

HEART 2 HEART

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BETWEEN YOU AND US

We live in an age where we wake up everyday to be baffled by mind-boggling breakthroughs be it in information, communication and entertainment technology (or ICE as they call it) or genetic engineering or space exploration. We live in an age which is at crossroads – the path to destruction or redemption and each one of us, our every thought is adding to the mass which is attaining criticality. A good act will definitely add to the critical mass and so will the evil one. But now comes the best part. We live in an age which also hosts a phenomenon which is most remarkable, incredible and unprecedented. And what is more wonderful, we know about His existence!

What we have with us today is not an enlightened being but the being which embodies the consciousness of the cosmos in his 5-feet-three-inches tiny frame. Whether we realise it or not, our fortune is incalculable, unimaginable. For, how many times in the past have we got this opportunity to live with the 'personification of all goodness in the universe' and how many times in the future are we going to get it? And He is here moving amongst us, speaking to us, showering His love on us, caring for us in ways we cannot even fathom with His divine motherly love and also at the same time teaching us, training us and transforming us like nobody else can just like a perfect Guru.

Yes, He is the preceptor unparalleled and unprecedented in the history of mankind. For, there are instances in history where the guru has reached the heights of a Sadguru and become godlike but never before has God assumed the role of Sadguru. He is the one who has no guru above Him. Even avatars like Rama, Krishna and also Shirdi went to a Guru to get initiated but not Sai. So what is so special about God becoming a Guru? What difference does it make to us and to the world at large? And how do we make best use of this 'once-in-a-lifetime' opportunity?

When you read our cover story you will find answers to all these. You will know that while an ordinary preceptor sees us as clods of earth awaiting to get molded, the Sadguru shows us that we are already perfect, only we have to become aware of it. The mission of a Sadguru is global, not local. It is not to redeem a few chosen ripe souls. A Sadguru is for everybody and He is all-pervading. Can we not see that happening every day? Never before in the annals of man has there been such a phenomenon as what we are witnessing today: the experience of Bhagavan Baba as a Divine Presence by persons in different parts of the world, through inexplicable incidents and happenings. If streams of Chinese, Europeans, Americans, Africans and Asians continually pour into Prasanthi Nilayam for "darshan, sparshan and sambhashan" (seeing, touching and speaking to Baba) the common impulse that is animating all of them is a spiritual quest - the hunger to experience God as a personal reality.

In the Sai Seva section, when you read our story about how a criminal-infested village is now suffused with Sai bhajans and Seva; Or the story of how Sai entered the hearts and minds of the Roman Catholics along the

coasts of Atlantic and Pacific in Colombia in the features section; or in the Sai Seva section again, how Sai-inspired volunteers rushed to the scene within moments of devastation and death in the Yogyakarta region of Indonesia; Or how there is silent yet effective Education in Human Values programmes continuously going on in countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Israel and in many other European countries in the Sai World News section; or even how the recently held "Walk For Values" in Toronto was a trial-blazer which made not only the local community and the government sit up and think but also inspired a chain of similar events creating a colossus of positive vibrations in different cities of Canada, again in the Sai World News section; or...well, we can go on and on but there is only so much that we can present to you in a month's issue. But the crux of the issue, as already stated is this – when God assumes the role of a Sadguru, it is not for a few individuals, it is a mission which is mammoth and magnificent.

And it is an opportunity like no other because when God walks on earth, He is full of Love and so magnanimous that what would have taken years for us to achieve, He will grant us in a moment. It is like 'liberalization of liberation' in the divine scheme of things. All we have to do is to just make sure that we do not become a hindrance to His love.

In the Arathi song which we sing at the end of every bhajans session, we say: "Jai! Sadgurudeva!" (which means , Victory to the Divine Teacher of the Supreme Reality!) What is the victory we wish for Him? He seeks nothing from anyone, no earthly dominion or power. What then is the victory that will please Him? It is our response to His Divine epochal mission that will rejoice Him. It is when we see Him in every being and love every being like He loves and He cares, that would be the real victory.

It was last year when Bhagwan during a session with the boys in Kodai Kanal said, "I don't want your devotion". All the boys were shocked. What else could He want?, they thought. That's when He said, "I want transformation". He continued "Devotion comes and goes. Transformation comes and stays." So, let this become our mantra. Let's take this as the Guru mantra that He has given us as we celebrate the auspicious occasion of Guru poornima this year.

Let us shine with the fullness of His love every moment of our life,

H2H Team

YOUR SAY

- FEEDBACK FROM OUR READERS

Response To The June Issue Of H2H

Dear Heart2Heart Team,

I thank God for this opportunity to be with Baba everyday of my life through Radio Sai receiving Baba's messages of love and wisdom. They are my everyday bread and the only reason why I run to the computer to see and feel what is awaiting me.

I 'discovered' Baba last year when I was looking through previously owned books at a market in Sydney, Australia when to my surprise I found a book written in Spanish (which is my mother tongue): 'Sai Baba, the Miracle Man'. Since it is very unusual to find books written in Spanish in Sydney (unless you look for them in bookstores or libraries where they specialise in books in that language) I immediately knew that the book's message was for me. Later, I found Radio Sai and I have been 'tuned' with it ever since.

I would like to thank everyone looking after the website and congratulate them for their wonderful work of love. I would like, if possible, to receive more personal stories of people who having come from a non-God-believing background (particularly if they are from Latin America), and have found their faith through Baba. I often find myself being inspired or just simply crying over Baba's messages. Thank you once again for your love and dedication.

Love,
Margarita, Sydney, Australia.

Dear Heart To Heart team,

I thank you for doing this service in a most wonderful way. You have asked "how did you like this article, and did it help you anyway?" It is an understatement to say "yes, it is helping in many ways". Words can never experience what the heart feels. As the title says "heart to heart" the message goes where it goes, and it is doing its process of transformation.

I wanted to write earlier after reading the many articles. To mention a few "I am a Sai devotee by Sri Sai Sandesh', 'Unforgettable Moments with Sai' by Chidamabaram Krishnan, 'An Amazing Personal Transformation' by Charu Sinha. I was particularly moved by the article by Sri B Arvind titled "Precious Closeness to Bhagavan".

In this world of constant distractions, this service of yours serves as a constant reminder to people like us who long to achieve the pristine state of

surrender. Therefore, I would like to have as many article as possible. They are just wonderful.

With love,
R.Balakumar, Taiwan .

Response to the Sai Seva article "Creating New Lives...Through Service."

Dear Brothers and Sisters at Radio Sai,

A few days back you published another great article and quoted a devotee's question about how to combine a Godly life with this earthly one - or at least something to that effect. This question touched something in me.

This morning when I was doing something really wonderful that is also seva, I had, what was to me, a very inspiring thought that could very well be a little short inspirational message:

This life can be so stressful. You feel like you are always running after the proverbial carrot on a stick. You know that you will never reach it - and Swami tells us that it is not even worth running after. This thought came to me in response to the futility of my striving:

There is nothing out there,
In time or in space.
The goal is right here - right now.
And the goal is to realize that -
I am - right here in the heart...right now.

- Anita, Carlsbad, NM, USA .

Response to the Feature Articles "Mantras - Man's Link To God" and "Sai Movement in Guatemala."

Dear Team,

Thank you so much for the article on Raimundo Panikkar - "Mantras - Man's Link to God". I was so excited to find out about him because I am hoping to enter graduate school soon for religious studies. The dialogue between Christianity and Eastern religions is a controversial topic around here (Toronto, Canada), in both academic and lay discussion. Dr. Panikkar's broadminded approach is extremely exciting, and thankfully, I discovered that my university library system carries many of his books.

All of the articles on the website are excellent and beautifully presented. I have begun to read from the article on Buddhism to our mostly Sinhalese Buddhist Sai Centre, as members often gripe that they don't learn much at

their temples. So it is very helpful. For me, personally, as a practicing Hindu, the articles on the Vedas are superb, as it is very difficult to find such information presented in an accessible way. Around Easter, there was also a beautiful article on Christ that I enjoyed immensely, as my father is Catholic. The religious and spiritual education on the website is of a very high quality, expertly done, and easy to absorb. It is difficult to find this quality of education elsewhere!

I also very much enjoyed the article on the Sai Movement in Guatemala and would love to see more articles about the Sai Movement in other countries. It helps a lot to know that there truly is a common bond that is uniting humanity in this way, and it is wonderful and inspiring to see Swami's message transcribed into different languages and cultures. I particularly enjoyed seeing the photographs of the happy children in the Sai school in Guatemala . Sometimes people get misled into thinking that Swami's mission is a Hindu/Indian one, exclusive to a particular group of people, so this is wonderful evidence that God transcends all boundaries of religion, culture, or nationality. It is also nice to learn about the history and geography of different parts of the world - it is very important to be aware of the rest of the world.

Thank you so much for taking the time to do this service! You are educating us all!

Sai Ram, Ellesha Wanigasekera.

Response to the Sai World News article "Sai Hospitals - A Revelation At IIM-A Health Conference."

Dear H2H Team and Dr Venkataraman,

Sai Ram to you all!

Thank you very much for the scintillating presentation of Dr Anil Kumar at IIM-A. We got the opportunity to see for ourselves the wonderful work which the Sai Organisation is doing. It also makes us think. We want to appreciate the various extracts of conversations that you are letting us access through H2H. We sometimes miss the lovely talks and discussions on RadioSai. It would be indeed wonderful if these conversations become available for us on H2H. In particular, Dr Venkataraman's talks on Shirdi Sai Baba could be put on the web for us.

S. Mohan

[Dear Mohan, we will be having the Shirdi talks of Dr. Venkataraman in H2H as a serial article sometime in the near future.]

Response to the Swami And Me article "Precious Closeness To Bhagawan."

Sai Ram,

Dear Devotee of Sai,

Thank you for the transcript from Swami's student Arvind. The whole thing was so inspiring and helpful to me. More articles like that would be very much appreciated. Swami's students are so special, we want to be more like them so we need to know what they are doing in their spiritual practice, how they overcame challenges, and how they get close to Swami. Also I am grateful for your work for Radio Sai so we can get to read these articles.

Lisa Knight, Washington , D.C. USA.

Sai Ram,

The transcription 'Precious Closeness To Bhagawan' by Sri B Arvind, in the current issue of Heart to Heart was invaluable to me. I picked up many ways to practice my devotion, and it reaffirmed many of the ideas that I had. Please provide more in the future.

I think students who are directly under Swami's guidance can provide many pointers and guidance to other devotees of Swami, as they are have benefited first hand from His influence. (However, even as I say that, I am aware that I too am benefiting directly from His influence).

I read Sai Inspires either first thing in the morning, or during lunch in the midst of a busy day. It is a most soothing balm, and a great gift from Swami and His students. Thank you.

Regards,
Kavitha Sandrasagaram, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Dear Heart2Heart team.

My name is Krish Boodhoo and I am from Durban, Natal In South Africa. I have enjoyed immensely the talk given by brother B. Arvind and others that come via email to me. I read every message that comes via email from Heart2Heart team. I thank the Heart2Heart Team very much for the wonderful work they are doing. I love you all very much.

Jai Sai Ram.
Krish Boodhoo.

Responses To Sai Inspires

[Sai Inspires is a free daily inspirational email service sent to all subscribers.]

Dear Team,

My name is Simi Kavita Sikka, and I live in Fremont , California . I am 20 years old. I have been subscribed to your emails for about the last few months, I am so thoroughly gratified and appreciative of all the time and effort you devote to this noble cause. It truly enriches my life and furthers my connection with SWAMI. I have learned so much about life, love, spirituality, forgiveness, forbearance, and most of all, about the teachings of beloved, beautiful BABA.

Please do let me know if there is anything I can do to assist or support you in any way possible. I would love to get involved. Thank you.

Sincerely, Simi.

Sairam!

I have been subscribing to H2H for some time now and I would like to congratulate your team and everyone for so diligently delivering this message from Swami to us on a daily basis. These small potions of love you send us everyday are what we need on many days to get along with our day to day activities in the right spirit! I have also saved up several of Swami's pictures which I use for various functions organized here. Please keep up the good work, and pray that Swami continues to inspire you to do greater deeds!

Sreeram,
CA, USA.

Dear Heart 2 Heart Team Members,

Sairam, I am member since few days only, but I am very much impressed with the service what you are offering to us. We are physically far away from Swami. But after reading the messages from you we feel as if daily we are visiting Swami! Once again congratulations on the first anniversary of SAI INSPIRES.

Sairam.

Sai Ram,

Just a note to express my gratitude to the staff at Heart to Heart. I have been silent up to this point until I read this morning that it is your first anniversary. I

have been reading the daily quotes and articles so long now that doing so has become such a precious and integral part of my life that it is hard to believe that there was ever a time when your publication did not exist.

Anyway, thank you so much for all that you do. Your beautiful service is enriching my life every day. I have not been able to travel to India in the past couple of years and H2H makes that fact easier to live with. I do believe that your articles are reminders that help me to integrate the fact of unity more firmly in my consciousness.

Again thank you and loving Sai Rams,

Dixie Cooper.

Dear Sai Brothers,

Most heartfelt congratulations in this first anniversary for your dedication and loving service to all of us, which comes in the form of these beautifully prepared messages that reach our hearts. It is most comforting to daily get a bit of Prashanti for all of us who have been born and have to live physically distant from Swami's enchanting and inspiring form.

Keep going with the good work!

Sai Ram,
Veronica, Argentina.

Responses To Sunday Special Articles

Every Sunday the subscribers to Sai Inspires also receive a spiritual discussion on a topic of current relevance called Sunday Special Articles.

Responses to the Sunday Special "The Three C's" sent on 3rd Jun 2006.

Dear Spiritual Brothers and Sisters Team,

I am a regular reader of Sai Inspires and have been getting wonderful insights. Today's article on Conscious [C1], Conscience [C2], and Consciousness [C3] has further helped me to strengthen my belief that God is there in every one, including the one who hurts me and has helped me to remain conscious of my feelings and responses in my dealings with people. Please accept my hearty compliments.

Warm greetings to the entire team,
Sushil Goel.

Hi,

I truly appreciated your article on the three Cs. It made me truly conscious of the subtle difference in evolutionary stages from C1 to C3 via C2. True knowledge sets me free, and thanks to your article, I became a little freer on this sunny Sunday morning . Thank you for your good work. Please keep it up!

Mina
Los Angeles , California , USA.

Yamazaki,

Om Sai Ram!

This is regarding your last Sunday special- 3 C's. I really appreciate your efforts in putting up the things in place in such a simplified and legitimate manner. The take away message was absolutely clear and it did enter deep inside me. Indeed, we humans are unique in being blessed with conscience to enable us to follow the path of righteousness. This is also true that being good is necessary but not enough to merge into the Ultimate. I think, internalising and practicing this concept of Universal consciousness is what brings about transformation of heart. I have always felt on coming in contact with many good natured people that what is it that is missing in them. What makes the Sai organisation so different from others? But then I realised it is this 'transformation of heart' that makes one see the same God in all and loving all with no exception that makes this organisation so special. Thank you so much for sharing such valuable ideologies with us.

Jai Sai Ram!
Nayanika Jayaram Romanyuk

– Heart2Heart Team

SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS

SATHYA SAI SPEAKS

EXPERIENCE ONENESS, THE ALL IMPORTANT VIRTUE

July 11th is the auspicious occasion of Guru Poornima, the day when Sai is adored and worshipped as the Sadguru, the Supreme Divine Preceptor. Let's recapitulate what Swami had said on this occasion way back in 1989.

Nature – The True Preceptor

Emodiments of Divine Love! The trees provide cool shade and sweet fruit equally to all, whether they have fostered them or harmed them. They teach man this lesson of equal mindedness. The mountains, by bearing heat and cold, wind and rain alike, teach man not to care too much for the body. The birds take no thought for the morrow and are content to live on what they can get. They teach man the lesson of contentment and indifference to the future.

The departed convey the message of the impermanence of life and its pleasures. Nature thus teaches man in many ways to give up ideas of "I" and "mine" and look upon God as the supreme preceptor. Although Nature has been teaching these lessons from the beginning of time, man has not learnt to give up the ideas of "my people" and "others" and to develop the sense of oneness and equality of mankind and realise his divinity .

We are seeing people being born and people dying. In spite of all that is seen, or heard or experienced, man is unable to get rid of the delusions relating to the body. Hence he is caught up in the coils of bodily attachments. He does not learn the lesson of the impermanence and fleeting nature of physical existence....

Prakriti (Nature), which is constantly teaching these lessons, is the true preceptor. The cosmos is a University. God is the Cause. The cosmos is the result. God pervades the entire Universe. Nothing can exist in the world without the power of the Divine. The Universe is a manifestation of the Divine....

Oneness Must Express Itself in Universal Love

What we must seek to experience today is *Ekatvam* (unity in diversity). *Advaita* (Oneness) is expressed in three forms: *Bhaava-Advaita* (oneness in mental attitude); *Kriya-Advaita* (oneness expressed in action); *Padaartha-Advaita* (oneness as seen in all objects). Only when oneness is experienced in all these forms can Divinity be understood....

Oneness must express itself in universal love. Those who speak about love do not practice it. It is the divorce between thought, word and deed which is at the root of all the troubles in the world today. It is also the cause of the rise of atheism in this sacred land of ours.

Harmony in thought, word and deed is the highest human value. *Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema* (Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love) are not mere words. They are fundamental values to be practised in thought, word and deed as far as possible. Only then can divinity be realised.

It is not necessary to undertake all kinds of *sadhanas* (spiritual exercises) to recognise the Divine. If the happenings in daily life are properly enquired into, the *Atma* principle can be recognised easily. *Hethu* (cause) is one of the names of the Divine. This means He is the cause of creation. He is both the cause of and the means used in creation. Another name for God is *Vikshara* (Imperishable). All objects in creation are liable to decay and destruction. God alone is beyond change and decay .

Nature is Like a Clean Mirror

God's love is unbounded. It knows no growth or diminution. Worldly love is momentary and fickle. Divine love is unchanging and eternal. God is the embodiment of love. His infinite love is offered to all in equal measure. Some may feel that they had experienced God 's love for a time and had been deprived of it later. This reflects only their own feelings and not the attitude of the Lord.

Nature is like a clean mirror which reflects your feelings and attitudes. It is your own actions and thoughts, whether good or bad, which are reflected back to you. The Lord 's love remains the same always .

Pleasure and sorrow are not inherent in the nature of man. They are products of the mind. Bliss is the true nature of man. But it can be realised only when the love of God is experienced. The sense of "my -ness" has to be totally eradicated. You must strive for the welfare of all... Fill your hearts with this sacred feeling. Banish from your minds all thoughts of hatred and envy .

- Divine *Discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on 18- 7-1989.*

- **Heart2Heart Team**

CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI - Part 22

(Continued from the last issue)

H: Some say it is necessary to mortify the body to overcome the tendencies?

SAI: Some spiritual aspirants do tapas and various austerities that torture and weaken the body. This is wrong. If there is a healthy body, this is the basis for healthy thoughts.

H: One's tendencies are there for a long time. Despite oneself, they come up again and again.

SAI: There is the sun, the magnifying glass, and the paper. God is the sun, far away. The heart is the glass. The desire and tendencies, the paper. If the glass is just right, the paper is burned at once. If the heart has strong love for God, and faith in Him, the glass is automatically right.

H: One very strong tendency is in the tongue, the problem of taste, which gives rise to craving for more. How to overcome that?

SAI: **The body is like a boil. Water is for cleansing the wound. Food is the medicine. Clothing is the bandage. Considering the body so, reduces the strength of taste.** But what is taken in by seeing, hearing, talking, is the more important food. Gross food for the body is like digging a well. Whereas pure, subtle impressions taken in by the other senses is like building a wall high into the heavens. It is building the wall high that should have the major emphasis.

The Body As The Temple Of God

H: Body is like a boil. But Swami often uses the phrase, 'the body is the temple of God'.

SAI: In the spiritual world there is a different arithmetic. $3-1=1$. There is you, the mirror, and the image. Remove the mirror, and there is only one left. Life is the mirror, body is the reflection. Be attached to God, and there is only One, God. The body is the temple of God.

The life of the person is the priest. The five senses are the vessels used in the religious ceremony. Atma is God, the idol of God. One cannot say that the body is the temple of God unless it is. Every act, thought, and word should be worship in the temple. The five senses should constantly be cleansed and polished, so that the worship is reverently offered to God. One goes to the office and says to himself that every act of the day should be the worship of God, and it will be so.

H: Swami says that when the senses leave their place and mix with worldly objects pain and pleasure are produced. What is the proper place of the senses?

SAI: It is all the play of desire. Desire for worldly objects produces pleasure and pain, whereas desire for God confers bliss and does not produce pain.

The Right Expression Of Desire

H: But Swami, most of our actions arise from worldly desires. We see, hear, think, feel, smell. Then there is some desire and that leads to action.

SAI: God works through you as desire.

H: Swami! Does God prompt even the bad desire?

SAI: There is the strong thrust of the life force, the desire to live. If it goes into action in a favourable field, it becomes love; otherwise, it remains as desire. **If desire is expressed in a favourable field, it is expressed as love. Then knowledge and bliss arise.** The force, the strength, the energy, and the motivation in desire is God. Whether the desire is good or bad is related to time, place, and person. In early years, a desire for worldly achievement might be good. In later years, the same desire might be bad. Fruit, good one day may be rotten several days later. One side of an apple may become good, the other side rotten. Discrimination says eat the good side and discard the bad.

There is another force in you through which God works, and that is discrimination. That force must be used to put aside wrong action. The power of discrimination knows what is right and what is wrong. The wrong desire is God overshadowed by Maya. Whereas discrimination is God less overshadowed by Maya.

H: Swami! This really explains the whole problem of good and evil?

SAI: Yes. The story of Valmiki is an illustration. He was a ruthless killer and robber without any doubt about his actions. He, at one time, listened to the five sages and started repeating 'Ram'. The same strength and force that made him a terrible criminal was turned to Godly desire and action, and he gained God-realization. Valmiki started to repeat 'Rama' and, gaining speed 'Rama' became jumbled up with 'Ma' and 'Mara'. In this he lost body sense and transcended the senses. Losing body sense should be like that, natural and not forced.

H: Swami says that body, mind, intelligence do not work for anybody, that they do their own work. What does that mean?

SAI: What is meant is, 'unfortunately, that is the case'. They are doing their own work, but the work should be co-ordinated for the benefit of the higher. For example, the eyes see. Seeing is their work. But unless they see for somebody there is no point in their work. The mind should be seeing through the eyes. The intelligence should be directing and controlling the mind, for that is the intelligence's own work.

H: Then, for whom should the entire mechanism be functioning?

SAI: For the Atma. A small example: the earth turns on its own axis, but at the same time it is revolving around the sun. **The various faculties of man should do their own work, but the Atma is the centre of their universe.**

H: There seems to be something wrong. The Atma is not doing its work of directing the faculties. How can one bring the faculties under the control of the Atma?

The Meaning Of Surrender

SAI: When one realizes that the Atma is the reality, everything will function very smoothly. It is a question of surrendering all to the Atma.

H: But Swami has said that one cannot surrender that which he really does not own and of which he is not in control.

SAI: It is not a question of surrendering or giving to someone else. One surrenders to himself. Recognition that the Atma is oneself is surrender. Surrender really means the realization that all is God, that there is nobody who surrenders, that there is nothing to be surrendered, nor is there anyone to accept a surrender. All is God. There is only God.

H: 'Surrender' is not really a very good word. It quite fails to convey what is meant.

SAI: 'Surrender' is worldly language. To correctly describe this, the language of the divine is needed. There is no adequate word in the English language, therefore the use of 'surrender' goes on.

Contemplation On The Form Of God

H: When Swami says, 'The form of the Lord', what does He mean? That is, when I think of the Lord, the image of Baba comes to mind and that is only natural. But beyond that, what?

SAI: If you continue to visualize the Form when you are engaged in activity, you will make mistakes. For instance, if you try to visualize the Lord when you are working in the office, you make mistakes. So, when engaged in action, 'Visualizing the Lord' means doing the work in God's Name, and not doing the work to gain the fruit of the work.

H: Well, then about the Name, repeating the Name?

SAI: When God comes taking a human form, it is very difficult to see Him as the Lord. One sees that body, then one's own body, and one cannot but relate the two and put that body at the same level as oneself. But if the Lord came in all His majesty, people would be afraid and would have no opportunity to know and love the Lord.

For example, people worship an image of a snake in a temple, hoping that the worship will bring the birth of a child. But if the snake became alive and wriggled across the floor towards them, they would take to their heels. People could not stand the Lord in super-human form. **It is only when the Lord comes in a human body that people are able to approach Him and learn to love Him and know Him even a little bit. But one should not make the mistake of thinking that is all there is to the Lord.**

For instance, the aeroplane flying high in the sky descends to the airport. But one should not make the mistake of thinking that the plane is a ground machine because they see it on the ground. Once it has taken on its load of passengers, it again zooms up high into the sky. In like fashion, although the Lord has made a landing here on earth so to speak, He is not limited by His human form

Repetition Of The Name Of God

H: May Swami please tell us more about saying the Name of God? **SAI:** Here is a small example. A man had to pass through 20 miles of forest at night, and he had only a small lantern that lit about a three foot circle. He put down the lantern and started to cry, for he could see for only three feet. Some travellers came along and asked the reason for his sorrow. They exclaimed, 'But sir, if you walk, carrying the lamp with you, if you can see only two feet ahead of you it is enough, and you could travel in that way through a hundred miles of dark forest without trouble. But if you leave the lantern where it is, you cannot move at all in this dark forest.'

In the same way, the Name of the Lord may be written in the book you are looking at, but you may find your way only by using the Name. **The Name should be woven into the breath so that you are calling on Him all day long. Sohum - 'He am I'. 'He' with the in-breath, 'I' with the out-breath. Or Sai Ram.** Or the name of your choice, said with the movement of the breath. Breath is form, thus the name and the form go together.

Breath is life. Life is God. Breath is God. The name of God and the form of God. Breathe God. See God. Eat God. Love God. The Name of God will illumine every step of your life and take you to Him. **The Name must be said with love for God is love. If the breath is said with love, then life is love. There is no shakti stronger than love. If it is said with love, the Name of God - any name of God Ram, Sai Ram, Krishna , Jesus, Sohum - that small name will open up and illuminate the whole of life.** For the one who desires to realize God, only the Name is needed. The ocean is vast, but a huge steamship is not needed to go on the ocean. Just a small tire will take one on the ocean.

H: In respect to repetition of the Name of the Lord, what is the relationship between Sai Baba, Sai Ram, Sohum? And which form is to be visualized for each?

SAI: Sai Baba is the physical form. Sai Baba also means Divine Father and Mother. The syllable 'Sa' means divine. The syllable 'ai' means mother. Baba is the word for father. 'Sai Baba', therefore, means Divine Mother and Father. Sai Ram represents the same form as Sai Baba. Sohum does not have a form. It means, 'I am God'.

Just as a person has several names but they refer to the same body. The repetition of name with form is at the beginning. Later on one worships the omnipresent transcendent divine. If one sees God as the essence of every person he meets, it is also appropriate to love Sai Ram constantly in the mind, because then the diverse forms merge into the Sai Ram form.

The Correct Way to Chant 'Om'

H: What is the correct way to chant 'OM'?

SAI: The sound of 'OM' is 'AUM'. **'A' starts softly from the throat. It is the earth. 'U' comes from the mouth and the sound rises in volume. 'M' is sounded with the lips, with decreasing volume.** Like a plane, heard distantly, increasing in sound as it approaches and fading with distance. 'A' is the world. U is heaven. 'M' is divine, beyond all the senses.

H: Suppose one fails to achieve this perfect pronunciation?

SAI: The perfect OM is not too important if there is love. Love is the bond of devotion between mother and child, and if the child cries, mother does not worry if the cry is discordant. She rushes to the child and cares for him.

The Divine Mother is in every place. Swami is here, but the divine Mother is everywhere. So, everybody has a chance. As soon as a person starts to yearn for God, the Divine Mother is there to respond with grace. In all these matters, love is vital. Devotion to God means love of God.

The real OM is spontaneous; it enters through the two nostrils, up to forehead center and out through the ears to the world. Like the broadcast from a radio tower.

H: Is not OM a dangerous sound to use? I have heard that the OM sound is continuous, and continuously sustains the universe. Whereas man breaks the continuity of his saying 'OM' and so his life is likewise broken. I have heard of a number of such instances, and it is said that OM is suitable only for sannyasi who have already broken their worldly ties.

SAI: What is a sannyasi? There are three types. First is 'cloth sannyasi' who pretends renunciation by wearing an ochre robe. There are thousands of such in India. Next is the 'sense sannyasi' who gains control of his senses. These persons should never leave the world for solitude. They should remain in life where they may watch their reactions and know if their sense control is genuine. Then there is he who has surrendered to the Lord, dedicating the fruit of every action to Him. In this sannyasi, ego has no place. His heart is

pure. His senses become calm and are not affected by the opposites. **If the heart is pure, then the continuity of the 'OM' sound will not be broken. And, if something that seems bad does arise, then it is unreal, for only OM is real.**

'Sohum'

H: Swami says that people make a mistake by not saying 'Sohum' with every breath. How does one do it?

SAI: 'Saa' is He. 'Hum' is I. Yogi 'X' whom you mentioned, teaches to say, 'Saa, Saa' 24 hours each day. Since 'Hum' is not said, the 'I', the personality, is supposed to subside. It is extremely difficult to do it 24 hours a day, and in sleep it is almost impossible. Yogi 'X' says he does it, but he does not. What is the use of struggling with a very difficult practice like that, when there is an easier, more effective may?

Well, Swami, putting Yogi 'X' aside. I want to do as Baba says, and say 'Sohum' with every breath. What is the technique? Is it said with each breath?

SAI: **The breath is always saying 'Sohum'. The practice is to say 'So' with every in-breath, and 'Hum' with the outbreath. Say it in thought. It is intended to keep the mind fixed and quiet. After a while it becomes automatic. During the day say 'Sohum'. At night, during sleep, the sound naturally changes to OM.****H:** Should one think, 'He am I'?

SAI: No. The sound is 'Sohum'. It is not an Indian word or an American word. It is the sound of what the breath is saying. Of course, it is all right to appreciate the meaning of the sound.

H: Swami says that 'Sohum' is the natural sound of breath. Listening to my breath, it does not seem to me that I hear the sound of breath in that way.

SAI: The sound through the nose and mouth are mixed with mind or idea, and may be heard in various ways. The fact is that when the mind is without movement and the breath is perfectly spontaneous and natural, the sound of that breath (through the nostrils) is 'Sohum'. Breath through the mouth goes into the stomach.

H: Krishna told Arjuna to sound OM in the mind.

SAI: OM is in every place, mind, tongue, heart etc. First sound OM on the tongue and then in the mind. The sounding of OM 21 times is important; five outer senses, five inner senses, five lives (the five elements), five sheaths (the kosas), and the Jiva.

(To be continued)

– Heart2Heart Team

CHINNA KATHA

THE SANDALWOOD TREE

A Raja was out hunting in the forest. He spotted a deer and as he was pursuing it, he went too far and discovered that his retinue had been left behind. He lost his way and was overcome by hunger and thirst. At last, he saw a tiny hut where lived a poor woodcutter and his wife who sold fuel in the distant village.

Their larder was almost empty, but the wife managed to prepare a roti which the Raja ate with great relish. He had never known such taste, for he was never so hungry as then. And he slept soundly that noon, for he had never been so tired at any time before. By that time, the courtiers and soldiers came up to where he was and the astounded woodcutter learnt that his guest was no less a person than the monarch of the realm. He apologised for the poor fare he had offered, though the king had never uttered a harsh word.

Next day, some men came from the capital to take him to the king's court and the poor man felt certain that he was going to be punished for not taking proper care of the ruler. His wife accompanied him as she offered to share the fate of her lord. The Raja gave him a seat and insisted upon his sitting, an honour which the woodcutter knew, was usually given to animals that were about to be sacrificed. He and his wife were fed sumptuously, another honour which such animals usually get.

Then the Raja asked him what boon he would ask from him and the terrified man could ask for only this, "Please allow me to go home alive with my wife! Please do not cut off my head," he cried. The Raja said, "I am not an ungrateful wretch to treat you so cruelly. If I give you an estate you will ruin it, for you are unaware of agriculture. If I give riches, thieves will carry it away, for you live alone in the jungle. Well, I am giving you a sandalwood plantation in that forest, thirty acres in extent. Make good use of it and prosper." The woodcutter felt relieved and he went happily back to his home in the woods.

After about six months, the Raja went to the forest again for a hunt and remembering the roti, he went in search of the woodcutter. He found him quite happy but was disappointed when the woodcutter told him that he had started selling charcoal instead of fuel! The sandalwood trees were being burnt and reduced to charcoal by that man because he did not know the value of the gift he had received. **So too, man does not realise the value of the precious gift of "the number of days" of life he has received from the Lord. He fritters them away acquiring ephemeral objects and fleeting pleasures, that makes his life invariably a tragedy instead of a happy pilgrimage towards God.**

-Baba

-Heart2Heart Team

COVER STORY

THE MATCHLESS COSMIC SPLENDOUR

.... *When God Becomes the Guru*

The Presence

How many times have we experienced this? The serene silence in the hall is suddenly filled with soothing music and sonorous chants of *vedic* hymns, all eyes are glued towards one direction, uninterruptedly, in full concentration; there is an amazing one-pointedness in everybody's mind and vision, not even a fraction of a second can be missed, every millisecond is precious, every moment is a blessing and as every moment passes by every pore of our being seems full, every cell of our body is as calm and composed as a great ascetic lost in meditation; we are filled with a rare feeling of fulfillment, something which can never be acquired in the external world, we have become so detached to the world which we have been clinging to like a leech clinging to its prey just a few minutes ago, we are filled with so much dispassion, all the wealth of the world cannot lure us to take that moment away from us.

There is so much quietness within us, there is so much peace; a kind of peace which makes us feel we are no more governed by our senses, we are mighty yet so calm...and we want that moment to become eternity, we want to just immerse ourselves in that experience, in that environment, in those sublime vibrations, we want to be lost forever in those moments, in that bliss.....we experience so much!

But Swami has not even spoken a word to us, He has not looked into our eyes, He has not come near us and taken our letter or listened to our problem, He has only just come out of His abode and moved amongst us. No, not even that - He has just alighted from the car and is sitting yards away from us silently and as serenely as ever on His sofa.

There is absolutely no communication, but yet so much is conveyed, so much is received and so much is given; there is so much achieved with so little effort; there is so much learnt without a word spoken and there is so much progress in so few moments.

Have we not felt like this innumerable times when we have had the priceless opportunity of seeing the Lord in front of us? How gratified we feel? How we look at His face with awe every time He comes out - even if we have seen Him hundred thousand times earlier? How springs of love, devotion and gratitude swell up in us and inundate us when we are close to His cosmos-compressed-into-a-tiny-frame?

Amazing Grace

Recalling her first encounter with Bhagawan, Ms. Hagit Marom from Israel says, "How can I describe in words the magnitude of the grace I received...I did not stop crying from sheer bliss for three days. All the pieces in my life had come together...I came to Swami as someone who went occasionally to meditation retreats. I came back from Him knowing this is the life I have come to live. That this is the meaning I was always looking for. That this is the master I wanted that will teach me all that I need to know. My heart was overflowing with gratitude (and still is) and I was asking myself: 'Why me?' So many people gave so much to this world and I received this amazing grace. The voice in me that now had a name and a form answered: 'All is *Karma* and the grace of God.'

I knew the only way I can show my gratitude, is to share what I was given, with anyone who wants it. Ever since that auspicious day that is what I do in my life, every time a little more, with the grace and the will of the embodiment of Love on this earth Sri Sathya Sai Baba, my Lord of Grace. I thank You from here to eternity for this amazing grace we have received from You, incarnating in our life time, touching and transforming our hearts to give us the greatest gift of them all - ourselves."

Yes, this is what the Sadguru (the supreme preceptor) does. He teaches us, transforms us and gives our 'self' back to us. And all this happens, in just a few minutes, nay sometimes in an instant when we are in the proximity of the Sadguru, something which would have taken years and lives together under any ordinary preceptor. Let us look a little more into the role of the Sadguru?

Sadguru – His Mission And Methods

Is he the one who teaches a mantra or Vedanta? Is he the one who explores properties of matter for us? Swami says,

"The true meaning of Guru is 'one who dispels darkness of ignorance'. 'Gu' means 'darkness of ignorance' and 'Ru' means 'one who removes'."

And towards achieving this end, the Sadguru employs methods and strategies which are as unique as each man on the face of earth. For Sri Seshagiri Rao, who came to Swami very reluctantly (almost out of compulsion and with no other option but to escort his daughters to Puttaparthi), at a time when Swami was just a teenager, it was just one Darshan of Swami where he saw not a sixteen year-old-boy proclaiming his divinity, but the very same Lord Shiva (complete with moon and third eye) that he had been worshipping for fifty years with great devotion! Sri Seshagiri Rao never left Puttaparthi from that day till his very end.

For Renate Kuchardt who began her search for truth in 1969, two decades later, it was no special vision. Just the usual Darshan with an out-of-the-ordinary twist that cleared the darkness of her soul forever.

“In August 1988, I made my first trip to India to see Sri Sathya Sai Baba,” she says, “I was not a devotee yet, but I was very eager to see Him after watching Him 18 years earlier on German television. However, before I arrived Baba had broken His hip and therefore He did not make any appearances.

He only came out to give Darshan and a discourse for Krishna’s birthday. I was lucky to get a front-row seat for this celebration, which made it possible to see and experience Him very closely.

For two hours I watched Him give a discourse standing – with a broken hip. This left me absolutely astonished. No words can describe what I felt for him. I knew then that He was to become my path. I left the ashram as a devotee and with the desire to see Him in His full glory.”

How many persons have found light, love, peace, fulfillment and joy just by His mere presence? It all happens so mysteriously, so silently in every individual’s heart and soul that has been touched by Him.

How Fortunate We Are!

“Another meaning for Guru,” Swami says, “is One who reveals the *Guri* (target) to the disciple. He does this by removing the darkness of ignorance. *Guri* here refers to the *Atmic* (divine) principle present in every human being. The real Guru who can reveal the *Atmic* principle is a *Jnaanamurthy* (embodiment of wisdom); He is the very embodiment of Divine principles; and He is one who takes upon Himself a form to teach the same to the disciple; He is God Himself.”

How profound it is and how fortunate we are! What we have is not a Sadguru who is Godlike but God who has come down to perform various roles for us, the foremost and the all important role of being the true guide, the perfect role model, a preceptor beyond imagination.

The Revelation Of A Lifetime - Dr. Anil Kumar

It was in the early eighties, 1981 or 82, during the summer months and Swami was in Puttaparthi. Unlike these days when during almost all summers Swami is in Bangalore or Kodai Kanal, those days Swami used to spend some summers in Puttaparthi itself. Barring a few, almost all the boys had gone home.

These few boys, which included a dozen or two from the Bangalore campus of the Institute as well, had decided to spend their vacation with Swami in Puttaparthi. Recalling those days and the awesome and revelatory experience which he had which revolutionized his life, his thoughts and feelings for Swami forever, Dr. Anil Kumar, a student then and now a lecturer in Swami’s University, says,

“How wonderful those days were! We were so few of us in the Mandir, just about thirty or forty of us and we had the whole Mandir portico for ourselves.

We all sat totally dispersed, each a few feet away from the other, not to occupy the whole space but to have an individual space for ourselves so that when Swami came out we could have His personal attention. And He did come so many times amongst us and how precious those interactions were!

One day, Swami called a dozen of us who were all from the Bangalore campus of the Institute into the interview room. It was a very intimate session where Swami at length explained to us how we must sing with devotion during bhajans and more importantly, how we must visualize the deity and understand the meaning of the bhajans while singing and give ourselves completely to the bhajan. This advice from Swami touched me and with great earnest I had begun to practice this in every bhajan session.

In those days, bhajan sessions in the morning used to be around 11am and Swami would often go out in His car for a ride in the morning to where, only He knows. One particular morning in the similar fashion He had gone out and the bhajans started. I was sitting in the Mandir and I enthusiastically joined the bhajans and as per His instruction started visualizing as I was singing. For me, Swami was Rama, Krishna , Devi, Guru, everything. So, let the bhajan adore any deity, I was constantly seeing Swami in my mind's eye.

In fact, I was immersed entirely in that sublime feeling and as the bhajans proceeded I was in a different plane altogether imagining Swami, fresh and so beautiful, gently swaying from one side to the other in rhythm with the beat of my heart, His hands cupped behind, a soft heavenly smile on His lips, His face so radiant, so enchanting and enamoring...I was lost, completely.

So oblivious I was to what was happening around me that I did not even realise that Swami, after returning from His ride, was standing right in front of me! I was sitting there absorbed in my divine reverie as it were, with Swami so beautiful and gently swinging from side to side in my mind and Swami was there physically right in front of me reflecting exactly what was going on in my mind for one whole minute. When I opened my eyes because of some hustle, I was obviously spellbound, speechless.

But what was mind-blowing was what Swami said that momentous morning looking into my eyes with an all-knowing loving smile dancing on His lips. He said, "Inside Swami and outside Swami, one and the same."

My hair stood on ends! What a revelation! Who can give you such an experience other than Sai, the Sadguru, who is omniscient and omnipresent, beyond mind, logic, reason and the universe."

Unending Magical Moments with the Sadguru

Instances like this are galore. Late Sri G V Subba Rao, a great vedic scholar who worked in the UN Energy division for decades before he settled down in Puttaparthi, narrates in one of his many articles,

“Once just on the eve of my departure from Puttaparthi in a hurry to catch a plane that very morning in Bangalore, I was called by Swami to His modest living-cum resting room in the upstairs of Prashanthi Mandir.

Without being told that I was studying *Thaitireeya* Upanishad (a sacred vedic text) during my weekend spare time in Delhi (where I was then a resident representative of a UN agency) Baba, in His infinite Grace expounded for nearly one full hour the essence of this famous Upanishad.

When I began to write it all down, Baba remarked that there was no need to take notes; He assured me that whenever the need arose, I would automatically recall His teachings!

While Baba's instruction was thus proceeding, Sri Kasturiji, the editor of the Ashram magazine, came up to request Baba for Swami's article for the monthly 'Sanathana Sarathi' issue which was just then going to the printer. Swami, with a wave of His hand, produced the article and gave it to Sri Kasturiji in my direct presence! When Swami concluded His Upanishadic teaching, He materialized a king-sized hot *laddu* (a type of Indian sweet) as His prasadam to be distributed to members of my family. Furthermore, Swami assured me that I would definitely catch the plane as it was flying late that day. I reached Bangalore airport with all anxiety but to my pleasant astonishment I was the last passenger on the long delayed flight!”

There is no one way or one approach that the Sadguru uses. In a myriad ways, the Sadguru reveals Himself to different individuals - every student, every devotee who has come in touch with Sai has been metamorphosed just like the lion cub which always believed in eating grass and bleating as it lived with sheep from its birth until one day a lion caught it by its scruff, showed him his reflection in the water and asked him to roar. And the cub was never the same again. Similar is the task of the Sadguru. He puts us through different experiences, some pleasant, some pungent, some humiliating, some elevating till we begin to trust and believe and say, yes, we are not human or sub-human, we are verily divine. Sometimes a look is more than adequate, at other times a word or a smile or a rebuke is sufficient to shake us of our slumber.

The One and the Many

This happened recently, just a few weeks ago in fact. Swami had returned from his short trip to Kodai Kanal. There were only a few boys in the Brindavan ashram in Bangalore, the fortunate few who had accompanied Him to Kodai Kanal and a few others who had decided to spend their summer vacation with Swami. In the evening after bhajans, Swami would often call the boys inside to His abode Trayee Brindavan for what is generally known as a “Trayee Session”. These are very special occasions when Swami blesses the students and staff with His divine proximity and imparts lessons which are invaluable and incomparable to anything material in the world.

During one such session in the month of May 2006, while Swami was seated on the swing and was interacting with the boys, a few boys who were sitting right in front had the rare privilege of performing *padaseva* (the opportunity to gently massage His holy feet). (Yes! This indeed is a great blessing!).

One particular boy who was serving Swami this way wanted to give his hands a moment's rest and so withdrew his hand for a few seconds. When he wanted to resume the Seva he found that Swami had moved His Foot. So he slowly raised the robe a little looking for His Foot. Immediately, Swami tapped him on the head and remarked,

"I have only two Feet! What are you searching for?" There was laughter all round. But what came next from the divine lips was profound.

Swami continued, "If you think that there is only one foot, you will keep searching. But consider that there are many feet, and then you will find His Feet wherever you put your hand." It struck like a flash not only the boy concerned but all who were witness to it. How often we limit Sai to the five-foot-three-inch tiny frame? How often we get deluded by His seemingly human acts? If only we are alert and we have the eyes to see and the purity of heart to experience then we realise that His every joke and every smile, every gesture and every word, whether a pat or a rebuke is all intended for one sole purpose - the very mission for which He has assumed a human form - that is, to make us aware of our oneness with the divine.

A similar event, which was used by Bhagavan to inculcate an important teaching, occurred on 18th of October 1990.

"Thousands of devotees from all over Andhra Pradesh," says Dr. Ravi Kumar, "were arriving at Prashanti Nilayam for the golden jubilee celebrations of the day of annunciation. The devotees had taken lamps lit by Swami to every nook and corner of Andhra Pradesh and they were converging at the sanctum sanctorum for the Blessing of Darshan of the Lord on that special day.

The students were having their winter holidays. Still, there were many of us at Prasanthi Nilayam. That night as we assembled for *parayanam* in the holy precincts of the Mandir, one student voiced the opinion that on this historic once-in-a-yuga-event, all of us also should do something special to show our love to Swami.

We all heartily agreed with this suggestion and it became a brainstorming session. One student felt that we should include all the devotees as well. We are all children of Saimaa and it would represent mankind's homage to God. All of us felt that it was the right suggestion. So it was decided that as soon as Swami came to the portico, we would all sing the song He taught mankind on 20th October 1940 *Manasabhajare Gurucharanam*.

Then someone suggested that we could also chant the *Ashtotra Shatha Namavali* - the 108 Names by which we worship Swami. We would also sing

some group songs like 'Why Fear When I Am Near', 'Thu Pyaruka Saagar Hai', 'I keep feeling your love in me' and so on.

The next morning when this idea was placed before the wardens of the Brindavan and Prashanthi Nilayam Hostels they felt very happy and decided to seek Swami's permission for it. So they asked the art group boys to make a card which they could show Swami and seek His consent. However by the time the card was ready the morning bhajans had started and Swami went into the prayer hall and sat on the throne. Still, the wardens went forward and seeing them the Lord came out (talk of encouraging good endeavours!) and asked 'Emi samachaaram'. When the students' prayer was presented Swami readily gave His consent. He even said 'The Andhra Pradesh devotees' programme is at 7.15 AM. Tell the boys I will come out at 6.30 AM itself to accommodate their program.'

Who can be so sweet as our beloved Mother Sai! Beloved Saimaa how are we ever going to repay the gratitude we owe You for giving us everything and for giving us Yourself so willingly?

The program was a great success as Swami was very pleased. A few days before 20th October it had been announced that no one should take Swami's *Paadanamaskar*. That day, after the morning program, Swami came out on the 1st floor balcony and conveyed His happiness. He then said with an impish smile "If any of you are able to take *Paadanamaskar* now you can do so". We all laughed.

It was only later that it struck us that what Swami was conveying to us was exactly what He had told mankind on that epoch making day in October 1940. The message was '*Manasa bhajare guru charanam*' –'In the mind (the mind can even touch His feet in the first floor balcony!) worship the Feet of (this) Guru and be redeemed.'"

The Test and the Triumph

To narrate instances of how every moment He teaches simultaneously to scores of devotees with His every act will be like trying to count the stars in the sky. The Guru is the embodiment of infinite wisdom and peace and countless are the ways through which He imparts this precious wealth of peace and wisdom. The following anecdote, for example, will tell you how Swami so amazingly not only revealed Himself but also at the same time conveyed a message whose profundity was beyond parallel.

"We were seated that afternoon in the Poorna Chandra hall," says Sri Ram, a former Sai student who takes us down memory lane,

"The winter vacations were on and we children were in our 'Home', watching a movie with our Mother Sai. It was a Telugu film on Lord Dattatreya (the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Ishwara in one as per Hindu mythology).

With our eyes riveted on the screen, we watched Karthaveerya-Arjuna enter the hermitage of his later Guru, Dattatreya. (Karthaveerya according to mythology was directed by his mother to visit Dattatreya, who would be his Guru).

After years of search, he finally found Him. The One, Whom, his parents said, would be his Guru... his God. And as he took the thorny track that lead to the Guru's Ashram, he was tired, but thrilled. With every subsequent step, he felt the peace within swell. Aye, he had reached the end of his journey. Actually, the journey had just begun...

'Good God! Is He supposed to be my Guru?' He was sure that he had come to the wrong place, in search of the wrong person. The entire Ashram reeked of liquor and putrid flesh. The Guru Himself emanated the very same aroma from His being. Surrounded by a horde of women, He spoke, not the Holy Vedas but the lowly language of cobblers! Was He the great Dattatreya that his mother had spoken so highly about? Definitely not. But the drunken attendant serving his equally drunk Master said that He was Dattatreya. Karthaveerya approached Dattatreya with folded palms ...*splash*.

He got up with difficulty, more mental than physical, from the puddle of water where the attendants of Dattatreya had thrown him. Stunned, he squeezed his *dhoti* (garment) dry. The humiliation was too much to bear. The Guru whom he approached for *Bramhajnana* (highest wisdom) had next thrown him out of the Ashram! What kind of a Guru was this fellow? A true Guru, the scriptures say, rests not even for a hundred births until His disciple has attained the Ultimate Reality. But this Dattatreya had rejected him outright. Or was He Dattatreya at all?

It seemed to us that it was the same story both on and off the screen...How many times have we held out a letter only to see Him turn His head away? How many times have we knelt down to pray, only to see Him ignore our prayer? He pretends 'deaf' when we speak to Him, rejects the kerchief we give Him and does not even look when we are actually there all the while....

Still, Karthaveerya resolved to cling on firmly. He went back to the Guru who continued to remain in the same insane stupor. With faith, he held on and prayed. He was abused, ridiculed and even beaten, but he did not swerve. This went on and on...

And then suddenly fragrance filled the air... the women and the drunken attendants changed to rishis...and in place of that grotesque Guru stood a form Divine and Effulgent. Dattatreya smiled at Karthaveerya and placed his hand on the disciple's head. With a single touch He had given him *Brahmajnana*, the highest of wisdom.

The screen went blank, for, the movie was stopped. Bhagawan got up from His chair. The table was brought and the mike placed there upon. We waited with breath abated...

He did not thunder. He just said it without much ado... "I Am Dattatreya." With gaping mouths we gazed at, our Guru... our God.... He added... "Test Is My Taste."

All One Needs for His Grace...Is Faith

Swami often tells us there are three things which if possessed makes the holder verily god, namely, Purity, Patience and Perseverance. And the Guru is relentless till we attain these immortal virtues. Tests will have to be welcomed to rise to higher planes of bliss. The only way we can overcome these tests is by holding the two solid staffs of *Shraddha* and *Saburi*, as Shirdi Baba used to say. Faith and earnestness is the key to attain God's grace.

In the Bible it is said when a rich man approached Jesus and said, "Oh Lord, what can I do to come near God?" Jesus said, "Sell all that you have and give to the poor and follow me." The man ran away when he heard these words.

But not Victor Kanu. When Mr. Victor Kanu's wife asked Swami, "From where do we get funds to set up a Sai School in Zambia?" Swami said, "**Sell your house and if funds are not enough, borrow from banks.**" Victor Kanu and his wife did just that and today the Sai School of Zambia is hailed as the "miracle school of Africa" and awarded the Business Initiative Directions (BID) award at the 22nd International World Quality Commitment (WQC) Convention in Paris, held last year on May 30th.

When all the employees of Andhra Bank all over India went on strike in 1989 Sri Gopal Rao, who was Chairman of the Bank then, just followed Swami's instructions to "be firm in his path of truth and not budge" and so never gave in to their unreasonable demands inspite of threats to his life and political pressures from the highest level in the government. And in the end, he not only emerged triumphant but created banking history as "No Work, No Pay" went into the policy guidelines for employees of many banks all over India.

When Mr. Chidambaram Krishnan had a heart attack in his hometown near Tirunelveli, he did not allow himself to be taken to hospital, he insisted that he be taken to his home and into his *puja* room. For he believed completely that Swami will take care of him and imagine, just then the telephone rings in the house and Swami is on line! Swami says,

"You depended only on me and so I have responded. Now come to Puttaparthi."

As Mr. Krishnan was been driven to Prasanthi Nilayam unbelievably he took over the steering of the car and himself drove all the way to Puttaparthi. When they reached Puttaparthi Swami profusely blessed Mr. Krishnan and Himself accompanied him back to his village. This is what faith can do.

Faith is all the strength that man needs and if millions round the globe adore Sai in the shrine of their hearts, it is because their implicit faith has done for them wonders which no other phenomena on earth can do. Not every time nor

for everyone does Swami physically respond like He did for Mr. Krishnan, but He does call, by way of inner channels. And every devotee in the safest and deepest recesses of their heart has those amazing moments of their life preserved where faith was rewarded remarkably and life turned from depression to delight, from darkness to peace-giving light in an instant.

Instilling Faith In His Own Inimitable Way

Swami takes every opportunity to firm up our faith and this is what Dr. Ravi Kumar, a former Sai student and currently a lecturer in Swami's University in Whitefield, Bangalore, experienced. He says,

"It was a week after the 70th Birthday. My sister presented me with an English translation of a Tamil devotional classic '*Periya Puranam*' that she had been able to lay her hands on. I was very excited because I had read that it is a saga of the 63 *Nayanmars* or servitors of the Lord who not only lived for Him but also adored Him in delightfully distinct ways. So I started reading it straight away that night. When I went for morning *Darshan* the next day, I carried it with me and continued reading it till Swami came out to give *Darshan*. After *Darshan*, Swami went into the interview room with a group of devotees. I was sitting in the prayer hall in the first row near His Throne, enjoying this book.

The narration was of the life of One, who is adored as the son of God – Thirugnana-sambandar. When the child is three years old, one day, he throws a tantrum as the father is going to the temple tank for a bath - the child wants to accompany him. Cajolements and threats are of no avail and finally the father says, "If this is the way you behave, then go with me" and takes him along. Arriving at the tank, he leaves the child on the bank and loathe to leave the child unattended, enters the water with hesitation. Seeing the father has not surfaced for a long time the child began to weep.

Now, at this point the interview room door opened and Swami came into the bhajan hall. I was delighted, and quickly closed the book. Swami went into the bhajan hall and talked to some devotees along the aisle for a long time.

As He was returning to the interview room after that, He stopped in front of me and posed a strange question, "How many litres of milk do you need?"

My immediate thought was 'maybe I have put on too much weight!' Swami repeated the same question again a couple of times. I was not able to give any answer and Swami went into the interview room. I sat thinking about the strange question Swami had asked me... Why did He ask this question? Being unable to find a suitable answer I returned to the book I was reading....Imagine the thrill that went through me when I read that ...

With gracious compassion rising in His heart at the sight of the child, the Lord (Shiva) looked at Mother Parvathi and said, "give him a gold cup of milk". (The narration continues that on coming back from his swim the father sees a cup of gold in the child's hands and the tell-tale milk drops on his face. He asks

who gave him the milk and the child - who till then was barely able to lisp - describes the Lord in wonderful poetry...)

I could not control my tears (of bliss) as it dawned on me that it was the same Siva-Sakthi who had posed this question to me. I must mention that I was sitting at the same spot at which Swami has disclosed that He is Siva-Sakthi incarnate after the miraculous cure of the paralysis on Guru Poornima day in July 1963... Oh! How can we measure our good fortune in being present on Earth when God has come in Human form!"

The Dawn Of Truth – The Revelation Of The Age

6th July 1963 was indeed one incredible day in the life of the Sai Avathar. What devotees went through before, during and after the event is something indescribable – from devastating depression and blinding delusion to joy and bliss that was euphoric, unimaginable and unprecedented. Swami, who was literally bed-ridden, with one side of his body totally immobile and stiff, His facial muscles twitching and one hand and one leg lifeless, asked that He be taken down to the prayer hall to see the devotees. It was like asking for Mount Everest to dislocate from land to the sea! Totally impossible, the most unintelligent thing to do, utterly foolish and witless – with all these thoughts in their minds the devotees prayed that Swami alter His mind. But Swami insisted. And He was literally carried from upstairs by devotees and placed on His chair, propped up by pillows. But then what happened next transfixed everyone to their spots. They were out of their wits. They had never seen such a thing before.

Describing the momentous event, Prof. Kasturi, Baba's biographer, writes, "Baba signed that the mike be held near His lips. Slowly, He whispered into it, in swollen half-suppressed syllables, "*Vinupisthunda?*", but even we (senior devotees) who had learnt to decipher the mushy paralytic alphabet could not make out what He was trying to say. He repeated it twice.

Then, someone caught the meaning and repeated it on the mike. Baba was asking them, "Can you hear Me?" This raised another groan: He was heard but, alas, it tore their hearts. It was too indistinct. Evidently Baba was too tired by that attempt to speak, for He gestured for water to drink. It was brought by Krishnappa, in a silver tumbler, and held to His lips by Raja Reddy.

His palsied right hand came towards it... He tried to hold it... His fingers slipped into it... the fingers dipped... He sipped a few drops... He sprinkled, with the fingers of the right hand, a little water on the limp left hand on the pillow above His chest... He sprinkled the water, faintly shaking the fingers, on the left leg too. He stroked the left hand with the right. And with both hands now, he stroked the left leg. He rose; the pillow fell off; we could hear His divine voice calling us, as was ever His wont, "*Premaswaroopulaaraa!*" He had begun His Guru Pournima Discourse!! Oh, oh! our Baba hale, hearty, holy, healthy, heavenly...".

And then Baba went on to declare,

“I have been keeping back from you all these years one secret about Me; the time has come when I can reveal it to you for this is a sacred day.

I am Siva-Sakthi, born in the *Gothra* (lineage) of (sage) Bharadwaja, according to a boon won by that sage from Lord Siva and Mother Sakthi.

Siva Himself was born in the *Gothra* of that sage as Sai Baba of Shirdi; Siva and Sakthi have incarnated as Myself in his *Gothra* now; Sakthi alone will incarnate as the third Sai in the same *Gothra* in Mysore State.”

The audience was stunned, to say the least.

Guru Poonima Over The Years... Always Special

What is significant apart from the great revelation that Swami made, is the day Swami chose to enact the whole divine drama. It was Guru Poonima Day.

“A true Guru is one who enjoys and confers changeless supreme happiness. He is beyond space and time; and there is nothing higher than Him. He is the very form of truth and infinite. He has neither birth nor death, neither beginning nor end. He is God Himself,”

Swami has explained on any number of occasions and therefore it is no surprise that Swami chose Guru Poonima day to reveal about Himself and His advent. Guru Poonima celebrations in the divine presence have always been special. In 1966, Swami returned to Prasanthi Nilayam on this day after a long tour of Mumbai, Poona, Gulbarga, Mysore and Madurai and gave all the devotees assembled a few drops of *Amrit* (Nectar) with the exhortation that the tongue which has tasted *Amrit* should no longer relish *Anrit* (Falsehood). He then inaugurated the branch of State Bank in Prasanthi Nilayam and comparing the Bank where money is taken and given, to the Bank where Love alone is accepted and given, said,

"That bank receives deposits and maintains accounts strictly and confidentially. Every little is entered and accounted for - thoughts, deeds, words, good, bad, indifferent. Develop the saving habit, for saving yourself. Here (in the bank) they take *Dhanam* (money); there, they take *Dhyanam* (equanimity) as deposit." Each sentence that day was a brilliant flash, revealing the deepest Truth from the lips of the Divine Master.

In 1968, Guru Poonima was purely exceptional as Baba was, for the only time in history, out of India. Yielding to the yearnings of African devotees, Swami changed His plan of returning to Mumbai on Guru Poonima Day and spent the whole day showering them with His loving benediction and grace. "More than 25,000 persons gathered that morning for the Bhajan," Prof. Kasturi writes,

"The Africans joined the chorus led by a Tanzanian, Mr. Zoodoo. For over two hours, Baba walked slowly among the lines of lonely, love-seeking eager hearts, giving each person a handful of sweets and a packet of Vibhuti. To the

amazement of the recipients, most of them discovered inside the packet, lying ensconced in the midst of the holy ash, enamel or metal portraits of Christ, the Cross, Krishna or Sai Baba Himself.

The 'Uganda Argus' published an article, announcing that Baba had brought the message of Unity and Service, to the people of that Continent. Baba's discourses as well as activities were also televised and broadcast, so that the entire population could share the inspiration of the Gospel." There was only light, joy and delight in the dark continent.

It was Guru Poornima Day again in 1971, when the new Hostel building with 100 airy rooms for the girl students of Anantapur College was inaugurated. It included a separate Auditorium planned and finished in a most artistic and lavish scale with a separate Library hall attached to the college building. Speaking to the students on that occasion in the presence of the President of India, Sri V V Giri and a host of other ministers, educationists and other dignitaries, Swami said,

"At present, Colleges are infected by anxiety and perplexity, discontent and ill-discipline, irreverence and futility; they have lost the status of temples of learning, where youth is shaped into self-reliant, contented and enterprising heroes; when I identified these defects, deficiencies and dangers, which are rampant in the country, I resolved upon this College in Rayalaseema (region), at Ananthapur.

I am never satisfied with the declaration of intentions. I must taste the *Aananda* (bliss) of putting them into action! I express my Love through every act, every intention of mine. More than floods of eloquence in praise of that intention and millions of words written in elaboration of the theme, I insist, by My own example, on immediate and complete fulfillment. This will be a *Gurukul* - a place where teachers and taught will grow together in love and wisdom, as close to the ideas of the hermitages of the past as possible under present conditions. Today is *Guruvaar*, Thursday; it is also Guru Poornima, the Day set apart for adoration of the Guru (the Preceptor)..... The seed has been planted today; it has to sprout and spread as a tree, heavy with fruits. It has to confer security and sustenance to all."

And over the years how beautifully has this *Sankalpa* (Will) of Bhagawan, the supreme educator of this age, blossomed into 'temples of learning' holding aloft the lofty Sai ideals of integral education where the heart is as important as the head. The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was awarded the "A ++" rating by the National Accreditation Council and hailed as the "Crest Jewel" among Universities in India by the University Grants Commission; the Institutes of Sathya Sai Education present now in every continent; the Sathya Sai Schools now run in every corner of the world from Argentina to Africa and Australia; the hugely successful EHV (Education For Human Values) programme organized for children and teenagers by Sai Centres all over the globe – all stand testimony to the grand and glorious revolution that Sai is bringing about in the collective consciousness of the world, more importantly in the hearts and minds of the younger generation.

In the Arati song that we often sing, the refrain of the last verse hails Him as "Sadgurudeva", which means, the Divine Teacher of the Supreme Truth. All other attributes ascribed to Bhagavan relate to His divine puissance. But the true significance of His advent consists not merely in the manifestation of His supra-human powers, but in His role as the Divine Guru who has come to awaken in erring and groping mortals the truth about their essential divinity. While all the others teachers or so called gurus show the way to the Lord, when the Sadguru descends, there is no path, there is no road to travel, as the path itself becomes the goal.

'Your Mission Has Begun'

In a message given intuitively to Charles Penn more than two decades ago, Swami had conveyed,

"Your mission has begun. Those are My words to you, My devotees. Each of you has a unique and valuable part to play in this lifetime. Only those whom I have called can serve Me.

My Mission has now reached that point in time when each one of you has work to do. This planet has a purpose in the great galaxy in which it is held. That purpose is now unfolding before our eyes.

I call upon you to radiate the devotional Love within you so that its unseen power will envelop all who come into your orbit.

To successfully perform your part, always remain centred upon Me. Allow yourself to impart that purity of heart within you to all human beings and all living creatures, and do not reach for the fruits of your work."

Develop purity of heart that has been Swami's message in every Guru Poonima - and how to develop this purity?

"Develop love," Swami said in His Guru Poonima message of 2000, "Through love alone can you annihilate the mind and through love alone can you get cured of any disease. Only love can eradicate the evil qualities in you."

Even in the previous year in 1999, Swami had emphasised the same principle and said,

"That day is Poonima in the true sense of the term, when the mind is filled with pure love. Let your mind shine brilliantly like the moon on a full moon day. This is possible only when you fill your mind with love. Fill your hearts with love. There is no wealth, no Dharma, no meditation greater than love. I expect all of you to live in unity like brothers and sisters. If you become the embodiment of love, you will become divine."

What Should We Do This Guru Poornima?

So this is the message of our Divine Master, who is Himself nothing but love, love and love alone. Love that knows no conditions, love that loves because it knows nothing else, like water that can only flow and air that can only float, God can only Love.

To such a Master, to such a being who has literally taken us by our hand and shown us the royal road to peace, joy and fulfillment walking alongside us all the time, sometimes taking the role of a divine mother, sometimes a loving father, what is the 'Guru Dakshina' (offering) that we should present to Him as we celebrate and adore Him this Guru Poornima?

Swami once said,

“Real gurus are to be worshipped not by '*dakshina*' (offering fruits, wealth, etc.) but by "*pradakshina*" (circumambulation), that is, by revering them with heart and soul.”

So as we sing "*Manasa Bhajare Gurucharanam*" this Guru Poornima, let's adore Him and demonstrate our love to Him by living up to His message. Let our love for Him translate into love for all beings, let love flow whenever we see a fellow human being, let us feel one with His creation, then one day indubitably we will be one with Him. Then, the guru, the disciple, the path and the goal – all would have become one!

-Heart2Heart Team

FEATURE ARTICLES

CONCERNING THE VEDAS – 06

A HOUSEHOLDER’S LIFE – THE VEDIC WAY

The Stage of the Householder

This is my sixth article in the Veda Walkthrough series. Last time, I finally started on the Walkthrough in the way I had been planning all along, and took you up the stage where a young boy is admitted to the *Ashram* of an *Acharya* to learn the *Vedas*. We now cut to the time when the disciple leaves and prepares to enter life. He returns home, rejoins his family, and with the consent of his parents and relatives, marries, settles down to discharge his duties in life along with his wife, as ordained by the scriptures. I shall commence with some verses chanted during the marriage ceremony. But first, a few words of introduction about the concept of marriage in Vedic times.

It is remarkable that almost all societies, independently established the custom of marriage, whereby a man and a woman enter into a holy and life-long alliance, raise a family and try to enjoy a prosperous life. Invariably, in every community around the world, marriage was not merely a case of entering into a social contract, but also had a religious side to it, besides being an occasion for celebration and festivities. Marriage was the commencement of a new chapter in the long story of the sustenance of the human race.

These days, marriage is often seen as the culmination of a romance, with focus largely on the physical union. Indeed, the excessive stress on the physical has reached a point where, during the last few decades, marriage is no longer considered necessary. A couple come together and live together as long as they please without any concept of social responsibility or of sin. Concepts such as marriage are considered to be old-fashioned, irrelevant, and even meaningless. To ridicule tradition is regarded as being very progressive and modern.

Marriage in The Vedic Times

Things were very different in Vedic times. Humans did not see themselves as freewheeling individuals but as a vital part of a cosmic whole, in which everyone played a part as ordained, to sustain the wheel of life and *Dharma*. *Dharma* - that was the key word. The Brahmin, in particular, had not only to personally uphold *Dharma* to the best of his ability but also had the responsibility of guiding others in doing the same. In this task, the wife was his partner, and that is why the word used for wife was *Sahadharmini*, meaning ‘one who participated with equal right, in upholding *Dharma*’.

How did the couple uphold *Dharma*? Not merely by being truthful in all their actions but also by discharging their various duties. Maybe I shall come to that a bit later, but for the moment let us take it that in Vedic times, marriage was more than a matter of procreation and propagating the human race.

Swami has, in some of His Discourses, especially a memorable one given during the Summer Course of 1996, described the marriage of Rama and Sita. He said on that occasion, that this was no ordinary marriage – it was the coming together of *Paramatma* and *Prakriti*, meaning the coming together of Cosmic Consciousness as represented by Rama and Divine *Shakti* or Divine Energy as represented by Sita. In a sense, the union of a man and a woman in holy wedlock symbolises the coming together of complimentary parts, to make a whole.

Turning to the marriage ceremony itself, it was a pretty elaborate affair, that included the father giving away the bride to the bridegroom. Here it is pertinent to recall what Swami said about the marriage of Rama and Sita. There was the holy and sacred fire and *Mantras* were being chanted both by King Janaka, the father of the bride and Rama, as appropriate, guided of course by celebrated sages like Viswamitra and Vasishta. At one point, Janaka says, here is my daughter Sita. Rama was expected to turn towards her and take a look at her. He did not. Emperor Janaka repeated the statement again; once more, Rama did not turn to look in the direction of Sita. When Janaka repeated that statement for the third time, Rama said to Janaka, “I am not yet formally married, and an unmarried man must not look at other women”. One might say that this was the limit, but that was how seriously the observance of code of conduct was taken in those days.

Marriage Vows Made Before the Sacred Fire

One striking thing about the Vedic marriage is the central role played by the sacred fire. *Agni*, the lord of fire, plays the role of a witness, and all declarations and promises are made with *Agni* as the witness. This is the equivalent of taking an oath placing one’s hand on the Bible or Quoran or whatever. In the Vedic system, the entire marriage was performed with *Agni* as the witness. Once one swears by *Agni*, one is supposed to keep one’s promise, come what may. Incidentally, Swami narrates an interesting incident that occurred during Rama’s wedding. One of the promises that the groom makes is that he would fulfil the wishes of his wife or something to that effect. When the priest chanted that *Mantra*, Rama was supposed to repeat it. He did not. The priest chanted a second time and once more Rama remained silent. The priest then said, “Rama, you must chant the *Mantra*.” Rama said in reply, “I am sorry but I will not.” “Why,” asked the priest. Rama then said, “I belong to the royal family. One day, I would have to rule as a King. For a King, his subjects must always come first, and only then his wife. If I make this promise, then it would require me to give top priority to my wife, which would go

against the *Dharma* of kings.” So you see, we have here yet another example of the primacy given to *Dharma*.

Turning to some of the rituals, the groom takes the hand of the bride, and this by the way is probably the first time he touches her. And as the bride gets up, she is supposed to step on a stone, placing the tip of her right foot. At that time, the groom says,

*Come, step on the stone; be strong like a stone,
Resist enemies, overcome those who attack you.*

After this, the bridegroom pours some parched rice into the bride’s joined palms and says,

*This grain I spill,
May it bring well-being to me,
And unite you to me.
May Agni hear us.*

Agni is not only the witness but also a protector. After the bridegroom finishes saying those words, the bride pours the grain into the fire – perhaps, this is symbolic of conveying the appeal to *Agni*. The groom then continues:

*This woman, scattering grain into the fire, prays:
Blessings on my husband.
May my relatives prosper.*

The couple then walk around the fire with the groom chanting suitable *Mantras* symbolic of their union as man and wife.

After this comes the famous ritual of the seven steps, during which the bride takes step after step, while groom says:

*One step for Vigour,
Two steps for Vitality,
Three steps for Prosperity,
Four steps for Happiness,
Five steps for Cattle,
Six steps for Seasons,
Seven steps for Friendship
To my devoted.*

After the seventh step, the bride remains still while the groom says:

*With seven steps we become friends,
Let me reach your friendship,
Let me not be severed from your friendship,
Let your friendship be not severed from me.*

Next, touching the heart of the bride, the groom says,

*I hold your heart in serving fellowship,
Your mind follows my mind,
In my word you rejoice with all your heart,
You are joined to me by the Lord of all creatures.*

The couple then depart from the wedding site, the bride following the groom to his house, or rather the house of his parents. When they leave, they carry in an earthen pot a part of the sacred fire, which they are supposed to keep alive throughout their marriage. Fire thus becomes the constant witness in the lives of the couple. When the couple reach the house of the groom, he says,

*Enter with your right foot,
Do not remain outside.*

There the couple sit in silence till dusk falls and the stars become visible. The couple then go out when the husband points the pole star to the wife, saying,

*You are firm, and I see you.
Be firm with me, O flourishing one!
Brihaspathi has given you to me,
To live with me a hundred years,
Bearing children by me, your husband.*

I am not sure if I have given the flavour of the Vedic marriage rites but if I have managed to convey the cosmic view they had of marriage in those times, then I would have done my job.

What is Our Dharma?

Let me get back to this *Dharma* business. *Dharma* is often translated as righteous conduct. To us with a so-called secular vision, right conduct might mean being truthful, not harming others and so on. Yes, all these do form a part of right conduct, but in those times, duty was the corner stone of right conduct. A man might never tell a lie, a man might never harm another person, but if he was not true to his duties, then he was straying away from *Dharma*.

In life, duty called for, among other things, the expression of gratitude. These days, seldom does one realise what one owes to others. After the end of the famous battle of Britain, Winston Churchill said in a tribute to the young men of the RAF, that is, the Royal Air Force, "Never have so many owed so much to so few." In life, each of us owes so much, to so many, starting from God.

The Five Yajnas

In Vedic times, *Yajna* was one of the means by which various debts were discharged. Swami says,

There are five Yajnas prescribed as mandatory for every human being.

Let me now list these five *Yajnas* spelt out by Swami. They are:

Rishi Yajna,
Pitru Yajna,
Deva Yajna,
Athithi Yajna,
Bhuta Yajna.

I shall now explain what each of these *Yajnas* mean, starting with **Rishi Yajna**. It was the *Rishis* who gave the scriptures, especially the *Vedas*. One therefore owes an expression of gratitude to the sages of old. How does one thank them? Well, by remembering them for a minute and then studying the scriptures intently. One was not expected to just turn the pages but remind oneself of all the dictats mentioned therein.

Next, *Pitru Yajna*. Normally, the word *Pitru* means parents, but in Vedic times, *Pitru* also meant ancestors. We really do not realise how much we owe to our ancestors. Indeed, if today we are well off in many respects, it is in no small measure due to the sacrifice they made in their time.

Here I am reminded of a talk that late Mr. V.K.Narasimhan, then Editor, *Sanathana Sarathi*, gave to Swami's students in the Divine presence in Trayee Brindavan. Mr. Narasimhan said, in his own inimitable style of course, "Many of you students dream of going to America because that seems like the land of milk and honey. But do you know that if America is prosperous today, it is because of the tremendous hard work and enormous sacrifices made by the immigrants of last century? You want to enjoy the benefits of their sacrifice but what about your own contribution? This country needs sacrifice, and you must stay here and do what the immigrants did in America a hundred years ago. If you did that, then this country too would become prosperous."

Talking of America becoming rich, I am reminded of a nice story involving the famous film actor and comedian Danny Kaye, who was once the UNICEF Ambassador, bringing love and cheer to children all over the world, especially in countries where there was much suffering. Danny Kaye's father came to America from Poland maybe in the very early part of the last century. As you perhaps know, hundreds of thousands of people from all parts of Europe poured then into America, seeking a better life. Danny Kaye's father was one of them. After a few years, he returned to his hometown in Poland for a brief visit. His friends back home immediately surrounded him and plied him with all sorts of questions about America. One of them asked, "Is it true that in America

the streets are paved with gold?" Danny Kaye's father said in reply: "No, it is not true that the streets in America are paved with gold. In fact, most streets are not paved at all, even with stone. And do you know what my job is? Paving streets with stone!" So you see, there is no free lunch ever, and for whatever benefits we enjoy granted to us by Society, we have a duty to be thankful for it. In the Vedic age, the expression of gratitude formed an important part of one's life.

OK. So far, I have dealt with two *Yajnas*. Now on to the third *Yajna*, the ***Deva Yajna***. This meant offering reverential homage to the presiding deities, especially those associated with the forces of Nature. Why should one offer such homage? The ancients believed that if we have rain, we owe a duty to express thanks to the god of rain. If we get sunshine, we owe a duty to the sun god, and so on. In this day and age, all this might seem amusing if not downright stupid, but I will put it this way. We need not exactly pray to this deity or that, but we could, could we not to say the least, at least pray to God Almighty for the sun, the wind, rain and so forth, without which we would all be dead? Besides, do we not have an obligation to keep the elements of Nature pure, meaning not polluting, air, water, and land?

I cannot but recall here a Trayee session many years ago when I was privileged to be present, along with Swami's students. Swami said that modern man ridicules the ancients as being superstitious and stupid. Modern man says, "Look at those fools. They worship the land, the water, the air, and even snakes. How idiotic!" **Swami then said, "The ancients did not pollute the air, they did not pollute water, and they respected all the constituents of Nature, including all animals. But modern man, besides polluting heavily land, water and air, is also destroying entire forests, and wiping out many species of animals, without concern for eco- and bio-balance. Who is more stupid? Modern man who is wrecking all the gifts of God, or the ancients, who not only preserved what God gave them but also were thankful to God for the blessing?"**

One cannot give a more powerful assessment of Vedic life and philosophy. Incidentally, this respect for ancestors and the environment is to be found in many traditional cultures, for example among the American Red Indians. Only, the Vedic seers saw the Universe in a much larger cosmic setting than did people of other cultures, as I shall perhaps explain in a later lecture.

A couple of words now about the remaining two *Yajnas*, namely the ***Athithi Yajna*** and the *Bhuta Yajna*. The former involves offering cordial and loving hospitality to guests, while ***Bhuta Yajna*** means doing everything one can to sustain all components of the environment – plants, trees, fishes, birds and animals. The husband dutifully performed all these *Yajnas*, and the wife rendered all the support that was necessary.

Family Duty

Before I proceed further with the Vedic journey, I think it is worthwhile for me to pause for a moment and reflect on the above *Yajnas*, especially their relevance to modern times. To many, all these may appear to be an utter waste of time but instead of focussing on the procedures associated with Vedic rites, let us concentrate on the **basic principles** of Vedic life. The first thing is the concept of a family. The family is the atom of Society, and it has been so throughout history, in all places and all cultures. It is only in recent times, that the traditional concept of the family is being severely rocked with practices that seek to make marriage irrelevant, all in the name of personal freedom.

I recall reading, when I was the Vice Chancellor, a Convocation address given by a Canadian lady, an educationist, to one of our Universities. She said that a hundred and fifty to hundred years ago, most people in Canada lived on farms. Every farm was run by a family, and all the farm work had to be done by the members of the family – the father, the mother, the sons and daughters. Since all did more or less the same type of work, there was no question of gender bias and there automatically prevailed a sense of equality. The Canadian educationist then said, that when Canada started getting industrialised and more and more people started moving to the cities, things changed suddenly and dramatically. Many men went to work in offices and their work took them on tours. They could then have a good time while on the road, drinking, spending time on the golf courses, visiting nightclubs, and so on. The women, on the other hand, slogged in the home, doing kitchen work, bringing up the children and so on. The lady said that was when feminist feelings started to rise and become strong.

The Importance of Gratitude

What I am getting at is that when life strays away from duty, imbalance results. In Vedic Society, the focus was always on duty, responsibility, and the sustenance of Society as well as Nature. Analyse every *Yajna* that I mentioned, and you will find the undercurrent of duty. Let us take *Rishi Yajna* as an example. One may say, “Why should I be bothered? I don’t care for the *Rishis*.” **The point is not being bothered about *Rishis* but that one moves forward on what we have been handed down. You know what Newton the great scientist said? He said, “If I have been able to look farther than others, it is because I was standing on the shoulders of others.”** We do this all the time in Science. We can’t say, “This Galileo, he lived five hundred years ago. His is old stuff. Forget it!” We can’t do that. When we teach first year physics, we **have** to teach what Galileo, Newton and even Archimedes discovered. There is an essential continuity in knowledge, in all branches.

We can't also say that "Newton is relevant but the *Rishis* are not." Let me tell you that it was the ancients who gave us our first ideas about planetary motions etc. They it was who first made almanacs. In India, the neem is used for a hundred things on account of its wonderful medicinal properties. This knowledge, about the medicinal properties of neem, turmeric, etc., comes to us from very ancient times. We cannot scoff at them, can we? In short, *Rishi Yajna* must be seen as an expression of gratitude to our ancients for **everything** they have given us from the discovery of fire and the invention of the wheel, to developing agriculture and metal forming. Expression of gratitude is a sign of refinement; ingratitude, on the other hand, is a sign of uncivilised behaviour.

As for *Pitru Yajna*, it does not mean performing some kind of rituals but remembrance of dead ancestors and, more important, being ready to perform any sacrifice for one's parents. The compulsions of modern life have become such that people have been slowly conditioned to giving importance to their own personal security in terms of money, job, career and so on. Inevitably, parents slide down in priority, especially when they have fulfilled their role. The next thing is that they are seen to be as irrelevant and a nuisance. This is not a Western attitude but a global one.

I recall seeing two wonderful dramas staged in the Poornachandra Hall many years ago on the occasion of the Chinese New Year Day. In both, the theme was how in the present day, old parents are neglected or even abandoned. I learnt then, that this sort of thing happens not only in America and India but also in China. By the way, on both occasion, there was young Chinese boy who literally stole the show. He was a great hit, and Swami liked his acting very much.

A word now about *Athithi Yajna*. This had special relevance to ancient times, when *Sannyasis* wandered across the land. *Sannyasis* are, by definition, renunciates. They have no family, no home, no money, no nothing. They wander supposedly to visit holy shrines but during their wanderings, they always speak about God and spread the good word. In those days, when a *Sannyasi* came to a village, the people of the village would welcome him and offer hospitality. They considered it not only an honour but also a duty to do so, since that was what was commanded by the *Vedas*. Suppose the villagers had not done this, the *Sannaysis* could not have played their role and contributed to Society. The Vedic philosophers knew all about system management. If an institution was beneficial, it had to be sustained, and a procedure had to be devised for it.

The same goes for *Bhuta Yajna*. We have in India a festival called the *Naga Panchami* when the snake is worshipped. People are petrified when the very word snake is heard; yet, in those times, it was considered a duty to worship the snake. The Vedic seers might not have known all the details we know about ecological balance but this they certainly knew. Everything in the Universe has been created by God with a

purpose. This applies to everything from the hydrogen atom to the black hole. We may or may not know about the purpose but a purpose there certainly is in the Divine Master Plan.

Today, the Green people and such others make a lot of noise about the environment. Very good and very necessary. But why this need? Because people have forgotten all about *Bhuta Yajna*. In Ecuador, they want to cut down pristine rain forests to drill for oil. In Alaska, the wilderness is being disturbed for oil. In China, huge dams are being built so that more electricity can be generated. A Chinese environmentalist was asked about these dams. She said that the dams were a disaster. She was then told, "But if dams are not built, then more coal would have to be mined. Mining is a dangerous activity and so many people are being killed. Moreover, coal-fired power stations will belch carbon dioxide. So, is it not better to generate electricity out of water from dams than from coal?" The environmentalist replied, "I think there is yet another alternative. It is to decrease our desires, our wants and our consumption. Then we would not need so much electricity. And when we do not need extra electricity, we do not have to build dams or mine more coal."

So this lady has, by her own reasoning, come to the same conclusion that formed the basis of Vedic Society; only, the Vedic seers linked it all always to God.

Let me wrap up. Man married mainly to sustain *Dharma*, with his wife as an equal partner. He had his part to play and she had hers. Nothing was considered inferior and nothing was considered superior. Duty, responsibility and obligation formed the core of one's life. **The Vedic seers were firmly of the view that it was only when these virtues were given primacy, that there would be harmony in Society and human life could be sustained properly.** Today, most virtues are summarily dismissed on one of two counts. Either one says it is irrelevant or one says it is not workable in this day and age. I believe both arguments are false and escapist.

What is Freedom?

Duty, responsibility and obligations are often evaded in the name of freedom. What is this so-called freedom? People say freedom means one can do what one likes, in an unfettered manner. But seldom do people who talk like this realise that they are not really free but a slave to their senses and Mind. **Who is the one who is really free? Swami says the one who is rid of attachments and the dictates of the body, the senses and the Mind is the one who is really free.**

Why is there so much obsession with freedom to do what one likes? I heard an American author the other day on the radio. He put it like this. **He said that these days, the Media, all owned by rich barons, want to deliver us lock stock and barrel to the big corporations, so that**

we buy what they want us to buy, and invest our money where they want us to invest. This is not as far fetched as it might seem. I shall not go into this topic here, but there is a strong empirical correlation between the growth of advertising, the craze for freedom, the growth of consumerism, etc.

All those who are swept by the glitter and glamour of so-called freedom, and all the joys it is supposed to confer, are totally oblivious to social costs. Those who want to grab wealth do so at the expense of individuals and Society. Ultimately, it is Society that pays, and pays heavily too. All this is well known of course, but ostrich-like, everyone wants to hide from the truth because it is so inconvenient.

Vedic Society was built on the concept that since Society and Nature are what sustain us all, they must receive primacy and not the individual. Marriage too was seen in this total framework, and not in terms of romance or sense gratification.

I am sorry I did not give as much details of the wedding *Mantras* as I would have liked, but I hope I can make amends when we manage to bring a vedic scholar to our studios. Next time, I shall take you a bit more along the Vedic path, giving glimpses of how *Dharma* was sustained in Society. Thank you. Jai Sai Ram.

-Heart2Heart Team

THE SAI MOVEMENT IN COLOMBIA

In the last issue of our series of feature articles on the Sai Movement in Latin America, we carried the story of the Sai Movement in Guatemala. In the month previous to that, in May, we had the Sai story of El Salvador. Both of these are Central American countries. In this issue, we have our first country from South America – the Republic of Colombia. Before we tell you how Sai entered this Spanish nation which gets its name from the legendary explorer Christopher Columbus, first a little about its geography, economy and people.

Colombia – An Exceptional Geographical Location and Climate

Colombia is the only Andean and South American country with ports and long coasts on both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. It borders Venezuela and Brazil in the east, Ecuador and Peru in the south, and Panama in the northwest. Its island possessions include the Malpelo, opposite its Pacific coast, and several small islands, coral reefs, islets and sandbanks (San Andres, Providencia, Serrana, Serranilla, and Roncador) in the Caribbean Sea.

With three ranges of the Andes in its west, east and centre and also the equator running through it, Colombia is a country with an exceptional climate. It has all sorts of climates from cold areas as in the snow-capped peaks up to the hot areas as in the deserts, also having moderate climates as in the valleys and humid forests. The Capital Bogota, the largest and the most populous city, stands in one of these basins.

The People of Colombia – A Range of Different Races

Ninety-five percent of the entire population of nearly 32 million are Roman Catholic. However, it has freedom of worship and one can find different branches of Christianity as well as other major religions such as Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. The people of mixed European and American Indian race 'Mestizo' form the largest group (45-68%), while there are large chunks of European descendents (20-25%), mixed European-African or American Indian-African 'Mulatos' (14-20%) and also a few aboriginal Indians (5-8%). The proportions of these racial groups differ widely from one part of the country to other.

Agriculture and Industry

Colombia's economy is based mainly on agriculture, the exploitation of mineral resources, and industry. Coffee plays a dominant role in agriculture, Colombia being the world's second largest producer. It is South America's leading producer of gold, nickel, and coal. Most of the country's land, water, and forest resources are not utilized, but the beautiful emeralds of Colombia are of world renown.

Colombia's variety of industries consists mainly in processing agricultural, mineral, and forest products and in supplying domestic demand for a wide

range of consumer goods, machinery, vehicles, tools, building materials, chemicals, wood products, and paper. The number of plants had doubled by the mid-1980s, and their average size has grown considerably. The main industries which employ about 20% of the country's work force are textiles, clothing and footwear, food processing, tobacco, iron and steel, metal products, automobile assembly, chemicals, oil refining and petrochemical products, cement, wood pulp, and paper. So much for a brief introduction to this Northwest South American nation which gained independence from Spain nearly two hundred years ago.

The Genesis of the Sai Movement

The origin of the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization in Colombia dates back approximately to 1986, when some of Swami's admirers went to visit Him in India. When they returned to Bogotá, the capital city, they started to gather with other people at a vegetarian restaurant to sing bhajans and study Baba's teachings. By the beginning of 1988 this was the situation in Colombia: a few followers gathering once a week.

In 1989, at the auditorium of the Dann's Hotel in Bogotá, the first public meeting took place, the speakers being Messrs. Michael Goldstein, Leonardo Gutter and Roberto Pinzon Gonzalez.

Thereafter, the first four centres were established in the country: two in Bogotá (La Magdalena and Pablo VI), one in Cali, the second most populated city and the other one in Bucaramanga, a major commercial centre of Colombia. Later on, they would officially become La Magdalena Centre (1990), La Soledad (1991) El Spring (1992), La Esperanza (1991) and Quiroga (1995). After Roberto's visit to several places in the country, different groups in Barranquilla, Pereira and Cucuta and later on in Medellin, the second largest metropolitan of Colombia, were also formed.

The Sathya Sai Institute of Human Values – A Valuable Initiative

During 2000, in order to consolidate the education area, the Sathya Sai Institute of Human Values was created, with a group of volunteers. It trains public and private school teachers by means of an introductory course of one semester and the second semester consisting of practice sessions with feedback from all the participants of the first course. It may sometimes continue for more semesters. It also provides short weekend workshops on the different human values for schools or institutions which ask for the service.

So far (2006), approximately 250 teachers have received training on how to expand human values. The volunteers visit different schools and have reach out to about 2,500 children. Till 2005 about 6,000 children have been benefited directly or indirectly by the Program. A very big group of volunteers work with abused children and in very poor communities and the transformation that is coming about in these children is really inspiring. **For example, at El Portal, a school for the children of dangerous prisoners, a kid was beaten by a classmate but this boy did not react, he just stared**

at him and told him “here we are told not to beat each other, so I am not going to hit you back”.

The classmate hit him again and the other one repeated that he was not going to hit him since it was not correct. When he was going to be beaten again, a teacher appeared and stopped the aggressive boy. Isn't this boy a marvelous example of how character can be constructed?

At the same school, after one workshop given to the parents, one mother stood up and with tears in her eyes and said that she wanted to thank everybody for all the things she has learned in the workshops and also that she no longer beats nor shouts at her children. Whenever she completely loses her patience, now she goes out of the room and when she is calmed she enters again and talks to them. Other parents also shared how they no longer hit their children, and how they have learned to control themselves. These parents are changing for the better and the human values program is giving them a new approach to life.

At Fearc (another school with volunteers from the Human Values Institute), once two girls were fighting. They were asked to prepare a story on forgiveness and tolerance together but they did not want to work together. After some reflection among all the students, they were given 8 days to prepare it. The day came and they got out their own story. The volunteer teacher insisted that they must have just one story written together, so they went out for 20 minutes and putting together their two stories they made one with a happy ending of forgiveness. It resulted in all the children deliberating on the advantages of forgiveness.

This is the kind of positive impact that the human values program brings about in the minds of the children and the parents.

Community Service – Another Important Facet of Sai Work

Service connects hearts and each of the eleven centres and four groups carry out community service. The 350 active members and 100 other members offer breakfast, food, and clothes to the homeless; they also visit old age homes frequently.

Once, some members of the Executive committee (every area has an executive committee to coordinate and promote the Sai activities) visited one of the centers which is in a deprived area of the city. They were informing the people about and inaugurating the recently created Medicare service. [Medicare was inaugurated in February 2005 and there are several doctors ready to offer service]. The people of the rural area were very grateful with Swami and one lady even said that she would like to clean or do something else in return for the service she was going to receive. When hearts are touched with love, they are opened and devoted to serve, support and help.

Under special circumstances such as painful natural disasters, all the Sai Centres in Colombia help each other and money contributions are sent through Fundasai in an organized manner to reach out to the distressed.

The Other Joy-filled Spiritual Activities

The Sai Organisation also has also held many public meetings apart from study circles, workshops on Human Values and Sai Spiritual Education.

In August 2004, the Sai Organisation has organized a public meeting in the capital city of Bogota, the largest and the most populous city of the country with more than 7 million population. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Leonardo Gutter from Argentina and Mr. Billy Escalante from Peru.

In the same year, there was another grand public meeting organized in the city of Bucaramanga, the major commercial center of northeastern Colombia which also had a very positive response.

In the September of 2004, Sai Organization held a public meeting in San Jose. This meeting was addressed by Dr. Jorge Luis Beera. In the same month, thgrer was another meeting organized in the city of Barranquilla. Hundreds had gathered at the Beauty Arts Faculty Auditorium of Atlanta University to listen and learn about Sai and His mission. There was also a book sale and exhibition of Sai Literature.

In 2005, the first Bal Vikas meeting took place at one of the Sai Centres in Medellin. The second Bal Vikas Public Meeting will be held this year (2006) in Barranquilla, the largest industrial city and port on the Colombian Caribbean region.

Devotional meetings take place every month at “La Puerta del Cielo” (Heavens’ Door), a temple constructed by a devotee to serve the Organization. Devotees are taught bhajans and now the organization has a new song book and will soon have a website.

One other thing that the Sai organization in Colombia does is to participate in Book Fairs. Many people bought books on Sai and wanted to learn more about Him. They also show films and documentaries on Baba so that visitors can feel and confirm the positive influence that Baba has on everyone.

This has been an occasion every year when many people learn about Swami for the first time and eagerly become His devotees. The Colombian President, through his personal doctor Elsa Lucia Arango (a Sai devotee) has Swami’s *padukas* (holy sandals) at his residence. All the arrangements for the fair are done by Sai Volunteers with a lot of devotion and dedication.

Disseminating His Message

Not only this, to communicate the message of Sai effectively, since 2005, every month a bulletin called “Sai’s Expansion” is published in which apart

from Swami's own messages, there are also experiences of Baba's followers, information about service activities and other Sai activities.

The Organisation even organized a course on "Sai's Reporters" in order to be able to gather information on different events and maintain proper documentation of different encounters and seva activities among others.

In the Prashanthi Nilayam ashram, one cannot miss the Colombians with their yellow scarves behind with 'col' (and symbol aum) and 'bia' written in the shape of an upturned arc. Though miles from Puttaparthi, their dedication to His mission and devotion to His feet is really an inspiration for all the Sai Community. We, at Heart2Heart, wish all the Sai brothers and sisters of Colombia all the energy, strength and His grace to carry forward His mission and redeem their lives.

-Heart2Heart Team

LEADING A LIFE OF FEARLESSNESS AND FREEDOM...

Vision Of The Non-Dual Part 6

- A Choice between Deha Dharma and Atma Dharma

Life confronts us with so many choices every day. These choices always lead to only two scenarios - either it further our progress on the spiritual path or take us back. Now, progress on the spiritual path is defined as anything which helps us to reveal our true nature as a divine being, forever selfless and blissful. And the opposite that which gives us joys which are temporary and come from selfishly enjoying bodily pleasures. But how do we orientate ourselves towards the divine with our every step and breath? That is what we intend to deal with in this article.

Swami has told us that we can either make choices that further our life as a separate body, or make choices that are in consonance with the *Atma* or spirit (or the Self).

Man implies three things - doing, knowing and being. When the body acts alone without regard to the mind and the Atma, that person is considered to be in the animal state. When the mind acts in association with the body without regard to the Atma, that condition is described as demonic. When man acts in consonance with the Atma, he achieves oneness with the Divine. Hence, man has in him these three potentialities, he can manifest himself as an animal, a demon or God.

- Thought for The Day June 13th 2006

Let's look at two examples from the Sai family. Ask yourself according to Swami's guidelines above what are the youth Seva dals following in West Bengal when they give their time and energy to clean toilets at railway stations? Ask yourself what are the Seva dals following when they come to offer their time and love to Swami at Prashanti year after year with greater zeal? They could all be using their spare time for a host of enjoyments that are available to them in the every day world. Yet they chose to do things that many people would laugh at and not understand. This points to a vast difference in behaviour and the motivation behind that behaviour.

The Greek Philosopher

A well-known Greek philosopher once happened to meet an Indian yogi. He said to the yogi. "The most worthy and fruitful study, is the study of man." The yogi agreed with him and then added "But how can you know man without knowing God?" 'Man Know Thyself' therefore means realize your divine/true nature." What the yogi meant was that the *deha dharma* pertaining to the individual is not the final state. Only enlightenment proper, leads to the practice of *Atma Dharma*.

Swami says "*Man is the greatest, the crown of creation. He is superior to all.*" But Swami also says, "*Man in his present evolutionary stage, is in the*

intermediate stage between the animal and the divine. He should not rest until he has risen to the level of Divinity itself. The proper study of Mankind is Man.”

The Choices - *Deha Dharma* and *Atma Dharma*

To understand why there is this enormous disparity we need to learn about the two important *dharmas* that Swami refers to - *deha dharma* and *Atma Dharma*. *Deha Dharma* means those duties we discharge as a member of society, based on caste, age, sex, nationality and so on, all centred around the belief that we are a separate body. Among Hindus, Manu the Lawgiver has laid the codes down and these are known as *Smritis*; of course, every culture will have its own mores and customs. *Deha dharma* applies to our daily life and helps to create harmony, order and respect among people. It also permits us to enjoy ourselves, within decent boundaries, as much as we wish without reproach. *Deha dharma* leads to the heavenly worlds, but also to the round of birth and death. It does not lead us to liberation.

Yet for those on the spiritual path a higher path beckons which ultimately makes us free from all selfishness and desires, and leads us onto the path of liberation. This is *Atma Dharma* or *Swaha Dharma*. We may have instances when we are living by *Atma dharma* (albeit temporarily) – such as when we put someone else’s needs before our own; when our heart feels another’s pain; or when we decide to question our selfish traits and orientate ourselves towards a more selfless life. Then we know the peace, bliss and total contentment of the *Atma Dharma* which is totally free from doubts, confusion and dualities of any kind.

A life lived in this way, in the permanent consciousness of our true self shines ever in the service of others. We know such people as saints, prophets and yogis who live the “life divine” and are examples of *Atma Dharma*, ever One with the Non-Dual Reality. They live beyond all categories altogether (right/wrong and happy/sad); no duties need to be performed by them for by seeing the One in all, they are in a state of total freedom where the *Atma* and *Atma Dharma* are one, and their life is a blessing to the world. **The important aspect of this *Dharma*, as Swami says is “seeing the one in all, and the all as one”.**

Room Full of Mirrors

To see and experience this all the time is difficult, for we are mainly bound by ideas of separation and of ‘me’ and ‘mine’. In this context, Swami gives a beautiful allegory of a dog entering a room full of mirrors. The dog sees its reflections as many different dogs and becomes wild. The more it gets excited and barks, the worse the situation; it finally leaves most upset at all the ‘other noisy dogs’ who came into its territory.

Later, a small boy enters the room and enjoys the whole show, laughing, and making faces at himself. **It is a blissful experience for the boy, as he sees**

his own reflections everywhere. He sees the one in all and the all in one. This is a close analogy to the vision of the non-dual.

Swami says "Change your perceptions of the world, and the world changes for you. Many of us move around the world wearing glasses (spectacles) of envy, fear, worry, anger, etc and so the world appears as a terrible place. "Wear the glasses of Love instead" says Swami. This will help transmute *deha dharma* to *Atma Dharma*.

Arjuna's Dilemma and Deliverance

One of the most famous examples of the transition from *deha dharma* to *Atma Dharma* concerns Krishna's transformation of Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Swami has revealed that Krishna and Arjuna were inseparably together for seventy five years but at no time during that period, did Krishna teach the *Gita* to Arjuna. Why? Because during all those years, Arjuna treated Krishna as his brother-in-law and a close friend. During all those years, Arjuna was living with body-consciousness. The moment Arjuna surrendered, Krishna was ready to impart the Divine Message. Surrender, thus, is the right approach, as it takes one beyond the powerful delusion that one is a body-ego who must make all decisions for one's own advantage.

Swami adds that although Arjuna had declared that he had surrendered to the Lord, he was still subservient to the triumvirate of the senses, the body and the mind - a powerful combination which invariably steers one in the wrong direction. However, he had sought refuge in and appealed to Krishna, and the ever-compassionate Lord was only too willing to do the needful even though, Arjuna's surrender at that stage was perhaps not yet complete; but no molly coddling! Thus, Krishna asks Arjuna sternly:

Why do you weep like a coward? Is it because Bhishma, Drona and the rest are about to be killed? No; you weep because you feel they are "your" men. It is egoism that makes you weep. People weep not for the dead but because the dead are "theirs". Have you not killed until now many who were "not yours"? You never shed any tears for them. Today you weep since you are under the delusion that those whom you see before you are somehow "yours" in a special way. When you sleep, you are unaffected by this feeling of "I" and "mine", so you are unaware what happens to your body or the bodies of these "your men " or to your possessions, items which you carefully remember while awake. "Mine" is the possessive case of "I" and so it comes in its trail. The fundamental ignorance, my dear fool, is the identification of yourself with something that is not you, viz., the body. What a topsy-turvy bit of knowledge is this! To cure this Ajnana (ignorance), I must administer the medicine jnana (Knowledge) itself.

To confuse the body with oneself and pine for the body as if something has happened to one is delusion. The body is but a mere inert vehicle for the Indweller or the *Atma*. It is transient whereas the *Atma* is eternal. When Arjuna used words like "I" and "mine", he meant the body or the lower self

(i.e., the complex involving the gross physical body plus the mind) whereas what is eternal and therefore meaningful is the *Atma* or the Real Self. This misplaced identification, also called body-consciousness, is sometimes comprehensively referred to as ego or *Ahamkara*. (Ego as used in spirituality means much more than what dictionaries convey; basically it implies body-consciousness).

What Should We Do To Lead A Truly Divine Life?

Arjuna was not alone suffering from ego; all of us do, which is why death, especially of near ones, affects our feelings. So what is one to do? **Firstly, we must, as Arjuna was told, make a conscious effort to realise actually that body is transient. Having done that, we must also not give the body excessive importance; instead it is the *Atma* which must constantly remain in our focus. Secondly, we must appreciate that life is but a bit of playacting (in a drama scripted by the Blessed Lord). Thirdly, we must not goof our part by forgetting the script/dialogue (meaning, we must not forget to do our duty).** Swami's advice in this context is worth remembering,

Do all Karma (action/duty) as actors in a play, keeping your identity separate and not attaching yourself too much to your role. Remember that the whole thing is just a play and the Lord has assigned to you a part; there your duty ends. He has designed the play, and He enjoys it.

To explain *Atma Dharma* with the help of thoughts and intellect, which are dual in nature and as a third party observer is impossible. *Yatho vacha nivartanthe aprapya manasa* as the Vedas declare. But fortunately for us we have Swami - the best example of the practice of *Atma Dharma*.

Swami says "I have no duties to perform, no bonds that bind, yet I am active all the time." Swami's acts are spontaneous, He sees and knows the past, present and future of all and so His responses are varied and unpredictable to mortals. On the other hand, mortal man lives and acts based on the *deha* (body) *dharma*. He has a dual mind. He is therefore ignorant of his true nature. Man's state lies in between the two. One does not build a house in the middle of a bridge. The bridge is meant to be crossed so as to reach the other side. At man's present level, on the ladder of evolution he must not and should not stagnate. Sadhana and effort for upliftment is necessary. We should transmute *Deha dharma* into *Atma Dharma*.

How to Practise Atma Dharma

One potent means to further this is Karma Yoga, also called the Yoga of Disinterested Action. Why? Because the doer is not interested in the rewards. In that case, why at all is the person engaged in action? Because he considers it to be his duty. Of course, this is not the way people normally behave. They engage in action because of specific desires. Krishna tells Arjuna your outlook should be

similar; always seek to perform your duty, but do not claim the fruits thereof - that is what desireless action really means.

Some hold that thinking about and working for rewards is totally wrong and immoral. Swami has categorically refuted this point of view and observes:

This is a great blunder... When a man has a right for engaging in Karma, he has a right also for the fruit; no one can deny this or refuse his right. But the doer can, out of his own free will and determination, refuse to be affected by the result, whether favourable or unfavourable.

So there is nothing immoral in aspiring for the rewards of one's actions or effort. However, there is a catch! As Swami says:

If you have an eye on the fruits of your actions, you are liable to be affected by worry, anxiety and restlessness.

The Sun God's Dilemma

The following parable is full of pregnant meaning on this topic. Surya Deva (Sun God) had a devotee who admired him greatly. Everyday at sunrise the devotee with great fervour would chant the thousand and eight names of the Sun Lord and pay obeisance to him. Needless to say, the Sun God was pleased with the devotee's prayers.

But there was one problem. One of the names uttered by the devotee was "Oh Saviour, thou who art the Enemy of Darkness". This perplexed the Sun God and he said to himself: "I am a good being, friendly to all. I have no enemies. Who is this enemy he is talking about? I must find out." So, he approached all the great gods for help. Each of them sent him to different places of darkness, like *Patala* (Hades), dark caves, dark forests, the bottom of oceans, etc. Wherever the Sun god went, he found only brightness and daylight. The sun finally returns to his abode and thinks to himself "This is an aberration in the mind of the devotee. There is no such thing as darkness. It is his illusion. I bless him that he may be freed from it."

The non-dual vision of the Atma, destroys all darkness of ignorance. Man rises above *deha* (body) *dharma* to find peace and bliss in the realm of the Atma. **Our Swami has said on several occasions: "I do not know what worry, sorrow and suffering are." That is the sure indication of Atma Dharma.** But we mortal devotees go to Him with our sorrows, our fears, and our worries hoping for (albeit temporarily) release from them. These are the limitations of *deha dharma*. "The Unlimited is always with the Atma alone" says Swami.

There is an interesting story about Jadabharata from the Upanishadic times where aspects *deha dharma*, prior to atmic realization, are brought out beautifully and we end with this story.

The Story of Jadabharata

King Satyavrata of ancient times was a wise and just ruler. His kingdom flourished and all the people were happy and prosperous. As days went by, the king grew old and so he handed over the reins of his kingdom to his son, and as per the *dharmic* codes, proceeds to the forests for a life of austerities and tapas. (*Vanaprastha* stage of *ashram dharma*).

So great is the dispassion and renunciation of the king, that he gives up all worldly attachments and luxuries of life. He builds a small hut for himself by the side of a flowing river and lives an austere, spartan life devoted to meditation and contemplation. He lives on the herbs, roots and fruits growing in the forest.

One dawn, he is rudely disturbed out of his meditation. In his vicinity, there is a scream and scramble. He opens his eyes. A pregnant deer fleeing for her life, is pounced upon by a tigress. Meanwhile it collapses and gives birth to a fawn (baby). The stalking tigress later carries away the mother deer. Out of compassion, the king picks up the crying fawn and begins to look after it, feeding it, cleaning it and the fawn becomes very attached to the king.

In due course of time, the King is aware of his last days on earth and is on his deathbed. The fawn instinctively sits near him and sheds tears of sorrow. While contemplating on God, in his last moments, a thought comes to the King's mind "Oh, what will happen to this fawn when I am gone?" and then he breathes his last.

"The predominant thought at the time of death decides the fate and the next life" says Swami. Swami as well as Krishna state "Those who depart from this world uttering 'Om' merge in me."

The king is therefore born as a deer in his next life. Due to the great austerities of his past life, the deer is aware of its past and wanders in solitude visiting sacred places, wherever the Name of God is chanted or sung, etc. The deer duly passes away in this manner. **Swami says, "Surroundings conducive to the jiva's spiritual growth in its next life, depend on the effects of its past karmas."**

In his next (third) life, the king is born in the house of a spiritually elevated Brahmin family and remembers his past lives. Out of great discrimination and worldly detachment, the boy appears dumb from birth as he is unresponsive to worldly ties and social contacts, seeing that these have landed him in trouble in the past. His parents give him up as a dumb boy but as he is otherwise healthy and strong he is known as Jada-bharata ("jada" means heavy, inert, dull).

One day, Jadabharata now a tall young man, is sitting by the side of a path on a piece of rock, very unconcerned. It so happens that the king of that country is passing by in a palanquin, carried by four bearers. One of the bearers has a limp, and so the king calls this young man as a replacement. Due to his

height, the palanquin moves awkwardly and the king is angry and calls him a fool, etc. Seeing his unresponsive attitude, the king threatens and draws his sword, in order to make him speak. It is said that Jadabharata opens his mouth for the first time and speaks the highest philosophy to the king.

“Oh King” he says “whom are you calling a fool? Is it this body of mine? In that case this body is not different from yours or any other as they come from the selfsame elements. Is it the Atma that you address as a fool? In that case also the Atma is One and undifferentiated. So who is it that you are calling a fool?”

The king questions him on several spiritual aspects, and is amazed at the words of Jadabharata. He falls at his feet, craving pardon and later he appoints him as his *Rajaguru*, preceptor for the kingdom. In this third life, Jadabharata attains the realisation of the Non-Dual Self.

Therefore, eternal freedom or liberation can be obtained only from following the dictates of our Atma or Self and not the *deha* or the body. The body as Swami says is only an instrument and transient just like a water bubble. When we believe and live in this principle, we experience true freedom. “The end of wisdom is freedom,” as Swami has told us often.

**- Sri S Suresh Rao
and the Heart2Heart Team**

THE INEVITABLE COLLAPSE OF CALUMNY

Introduction

Readers might recall that sometime ago, we made a special announcement over both Radio Sai and in Heart2Heart, entitled *Truth Always Triumphs*. At that time, we promised we would give full details later. The time has come to do that.

We hope you would take time off to study this article carefully, and encourage others whom you know to do so. Our main purpose in making this request is to enable you to appreciate how complex the Divine Drama is and how it always goes through ups and downs, all entirely by Divine design!

In this context, it is well to remember that when the Anantapur Drinking Water Project was in progress, the Central Trust which was executing the Project, had to borrow money from banks, because it was short of cash. On the face of it, this might appear very strange. God is the source of all wealth; how come He has to borrow, when He comes down in human form? Surely, there must have been a reason. While Swami has not explicitly stated that, we believe that it is a signal that once one takes a step forward one must never go back. Instead, one must go ahead with full faith in oneself. In other words, we believe it was a Divine lesson in self-confidence.

Obstacles, obstructions and oppositions there always will be even when one tries to do good. The Ramayana has many illustrations of that. But the same Ramayana also tells us that with purity any obstacle can be overcome. That is also the inner meaning of the folklore about Siva drinking the poison that emerged when the *Devas* and the *Asuras* churned the Cosmic Ocean looking for nectar.

Now that it is all over, we request that you reflect deeply, even as you read some of this historical material, which necessarily is influenced by the sentiments of the times. However, in a historical context, we must leave aside the background of momentary passions and look objectively at how the drama started, how it evolved and how it concluded. Such reflections can give us much food for thought!

This issue carries the following:

- Transcript of the broadcast made by Prof. G Venkataraman over Radio Sai, concerning the California case, its withdrawal, and related matters.
- Text of the statement issued by five prominent citizens of India, led by Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, then Prime Minister of India.
- Background to the adverse Media Advisory posted by the UNESCO, and an account of the actions taken from our side.
- Full text of the letter written from here subsequently, to the UNESCO.
- Also, links to related material in earlier issues.

We have made every endeavour to maintain high standards, and hope we have succeeded.

Transcript of a Special Broadcast on the Alaya Rahm Case - By Prof. G Venkataraman

Case Against Swami Withdrawn

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. I presume that by now you would have either heard our special announcement over Radio Sai or seen our special message sent via the Sai Inspires service, about how Truth Always Triumphs. **I am referring to the case filed in a California Court based on false allegations against Swami that was subsequently withdrawn by the plaintiff 'with prejudice', meaning that the plaintiff cannot file that case again in any Court in America or in India.** Today, I would like to offer some reflections on this event. I feel this "closure" is required because in a sense, we owe this to many who have repeatedly written to us expressing their deep concern about attacks on Swami, and asking us to do something about it.

Before I start, I think I should say something about my own views on the matter. There are many who have always wondered why when Swami is being tarnished, we are not responding. On the other hand, there is a small minority that has always felt: "Let the dogs bark. Why bother?" I take a slightly different view of the matter; my own feeling is that we here can neither remain completely aloof nor be continually belligerent and go on the counter offensive at the drop of a hat. We are of the opinion that depending on the circumstances, different responses are needed at different times, to suit the occasion.

Let me begin with the general observation that both the good and bad that we see in this world are part of a ceaseless Cosmic Shadow Play. At the objective and Spiritual level, we certainly must be detached, recognising both good and evil as a part of this endless Divine Drama. Yet, at the worldly level, we simply cannot march ahead ignoring the background noise. We have a role to play, and play that role we must; only, we must take proper care to ensure that whatever we do is done properly, as God would want us to. In passing, I might add that we plan shortly, to offer additional perspective about all this in H2H. So maybe you should look out for that also.

The Eternal Struggle Between Good and Evil

The Indian scriptures say that practically every *Avatar* has had enemies. **I will not go into the details, but during every Incarnation there are enemies who challenge the *Avatar* in various ways. Sometimes, they even attack physically.** Apparently, the enemies symbolise the evil on earth, and a struggle between the good and the evil is needed from time to time to establish the Eternal Truth that in the end, Good always triumphs over Evil.

In the Krishna *Avatar*, for example, there was a demon called Jarasanda who repeatedly attacked Mathura, the city that was the capital of Krishna's

kingdom at that time. In fact, to protect His people, Krishna moved from Mathura to Dwaraka. Krishna was God Almighty in human form. He commanded all the Powers of God. If you recall, He revealed Himself as the Supreme Lord to Arjuna in the battlefield. And yet, why is it that the same Krishna did not dispose off Jarasanda, which He surely could have done in a jiffy? Well, those are the mystifying aspects of the *Avatar*! Such aspects are present in every *Avatar*. By the way, to complete this story, it was finally left to the hefty Pandava Bhima, to tear Jarasanda to pieces, literally.

Not many realise that attacks on Swami have always been there, almost from the time Swami declared His Avatarhood. If you read the accounts of people who used to travel to Puttaparthi in the good old days, they always tell us how the locals were quite hostile to Swami. For them, a little boy who used to be one of them simply could not be God. How on earth was that possible, they asked. But that phase soon passed off, and now we see how that very same Swami is being venerated by the people of those very same villages, who were once so hostile to Him.

Later, came Vedic scholars who scoffed at Swami. How could this young man who never spent even a single day in *Veda Patashala* [Vedic school] know anything about the *Vedas*, they asked. But soon they realised that this was no ordinary young man but the One who was the very form of the *Vedas*, or *Veda Pursusha*, as He is known in ancient Indian scriptures.

In the sixties and seventies, it was Swami's miracles that came under heavy attack. A whole bunch of rationalists pooh-pooed Him, challenging Swami to do this and that, so as to convince them. Swami has not come to convince anybody about His Divinity. Rather He has incarnated to tell man, "O man! **Realise you are Divine** and start acting Divine if not at least as a human. Do not be a slave to your senses and behave like an animal or worse still, like a devil." The rationalists made a lot of noise but the world soon got tired of them. However, some serious intellectuals like Murphet, Hislop, and Sandweiss came with open minds and realised that Swami was the Embodiment of Pure Consciousness.

The Blitz Interview

In mentioning all these names, I must not forget Rusi Karanjia, a self-declared atheist and Marxist, who published from Bombay, the then highly-popular weekly *BLITZ*. Karanjia wrote many things against Swami until someone asked him, "How can you write about something when you have not checked the facts? Have you ever met Sai Baba? Have you checked out whether what you are publishing as facts are really facts and represent the truth?" When his journalistic credentials were challenged, Karanjia came to Puttaparthi and Swami graciously granted him many interviews. The journalist that he was, Karanjia asked many probing questions and Swami answered them all, patiently. **Karanjia had to admit that he was mistaken and he wrote a book not only retracting all his earlier biased and critical opinions, but went so far as to describe Swami as the living God walking on earth!** By

the way, to my knowledge, with the exception of Karanjia, Swami has never granted interviews to pressmen in this fashion.

For devotees, it is always a matter of great astonishment that the Lord could have enemies. "Why Swami," many of them asked, "do You have enemies?" Swami always gave the same reply: "It is only when there is darkness that people appreciate the value of light." In the same way, *Avatars* need enemies so that people understand better the difference between Good and Evil. In short, the appearance of villains in the Lord's Story is preordained, and we need not be overly surprised by it. Let me now focus on the more recent events, because the Court case I referred to earlier is connected with these.

Now, The Opposition Uses Powerful Media

Starting from somewhere around the late-nineties, began what might be called the fourth anti-Sai wave. Thanks to the internet, this time, it was global. In the past, the targets of attack were Swami's Divinity, His knowledge of the *Vedas* and His miracles. This time, the detractors went to the extent of questioning Swami's purity and character itself. During this period, I was always quite busy with my work, and I therefore heard very little about the non-stop chatter in the gossip circles. From time to time, someone or the other would try to tell me something about this nonsense but I politely kept my distance since I neither had the time for this sort of thing, nor any patience to listen to falsehood.

The slander campaign started amongst a few disgruntled devotees, and soon spread to those eager for sleaze and scandal. In that sense, the anti-Sai campaign did not amount to much and could be ignored. However, encouraged by the prevailing social atmosphere, the people bent on vilifying Swami now got a toehold in important circles. First, there was a very negative article that appeared in *The Times* of London. After this came an anti-Swami Media advisory by the UNESCO, and to cap it all, there was the film by the BBC. I am sure you all know about these things and so I shall not spend much time on them. For the present, let me just mention the following:

- When the *Times* article appeared, I was shocked as were many others. **Here was one of the leading newspapers of the world, and it was publishing negative material without even a casual inquiry about the accuracy of the content.** Some of us wrote letters to the Editor, but, contrary to the usual practice of giving some space to those with differing opinions, none of these letters were published. So much for objectivity of the Press!
- The fact that the *Times* refused to extend media courtesy due to us did not mean the end of the matter. One could not simply remain silent when wild allegations were being made and atrocious aspersions were being cast in so-called responsible quarters. **That was when our respected Mr. Indulal Shah took the initiative and met the then Prime Minister Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee.**

- As a result of this meeting, a statement was prepared that was later signed by Mr. Vajpayee, the Prime Minister, Justice Bhagavathi, former Chief Justice of India, Justice Ranganath Mishra, another former Chief Justice of India, Ms Najma Heptulla, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNDP Distinguished Human Development Ambassador, and Mr. Shivraj Patil, former Speaker of the Lok Sabha, former Minister and then a Member of Parliament. I think it is appropriate to show readers the statement signed by these distinguished people.

Mr. Vajpayee et al Counter the Lies Through A Public Statement

We are deeply pained and anguished by the wild, reckless and concocted allegations made by certain vested interests and people against Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. We would normally expect that responsible media would ascertain the true facts before printing such calumny – especially when the person is revered globally as an embodiment of love and selfless service to humanity. Since this professional ethic has not been observed by a section of the media, we have decided to go public with this signed statement.

We are among the several million people in the world who regard Sri Sathya Sai Baba as a great spiritual master and teacher. We come from different nationalities and religions and greatly admire the fact that Sathya Sai Baba asks us to become a true follower of our chosen path. His is a message of truth, right conduct, love, peace and non-violence. He always emphasizes that these universal human values belong to all faiths and religious traditions.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba leads by example. He devotes all his time and energy for the well-being of Society. People from all walks of life, and from all parts of the world, visit him in Prashanti Nilayam [Andhra Pradesh, India]. He meets them and showers his love and blessings on all those who seek him. He has been the sole inspiration behind some of the most monumental public service projects in recent times. He has set up schools, colleges and universities where finest quality man-making education is imparted to all, at no cost. His educational programme of universal human values is being used by thousands of educational institutions all over the world. He has set up hospitals where complex surgical interventions are performed every day, without any cost to the patients. He has set up a mammoth clean drinking water network in drought-prone areas. Indeed, the list of activities and projects inspired by him continues to grow, with new projects being undertaken in all parts of the world.

We have had the privilege of meeting Sri Sathya Sai Baba many times and seeing him engage ceaselessly in community service projects.

We unequivocally condemn the baseless and malicious allegations being hurled upon Sathya Sai Baba in certain quarters. Great men have often

faced slander in their lives. Such pitiful efforts neither diminish their glory nor slow down their resolve to achieve their mission.

May God give good sense to all who create these scurrilous stories and wisdom to all others who pay any heed to them.

Mr. Shah made sure that the letter was seen by the top leaders of Europe, including the then Prime Minister of Britain.

UNESCO Withdraws its Criticism

Where the media advisory of the UNESCO was concerned, we took a different approach. The UNESCO is a part of the United Nations and India is in fact one of the founder members of the UN – it was a signatory to the original declaration, way back in 1944. We in Prashanti Nilayam took up the matter with the Government of India through suitable channels, and for its part, the Government, through its Ambassador in Paris, protested to the UNESCO. **I shall not go into the details here but merely say that the Indian Government took strong exception to the UNESCO posting a hostile media advisory, merely on the basis of hearsay, thereby maligning Sai Baba, who is a revered figure in India and has done enormous good to Indian Society. This strong protest worked and the UNESCO backtracked.**

This retraction by UNESCO was a big set back for the anti-Sai group but they now attacked from another angle, namely television. As you well know, most TV channels have sunk to depressingly low levels. It was no surprise therefore that some channels in some countries seized the opportunity to come out with negative programs on Swami. Given the scepticism of many in the West about *Gurus*, such a program naturally commanded an audience, though not among viewers with discrimination. Hence, though we received complaints from many overseas devotees, we did not bother too much. It was not worth getting into arguments with third-rate TV channels.

The BBC Shames Itself

Things went into a different gear altogether when the BBC came out with an anti-Swami film. This was absolutely shocking because like the *London Times*, the BBC is an icon - in the broadcasting world that is. **And yet, for reasons best known to it, the BBC produced a program that was not only poorly researched but also deplorably low in taste, quite in contrast to what it is known for.**

The Sad Case of Alaya Rahm

Central to BBC's vilification campaign was one Alaya Rahm. I have to mention the name of Alaya Rahm because he is the one who filed a case on January 6th, 2006, in the Superior Court of California, Orange County. It was a lawsuit in which the plaintiff sued for money damages. The Court set the case for trial April 28, 2006.

At this point, I shall quote, with permission of course, from a letter we have received from Brother Robert Baskin of California, who is himself a lawyer. He has full knowledge of this case and I think it is best to quote from his report since it would be factually and legally the most accurate account we can present. This is what Baskin says concerning what happened to this lawsuit.

“Although Alaya Rahm’s accusations received some publicity before he filed his lawsuit, his claims were not thoroughly investigated until after the lawsuit was filed. The legal proceeding provided a forum in which his claims could be thoroughly and critically examined. Through this process of investigation, it was discovered that the plaintiff and his family had spoken at a number of retreats and conferences between 1995 and 1999, during the time that the events were alleged to have occurred. Inconsistent with his later accusations, these conference talks, many of which were recorded and have been transcribed, contain no suggestion of any wrongdoing and the earlier words spoken by the plaintiff would appear to refute his later accusations.

Through the process of discovery during the handling of the lawsuit, witnesses were identified and interviewed who were present in the Ashram in India when the events were alleged to have occurred which formed the basis of the plaintiff’s lawsuit. One of these witnesses brought the plaintiff to India in 1995, accompanied the plaintiff to India in 1997, and was present for some of the alleged interviews. The deposition of this witness was taken as a process of discovery in this lawsuit. The witness testified that he had a close and confidential relationship with Alaya Rahm from 1995 to 1997, spoke with the plaintiff on a daily basis when he was in the ashram in 1995 and 1997, discussed the details of each of the plaintiff’s interviews during that period and that Alaya Rahm never suggested during this period of time that any misconduct or wrongdoing had occurred. The deposition of the witness was taken in March 2006. Alaya Rahm dismissed his case after the deposition was taken.

No offers of settlement were made in this case and no money or any other consideration was paid for a dismissal of the lawsuit. This dismissal should be the conclusion of this lawsuit.”

I must at this point, express my deep and personal thanks to Brother Baskin for that succinct account.

I do not know what you think about it, but as far as I am concerned, this case withdrawal by Alaya Rahm, before the suit came up for formal hearing before a Judge, knocks the bottom out of all the allegations that have been circulated during the last several years. And please remember that Rahm would not have dismissed his own case, if he thought he had a chance of winning. The fact is he had no case, none at all, at any time. For years, Alaya Rahm got away with wild allegations, and the BBC made much of it. Why? Because they were never put to the legal test. Emboldened by the apparent wide acceptance of his claims in the West, Rahm then thought he

could seek damages and filed a lawsuit. But his attempt has backfired and the chief accuser has realised that. Quietly, he has withdrawn the case.

Points to Reflect Upon

Let me now stand back and look at this entire history from a slightly detached perspective. I would like to make the following points:

1. **Objectively speaking, one ought not to be surprised at the mudslinging that has been going on recently.** As already pointed out, for devotees, anti-Swami campaigns are really not news. What is new is the type of accusations made this time. The fact that they received wide circulation merely testifies to the prevailing low standards in the Media. These days, people in the Media openly say that scams, scandals, sleaze and controversy alone make news, nothing else. Increasingly, even newspapers and TV channels that once prided themselves on high standards are being driven to gimmicks that would attract attention and “improve” ratings.
2. On many occasions in the past, Swami Himself has commented on the attacks made on Him and has remarked, **“People throw stones only at the tree laden with fruits, and not at a tree that has no fruits.”**
3. It is a part of the Divine Drama that the good often have to suffer. **In the case of Jesus, though Divine, he was crucified.**
4. In earlier eras when Swami incarnated as Rama and Krishna, He had enemies and detractors. It was so in Shirdi also. It could not be different this time, for it is the same world that the Lord has made His appearance in.
5. When *Avatars* come, they weave a subtle web around them. This web is a test for humans. Some by the Grace of God, manage to see through the web and recognise Divinity beyond. They are the ones who are redeemed. Others get deceived, fail to see the Divine hiding in the human form, and flunk the test. They have to wait a long, long time before they come closer to God. By the way, the web I am talking about is the cloud of suspicion raised by the detractors. **In that sense, the detractors play their own role as instruments!**
6. Incidentally, all this is mentioned by Krishna Himself. In the *Gita* Krishna says:

Not knowing My transcendental nature as the Sovereign Lord of the Universe, fools slight Me when I incarnate in diminutive human form.

But the great ones, O Partha (Arjuna), guided by their Divine nature and knowing Me as the Imperishable Source of all beings, worship Me with their minds always fixed on Me.

7. Continuing with the theme of *Avatars* and their enemies, Rama needed a Ravana, so that He could, in the name of going after Ravana, confer Grace on so many *Rishis* who played host to Him in the forest, give Sugriva the opportunity to claim God as his friend, help old Sabari to realise her dream, enable Jatayu to make the supreme sacrifice for the Lord, and so on. **In other words, the Lord's Drama is complex and we cannot visualise it in pure black and white terms.**
8. Having said that, as in the Ramayana, each of us has been picked to play a certain role. Very few of us might be aware of it, but the fact of the matter is that no one is without a role in the Cosmic Drama. In the Ramayana, for example, we have the little squirrel. What can a squirrel contribute to building a mighty bridge? Yet, it too played a role, calling attention to the fact that God is not interested in quantity but quality.
9. In the same way, from a larger perspective, we too have a role to play, within bounds of course. **When needed, we do have to counter untruth in manners appropriate.** However, while contesting falsehood, setting the record straight and so forth, we must NOT allow any room for hate and anger.
10. I have found that many a time, when Swami denies access or pulls up someone, some reform, some withdraw, while a small minority become offensive. **At least in the case of two people who have been carrying on an e-mail campaign against Swami, I know that one fine day, Swami started ignoring them.** Maybe that hurt these people too much, especially as they used to enjoy not merely good but enviable access and privileges.

Summing up, I would like to make the following observations. Although noble men and even *Avatars* have been attacked throughout history in various ways, when the dust settles down, few remember the detractors. I mean, when people think of Christ, they only remember the ultimate sacrifice He made. How many can name those who harmed him?

Next, I would like to recall what Swami said way back in 1963 after He miraculously pulled Himself out of an attack of paralysis. He said that in the brief period He suffered the stroke, many felt deep anguish. That, said Swami, brought many devotees closer to Him than they might have gained through normal processes in many lives. **In the same way, even while some tried to paint Swami black, their action produced so much anguish in many, that that burst of Love probably brought all these suffering devotees much closer to God than they perhaps realise.**

To those who sometimes tell us, "ignore all this calumny", I would like to make a special point. You see, our role here in the Prashanti Digital Studio necessarily has to be somewhat different from that of the ordinary devotee with no formal responsibilities. We are a media unit and we have specific tasks that we must perform. We definitely do not descend to the level of people who are mean in their outlook. Nor do we always take on directly the

powerful, who exploit their reputation and peddle half truths and untruths. But disinformation cannot always be ignored; it has to be countered in suitable ways. Thus it is that Mr. Indulal Shah, requested Mr. Vajpayee and several distinguished citizens of this country to issue a Public Statement. While those who want to believe in falsehood might dismiss this, responsible people would definitely sit up and say: "Do we believe some unknown people making unsubstantiated charges or do we believe a man like Vajpayee who is a world statesman?" If we fail to contradict when responsible agencies peddle falsehood, we can be in all kinds of trouble.

I don't know how many of you are aware that even today, many TV channels, including in India, sometimes broadcast controversial material about Swami. Some newspapers, likewise, try to downplay Swami's enormous contributions. We just cannot sit back and say, "Oh, God does not need my intervention. He knows how to take care of things." **If there is anything I have learnt by watching closely, it is that we must be totally involved in anything that we do and not try to act like a recluse. However, while being intensely involved in our work, we must not carry malice, jealousy or hatred in our Heart.**

Swami Himself taught this lesson beautifully in the Ramayana. One day during the long battle between Rama and Ravana, Ravana fell out of the chariot. He was without his weapons. He was also very tired. If Rama wanted, He could easily have finished Ravana in one stroke. He did not. Instead He said, "Ravana, go home now and come back tomorrow. We shall resume the battle then." What does this teach us? It tells us that we must go about performing our worldly duty as we ought to; in this case, Rama's duty was to punish Ravana for his misdeed. That was to be done by due process and without hatred, anger, a sense of revenge, and so forth. So, if in any way I have chosen to intervene at select points, it was only after careful deliberation about the course of action to be pursued.

Allow me please, at this juncture, to point out something pertinent. I found it strange that when all this negative propaganda was going on, so many of our devotees were busy telling each other, "Do you know what they are saying?" and so on. Very few bothered to tell each other, or more important to the world, about the wonderful work Swami has done and is continuing to do. I hope you do not get angry with me for saying this, but spreading the good word is one effective way of countering bad odour. **But few seem to know about what all Swami has done for the welfare of humanity. What is even more saddening is that not many are bothered about it; their concern is more about Swami's travel plans, daily Prashanti gossip, etc.**

How to Spread the Good News

It is not as if information about Swami's wonderful Missions is lacking. For example, at the time of the 80th Birthday, we brought out a comprehensive set of Souvenir Volumes, which, through priceless pictures, narrate the story of the Lord's many Missions. These volumes are being offered for less than the cost of production, and yet there are not many buyers. When I last checked,

there were a large number of these Souvenir sets sitting in the Tustin Book Centre in America. We thought they would just fly away but there does not appear to be much interest. I asked Dr. Gadia of UK why young people there do not show interest. He was not able to give any explanation. But he agreed with me that it was very strange that when people could spend money on changing mobile phones every two years, their i-pods every three years, and their laptops every four years, they did not want to buy this treasure that was timeless and came to them at such a low cost.

In India too the situation is depressing. Here in the Ashram I see devotees moving everywhere talking all the time on the cell phone. Sometimes, every member of the family is talking on the mobile. These people have enough money to buy not one but many phones. And yet, ask these people if they would like to buy a souvenir set, they would immediately grumble.

This happens everywhere, including in places like Bombay that is loaded with money. People all over India, devotees' kids included, do not bat an eyelid to buy the latest Harry Potter book, sometimes even standing in a long queue. People do not mind spending a lot of money to see the latest block-buster movie on the opening day. But when it comes to buying a souvenir that would be a treasure for all time to come, it is a different matter.

I am not complaining but reflecting on the sad decline in values. When we who pride ourselves on being His great devotees are indifferent to knowing more about Swami, His acts of Compassion and His Message, when we unconsciously trivialise Him in many different ways, how can we complain when others malign Him? Do we at least know enough to counter and challenge these false allegations?

Somehow, somewhere, we seem to be losing our perspective. **If there was a greater awareness about Swami's teachings and service, the news of that would spread faster – the more the people who know, the faster the news spreads. And if millions know about Swami's greatness and Compassion, few would be swayed by negative propaganda.** I hope I am not touching raw nerves, but I do feel we do not take Divinity seriously enough and often tend to trivialise it. God comes in human form not for us to trivialise but so that we may have easy access to Him via *Darshan*, opportunities for *Sparshan* and *Sambhashan* (being blessed by His touch and discourse). These represent extra-ordinary Grace, in return for which we are duty bound to express gratitude by telling the world in some manner or the other about the wonderful work being done non-stop by Swami.

A Moving Talk

Finally, I would like to present you a hitherto unheard audio transcription. This would illustrate how the *Avatar* quietly uses His human form to give powerful Messages. It is a recollection by an old student of Swami's Institute. I shall then end by making a few remarks about the memory. The name of the person is Gopal Indreshwar. He is the grandson of the Rajmata of

Nawanagar, who during her life was incomparably devoted to Swami. This is what Indreshwar said in part, while speaking to us some months ago.

Well, did you hear that? It was all about a small incident involving Swami and His students, but it tells us, the world and also posterity, that Swami is PURE, always. It does not matter if you don't remember a single word of this talk. It is enough if you do not forget Indreshwar's words. In the ultimate analysis, that is all that matters.

Thank you. Jai Sai Ram.

IN ADDENDUM

THE UNESCO STORY

Here is a brief introduction to the UNESCO affair. It all started with a big conference on value-based education, planned to be held here in Prashanti Nilayam in the year, 2000. The prime mover behind that conference was the Institute for Sathya Sai Education in Thailand, and UNESCO was supposed to be the co-sponsor. Elaborate arrangements were made for the conference and everyone was keenly looking forward to the deliberations. However, on the morning of the opening day, just before inauguration, the UNESCO office in Delhi issued a press statement dissociating itself with the Conference and withdrawing its support. It was later learnt that this happened because some anti-Sai people wrote to the UNESCO, urging it to withdraw. As a sequel, the UNESCO posted a Media Advisory on its web site, which was very uncomplimentary to Swami, His Ashram, His Organisation, etc.

Now it is one thing for tabloid newspapers to sling mud and quite another for a UN body like the UNESCO to do something similar. It was incredible that this UN body did not even bother to cross check. Obviously, this sort of insult could not be left unchallenged. What was worse, this anti-Sai group were now trying to thwart the water education programs being pursued in Africa by our most respected Brother Mr. Victor Kanu, in association with Mr. Kalyan Ray, then serving in the UN Habitat.

A plan was then evolved to take up the matter at the highest quarters. Mr. Kalyan Ray who was then on a visit to India, sought and obtained an appointment with Mr. Yashwant Sinha, then India's Foreign Minister or Minister for External Affairs, as we say in India. Mr Sinha is a devotee of Swami and has visited Puttaparthi on a few occasions. Mr Sinha gave Kalyan Ray a careful hearing and was appalled to hear about the UNESCO affair.

Meanwhile, I also happened to meet Mr. Rasgotra, former Foreign Secretary. Mr. Rasgotra had, at one time, served as India's Ambassador to France during which time he was also India's representative to the UNESCO. Thus, Mr. Rasgotra had contacts at the UNESCO, and I told him that he must do

something to make the UNESCO appreciate that they cannot act irresponsibly and put objectionable matters in their website merely based on hearsay.

Both these approaches clicked. The long and short of it was that the Government of India asked the Indian representative to UNESCO to take up the entire matter with concerned officials at the other end. Thus, the Indian representative wrote a letter, somewhere in early 2004 I believe, from which I quote a part. The letter said:

The media Advisory dated September 15th 2000, and viewable at the address: www.unesco.org/education/highlights/media_advisory is posted to explain UNESCO's inability to participate in a Conference organised by the Institute of Sathya Sai Education [Thailand]. In doing so, it attempts to gravely tarnish the reputation of the Sathya Sai movement by casting aspersions on the personal integrity and character of its leader, based on hearsay, and unconfirmed reports.

Shri Sathya Sai Baba is a highly respected spiritual leader and public figure in India and abroad. It is well known that the life and message of Shri Sathya Sai Baba has been devoted to promoting peace, non-violence, social harmony and is a moving force behind numerous philanthropic social projects. In this context, it is pertinent to mention that the UN Settlements Project [UN-HABITAT] launched a major education initiative three years ago, using human values approach propounded by Shri Sathya Sai Baba, to introduce a values-based water education programme through the national curriculum in Africa. The initiative has been widely accepted at high political levels and among educationists in Africa and is now being replicated by the UN-HABITAT and the Asian Development Bank in Asia and the Pacific. You will agree that issuance of a casual and negligent press release by the UNESCO cannot but do disservice to such valuable projects.

Government of India considers Shri Sathya Sai Baba and his movement a national asset and takes strong exception to UNESCO press release, which spreads wholly unfounded and unsubstantiated allegation against Shri Sathya Sai Baba.

I would therefore request you to take immediate steps to remove the objectionable press advisory from the UNESCO website. I would also appreciate an expression of regret for the damage caused to one of India's revered public figures, without first verifying the facts and any consultations with Indian authorities.

Now that was a strong letter at the official level, was it not? So you see, we here were not always keeping quiet or taking it lying down. If it was the riff-raff resorting to slander, we chose to ignore. But if allegations came from responsible quarters, we did what we could. In the case of the *Times* of London, since it is not answerable to anyone, it chose to ignore us. But with the UNESCO, it was different. It is governed by protocol and all that, and it simply could not ignore legitimate protest by a member country, which India

is. So the UNESCO was obliged to respond, and this is what its representative said in part in the reply:

I do appreciate this concern and wish to inform you that following your personal intervention, the media advisory in question was immediately withdrawn from the archives of the UNESCO's website for education.

I should also like to take this opportunity to say how much the Organisation regrets this unfortunate incident and to reiterate to you, on behalf of the Director General, that the Organisation attaches the greatest importance to the varied forms of fruitful collaboration that we have enjoyed with your country for many years.

So this was one case, where we succeeded in setting the record straight. However, the story did not quite end there. I wrote about all this in **Heart 2 Heart** in May 2004, I believe, and that stirred a hornet's nest.

You see what happened was this. The mud-slingers are keen browsers of our website – they are always on the lookout for items they can pounce on – and they read what I had written in **Heart 2 Heart**. One of the ring leaders then became hopping mad – no surprise in that. Full of fury, he shot off an angry e-mail to the UNESCO about how dare they buckle to what he called official pressure? About how they could choose to ignore the testimony of reputed Vice Chancellors from Australia who had lent their support to the allegations made against Sai Baba etc., etc. The UNESCO was perturbed and wanted to know how their correspondence with the Indian representative had become public etc. This concern of the UNESCO came to my attention, along with information about the vituperative counter attack by the anti-Sai gang.

I thought about this for a while. Here was the UNESCO perturbed because we had quoted from the correspondence exchanged between it and the Indian representative. By the way, I did not go round hunting for this correspondence. In fact, I was not even aware of the exchange of letters. However, copies of this correspondence were sent to us by our contacts in Delhi, without our even asking for it. And this correspondence was not marked secret or even confidential. So I asked myself: "The UNESCO couldn't care less when it hurt all our feelings by publicly tarnishing the reputation of Swami but it becomes upset when I try to explain to our devotees how the UNESCO has been forced to take back its words."

At that point, I wrote a long fourteen-page letter to the Director, Bureau of Public Information of the UNESCO. That letter is published below.

Letter To The Director, Bureau Of Public Information, UNESCO

From

Prof. G.Venkataraman
Ex Vice Chancellor
Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning
Prashantinilayam, 515 134
Anantapur Dist. A.P., India

To

Ms Elke Salas Rossenbach
Director, Bureau of Public Information
UNESCO, Paris

SUB: UNESCO Media Advisory on Sai Baba

Dear Madam,

I write this concerning the recent withdrawal of the Media Advisory on Sathya Sai Baba. I would not have ventured to trouble you but am constrained to do so, because it appears that my name has been mentioned in communications addressed to you besides which, an article I wrote for our radio magazine, has been forwarded to you. I am attaching at the end of my letter, a brief profile of myself so that you have some idea of my background as well credentials. I am sorry my letter is a bit long but even so, I do hope that in the interest of getting some idea about Sathya Sai Baba and his organisation, especially from one with direct and personal knowledge, you would be so kind as to give this letter a careful and patient reading.

I retired from service as a scientist in October 1992, having first spent over three decades in the Department of Atomic Energy, and thereafter several years in the Defence Research and Development Organisation. At the time of retirement, my boss was Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, now the President of India. Dr. Kalam asked me continue for some more time but I declined saying that I would like to go Sai Baba's Ashram, and serve in Baba's University in an honorary capacity. Dr. Kalam then told me, "You are lucky; you are going to a sacred place." I came to the Ashram in late November 1992, and have been there ever since, rendering service of various kinds. I have to mention all this so that you can place what follows in the proper perspective.

Concerning Baba And Education

In a recent communication addressed to you, a reference has been made to two Vice Chancellors from Australia and many heads of institutions [none named], and it is stated that they all have lent credence to the demand made

for the issue of Media Advisory. I have been in **continuous** residence in the Ashram for **twelve years**, and I always meet senior educationists visiting this place. I simply cannot recall any visit by any Vice Chancellor from Australia. I have to mention this because I wonder how in such a serious matter as this, senior educationists lent their name without any direct personal knowledge of either the person involved i.e., Sathya Sai Baba or the place, i.e., the Ashram [both of which you are being asked to warn about]. Since educationists have been mentioned, let me state some facts that might not be known to you before.

In November, 1996 the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Human Resource Development visited the University founded by Baba, the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. I was then the Vice Chancellor and it was my duty to not only make a presentation but also answer all the questions put by the Committee. The Committee was then touring the country visiting many Universities and institutions, particularly those connected with value-based education. The Committee was headed by a senior Parliamentarian, who had earlier served several times as a Cabinet Minister. The Committee put searching questions to me for over two hours and later visited the Institute Campus as also the Ashram. When the time came for the Committee to write a report, it adopted the core values of our Institute namely, Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence as the basis for its main recommendations. The Government of India accepted the report and subsequently, in connection with some case before it, the Supreme Court of India upheld the principle that all students do need to be given a strong exposure to basic human values [highlighted by the Parliamentary Committee] so that they later become good citizens.

About two years ago, the National Accreditation and Assessment Committee [NAAC] of the University Grants Commission [UGC] visited our Institute as a part of its countrywide assessment of Universities. It spent several days, visited each department, talked to teachers and asked many questions. It also met students in camera, without any faculty member or University staff present so that it could form an independent opinion about the quality of students and the training they receive. When NAAC gave its final report it not only commended highly the integral system of education [catering to the body, the Mind and the Spirit] followed in the Institute but also hailed it as the "Crown Jewel of Indian Education". It further recommended to the UGC that the integral system of education followed in our Institute is worthy of emulation all across the country.

About eight months ago, the University Grants Commission organised a special Seminar of Vice Chancellors on Value-based Education, and conferred the honour of hosting that Seminar to Baba's Institute. Over thirty Vice Chancellors gathered here for the deliberations, apart from Mr. Ranganath Mishra, the former Chief Justice of India and former Head of the Human Rights Commission of India. He was a special invitee because of his keen interest in promoting value-based education. The meeting was presided over by the Chairman of the University Grants Commission. The Seminar lasted three days during which our Institute students were wholly in charge of

the hospitality service. So impressed were the delegates that they insisted on visiting the students' hostel to see for themselves the kind of training given.

Our Institute enjoys a very high reputation on account of the strong emphasis laid on character development, and thanks to its uniqueness in this respect, many distinguished leaders of the country have readily agreed to be the Chief Guest at our annual Convocation ceremonies. Thus, we have had the pleasure of having President R. Venkataraman, President Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, President Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam, Vice President Krishna Kant, Vice President Bhachawat, Prime Minister P.V.Narasimha Rao, and Prime Minister A.B.Vajpayee, among others, as our Convocation Guest.

By the way, I should not omit to mention that education in Baba's educational institutions is absolutely FREE, not one cent is charged. You can confirm this with thousands and thousands of parents who have sent their children here and are continuing to do so. I might also add that every year, the number of applications we receive from students seeking admission is about eight to ten times the number actually selected. That says something about our credibility, does it not?

Please consider: Is it even remotely possible that all that I have stated above [completely verifiable] could have happened if the founder of the Institute, namely Baba, was a person given to child molesting as is being alleged?

Let me state some more pertinent facts relating to the Institute before moving on to other matters. Consider the kind of people who come and teach regularly in our Institute on an honorary basis. Here are some names: Professor David Gries, Professor of Computer Science, Cornell University, Prof George Ordal, Professor of Bio Chemistry, Illinois University, Prof Somanth Mishra, Professor of Chemistry, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Prof. M.K.Sundaresan, Professor of Physics, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. These are some of the people who come regularly and teach in Baba's Institute for periods ranging from three weeks to three months. They come entirely at their own expense, and willingly do service just for the sheer joy of it. I know each and every one of them personally. What draws them here? Baba's philosophy of Selfless Love and his great experiment in blending character development with modern education. Would they come voluntarily, if allegations about child molestation are true? These are academics of integrity belonging to reputed universities and surely they would not tolerate child abuse, would they?

Few realise that Baba's colleges have been running for over thirty years, and his school for over twenty years, Thousands, yes, literally thousands have passed through the portals of the school and the colleges, and how come there has not been all these years, a **single** accusation against him by the people of this country? On the contrary, it is astonishing to see how the students are impelled, out of love for Baba, to do social service wherever they are, long after they have left. Examples of this, with documentary evidence, is presented separately.

Baba is held in such high esteem and his Institute is so highly regarded that many corporate employers now turn to our Institute for hiring. As a policy, we do not have a placement-service, as we believe that would deflect the attention of students while they are studying. Yet, leading organisations like Maruti Udyog [the country's biggest auto manufacturer], a host of industries run by the TVS group [famous in the country for their staunch commitment to honesty and transparency], the HDFC Bank, and the CITIBANK, to name a few, have sought our students. Why? Because they know they are Baba's students. Many executives from these corporations get to know about our students when they come to give guest lectures in the Business School of the Institute. When they see the tremendous discipline of our students, they invariably become impressed. Increasingly, business corporations have now come to realise that mere skills alone are not enough and that character is an equally important virtue if not more important than technical abilities – that is why our students are in great demand from discerning employers who set much store by character.

Having watched our students in service, lately many of these corporate executives have themselves become regular visitors to the Ashram. Baba's detractors claim that it is not safe to visit the Ashram; then how is it that these people come spontaneously, as do thousands every single day, indeed from so many countries round the world?

A Brief Roster

Let me now give you some idea of the type of people who come to Baba. Leaving aside the ordinary folk who flock daily in thousands, here are a few names:

Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, currently the Prime Minister. Mr. Vajpayee has been coming to Baba since 1977, when he was the Foreign Minister. At that time, Vajpayee came to give a course of lectures to our college students during a Summer Course. He stayed in the college guesthouse, and I have pictures taken on that occasion. Later I personally saw him once calling on Baba in Bangalore, somewhere around 1994 or 1995. At that time, he was just a plain Member of Parliament, and his party had just two seats. Subsequently I have seen him come again and again, and just this year, he came once in March and once more in April. What draws him? It is Baba's spirit of universal and selfless love.

Justice Bhagavathi, former Chief Justice of India, former Head of the Human Rights Commission of India, and Member UN Committee on Human Rights. Justice Bhagavathi has been coming to Baba for over thirty years, and is also a Member of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust as well as the Institute Trust. One can unfailingly see him every year, in splendid robe, marching along with the Academic Procession during the Convocation of the Institute. Please consider: Has Justice Bhagavathi allowed himself to be fooled for over thirty years? Is it ever conceivable that one who is so well known for his strong advocacy of human rights would ever associate with someone who is

supposed to be a child molester? Would he lend his name to organisations founded by a person of questionable reputation?

Several distinguished service officers have been coming to Baba regularly, starting with late Field Marshal Cariappa, free India's first Indian Army Chief and also our first Field Marshal. Later, Air Chief Marshal Mehra, Air Chief Marshal Suri started coming regularly; they still do. While Mehra after retirement served as Governor of two States, Suri is even now busy spreading Baba's message in England, which he visits regularly. From the army, Lt. Gen [retd] Malhotra, Lt. Gen [retd] Chibber, Lt. Gen. [retd] Mehta, are all not only regular visitors but come for long stay in the Ashram. Incidentally, Lt. Gen Chibber is the Director of the Sri Sathya Sai International Centre in Delhi. He often visits Pakistan on peace missions, and his friends there include his military counterparts in that country. Air Chief Marshal Mehra and Lt. Gen Malhotra are serving members on the Council of the Sai International Centre in Delhi. By the way, I might here mention that a few months ago, the Dalai Lama gave a special lecture at the Delhi Centre. Do you think the Dalai Lama would accept an invitation from a shady organisation? Is it at all conceivable? Lt.Gen [retd] Mehta whose name I mentioned earlier, retired as the Commander of the prestigious Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun. He has for many years, trained our students in various aero-sports.

From the armed services let me now turn to administrative and police services. I shall start with late Dr. Ramakrishna Rao, who first served as the Governor of Kerala and later as the Governor of Uttar Pradesh. He was a regular visitor and not only that; he made Baba tour the States he was the Governor of extensively, bringing his message to the ordinary people.

Next let me mention Mr. Rasgotra, the doyen of our diplomatic service. He served in many posts, and it might interest you to note that he was once our Ambassador in Paris as also our representative in the UNESCO. Later he rose to the highest career post, that of the Foreign Secretary, and after retirement, he served as India's High Commissioner in London, a Cabinet level post. Mr. Rasgotra has been coming to Baba for over thirty years. He is, incidentally, also a Member of Council of the Sri Sathya Sai International Centre in Delhi.

Then there is Mr. Vijay Kelkar, who served as our Finance Secretary, and thereafter went to the IMF. He is a regular visitor.

Dr. Arjun Sengupta who was once in the Planning Commission and now is teaching partly in India and partly at Harvard, he too is a regular visitor.

There are many such names but two I must mention, even if I skip the others. The first is that of Mr. K.Charavarthi. Mr Chakravarthi entered the prestigious Indian Administrative Service [IAS] in 1966 or so. As a member of the service, he once was posted to the Anantapur District of the State of Andhra Pradesh. Baba's native village Puttaparthi belongs to this District, and was under the jurisdiction of Mr. Chakravarthi when he was the Collector of the District. In his tours, he visited Puttaparthi and saw Baba. The call of selfless service was

irresistible. Mr. Chakravarthi then took premature retirement from IAS despite the attractive future it held, and has been with Baba for over twenty five years. He first served as the Registrar of Baba's Institute and is currently the Secretary of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. If there is one person who has day-to-day contact with Baba, it is Mr. Chakravarthi, and he has been having this for decades.

Another distinguished member of the IAS whose name must be mentioned at this juncture is that of Mr. S. V. Giri. He was Mr. Chakravarthi's batch mate [they both joined IAS in the same year]. Mr. Giri has served in Andhra and has been coming to Baba for decades. Unlike Mr. Chakravarthi, he did not retire prematurely from the IAS. His work took him to Delhi, where he served in many capacities, including as the Education Secretary [a job that involves liaison with the UGC and dealing with all universities in the country]. After he retired from the IAS, the Government appointed him the Central Vigilance Commissioner, a most sensitive post as well as a prestigious one. In mid 1996, Baba asked Mr. Giri if he would come down to serve as the Vice Chancellor of his university – my term was coming to an end and a new appointment had to be made. Mr. Giri unhesitatingly relinquished office immediately to rush to Puttaparthi. He took over from me in August 1996 and is currently in his second term as the Vice Chancellor.

To the police now, and let me start with Mr. Kandaswami, Indian Police Service [IPS]. Mr. Kandaswami joined the Police service during the British days, served in what was then Madras Presidency. Later he was called to Delhi, where he occupied the highest position as the Director of the Criminal Bureau of Investigation [CBI]. He is now past ninety. He has gifted away his house to Baba's Trust and is now living alone, by choice, in Baba's Ashram, unwilling to be with his children or grandchildren. How come? Because he says he is under Baba's care; indeed, Baba is taking care of him in every possible way. Mr. Kandaswami earned a very high reputation as an officer of great integrity.

Then there is Mr. H.Dora, also of the IPS. He rose to be the Inspector General of Police in Andhra Pradesh, went to Delhi and is now a member of the Central Vigilance Commission.

From the services let me swing to the other extreme and mention a few names from the world of music and sport. Music, and let me start with Mrs. M. S. Subbalakshmi, a most talented and gifted singer who has once even gave a special concert in the United Nations in New York. She has won the nation's highest award, and has been hailed as the Queen of Classical South Indian music. This noble lady, till she became bedridden, used to regularly come to our Ashram and I have personally heard her sing for and before Baba. Such is her respect and reverence for him. Then there is the Sarod maestro, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and that vocalist with a remarkable voice, Begum Parveen Sultana [both Muslims] who seize every opportunity they can to perform before Baba. They come for the sheer honour and joy of singing in Baba's presence. There are many other musicians of great repute who have been coming regularly to Baba but I shall skip that list, having made my point.

In the world of sport, it is enough to mention just one name, that of Sunil Gavaskar, an international legend in his own times in the field of cricket, a man with many unbeatable records. He comes regularly, as do many other cricketers of repute.

Overseas Visitors

Right from the fifties, Baba has attracted many from overseas, especially those in spiritual quest. One of the earliest to come was Howard Murphet of Australia [whom Baba used to refer to as the Old Australian Tiger]. He was a regular visitor till he turned ninety and could no longer travel.

Then came Dr. John Hislop [Ph.D] of United States. For many years his spiritual hunger took him to many lands until he “discovered” Baba, I think somewhere in the late sixties. He then became totally absorbed in Baba’s spiritual teachings, which greatly appealed to him as they had a refreshing quality of universality. Hislop used to have long sessions with Baba, trying to absorb all he could; later he shared that knowledge extensively with people in all the countries he travelled to. Late in life [around 1994 or so] he was stricken with cancer and became quite ill. Yet, out of love for Baba he travelled to Japan and New Zealand to give talks on Baba’s teachings.

Dr. Samuel Sandweiss of San Diego, a psychiatrist, came to Baba in the early seventies. He came as a sceptic, just for the sheer heck of it as they say. But what happened? He was completely captivated by Baba’s philosophy of Total Love so much so he made love a corner stone of his psychiatric treatment, with amazing results naturally. He has been coming regularly for over thirty years and his cumulative stay with Baba is about a year and half – that is a lot of contact.

There are many others and I shall not list all of them. But a few important references cannot be omitted. There is, for example, a member of the Belgian royal family – I have seen her many times but unfortunately do not know her name; for all of us in the Ashram she is just the Belgian Princess! She comes regularly with her son.

Some years ago, Dr. Jum Sai of Thailand went to Kazhakstan and gave a talk on Education based on the five basic human values that Baba holds as supreme. The First Lady heard about the talk and then sent for Dr. Jum Sai who told her all about Sai Baba and his approach to education. Sometime later, the First Lady chartered a flight and flew direct from Almati to Puttaparthi, something unheard of. In fact, in order to accommodate the First Lady, the Government of India declared Puttaparthi Air Port a Port of Entry for the duration of her visit! Imagine that, the First Lady coming all the way, not for a State visit but just to find out about Sai Baba’s approach to education. Later, she sent a full- fledged delegation to study our methods in detail and I was among those who held discussions with this delegation.

I have to mention next Dr.Noah Samara of Washington who heads the WorldSpace Corporation that does satellite digital radio broadcasting. Dr. Samara has come a few times earlier but three years ago when he came, he spontaneously offered FREE a radio channel on his satellite Asiastar. Subsequently, he has offered a similar channel on his other satellite the Afristar. Why? Because he wanted Baba's message of peace and love to be heard constantly around this conflict-torn world, that is why. Radio time was made available on all the three beams of both satellites, 24 hours a day, throughout the year. The commercial rates for these would be about a million dollars per satellite but Dr. Samara has offered it free for the cause of global harmony [which is why we have named our service Radio Sai Global Harmony].

One of the members on the Board of WorldSpace is Dr. Michael Nobel, the great grand nephew of the famous Alfred Nobel, and head of the Nobel Family. He wears many hats, and among other things he is Chairman, Appeal of Nobel Laureates Foundation. He has come to Baba a few times and I have had the honour to talk to him in depth once on various matters. In the course of that conversation, I bluntly asked him, "A few people are going round making many allegations about Sai Baba. Their number is small but they seem to be getting the ear of many. What is your view about it, especially now that you have come here and seen things for yourself?" His answer was categorical, "These people are talking rubbish and I do not believe a word of it, certainly not after having personally visited this place and seen the set up." There are many other things complimentary about Sai Baba that he said but I shall not go into that. More to the point is that a man of Dr. Nobel's credentials has personally come here, seen and dismissed all allegations as nonsense.

My remarks about overseas visitors would not be complete without at least a brief reference to Buddhists who come for celebrating Buddha Poornima festival in Baba's presence, to Christians who come for celebrating Christmas in his presence, and to a group from Iran that, at great risk to itself, comes with unfailing regularity every year to spend a month or so in Baba's presence.

The Press

The Indian press is very free and does not hesitate to expose frauds and charlatans. However, not a single paper, especially the national newspapers like the *Times of India*, the *Indian Express*, the *Hindu*, the *Statesman* and so on has ever written one critical word about Baba, especially on the matter on which allegations are being made to you. On the contrary a noted journalist like Kushwant Singh, who is a distilled hard-boiled, no-nonsense type of journalist, a non-believer, etc., has not hesitated to hail Sai Baba for his good work to the community.

While on this subject, I should not omit to mention the name of late R.K.Karanjia, editor of a tabloid weekly named *Blitz* published from Bombay. Karanjia was a staunch leftist, and a non-believer. In the seventies he wrote many critical articles on Sai Baba, [not about child molestation though] about

what he [Karanjia] believed was the way in which Baba drew people to him. One day someone asked Karanjia, “You say you are a journalist. A journalist must be objective. You have never seen Sai Baba nor talked to him. You know nothing about him and yet you are attacking him. Is this objective journalism?” This stung Karanjia, and the next thing he did was to come to Puttaparthi. Having come here and seen for himself what was going on, he then sought an audience with Baba, which was given, not merely one but many. Later Karanjia wrote a book, completely revising his opinion about Baba.

Please consider: Do you think that our Press would have kept quiet if child molesting has taken place, especially where a major public figure like Baba is involved? If allegations about Sai Baba are posted on the internet and are there for the whole world to see, do you mean to say that the Press which is ever on the look out for “stories” would have missed this, especially where a very popular public figure like Sai Baba is involved? Could it not be that the Indian Press, which is right here, knows for sure that publishing pure falsehood is non-productive and serves no purpose? Do you think Police Officers of the calibre of Mr. Kandaswami and Mr. Dora, both of whom are men of great integrity would have associated themselves with Baba? And do you think men of great probity like Mr. Chakravarthi and Mr. Giri would be here? Do I have to say more?

Baba’s Service To Society

This I shall make brief but please, are you aware of the following?

- That Baba has set up a tertiary care hospital in Puttaparthi [inaugurated by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in 1991] where cardiac and urological treatment is offered completely **FREE**, including surgery? Over 12000 heart operations have been performed absolutely free. About 99 % of the beneficiaries are poor and lower middle-class people who cannot even afford consultation fees, let alone fees for surgery.

I can mention one case from direct personal experience. Many years ago a poor employee in public school I was once associated with approached me and sought help to admit his wife in Baba’s Super Speciality Hospital in Puttaparthi. I did the needful. Later, his wife was operated and given a new lease of life and this man did not have to pay a penny – he could not have ever paid for the operation.

- In 2004, Baba opened a second Super Speciality Hospital in Bangalore, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Vajpayee. In this hospital too, treatment is completely **FREE**, and the specialities of this hospital include cardiology and neurology. Since its inception, thousands have received advanced surgical treatment without having to spend any money on medical charges of any kind.

- While on the subject of Baba's hospitals, I must mention three important facts. Firstly, when Baba launched his Puttaparthi Hospital, he invited an eminent doctor named Dr. Safaya to come and head his new hospital. At that time, Dr. Safaya was the Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences [AIIMS], Asia's biggest Super Speciality Hospital with 35 specialities. The post of Director of AIIMS is very prestigious, and yet Dr. Safaya chose to give that up in order to come and serve Baba in an **honorary** capacity in a hospital for poor set up in rural area. And he has been here for 13 years now.
- Attracted by the opportunity to do service, many doctors from overseas [particularly America] regularly come to Baba's super speciality hospitals to offer help.
- As if this is not enough, about 50 graduates from Baba's Institute have joined the two hospitals as staff members and are engaged in support service, even though outside they could, with their management and computer science degrees, command much higher salaries. Why have they chosen to sacrifice thus? Out of love for Baba who has not only given them free education but showered much love on them.
- Two years ago, two of Baba's students were sent to the Loma Linda University in California for training in Hospital Administration. Over there, they not only won the hearts of staff and students alike with their impeccable conduct and behaviour, but, more important, enthused the Dean and an Administrator to come to Puttaparthi to see the environment from which they [Baba's students] have come. And these American doctors saw for themselves what produces quality students. By the way, these two students not only got the top rank, but were also among the few top students in the whole country that year and for that reason received a letter of commendation from the President of America.
- Between 1995 and 2000, Baba spent over eighty five million dollars on a massive drinking water scheme that has brought safe drinking water to over a **million** people spread over a **thousand** villages in the parched districts of the State of Andhra Pradesh. And starting 2002, Baba is engaged on a massive project to bring water from the river Krishna to the water-starved metropolitan city of Madras. All this is public knowledge in India, but I wonder whether the detractors of Baba and those who have lent their names to support this negative campaign are aware of even a tiny bit of what Baba has done over the decades for Society and is continuing to do.

The Signature Of Baba's Institute

Again and again, Baba stresses that the end of education must be character. We are what we are because of Society and when students go out into life, their foremost concern must be: How to express gratitude to Society and pay

back the debts they owe? If students are to acquire this attitude of service and sacrifice, then the end of education must be character – no escape from that. Students must study not with the intention of using their knowledge for making money in life but for living as a good human being, and being of use to humanity. It is this philosophy of Baba that has moved me most.

There are innumerable examples that can be cited to illustrate how Baba's students have always stuck to the path of righteousness even under the most adverse circumstances but I shall not bother you with those. However, this I must call your attention to. There are thousands of Baba's students, scattered all over the globe in fact, and wherever they are, they do not fail to engage in service that is beneficial to the community. This, I submit, is something unique [though unfortunately the world knows little about it]. Enclosed are two articles on the subject of service by our old boys that have appeared in our Radio magazine *Heart to Heart*. I would strongly urge you to go through them to get a feel for the kind of students our Institute produces.

Madam, culture, they say, is manifested through refinement. Is not compassion a noble sentiment that is an index of human refinement? Noted physicist Victor Weisskopf [born in Austria and later Professor in MIT] once said: “[Scientific] knowledge without compassion is inhuman while compassion without knowledge is ineffective.” In our Institute, we make it a special point to impart education blending knowledge and compassion. We are not aware of others who are consciously and consistently making such an effort in a sustained manner. And please remember that Baba has been doing this for over three decades. Incidentally, as a scientist, it is the practical demonstration by Baba of the efficacy of such blending that has made me dedicate myself totally to the cause of the Institute founded by Baba.

Madam, your organisation the UNESCO is concerned with education, science and culture. You therefore ought to be more than interested in what Baba is doing. The people of India are becoming increasingly aware of what is going on. The leaders of India are drawn to Baba because it only when humanism is blended with material progress that there can be true Peace. And students love Baba because no one loves them as much as he does – this you can ascertain from them directly if you so choose. If any proof is needed, one has just to see how old students repeatedly come to see Baba in large numbers from all over the world, just as they would come to their parents. That is their special bond of love, unmatched anywhere in the world. I have seen many universities in the world but I know of none where the alumni have consistently and in such a sustained manner dedicated themselves to the service of the suffering.

Some Personal Notes And Concluding Remarks

Allow me please, at this juncture, to add a few personal notes. My wife and I lost our only son nearly two decades ago. His death was sudden and tragic and that produced a deep vacuum in our lives. That was when we both were drawn to Baba, and soon the emptiness of that vacuum was replaced by the

sense of fulfilment attained by serving humanity under his umbrella. A few years ago my wife also passed away and now I am all by myself. Deeply desirous of dedicating every single available moment of my life [I am now 72] to the mission of Baba, I have reduced my possessions to just my clothes, books and a computer. I live in the Ashram where Baba has been kind enough to provide me with a room. My wants are few and my needs are simple. I am at work every single day and believe me I have not taken a vacation in 12 years. That is how Baba inspires us.

These have been the best years of my life when I have been able to do something for others without bothering to do something for myself – that freedom is so refreshing, and added to that is the joy of working with Baba's students. It is their enthusiasm that enables me to work harder than ever before.

I teach and do many other things besides, including various instrumentation projects for Baba's hospitals. Every single piece of working is most fulfilling, and I have come to realise, as St. Francis said, that is in giving that we truly receive.

Madam, I deeply apologise to you for the length of this letter, but please consider: Those challenging you about the withdrawal ask for a debate. I put it to you: why should there be a debate just because a handful of people [if you examine carefully, it is the same three or four who are actively engaged in this vilification campaign] make frivolous accusations? Are we on trial? Are we to be presumed guilty unless we go through fire and establish our purity? What are the credentials of the people levelling the charges, as opposed to the credentials of people who have been coming to Baba for decades and are associated with him? There is an accusation of cover up. Where is the cover up? I would instead say that it is those slinging mud that are covering up, brushing away the credibility of Presidents and Prime Ministers down to diplomats, doctors and thousands of students.

The question may be asked: why did we not speak before? The answer is to be found in the letter written by Baba in 1947, quoted in my article, which has been forwarded to you. We simply do not allow ourselves to be deflected by frivolity; instead we focus on our work.

May be at this juncture I should mention that I have nothing personally against the academics that have been cited in support of the Advisory. Child molestation is such a horrific crime that naturally every one is rightly concerned about it. I think it is probably that concern that has translated itself into support. I am sure that if these academics, whom I respect [since I too belong to that community], had the faintest knowledge of what I have placed before you, they would not have lent their names to supporting a frivolous complaint.

You also have this to consider: You are told about credibility etc. Is the Government of India, which has made the representation to the UNESCO irresponsible? Are we to seriously believe that the Government of India too is

involved in a massive cover up as is being alleged? Or is the Government gullible and has been misled? **Do these people who are making the allegations know that the Trusts of Baba [as indeed all charitable trusts in India] are under CONSTANT scrutiny by various governmental monitoring agencies besides the tax authorities? Do you think they would grant tax exemptions to Baba's Trusts if there was even an iota of truth in the kind of unfounded allegations that are being made? Are they also supposed to be involved in the alleged cover-up? And pray, what are they supposed to get by doing so?**

I am sending herewith a set of brochures that profile briefly Sai Baba and works connected with his mission of compassion. Please study them carefully and examine the photographic evidence presented therein and ask yourself: Is not the Government of India justified in taking exception as it did, against the vilification of one of the most venerated citizens of the country, who has also served it so well? Also, what has the writer who is angrily challenging you for removing the Advisory got to say about the thousands of free cardiac and neuro surgeries performed? I rest my submission here.

With my deepest apologies for taking so much of your time,

I remain,
Yours faithfully,

G.VENKATARAMAN

A Thumbnail Sketch Of Myself

Academic degrees: Honours degree in Physics from the University of Madras, and Ph.D in Physics from the University of Bombay.

Career summary: Served in the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Bombay, of the Department of Atomic Energy, from 1955 to 1973 as Scientist. From 1973 to 1987, served in the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalpakkam, of the Department of Atomic Energy, as Director Physics and Electronics Group, Head of the Computer Centre, Head Library and Information Service, from 1978 to 1992 as Director ANURAG in the Defence Research and Development Organisation, holding the rank of a Distinguished Scientist. Retired from that post on superannuation.

Publications: About eighty [80] original papers and review articles in leading physics journals published in America, England, Europe and India.

Books and monographs: One monograph published by MIT Press, Boston, one monograph published by Springer Verlag, Berlin, the official Raman centenary scientific biography of Nobel Prize winner Sir C.V.Raman, commissioned by the Indian Academy of Science and released in October 1988 by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, and 14 books on physics in a series entitled VIGNETTES IN PHYSICS.

Fellowship: Elected Fellow, Indian Academy of Science, elected Fellow, Indian National Science Academy, elected Fellow, National Academy of Sciences India.

Professional Awards: Sir C.V.Raman Medal of the University Grants Commission, Raman Centenary Medal of the Indian Academy of Science, Indira Gandhi Award of the Indian National Science Academy, and the Sir C.V.Raman Medal of the Indian Science Congress.

Other honours: Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship conferred by the Nehru Foundation, and the Padma Shri conferred by the President of India.

Participation in international scientific activities: Have presented papers in many international conferences, have chaired sessions in international conferences, have been on the organising committee for international conferences, have lectured in many universities in India and abroad [from McMaster University in Canada to Victoria University in New Zealand], have refereed papers for journals and served on editorial boards of journals.

-Heart2Heart Team

SERIAL ARTICLES

SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI - PART 19

(Continued from the previous issue)

ACT III SCENE 3

One day, Easwamma is busy with household work. The baby is left on the floor. It can now crawl. A cobra quietly enters the house and slides inside. The child crawls and moves towards the snake. The mother is not aware of this; she is busy with her work. The snake and the child face each other. The snake raises its hood and gently waves it. The child smiles. Suddenly, Easwamma sees what is happening. She is horrified. She screams, 'Snake! Snake!' People come running in. A few are armed with sticks.

E.AMMA: *[to a villager about to hit the snake]* Stop! If you try to hit the snake, the child will be in danger!!

K.RAJU: *[to E.Amma]* Don't get excited! *[To villager]* Don't hit the snake. Instead, go and call Naga the snake-charmer.

VILLAGER: I shall.

The snake charmer is brought. He skilfully catches the snake. Everyone is relieved. Easwamma hugs the baby.

E.AMMA: My child, ...my child.

V.RAJU: Don't cry. Nothing has happened to the baby!

K.RAJU: There is nothing to be afraid of. Our Sathya is the very embodiment of God. This incident is merely for proclaiming that to the whole world.

People disperse, discussing the incident. Many realised that there was Divinity in the child and that was why the snake did not attack the child. However, no one realised then that the child was the Incarnation of the very Lord Himself. However, later, as the boy grew up, He performed many miracles, Leelas. Slowly, many began to understand that the boy they called Sathya, was the very form of God.

ACT IV - SCENE 1

Sathya is now a boy about five years old. One day in the Raju house; the children are being served food by mother Easwamma. For Sathya, Easwamma has prepared the dish sanghati, made out of millet. [Even today, Swami eats mainly sanghati; it is a poor man's food but very nutritious.]

E. AMMA: Sathyam, do you like this dish *sanghati*? Is it nice?

SATHYA: Yes.

E.AMMA: Shall I give you some more?

SATHYA: Yes!

E.AMMA: Seshama!

SESHAMA RAJU: Yes mother.

E.AMMA: How is the *sanghati*?

SESHAMA RAJU: It is very nice!

E.AMMA: You like it? Shall I give you some more?

SESHAMA: No mother, I have had enough.

E.AMMA: Venkamma, how about you?

VENKAMMA: Mother, I will have some more.

E.AMMA: Parvathi, what about you?

PARVATHI: Me too, mother!

E.AMMA: What?! Is it so good?! You always say no but today you are asking for more! Seshama, why don't you also have some more?

SESHAMA: No mother, enough! I have already had rice and other side dishes.

E.AMMA: Great, you and your calculation! When you are young, you must eat well. I will give you some more, and you had better eat it!

At this stage, Venkama Raju enters the house.

V.RAJU: Easwaramma!

E.AMMA: Oh, you have come! Join the others and have lunch. It is already late.

V.RAJU: Has father had his meals?

E.AMMA: No, he said he would wait for you. He asked me to serve food to the children first. Please go and wash your feet.

V.RAJU: Will do!

Venkama Raju comes after a wash and sees his father Kondama.

K.RAJU: Venkama! Why so late? Come, let's eat.

V.RAJU: Yes sir.

Together, they sit down to have their meals.

END OF ACT IV SCENE ONE

(To be continued)

GITA FOR CHILDREN – Part 21

(Continued from the last issue)

CHAPTER 8

41. Continuing, Krishna says, 'But Arjuna, mere bookish knowledge is not enough. Life is a never-ending examination and at every stage you would have to check between right and wrong before acting.'

42. Showing some signs of disappointment, Arjuna now asks, 'Krishna, why does God make life a never-ending exam? Can't we have a break, some relaxation, and also some fun perhaps?'

43. Krishna replies, 'God knows you would complain in this manner. So He offers a concession. He says, "Listen, why are you so bothered about how to get through these exams? Am I not sitting there right within you in your Heart? And am I not always available to give you the answers to questions you are unable to answer yourself? Just activate your Intellect or *Buddhi* and give Me a ring!"'

44. 'Can you ask for a better deal? In the worldly exams, you cannot have such consultations during exams but in God's exam, you have this privilege!'

45. 'Arjuna, in essence, only in man can one see the third strand of evolution in action, i.e., the strand of Consciousness. Where Consciousness is concerned, some are at the very bottom. Some are in the middle, while a handful are at the top.'

46. 'All that I am now telling you is closely related to the cycle of repeated births and death. If a person resists spiritual evolution, then I am afraid that that person would have to go through innumerable birth cycles to achieve spiritual refinement. And in the process, he has to face all kinds of problems. But one does not have to get stuck like this. All one has to do is to surrender to Me, place full faith in Me, and I shall take care of the rest.'

47. 'This brings Me to the topic of the time of death and the right time to die. There is a lot of confusion regarding this, and I do not want you to be misled by popular misconceptions.'

48. 'First and foremost, I wish to stress that if you manage to think of Me at the moment you are giving up your body, then all your problems are over! You will instantly merge in Me; no more rebirth and all the hassles associated with human existence here on earth.'

49. 'That is a bargain offer, is it not?! Unlike the commercial bargains that are usually available only at festival times, My offer is available all the time to all people everywhere!'

50. 'But I must caution you that thinking of Me at just the last minute is not easy.'

51. Arjuna comments, 'I knew that there would be a fine print somewhere! If it is not easy, then Krishna why are You bothering to mention it at all?'

52. Krishna smiles and replies, 'Arjuna, you have got it all wrong. There is no catch anywhere as you seem to imagine. All I am saying is that you must make sure you think of Me at the last moment. You see, man spends all his life absorbed in the outside world. You may protest and ask what else is one supposed to do. Can one be sitting in Meditation all the time?'

53. 'No Arjuna, I am not suggesting anything like that at all. I know very well that people would be busy all the time with worldly activities. They would be preoccupied with family problems, health problems, financial problems, and so on. All this I know.'

54. 'I am not asking anyone to run away from these or bury their heads in sand. Not at all. Don't you realise that right now I am asking you not to run away from battle but to enter it? Then what? My simple formula is, "Do what you have to do but keep chanting My Name all the time". That is all.'

55. 'What I am suggesting is not at all difficult. It is just a matter of regular practice. You are an expert archer. How did you become one such? Was it not through constant practice. Without such practice can you react suddenly, say if you were in danger? I am saying the same sort of thing. If you cultivate the habit of constantly chanting My Name, then you would do it automatically in the last minute. Where is the trickery here?'

56. Arjuna now asks, 'Granted. But then, Krishna, You are known by so many Names. Which of these am I supposed to chant?'

57. Krishna replies with a smile, 'You can choose any Name of Mine that you like, any Name. Just make sure that when you chant, you do so with feeling and Love, that is all. But unfortunately, people do not bother to follow this very easy prescription. That is the problem.'

58. Arjuna now asks, 'What happens to people who fail to merge in You after death?'

59. Krishna replies, 'Well, death must come to all bodies – that is the law of the Universe; no escape from that. The good enjoy a good after-life while the evil ones have a rough time.'

60. 'Now there is a folklore related to the fact that during the year, the Sun spends six months over the northern hemisphere and six months over the southern hemisphere. Based on this, somehow the idea developed that good people die during the bright period that is, during the period when the Sun is in the North. In the same way, the bad people were supposed to die during the dark period.'

61. 'This myth is a gross distortion of the spiritual truth. The fact is that good people are those who follow the Path of Wisdom. Wisdom and Knowledge are normally associated with light. That is what made people to think that the good alone die during the bright period. These people who speculated thus did not understand the difference between physical brightness and Spiritual brightness.'

62. 'Good people are always guided by Spiritual light, and their life automatically ends in Spiritual brightness. That is all. The fate after death has nothing to do with the Sun being in the North or the South at the time of death but on how you are here on earth.'

63. 'So once again Arjuna, the bottom line is: "Think of Me always, under all circumstances." If you do so, then I would be there to receive you at the last moment, and after that you are guaranteed a bright future, shall I say?!

End Of Chapter 8

(To be continued...)

- Heart2Heart Team

WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

GIFTS OF LOVE AMIDST DEATH AND DEPRESSION IN INDONESIA

How the Sai volunteers reached out to the survivors of the devastating earthquake in Indonesia on a war-footing and gave them comfort, solace and love...

"Initially, I was very sad and frightened when the earthquake struck. My home was no longer standing. I could only see planks of wood here and there. There was no food or water. My family was starving and no one was helping us. I was so happy when the people from Sai Baba came to help us. They gave us rice, towels, biscuits, milk, soap and clothes. I felt that God had listened to my prayer. Now we are no longer alone."

This is what a tiny and traumatized girl, Tita of just 11 yrs, from the Bantul area of Central Java, Indonesia says with a rediscovered smile on her face a few days after the massive earthquake shattered her home, family and life on the early hours (5.54 am) of 27th of May 2006.

When the earthquake struck thousands like Tita, she and her family were sleeping in this densely populated town of Yogyakarta located in Central Java, Indonesia. Measuring 5.9 on the Richter scale, the disastrous tremor, originating from a depth of 33 kms from the floor of Indian ocean and centered at 38 kms to the south of the city of Yogyakarta, brought in its wake more than 5,700 deaths. The brunt of it was felt was in the Bantul plain where there were more than 3,500 deaths.

In addition, over 15,000 people were injured, 83,683 homes were completely destroyed and an additional 314,865 houses damaged. An estimated half a million people were rendered homeless.

So many lives are shattered beyond repair because even if they are alive now they cannot walk or work. There is so much need to infuse self-confidence in them, provide them with all necessities and rebuild their lives. The World Bank has projected the financial damage at a massive 3 billion dollars – more than both the Gujarat and Pakistan earthquake figures of 2001 and 2005 respectively - due to the large amount of infrastructure destroyed. So that is, in brief, the extent of damage in the island of Java.

Sai Devotees Rush to the Scene

Into this scene of death and devastation came the Sai Organization – dozens of devotees ready to work tirelessly for their brothers and sisters who had lost everything. **Heart2Heart** was privileged to receive details of the work undertaken by the Indonesian Sai Organisation and we share with you an overview of their tireless toil.

On the day following the disaster, four teams including senior office bearers went to the stricken areas to make assessments. They visited Dr. Sarjito

Hospital, located in Yogyakarta, and Cakra Husada Hospital, located in Klaten. Medicines were distributed at these two hospitals, including thousands of antibiotic doses, thousands of syringes, bandages and other necessary medical items. The distribution of food, clothes and stoves was carried out in other afflicted areas.

On the second day after the quake, they distributed emergency supplies such as 40 tents, and hundreds of pieces of clothing.

On the third day, 3 lorries full of supplies (consisting of over 3 tonnes of rice, 1000 bottles of water, clothes and other essential items) reached the area for distribution.

On the fourth day, two mobile medical teams began making house to house visits supported by another stationary team, helped by 10 youths who also started setting up kitchens.

By the fifth day two public kitchens began feeding the hungry, as more supplies arrived, including one and a half tonnes of rice and more household supplies.

In a short while three hygienic public kitchens were set up in the areas of Klaten, Imogiri and Gunung Cilik, to remain open till 29th June 2006. Fresh vegetables were supplied daily to the base camps from the Sai Center in Yogyakarta. The sevadals, with the help of the local villagers, worked round the clock and served with love three meals a day for over 2,050 people.

Bibi, a little girl of 7 years from Bantul, tells us how vital the supply of food was:

I feel very scared and I cried. My father and mother took me and my sister from our home because it had broken into dust. I was very hungry and some people started giving us milk. My mother made me drink it and I felt much better. Now I want to go back to school to play with my friends.

Over the next few days, 6 medical teams were working to aid the survivors; over 2 and a half tones of rice were given out; 50 stoves and many essential food and household items were distributed; tools and volunteers arrived to help in rebuilding homes; the materials to make 20 brick furnaces were arranged (the bricks will be used to build 80 new homes); and thousands of items of clothing were distributed including a company run by devotees dispatching 10,000 pieces of clothing and 2,500 blankets.

(This is a very small picture of the massive efforts that went into collecting, delivering and distributing the earthquake relief supplies. For the full figures see the tables)

The logistical efforts were carried out with the knowledge that their labors were feeding the starving, giving medical aid to the injured (by 14th June as many as 1,070 victims had been medically treated by Sai volunteers),

providing shelter to the homeless and clothing those who had nothing. It was and still is a massive undertaking, bringing out the best in the devotees in these life and death situations. The comment below depicts one example of the rebuilding work achieved by the devotees.

“After the quake I felt very scared. I lost my friends and my father brought me here (in a tent put up by the Sai Organization). Over here I met my aunty, uncle and friends. I am so happy to be with them and can play again with my friends. I like the class, the songs and the gifts given to us,” says Kristianingsih of 10 years from the Bantul region.

Donated Medicines

TT (tetanus toxoid)	4150 doses
Amoxicil 1gr antibiotic injection	500 doses
Bandage Kasa sterile	300 boxes
Betadine	15 liters
Cexftaxidime	800 doses
Disposal syringes 1cc / 3cc	3500 / 2000
General medicines	12 boxes
Latex gloves	250 pairs
Lidocaine 2ml	2100 vails
Mini surgery kit	12 sets
Needle/thread sets	444
Pehacain 2ml	1000 vails
Plaster leucoplast 2" and 3"	60 of each

Donated Clothes

Sarongs	1268
Shirts	1120
Clothes	50 boxes + 10,000 individual pieces

Children's clothes	1100
Women's dresses	1080

Donated Food

Rice	8360 kg
Drinking water	212 boxes
Milk	270 packs
Biscuits	97 boxes
Baby's food	51 boxes
Instant noodles	420 boxes
Cooking oil	89 boxes.
Sugar	6 boxes + 100 kg
Coffee	3 boxes
Soy Sauce	15 boxes
Sugar	90 kg
Tea	3 boxes

Donated Essential Items

Plastic Tents	40
Blankets	1289
Soap	51 boxes
Mosquito repellents	3,000

Kerosene Pressured Lanterns	70
Stoves	52
Beds	2
Towels	860 + 3 boxes
Tooth Paste Tooth Brushes	54 boxes 19 boxes
Mats	427
Children's toys	3 boxes
Rope	5 rolls
Detergent	14 boxes
Laundry soap	1 box
Writing materials	1 box
Cooking ware	1 box
Glasses	1 box

The devotees not only brought supplies and equipment but gave their physical strength too to help rebuild lives. As a pilot project, the Sai Organization will provide the finance and human resources for 9 houses in the district of Bantul. They also gave much needed emotional support to the traumatized, such as listening to accounts of personal suffering, playing with children and singing songs to uplift people, as one boy, Hevin, of 12 years from bantul, recounted to a devotee -

I was shocked when the earthquake came. Everybody ran helter skelter and everything was destroyed in a split second. Everyone screamed and shouted and panicked. My family brought me here and on the first day we slept without shelter and food. So many had no tents and it rained heavily during the night. I prayed to God to help us. The next morning we did not know where to go, or what to eat as we had no food.

But then the Sai Organisation came and gave us some milk, noodles and also provided us with tents. Injured people are now being taken care of by the doctors. We are happy because the Sai youth and devotees play games and sing songs with us, give us books, pencils and rubbers.

So that is the difference that the Sai volunteers in Indonesia have brought in the lives of their brothers and sisters in distress. One can never describe in words how the love and emotional support apart from the material support from the Sai devotees really reenergized the people who thought they have nothing and nobody for them. The work in Indonesia is still going on and Heart2Heart wishes all the dedicated devotees there all love and prays for His grace and blessings on them for now and forever.

-Heart2Heart Team

SIMPLE VILLAGERS OF KANPUR....DRAWN BY HIS LOVE

The Subtle Influence of Swami's Love

The villages of Kasigawan and Banapurwa lie about 15-20 kms away from the city of Kanpur, in Uttar Pradesh, North India. In 1999, some Seva Dal members from the Sai Organization visited the villages to carry out seva. They had read about Swami's wish to make India prosperous and that the first step was to make the villages self-reliant. Unless the villages are provided with resources and proper civic facilities the nation will not prosper. Swami emphasized that villagers should be provided with proper sanitation and they had entered the villages to carry out Swami's instructions.

The villagers were very suspicious as they imagined them to be politically motivated or government employees and hence their reaction to the sevadals was not encouraging to say the least. In fact, their attitude was hostile.

The Seva dals were not disheartened but with abundant faith in Swami and fervent prayers on their lips, entered the villages again after a small gap of few weeks. This time they started conducting bhajans with the help of a few spiritually minded villagers. A few respected people from the village came and told the Seva Dal, "These villagers are bad people and you are simply wasting your time."

This was partly true, because these villages were notorious as they used to harbour criminals. But the Seva Dal members ignored this advice, and praying to Swami they saw that the bhajan meetings increased in numbers. They then carried out sanitary work and helped those who were in abject poverty.

The main motive behind all this was to love and serve. And also to make the villagers aware of Sai so that they can experience His love which would then transform them and make them trouble-free. And all this is something which is impossible without His grace. Initially the Sai bhajans were difficult for the villagers to follow, and so they sung more locally known songs. But after a while, they came to know, learn and love Sai bhajans. And over time Swami worked so wonderfully. Their hearts now hold His love, their minds understand His teachings and their hands do His work. Here are two stories just to give you a few instances of how this heartening transformation happened.

Transformation of Two Criminals

The first miracle took place when the village's most famous criminal was seen silently enjoying bhajans. People were scared that he would create problems at the meeting. But he sat quietly by himself. And at the end of bhajans he even came to the front and shared his experience with the gathering, saying,

"I was fast asleep outside my house last night. Suddenly, the police came to arrest me and I heard them saying that they will not let me escape at any cost. I prayed with all my might to Swami for protection. And then, what I saw shocked me! The police force was going away. I immediately understood it was none else but Swami who had saved me. I felt very guilty for all the bad I had done in my life and I wanted to give up all my bad habits."

Now a regular member of the Sai Samithi in the village, this criminal-turned-devotee adds,

“It took a very long time to rid myself of my bad traits - but I did not stop praying to God. Finally, I got a call from Swami in the form of a chance to serve in Prasanthi Nilayam in the month of June along with other Seval team members the next year. Today I take part in all seva activities of the Sai Samithi, as an offering of gratitude to Swami for all that He has done for me.”

Another similar incident happened with a notorious criminal called Brijendra Singh. He relates how he was the greatest drunk and all the villagers were scared of him - even his fellow criminals. He used to see his family taking part in Sai bhajans and seva activities, but he paid no attention to them.

He says, “In June 2002, I learnt that 40 young people of my village are leaving for Prashanti Seva. I also somehow wanted to go and gave my name for the trip. On arriving, I was very impressed with the activities of Prashanti Nilayam; there was complete silence all around. I had Darshan of Swami in Whitefield and carried out the seva in Puttapparthi. Although the Seva was a bit difficult, it all went on so well somehow. Slowly, I started to feel guilty for all the wrong I had done in his life. After returning from Puttapparthi, I found a strange transformation in my life.”

From then onwards Brijendra became interested in Seva activities, and left all his past bad habits. Now he takes part in all the Sai activities and is much loved by the other villagers. These are just two representative cases of how Swami, so beautifully has brought about a silent spiritual revolution in the village.

Sai – Their God and Guardian

These villagers love Swami immensely and it is Swami who protects and sustains them. One particular season a certain group of villagers were working round the clock in their fields harvesting their crop. Their neighbours were a little puzzled as to why there were harvesting their crop so early and the answer that they received was – “We are rushing to finish all our work so that we can leave for Puttapparthi to do Seva in the month of June”.

The Puttapparthi group harvested the crop but could not thrash them and left the crop in the fields. They feared that rainfall could anytime spoil the entire crop. And their fear came true. One evening they saw dark clouds in the sky and rain seemed imminent. They had no time or energy to do anything. All they could do was pray. And they opened their hearts to Swami and prayed as fervently as they could. Surrendering everything at His feet, they retired for the night.

Then, at midnight, there were knocks at their doors. They were scared of opening their doors for the area was renowned for criminals and they feared the worst. But there was someone chanting “Sairam” outside and somewhat reassured they opened their doors and found that some people, well in time, had carefully placed all their crops under shelter. It was unbelievable. Who did it and how it happened? It was their prayers and the Lord’s grace.

Saved by Faith in God

Bhagavan saves their lives, not just their livelihoods. A Sai devotee, Sri Shivaram, had a baby with a serious health problem. He took him to the three best hospitals in Kanpur. The doctors told him that the infant cannot be treated there, and to take him to the P.G.I. Hospital in Lucknow. When they took the baby to Lucknow, the doctors there asked him to deposit Rs 50,000/- in cash immediately for the operation. His father somehow managed to find the money, but just before the operation the infant's condition became very serious. The doctors were now reluctant to go ahead with the operation and advised him not to waste money and take the infant home. The chance of survival was nil, they told Shivaram.

Hearing this, the parents broke down and with no option left brought their child back to the village. At the village everyone sang bhajans and prayed to Swami, their last resort, to save the child. One villager advised *Vibhuti* and the regime of bhajans and application of *Vibhuti* continued for 15 days! **On the 15th day the unbelievable happened! The sick infant was playing happily on its own. With this miracle Swami and *Vibhuti* has now become the most potent medicine for all health problems in this village.**

An Amazing Tale of a Life Saved

Another fascinating account is that of a young girl called Swati Chouhan from Chakeri Samithi. She tells **Heart2Heart**,

“This happened on 13th July 2004 when I was returning home after submitting my N.C.C form. I was standing on Harjinder Nagar Crossing waiting to cross the road, when I was hit by a fast moving truck. The next moment I was under the truck and I saw the truck tire running over my legs.

I felt I was dying and my body became numb. I was not able to speak and I prayed to Swami that I am going to die here and how will my parents know where I am lying. **Immediately after this prayer, a big ball of light just like the sun appeared. My eyes were burning the same way when one stares at the sun for a long time. Then I saw Swami in a white dress and He told me “Don't be afraid. You shall not die, for you have a long life.” After this He disappeared.**

These words echoed in my ears and I felt that my life was coming back. I raised my head and saw that there was no flesh left on my legs and the bone was clearly seen. I didn't feel scared at all seeing such a thing. I didn't feel any pain as my legs were lifeless. Then one uncle came and held my hand and also called people for help. Somehow he took me out from under the wheels of the truck and helped me to lie down on steps of a temple close by.

Many people came up and asked me about my parents; but no one came forward to take me to hospital or to inform my parents about this. The same uncle who had lifted me out from under the truck carried me to the nearest hospital. There, they gave me first aid and directed me to be taken immediately to Madhuraj Hospital, which is the biggest hospital in Kanpur.

While I was being given first aid, this uncle went all the way to my house and called my parents. Then I was taken to the bigger hospital where I related what had happened to the doctor and my mother. They kept me in I.C.U. and told my mother and other relatives that I will only survive for 7-14 days and not to spend much money on my treatment.

On fifth day after the accident my condition worsened, and nobody thought that I would survive. That day my respiration also stopped and the doctors kept me on a ventilator. It is said that out of hundred only one or two survive on ventilators. They kept cotton on my eyes and put tape on it. I was on ventilator for about 15 days. All my relatives were praying either for me to survive, or die - but not to suffer.

My coma situation made my relatives believe that I was no more, but I could feel everything although my body was practically lifeless. Again Swami appeared, and placing my head on His lap, I fell asleep. After some time, I got up and found that my breathing was back to normal. Swami gave me a new life and today I am alive all because of His grace.”

Sai Touching The Tender Hearts...

Yes, the hand of Sai is working hard to help the young take to healthy moral paths. In the area of Govind Nagar, Bal Vikas Programmes have been continuing for the last fifteen years. The poor children have taken immense interest in the programme and as a result there are a great many shining examples of Swami's teachings. Their transformation has been possible all because of His grace and blessings.

The children are taught bhajans, mantras, and are told *Chinna Kathas* (stories narrated by Swami) which are the main source of change in their lives. Earlier they used to go begging for food but now they are ready to serve other poor people. Studies were an impossible dream, but today every year 20-30 children are given admission to schools, all expenses being taken care of by the Govind Nagar Sai Samithi. Inspired by Sai devotees one school in the area has even started to provide free education for all.

After joining Bal Vikas these poor children have transformed their hearts. They have left all their bad habits and look forward to seva activities which they perform as an offering to Swami for all that he has done for them. Every year, ten to fifteen children are taken to Puttaparthi so that they can see God in flesh and blood walking amongst them.

Today every single individual in these villages says "Sai Ram" to each other, instead of names or hello. There are many other such examples of transformation which have touched them all for they know that Swami is caring for them and they have each experienced His love in action in their lives. We can read a telling example below.

The Sai Children Shine

In year 2001, there was a state level security seva training camp in Govind Nagar in which about 300 people took part. All arrangements for this programme were solely handled by the Bal Vikas children of ten years and above. There were only three elders to assist these young men of Sai. The programmes were a great success.

In 2005, when all the Sai devotees had gone to Puttaparthi for a conference, the Bal Vikas children arranged a day of distributing food to 400 *Narayan*s (poor and underprivileged) and other service activities, from 5 am to 10 pm.

In summer the children provide cool drinking water; in winter they provide hot tea and distribute blankets and other warm clothes, all as offerings to please Swami. Many of these children have passed the second level of the Bal Vikas programme. Today businessmen in Kanpur prefer to appoint Sai devotees, as they feel that they can trust them because of their integrity.

Bal Vikas Education – A Heartening Success Story

The Bal Vikas education in the villages of Kasigawan, Emlipur, Bampurwa, Parsowli and Kweyar has been uplifting the people in many ways. Where earlier they used to speak harshly, today they devotedly chant *Vedam* just to please Swami. They chant the Name of Sai whenever they are free and the villages have such a cordial atmosphere.

Once the All India President of Sai Organizations came to visit one of these villages and said that he was told by Swami specifically to visit that particular village, and that he was just following His command. The village children welcomed him with *Vedam* chanting.

Today the Bal Vikas programme has reached even the village schools, where Omkar and Sai Gayatri have become a part of their daily prayers. The teachers say that the students have become more disciplined and respectful to their parents and teachers. Their language has changed as they sincerely try to observe 'speak no evil, hear no evil and see no evil'. They have been totally transformed and about 35 children of them have even gone to Puttaparthi to see Swami.

In 2005, there was a Bal Vikas conference in Puttaparthi where books were distributed at the end of the programme as prasadam to the children. There was one boy among them who did not get a book and he felt very sad. Immediately another boy gave away his book to this boy, just to see his brother happy, showing how much he had learnt about love in action.

Another child relates "I had gone to a bookstall and saw one book that I liked very much. The name of the book was 'Healing with love'. When I saw the cost of the book it was around Rs 307 and I had only Rs 107, so I felt very disappointed. On the second day of the Festival of Joy, Swami distributed books to the children and when I saw it was the same book which I wanted to buy I felt

very happy as Swami had heard my prayer and had given me the same book as prasadam.”

The children practise Omkar and Sai Gayatri in the morning and at night before they go to bed and about 150 children of this area join in the Bal Vikas programme. The Govind Nagar Samithi provides free education for the poor children; free uniforms and books, and also distributes clothes for village people.

With the holding of free medical camps the villages have truly become holy Sai villages. The slum area and village people take an active part in all seva activities. Movingly, they say they want to be good and helpful instruments in Swami’s hands and will serve His mission in all possible ways. They say that they are very grateful to Swami for all that He has done for them. All the transformation seen in these people is patent evidence of the Grace of Bhagavan.

*All these accounts tell but a small part of Swami’s gracious touch on the lives of just a few people. Imagine if we were to know the full story! Most of His work is unseen and unheralded - which reminds us to be ever thankful! **Heart2Heart** would like to thank the people who shared their miraculous experiences and we pray that our readers will give us the privilege of re-telling more such stories.*

-Heart2Heart Team

PRASHANTI DIARY

CHRONICLES OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

While it is well-known that India is one of the world's most populous countries, what is perhaps not so well-known is the fact that the youth compose over 60% of the population. And this youthful segment of the Indian population has now come of age and is asserting itself in many streams of national thought and is shaping the issues that will define the progress of the country over the next few decades.

And this facet of national life has also pleasantly infiltrated the Sri Sathya Sai Organizations. While the youth of the world have always been the chosen instruments of this Avatar occupying pride of place in His scheme of things, over the past 18 months there has been a more than the usual participation of youth in programmes in the divine presence - not only from the different states in India but also from abroad. Just a few months ago, we had a children's Festival of Joy that was well attended by children from all the states of India. Then we had the youth from Hyderabad that played a very helpful role in the conduct of the 80th birthday celebrations.

Youth from England participated in last year's *grama seva*. Talented youth have always come and performed in the divine presence – displaying their mastery over instruments like the sitar or else displaying their musical talents in full measure like the Sundaram Group from Chennai. Now after the Sadhana Camp of the Kerala Youth (as reported in Prashanti Diary of the June 1st issue), it was the turn of the Karnataka Youth to put up a program called *Yuva Vandana* - a 2 day celebration during Swami's stay in Bangalore. And these are apart from the myriad programs that are regularly put up in the Divine Presence by the students and the alumni of His educational institutions both in Brindavan and Puttaparthi.

Apart from the program of the Karnataka youth, there were a host of organizations in Bangalore that also had one celebration or other before Swami's return to Puttaparthi on June 8th. We bring an in-depth coverage for you all these different programmes in this month's instalment of Prashanti Diary.

May 24th - 26th, 2006: An Exhibition On Educare

A three-day exhibition intended to convey Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's message of Educare was held in Sai Krishan Kalyana Mantap between Wednesday the 24th and Friday the 26th of May during Swami's residence in Brindavan. The exhibition attracted a considerable attention from a large number of visitors.

Bhagavan Himself found the time and graced the exhibition on the morning of the 24th to signify the inauguration of the event. He was accompanied by Sri Y.N. Gangadhara Setty, Convener, Council of Management, Sri Sathya Sai Trust, Karnataka and Sri Nagesh Dhakappa, State President, Sri Sathya Sai

Seva Organisations, Karnataka and was received by the members of the team from the Spiritual Wing of the Organisation who had put together the Exhibition. Swami went round the Exhibition and evinced keen interest in the posters and exhibits displayed. He expressed his approbation of the work and clearly conveyed His advice that the exhibition should not be confined to Bangalore but be taken to other centres in the State. *Arathi* was performed before Bhagavan left the Kalyana Mantap.

The exhibition contained a display of around 80 computer-generated posters and other exhibits to underline the message of Educare. The Kalyana Mantap was tastefully decorated in anticipation of Bhagavan's visit.

The first exhibition on 'Educare' was held at Brindavan two years ago, and all the posters were put on the website of the Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust, Prashanti Nilayam. For this second exhibition, all the English posters were accompanied by Kannada translations so as to make it easier for the Kannada-knowing people to understand and appreciate the message sought to be conveyed through the exhibits.

The Exhibition was divided into separate sections each dovetailing into the other in a logical sequence beginning with the definition of Educare and the relationship between Education and Educare and then going on to cover subjects like the creation of the Universe and the lessons to be drawn from nature, the strange paradox of the absence of happiness and peace for mankind in spite of material prosperity, the importance of 3HV - unity of the head, heart and hands - in addition to EHV, the significance of the five Ds - duty, devotion, discrimination, discipline and determination - in charting one's course to self-transformation and finally, the importance of conducting our lives in such a way as to satisfy Bhagavan's statement: "Your life is My Message!". The publication: 'Educare - Veda of the 21st Century' was also made available to the visitors to the Exhibition.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's message of 'Educare', a synthesis of spiritual thought and practice, charts for us a clear way of life. It is proposed to take the display around the state in due course so that Bhagavan's message can reach an ever-widening circle of devotees.

MAY 25th: A Concert By The Gents Of The Brindavan Bhajan Group

The Brindavan Bhajan Group has a fairly long history. *Bhajans* were initiated at Brindavan by Bhagavan on a regular basis during December 1968 after Swami returned from His trip to East Africa... Initially, the lady members started the *bhajan* sessions with a few senior gents joining them. It was only in the year 1987 that male members also formally joined and formed a group after receiving the blessings of Bhagavan. The Brindavan Bhajan Group has since come a long way to the present structure wherein they form the back-bone of the *bhajan* singing especially during the summer months when Swami normally visits Brindavan.

The Brindavan Bhajan Group (Gents) which is now a part of the Spiritual wing of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations, Karnataka, is a group which is unique, comprising members of varied talents and professional backgrounds. The common thread which binds this heterogeneous unit is their love for Swami and a desire to sing His glory. Recently this talented group has been doing a number of Spiritual activities especially related to *bhajan* singing. Apart from conducting regular *bhajan* sessions at Brindavan and selected temples in Bangalore city, the Group was also involved in conducting *bhajan* training sessions in various districts of Karnataka. There was an exhibition on *Namasankirtan* hosted by this group during the Divine Presence in 2005 entitled "Sai Nama Kirtana Kaliyuga Sadhana" at Brindavan during May 2005, which was again repeated with the Divine blessings at Prashanti Nilayam during the Gurupoorinma celebrations in July 2005.

On the same theme, "Sai Nama Kirtana Kaliyuga Sadhana", a comprehensive book giving insights on *bhajan* singing was also brought out by the Group along with an Audio-Visual CD during the 80th Birthday of Bhagavan, through the Karnataka Publications Trust. As a follow-up the group is now ready to present about 12 episodes of recorded Audio-Skit on Radio Sai Global Harmony to be aired shortly. This skit also highlights the significance and efficacy of *namasankirtan*.

A devotional songs ensemble called "Geetha Malika" comprising of 9 selected songs in Hindi, Sanskrit, Telugu and Kannada languages, was presented as a humble offering to Bhagavan on the 25th of May at Brindavan. Bhagavan appreciated the presentation of the songs. This was the first time that the Group presented a music programme in the Divine Presence. The devotional songs presented by the Group were a result of concerted and devoted efforts put in by the members for the past one year. The following are the songs of "Geetha Malika":

1. *Gaiye Ganapathi Jagavandana* (Hindi)

The Presentation started with our Obeisance to Lord Ganesha who is the remover of all Obstacles. He who is worshiped by the entire World. He is the dear son of Shankara (Shiva) and Bhavani (Parvathi).

2. *Enu Daha Yava Moha* (Kannada)

There is an inexplicable thirst to see Him and a desire to sing His glory by His devotees. Let us become a bee which hovers around His feet humming His Name.

3. *Govinda Shritha Gokula Brinda* (Sanskrit)

This song is a composition of Saint Annamacharya who extolled Govinda as Gokula Brinda. . .How fortunate are we to see the very same Sai Krishna in Brindavan!

4. *Teliyaga Tarama* (Telugu)

Is it possible for mortals to understand and comprehend Bhagavan's glory? Nay even Saints and Sages nor even Brahma can comprehend! But we can get His Love by singing His *namasankirtan*.

5. *Nee Kaiya Bidade* (Kannada)

Hold our hands Oh Parteeshha.....We contemplate on you everyday. We yearn to have your Vision... How blessed are we to have your *darshan* today!

6. *Darshan Bina Sai Man Nahilage* (Hindi)

Oh! Sai, Your *darshan* is the greatest gift to your devotees. We yearn to see You and will imprint You in our Hearts.

7. *Sai Ram Meghashayam* (Telugu)

Swami, You are both Sathyaswaroopa and Shanthi PradeepaSalutations to you Dear Lord.

8. *Dekha Bhagavan - Dhanyavaad* (Hindi)

Swami, we would like to express our gratitude to you. Whatever we possess today is only by your Grace. That we are singing today in your presence itself is only by your Grace.

9. *Sai Nama Kirtanamu Kaliyuga Sadhanamu* (Telugu)

Sai Nama Kirtana is the only effective *sadhana* in this Kali Age. Let us all then sing with *bhava*, *raga* and *tala* (feeling, melody and beat). . .

After the conclusion of the programme, Swami called two senior members of the group to the dais and expressed His happiness about the morning programme. He said it was full of *bhava* (feeling) and wanted the songs to be printed in a book form. He also instructed the group to come to Puttaparthi and present the songs again there in His Divine Presence. He then further blessed all the members of the Brindavan Bhajan Group (Gents) who had performed that morning with a group photograph.

He then looked at the *Mahila* Wing (Ladies' wing) of the Bhajan Group and though they had not sung that morning, still they had served Him long and well over the years. He called the leader and asked her to bring all the ladies also on the dais for a group photograph. With happy expressions all the ladies ran up the dais at this unexpected divine benediction of an opportunity for the coveted group photograph!

May 27th - 28th: Yuva Vandana – A Karnataka Youth Programme

In His infinite compassion, Bhagavan Baba graciously permitted the holding of a state level Youth Meet in His immediate divine presence at "Brindavan" on the 27th and 28th of May '06. This two-day meet was widely attended - 2250 Sai Youths and around 400 Balvikas Gurus and other office bearers attended the meet. They arrived at Brindavan by the 26th evening from all the parts of the state. Elaborate arrangement for their food, accommodation and transport had been arranged by the organisers. In addition, 1000 school children drawn from the various villages (where a number of service activities are regularly conducted) also attended the function. Every village boy dressed in a white pant and shirt and every village girl in a white *salwar kameez*, specially stitched and blessed by Swami earlier, were a sight to watch, as the children

were so very happy. With all these youth and children, the energy levels were very high in Brindavan during the course of the two days.

The First Day Morning Programme

The programme was inaugurated in the morning of the 27th of May by Swami. An elaborate procession was organised to escort Him over the very short distance from His residence in Trayee to the stage in Sai Ramesh Hall. Bhagavan Baba was thus accorded a ceremonial welcome with Veda chanting, *nadaswaram*, *Chande*, *Keelu Kudure* and *Dollu Kunita* folk dances done by youth from the different districts of Karnataka.

Bhajans were also sung by Sai Youths drawn from different districts. Bhagavan Baba arrived on the stage and inaugurated Yuva Vandana - 2006 by pressing a remote button and a huge lotus erected on the stage bloomed, a little dramatically with smoke coming out from the bottom, and all the huge photographs of Bhagavan Baba on the stage were illumined brightly simultaneously. The Lotus flower after it opened revealed His Lotus Feet in the centre and was illumined with the name of the festival YUVA VANDANA in bright letters on the top. The lotus was erected against the back-drop of a blue sky to provide a pleasing contrast.

While Swami was inaugurating the function the youth continued singing the bhajans. They started with *Ganesha Sharanam* and followed it with the *bhajans* – *Shakshatha parabrahma*, *Sarva Dharma Priya*, *Sri Kari*, *Jaya Panduranga*, *Hare Ram Hare Ram*. They ended their *bhajan* presentation with *Jaya Jagadeesha Hare* and *Bolo Bolo Sab Mil Bolo*. Clearly the *bhajan* singers are very talented and Swami enjoyed their *bhajan* singing this morning and also on subsequent other occasions during this two-day festival, for it was their pleasant duty to sing the *bhajans* as Swami arrived into Sai Ramesh Hall both in the morning and the afternoon.

After inaugurating the function, and as the *bhajan* singing was going on, Swami expressed a desire to walk around the youth and the children. He blessed the distribution of the school kit to all the children, a timely gesture at the beginning of the school year. The school kit containing a school bag, 6 Note-books, a Geometry box, pens & Swami's laminated photograph were then distributed to all the 1000 children to their great joy, as a blessing from Bhagavan Baba, while Swami Himself stood observing and blessing all of them. Swami further blessed the school children and the Sai Youth by moving amidst them, giving *darshan*, *sparshan* and *sambhashan* before returning to the stage so that the morning's festivities could begin.

Swami permitted to start the programme with a theme song and a welcome song written by Sri Kasturiji and four little girls dancing to its melodious tunes. This was followed by music programme by Sri Shankar Shanbhogue and Smt. Smita Bellur and party. They gave a very scintillating performance singing compositions of Purandara Dasa, Meera and Basaveshwara.

Sri Shankar Shanbhogue is an exponent in devotional singing and has learnt under the guidance of Pandit B. Radhakrishna Baliga, Pandit Mahabaleshwar Bhagwat, Pandit Madhav Bhat, Pandit Ramrao.B Naik, Pandit Raj Bhau Sontekke, and Pandit Panneshwar Hegde.

Smt. Smita Bellur was initiated into Hindustani Classical Vocal Music at the age of 12 by Guru P.R. Bhagwat and continued her learning with Pandit Arjuna Nakod, a doyen of the Gwalior Kirana Gharana. Presently she is getting her classical *taleem* from Pt. Balachandra Nakod.

They sang songs alternately. Sri Shankar began first with the Keshavadas composition *Gaganopama Gan Ganapataye* followed by the Purandaradas composition *Dasana Madiko Enna* and his last song was the Hindi *Hari Tum Haro Jana ki Bheer*. Smt. Bellur sang the *dasa pada - Nandenado Illi* followed by the *vachanas - Bettada Melondu and Guru Vinadinda*.

They were accompanied by Pandit Vasanth Kankapur on the harmonium and Sri Guru Murthy Vaidya on the *tabla*. With *mangalarathi* and *prasadam* distribution, the morning programme concluded. The *arathi* was a little unusual in that about 12-14 people, on both the gents and the ladies side did the *arathi* simultaneously using lamps of different shapes and sizes, with the largest one being at least 3 feet long.

The First Day's Evening Programme

The afternoon function started with *bhajans* on Bhagavan Baba's arrival. The singers started with *Pahi Gajanana*, followed by *Easwaramba Priyanandana*, *Radhe Govinda*, and *Arunachala Shiva*. After these *bhajans* Swami blessed the afternoon programme to start.

The programme started with an introductory talk by Sri Nagesh G. Dhakappa, Karnataka State President of the Sathya Sai Seva Organizations and he also introduced the two youth speakers. Kumari Shivaleela from Dharwad and Sri. Vinay Kumar from Bangalore spoke about youth activities and their experiences as also the transformation that has come about amongst the youth.

Kum. Shivaleela, who was selected to speak in the Divine Presence after she had won a state level elocution contest, spoke in Kannada about the changes in her after entering college. Starting with the value of prayer she recounted how Swami had returned after giving interviews, when their group went away having break-fast while the interview was going on. They then started praying and reciting the Gayathri mantra and Swami in response returned and granted *darshan* again. Recounting another story she talked about the time when one Sunday there were only three of them to do the Narayana Seva in an adopted village. By Swami's grace the auto driver who took them there also participated in the *seva* and many of the village folk themselves helped out. In fact the auto-rickshaw driver also did not charge them for the trip back.

Speaking next was Sri Vinay Kumar, Youth President of the Karnataka State Seva Organizations and one of the organizers of the programme. He touched upon Swami's beneficial influence in His life and the protective role that mother Sai has had in critical moments of his life. One memorable account was how Swami saved him from nasty office politics! He recounted feelingly about how depressed he was as he was being blamed in the office for something he was not responsible for. He prayed ardently to Swami as he felt that only Swami could save him from the forces that were arrayed against him. Swami worked wonders in His own way. He totally transformed the Managing Director and over time far from being antagonistic the MD not only became a friend but even an ardent Sai devotee, dropping in often to talk to Vinay about Swami.

Bhagavan Baba blessed the gathering with His divine discourse followed immediately by *mangalarathi*. Exhorting the youth to follow the path of *Sathya* and *Dharma*, He said in part, *"It is only the youth who are capable of protecting this world. It is the youth and youth alone who can set this world right. No nation can stand without youth. Sometimes, the elders underestimate the capabilities of the youth, thinking that they are inexperienced and young. But the youth are endowed with immense power. If they take a firm resolve, they are capable of achieving anything. If they realise their power, they can emancipate the nation. This does not need any education."*

What is education? Education means Vidya which connotes the knowledge of the Self. This is the foundation of all education. Today students are acquiring only bookish knowledge. Does a man become educated just by acquiring a college degree? Can a person who lacks wisdom and does not perform righteous actions be called educated? Education which does not confer wisdom is no education at all; it is only worldly and bookish knowledge.

Imagine the great sacrifice of Sakkubai who renounced everything for the sake of God. Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amrutatthwamanasu (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth; it is attained only by sacrifice). Money is the root cause of many evils. Money makes many wrongs. The first priority of the moneyed people today is to send their children abroad for education. Too much money leads man to the path of evil. Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows. So, we have to develop morality. The very foundation of Bharat is based on Sathya and Dharma. This is what we have to propagate. The Bharatiyas should consider adherence to truth as the greatest Dharma. Sathya and Dharma are most important in the life of man. The youth should strictly adhere to them. What is Sathya? It is the harmony of thought, word and deed. Where these three are in harmony, Sathya is present there. People speak something on the platform, they have something else in their mind, and their actions are entirely different from what they speak and think. This is the worst sin.

Your very form is love. It is love that protects the whole world. The five elements that constitute the universe are based on love. Only when love combines with the five elements does the universe come into existence. But

love is not to be seen anywhere today. Today there is lack of love even between mother and children. What happened to that love? We are bartering it for money. When money is lost, nothing is lost. Instead of putting our faith in money, we should have more faith in love and should develop love to love relationship with others. When you have this type of relationship based on love, love will develop more and more. Only then will we be able to love everybody.

Those who have money should look after the poor and sick people. Utilise all your earnings in a proper manner. Consider social service as service to yourself. Do not bear hatred or enmity towards anyone. Enmity is a wicked quality. Friendship is very important. You and I should become one. That is true Maitri (friendship). All should become united. If you really want to see God, first see Him in everyone. The youth should greet and treat each other with love like brothers and sisters.

Face all difficulties with forbearance. Accept all trials and tribulations with love. Accept both pleasure and pain with love. Fill you heart with love and not with the poison of evil qualities. Even poison becomes Prasadam (sacred food) if it is offered to God. When Mira was given a cup of milk mixed with poison, she offered it to Krishna. Krishna accepted the poison and gave her the milk as Prasadam”.

Immediately thereafter, Sai youths from Mysore enacted a play entitled "Ekalavya" in the Sai Ramesh Krishan Kalyana Mantap.

This play was written by the renowned Kannada playwright of hallowed memory - Sri. T.P. Kailasam. All the actors who appeared on the stage were the students of the Mysore Medical College and they were drawn from all over Karnataka. They were also the old students of the Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva, Junior College, Sathya Sai Vihar, Alike.

The play in Kannada brings out the supreme qualities of Ekalavya, the subtle changes made by Sri T.P. Kailasam in the traditional story have added to its poignant sanctity.

The story of Ekalavya is a rather difficult theme to present effectively and positively on stage because it reflects a rather dark chapter from the story of Mahabharatha. It can be a story of deceit but the boys did a commendable job in focussing on Ekalavya's devotion to his preceptor Dronacharya and the ultimate sacrifice which Ekalavya performed in order to uphold the word of the Guru and thus made himself an eternal and universal ideal for all youth.

Ekalavya is a tribal youth and is enamoured in becoming a great archer. He is very talented and approached the preceptor Dronacharya to take him as his *shishya* or disciple. But Dronacharya taught only the princes of the *Kshatriya* lineage and hence refused. Undaunted, Ekalavya makes a clay idol of his guru and teaches himself archery, by accepting the clay model of Dronacharya as his guru.

The play brings out Ekalavya's tribal roots and there are a couple of tribal dances and songs sung in Kannada that were melodious.

Moving on, one day Arjuna and his guru Dronacharya were walking in the forest. There they meet with proof of Ekalavya's immense skill as an archer. Arjuna reminds Dronacharya of the guru's promise to make him (Arjuna) the greatest archer on earth.

The confrontation between Arjuna and Ekalavya is electric and full of fast paced dialogue which was well appreciated by the Kannada speaking crowd. When Ekalavya hears about the guru's promise to Arjuna, unhesitatingly he gives his right thumb to his "guru" Dronacharya as guru *dakshina* so that the guru could redeem his word to his disciple Arjuna of making him the greatest archer on earth.

Swami watched the entire play and later personally handed over watches to each of the participants in the drama. Bhagavan Baba also expressed His immense happiness at the performance by creating a "Navaratna Ring" for Sri Kishen Bhagwat who enacted the role of Ekalavya. He also had a special word for the director of the play.

The Second Day's Programme

On Sunday, 28th May'06, *bhajans* were held by members of "Sai Gitanjali, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Kshetra" J.P. Nagar, Bangalore followed by Narayana Seva and *vastra dana* by Bangalore *mahila seva dal* (reported below). Talks were arranged in the morning for the Sai Youth in Sri Sai Krishen Kalyana Mantap. Sri B. N. Narasimha Murthy, Warden, Sri Sathya Sai Hostel; Sri Sanjay Sahani, Principal, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning; Sri. U. Gangadhar Bhat, Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Institutions, Alike and Smt. Geeta Mohanram from U.S.A. addressed the Sai Youth.

The afternoon session started with *bhajans* by Sai youth on the arrival of Bhagavan Baba. They were able to sing just two *bhajans* – *Pasupathi Tanaya* and *Rasavilola Nandalala* before Swami asked the afternoon programme to start.

This was followed by two music programme. First was a "Tala Vadya Kacheri" by Sri Arjun Kumar and party followed by instrumental fusion music by Sri Muthu and party.

The *Mridangam* is one of the most ancient percussion instrument in India. It is considered a divine instrument as according to the *Puranas*, Lord Vishnu played the *Mridangam* during the Celestial dance, *Tandava* by Lord Shiva, while Goddess Saraswati played the *veena*, Indira the flute and Goddess Lakshmi was the vocalist.

In *Talavadya kacheri*, the *Mridangam* is accompanied by the instruments like the *Tabla*, the *Ghatam*, the *Khanjira*, and the *Morsing*. *Ghatam* is a pot made of special clay and baked to make it musical. *Khanjira* is a stretched

membrane over a circular ring and *Morsing* is an instrument made of metal having a pinhead and it produces a melodious sound. It is also known as a Jewish Harp in western music.

Talavadya kacheri means a concert using exclusively percussion instruments. It is a difficult exercise to bring together several percussion instruments and fuse their sounds together and render a full-fledged classical concert. But this is exactly what the artists did that morning. The artists were Sri Arjun Kumar on the *Mridangam*, Sri.Giridharudupa on the *Ghatam*, Sri Rajendra Nakod on the *tabla*, and Sri A.S.N. Swamy on the *Kanjira* and Sri M. Gururaj on the *Morsing*. All of them took to the exposition of Aditalam which consists of eight *mathras* (syllables). Additionally, they made it interesting by telling the *konnakol* (which means saying the rhythm through the voice instead of the instruments). Needless to say this unusual fare was thoroughly enjoyed by all present in Sai Ramesh Hall.

Wanting to continue to present a different fare rather than the usual run of the mill concerts, the organizers also contacted the fusion band River, led by Sri Muthu Kumar. Sri Muthu Kumar who is an alumnus of Swami's Institute readily agreed at this golden opportunity to present in Swami's presence. While Sri Muthu Kumar played on the *tabla*, Sri Ashok Iyengar provided the music of the Sitar, Sri Gopinath enthralled us on the drums, and Sri Praveen David formed the quartet on the guitar. The fusion band had four items. They started with the *bhajan Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam*, and then classical fusion music with *Raag Jogiya* was presented next. Their rendition of *Bhairavi* was very enchanting and last but not the least they provided the back-ground music for the climax of that evening session where the youth offered the Yuva Vandana song sung by Dr.Anandkumar and Sri Sai Hariharan. This song composed in three languages (Kannada, Telugu and English) was set to tune by Sri Hariharan.

The words for the Yuva Vandana song are as follows:

Kannada

Yuva vandana yuvavandana yuvavandan saige yuvavandana
(We young people make pranams to Sai)

Nammawamige yuvavandana
(We young people make pranams to Swami)

Sathya Saige youvavandana
(We young people make pranams to Sathya Sai)

Hridaya sarathige yuva vandana
(We young people make pranams to the heart's charioteer)

Telugu

Asirvadinchu asirvadinchu asirvadinchu maa sai asirvadinchu maa Swami

(Bless us, bless us, bless us, oh Mother Sai)

Mee matale memu cheppalani
(Our tongue should recite your Name always)

Mee patale memu padalani
(We should always sing Your glory)

Mee premelo memu munagalani
(We should immerse ourselves in Your Love)

Meekosame memu brathakalani
(We live for You)

The last sentence of the song in English, “We all have come to say we love You Swami” was rendered by more than two thousand youths assembled in Sai Ramesh Hall.

At the close of the function, Bhagavan Baba stood up and expressed His immense happiness. Swami also announced that this was one of the best recitals and Swami assured the youths that He is always with them all the time. He appreciated the drama by the Medical students and called them on stage and posed again for a group photo with them. He appreciated the Sai Youth arranging such a drama and music programmes in such an efficient and appealing manner.

He created a *Navaratna* necklace for Sri. Vinay Kumar, member State Youth Co-ordination Committee. He also spoke about the Ekalavya drama and expressed that it was a difficult theme well rendered. He also asked the boys to come and perform the drama in English at Prashanti Nilayam. (Hmmm, that would make the reporting easier as it was difficult for Heart2Heart to get English translations from the organisers for the programs held in Kannada). This programme concluded with the blessings of Baba and *mangalarathi*.

May 28th Morn: Gitanjali Bhajans and Narayan Seva

On the morning of the 28th the devotees from Sai Gitanjali, a Sai centre in J.P. Nagar, Bangalore, were blessed by Bhagavan to offer a bouquet of *bhajans* in the Divine presence. They had come by buses early in the morning and were given pride of place so they could celebrate the 9th anniversary of their centre in the Divine Presence.

After Swami arrived in Sai Ramesh Hall, they welcomed Him with a rose and gave Him a card that outlined the *bhajans* they wanted to sing for Him this morning. They first paid homage to Lord Ganapathi with *Sri Gananatha Gajanana* and followed it up with the *bhajans* – *Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam*, *Akhanda Jyothi Jalao Sai Man Mandir Mein*, *Antaranga Sai Anathanatha Sai*, *Jai Jai Bhavani Maa Ambe Bhavani Maa*, and *Tripura Shiva Shankara*. They also sang the *bhajans Sathyanaarayana Govinda Madhava*, *Rame Hare Sai Krishna Hare*, *Radhe Govinda Radhe Gopala Sairam*, and

Shambho Mahadeva Shiva Shambo Mahadeva. They concluded the morning session with the *bhajans Radhe Govinda Bhajo Radhe Gopala Bhajo, Rama Sumira Man* and the 13th and last *bhajan* of the morning was *Jaya Vittala Vittala Vittala Jaya Vittala Panduranga*. Swami then asked for the *arathi* to be taken so He could go on with the next activity that was dearer to His Heart – alleviating the distress of the poor.

Even while the *bhajan* singing was going on, Swami's attention was frequently diverted to the activities and preparation going on near the Kalyana Mantap for *Narayana Seva* (feeding the poor) and *vastra danam* (giving of clothes) by the Ladies Wing of the Bangalore Seva Dal. After the *arathi* was taken, Swami hurried to the Kalyana Mantap and blessed the clothes and food and waited till the service was well under-way before He returned to His abode in Trayee Brindavan.

May 29th: a Santoor Concert by Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma

In the afternoon we were regaled by a concert by the great *santoor* master and legend Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma.

Santoor is a Persian word and it means a hundred strains. It is the oldest known string instrument of India. In Sanskrit it is called the *shata tantri veena* or "a hundred-stringed lute". The word 'veena' was used to describe all stringed instruments where the sound is created by maneuvering the taut string of a bow or *pinaki*. In the Rig Veda there is mention of the *pinaki veena*, which also happens to be the instrument of Lord Shiva.

The Santoor as used by Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma is played with a pair of curved mallets made of walnut wood and the resultant melodies are similar to the music of the harp, harpsichord or piano. The sound chamber is also made of walnut wood and the bridges are made of local wood and painted dark like ebony. The strings are made with steel from Germany and England. The instruments used to be made by one family, known as Rehemanju Saz, and the instrument that Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma plays was made by the grandfather of the present maker when he was 95 years old.

To state that Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma is a legend is a master understatement. After all how many musicians can boast of single handedly bringing forth an obscure, almost unknown instrument to the level of being "indispensable" on the concert platform! Musicians and their instruments do become synonyms, but the *santoor* has acquired such an identity solely because of Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma.

In recognition for his immeasurable contribution in the field of music, the Government of India conferred on him the title of Padma Vibhushan, the second highest award that can be given to any citizen of the country.

But more than anything else he is an ardent devotee of Swami making time to come and see Him many times in the year in spite of his immense popularity

and the great demands on his time for concerts around the world. And he has played for Swami many times most notably also at the 80th Birthday celebrations last year.

For the more knowledgeable readers, Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma played the *raga* Khamuz and the *taal* was Dadre and Teental (16 beats). The second piece was Swami's *bhajan Prema Easwar Hai* in Bhajani *taal*.

Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma was ably accompanied on the *tabla* by Sri Vishwanath Nakode.

May 31st: "Sai Darshan's" Programmes In Sai Ramesh Hall

The Morning Programme

May 31st was a red letter day for the devotees who belonged to "Sai Darshan", a Sai centre in Indira Nagar, Bangalore. At a specially arranged function, they got to regale the Lord with *bhajans*, apprise Him of their activities over the year and have Him inaugurate an addition to their centre building. The children of the centre also staged a drama in Sai Krishan Kalyana Mantap in the evening.

Swami was welcomed to the Hall in the morning by the *bhajans* sung by the group. The *bhajans* that were sung by both the ladies and the gents that day included the following: *Jai Jai Jai Jai Ganapathi Deva, Om Namo Bhagavathe, Purandara Ranga, Guru Brahma Guru Vishnu, Sri Ramachandra, Shiva Shiva Shiva, Karunasamudra Sri Rama, Hara Shiva Shankara, Shirdi Sai Dwarka Mai, and Amba Vandanam.*

After Swami signalled for the programme to start, there was a brief *vedam* chanting by the elders of the Sai Darshan group. Sri S.N.S. Murthy then briefly narrated the agenda for the day and handed over to Swami a booklet that summarised the activities of the group. He also requested Swami to press a button that opened a curtain on a specially erected structure on the dais to reveal a portrait of Mother Easwaramma. Thus by pressing the button Swami symbolically blessed "Sai Darshan" to have an addition on the first floor of their building, to be named as Mother Easwaramma Hall, to accommodate the growing activities of the centre.

Swami spent some time going through the booklet and also listened to the melodious *bhajans* sung that day. The morning programme concluded with *arathi* and distribution of *prasadam*.

The Afternoon Programme

In the evening after the normal *darshan* and *bhajans* in Sai Ramesh Hall, all of us quickly moved to Sai Krishan Kalyana Mantap for the children's drama. The children of "Sai Darshan" enacted a play in Kannada called "Ramayanada Ramaneeyaru" based on the Ramayana.

The play had a cast of 33 children – both boys and girls – and depicted sequentially the story of Rama’s exile for a period of 14 years and His triumphant return to Ayodhya and His coronation, following the death of Ravana in the epic battle.

The play began with a scene where the ‘Bala Leelas’ and the growth into manhood of the four sons of Dasaratha were described. The next scene conveyed Mantara’s evil scheme of sending Rama into exile so that Bharata could ascend the throne of Ayodhya. Manthara succeeded by poisoning Kaikeyi’s mind to wring out from Dasaratha the two boons he had promised her many years earlier. Kaikeyi following through with this advice was depicted in a poignant tearful and tragic scene.

The play then showed Rama appropriately dressed up and getting ready to go to the forest. However, He finds that both wife Sita and brother Lakshmana want to accompany Him. All of them take tearful leave of mother Kausalya, Urmila and Sumithra. The episode of Shoorpanakhi being punished by having her nose cut off by Lakshmana, and Ravana vowing to abduct Sita against his wife Mandodari’s advise is next shown.

The next scene showed the trio in Chitrakoot and beyond where Mareecha in the guise of a golden deer lured Rama away from His hut. Ravana in the guise of a holy man begging for alms enticed Sita to cross the three “Lakshmana Rekhas’ and abducted her to his home in Lanka. After this came the beautiful episode of Sabari offering hospitality to Rama and Lakshmana who are searching for Sita in the forest. In a brief scene Tara, the wife of Vali, is blessed by Rama and then Tara directs her son Angada to join the search for Sita.

There was also a scene where Ravana tried to woo Sita but was spurned by Her. Trijata offered Sita some comfort in Ashoka Vana. Hanuman then enters the scene, is blessed by Sita and carried her *choodamani* (head-band) back to Rama. He also destroyed most of Ashoka vana.

Moving on, the drama next showed Rama subjecting Sita to ‘Agni Pariksha’ – the test by fire – before receiving and accompanying her back to Ayodhya. In Ayodhya Bharata and Shatrugana anxiously await the arrival of Rama. The final scene showed Rama’s coronation and His assurance to the *vanaras* (the monkeys) that He would have them as His devotees in His future Avatar as Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The duration of the play was around 50 minutes and the children and everyone who had assisted with the play received Bhagavan’s blessings.

June 1st: Speeches By Two Elders

June 1st is the date the Institute opens after the summer vacation. Sai Ramesh Hall was abuzz with the new and returning students, all glad to be there and having Swami’s *darshan*. Normally when Swami is in Brindavan, He visits the College Auditorium in the morning on this day and blesses all the

students there at the start of the academic year. This year however, He chose to visit the Vydehi Hospital in the morning, perhaps in response to the ardent prayers of its chairman who is a Sai devotee.

The Vydehi Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (as it is called) is next door to the Super Speciality Hospital in Whitefield. The Institute has a Biotechnology Park within its campus with over 500 varieties of medical plants. This Institution also provides free tertiary healthcare with love and compassion for the underprivileged and ailing. The Institute also focuses to deliver high quality, comprehensive, integrated medical education and research. After spending about 20 minutes there, Swami was returning back to Trayee Brindavan, when the railroad crossing gate was closed. The driver parked His car under the shade of a tree, while waiting for the train to cross. While the security restricted the traffic from passing Swami's car, they did allow the few pedestrians on the road at this hour to get close to Him right up to the car and have the bliss of a real close-up *darshan*. We were amazed that a gentleman even had a letter ready to hand over to Swami right there on the road itself!

The kind and compassionate Lord in order to compensate for not visiting the Institute in the morning asked two elders to address the students in the evening. As the function was held in Sai Ramesh hall, all of us were also benefited.

The first to speak was Sri T. G. Krishnamurthy, a devotee with over four decades of divine association. He has held increasingly important positions of *seva* in the Tamil Nadu Sathya Sai Seva Organizations and was its immediate past State President. He chose to address the students about God's role when He comes down to earth to reform mankind. He said that first and foremost He is the divine mother and father and showers immense love to melt the most stone-hearted and reform him. He is simultaneously the divine preceptor, who removes ignorance. He also stated that we can converse with God only in solitude. Hence we have to observe silence and in that silence we can draw extra energy from Him to help us solve our problems. We also have to get rid of our ego so that God can open our eyes of devotion. In conclusion, he also talked about the 4 letters:

1. *Roopa Madhuri*: He is so beautiful that there is no saturation point in looking at Him.
2. *Geeta Madhuri*: Everything He says is poetry
3. *Leela Madhuri*: "Isn't it astonishing", he asked, "How many tons of gold would have been transformed into gold chains, bracelets, and rings by Him over the years?"
4. *Prema Madhuri*: To acquire Him by love. He is love.

Sri Krishnamurthy concluded by saying that when you lose everything that you have acquired in this world (i.e. material desires) then whatever you have not acquired (i.e. God) will be with you forever. So we should control the senses and be always happy in order to experience Him.

Next to speak was Sri B.N. Narasimhamurthy, the Warden of the Brindavan campus of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher learning. Quoting a Kannada poet who 800 years ago in an epic said of the love outpouring from his heart, "Just as the *katchora* bird has only one desire to see the rise of the full moon; just as the lotus has only one desire to see the sunrise; just as the bee has only one desire to see the nectarine honey in the flower, so also I have only one aspiration to contemplate on the Lotus feet of the Lord".

Sri Narasimhamurthy said that our Lord also has only one desire – *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*. His whole life is full of love, compassion and service to mankind.

Narrating an incident of Swami's love and compassion, Sri Narasimhamurthy recounted how Swami wanted to honour Sri V. Srinivasan, currently the All-India President of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations on his 60th birthday. Swami is a great administrator, organizer and manager. Planning for this function, Swami went into all the minutest details, including how Sri Srinivasan should be lodged and how and who should receive him on arrival. And out of His bountiful love, He permitted Sri Srinivasan to sit with Him on the *jhoola* (swing). Sri Srinivasan then with all humility said, "Swami how much trouble you have taken for me". Swami replied, "Not trouble, but love!" Sri Srinivasan then said that what Kuchela experienced in Dwapara Yuga we are experiencing today. Swami replied that the experience is the same, only the time is different.

In conclusion, Sri Narasimhamurthy said, "Look behind and be grateful to God; look ahead and have trust in God; Look around and serve God; Look within and see God".

June 8th: Swami Returns To Puttaparthi

On June 8th, Swami returned to Puttaparthi around 1:45 PM. For a few days prior, He had been indicating to the students in Brindavan that He has to return to Parthi as He had to oversee a lot of work. Parthi after all is His office!

The news of Swami's departure from Brindavan is immediately conveyed to Parthi, and within a matter of minutes the whole village comes alive. The roads leading into the village are washed by the women by pouring pots of water to wash away the dirt and make the black-top look clean and fresh. The women then decorate the cleaned roads with *rangoli* or floral patterns drawn using coloured chalk and letters in either Telugu or English welcoming Swami 'home'. The men get busy making and tying buntings made of mango leaves across the road, a tradition in South India to welcome any eminent personality. And all of them after a bath assemble on the roads, occupying vantage positions, craning their necks so as not to miss even the slightest vision of the Lord as He returns home after His summer sojourn in Brindavan.

The Ashram is equally busy. *Rangolis* are drawn across the main entrance. Sai Kulwant Hall also wears a festive look as all the Ashram inmates and the students gather to welcome Him in a fitting manner.

When Swami's car enters the main road of town, palpable excitement manifests - for the soul of Puttaparthi is now back in residence. The bystanders vie with each other to catch the briefest of glimpses as His car zooms past. Some of the villagers also break coconuts in front of the car as a sign of auspiciousness. Slowly the car vends its way through the town and reaches the Ashram gates where a big crowd of devotees and students have assembled. As the car enters the Main gates, the *vedam* chanting boys and some of the boys dressed in bright coloured costumes are there to welcome Him and as His car enters it is showered with a cascade of flower petals. His car is slowly escorted to the middle of Sai Kulwant Hall and the kind and compassionate Lord though tired from the road trip still decides to sit for a few minutes on the dais giving joy to all before returning to His residence in *Yajur Mandiram*.

June 18th: Felicitation Of Professors

After returning from Brindavan, there was a little lull as far as public activities go. But suddenly on the 17th of June the entire Sai Kulwant Hall was in the process of getting decorated. Bright red-coloured embroidered cloth had been hung on the balcony and small pearl-like beads were strung along the entire veranda leaving everyone to wonder that perhaps a celebration was in the offing. And no-one was disappointed, for on the morrow a special ceremony had been arranged to felicitate a few eminent and long-serving teachers of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) at Swami's behest.

Though the function was announced for 9 A.M., Swami in His eagerness to felicitate His devotees who had served Him well came into Sai Kulwant Hall at 8 A.M. itself, amidst chanting of Vedic hymns by the Institute and High School students and to the tunes of *Nadaswaram* by the Music College boys. Soon, Bhagavan was seated and alongside Him were the four senior teachers along with their spouses, the present Vice Chancellor Sri Anil V. Gokak and the former Vice Chancellor Sri S.V.Giri. Then as per Bhagavan's instructions, some students came on to the dais and garlanded the seated teachers and their spouses and the Vice-Chancellors; other students showered rose petals on them as a sign of welcome and the entire hall resounded with thunderous applause at watching this grand spectacle. Apple juice was also given to all in silver glasses before the start of the function.

The Vice Chancellor Sri Anil Gokak welcomed the gathering and introduced the four teachers who were to be felicitated by Bhagavan that morning. They were: Prof. U.S.Rao, Prof. V.E.Ramamoorthy, Prof. M. Nanjundaiah and Prof. Vishwanath Pandit.

After Sri Gokak's talk, Bhagavan commanded the Institute Brass Band to play on this happy occasion. They responded with 5 songs including 2 *bhajans*. This was followed by some soulful group songs in Telugu by the students. At 8.40 A.M., as the songs were being sung, Bhagavan walked up to each of the teachers in turn, wrapped a silken shawl around them and presented them with a golden 'Kankanam' (bracelet) as a mark of appreciation for their

unstinted service and dedication. It was really moving to see the deep love in Bhagavan's eyes as He gave away the gifts, and tears of joy and gratitude welling up in the eyes of the teachers as they received them from their Beloved Lord. Thereafter, each of the four teachers addressed the gathering.

The first speaker was Prof. U.S.Rao, Principal of the Prashanti Nilayam Campus of the Institute and also the Dean of the School of Business Management, Accounting and Finance. Prof. Rao has had many years of experience in the industry having worked in reputed companies such as Jyothi Laboratories, Alfa Laval and Larsen & Toubro. He joined the Management Faculty in Bhagavan's college in the year 1988. He has published several articles in national and international journals, and his zeal and energy for academic excellence has remained undiminished through all these years. He began his talk by expressing his gratitude to Bhagavan who blessed his wife and him with an extension of life 17 years ago. He remarked,

"I am also grateful to Bhagavan for making me a teacher in his great educational Institution which shapes and moulds His students into leaders of tomorrow to carry out His mission. I am also very fortunate to teach and interact with good-natured students selected by Him. Their enthusiasm, sincerity, idealism, faith and love for Bhagavan is contagious and spreads to all those who deal with them. Can there be a better atmosphere and nobler profession than that?" He also stated that the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet is an example of their love for Him and His love for them. He added, *"The impact of the transformation in the students is that they slowly begin to rely on the power of the divine rather than on the power of the physical and the material world. This can be achieved only by the Divine".*

The second speaker, Prof. V. E. Ramamoorthy, is a qualified cost accountant and has taught in prestigious institutes like the Institute of Financial Management and Research (IFMR), and the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), Hyderabad. He was the Director of Management Development Institute for South Asian region. He has authored several books on Working Capital Management. Prof. Ramamoorthy said,

"1993 is a memorable year for my wife and I for that was the year Swami brought us to His Lotus feet. Having had our share of the ups and downs of life, we were praying for a retired life of reasonable health, peace and quiet. For the last 12 years we have had uninterrupted health, happiness and peace. This has been the golden phase of our lives for which we are very grateful to Him. What greater boon can there be than being able to serve in God's own temple of higher learning which has a wide reputation as the crest jewel of the institutions of higher learning of any country. What greater boon can there be than to associate oneself with the students – God's own chosen ones who are academically and spiritually alert and active. In the contemporary world the counterparts of the students shun devotion; but here when I listen to their whole hearted and full throated participation in the morning bhajans and when I witness the spiritual themes they present before Bhagavan and the innovations they bring in and their participation in cultural events like the Grama Seva , it is not only heart-warming but soul stirring".

The next speaker was Prof. M. Nanjundaiah, Controller of Examinations, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Prof. Nanjundaiah came to Swami in the year 1973 when he joined as a Reader and the Head of the Commerce Department in the erstwhile Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts, Science and Commerce at Whitefield, affiliated to the Bangalore University. He said,

“Sai has a very unique relationship with each and everyone. With me the relationship is that of a mother. When She personally told me that you should not go on changing your relationship with Me – choose one thing and stick to it. This was way back in 1974 and from then onwards it has been Mother Sai for me. It is difficult for me to convey the deep sense of feeling when way back in 1973, I asked Him for the opportunity to serve in His Institute. What I had in mind was to be an honorary part-time teacher coming from Bangalore and teaching in the Whitefield College. In 2 months from that day I became a Reader in Commerce and the Head of the Department and then commenced the most wonderful period of my life. Those days Swami used to spend a lot of time with the students in Brindavan. What greater joy than to see the incessant flow of love between Swami and His students!”

He further quoted an incident of how Swami transformed the behaviour of a boy by stopping to talk with him and also revealing His omnipresence. Such lessons, he said are innumerable and Swami always guides His students. In this context he gave the example of the involvement of Swami in the Bhajagovindam drama that became a big success. He also mentioned the immense help and guidance that Swami gave him, as a mother, when he made the transition from teaching to administration. He further mentioned the guidance that Swami gave him through letters specifically mentioning how Swami wrote to him telling him how he could be a good family man and a devotee.

The last speaker was Prof. Vishwanath Pandit, Head of the Department of Economics in the Prashanti Nilayam Campus of the Institute. Prof. Pandit is a renowned economist who has been on the faculty of the Delhi School of Economics. He has also been associated with Pennsylvania University, USA and Manchester University, UK, and also with various projects in the UN and the World Bank. He was the President of the Indian Economic Society and the recipient of the UGC (University Grants commission) Swami Pranavananda National Award 2004 for his contributions in the field of economics. With his characteristic humility he said,

“The magnanimity of the most compassionate Lord is indeed limitless. It is here today for all to see. I have no doubt in my mind that having been permitted to serve Him at the SSSIHL and to stay close to His Divine Lotus Feet is much more than what I have ever deserved and much more than what I have ever asked for. The torrential grace that has been showered on us today is really overwhelming. There are no words for me to adequately express my gratitude to Bhagavan”.

Sharing a couple of his thoughts, Sri Pandit said that though he joined the SSSIHL only in 2001, he was associated with it right from 1986 when he was asked to set the entrance test question paper for the new School of Management. He came a number of times over the years and spent his summers in Prashanti Nilayam helping out wherever he could, but it was only when the Master Programme in Economics was announced in 2001 that Swami deemed the time right for him to come to Prashanti Nilayam. He said that it was very fulfilling for him to interact with the students whom Swami referred to as His only treasure and the role models of tomorrow. He concluded by praying to Bhagavan to always let everyone remember and be aware of His Divinity and Grace.

Dr. Deepak Anand, an alumnus of the Institute and presently on the Management faculty spoke on behalf of all the students expressing appreciation and gratitude to the teachers for their invaluable guidance in shaping the careers and personalities of hundreds of students. Quoting verses from the Taittiriya Upanishad he surmised that in this University the teachers and the students learn the lessons of life in the presence of Bhagavan in the spirit that living with God is true education. He led the entire gathering in applauding the achievements of these eminent educationists, in turn.

Swami then gave a short but sweet Divine discourse. He said, *“The senior professors are imparting knowledge with love and affection and the students are making rapid progress in their respective fields. Students should cultivate virtues, develop noble character and earn a good name in society. This is what I expect from them.*

On being questioned by his father, young Prahlada replied. Father! The teachers have taught me many things, I have understood the four objectives of life – Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire) and Moksha (liberation). I have studied many things; in fact, I have understood the very essence of education. (Telugu Poem)

Love is the essence of education. Bereft of love, your education will be of little use. However, secular education is also required to eke out a livelihood in this world. There are two types of education. One is secular and the other is spiritual. It is not possible to build a mansion without a strong foundation. Spiritual education is the foundation on which the mansion of secular education should be built. You need to develop Shakti (ability) and Yukti (strategy) in order achieve success in the field of secular education.

Students! You may acquire any type education but, you must give topmost priority to character. The end of education is character. Bear this truth always in your mind. First of all, establish order and harmony in your house. Only then will you have the right to teach others. Lead an ideal life so that others can derive inspiration from you. Cherish the noble teachings imparted by your professors, put them into practice and find fulfilment in your life”.

Swami then sat down and all of us were requested to rise for the National Anthem. After a few *bhajans*, Swami received *arathi* and retired to His Yajur Mandiram residence. All the students and staff had a sumptuous lunch in the South Indian canteen that had been so lovingly arranged by Swami.

June 20th: Annual Day Celebrations Of Deena Jano Dharana Pathakamu

Four years ago, in the year 2002 on the occasion of Gurupoornima, Bhagavan opened the Sri Sathya Sai Deena Janodharana Pathakamu (DJP), a scheme under which residential units were constructed to house orphaned children or single mother with children belonging to the weaker sections of the society. About sixty children from various villages around Puttaparthi are now supported by this scheme. The sum of Rs.100,000 has been deposited in the name of each child (which would be given to them along with the interest when they reach adult age); additionally free housing, food, clothing, education and other daily needs are being provided to them in a loving environment. The residential units are located in a colony named Sri Sathya Sai Nagar in the village of Kammavaripalli behind the western perimeter of the ashram. A school also has been built here where the children are provided formal education along with vocational training. This institution has now become a role model for many such institutions in Andhra Pradesh.

On the evening of 20th June 2006, the children of the home celebrated the fourth anniversary of their foundation day in the divine presence of Bhagavan. The students in their costumes and makeup were seated in the Bhajan Hall. Swami came for *darshan* at 3.30 pm, and directly came to the Bhajan Hall to see them. Swami asked about some of the costumed characters and spent a few light moments with them, and then instructed them to go and get ready to start the programme. Bhagavan took His place on the dais at 3.55 p.m and was ceremoniously welcomed by 2 actors from the drama.

The programme began with an invocation by the DJP students who chanted the 'Narayana Suktam'. At the outset, a boy from the Institution described in English the love and care of Sai and expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan for providing them food, clothing and a safe haven to live in. "We can only offer ourselves and pray for His grace", he said. The boy informed the audience that 9 boys had passed the 10th class and some others had done so well that after finishing the intermediate they had joined B.Sc. in Information Technology to pursue their further studies.

After the speech came the thematic skit which was interwoven with songs and dances, Bhagavan's teaching that technology and all resources must be used for social welfare, was the central theme that was conveyed by the boys through the 3 episodes with 2 boys as narrators providing a commentary. The sets included a giant TV set and a *homa kunda*, both of which were innovatively and realistically rendered apart from a back-drop that conveyed Swami's love for the boys and their love for Him.

The opening scene depicts Adi Sankara eulogizing Lord Siva. The narrators in their commentary set the tone by deploring that in this holy land that has given

birth to such great men of wisdom like Adi Shankara, society has today fallen to the lures of the materialism and ignored its past glorious heritage. This was followed by a dance that was well rendered by the boys who had obviously practiced hard to get the steps right and please the Lord.

The next scene portrays a few priests performing a *Yagna* (offering of oblations in the sacrificial fire) when the great emperor Alexander on his conquering expedition happens on the scene. He is angry at the priests for they ignore him and are unimpressed by his glory. Alexander converses with the priests and questions them if they have not heard about his conquests of vast parts of the world. The priests reply that they are not interested in such useless information when they have embarked on the grand adventure of realizing God. Alexander is impressed by their self confidence and simplicity and asks them to reveal the secret of their contentment. The priests reply that true happiness can be gained only by conquering one's desires and not by conquest of empires.

Then the boys portray a typical urban household in India. The family elder who prides in the richness of Indian culture is shocked at seeing his grandson's flippant attitude towards the values and ethos of this great land. He teaches his grand-son that the wonders of modern technology that he was so much in awe of were already known to the sages of ancient India. He cites examples such as the ancient Indian treatise on air travel as well as missiles and warheads, *Vaimanika Sastra*, and various surgical procedures detailed in the Charaka Samhita. He explains to the boy that it is not technology that is evil, but it is the harmful ways in which it is being applied. The play brought out the numerous ways that technology, especially Information Technology, can benefit society. It is only spirituality that can lend completeness to science was the message of the skit.

The presentation concluded with a moving song that expressed the gratitude the boys felt towards Swami for the sea change that Swami had brought about in their lives and Who cared for them as only a loving mother can. At the end of the programme, Bhagavan lovingly granted photographs to the boys. Swami lingered on for a while blessing the boys profusely while *prasadam* distribution (of a mango) was going on. Clearly he was very touched at this programme the boys had put up and all of us were also impressed to see the difference that love can make in a person's life and put them well on the God ward path.

We will stop this month's chronicles here. In the early part of July Prashanti Nilayam will again be pleasantly invaded by youth; this time it will be teenagers from the States of Maharashtra and Goa jubilantly celebrating the festival of Ashada Ekadashi in the divine Presence. And of course, four days after that will be the Guru Poornima festival. Join us again next month to read about all these exciting events.

Jai Sai Ram!

-Heart2Heart Team

SWAMI AND ME

THE WONDERFUL SWAMI I HAVE SEEN

By Mrs. Geeta Mohanram

This is the transcription of the talk given by Mrs. Geeta Mohanram during a Sai Retreat at Tower Bridge, UK.

My salutations at the Lotus Feet of our Ever Present Swami, and Sai Ram to all of you. Sai Ram.

I see that the theme for this retreat is "All is One", and I was reflecting about it, in that I have come from India to United States and from there to U.K; and you enter a Sai Regional Retreat and you immediately feel one with everybody in the hall; only because our Beloved Swami binds us all together with His Love!

So, thank you for having me here. It's late in the evening; so I hope I will be able to bring a little bit of Swami to you today. Someone just read out a beautiful story at the beginning of her talk about the Master and the three people who visited in the form of the woman and the child. Our Master is known to do things like that.

No Need for an Invitation

As she was reading that I was thinking about a strange experience that happened to me in 1970. My mother, for the first time was to visit London, UK as Swami had asked her to come and speak in Mr. Sitaram's house (who was one of the oldest devotees who started the first Sai Center's here in U.K). Swami had asked her to come and visit them in their house, because this was one of the first center's that was opened outside of India.

My mother had never traveled outside of India. She was coming by herself for the first time and Swami, with all of His love had written a letter to the Sitarams first telling them that He would be sending my mother. He had even written in that letter what she ate and she was a vegetarian; and a very picky vegetarian at that!

And when we went to Puttaparthi just before my mother was leaving - I was a young girl in school - Swami had asked us in for an interview because my mother was leaving. And in that interview, He was telling my mother: "You don't worry; I have written to Mr. and Mrs. Sitaram, they will be at the airport at Heathrow to pick you up." As we were leaving the interview room, He even asked my mother about money - at that time foreign exchange was quite difficult to come by in India - and He even gave my mother 500 pounds to bring with her to UK, if she wanted to do shopping!

But fun aside, in that particular interview, there was a lady in the interview room, and as Swami was speaking to all of us, (there were several people in

the interview room) she kept speaking up every time Swami paused, and she would say “Swami you must come to our town. We are doing a lot of seva, service in our town.” And at that time, you must understand of course, that the Sai Organization was still young - it was still sort of getting a format - and Swami had chosen several people in different areas to lead the organization in their places.

So, every time Swami paused she would say: “Swami, you must come.” The first time she said that Swami ignored her; second time, ignored her; third time, I was beginning to get a little nervous because you know that when Swami is ignoring you twice when you say something you are better off being quiet. I knew that there was a lesson that was coming our way in the form of this poor woman who was going to be the scapegoat of the evening. So the third time, when Swami was still speaking about something, she said it again: “Swami, you must come to our town.” **So Swami looked at her and said: “But I have! I have come to your city!”** Now this poor woman, she still would not keep quiet and said: “No Swami, you have not come to our city.”

Swami changed the topic, and suddenly looked at her and said: “How is the service going on in your town?” And immediately she was very happy because she was the service coordinator in her city. She said: “Swami, the service is going on so wonderfully well; you know when we started off, there used to be about five or ten families who used to go out and do seva.” Swami had at that time said: “Everyday, when you’re doing seva, put aside a handful rice or flour that you are using for your family; collect it over a period of time, and then pool all the rice. The Sai devotees’ together, cook a dish and then distribute it to the poor people.” And the idea behind putting aside one handful every day was - to remember the people who didn’t have anything to eat at every meal that you cooked for your family.

So the lady said: “Swami, when we started off there were ten families who were putting aside the rice. Now we have a hundred people and we have about 25 kilos of rice that we get together. And we are feeding a lot of people. Swami, the seva is going wonderfully well!” And this is asking for trouble if you know Swami! Because it is not for us to tell Him how wonderfully well we are doing seva, it is for Him to tell us how well we are doing. Swami said: “Oh! Very happy! Very happy! *Chaalā Santosham!*” in Telegu; “Very happy!” Now, this lady was beside herself with joy! She was the seva coordinator; she was all ready to go back and tell everybody how wonderful it was.

And then suddenly out of the blue, Swami said: “What kind of rice do you use for cooking?” I immediately nudged my mother because I was sensing that a lesson was coming - and they come in the form of a smile in the beginning! She said: “Swami, very good rice! We use very good rice!” Swami said: “No, I am not asking about the other people, I am asking about you! What kind of rice do you keep aside for the seva activity?” She said: “Good rice.” Swami said: “Oh really! Good rice?” She said: “Yes Swami, very good rice!” and in the middle, she kept saying: “But Swami, you must come to our city to see the seva!”

Swami said: “Very good! Very good! Ah! I know, five rupees rice for the family, two rupees rice for the Narayana seva, for the service, for the poor feeding.” So the lady says: “No, no Swami!” Swami said: “Yes, Yes! You don’t believe me? Five rupees rice for your house, two rupees rice for the poor.” Obviously the five rupees rice the quality is better, the two rupees rice is not properly cleaned; not a good quality. She said: “No Swami, good rice Swami.”

And Swami’s whole smiling face changed! To this day even as I narrate this incident to you, I can go back in time to 1970 and see His face changed! He said: “You don’t believe me? Wait! I will show you. Did you not give the beggar who came to your house who said: ‘Mother give me rice?’ a whole sack full of rice that you had bundled in a red cloth that you had kept aside for Narayana seva? Did you not give it to that beggar two years ago? You don’t believe me? Wait!” And He walks into the inner room, to His bedroom and comes out holding the red sack which was given to the beggar two years back filled with the two rupees rice! “Did you not give this to Me? I have been to your city!”

You can imagine the silence, the utter silence in that room and the embarrassment of that lady! She was embarrassed. She had tears in her eyes. But believe me, the ten people in that interview room that day would never dare to go out and ever do seva in a way that would not please Swami! Because it was such a moving experience. Swami does come, as the Master did in any Form at any time!

This is the wonderful Swami I have seen since I was a small child. He has been my Mother, He has been my Father, He has been my Teacher, a very good Friend, and He has been a Wonderful, Loving Master too.

To give you a little bit about the background that we were talking about earlier. My grandfather came to Swami in 1943. He came in a very strange way - he didn’t want to come - they dragged him along. My aunts had seen Swami 6 months before that in the year 1942, and they had seen a young Swami who was just sixteen years old at that time. They had been so moved by His singing, and His message, that they had gone back home and Swami had told them to come back for the Dussehra, Navaratri celebration - the ten day celebration that happens in the month of October. So they wanted my grandfather to take them along to Puttaparthi because in those days, the journey to Puttaparthi was so difficult!

‘Highlights’ of the Journey to Puttaparthi...Those Days

I am sure you have all read in books about the horrendous journey to Puttaparthi. It is only a hundred miles from Bangalore where my family lives - all the members of my family live in Bangalore. **It was only a hundred miles, but it would take us more than a day and a half to get to Puttaparthi!** We would leave Bangalore around two o’ clock in the afternoon, and reach a town - a small village in Andhra Pradesh - called Pennukonda around two o’ clock in the night. And the train would stop there and we would get out. And at two

o' clock in the night, there was nothing there - just a granite block which was the station - and we would just sit on that stone.

I remember all of my childhood, having spent many, many hours in this place in Penukonda. We just took out our sheets from our little bags, and we just spread it on the stone and just laid down and dozed off till about six in the morning, and around six o' clock or so, some of the elders would run around and try to get some milk from the near by shop keepers to give milk to all the children in the group.

And nobody would sell milk to us because we were going to Puttaparthi and nobody in Penukonda believed in Swami (who was 16-17 yrs at that time). Nobody had Faith in Him. And they said here's a crazy boy who says He is God and you're all coming from the city and making it worse! So they would actually stone these people and say: "Go back in the next train, don't go!" And these people (devotees) would just sit there saying: "Sai Ram, Sai Ram."

Once in a while some poor villager will feel sorry for the children and sell a little bit of milk. And the children will be given milk, and around 7 o' clock in the morning, we would all be put into a little cart and taken to another place called Bukkapatnam - that was the next village - and you got out there. And then, once you got out there, there were two choices; either you could walk to the River Chitravathi and wade through the water to cross the river and get to Puttaparthi- the old Mandir) - or you could get into a bullock cart.

And the bullock cart guy would take us across the river, if he felt like it. **Sometimes he would take you up to the river and say "I am not going anywhere, everybody get off!" because the river would be in spate;** it's not the same Chitravathi as you see now; there would actually be water there! Especially in the month of October, there would be a lot of rain, the river would be flowing quite rapidly and then you had to get off!

Sometimes, he would say: "I'll take you across but only the children and the luggage." So all the adults had to wade through the river and the poor ladies would all be screaming and yelling trying to cross the river wearing saris, and they would all be scared as nobody knew swimming!

And the children, I cannot believe our elders did this to us! Now that I think back, they would put us in this bullock cart - with the luggage - put all of us in it! I remember my cousins and all of us, we would all sit in the bullock cart and the bullocks would be made to go into the river. And you know what happens when the bullocks go into the river, they start swimming! So the cart floated behind these bullocks; and this hill that we had to come down - there would be a whole bunch of people standing on the hill - and the first victim group would be the bullock carts.

Everybody would be screaming: "Sai Ram! Sai Ram!" And these guys with the bullock carts would be making some really strange noises! And we would say:

“Why are you scaring us with these screaming?” They would say: “We are not scaring you; we are trying to scare the bullocks into swimming!” So they would scream and yell and these bullocks would swim faster and faster, and we would be in the cart with the entire luggage, going up and down in the water.

One load got off, he would come back; and then the second group of people, so you can imagine the heart attack the second group was having after having watched the first group from the hill! We would all be dumped in again!

In the meantime, on the way back these guys in the bullock cart would eat all the food! There was nothing available in Puttaparthi! Those of you, who have gone to Puttaparthi now, believe me; you are all very, very lucky! There’s the Italian restaurant, there’s the Pizza Hut, there’s everything! When we went to Puttaparthi, there was nothing there! There was not even a store! If you forgot one thing to bring from Bangalore, you had to go back on the bullock cart, back to Bukapatnam to buy it. So believe me, we packed everything quite well.

So, this would be our journey. We would have left the previous day, at two o’clock in the afternoon, and this is the following morning at 11 or 12 o’clock when you’re going through the river, going on the bullock cart, and arriving there in Prashanti Nilayam soaked to your skin!

But on the other side of the bank was our Beloved Lord, waiting to help us out of the bullock carts! “Come on! You must be really tired! All the ladies are wet. Come in!”

And there were no rooms. No Prashanti Nilayam, nothing! They had to go to the old mandir; there would be just three rooms there; Swami’s room, my grandfather’s room and one extra room. So we were all in that room to go and change. **By the time we came out, the food was ready! Swami would have had the village ladies cook the food, and He would make sure that all the children were fed, all the adults were fed. And then this is about three o’clock in the afternoon; He would say: “Ah!! Now that everybody’s hunger has been taken care of, sit down and tell me what happened in Bangalore? How did you all get going? How long are you going to stay?”**

Grandfather and the Sixteen-Year-Old Sai

So this was our trip to Puttaparthi. And on one of these trips, my grandfather (I haven’t forgotten that I had started the story with my grandfather) was asked to go with the ladies; because they couldn’t go by themselves without a male escort on these journeys that were so difficult. **And he was an orthodox Brahmin gentleman in those days when things like that mattered. He said; “I am not coming to see some sixteen year old! He is not even a Brahmin! He has never gone to school! He doesn’t know Sanskrit! I am not coming!”** So the ladies pestered him, they said: “No, you don’t have to come. You just escort us all the way to Puttaparthi because we want to see Him again. He has asked us to come.”

In that village of Puttaparthi, there was a relative of ours who lived there - who was a priest of the temple there - so he said: "Alright! I will accompany you all but I am not coming to see this young boy! Do you think I am crazy to come and see a sixteen year old, uneducated, non-Brahmin, illiterate person and believe that He is some kind of important person? You people are all crazy! I am not coming to see Him. I believe in my Lord Shiva that I worship everyday. I will drop you off all there and go to my relatives' house and spend my time there and that's about it!" So they finally convinced him.

They were happy to have a male gentleman to go with them. And they did this whole trip of the bullock cart, and the train, and the bus, and being stoned in Pennakonda and everything else! He was scolding them as the time went by - as he saw what the journey was like - and finally, they arrived in the old mandir. If any of you have been to Puttaparthi and have not been to the old mandir, please do so, it has changed a lot now but I think the stone where Swami used to sit is still there.

They arrived there around five thirty in the evening, and Swami in those days, used to sit on that stone and there was no bhajans as we have it; no devotional singing the way we do it these days. They used to just sing long songs one after the other, one person would sing a song and a second person would sing a second song, and Swami would sing the third one, but Swami would join in the bhajan too!

At that time in the evening while the bhajan was going on, these four people - my grandfather, and my two aunts - arrived, and as they entered the compound of the old *Pattam Mandaram*, the old mandir; there was Swami, sitting on the rock. **And here comes the gentleman who is supposed to be helping these two ladies - this is my grandfather, Sheshagiri Rao. He takes one look at Swami that he had vowed not to - because he was going to go away - he takes one look at Him; two seconds, and bang! He has fainted on the floor!**

So you can imagine these two aunts! He was supposed to be protecting them and here he is on the floor in a dead faint! Swami gets up from the middle of the bhajan and says: "Don't worry, don't worry!" He gets up, and helps them carry this 58 year old man into Swami's room and puts him on His bed. Swami says "Don't worry; he is going to be like this for two days. You people go and attend the bhajan."

So these poor ladies, this is the second time they're seeing Swami; they have a father who has fainted away, and they are sitting and trying to sing bhajans! Talk about concentration! And there is Swami, happily sitting on the rock continuing with the bhajan. As the bhajans are done, they say: "What has happened to our father?" Swami said: "Don't worry, he'll tell you when he wakes up. But he is alright, I'll look after him."

So, for one and a half days, Swami looks after this old man - 58 years old, puts water in his mouth every two hours, materializes *vibhuti*, puts it on his

head every two hours. This goes on for two days and these poor women, they don't know if he is going to recover or not.

Two days later he gets up and he is a completely changed man! He said: "You ladies, you two daughters of mine, you can go back to Bangalore, but I am not coming back." They said: "You said you were not going to come here! What do you mean you are not coming back with us?" He says: "No, when I walked in into that compound, and I saw the young boy sitting on the rock, in His face, I had the vision of Lord Shiva. In His head, I saw the moon, and on His forehead, I saw the third eye! This is the Lord Shiva that I have been worshipping for the past fifty years. And now that I have seen Him, why would I leave Him? I am not coming back."

So he resigned his job from Puttaparthi, he never came back. He would visit Bangalore; he would visit us with Swami - when Swami came to Bangalore - and he lived there till 1965, until he passed away.

We are all trying to get closer, and nearer, and dearer to Swami. But it is a lot of work. It is a wonderful thing to hear all these stories, but then it is not just listening to the stories; fortunately or unfortunately, we have to practice what He teaches us. From that place where my grandfather said: "He is not even a Brahmin." Where "I" am more important than somebody else, had to change into "We", and then it had to change into "Us". We had to grow from a narrow "I", my family to our family, relatives, and friends and then all the Sai devotees included. It has taken a long time to grow.

So he stayed there and because of him, my father came into Swami's fold at the young age of 21; and I was very, very fortunate therefore to be born into this family. So it wasn't too difficult really. In fact, I admire all of you or many of you who have come later to Swami; because it is more difficult when you are a grown up. When you are an adult, when the world has already entered your system; to come and accept and see and believe; it's much more difficult. And especially for those who have come from a different culture; it's even more difficult and I really recognize that and I didn't really realize that until Swami asked me in 1988 to go away to U.S.A.

Pack Your Bags

My husband and I were in Bangalore - my husband was taking care of the Sai Center there, I was a Bal Vikas teacher there, my children were born there. We were both very involved in the Sai activities in Bangalore and in Swami's physical presence all the time and we had no desire to leave Him and go so far away. And then suddenly out of the blue one day, He told us: "Pack your bags, time to go!" And we didn't want to go! We cried, I threw a tantrum - I have been a bad problematic child for Him; but He has been very kind to me like mothers are usually for difficult children - and I didn't want to go. He said: "No, you have to go!"

He gave me a very beautiful talk that day when I had to leave. He said: "You know, you have had so many experiences here near Me, do you think that was for free?" Nothing is free in this world unfortunately. He said: "You have to go; and when you go - you've seen only the little Swami, the five foot three inch Swami - but when you leave me and go away to the United States, you will see a Cosmic Swami!"

And I really have! Only because I have come to all these retreats and I have seen all these Sai devotees and I ask them: "How did you hear about Swami?" And they tell me all these wonderful stories and I say: "My goodness! There was I in Bangalore, running to him with my littlest problems; and here people come to Him without seeing Him, without having ever spoken to Him, without having ever had a single interview! How does He do this? It's just that His Love radiates to each one of us when it is our time to come to Him. So, I came to United States and over the years, I have really understood what He meant when He said: "You've just seen a little Swami here, and you go and you will see a Cosmic Swami there!"

God And Dog

And as the pervious speaker was talking about the dog, I was reminded of another incident. There's a beautiful letter that Swami has written to my cousin who lived in the town of Mysore, which is about eighty miles from Bangalore.

At that time, the mother had gone to Puttaparthi for one of the functions and left all the children by themselves. The oldest one being sixteen or seventeen and the little children were younger. And they had gone there telling them they will be back in two days. They had gone away and the children were there alone. And when the mother went to Puttaparthi, Swami asked her to stay on for the birthday celebration which was almost a month away! So the mother said: "Swami, I have left all the children and come away, I cannot stay for one month in Puttaparthi!" Swami said: "Why are you worried about them? I am there with them." She said: "No Swami, the children are so young; they will be worried about me and if I am not there, they won't be able to manage going to the school - the oldest one is going to college." Swami said: "Don't worry, I will write a letter to them." And in that letter, Swami has written a beautiful letter to my cousin - which he still has!

He wrote: "Are you really worried that your physical mother is away from you when your Cosmic Mother; the Mother who has given birth to this whole Universe is with you?" That is the question He asks: "Are you worried that I am not there with you? I am always there with you!" And He quotes a number of incidents in the letter of their daily routine! He says: "Haven't you all done this yesterday? Didn't you all do this day before yesterday? Didn't you pour extra oil into the lamp while lighting it in the pooja room day before yesterday?" He writes all these incidents in the letter and then He says at the end: "But if you're still worried, don't worry, the dog that you have in your house in the morning he is D-O-G, DOG; and in the night he is G-O-D, GOD! He will look after you!"

Lots of incidences today that Swami has taken me back in time. So this is the wonderful Swami that I have experienced throughout my childhood where He has assured and re-assured us that He is always there with us and I am sure that He'll have plenty to say to me the next time I see Him, that I walked in 15 minutes late for the bhajan - the bhajan had already started when I came - I am sorry Swami that I came in late!

High Drama at High Tea

I remember once General Cariappa who was the First General of the Indian Army after we gained independence. Swami used to be very fond of General Cariappa. He was a very tall man - tall of course for us Indians - he was about 6' 3" or 6' 4"! And he would look down at Swami whenever Swami spoke to him, and Swami would always have to look up. So being a very well mannered person General Cariappa would kneel down and come down to Swami's height, so that Swami wouldn't have to look up at him!

One day, Swami was coming to my parents' house for dinner and General Cariappa said: "Swami, You must come to high tea to our house on the way to Dr. Padnamban's house." Dr. Padmanaban is my father. So Swami said: "Surely! I will come. What time is high tea?" So General Cariappa, in all our presence said: "Swami, exactly at five o'clock, not one minute before, not one minute after." So Swami said: "Oh! Okay!"

My father, who used to drive Swami around at that time, was deputed to take Swami to General Cariappa's house and from General Cariappa's house he was to take Swami to our house for dinner. And my father is terrible at finding any place. You take him to the nearest place which is two minutes away and he will still manage to get lost! So my father was having a complete nervous breakdown at the thought of having to drive Swami from Brindavan to General Cariappa's house and then, to our house. Brindavan to our house was not a problem; he knew the way because he has done that a million times, but he was really worried to take the deviation to General Cariappa's house. So he said: "I am going to do a trial run on the previous day; I will go to Brindavan and from Brindavan to General Cariappa's house and then to our house; so I know the way correctly."

In the meantime, Swami told my father: "Make sure you are here on time because we have to be at high tea - not one minute before, not one minute after five o'clock." My father was even more petrified!

So I was the lucky eight year old, and I always went wherever Swami went; my father used to drive - when my brother was a little bit older he was sixteen or seventeen, my brother used to drive Swami's car - but I always tagged along. I was lucky to go in that car wherever Swami went till I was about 13 - 14 years old. Swami told me in Brindavan too that "Make sure you are ready and you're in the car and not making anybody wait."

So the previous evening my father and I go to Brindavan, we drive to Carriappa's house, and drive back and everything is absolutely timed so that we are not late. The following day, we arrive in Brindavan. Swami gets into the car and asks him: "Do you know the way Padmanaban?"- Because Swami knows my father- "Yes Swami, I have the directions, we have done a trial run yesterday, and I know the way." "Very good!" He says and gets into the car. My father starts off from Bangalore and drives and he knows the road so well; he is there ten minutes early! So Swami of course, who never wears the watch, says: "Padmanab, you have come ten minutes early! Remember, he said not a minute before or after?" Then He says: "Go around the block a couple of times so that we are there exactly at five."

Oh! You should have seen my father's face! He went around the block but he didn't know how to come back! Because that was not a part of the trial round! So he goes around and of course the ego doesn't let you say: "Swami I am lost!" How do you say that to Swami? Father looks at me and says: "Did you make sure that you looked at all the cross-roads?" And you know in Bangalore at that time there were no street signs, no road names, nothing. And I am like nine years old! He says: "Did you look at all the street names? Where did I turn?" And he is asking me all this in whispers - because Swami is sitting in the back seat - And I don't know where he went!

Swami bends down and says: "Don't worry, I know the way." So Swami very sweetly directs my father and we come back exactly one minute before. And at five o'clock we are at the door-step of General Carriappa's house.

And we walk in and General Cariappa, who is very well mannered, says: "Come in Swami!" And then Swami turns and looks at me - and I was a little girl - and He whispers: "You are not allowed at the tea-table; just sit in the veranda". Because I was gate crashing you see, only Swami and my father are invited and I was part of this whole car routine. "You sit in the veranda; I'll make sure they will send you a biscuit."

So here I am, a little girl sitting in the veranda, eating my biscuit with Swami sitting inside for about half an hour; and then General Cariappa comes out and we all get into the car. And I was thinking, as I walked in: "Swami, what would you say I am walking in the third bhajan when the bhajan has started!"

That is Swami, who is punctual! He is here. If you told Him you are starting at eight thirty, believe me, exactly at eight thirty He would have sat on that chair and it is ten minutes to ten and I dare not exceed my time again. I didn't come prepared for these talks and I will tell you a little story about that then we will stop.

Speak or Retreat

In 1996, out of the blue, the U.S Retreat in my region asked me to speak because the vice-president of the Region was a member from our center in South Defesta; Washington D.C. He said: "Geeta, you keep telling us all these

stories whenever we come to your house for dinner, why don't you speak at the Retreat, and share all your stories with our friends?" I said: "No, I don't know if Swami would approve or not and I don't have His permission to speak." He said: "No! How can you say that? This is Swami's work, you should do it!" I said: "Swami's work or not, I am not sure if He would want me to talk about my interactions with Him!"

But he kept on saying: "No, you have to speak, you have to speak!" And I was very nervous! I have spoken at EHV training meets and it's very easy because they give you a topic and say: "You speak on this topic." And you prepare and you read from the Sathya Sai Speaks; I don't know but I am sure all of you in the U.K are very well versed in reading the Sathya Sai Speaks. But in my center, I can tell you in Washington; the only books that are absolutely new for the past ten years are the Sathya Sai Speaks. The pages are so beautiful and the books are so well maintained!

But when I was given a topic, I would refer and the best thing that has come out in the past few years is the index and when you want to talk about non-violence; you look for non-violence in the Sathya Sai speaks number 7, page number 42. And you read up that part of Swami's discourse and prepare it. Those talks are easy. And I have done that many times!

But I had never spoken about my personal experiences. Because, when you speak about Swami in that personal fashion, you have to carry a great responsibility on your shoulders. So I said I am not going to do it. He said: "No, you have to do it!" I said: "Okay, I will see, Swami is in Bangalore, I will see if my father will ask Him." My father has spent 60 years serving Swami, and his one rule in the past has been: "I never ask Swami anything personal for myself or my family!" That has been his rule.

I didn't know how to tell my father: "Can you ask Swami if I can speak at the retreat?" I kept thinking how can I ask my father to ask Swami because he is with Him all the time; and I came up with a loop-hole. We all like loop-holes right? So I thought: "It's not really a personal matter, it is the Sathya Sai Organizational matter. They are asking me to speak at the retreat. Ah! That's good." So I called him on a Thursday afternoon; I was going to say can you please ask Swami on my behalf, because they are pestering me.

As soon as I call my father, he picks up the phone. He had just come home from Brindavan having spent all day with Swami. He said: "Oh I am so glad you called. I have something to tell you. I said: "Forget what you have to tell me. I have something important to tell you." He said: "No, No, this is something that Swami said." I said: "Oh! What did Swami say?" So he said: **"In the afternoon Swami took me for a drive in the car and He asked: 'How is Geeta?' I said: 'She is fine.' He said: 'Tell her to go and speak if anyone asks her.'**

My father didn't know what Swami meant. "What Swami?" He said: "Tell her it's okay to do Swami's work, what is the confusion to do Swami's work. There should be no confusion in doing Swami's work." My father is

a very strict man. He said: "Have you not been doing Swami's work?" I said: "I have been doing everything at the center! Okay, here's what they have been asking me to do: they have been asking me to speak at the Retreat. I want you to ask Swami is it okay to speak at the Retreat." My father said: "You want me to ask Swami for you? No!"

I told him: "Please can you ask because it's an organizational thing?" And I told him about my loophole strategy and it still didn't work. He said: "Look, Swami already said there should be no confusion to do Swami's work. So go and do it if they have asked you to do it!" I said: "But, you're not getting it! Tell Swami that at the Retreat really important people like Dr. Hislop and Dr. Goldstein have spoken there. I can't go and speak! There will be a thousand people who are going to be at the Retreat! At our Retreats in the mid Atlantic region 900 to 1000 people attend the Retreat! I cannot speak at this Retreat. It's a huge crowd and all these important people have spoken there.

"Will you explain to Swami that this Retreat is big?" My father said: "I am not going to go and tell Swami: "Swami, the Retreat is big and You don't understand it." I said: "Well, can you do something?" My father said: "I am not going to do anything, you call me again over the weekend, and if Swami wants to say anything, by that time He would have!"

I wait for two or three days and in the meantime Uncle Singh has been calling me everyday: "Have you decided?" I said: "No! No! No!" Finally I call on Saturday night and my father said: "Swami said for you to go and speak." I asked: "But, what did He say?" He said: "He took me for a drive again and asked: "What? Is your daughter still confused? What's the confusion now?"

I am always confused, Swami knows that. My father told Swami: "She is very nervous because there's going to be a thousand people there and all the important people have spoken." Swami said: "Ask her to go and speak." So, I did that - in '96 for the first time. Then, when I go to India in '97; He asked: "Did you speak at the Retreat?" I said: "Yes Swami. I spoke at the Retreat. It's over right? I don't have to speak again?"

Swami looked at me and said: "Oh! Is it you that is speaking?" I said: "Swami I don't want to speak again". He said: "You think you are the one that is speaking? What are you afraid of? You are just the tape recorder. When I turn you on; speak; when I shut you off; quiet!"

So that how I started to speak. And it's time to be quiet now.

Sai Ram!

-Heart2Heart Team

LET'S SPEAK WITH HIM...

By Poppy Hillcoat

This is the transcription of the talk given by Mrs. Poppy Hillcoat at a meeting of Sathya Sai devotees in Ebell Club, Los Angeles, California on the 7th of Sep, 2003. Mrs. Poppy Hillcoat and her husband, Mr. Arthur Hillcoat, have been serving Swami for many years, since '79. They have been to Israel, Russia and many other countries, spreading Love and the message of Bhagawan. Mr. Arthur was the chairman for Sathya Sai Council of Australia and later was nominated by Swami to be the central coordinator for the Region 9 of Sathya Sai Organisations which comprises of New Zealand, Australia and a few islands.

My loving thoughts and prayers to our beloved Sai for keeping us all safe and well at all times. I'd like to start with a prayer:

Beloved Baba, we are filled with gratitude and joy for all the help and blessings you bestow upon us at all times. You tell us that whoever has the enthusiasm, the steadfastness, and the determination to reach their goal will certainly succeed.

All We Need Is Faith

We should cultivate faith in ultimate success; never to despair, falter or doubt in any way. If we do that, then we know that with His Divine intervention and our faith, everything will turn out well.

Beloved Baba, We know that You are with us every moment of our lives; loving us, guiding us, supporting us and encouraging us to have faith in You and faith in ourselves. And to understand that whatever happens in our lives is for our own spiritual growth. Sweet Lord, we love You and put our trust in You. Sai Ram.

Actually, this is the prayer that Swami gave to the students and He has told us that if we have the steadfastness, the enthusiasm, and the determination to reach our goal, we shall surely succeed.

Now what is our goal? As young people, our goal would be to pass our exams and do well. **As we get older, our goals change; and certainly my goal as a mature person is to merge with the Lord. And He says all we need is faith. But, there's a 'but'. We have to understand that whatever happens in our lives is for our own spiritual growth.** I like that.

Sincere Prayers

Prayer brings man and God closer and closer together; nearer and nearer with every sigh. Prayer must be said sincerely; for our Lord cannot help but respond to our sincere prayers. We should not pray for one thing and practice another; such prayer is only a means of deception. The thoughts we think, the

words we utter, the deeds we do, and the prayers we make must all be directed along the same path.

The power of prayer can heal disease. I read somewhere that a survey was done in San Francisco with 400 heart patients who required by-pass surgery. Those that prayed sincerely only needed small amounts of antibiotics after the operation. There is some aspect of the human soul from the subconscious level that responds to prayer. There is something within us that is all knowing and immortal; Baba says it is the God within.

God Calls

It's amazing how God works in our lives. On a Saturday night some time ago, a minister was working late at the church office getting ready for the next day. He decided he'd call his wife and let her know that he will be home soon. It was about 10 o' clock. The phone rang and rang but his wife didn't answer. The minister let the phone ring for quite some time. He thought it was really odd that she didn't answer the phone. But he decided he would finish his work and he would give her a call again. The next time he called, she answered straight away and he asked her why she hadn't answered the first time? But she said the phone hadn't rung at all!

The following Monday, the minister was back in his office again at the church and he received a call. It was the same phone that he had used on that Saturday night. The man that he had spoken with wanted to know why he called him on Saturday night. The minister couldn't understand what the man was speaking about. But the man said: "The phone rang and rang, but I didn't answer." Then the minister remembered the mishap and apologized for disturbing the man and said that he had been trying to call his wife.

The man said: "That's okay. Let me tell you my story. You see, I was planning to take my own life Saturday night. But before I did, I prayed. I said: 'God if you are there, and if you don't want me to do this, give me a sign now.' And at that point, my phone rang and rang. And when I looked at the caller ID, it said Almighty God."

So he was scared and afraid to answer the phone. The reason why the man's caller ID showed Almighty God was because the church that the minister works at is "Almighty God, Pebenaco."

Selfless Sai

Our beloved Baba has recently had an accident (2003) and broken His hip on His femur and He was operated on. And we were told that He was given anesthetic during the operation but it didn't put Him to sleep; and He was talking to the surgeon all the way through. After that was over, He didn't give darshan for some time. But we have again recently heard that Swami has fallen over and has again fractured His femur. But this time He has refused any intervention by the doctors.

Swami's plays are sometimes impossible to understand. But everything He does is perfect and has a reason behind it. He said in the past that while He will never use His powers just to selfishly heal Himself, the Love and prayers of His devotees can help to heal His body. He added that His physical form is for our benefit and therefore, it is our responsibility to look after it through our prayers, positive thoughts and love.

On another occasion during a discourse, He announced: "When I entered the Kulwant Hall today, I felt very tired. I didn't have any energy to speak. But all your love, faith and prayers have given Me energy, and now I am giving a discourse."

Once Professor Anil Kumar asked Swami why He cures His devotees' suffering from ailments but Himself undergoes the painful process of illness and disease? Swami replied that when we were sick, we pray with great intensity for a cure but when Swami is sick, we forget to pray. He added: "Through prayer, we can achieve the impossible." Our prayers do work. **Our Ma has taught us this. So I ask you all to please send to Swami from your hearts, your love and prayers and positive thoughts; that's very important.**

Prayer for Peace

The following prayer is for world peace. It was written by two American people - Sai Mela and George Jackson - they were at a workshop in the mountains in California.

Let there be Peace on earth; and let it begin with me.
Let there be Peace on earth; the Peace that was meant to be.
With God as Creator, family all are we.
Let us walk with each other in perfect harmony.
Let Peace begin with me; Let this be the moment now.
With every breath I take, let this be my joyous vow.
To take each moment, and live each moment in Peace eternally.
Let there be Peace on earth, and let it begin with me.

Peace can only begin with each one individually. We can find peace - if we can find peace within - then those around us will also experience peace. Visualize a pebble been thrown into a pond; and see how the ripples grow and grow. That is how we can affect others; with our presence, be it peaceful or otherwise.

For me, God is my very best friend and I speak with Him often. When I am happy, grateful, not doing too well, and sometimes when I am sad. The beauty of speaking with God is that we don't need to pretend. He knows everything about us; the good things and the not so good things. So I make it a practice to ask for His guidance, no matter what I am doing. So speak with God as you would your very best friend.

Sai Saves

Some years ago, we would go swimming with disabled people. We live on a mountain top in Queensland, Australia. And the drive up and down is quite steep. We had overseas visitors staying with us at this particular time so Arthur stayed behind to take care of them and I went down to the bottom of the mountain on my own.

At that time I owned a little blue sports car. I was very fond of this little blue sports car; and it's really not good to have attachments like that. I spent a lovely morning with these dear people and it was a joy to be with them in the warm water, helping their bodies to relax. That only took an hour; I was with them only for an hour.

On the way home, I did a little shopping and as I was driving up the mountain, I was discussing the events of the morning with the Lord. It was raining lightly. And all of a sudden, the car went into a slide - there must have been some oil on the road. And due to my inexperience, I had the foot on the brake, my hands on the steering wheel and I prayed to Swami:

"Swami, please don't leave me now." And over the side of the mountain I went. The car must have been going to go into a roll but instead it crashed into a tree and straightened out and stopped a little while a little further down at a very precarious angle - must have been about sixty degrees.

When the car hit the tree, I must have hit my head and I was unconscious for a little while. After a little while a man called out to me; he must have seen me going on the side. And he said: "Lady are you okay?" And I shook myself. I said: "Swami, am I okay? Yes, I am okay."

Fortunately I had my seat belt on. I undid the seat belt; turned off the ignition, opened the door; and it just flew open because of the angle that the car was on. And I crawled out of the car and up the side of the mountain.

The man started to come down to give me a hand, and he slipped. And again I prayed to Swami: "Please Swami, don't let anything happen to him." And we both reached the roadside very safely. At that time, now I am going back about 12 years or so, the man had a two way radio in his truck and he called the office and the office called Arthur. And the girl said to Arthur: "Your wife's gone over a cliff." It was amazing that he didn't have a heart attack.

But he didn't and he came and picked me up. The car was a complete write-off. The only safe place was where I was sitting. Because when the car hit the tree, it just fell right in to the driver's side of the street. So it was really quite an amazing experience. We went home. I rested for a little while, and then I got up and prepared dinner for our guest. So really Swami was with me all the way.

Prayer without faith is absolutely useless. The Lord may not give us what we want, but He will give us what we need. In asking for something for ourselves or for someone else; it's always good to add: "Let Thy Will be done."

Are We God?

Prayer is a very useful tool. A lady rang Arthur to ask about prayer. She said: **"If we are God, and Swami keeps telling us that we are God, what is the need to pray to God?"** When Swami was asked a similar question, He said, **"Yes, that's correct. However, until you realize that you are God, keep praying."**

So talk with God today, speak with Him as your very best friend. Ask God for help, for counsel, and advice; for insight and strength and inner peace and deep wisdom. Ask God to show us how to be in the world; but not of it.

Heart Prints, Not Finger Prints

Whatever our hands touch, we leave our finger prints - we leave them on door knobs, on furniture, on glass; anything - wherever we go, we leave our identity. But how about heart prints? Do we leave our heart prints wherever we go?

Oh God, where ever I go today, help me to leave heart prints. Heart prints of compassion, of understanding and love. Heart prints of kindness and genuine concern. May my heart touch a lonely neighbor, or a run-away daughter, or an anxious mother, or perhaps an aged grandfather. Lord, send me out today to leave heart prints and if someone should say: 'I felt your touch', may that one sense Your love touching them through me.

Usually we go to church, temples, or mosques to pray. However, God can't be confined to four walls. We can pray wherever we are. God is within us, and all around us. We are like fish in a bowl and God is the water. We cannot limit God; but we do limit ourselves. So when we pray, God is right there with us, listening to every word.

I can tell you a little story of when we were home and we have been doing a lot of traveling. We'd been invited to go to Indonesia. When we were planning our travels, Arthur said: "I don't think we will go to Indonesia. We've been doing a lot of traveling, and we have spent a lot of money. We'll just go to India to see Swami." And I said: "That's fine", I didn't have a problem in that at all.

When we arrived in India, Swami took us in for an interview and when we went to the private interview room, the first thing He said to us was: "Don't worry about your traveling expenses; there will always be enough." So we'd take Him on His word on that one.

When we speak to God, it's preferable to speak to Him as our very best friend. Pray to Him in pictures; visualize the scenario that you are praying

about. See yourself helping a friend or how you can do selfless service into the community.

The Test of Faith

Here's one of Swami's stories story of faith - or rather lack of faith. Once a village in India was inflicted with severe famine. The rivers were dried up; the trees were reduced to branches and twigs. And there was no sign of any greenery anywhere. The villagers were in torment. A solution had to be found. The elders of the village discussed the matter over and over again. But couldn't come up with a solution.

At last, they met a sage in a nearby village. Hearing their sufferings, the sage replied: "I shall come to your village. Instruct all the villagers to assemble at the village square this coming Thursday at five p.m. We'll pray to get the rains; it is sure such a collective prayer will be answered."

Hearing this, the people were overjoyed. Everyone anxiously waited for the day. At last the day arrived. Even before five o' clock the ground was full. The sage arrived, ascended on to the stage, and looked around. He looked around for quite some time. And then he said. "However loud you pray, there is going to be no positive result!"

It was unbearable for the villagers. How much they had expected! But now the sage continued: "You have no faith! All of you have come to pray for rains haven't you? But not even one amongst you has bought an umbrella!"

What message was the sage conveying here? In prayer, faith is a must. Only prayer with faith will work. "More things are brought by prayer than this world dreams of." said Lord Tennyson. Make prayer a part and parcel of your life. "Prayer is the key of the dawn and the bolt of the dusk." said Gandhi.

What Can We Do?

Start the day with prayer, and end the day with prayer. Pray in between wherever possible. You can ask the Lord for anything at anytime, in any manner. The mental peace that you acquire from this is beyond words. Can you be happy when the people around you are suffering or in distress? Pray for all - your parents; don't forget your grandparents, brothers and sisters, relatives, friends and enemies; and above all pray for the world at large.

Jesus said: "Love ye one another as I love thee." He also said: "Love your enemies." Once I thought that was impossible. But that's not so. We can and we must.

Today every human being should ask the question: "What can I do to preserve the beauty and the wonder of our world? And eliminate the anger and hatred and the inequality that causes that hatred and anger in that part of the world which I touched?"

We are in troubled times; and it is only through prayer and loving thought with compassion in our hearts, that we can help those in need. Love and prayer is the answer, not revenge and hate.

This is one of Swami's thoughts of the day from Prashanti Nilayam.

The whole world is in the throes of anxiety and fear. But I assure you that very soon the dark clouds will be scattered, and you will witness a happy era all over the world. Right will be restored and evil put down. Your duty is to yearn for the attainment of consciousness of the one beyond the multiplicity. Be centers of love, compassion, service and mutual tolerance. And be happy, very happy. Very, very happy.

When we stand before God to give our final account, He will not ask how popular you were during life. How many parties you went to? How well-dressed you were? How many clubs you belonged to? How big was your bank account? But He will ask what did you do for others? What service have you done?

We need to enlarge our definition of self with a capital S. When we believe our self to be One with everything - with the trees, the earth, animals and all people - to be One with God, then we will behave differently. And we will change our thinking and our beliefs. This will change our lives and those around us. We are free to love God, to love ourselves and all others and all things.

Remember, God is in everything. God wants nothing from us except our love. We can speak with Him as our very best friend, confidante, teacher and healer. God does not want us to suffer. He loves us, He tells us: "Be happy!" A smile, a touch, a decision to forgive, willingness to share, and the choice to live as One - these are the short steps to the Golden Age.

On a tablet in the grounds of Brindavan campus, are the words: "Man was born to learn not to be born again." Please let this be our goal in life, which has been given to us by none other than God.

Sai Ram.

-Heart2Heart Team

H2H SPECIAL

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS WITH SAI - 05

We continue with our presentation of the wonderful recollections of Mr. Chidambaram Krishnan, a long-time devotee of Bhagavan Baba who came to the Lord under somewhat unusual circumstances. In the last Instalment [04], we left you wondering about a vision/dream that Mr. Krishnan had. He wanted to be sure, and decided then and there to dash off to Puttapparthi to check directly with Swami. In this the fifth instalment, we follow Mr. Krishnan to Puttapparthi to find out what happened. Read on.

Drawn By Divine Dream

I had the dream around 4.30 AM and by 5.30 AM, I was back on the road, driving towards Puttapparthi, all the way from my home near Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. I travelled via Bangalore, where I made a halt to have a bath and also something to eat. After that break I drove on and reached Puttapparthi around 8.30 at night. In those days, Puttapparthi had not yet been electrified. Swami had about four or five petromax lanterns, and they would be put off by 8.15. However, on this particular day, I found that they were still burning when I reached the Mandir; it looked like Swami had not yet retired for the day.

I drove into the Ashram through a gate that used to be where the Gopuram now is. It was all open ground in front of the Mandir, and one could drive right up to the building. I did so and parked my car right below Swami's window - that is where ladies and children now sit. Even as I was getting out of my car, Sri Kasturi came out of the Mandir and was walking towards me. He said, "Go up. Swami wants you there; He is waiting."

Shivering Before Lord Shiva

I was not only taken aback [because I had sent no message that I was coming], but also very scared that Swami might scold me. I told myself that this was it and that I was going to get it right and left. You see, I was still very new to Swami and I just could not figure out how He knew that I was coming. I climbed up the winding staircase and went to Swami's room with great trepidation. I was shaking and shivering, not knowing what to expect. All the way, I was praying to my favourite God, Lord Murugan: "Oh Muruga, I am all confused and have somehow got caught up with this person who says He is God. You alone know everything. Please protect me, and see that nothing happens to me!" Those were my thoughts as I slowly went up!

Finally, I was there in Swami's presence, trembling all over. **Swami looked at me, smiled and then said, "So, at least after the dream, you felt like coming back, did you?" It was just one simple sentence, but my God, that one sentence changed my entire life.** It was only a short sentence but

it said everything! I broke down and threw myself at Swami's Feet. With tears rolling down my cheeks, I cried, "Swami, please forgive me! From this moment, I have no one except You!" Very magnanimously Swami replied, **"Oh, it is nothing. You can go where you want and worship the God you want. But one thing, wherever you go, I will be there! After all, you did not come to Me in the first place. I came to Surandai to draw you to Me and to take charge of you!"**

After that, Swami began to tell me all about my meditations in my younger days and ended up saying, "Don't worry; you can worship any God." Holding firmly on to His Feet, I cried, "Swami from now on, You alone are my God!"

Swami's Surprise

While all this was going on, I was still afraid that Swami might still severely rebuke me for running away the other evening. However, the compassionate Lord knew that if He spoke even one word on that subject, I would drop dead right on the spot! **Instead He said, "Now that you have come, shall we discuss some details about your marriage?" What a dramatic turn! With that one magical opening sentence, Swami had not only pardoned me but also transformed me! All this happened on the night of 7th April.**

Next morning, Swami called me and said to me, "Go to your family astrologer, and ask him to fix the date for the marriage." I did not understand why Swami was asking me to go the astrologer when He could have fixed the date Himself. I realised only later that there was a purpose behind this instruction. Not being aware of the Divine purpose at that point, I simply said, "Swami, why the astrologer? You can do it Yourself." Swami replied in a cryptic manner, "No, no, it is good for you to consult your family astrologer. He is the one who should decide the date of the wedding."

I did not protest anymore, and as directed went to the astrologer in Madras. He was shocked to see and exclaimed, "What! You are still alive?!" I did not like what he said and retorted, "You mean to say you would like to see me dead rather than alive?" He said, "No, no, it is not like that. You see, according to your horoscope, there was no life left for you after that critical date. God alone could save you, and I did not expect that."

I then narrated in detail all that had happened since 9th March. He listened most attentively and then said, "I have to accept that Sai Baba saved you. And since God alone could have saved you, it means that Sai Baba is indeed God!"

This astrologer, though settled in Madras, was actually from Andhra. He hailed from a village located on the banks of the Tungabhadra river. As a young man he was rather lazy and so he was driven away from home. Feeling depressed, he tried to drown himself in the river but was saved by a *sadhu* (ascetic). This sadhu then told this young man who tried to commit suicide, "Listen, don't try to waste your life. I shall teach you the scriptures and some skills also. After that, go out and serve Society; do some good." Thus, this

astrologer was actually a good and God-fearing man. When this man accepted that Sai Baba was indeed God, I realised that Swami had sent me to this man in order to “wake” him up, so to speak. Later this man went to Puttaparthi and became Swami’s devotee.

The Lord Does Everything

From Madras, I returned to Puttaparthi to report to Swami what had happened there. Meanwhile the Tamil New Year Day, which usually falls on 14th April, was fast approaching. Swami asked me, “What contribution do you propose to make to the celebration of the New Year here?” I replied, “Swami, I shall arrange a grand lunch for all the people attending the festival.” Swami was pleased and said, “That’s good. You serve lunch while I shall materialise nectar and distribute it on that occasion.” Swami then added, “By the way, just because you are arranging lunch, it does not mean people would automatically show up. This is a village and there are certain traditions. You have to go to every house and respectfully invite all the inmates. And you must go with a band!” I did precisely that.

On Tamil New Year Day, a grand lunch was served and all were happy. **In the evening, Swami asked for some water to be brought. He then materialised some nectar and mixed it with the water. The water then became sweet and acquired a nice fragrance too. Devotees were then seated in lines, and Swami moved among the lines with someone carrying the vessel that contained the water mixed with Divine nectar. As He approached, everyone was expected to look up with his or her mouth wide open; and Swami would pour a little of that Divine elixir into the mouth!** That was how Swami used to distribute nectar on many festival days in that era. Of course, all that has changed now.

The Tamil New Year Day over, Swami told me, “You now go back and return with your marriage party on the 28th of this month.” Summoning Suraiya, He once again told him, “Listen, in all about 1,500 to 1,800 people would attend this marriage. So lunch arrangements would have to be made for that number.” Turning to me, Swami said, “You had better send a car two days in advance, for helping with the shopping trips, etc. Also, send your relative Kailasam along with the car, so that he can give a helping hand.” I said I would follow Swami’s instructions to the letter and came out.

Suraiya also came out along with me and the moment we were out, he said that only the 350 or so people in our party would attend the marriage and that therefore there was no need to procure provisions for cooking for 1,500 or more guests. In those days, nothing was available in Puttaparthi; it was very much a small village. If one wanted groceries, one had to go all the way to Hindupur, more than fifty kilometres away. I was therefore very much worried by the stand taken by Suraiya.

Swami was indeed very practical and thoughtful. For cooking for a large party, huge vessels would be needed. Where to get them from? Swami told me that three days before my marriage was to be celebrated, He would be performing

another marriage – the son of the brother of one Pattabhi Chettiar of Mettupalayam in Tamil Nadu. Swami said that Chettiar would be bringing the cooking vessels for the marriage in his family and that Chettiar can be persuaded to make those vessels available for your marriage also. Having said that, Swami added, “Make sure you invite the entire Chettiar family for your wedding!” That was how meticulous Swami was about various details!

And so, as advised by Swami, our marriage party arrived in Puttapparthi on 28th April for my marriage. We were a big party, and travelled to this place in seventy cars! Our party included also my eldest brother, who was vigorously opposed to my marriage all along. How then did he form a part of our party? Ah, that is a separate story, which I shall now narrate!

Back to Brother’s Backtrack

When Swami gave me the Interview in Puttapparthi and we discussed dates for the marriage, Swami told me, **“You should also invite your eldest brother. He will surely attend the wedding.” I was shocked, stunned, and surprised. I said, “No Swami, that is not possible. If he comes to know there is to be a wedding and also the date, You can be sure he would show up here with the Police to stop the marriage!”** Swami just listened to that and did not offer any comment.

Later, when I took leave of Swami after the celebration of the Tamil New Year’s day was over, Swami again told me, “Remember, as soon as you reach home, you are going to tell your eldest brother everything and you will invite him.” Once again I pleaded with Swami, “Swami, please not now. Let the marriage first get over. He can then be informed. If he comes to know of the marriage in advance, he is sure to obstruct it.” Swami curtly told me, “Stop talking nonsense. Do as I say. Just go to him and invite him. He is sure to attend the marriage.” I feebly protested but Swami firmly overruled me. I then left Puttapparthi to return home and make arrangements for the marriage.

A couple of days after I returned, I called on my eldest brother. He lived in a separate house with his family. However, his house was close by, just opposite to the one in which I lived. When I went inside, my brother looked up at me and asked, “Why have you come here?” I replied, “Brother, my marriage has been fixed for 1st June. As the oldest member of the family, you must attend and grace the occasion.”

My brother was stunned and simply could not believe my words. Angrily he said, “You have the audacity to come here to my house and invite me to your marriage, knowing fully well that I have obtained a Court Injunction to stop your marriage? Let me tell you; now that I know what you are up to, I shall see to it that you and that Swamiji are locked up before the 1st of June.” I of course expected such a reply from my brother, and did not straightaway submit to it. I pleaded with him a lot, saying, “Listen, I have no father, no mother. They both are gone. Thus, right now, for me, you are both father and mother. If you do not want to make me happy, tell me, to whom do I turn? Am I asking for anything unreasonable or atrocious? All I am telling you is that I would like to

get married, and you, as the head of the family, take charge of the marriage, see that I get married and bless me. What is wrong with that?" My brother was in no mood to relent. He said, "I am not against your getting married. You get married to the girl I select, and I shall happily make all the necessary arrangements and personally celebrate your marriage in grand style. But if you cross me and try to proceed with this marriage, then take it from me that I shall have you arrested."

Our dialogue went on like this, me pleading and he refusing to give in. I then silently prayed, "Swami, with full faith in You, I have followed Your instructions to the letter. Now look what's happening! If I had not told my brother, at least the marriage would have gone through, and we could have worried about informing him later. But now, I am stuck!" Feeling thoroughly depressed, I withdrew and slowly started to go back to my house. As I was opening the gate to get out, my brother suddenly called out, "Come back here!" I was puzzled and wondered, "Now what? Does he want to frighten me even more?" I feared that he might even beat me. Anyway, I went back to his presence.

My brother asked, "What did I tell you just now?" With much frustration I replied, "Well, you just ticked me off left and right and threatened me with all kinds of unpleasant consequences, if I went ahead with the marriage." I was stunned by his reply to this. Slowly he said, "Yes, I did say all that. But how wrong was I to say that! Father and mother are gone, and I should have taken the responsibility of getting you happily married. Instead, I was trying my best to obstruct it. I really do not know what possessed me to say all those horrible things." There were tears in his eyes, as he said those words.

I just could not believe what was happening. I mean just a few moments ago, there he was threatening me with dire consequences and now just seconds later, he is shedding tears, saying how wrong he was and how it was his duty to see his younger brother happily married! A mere couple of seconds and my eldest brother was a totally changed man. Gone was the bitterness, gone was the hostility, and gone was the anger. Instead, he was now speaking to me with so much love and affection. My God! What a spectacular transformation, in the twinkling of an eye!

My brother continued, in a choking voice: "Tell me, what made me turn against you? Why on earth was I objecting to your being happy?" I was overwhelmed, and barely registered what my brother was saying. With tears in my eyes I replied, "Past is past and let us not worry about all that now. Nothing would make me happier than to see you play the role of our departed father and preside over my marriage." Wiping the tears in his eyes, my brother said, "**From this minute I am in charge and shall see to it that the marriage is celebrated in a grand manner, in keeping with our great family traditions.** Now get busy and go and call that Mudaliar; I have instructions to give."

This man Mudaliar was a person working in our company. I sent for this Mudaliar and soon he appeared before my brother, who said to him, "Listen, my youngest brother's marriage is going to be celebrated soon and there will

be a lot of work connected with that. You have to manage many things. When the groom and the bride return to our town after the wedding, there would be a grand reception in my house. You will not come for the wedding. You have to stay back and make all the arrangements for the reception. Understand?”

This man Mudaliar was absolutely knocked out. He knew the strong objections my brother had against my marriage and here was this same man, giving instructions about a grand reception after the wedding and things like that! How did this somersault occur? Anyway, there was no time for analysis since instructions were coming in a torrent. He was however quite happy that bitterness had evaporated and replaced with love, care and concern.

The brother's problem having been solved, it was marriage next. That would be described in the next instalment!

-Heart2Heart Team

WITH THE LORD IN THE MOUNTAINS - 01

We present below, an account by Prof G.Venkataraman on his Kodai reminiscences, based mainly on his trip with Swami to Kodai this year and also earlier in 2003. This account was prepared for broadcast over Radio Sai. For the convenience of the readers of H2H, the transcript is presented here with minor adaptations. What follows is the introductory instalment. Others would follow in the subsequent issues.

Kodai, Some History and Geography

Sai Ram! I am sure you must have heard of Kodaikanal, a popular hill station in South India, especially because Swami often goes there during summer, taking a few select students with Him. I have been blessed by Swami to accompany Him twice in His Kodai trips, once in 2003 and again this year, that is 2006. Apart from this first hand experience, I have also talked to many students, teachers and other elders about their own Kodai experiences. In fact, some of you might have heard over Radio Sai, my chats with Prof. Anil Kumar and Mr. B N Narasimha Murthy, about their Kodai trips. Since there is always great eagerness to know about the Kodai visits of Swami, I have decided to offer you, through Radio Sai, a detailed and ringside account of the 2006 trip, weaving into it also various recalls by various people at various times, besides my own recall of my trip in 2003.

I think it is appropriate if I start with a brief description of Kodaikanal and its history. Kodaikanal is a small town nestling in the Palani Hills, near the famous temple town Madurai in Tamil Nadu in South India. The Palani Hills, by the way, is a small spur jutting out of the main Western Ghats in South India. Kodai is a small town, at an altitude of about 7,000 feet or 2,300 metres, with a nice lake as its hub.

Before the British came, the Palani Hills were covered with rich tropical rainforests, called sholas. In fact, the entire Western Ghats was once more or less covered with sholas. Low in height, the trees of a shola forest are full of branches that allow the tree to take the shape of a cauliflower. The trees are filled with creepers, and inside a shola forest, the canopy of trees spreads out, restricting the penetration of sunlight. The forests are thus cool and dark.

People used to live in the Palani hills from prehistoric times, and some of the stone dwellings of that period can still be seen. It was only after the advent of the British that Kodaikanal came to be developed as a hill station. And it was also the British who are responsible for many of the sholas to be replaced with trees native to the England and Australia, such as blue gum eucalyptus, the wattle and so on. Talking of the flora of the region, I should not omit to mention the famous Kurunji plant which flowers once in twelve years. This year, 2006, the Kurunji was in bloom again. This purple floral plant grows abundantly on the slopes of Palani Hills. Its botanical name is: *strobilanthus kunthianus*.

The first European to visit Kodaikanal was Lt. Ward. This was way back in 1821. Ward was doing a survey of the Palani Hills, and in the process visited the highest point in the hills, which is in modern Kodai. In those days, the forests were really thick and the area was malaria infested. Notwithstanding that, inspired by Lt. Ward's description of Kodai, Mr. J.C. Wroughten, then Sub-collector of Madura [as Madurai used to be known then], and Mr. C.R. Cotton climbed up the hills from Periyakulam in the plains, directly below Kodai. In 1834, they built a small bungalow about 10 km from Kodai and started to explore that area. Soon, another person named Dr. Wright joined them, but all these were explorers.

The actual settlement of Kodai came about almost by accident. There were many American Missionaries in Madurai then, and they were looking for a place where their staff who had become sick could recuperate. The Americans explored many possibilities and finally decided to build rest houses in what is now Kodaikanal; this happened in 1845. Still, there was no permanent resident there.

1852 - The First Settlement

The first person to actually settle in Kodai was Major Partridge of the Bombay Army, who built himself a house in 1852. By the way, it was Major Partidge who introduced the Australian Eucalyptus to that area. Soon, others like Fonclair and Judge Elliot, who was also a planter, followed. However, it was not until Blackburne, the Collector of Madura built a home there that the development of Kodai gathered pace.

Though Kodai boasted of a good climate, somehow the British did not favour it too much; they preferred Ooty instead. Ooty is also a popular hill station in Tamil Nadu near Coimbatore, located on the main Western Ghats. Kodai, on the other hand was preferred by the Americans, and was thus exposed more to American influence than to that of the British. Property was then ridiculously cheap [by today's standards that is]. For example, the huge property of Major Partridge was bought by the American Mission for just Rs. 154!

'Forest of Creepers'

Initially, this settlement had no name, and the name Kodaikanal was used only from 1860. One does not know how this name came into existence. But this much one knows; in Tamil, *kodi* means creeper and *kanal* means dense forests. If one combines these two words, one gets Kodaikanal, which can be interpreted as the *forest of creepers*.

Kodai today is famous for its lake. You would be surprised to know that initially, there was no lake, and there was only a basin in the area where the lake now is. Rainwater from the surrounding hills would flow into the basin and from there flow as a stream downhill to the popular Silver Cascade, a pretty waterfall a little down from Kodai. There was in Kodai a retired Collector of Madura named Sir Vere Levinge. The French envoy to British India told Levinge, "Why don't you build a small dam near the outlet of the swampy

basin and hold all the water? You would get a nice lake?” Levinge liked the idea and started to take steps to have a small bund built.

The villagers downstream who lived in the Silver Cascade valley depended on this water for agriculture and they protested. Sir Vincent Levinge then told the villagers, “Look here! I shall now pay you for building the bund. If at any time you find water shortage during the cultivation season, just let me know. I shall then pay you again to pull down the bund!” For the poor villagers, this was a bonus since there was no one to hire their labour. The basin was fed mainly by three small streams coming down the Kodai hills and it took sometime for the basin to fill and the lake to form. But once it formed, the lake looked grand. There was an outlet through which excess water flowed out and thus the villagers living near Silver Cascade were not too much affected anyway.

Till 1870, visitors to Kodai came mainly from Madurai. They came by bullock cart from Madurai up to Periakulam in the plains, directly below Kodai. From there, the men climbed on horses while the ladies and children went in roofed palanquins called *dholies*. There was also an improvised arrangement which was essentially a chair held between two bamboo poles, which the local people carried on their shoulders.

In 1875, a railway track was laid from Madras to Tuticorin on the east coast. This track passed near the Kodai hills, the closest point being about fifty or so km from Kodai. Soon, the need arose for a regular road from the plains. Major Law of the Madras Staff Corps did a survey and it was decided to build a bridle path from the plains up the hill. One reason for undertaking this project was that there was a famine and construction work would provide some employment. By 1878, Rs. 43,000 was spent and about 30 km of so of track was laid out. The first fifteen km could be covered using carriages and the rest had to be done by riding on horse back. The project took a heavy human toll, with many dying on account of malaria. The road took some sort of a shape only by 1914, when one Mr. J.F. Hall drove his Ford car all the way to the top. Others followed by travelling in motor cycles. I am mentioning all these historical details, because today when we zip up the mountain on well-paved roads in nice modern cars, we have little idea of how it used to be less than a hundred years ago.

Talking of roads, I must mention that during the Second World War, when there was some fear of the Japanese invading India, a road was built from Kodai along the hillcrest to Munnar, and from there down the mountain to Calicut, now Kozhikode. Calicut is a port, where, by the way, Vasco de Gama landed first, exploring a sea route from Europe to India. The British wanted to keep their families in Kodai and if there was danger, evacuate the families by road to Calicut and take them from there by ship to England. Today, there are plenty of tea estates near Munnar, and people who trek from Kodai to Munnar often encounter elephants!

I was born in Madurai and although I spent most of my childhood in North India, including five years in Karachi, before partition that is, I had heard about Kodai even in the early forties. For one thing, there was in our house, a black

and white photo of my father, sitting under a tree near the lake; this picture must have been taken in the thirties. My own first trip was in the early sixties, and subsequently, I made several trips, all at the instance of Prof Richard Riesz of America, who spent twenty-five years teaching physics in the American College in Madurai. When I look back to those times, I see how much Kodai has changed, not always for the better. Tourism may be good for the economy but for the environment? That is a different matter. Anyway, enough of this introduction, and let me get to Swami's visit to Kodai.

Swami in Kodai

I don't know for sure when Swami made His first trip but I guess it must have been sometime in the early sixties. I recall a photo of Swami standing in front of the Silver Cascade, dressed, believe it or not, in an overcoat! I am sure Swami wore the overcoat just to please the host, whoever that was. Whether it is Simla or Badri in the Himalayas, or Ooty or Kodai in the South, Swami wears the same dress we see Him in, in Parthi and Brindavan – nothing more and nothing less. Even when it is chilly, He refuses a shawl.

So, that was how it was, way back in 1981 when Swami visited Kodai. Since then, He has made many Kodai trips. The details might have been different but one thing has always remained constant in every Kodai trip, and that is Swami goes there to give a special dose of *Ananda* to the people with Him.

I hope I have said enough to whet your appetite for more! That's all for now!!

[To be continued]

SAI WORLD NEWS

A WALK FOR ME, MY FAMILY AND MY COMMUNITY

*In **Heart2Heart**, we had covered the inspiring story of the last two 'Walk For Values' events held in Canada in 2004 and 2005. Here is news from the latest walk, which enthused so many devotees to contemplate on Swami's Teachings and also brought this important eternal message to the community at large. It is no more an event, it has become a movement gaining increased momentum every passing year and inspiring other cities and regions to follow suit in spreading His message.*

Across the Nation and Beyond

Values awareness is spreading like wild fire across Canada, and beyond. For the fourth consecutive year, the Sathya Sai School of Canada's annual Walk for Values was held on Sunday, May 28th, 2006. Apart from the grand event held in Toronto, 13 other Canadian cities walked the values talk, to express their support for the universal human values propounded and exemplified by Sri Sathya Sai Baba, founder of the Toronto based Sathya Sai School. Apart from the 14 Canadian cities where supporters of the Sathya Sai School sought pledges of self-transformation, Sai Schools in other countries such as Scotland replicated this unique event in their communities.

Proving that practice makes perfect, the organizers and participants of the fourth annual Walk for Values conducted this year's event flawlessly. Once again, under clear, sunny skies, the students of the Sathya Sai School led a few thousand of their close supporters down the streets of the Malvern area in Scarborough, in the east end of the city of Toronto, seeking pledges of self-improvement, inspired by the greatest example and exponent of universal human values, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It was a day of triumph for the hundreds of man-hours of volunteer work put in by scores of teams, when the event was executed smoothly, with finesse.

Sponsored each year by the students and parents of the Sathya Sai School of Canada, the theme for this year's Walk for Values was "A Walk for Me, My Family and My Community". The planning team, consisting of Sai youth from the Greater Toronto Area, hoped to make a difference in various communities by encouraging everyone to evaluate the values that guide and inspire us, while further polishing those values to become better citizens of the society and country.

The Sai School Leads the Way

As always, an upbeat Mr. T.R. Pillay, Principal of the Sathya Sai School was optimistic about the community outreach value of such an effort. According to him, "this unusual walk affords golden opportunity to take part in something unique and special where all of us come together, to instill and recognize the importance of universal human values, especially at an early age. By reflecting on these values and ensuring its daily practice, we

do ourselves, our families and our communities a great service. Our school is honoured to sponsor and organize this community outreach project.”

Over the years, Sai volunteers, have fine tuned the event into a turn-key operation. This year, Ms. Megan Bennett from Foothill Ranch, California came to study the walk in person, so that her community could attempt one as well. The planning team at the Sathya Sai School has gladly shared its planning and coordination templates with school supporters everywhere.

Leaving nothing to chance, the volunteers had thought of every possible detail which made this year’s walk an even grander success than ever before. For instance, the marshals leading the event wore specially designed belts fitted with perfect holsters for holding the value flags which they distributed to spectators at various intersections.

With each passing year, the event has grown in its appeal. Attended by well over 3,000 participants including Honourable Harinder Takhar, Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, and MPP Bas Balkissoon, and City Councillor Raymond Cho, this unique Walk which was first held in the year 2003 in Malvern in the name of peace and non-violence, truth and love has become a trailblazer for cities across Canada.

Cities Declare ‘Human Values Days’

This year, the city of Edmonton in the province of Alberta and the cities of Regina and Saskatoon in the prairie province of Saskatchewan proclaimed May 28th as Human Values Day. For a school committed to integrating Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s Education in Human Values program within the Ontario Education Curriculum, it is indeed gratifying to see this realization among policy makers about the relevance of universal human values in all spheres of life including politics and governance.

Human Values to the Forefront

A brainchild of the Sathya Sai School of Toronto, the Walk for Values is not a money-raiser; nor is it a Walk provoked by protest or anger at any social or political injustice. Instead, participants pledge to improve the world by improving themselves by practicing a value of their choice. **The theme for this year’s Walk: “It’s a Walk for Me, My Family, and my Community” is most appropriate in the wake of violence and bullying in our schools, drugs on our streets, gang wars in our neighbourhoods, and greed and corruption in our institutions.**

The theme underscores the adage of humanitarians like Mahatma Gandhi: “Become the change you want in the world.” **By walking together as kindred spirits, participants raised awareness of the need to practice the values of tolerance, understanding, respect, and other virtues such as strength of character and concern for others which are gradually being eroded by negative forces.** This important message was conveyed in a most dramatic way by participants publicly displaying their value pledges; carrying quotations about values, ethics, morality and

service; and by singing rousing value songs. MPP Bas Balkisoon brought greetings and a message from the Premier of Ontario to this community-minded group which not only talked but “Walked the Talk.”

The following week, Mr. Bas Balkisoon, Member of the Provincial Parliament made a statement at the opening of the Ontario Legislature, complimenting the school for this event.

**Statement by the Hon. Balkissoon, MPP for Scarborough
Rouge in the Ontario Provincial Legislature on May 30
on the occasion of the 4th Annual Walk for Values.**

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, May 28, the fourth annual walk for human values organized by the Sathya Sai School of Toronto took place in the Malvern Community of my riding in Scarborough Rouge River.

Minister Harinder Takar and myself joined over 3,000 participants from across the GTA to walk in the name of peace, nonviolence, truth and love. One participant in the crowd, Miss Megan Bennett, traveled all the way from Foothill Ranch, California, with the goal of implementing a similar walk in her community in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, this walk has now become a trailblazer for cities across Canada, 12 of which held their own Walk for Values on the same date. The Cities of Edmonton, Regina, and Saskatoon proclaimed May 28 as Human Values Day in their cities.

Mr. Speaker, this walk was not about raising funds, or provoked by anger. Instead it was focused on character building and encouraging role models in the community.

Walking together as kindred spirits, participants raised awareness of the need to practice the values of tolerance, understanding, and respect --values that are gradually being eroded by negative forces. The walkers conveyed their messages of human values through songs and decorated floats.

The participants' demonstrations of understanding, peace, and commitment to positive change show us all the importance of recognizing our values. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Sathya Sai School of Toronto in their efforts in making a difference in our community, our province, and Canada through their walk for human values. Thank you.

Once again, Sai youth from around the Greater Toronto Area infused the event with energy and excitement by acting as Masters of Ceremonies, cheerleaders, marshals, as members of the webcam team, registration committee, media, community outreach and public awareness teams and in countless similar capacities.

The dedication and sense of responsibility demonstrated by the youth of the Sai organization bears testimony to the success of the SSE program that has prepared them to take the message of the five human values mainstream. Over the past four year, the youth have truly added dynamism and a sense of exhilaration to the Walk for Values with their cheerfulness, love and dedication to Sai ideals.

Sai School's Community Spirit Lauded

The fourth annual Walk for Values has not gone unnoticed in the community of Malvern. From the police officers assigned to the route, to the many spectators at various intersections along the 4 kilometer walk, everyone lauded the efforts of the school in bringing joy and awareness about the values to their doorsteps. The complete absence of any monetary pledges appealed to both participants and casual observers. In his communication, Mr. S.T. Pathy, a school supporter and regular participant of the event congratulated Principal Mr. Pillay for his contribution to the community of Toronto for spearheading such a noble community campaign.

He wrote "Your introductory message to the community that values based life is the only answer for surviving and thriving in today's world was indeed powerful. The two little students who spoke at the beginning were sweet and their message was a genuine reflection of the impact of their education at the Sai school, where positive values are infused into their daily living...both students brought smiles and energy to the gathering...The banners, the attractive floats, the values songs and the energetic music and cheerleading made the walk enjoyable."

City Council Honours Mr. Pillay's community spirit

At the concluding ceremonies of the Walk for Values, on behalf of the City of Toronto, City Councillor Mr. Raymond Cho honoured Mr. Pillay, with a special plaque in appreciation of his outstanding career as an educator with a vision and devotion to integrating academic excellence with character education.

In his address, Councillor Raymond Cho read out the plaque which read "On the eve of your retirement, it is with great pride and much gratitude that the City of Toronto confers this plaque to Mr. Pillay for your leadership, dedication, vision and commitment to promoting and integrating universal values among your students of Sathya Sai School of Toronto, Canada, their families and the community at large!"

While thousands of participants cheered, Mr. Pillay attributed the success of the Walk and all of the school's accomplishments to its Founder Sri Sathya Sai Baba whom he described as the living example and the most articulate proponent of the universal human values on the face of the earth.

Heart2Heart is very pleased to place before you this story and hopes to bring to you news of next year's 'Walk for Values' too with the expectation and hope that the individual, community, national and international participation of this very special 'moving message' will have grown exponentially.

-Heart2Heart Team

**“BRIDGE” - BE READY TO INSPIRE AND DIRECT GOODNESS
EVERYWHERE –**

A Meeting Held on Educare from 18-19th March 2006, in Milan, Italy,
By Prini Wimalachandra

Mrs. Prini Wimalachandra, an alumni of the Anantapur campus of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, has been very active in the Educare Mission of Swami in different countries for almost a decade. She has sent us her fascinating experiences in Italy where the Zone 6 (Southern Europe) regional Educare meeting was held recently. Apart from that we also have her experiences with EHV work in Israel and a few other countries.

The Educare conference in Italy was held on 18th- 19th March 2006 at Natura Docet, a foundation set up and managed by Sai devotees in Italy, next to Mother Sai House, the Sai Temple in Italy which is also a sports facility for disabled children, where Sai devotees work as volunteers and offer their time and expertise as part of their service. Her account follows below.

Aims of the Meeting

The purpose of the Educare meeting was to get to know one another, improve cooperation within the region and to find practical ways of implementing the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba and extending His loving energy towards the general public. Focus was put on a series of **key-concepts** – offered as steps to build and secure our “BRIDGE” (**Be Ready to Inspire and Direct Goodness Everywhere**), fixing our mind on the right understanding of what we are aiming at individually and as a group (i.e. Organization).

How to create (strengthen) a “bridge” related to the SSO in general:

How to create a “bridge” towards the local community:

How to create a “bridge” towards local-public schools:

How to create a “bridge” through PR and Website

There was also interesting news from around Europe regarding the Sai work that is being carried out.

Croatia

Mrs. Vesna Krmpotić, a well known Croatian poet, writer and composer (she is the author of 68 books and 108 books of poetry) living in Serbia shared with me, a set of five books authored by her on Swami’s Educare. The introduction acknowledges Swami’s inspiration, introduces the ‘Educare Programme’ and carries Swami’s Message to Teachers.

These books were presented to the President of Croatia Mr. Mesić in 2004 and the Minister of Education. These books are also used as supplementary literature at the Academy of Education. The Ministry of Culture has taken 100 books to be distributed in various libraries in the

country. The books have been promoted throughout Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro.

Vesna has organized an Educare programme in Vukovar, a town completely destroyed during the break up of former Yugoslavia. The programme was conducted jointly by Sai devotees from Croatia and Serbia for the two ethnic groups of Serbs and Croats. Vesna is the author of the first book written on Swami in the Balkans, called *Bhagawatha*'.

Readers may also be interested to learn about the public meeting organised by Sathya Sai Organisation of Serbia and Montenegro held in Belgrade, on 12th March 2006, attended by over 200 people, including the Indian ambassador. Vesna Krmpotić inspired the audience speaking on Bhagavan and His Educare work and Dr Upadhyaya from London spoke on Swami's humanitarian projects. The audience could see a film 'His Work', and learn from an exhibition and from the many books available.

Bosnia & Herzegovina

Azra Jahić, a teacher from Bosnia & Herzegovina has started an Educare training programme, with the support of ESSE Institute, for the teachers in a government school, (Čengić Villa Primary school in Sarajevo) with the permission of the Ministry of Education. She is having wonderful success and excellent feedback from teachers attending the programme. She plans on extending this training to teachers of other schools in the city. Mevlida Rovcanin, from Tuzla, also in Bosnia & Herzegovina described their monthly 'self awareness' courses for Sai devotees held in different towns in the country. About three quarters of the audience were newcomers to the world of Sai.

Spain

There are many projects and activities being carried out in Spain and a valiant effort is being undertaken to share the Educare programme in various cities. Educare presentations have been done in Granada, Madrid and other cities. Luis and Soraya from Las Palmas, Canary Islands are running an educare programme in a state school 'Las Torres'.

Italy

Daniel Conci, an inspirational young man from Northern Italy, shared his experience in using human values as taught by Swami in a project jointly run by the Catholic University and other non-profit organizations in Milan. In his talk titled 'Educare within the Family' he shared his research and experience helping children from backgrounds of conflict to find their own style of learning. He also presented an excellent bi-monthly manual 'Crescere Insieme' – 'Grow Together' - a values oriented magazine printed by Mother Sai publications in Italy for children, parents and teachers.

Greece

George Bebedelis of Greece gave us an insight into the key concepts of Educare using teachings of Swami and drawing comparisons and parallels with great Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Socrates.

Switzerland

Felix Wust from Switzerland who is an editor and owner of a publishing house that publishes medical journals presented the magazine 'SWISS MED' dedicated to health care and the Sri Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospitals. It also contains interviews with Dr. Safaya, Director of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences and Dr. M.W. Krucoff, an eminent cardiologist from USA.

Suzanne Carenini from Tichino, Switzerland, Education coordinator for zone 6 has been tirelessly working to share and spread the Message of Educare in the region. She is a children's book illustrator and together with her husband Dr Chino Carenini have produced a calendar on Health care with values based illustrations to be distributed free of charge in schools. She is also working on an introductory kit on Educare that can be given out to members of the public interested in the programme.

There were presentations on a school project 'Science and Human Values' and work carried out with intellectually disabled children on anger management in Ticino. We also enjoyed various presentations from Greece and Slovenia on activities done by them with children from their centres and groups in their respective countries.

It was indeed heartening to see the inspirational work being carried out by Sai members overcoming many challenges and hardships. At the end of the conference all the participants went away inspired and energised to carry on our work in sharing the Message of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

EHV Work in Israel And In Other Countries

As we reported in an earlier article in H2H (Go here to read it again), during her time in Israel, Prini was able to teach the Sathya Sai Human Values programme to students at the International Education Assistance Centre, popularly know as the UN School, in Nahariyya. Carole Alderman, the Education coordinator, Sathya Sai Organization of UK came to conduct a very successful teacher training workshop.

Since then Ora Karov, the education coordinator, Sathya Sai Organisation of Israel has continued to hold regular Educare workshops and train many teachers in Israel, including all the staff from one particular school. She is having wonderful success and excellent feedback from both teachers and students. Feedback from teachers is that both they and the students are benefited. They use silent sitting and the visualization of universal light, and conduct themselves as good examples to their students. A team of teachers

from Afula area, who are in charge of value education in their schools, attended a course for several weeks, and then took the message back to their schools.

In Tel Aviv area, a team of high school teachers from a school for children with challenging behaviour, received a course of E.H.V, and commented that it helped them a lot in their team relations and work together. In April another course was conducted for 5 days where the attendees were expected to volunteer in schools once a week atleast for a year and share their EHV training and experience.

Talking about her first experience with EHV, Prini says,

“My first experience with teaching Human Values was in Auckland, New Zealand as a teacher of Sathya Sai Spiritual Education at the Mt Eden Centre. I later joined a group of Sai Devotees in introducing the Sathya Sai Human Values programme to children in Rongamai Primary school, a public school in Otara, a suburb of Auckland. The programme was well accepted by the teachers and was recommended to the ministry of Education. As a result of which and with the official recognition by the ministry, the Sathya Sai Institute of New Zealand is now running a Pre-School officially known as the Sathya Sai Pre-school, in the premises of Rogamai Primary School in Otara.

Moving on to Bosnia & Herzegovina in 1998, I had the opportunity to teach Sathya Sai Human Values Programme in Čengić Villa Primary School in Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina. The principal of the school was very supportive and gave me all the help and encouragement to conduct the programme. In 2005 Azra Jacic commenced an Educare training programme for teachers in this school, which is an on going programme. With the help of Azra, we were also able to conduct weekly classes for young adults on values and self development as taught by Baba, at the Technical School of Sarajevo. Later, along with the youth members of the Sai Centre we conducted human values classes to children in a suburb of Sarajevo, as part of a project conducted by a local NGO.”

Heart2Heart is very grateful to Mrs. Prini Wimalachandra for sharing with us her experiences concerning EHV. Presently she is living in Cyprus having come from Pakistan, where she engaged in very successful EHV work with a school, gaining local media interest.

- Heart2Heart

GET INSPIRED

LIFE MANAGEMENT

An expert in time management was speaking to a group of business students, and to drive home a point used an illustration those students will never forget. As he stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers, he said, "Okay, time for a test," and pulled out a bucket and set it on the table in front of him. He also produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the bucket.

When the bucket was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this bucket full?" Everyone in the class replied, "Yes." The expert countered, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bag of gravel. He put some gravel in and shook the bucket, causing the pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks.

He then asked the group once more, "Is the bucket full?" By this time the class was cautious. "Maybe not," one of them answered. "Good," he replied, and reaching under the table he brought out a bucket of sand.

He started putting the sand into the bucket and it fell into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is the bucket full?" "No," the class responded. Then he grabbed a jar of water and began to pour it in until the bucket was filled to the brim. Then he looked at the class and asked, "What is the lesson of this illustration?" One student raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard you can always fit some more things in it."

"No", the speaker replied, "That's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is this: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you will never get them in at all." It is important for us to identify the Big Rocks in our lives.

So what are the big rocks of our life? Spirit of selfless service, Love for God and Adherence to Virtue. Often we put ourselves first, then society and lastly God. And then we wonder why we are unhappy. Swami turns this around and tells us to put God first, then society and finally ourselves – last. In SAI – Sai is first, Association is second and I, the Individual is last. Only then will we be eternally happy.

Only in an individual who is morally strong does the human personality find its best expression, Swami said on one occasion.

Illustrations: Vamsi Aditya, SSSIHL

– Heart2Heart Team

RED LIGHT

It is truly a sign of wisdom to make the most out of every situation, as this story shows.

Two friends were in a car when they had to stop at a red traffic light. The man at the wheel did not say anything and seemed lost in his own world.

The other man began to get irritated and blurted out "The time we waste at these red lights – why, you could write a book!"

The driver still said nothing. After a few seconds his friend said, "Didn't you hear what I said?"

No."

"How come?"

"I was talking."

"Who were you talking to?"

"I was talking to God," he said calmly. "I've been making it a practice every time I get to a red light to pray for one of my friends. It is wonderful how many people I have on my prayer list and how many I have time to pray for in this way."

The day has 24 hours, or 1,440 minutes, or 86,400 seconds. How many of these do we use productively for our own spiritual good, or that of others?

Swami has never wasted time and uses every moment in the service of humanity. He exhorts us not only not to waste time, but also to be careful with everything that God has given to us, by saying:

"Misuse of money is evil. Don't waste money. Don't waste food. Food is God. Don't waste time, because time wasted is life wasted. Don't waste energy. Energy is wasted in idle talk and meaningless wanderings."

- Heart2Heart Team

BE THANKFUL

Be thankful, that you don't have everything you desire.

If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful, when you don't know something.

For it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful, for the difficult times.

It is during those times that you grow.

Be thankful, for your limitations.

Because they give you opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful, for each new challenge.

For that will build your strength and character.

Be thankful, for your mistakes.

They will teach you valuable lessons.

Be thankful, when you're tired and weary.

Because it means you've made an effort.

It's easy to be thankful for the good things in life.

But a life of rich fulfilment comes to those,

Who are also thankful for their setbacks.

Moolyasudha, Jan 2006

- Heart2Heart Team

TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT

MULTI-FAITH QUIZ

1. What does Swami say the name 'Sai Baba' signifies?
 - a. The bringer of Peace
 - b. The Divine Mother and Father
 - c. The world teacher
 - d. Truth and Justice

2. What does Swami say the first 16 years of His life were characterized by?
 - a. Bhajans
 - b. Teaching
 - c. *Leelas* – Divine Sport
 - d. Meeting devotees

3. Swami organized an international cricket match at Prashanti Nilayam to demonstrate unity and the playing of sport simply for enjoyment, without any financial incentives. A galaxy of stars including, Sachin Tendulkar, participated. In which year did this take place? (Please see the cover story on this event – Oct 15 2003.)
 - a. 1998
 - b. 1988
 - d. 2002
 - c. 1997

4. Jesus brought one of his disciples back to life after he had lain dead in a tomb for four days. What was his name?
 - a. Lazarus
 - b. Paul
 - c. John
 - d. Peter

5. In the *Ramayana*, sage Viswamitra initiates the young Rama and Lakshmana into two mantras, *Bala* and *Athibala* for their task in destroying the demons who were disturbing the *Rishis*. What two powers did the mantras bestow on the two princes?
 - a. To fly above the trees and to remain invisible.
 - b. To be able to hear each other at any distance and to be able to move like the wind.
 - c. To have superhuman strength and to withstand any blows.

d. To be able to stay awake and never to be bothered by hunger or thirst.

6. How did Krishna and Balarama help their Guru Sandeepani, after he was bereaved with the death of his son?

- a. They took their Guru to see his son in the world of the dead.
- b. They promised to make him happy by their love and good behaviour.
- c. They brought the boy back from death and gave him back to their Guru.
- d. They gave him special herbs which made him forget his sorrow.

7. How did Krishna explain the relationship He had with the Pandavas to King Dhritrashtra, the father of Kauravas, and why they were dearer to Him than the Kauravas?

- a. That the Pandavas were like parts of His body.
- b. That the Pandavas were the tree and He the roots.
- c. That He was the sun and the Pandavas the planets.
- d. That He was the very air in the Pandavas lungs.

8. There are two main paths in Buddhism. One is called Theravada - what is the name of the other path?

- a. Zen
- b. Bodhisattva
- c. Mahayana
- d. Mahabodhi

9. *Sanathana Dharma* lays down four goals (*purusharthas*) in the life of man. Three of them are *Dharma* (Righteousness), *Artha* (Wealth) and *Moksha* (Liberation). What is the missing goal?

- a. *Kama* (Desire)
- b. *Prema* (Love)
- c. *Sathya* (Truth)
- d. *Ananda* (Joy)

10. When does a Muslim utter this phrase "*I begin in the name of Allah. Peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah. O my Lord forgive my sins and open for me the doors of your mercy*"?

- a. Before eating any food.
- b. Before sleeping.
- c. At the end of the Ramzan festival.

d. On entering a mosque

ANSWERS

1B

In the name 'Sai Baba' – 'Sa' stands for Divine, "Aiye" for Mother and "Baba" for Father. Swami says, "The name Sai Baba means Divine Mother and Divine Father. Like a mother, I will be tender and soft and give you happiness, and like a father I will punish you when needed. Through these methods I shall take you to a high level.

2C

The first 16 years are characterized by constant *Leelas*; then *leelas* and teaching up to age 45. From age 45 to 60 the emphasis is almost wholly on teaching. At age 60 there is a very big change.

3D

4A

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

(The Gospel of John, chapter 11, verse 38-44)

5D

Of this event, Swami comments that

"(Viswamitra) was preparing to initiate those very princes into some mystic Manthras, as if they were children of common stock. Surely, Viswamitra was shackled by Maya! He had yielded to the delusion of judging by apparent attributes; Rama laid bare the strength of the stranglehold of Maya on the sage. For, it was He who had shrouded Viswamitra's mind and made him enter proudly upon these initiations rites! Rama and Lakshmana finished their ablutions in the river, as directed by Viswamitra. The sage came to Rama and initiated Him into the two Manthras. Rama pronounced the formulae after the teacher, and nodded his head as a novice should do, when a mantra is taught. Lakshmana too did the same. They bowed their heads as if they had agreed to be the "disciples" of Viswamitra."

(Ramakatha Rasavahini p,97)

6C

Krishna and Balaraama on hearing the inconsolable grief of their Guru over the loss of his only son assured their Guru that they would bring back his son. They went to the Prabhaasa theertha where the lad was drowned and searched for the demon who swallowed him. They could not find him. They were told by the king of the Sea that the lad had been handed over to the Lord of Death. They approached Yama and demanded him to hand over the lad to them. Yama at once handed over the boy to the brothers. Krishna and Balaraama took the boy and entrusted him to their Guru saying "Guru accept our Guru Dakshina."

7A

Swami recounts Krishna's words as follows:

"Listen, I shall tell you of the kinship that binds Me to the Pandavas: For this Body of Mine, Dharmaraja is as the Head; Arjuna is as the Shoulder and Arms; Bhima is as the Trunk; Nakula and Sahadeva are as the two Feet. For the Body constituted like this Krishna is the Heart. The limbs act on the strength of the Heart; without it, they are lifeless."

8C

Theravada Buddhism is mainly practiced in Southern Asia, Mahayana Buddhism, in Northern Asia. Theravada Buddhism (meaning small vehicle) emphasises the personal individual goal for self liberation. Mahayana Buddhism (big vehicle), on the contrary, focuses on universal self liberation and the helping of other sentient beings to attain self liberation. Theravada scriptures are imparted in Pali, and Mahayana, in Sanskrit, or languages like Chinese, Japanese or Tibetan. The Mahayana mythology is much more extensive than the Theravada mythology.

9A

The missing goal is *Kama* desire.

Swami advises us "to take the four as two inseparable pairs: *Dharma* with *Artha* and *Kama* with *Moksha*. That is to say, earn wealth through righteousness and use wealth for the promotion of righteousness; and let liberation be your only desire."

10D

And when the worshipper leaves the Mosque they say:

"I begin in the name of Allah. Peace and blessing upon the messenger of Allah. O my Lord forgive my sins and open for me the doors of your bounty."

-Heart2Heart Team

THE HEALING TOUCH

A UNPRECEDENTED MIRACLE OF LIFE...AND DIVINE LOVE

Heart2Heart now carries the story of baby Sai Sathyanarayana, who owes his life to Bhagavan and those privileged to work for Him. Read on to find out about this amazing medical miracle.

“It is a healthy baby”, said the gynaecologist to Mrs. Kiran Kumari four months into her pregnancy. Her husband Mr. Karanam Srinivas Rao a photographer by profession in the port city of Visakhapatnam received the news with great joy and the birth of his first child was a moment was looking forward to. For him everything was picture perfect now. Theirs had been a traditional arranged marriage in the year 2004 after which the couple had settled down to raise a family. The baby in her womb was their first issue and motherhood was a destiny Kumari looked forward to with great joy. Everything seemed moving in the right direction and life went on as usual for the young couple.

First Fearful Tidings

In the 9th month of her pregnancy when Kumari returned for a check up, the scanning went on for more than two hours. “The baby is overweight” said the gynaecologist. “Usually three kilograms is normal but your child is around four. That’s one kilogram heavier”. The words were not as disturbing as the furrowed brow of the doctor. A housewife expecting her first baby – her bundle of joy, Kiran Kumari could only hope that nothing was seriously wrong. The gynaecologist offered the mother as much solace as she could as a professional. The young parents to be could only assuage their fears to an extent.

On the 10th of December 2005 at 11:15 PM in a small exclusive gynaecological hospital their little boy came into the world...but he came in silence. The heartening cry of the new born was conspicuous by its absence. Tubes were immediately introduced endotracheally and the fluids obstructing the larynx and the wind pipe aspirated. When the cool fresh air flowed into his little body the child drawing his first lungful cried out aloud. There were tears of joy on the cheeks of his mother and father who were apprehensive ever since the last check up.

But their joy was short lived...within minutes, the baby developed complications and the situation fast deteriorated. He was taken by ambulance to King George Hospital, a major Medical Institution in Visakhapatnam. It was 12:00 PM in the night. The child was admitted, his ECG traced and an Echocardiogram was performed. There was something seriously wrong but unable to identify it, the doctors advised the parents to get private scanning done – fast.

The Shocking Diagnosis

The parents got the X-ray and CT scans done. To their consternation the preliminary diagnosis was the sum of all fears. Their child had been born with a very rare congenital disorder with attendant multiple complications. Not one

but, **seven** doctors came and studied the reports. Despite their conferring, the doctors were themselves not sure of the extent of the disease. The young mother was in shock at the news, but refused to give up on the life of a part of her own flesh and blood. "Is there no way out?" she pleaded. "It can be corrected through surgery", was the clinically dispassionate reply. "But it is very delicate and tricky to decide right now, and also there is a very high risk of failure. Let us first stabilise him with medical management (medicines) and then proceed further."

The parents then took their baby to Apollo hospital for consultation, hoping that one of the premier private hospitals would be able to help. But even there the doctors were extremely hesitant to take up the case. They suspected a congenital heart disease. **The good news was that they had a technique to diagnose the disease but the bad news was the minimum weight to safely perform an angiogram was five kilograms – the boy was only 2.5 kilo grams.** Dr. Naresh Kumar, a paediatric cardiac surgeon and specialist said, "The child is too small for an angiogram. We will have to wait a while for him to gain weight. Doing it now is too risky." The surgery was pegged at Rs. 1.2 million but there was no guarantee that it would succeed...

They returned home to discuss the future course of action. They prayed to Shirdi Sai Baba for help, yet every minute that passed seemed to add to his agony. His condition tore at the hearts of Kiran and Srinivas. Neither could rest, yet they took turns at caring for their first born. Then one day at about 10 PM their already emaciated child started vomiting and was having difficulty even to breathe. They rushed him to back to Apollo and the child was immediately admitted.

The little baby was hospitalized and instead of the warm embrace of his mother he had to find comfort in the artificial means of medical technology. In place of the comforting thumping of his mothers heart that he was so used to when in the cocoon of her womb, his tiny senses heard the sharp abrasive sounds of alarms and beeps with white sheets and walls that surrounded him. The effect of the anomaly was apparent when his weight plummeted to an alarming 2 kilograms within the three weeks of hospital stay.

He was put on furosemide, a diuretic. The vital organs of all human beings, the lungs, kidneys, liver, spleen and so on are all sensitive to the pressure at which the heart is able to pump the blood. The kidney is a membranous biological filter that sieves the fluids of the body eliminating the impurities as urine. Like any other filter it needs pressure on one side of the membrane for the purification to occur. In day old babies the organs are extra sensitive. In the case of this little lad born with a congenital disorder the effects were apparent; he could not urinate without the help of furosemide that helped remove excess fluid from his body. When his weight began to fall furosemide was discontinued thinking that he was losing too much fluid, but surprisingly his weight began to fall further.

Even in all this agony and suffering his behaviour as a baby was very uncommon. He rarely expressed emotions, and even when he fell off the bed at the age of one month he did not cry. His stoicism strengthened the resolve of both his parents. They were willing to do anything to help him.

The boy was discharged from Apollo on the 10th of February 2006. The parents were distraught that all their efforts were in vain. But it is when all human effort has failed and the tired mind looks to God that He responds in full. What followed could not be providence alone. Something or someone beyond was holding them and leading them. That evening, when they were all in the depths of despair, a light glowed at the end of the dark tunnel.

The Light of Hope Beckons

Srinivas had a cousin who was an active Sai worker in Anakapalli, a small town in Andhra Pradesh. He advised that they go to the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences at Puttaparthi. This was more than a silver lining to Srinivas who was like a drowning man clutching at straws. Only, this was not a straw but the outstretched hand of God.

The family of three came to Puttaparthi on the 14th of February. The child was examined at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences Prasanthigram, and was referred to the sister institution Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences at Whitefield, Bangalore. They reached on the 15th the very next day and brought the child to the Hospital. The child was put through all the preliminary screening and was taken for the routine tests on the 16th. Just to verify the complexity of the anomaly, the echo was done a phenomenal six times and reviewed by three cardiologists in consultation with a cardiac surgeon. All this was just to ascertain that the anomaly that they were seeing on the screen really existed in such a little child. The doctors went into a huddle and then decided that they would go ahead with the case.

This was like manna from heaven to Srinivas. He could not believe his ears that after being rejected by two major hospitals in Visakhapatnam, with their specialists afraid to risk even a Cath procedure...here was a Hospital that was willing to take up the case in its entirety. It was here that he slowly began to realise the difference between a Doctor and a Healer. Though like conventional hospitals we too have doctors...all the doctors here work with the firm conviction that there is something beyond them that works through them and it is *that* power that heals.

The angiogram on the 2.75 kilo, 57 cms long baby boy was performed on the 17th of February. And the final diagnosis read as follows: Acyanotic congenital heart disease. Coronary cameral fistula. LAD →RV. PDA L→R. Normal Sinus Rhythm. Congestive Heart Failure. No Infective Endocarditis.

For laymen all the medical jargon translates as: there is a hole (that should not be there) in the heart that connects the major artery that supplies blood to the heart muscle into one of the chambers of the heart. This is the Coronary Cameral Fistula. Also, there was another communication between the pulmonary artery which circulates blood to the lungs and the aorta that circulates blood to the body. This is the Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA). All these unnatural connections were causing a very distorted flow of blood in the boy's heart. Unable to handle all these complications, the heart was going into failure. Fortunately for the boy he had no infections of any sort earlier. So, his body could withstand surgery.

20th of February 2006 will forever remain indelible in the life of the little boy. For, every time he looks into the mirror, at his bare chest, later in his life, he will see a silvery scar tracing its path in a straight line from below his collar bone to the top of his belly. Dr. Anil Kumar Mulpur, Head of the Department of Cardiac Surgery, operated on the child ably assisted by Dr. S.P. Manoj Kumar Consultant, both dextrous surgeons in their own right. Dr. Srinivas, Head of the Department of Anaesthesia was on the job through out the surgery. **No expenses were spared and the best was given. The child was put on cardio pulmonary bypass with the help of a heart lung machine. Dr. Anil smoothly ligated the PDA and closed the Coronary cameral fistula.**

The child was shifted to the Intensive Care Unit and was under constant supervision. But the suffering the little body had undergone for the weeks prior to the surgery had already left its impression. The child was on ventilator for 40 days since his lungs were not able to take the load of a normal blood flow immediately. When he showed signs of improvement, he was shifted to the ward for one night. He again developed respiratory trouble and was shifted back to the ICU – this time for another 15 days.

The Divine Heals

Time is a great healer and the child was in the Temple of Healing. Days passed and he gained strength. When the doctors were sure he was breathing well on his own without any difficulty, he was shifted to the ward. But unfortunately he deteriorated again and was brought back to the ICU for the third time and stayed on till the 29th of the month. When he was shifted back to the ward the third time...he seemed third time lucky...he never came back to the ICU. It was a one way route out of the portals of the Hospital...healthy and well. Since he had no events in the ward, he was subsequently discharged. He is now at home with his parents in Visakhapatnam leading a happy life, reborn in the SSSIHMS.

The Overjoyed Parents

A month later when contacted over the phone Karanam Srinivas Rao who has made Sri Sathya Sai Baba the centre of his life, joyously informed us that his little boy is recovering fast and without any subsequent complications. He said,

“Light and hope has dawned on our lives. At the beginning when we were leaving for Bangalore, some people said that it was difficult to get the child operated in Swami's Hospital. They dissuaded us but we persisted. The doctors of Swami's Hospital immediately attended on the child, conducted all the tests and performed the operation.

In fact we do not know much about Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Our god is Shirdi Sai and we prayed to Him and wrote a letter to Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Our prayer was answered. It was a great wonder that we did not spend even a pie on the child in the Hospital. Everything was free. The Hospital was like a temple, calm and serene. The child has now completed his first six months and now weighs 5 1/2 kgs, happy, healthy, playful and cheerful.”

Sai Sathyanarayana is the name of this gift of God. A name that will remind the entire family of their benefactor every moment of their existence. This is the subtle way God enters and pervades the lives of not

just the one who has been healed but his entire generation. The whole dynasty that will follow will be indebted to That God who touched the life of this boy Sai Sathyanarayana.

These feelings are aptly expressed in the words of the overwhelmed father, “Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the living and loving god of our time. He has proved in our case that ***“I will not leave anyone who comes to Me for help. Take one step towards Me and I will take ten towards you”***. This is a divine marvel, a manifestation of Bhagavan Baba's love for those who are in distress and who pray to Him for Help.”

‘A Miracle’ Opine the Specialists

He has also taken his son to a local specialist Dr. Radha Krishna who was astounded at the recovery, since no one would take up such a case with the baby in such a low weight category. The same opinion was echoed by Dr. Naresh Kumar specialist at Apollo Hospitals, in Visakhapatnam, “It is a rare case”, he had said and had expressed great interest about how it was possible to work on such a baby? All the specialists who declared the child inoperable under the earlier circumstances are now amazed at the surgery and the recovery and have even showed interest in documenting and learning from the case.

Sai's Surgeon

Let us look at the case of this boy through the eyes of Dr. Anil Kumar Mulpur, HOD Dept of CTVS SSSIHMS Whitefield.

“This young child had a pre-operative diagnosis of coronary cameral fistula. This is extremely rare to surface up and present in the first year of life. Even as we were planning the operation, the child deteriorated and had to be put on ventilator (artificial respiration) the night before. If this child were to be left alone, he probably would have died. The only option available was to operate on this 2.75 kilogram sick child who also had emaciation and cardiac cachexia – the child was essentially skin and bones. At the operation the patient was put on Cardiopulmonary Bypass, the PDA ligated and the heart arrested with Cardioplegia. The Left Anterior Descending artery was opened up to identify 1.5 cm communication with Right Ventricle. This was closed with child's own pericardium. The incision in the artery was closed and the patient was separated successfully from the Heart Lung Machine.

Though the heart recovered in three to four days, we had to undertake progressive hyper alimentation – loading the child with calories, proteins and vitamins and build the muscle mass of the child, such that he could breathe well on his own. In view of his poor pre operative status – emaciation and cachexia, it was not surprising that the child combated with multiple infections. The child was weaned slowly and was finally extubated on the 33rd post operative day.

The post operative echo showed – no fistula flow, no residual PDA, no Pulmonary Oedema, Good Left Ventricular / Right Ventricular function. Intensive care unit nurses, the physiotherapist and anaesthetist have spent more time with the child than the biological mother! **A literature search suggests that this could well be the youngest age and the lowest weight for this condition in the entire world so far. Whatever medical science**

can say or do...the bottom line is that it was impossible for the child to leave the hospital without the abundant grace of Swami.”

The last words reflect the faith of the doctors that **Sai is the Healer**. This is just another vindication that the Lord is the master of the great miracle called life. Men are but instruments in the hands of God who is the real doctor and healer. The treatises on Ayurveda declare “*Vaidyo Narayano Harihi*”. In other words – “Lord Narayana, Hari, is the doctor.”

-Heart2Heart Team



