

## **HEART 2 HEART**

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## BETWEEN YOU AND US

Why does God have to descend on earth from age to age? Could not Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, who declared the intent of their advent as 'Dharmasthapanam' or restoration of righteousness, achieve their Mission from wherever they are, if they are omniscient and all-powerful? Many so called intellectuals and rationalists in present times debunk the idea of 'God in Human Form' as pure gobbledygook.

Even many theologians and believers, though they worship the Almighty and profess walking on the path laid down by one of the Prophets or Messengers of God, treat the concept of God Himself descending down with scorn and disbelief. It was the same many centuries ago too. The most popular Mughal Emperor of India, Akbar, the Great, who believed in the invisible and formless Allah, once openly scoffed at this so called 'Hindu idea' of Avatars (God assuming forms) and threw a challenge to all the men in his court to convince him about the need and rationale for such an event. Birbal, the celebrated courtier who was known for his wit and wisdom, asked a week's time from His majesty. A few days later, Birbal arranged an exciting boat ride for the pleasure of the king and his family, and as the premier was cruising along soaking in the sublimity of nature, away from his sight, the canny Birbal dropped a life-size doll of the King's little son to the river. The King, who was shocked to hear the loud splash which was accompanied by a piteous cry from Birbal, "O, the prince has fallen into the water!" instantaneously jumped into the water to rescue his 'son'. It was then that Birbal disclosed the real drama, and after the emperor's tempers were down, explained, "I seek pardon, your majesty, but I had to perforce stage this drama to answer your doubt." The King was perplexed. Birbal clarified, "Your Majesty, you could have ordered any of us to dive into the river, but the circumstance was so precarious and your affection for the little one was so intense that without batting your eyelid, your Majesty himself took the plunge. So is the case with God's Incarnations. I have answered your doubt, my lord."

What does a mother do, when she sees her child walking away from her towards a grave danger? Does she look around to find the most suitable person to help? Or does she dash without loosing a split second? It is the same with our Lord too. In a revealing discourse delivered more than a quarter century ago, in 1964, Swami said that the decline of righteousness and the unmatched Love of the Lord for His children is what compels the Lord to descend. He further added, "The Lord is Love itself. He comes in human form so that you can talk to Him, move with Him, serve Him, adore Him, achieve Him, and recognise your kinship with Him."

In the only press interview Bhagavan has given till date, in 1970, the editor of 'Nava Kaal' asked Him, "At what age did You acquire this Divine Power?" Swami said, "From My very birth..." and then He continued, "From before that." The editor, evidently, was stuck with wonder. And then Baba continued, "Yes, I resolved upon My Birth. I decided who should be My Mother. Mere humans can choose only who is to be wife or husband: the Mother was chosen by the Son in the Rama incarnation and in the Krishna incarnation."

Then too, the task for which the birth was decided upon was, conferring Love on all. And through that Love, foster righteous living."

As we celebrate His Birthday this month, eighty-two years have passed of this most mysterious, magnificent and mind-boggling phenomenon on earth, yet what we know of Him is as miniscule as a molecule in the Milky Way. How many times has He stunned mankind! Right from the moment of His birth when musical instruments started playing mysteriously on their own, to the days when He was a tiny-tot playing on the sands of Chitravati – plucking all kinds of fruits from the tamarind tree for His playmates, to leaving them bewildered one momentous evening with the vision of the Sun, the Moon and the Third Eye all in succession; or the days after the declaration of His Advent when He started appearing simultaneously in two places or going in 'trance' suddenly to save a devotee; or the occasions when He left scholars and scientists of all hues stupefied with His eloquent and enlightening elucidation of the *Vedas* and Upanishads to the secrets of the Creation and Cosmos; or the diamond of a declaration He made in 1963 after curing Himself of the paralysis of seven days with just a sprinkling of water saying, "I am *Shiva-Shakthi Swaroopa*"; or the riveting revelation He made in the First World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations in Mumbai, 1968, asserting: "I affirm that this Sai Form is the Form of all the various names that man uses for the adoration of the Divine"; or the grand Guru Poornima festival in 1968, when He inaugurated a college for women in Anantapur and said, "The seed has been planted; it will sprout and spread, heavy with fruits, providing shade, security and sustenance to all"; or the mesmerizing manner in which He brought back Mr. Walter Cowan from the dead in December 1971; or for that matter, the way the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (now Sri Sathya Sai University) came into being with its three beautiful campuses in the early 1980s; or the incredible creation and functioning of the medical marvels – the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences which continue to amaze professionals and administrators, believers and skeptics alike; or the jaw-dropping mammoth Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Projects which know no end, starting from Anantapur and many neighbouring districts to the city of Chennai to the tribal regions of East and West Godavari districts to who knows where next, and which made even the UN sit up and take notice; or...well, the story of this glorious saga can go on.

And what we have enumerated now, you are aware, are just a few shining pebbles our eyes immediately fell upon in the grand seashore of His Glory. Speaking to thousands gathered on the occasion of Dasara 1961, Swami had said, "For every act of Grace you experience or read about, there are countless you do not know." And how true this is!

For every doctor who serves voluntarily in Swami's Super Specialty and General Hospitals in His physical vicinity, there are thousands in all parts of the globe who are stretching themselves to the limit to bring hope and happiness in the hapless and diseased. Did you know that just two months ago 36 eminent Sai doctors from the UK traveled to Malawi, one of the poorest countries of the world where every day 140 people die of HIV/AIDS and 95% of the adult population (between 15 to 49) is infected?

Similarly, for every youth of Swami's Institute who serves the poor doing Grama Seva in villages nearby Puttaparthi, there are thousands of inspired youngsters the world over who plunge into village service with a passion that would equal a Mother Teresa and Baba Amte. And this is no exaggeration! When you read how the Sai Youth of Orissa have converted a *Kustha Ashram*, a leper colony - where the 300 odd inmates, ostracized by society and permanently scarred by human apathy, whose lives were no different than rubble on the road - into a land where everybody is now smiling and every soul is shining with hope, joy and happiness, you will realize it yourself.

What we know of His work and Glory is probably only a drop of the infinite ocean. The incredible cascading effect His every act perpetuates is unfathomable. But what we do know and have experienced in innumerable ways, sometimes aware and at other times unknown to us, is His love. In fact, that is all He has; that is all He is. In a landmark discourse in May 1968, Swami had said, "You elaborate in your lectures the unique powers of Sai, the incidents that are described as 'miracles'.... But I request you not to attach importance to these. Do not exaggerate their significance; the most significant and important power is, let Me tell you, My Love. I may turn the sky into earth, or earth into sky; but that is not the sign of Divine might. It is the Love, the fortitude, effective, universal and ever-present; that is the unique sign."

If the Sai Movement is marching ahead at mind-numbing speed in every continent today, it is not because of the magnificent monuments of Healthcare, Educare or Sociocare that Swami has built, but because of the way the Lord has touched, transformed and triggered in millions the zeal to love all and serve all. One grand example of this process was the Prema Jyothi Exhibition which was staged in Chennai in the last week of September this year. When you read the cover story you will be amazed at the instances of inner revolution that He brings out so spontaneously and suddenly. Pure Love can convert a particle of dust into a diamond in no time. Prema Jyothi demonstrated this amply.

As we celebrate His birthday this month, let us remind ourselves of a Birthday message He gave many years ago. "Adore Me, on the day that you are I, on the day when you derive unbounded Bliss therefrom, on the day when you can be full of joy that you are born." Dear reader, let us celebrate! We are living with God, the most loving God. This is the best time in history. We are blessed! And if we so decide, we can be One with Him completely... in Love.

Loving Regards,  
H2H Team.

## **SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS**

### **SATHYA SAI SPEAKS**

#### **Signs, Wonders and their Significance**

The conflict between persons who accept God and deny Him, those who declare that God is to be found in this or that place and those who affirm that He can be found nowhere, is never ending; it has continued throughout the ages. While considering this situation, one has to remember that while it is unnecessary to awaken a person already awake and easy to awaken a person who is asleep, we cannot awaken, however much we try, a person pretending to sleep and refusing to be woken up! Those who do not know, can be taught by means of simple illustrations what they do not know. But those afflicted with half-knowledge and proud of that acquisition are beyond any further education.

The two eyes give a picture of a vast expanse of space, but they cannot see the face to which they belong! They are important instruments of the body, but they cannot see the entire body. When you wish to see your face as well as your back, you have to keep a mirror in front and another behind you too, so that the front mirror also shows you the reflection of your back. Similarly, when you desire to know your reality (face) and your future (back), you have to adjust the mirror of 'Self-confidence' (confidence that you are the Self) in front and the mirror of Divine Grace behind you. Without these two, to affirm that you are aware of your Truth or your destiny, is sheer fantasy.

#### ***Avathars Attract by their Inexplicable Acts***

The Divine is now denoted by various words that are common currency in limited human vocabularies. They name phenomena revealing the Divine, like 'miracles', 'magic', 'wonders', etc. Of course, man cannot contain in his mind more than he can hold. He cannot express in words the inexpressible. Only those who have dived deep and contacted the underlying principle of Love, can picture Divinity with some clarity. The Divinity that is Me has not been acquired or earned, nor has it been added or evinced after the lapse of some years in the middle of this life.

The Divine has to reveal Himself through these manifestations, largely shaped and modified by the nature of the times, the region and the cultural environment. The signs and wonders that I manifest are given names that do not connote the purpose or effect. They can be called *chamathkaara* (amazing acts), that lead on to *samskaara* (purification), which in turn urges one towards *paropakaara* (helping others) and finally results in *saakshaathkaara* (divine vision).

*Chamathkaara* is any act which attracts on account of its inexplicability. This aspect of attraction is inherent in the *Avathar* (divine incarnation). The very name, Rama, means 'He who pleases or causes delight. Krishna means 'He

who attracts, draws towards Himself'. This attribute of attractions is a characteristic of Divinity.

### **Why Does the Divine Draw?**

Why does the Divine attract? Is it to deceive or mislead? No. It is to transform, reconstruct and reform - a process called *samskaara*. What is the purpose of the reconstruction? It is to make a person useful and serviceable for society, to efface their ego, and to affirm in him/her the unity of all beings in God. The person who has undergone *samskaara* (this purification process) becomes a humble servant of those who need help. This is the stage of *paropakaara*. Service of this kind, done with reverence and selflessness, prepares man to realise the One that pervades the many. The last stage is *saakshaathkaara*. The Vedhas (ancient scriptures of Divine Knowledge) proclaim that Immortality (the stage when one is merged in the Birthless, Deathless, Universal Entity), is feasible through renunciation and detachment only, and not through rituals, progeny or wealth.

When a person renounces selfish desires, their love expands unto the farthest regions of the Universe until he/she becomes aware of the Cosmic Love that feeds all the four processes mentioned above. It is important that you know this underlying urge in all as I do...

The Divine can be grasped only through love, faith and *sadhana* (spiritual discipline), surcharged with Universal Love. Reason is too feeble an instrument to measure it. Denial of the Divine cannot negate it. Logic cannot reveal it. All the tirades now being made on the Divine are from atheists who are opportunists. So your duty is to preserve your equanimity. Be true to yourselves and do not waver. I am unaffected by praise or blame. My love and compassion envelop all; My Grace can be shared by all.

- *Bhagavan's Birthday Discourse on November 23, 1976.*

## CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI - Part 38

*(Continued from the last issue)*

*Baba first created some gifts, a ring for a lady - a green diamond in the center flanked by two white diamonds, all gems showing large flat facets. Then, for a lady who had a large japamala (rosary) of seeds, Baba created a Japamala of matched pearls, and showed her how to use it: The thumb, standing, separate, may be taken to represent God. The first finger, representing the individual person, is joined to the thumb, to the Divine. The three remaining fingers represent the three gunas - the three modes of temperament, thought, and action observable in all people - the middle finger being the Sathwic guna (calm, pure, balanced nature). The japamala is then drawn across the Sathwic finger by the thumb and the forefinger movement.*

**SAI:** *(Demonstrating the use of the japamala)* Like this, Swami holds all of creation in His hand.

*(A man from Nigeria was in the group, and Baba next turned to him.)* What religion? What is your religion?

**Answer:** Christian.

**SAI:** Do you like Jesus?

**Answer:** Yes.

*Moving His hand, Baba creates a ring, the centre stone of which carries a very fine portrait of Jesus. First, He shows the ring to those of us sitting near His chair, and then to the Nigerian, saying "Do you like Jesus? Which do you want, Jesus or Sai?" The Nigerian replied, "I would be pleased with either." Baba holds the ring between thumb and forefinger about six inches from His lips and blows His breath upon it. Then He shows it to those close to His chair. The portrait on the centre stone has changed from that of Jesus to a portrait of Sai. To the Nigerian, Baba then says, "Now you have both. Come here". The man moves forward and Baba places the ring on his finger, Baba says, "See, a perfect fit."*

*Later on, it was the Nigerian's turn to go into the inner interview room for a brief, private conversation, and when he came out we could see that the ring had changed yet once again. Baba had again recreated the ring and it was now a single large diamond in an appropriate setting. As Sai followed the man into the main room, He said, "He didn't like a large ring!" This remark caused considerable merriment. In fact, the entire interview was joyful in the extreme and Baba was in a great mood, constantly cracking jokes. Hearing such happy laughter coming from the group, the people outside were wondering what on earth was happening.*



## **Living with Desires**

**SAI:** Any questions? Spiritual topics?

**Q:** How to live with worldly desires which rise endlessly?

**SAI:** Turn all wishes and desires to God, then all will be well. Mind is like a key to the door of a prison. Turn it to the left, the door opens and the person is free to turn towards God and spiritual life. Turn the key to the right, and the person is locked into worldly life. Turn every wish and every desire into desire to be with God, and be happy.

**Q:** Swami, what is the truth of the mind? How to use thought and the mind?

**SAI:** There is no mind. Just as cloth is seen as thread, then as cotton only, there is only God. God is like a perfect mirror: your desires, thoughts, and actions are perfectly reflected in that perfect mirror, which is God. When your desires, thoughts, and actions are reflected back to you, you may think God sent them, but they are really your own.

**Q:** But what to do about bad thoughts and desires?

**SAI:** Human thoughts and desires. If you think, "I am human", then such human aspects of anger and jealousy will be reflected and will return to you. But you are not human. You are Divine. You are God. Think and feel, "I am Divine". Then you will think and feel only love, for God is Love. Every place, everything is Love, Love only.

**Q:** I have a desire which I cannot put away.

**SAI:** What?

**Q:** Privacy. I must have privacy.

**SAI:** Physical privacy is first, then mental privacy.

**Q:** And I make mistakes; the same mistakes. Can I give my mistakes to Baba?

**SAI:** Oh, yes. I am always ready. Give your life to me. Be my instrument. I act through you.

**Q:** Then even bad thoughts and acts are by you?

**SAI:** Human thoughts and acts. God is love only. You are Divine. Be Love. Act in Love.

**Q:** But, Swami, the mistakes I make. Even though I know better, I make the same mistakes. Can I give you my repeated mistakes?

**SAI:** Once, or twice, or three times perhaps it is the same mistake, but repeating again and again means it is no more a mistake. It is habit!

### **Love and the Soul**

**H (Hislop):** Swami says that if one is so fortunate as to have God's Love, then no spiritual practice, no *sadhana* is necessary?

**SAI:** Yes. If you have God loving you, then no *sadhana*, no meditation, no inquiry, nothing more is needed, for, then everything is God. All thoughts are of God, only God is seen; the whole day is with God only.

**Q:** What is soul?

**SAI:** Soul is the *Atma*. It does not die. You are *Atma*, not body.

**Q:** But Swami, there is something else. Something has results.

**SAI:** Yes, result is from desire. It is like this golden watch band you are wearing. You wish for a ring; the gold is taken from the bracelet and it becomes a ring. Then you are no longer pleased with a ring, but instead long for a golden necklace. The gold is taken and it becomes a necklace. All are different forms, but the gold is the same.

### **Ending the Dream**

**H:** Swami informs us that this life in the world is a dream only.

**SAI:** Yes, a dream.

**H:** But Swami works endlessly in the dream. Why?

**SAI:** If the dream is realized as such, then the world is done with. Swami helps those caught in the dream.

**H:** But it is still a dream, without purpose or end. Why bother with it?

**SAI:** A big scientist may know that a child's world is a dream and has no reality which is lasting. But this does not prevent him from sitting down with the child at the child's level. Again, Sai could be likened to an aircraft which briefly touches down in order to take passengers up from the ground.

**H:** Swami! There is room for only a limited number!

**SAI:** Limited, yes! Always there is room for a limited number only.

**H:** Swami! How to get a booking?

**SAI:** By Grace; booking is through Grace.

**H:** The limitation is severe.

**SAI:** Yes, it is true that reservations have been made. But on the plane, the Government has some seats reserved. Swami can say, "Hislop is given one of those reservations."

**H:** What is the difference between Swami's Grace and Swami's Blessings?

**SAI:** They are the same. Swami's Blessings, His Grace, His Love - all mean the same.

**Q:** How to get Swami's Grace?

**SAI:** Swami's Grace is always here. Swami is always here. He is here for all; for everyone. I am always calling, but they do not listen, they do not come. What can I do?

*(Now Swami calls people in turn to the inner interview room for a brief, private conversation. As He moves to the doorway, He says, "I am always happy. My bliss is ever full and never disturbed".)*

**H:** Because Swami knows that this world of experience is only a dream. *(Sai makes no reply.)*

*(To be continued...)*

## CHINNA KATHA

### The 'Judging Other' Jeopardy

There is a widely prevalent habit now of judging others and labeling them as devotees or *Nasthikas* (Atheists). What do you know, what can you know of the inner working of another's mind? There was once a queen who was a great devotee of Lord Rama. She felt so sad that her husband, the Raja, never even uttered the name of Rama and had no devotion. She had vowed that the first occasion on which she got evidence of his devotion or at least respect for the name of Lord Rama, she would conduct *Puja* (worship) in all the temples and feed the poor on a lavish scale.

A few days later, one night, while fast asleep, the Raja uttered the name of Rama thrice plaintively and prayerfully. She heard the *Namasmarana* (chanting of the Divine name) and was happy at the discovery of her husband's devotion to Rama. She ordered general rejoicing throughout the kingdom and the feeding of the poor. The Raja did not know the reason for the celebration for he was only told that it was an order from the Queen, which the officers carried out.

Similarly, a husband may not be aware of the excellence of a wife's spiritual attainments. There is the case of a couple who were proceeding through a thick jungle on pilgrimage to an inaccessible shrine. The husband saw on the footpath a precious stone, shining brilliantly when the sun's rays fell upon it from between the leaves. He hastily threw some sand over it with a movement of his foot so that his wife would not be tempted to pick it up and become a slave to the tinsel. The wife saw the gesture and chided the husband for still retaining in his mind a distinction between sand and diamond. For her, both were the same.

The Raja who spoke in his sleep the sacred name of Rama felt very sorry, according to the story, that he let Ramanama out of his mouth, for he believed that no one should know of his "love" for Rama. There are many who will not shout about their Guru or their favourite *Nama* (Name) and *Rupa* (Form). But whether you declare them to others or not, keep them ever in your consciousness. The name of Rama or any other name must be as constant as breathing. For this, practice is essential.

A person once told Dr. Johnson, the famous English thinker, that he could seldom find the time to recite the Name of God, what with the hundreds of things he had to do from morning till nightfall and even far into the night. Dr. Johnson replied with another question. He asked how millions of people found space to live upon the face of the earth, which is two-thirds water and the rest is too full of mountains, deserts, forests, icy regions, riverbeds, marshes and similar impossible areas. The questioner said that man somehow struggled to find living space. So too, said Dr. Johnson, man must somehow find a few minutes a day for prayer to the Lord.

- Baba

## COVER STORY

### LIBERATING LOVE...

#### 'PREMA JYOTHI' LIGHTS UP CHENNAI METRO

Dear Reader, in the September issue of H2H, we had a comprehensive cover story on the grand Exhibition “Prema Jyothi” held in the Poorna Chandra Auditorium during the Guru Poornima celebrations, 2007 in Prasanthi Nilayam. Two out of every three who visited this presentation fervently expressed that if an elevating show like this traveled to other cities and states of India, it would awaken many a dogmatic and dormant mind. And by His Grace, it did happen. In the last week of September 2007, “Prema Jyothi” was staged in the city of Chennai, and the impact it had on the citizens of Chennai was beyond imagination. The ways of the Divine are always mysterious and mind-boggling. And the Chennai episode of Prema Jyothi reveals this to us in many fascinating ways. This is one of the principal reasons why we have the second cover story on this Exhibition, though we had the first one just two months ago.

But, for a change, we have the story now not as a free flowing story-like narrative like all our previous cover stories, but as a conversation between characters, Prashant and Sundar. Prashant is a long time devotee who visited the Exhibition at Prasanthi Nilayam, while Sundar, equally devout, participated in “Prema Jyothi” in Chennai. Before we get started, a small note: Though these two characters are fictitious, everything that is conveyed through them (the incidents, facts, testimonials, etc.) are all as true as can be.

*Prashant spends most of his time in Prasanthi Nilayam while Sundar visits occasionally. After many months, Sundar is in Puttaparthi again and one morning meets Prashant, and the following conversation ensues:*

#### **Nostalgic Memories Rekindled...**

*Prashant:* Sairam Sundar. How are you? Nice to see to you here in Prasanthi Nilayam. You are coming here after a long gap, aren't you?

*Sundar:* Sairam Prashant, and yes, I am indeed blessed to be here. Coming here is always such a heartening experience. The moment I step in, it is as if a serene calmness pervades my entire being. I wish I could stay here for ever.

*P:* Oh yes, everybody feels the same. That is the divine magic of this ‘Abode of Peace’.

S: When I am outside, I miss Swami and this place a lot! But, you know, Swami, the Compassionate Lord that He is, always comes to my rescue in some way or the other. When He came to Chennai in January 2007, I joined in as a Sai volunteer and spent as much time as possible serving at the Yagnam site and basking in His blissful Presence.

P: That must have been an experience of a lifetime!

S: Oh yes, when He was there, it was literally heaven, I must say. The way He gave Himself away to all - be it a policeman or a politician, an auto-rickshaw driver or an esteemed celebrity, or the hundreds of eager devotees on the streets of Chennai, was very touching. My heart was soaked in bliss.

P: I can imagine that. Though I was not there, I heard a lot about it from many devotees. He was there for 13 days, right?

S: Yes. When Swami left Chennai on January 31, the emptiness I felt within me was, at times, unbearable. So I began to relive all the beautiful moments I had spent with Him, and that lightened me up to carry on with my regular duties. But recently, my heart again started intensely pining for Him, and it was at this time that a Sai friend, who was truly god-sent, I should say, told me about an elaborate exhibition on His Life and Mission called "Prema Jyothi" to be staged in the same venue where the Athi Rudra Maha Yagna was held!

**"It was like Swami re-visiting Chennai!"**

P: Oh, so you were there when "Prema Jyothi" traveled to Chennai!

S: Prashant, how do you know about "Prema Jyothi"?

P: How should I not know! Prema Jyothi was actually held here in Prasanthi Nilayam first during Guru Poornima celebrations in July 2007.

S: Was it? Did Swami see it?

P: Of course, He Himself inaugurated it, and spent nearly 90 minutes keenly watching every panel and presentation. Every inch of the Exhibition was blessed by Him. In fact, it was His inimitable Will and His Prema which made "Prema Jyothi" happen!

S: No wonder! Now I know why the Exhibition was clearly out of this world. You may not believe, but for many in Chennai, which includes me too, it was like Swami re-visiting Chennai!

P: Is that so? It had such a profound impact?

### **“I feel like I am in Parthi!” - Anuradha Vasudevan**

S: Of course, one devotee I met by name Anuradha Vasudevan told me, “I feel like I am in Parthi, right in front of Bhagavan. It is amazing. I cannot express myself in words.” Another person, Sandhya B, said, “I could not visit Puttaparthi recently, but this Exhibition literally brought Prasanthi to Chennai!”

P: This is incredible. But what really gave them such an elevating experience?

S: It is difficult to explain, Prashant. There could be so many reasons. Let me put it this way: you tell me, why is Darshan such a unique experience? What really happens when Baba comes amongst the devotees?

P: Hmmm, all I can say is it is an overwhelming feeling. For each one, the experience is different. A depressed heart cheers up, an agitated mind calms down, a curious mind gets an answer, a doubting Thomas gets convinced and a devotee goes into raptures. When Pure Love flows, it touches the inner core of every person and unravels the most beautiful part of his or her personality.

### **Swami’s Divine Presence was felt Everywhere!**

S: Right and I must tell you, the experience of people who visited the Exhibition in Chennai were no different. Because I saw people coming out of the hall in ecstasy, some were in tears, many were beaming with smiles and others were wonderstruck. I do not know whether it was the grand entrance which resembled the stage of the Sai Kulwant Hall in Prashanti, or the never-before-seen magnificent pictures, the moving video presentations, or the courteous sevadals eager to explain patiently every panel to any number of devotees, or the soft bhajan music in the background.... I think the whole ambience was so much like Prasanthi and Swami’s presence was felt everywhere, and therefore, when people left the arena, they were all speechless. But a few gathered their emotions and poured their hearts in the visitor’s books.

P: Did you see these visitors’ dairies?

S: Yes, I used to peep into these pages off and on whenever I used to pass through the exit. One Mrs Beena Madhavan had written, “I am so pleased with the way Prema Jyothi exhibition is conducted here. Just like any other project of Swami it is so orderly. I feel I have spent my time truly in the presence of Swami and His Divine Love.” Another person, a youth, J. Syed Ibrahim, who came to know of Bhagavan for the first time, had written a note addressed to Swami, saying, “Baba, I am amazed. I cannot take my eyes off You!” And for Dr. Seethalakhmi Sreedhar, they were not pictures, she writes, “It was Swami speaking to you, alive!”

P: This is incredible. They did not see the panels as images of Swami but as Swami Himself. Swami often says how generally many worship God as a picture, but only people with true devotion see the picture as God.

S: Right. Actually, Dr. Krishna Raman, who was taking pictures, told me how one lady requested him to take a picture of her prayerfully standing next to one large image of Bhagavan. Many were immensely happy to secure just a snap of themselves with the huge panels. And this included the very elderly and the physically challenged too. The sense of devotion and contentment on their faces was so genuine and touching.

P: Only the Lord knows their feelings, just like Lord Rama recognized Sabari's devotion. Their looks can be many times so deceptive, isn't it?

**"This place is like a Temple!" - Krishnaveni**

S: Exactly. Let me tell you the touching tale of one such lady, which was an eye opener for me. I used to serve as a volunteer in the Exhibition area, and I saw one particular old lady from a poor background – she must have been in her late 60s – visit Prema Jyothi every successive day. And she used to go around the panels with so much reverence and fondness. One day, curiosity got the better of me and I approached her humbly and asked, "Amma, I see you coming here everyday. Why do you go through the same pictures day after day?" Then, the lady with folded hands, replied,

"Son, My name is Krishnaveni. I run a petty shop in this area in Thiruvannamiyur. I am Baba's devotee for the last 44 years and my son loves Him too. When I was living in Ariyalur (about 20 kms from the exhibition site), I used to participate in the Sai Bhajans conducted there and forget the world for those 2-3 hours; but I never got an opportunity to have His Darshan. My, 'more than four-decades-long desire' to see Him found fulfillment when Bhagavan came to Chennai in January this year (2007). Actually I had never imagined that I would be able to see Him at such close quarters. His Darshan quenched my thirst, and the divine chants and fragrance emanating from the Athi Rudra Yagna made me feel heaven had descended on earth." But that was not all.

She continued further, saying, "For poor people like me, Swami is doing so much. It is because of Him that we get drinking water. This is the fourth time I am coming here. My son has told me to enter these premises only after taking a bath. This place is like a temple. Therefore, every morning after my shower, I leave my shop under the care of a relative, and first come here. It is so uplifting being here. I too want to do some service, within my means. I want to be engaged in divine work, till I leave this body." You know, her heartfelt devotion humbled me.

P: And she was just one of the thousands who stepped in everyday, isn't it?

S: Right, when the Exhibition started on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, there were about 1,500 people; but as the days went by the number grew rapidly everyday and do you know how many people had visited by the time it was curtains on October 2<sup>nd</sup>? Do you want to guess?

P: 15,000?



S: No, you are way off the mark, Prashant. It was 22,545! But the most wonderful thing is everybody who stepped in had a story to narrate.

P: Is it? Did you meet anybody else like the old lady?

### **Sai's Infinite Glory Makes Everyone Speechless!**

S: Oh yes, I met so many people – youngsters, newcomers, old devotees. Talking of old devotees, I am reminded of one Mr. Nandagopal. This person was an old man, surely above 70 years. The striking pictures of Swami in the Exhibition moved his heart so much that seeing me standing near, he called me and started narrating his story impromptu. He said,

“Son, I am an ardent devotee of Swami from when I was a boy of 18. Ours is an orthodox family and our family deity is Lord Venkateshwara (also called Lord Balaji). When I first went to Puttaparthi, it was only out of curiosity. But Baba stunned me by looking at me and then calling me by name saying, “Nandagopal, ra naina” (Nandagopal, come, My son). I was speechless. I wondered, I am a stranger here, how did He know my name? I was so touched that I started crying. But Swami lovingly continued, “Why did you come here? And why are you crying now? Go to Balaji.” I could not react except through the tears that were still rolling down my cheeks copiously. And then, Swami, with motherly affection, lifted my face so that I could look at Him, and said, “*Choodu, choodu*” (see, see). When I lifted my eyes, I could not believe myself. It was no more Swami there! I saw Lord Balaji complete with *shanka* and *chakra* (conch and disc)! It was implausible. I was thrilled. And I immediately fell at His feet with total surrender. The kind Lord blessed me by smearing Vibhuti on my forehead and then asked me to return home as my parents were against Him.

“I reached home, and in the same evening our house was filled with the fragrance of Vibhuti. He was proving His presence. And in that night He came in the dream of my sick mother, who was suspected of cancer in the abdomen, and blessed her by pressing her stomach. Needless to say, her cancer was cancelled. And to complete the transformation process in our house, the very next day He gave a Divine vision to my father. From that day till now, we worship only Him. We know of no other God. He is the same Lord who is there in Tirupathi and now is in Puttaparthi. We pray for His blessings.”

P: Sundar, as you narrate these experiences, it is like listening to Bhagavatham, it is Sai Bhagavatham. They say, the story of His Glory is as endless as the sea. But even that is a misnomer. The sea may have an end but Sai's Glory is as infinite as He is.

S: You are right, Prashant, we can never comprehend Him. For devotees and non-devotees alike, Prema Jyothi served them in two ways. One, they were blessed with a unique kind of Darshan.

P: What do you mean by ‘unique kind of Darshan’?

**“Here one can see Swami in so many different Forms!” - Ms Gowri Ramnarayan**

S: You see, people were able to see so many different and enchanting facets of His divine personality – all in one place. In fact, this was put beautifully by a , Ms Gowri Ramnarayan, who said,

“This has been a comprehensive visual experience. The visuals here are so eloquent that you feel you are in the presence of Swami! But there is another aspect. When we go and see Swami physically, it is an indescribable experience; but what happens here is that you see Swami in so many different forms, various moods, myriad expressions, and doing so many diverse things. Therefore, you experience what we never perceive when we see Him physically, because when we see Swami, we see only Him, nothing else! But now, not only do we see Swami, but we also see the expressions on the faces of the people when they see Him! It is as if they found their heaven! And this is a complete revelation to me, which I have never seen, because I never look at other people when I am there in His physical presence, I only see Him!”

P: This is an interesting perspective. Truly, when we see Him at Darshan time, we are so careful not to miss even one second of those priceless few moments that we do not want to shift our gaze to anything else till He is in front of our eyes. And Prema Jyothi captured for us the other beautiful things that happen when He is amidst us.

S: Yes, and this is not all. There is another important facet - the second of the two, I was just mentioning. And that is, people at the Exhibition not only got a unique Darshan experience, but at the same time it opened them up to His Glory.

P: Because of the comprehensive display of Swami’s mammoth social welfare projects, you mean?

**“I am touched to see students’ participation in social projects”... - Ms. Anita Gupta**

S: Exactly. Take for example, Ms. Anita Gupta, Senior Vice President and Managing Partner, of JWT Advertising Agency. After seeing the Exhibition, she said,

“I am truly overwhelmed and speechless seeing the magnificence of Swami’s work - social and spiritual. Two things impressed me the most. First, I could not imagine the extent of service extended to all through the hospitals, until I saw this display. The service is free, and a calm and peaceful energy pervades the hospital, which is evident from the photographs and visuals. Healing would come naturally in such hospitals. Secondly, I am touched to see students’ participation in social projects. I now want to go and see it myself. This is very well done and I feel His presence here.”

*P:* That was good. Chennai being a metro, Prema Jyothi in such a location attracted all kinds of people, from various disciplines and professions, isn't it? It was different in Parthi in the sense that it was visited mainly by devotees who had gathered for Swami's Guru Poornima celebrations.

**“This is definitely an eye-opener for those who have least faith in any religion”... - Prof. K Meer Mustafa Hussein**

*S:* You are right, Prashant. You name any profession and there were people from that discipline, from movie stars to political heroes, from bureaucrats to businessmen, from eminent industrialists to distinguished educationists. Talking of Educationists, reminds me of Prof. K. Meer Mustafa Hussein, the Vice Chancellor of Dr. M.G.R. Medical University who dropped in one day. Besides being a doctor, he is a poet and an author too, and what he said was very revealing: “The world is One, and that is in His palm! And He expects us to do more service. I am really astonished that everyone can get treatment free of cost in His Hospital, which no Government has done! This exhibition is definitely an eye-opener for those who have least faith in any religion. God can do anything through His Holiness! It is really fantastic to see that surgeries are being done and I believe 50% of the healing happens because of the surgeons' efforts while another 50% is His blessing. That is the feeling I get when I see this exhibition.

“And what to talk of water! Our body contains mainly water and He understands our need for drinking water like nobody else. Not only has He concentrated on Puttaparthi's needs, the people of Chennai too are really fortunate to get drinking water from the Sai Ganga canal. You name the Project, and every drop of it chants Sai songs!” You know, he went on in this vein and then talking about Swami's educational institutions, he said,

“There is no compromise on the quality of Education He imparts... The glittering eyes of Sai Baba attract youngsters and they are being led at the right time... And one more peculiar facet of Baba is that He never points to any one religion. He treats all equally and this is really fantastic.”

*P:* This is something wonderful coming from the head of a medical university who is from the minority community. Did any other dignitary like him visit the Exhibition?

*S:* Prashant, there were many. Every day there were a few dignitaries. If it was Mr. N. Narayana, Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu one day, then it was Ms. Kani Mozhi, Member of Parliament and the daughter of the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu the next day. If it was Sri Subramanian, Mayor of the Chennai Corporation on the third, then it was Mr. K. K. Pandey, former General Manager of Southern Railway, on the fourth day.

*P:* I am sure the Exhibition must have left an indelible impression on them. What was the reaction of Ms. Kani Mozhi and Mr. Pandey?

**“I can only see Pure Love lighting up the whole hall!” - Mr Pandey**

S: Oh, the Chief Minister's daughter spent a lot of time studying all the panels very carefully and was very impressed. She expressed the desire that a Super Specialty Hospital modeled on the lines of Swami's Hospitals in Puttaparthi and Bangalore should be in Chennai too. And Mr Pandey, who is now a member of the Railway Rates Tribunal of India, said, “The name of the exhibition ‘Prema Jyothi’ is quite apt. I can only see Pure Love lighting up the whole hall. These are activities of God Incarnate on earth and for the first time in history we are witnessing this phenomenon where the Divine Incarnation is recognized and worshipped in His own lifetime!”

P: How true! And I remember there is one panel in the exhibition which shows how Swami Himself had mentioned this to Dr. Hislop, many years ago.

S: Yes, Prashant. It is in the section “The Matchless Glory of Pure Love.” We also have in that panel a picture of the former President Dr. Abdul Kalam reading out a poem on Swami's Birthday describing Planet Earth as a shining jewel because of His love. In fact, Dr. S. P. Thyagarajan, a distinguished educationist and a former Vice Chancellor of Madras University, who had come on October 2nd, expressed similar sentiments.

P: Oh, what did he say?

S: He said, “India is now emerging as a synergy of not only economic prosperity, freedom with democracy, and social empowerment, but also attracting people from all over the world because of the cultural integration and spiritual maturity that Bhagavan Baba is disseminating to the people.”

P: Oh yes, and you see the best example of this in Prasanthi Nilayam. Just look around and you find here people of all races, colour, religion, language, ethnicity and what not. In fact, the Sai Organisation in every corner of the world too is an eclectic mix of inspired individuals.

**“...and now, everybody wants to do service!” – A lady teacher**

S: Absolutely. In fact, the other day at the Exhibition I saw a telling example of this. A group of students from a village called *Dhoosi* near Kanchipuram (75 kms from Chennai) had come to see the Exhibition, and they were accompanied by a teacher who is a Muslim. The children were an active and enthusiastic lot and asking a lot of questions. But in the end, when we interviewed them, they all said that they want to emulate Swami and serve people. And next, all in the group, which included a Muslim boy too, started reciting the Ganesha sloka “Vakra Tunda Mahakaya...”. When we asked them who had taught them this sacred hymn, they pointed to their teacher. We were taken aback. We were even surprised when the lady teacher told us that she takes pride in taking Bal Vikas classes and tries her best to inculcate Educare in the young minds. We asked her, “How do your family members and community take this? Don't they have any problems with this?” Then, in a voice filled with conviction, she replied, “Swami is beyond religion, and my

whole family is devoted to Him.” And this Exhibition has further revealed the magnitude of His work to the parents of many of these children and now, everybody wants to do service.”

*P:* This is amazing! The way Swami brings about change in the hearts of hundreds and thousands everyday, directly and indirectly, is something astounding.

*S:* Very true. This is precisely what Honourable Justice Rama Subramaniam of the Madras High Court expressed after He went through the various themes of Prema Jyothi.

**“It is His exemplary life that has touched and transformed mankind.” - Hn. Justice Rama Subramaniam**

*P:* What did he say exactly?

*S:* He said, “Look at the millions who are directionless and come to Prasanthi Nilayam in search of meaning in their lives, and once they return after seeing Baba, they become instruments of service to society. For me, that is the greatest miracle that Swami performs everyday. If He had willed, by a wave of His thumb, He could have set up these Hospitals and colleges, but He chose to do it like any man would do, to demonstrate to us what we can do if we so decide. It is because of His abundant Love that He is walking on Earth and it is His exemplary life that has touched and transformed mankind.”

*P:* His words are so pertinent. And we see these transformations happening every day, don't we?

*S:* Yes, but I was lucky to witness personally many such instances during the 11 days of Prema Jyothi in Chennai.

*P:* Is that right? Why don't you share with me at least a few?

**“After seeing this...I am completely changed! I am a new man!” - Mr Muthuraj K**

*S:* Sure. One gentleman, Mr. N. Senthil who came to the Exhibition out of curiosity, after seeing the panels, said, “I am an atheist. But His Love brings me to a new fold. His service to humanity makes me feel that He has become an integral part of me! Love finds meaning in His eyes. They are delightful, powerful and blissful. I have no words to express.” Another person, Mr. Muthuraj K. wrote in the feedback diary: “I am speaking from the bottom of my heart. I have harmed others through my body and mind. But after seeing this exhibition, I am completely changed. I am a new man. I am so grateful.” Stories like this are many, but what takes the cake is the tale of Mrs. Vasantha.

*P:* Who is she? An actress?

**“He has done so much for us!...I want to give away all my properties to Him and live peacefully!” - Vasantha**

S: No, not an actress but an active servant of the Lord. She is an elderly lady who was once a Tax collector for the Chennai Corporation. Mr. Bhoopalan, a Member of the Sri Sathya Sai Trust, Tamil Nadu personally narrated to me this incident. Three days after Prema Jyothi opened, one evening she dropped in at the site and after seeing all the exhibits, she was in tears. She seemed to be looking for someone. Concerned, Mr Bhoopalan, who was standing near by, went to her and asked if he could be of any help to her in anyway. The lady said, “I want to talk to Swami.” And again she looked at Mr. Bhoopalan, she seemed to recognize her and said, “Do you remember me? I was the lone lady Tax collector in Chennai Corporation. I also worked in the town planning section under you. My name is Vasantha.” Mr. Bhoopalan, now in his late sixties, could not recognize or recollect her, but comforted her with kind words.

And then she continued, “Please help me. I see Baba in you. I saw through the whole Exhibition, how much Baba has done for all of us! I have done nothing.” And then tears started streaming her face. After a while she regained composure and said, “I retired in 2003. Six months ago my husband passed away and I have no children. I adopted my sister’s daughter, performed her marriage and gave her a share of my property too. And now, I am alone. I have two vacant lands – one at Tanjavur and another at Kolathur, Chennai; and there are many deposits in my husband’s name. I have decided to give away all these to Baba. He is doing so much for us. I don’t need these anymore.”

You can imagine how touched Mr. Bhoopalan was when he heard her resolve. But to make sure that it was not an on-the-spur decision driven by emotion and that she is fully aware of the pros and cons, Mr. Bhoopalan advised her to return home and think it over calmly. But she insisted. “You should help me in fulfilling my desire. This is all I can do. Only two months ago, I joined as a member in Aadambakkam Sai Samithi and I have offered to go to Puttaparthi in October as a sevadal.” Then, Mr. Bhoopalan asked her, “How long have you known Baba?” “My husband took me to Puttaparthi at the time of my marriage. That was more than 30 years ago. But after that I have never seen Baba,” she said and left the premises accepting Vibhuti and a photo of Bhagavan.

But the story does not end there. Next day, at the same time, she appeared at the Exhibition, now with all the papers concerning her land, and broke down. “Please, you must definitely help me. I do not need these properties. I have rents coming from my tenants for my maintenance, which is enough. I want to offer everything to Him and live peacefully. This is all I can do.” The State President of the Sai Organization of Tamil Nadu finally gave her Swami’s Vibhuti packets, appreciated her devotion and sacrifice, and told her that he will surely get back to her after getting Swami’s approval.

*P:* This is so stirring. She was so transformed by seeing only Swami's beautiful pictures and some wonderful videos - imagine what her state will be when she sees Swami physically!

*S:* I guess, those tears will never stop. When people see Swami, the innermost core of their being, which many times even they are not aware of, is touched and then transformation happens in an instant! The Embodiment of Goodness uncovers the best in every individual.

*P:* Right, these stories are so inspiring. Did you witness any more such instances of changes of heart?

**“After seeing this...I strongly feel I should do only good to others”... - Mr. S N Sridhar**

*S:* Oh yes, many. One gentleman by name Mr. S. N. Sridhar from Thiruvottiyur, said, “After seeing this exhibition, I strongly feel, I should do only good to others, especially, offer education to the underprivileged. I have decided today that I will contribute my might to make the lives of people better through education in my village Ulundai (which is near Sriperumbudur).” But what stimulated me more was what Honorable Justice S. Palanivelu, a Judge in the Madras High Court said.

*P:* Oh, so we had many distinguished lawyers come to the Exhibition? You earlier mentioned about Justice Ram Subramaniam.

*S:* Yes, at least five prominent members of the Judiciary visited Prema Jyothi, and every one had so many good things to say, but what Honorable Justice S Palanivelu said still rings in my ears.

*P:* OK, tell me about it.

*S:* He said, “I have read that service to society is service to the Almighty, but here, I see, that the Almighty is rendering service to society! Only a Pure Mind can render so much to society, be it education, in the field of medicine or providing drinking water. One caption which has left a lasting impression on me, which I have promptly noted down, is this: ‘Delaying education to the poor is the surest recipe for disaster.’ And then and there, I made up my mind to provide education to at least one person, and if possible, many others. We are so lucky to live while Bhagavan is still here with us.”

*P:* That was wonderful. Was he introduced to Bhagavan for the first time at the Exhibition?

*S:* No, but it was only recently he came to know of Swami. He had his first Darshan when Swami visited Chennai in January. Though he saw Swami then, till he visited the Exhibition he had no idea of the quantum of work that He has done for mankind. And, I tell you, he was no exception.

**“I realized how little I knew about Swami and His Mission!” - Mr S Kannan**

*P:* So the Exhibition introduced Swami to many who did not know about Him, and also about His work to many others, which often include even devotees who are not so aware!

*S:* Exactly. One devotee from Ranipet, Mr. S. Kannan, said, “Though I have been involved in the Sai Organization for the last 15 years, after seeing this Exhibition I realized how little I knew about Swami and His mission. I feel His presence here. I am grateful for this opportunity to come here.”

And when you mentioned about newcomers, I was reminded of a young dentist by name Miss Savithri, for whom Prema Jyothi was her first exposure to Swami, though she was inclined to matters spiritual like meditation, contemplation, etc. for a long time. When we requested her impressions, she said, “This is the first time I saw Swami and His work, though I had heard about Him a lot earlier. And I must tell you this is a golden moment for me. Being in the medical profession, rarely do I see people involved in a spiritual life. Even if a few show interest, it is limited to yoga and things like that. But this is the first time I have seen a Swamiji providing free surgeries, that too of high quality in hygienic conditions. After I finished all the panels, two lines touched me the most: ‘The Head is responsible for all our problems but the answer to all these lie in the Heart.’ And now I know, as individuals, we do not need money or influence or power to contribute to society, all we need is to give love. If we share love and serve, that is the greatest thing. That is life.”

**“I had no faith in Sai, now I am a devotee!” - Ms. Divya Satish**

*P:* Sundar, every story you mention surpasses the other. The kind of impact Prema Jyothi has had on the people of Chennai is, in fact, a revelation to me and, I am sure, it will be the same for many others here too. It only shows how great the need is for His love and guidance to people out there.

*S:* You are right, Prashant. Being inside the exhibition hall, looking at people’s expressions, talking to them, answering their queries and observing their reactions was an overwhelming experience for me everyday. The other day, as I browsed through the feedback dairy, I saw a particular note which stunned me. It was by one Ms. Divya Satish which said, “Till a second before I had no faith in Sai, now I am a devotee.” But what really made my hairs stand on end was a comment from a 19 year old, Ms. Soundarya Nandakumar. She had written, “What I truly feel is... I am 19 now and have wasted my life by not rendering visible service. Swami is Love.”

*P:* Such noble thoughts from a teenager! I think this is the best reward for all the effort put in by everybody associated with the Exhibition.



**“I am inspired to be a part of this service!” - Class XI student**

S: Certainly. And what is heartening is hers was not the only one. I met another student of Class XI studying in Bala Vidya Mandir in Adyar, Chennai. He said, “This exhibition has really inspired me. The amount of help Swami has rendered especially during the Gujarat Earthquake and the Tsunami relief work is phenomenal. I became speechless when I saw how each and every aspect of the projects was taken care of by Him. Every minor detail was paid attention to. For example, the people affected were given buckets to store water. And now what Swami has done for Chennai through the Sai Ganga project is so wonderful! I am inspired to be a part of this service.”

P: I feel this is the most striking facet of Bhagavan’s Mission. While nobody in these present times dares to speak to youngsters, let alone direct them, which includes even parents, Swami is the only one who, for decades, has systematically and so beautifully lit the lamp of love in their hearts and young minds and converted them into lighthouses. The way He has channeled their energies is simply amazing!

S: That reminds me of what Mr. T. G. Krishnamurthy, the former President of Sathya Sai Organisation of Tamil Nadu, said after seeing the Exhibition. First, he highlighted the uniqueness of Prema Jyothi, saying how it is incomparable with anything else done before and how it encapsulates within itself the essence of all world religions. Then, referring to the Youth, he said, “The energy of the Youth can be compared to a water level in a dam. If the water level exceeds the maximum limits, it overflows, and destroys villages, their agricultural fields and the cattle. But the same water when diverted through various canals into villages helps in irrigation and contributes to prosperity. It also generates power and lights up many hamlets. This is how Swami is converting youth energy into a constructive asset for the society.”

P: That’s a nice analogy.

S: Yes, but he made an even better contemporary comparison relating to the Exhibition and its impact.

P: He did? What was that?

**“Once you see this...it is like your life is cleansed!” - Mr. T G Krishnamurthy**

S: He said, “Once you see this Exhibition from the beginning till the end, it is like your life is cleansed. You are purified by the time you are out of this hall. There is so much Love energy here. You know, these days, when you buy a computer, you need also to buy anti-virus software and a pop-up blocker to save your system from crashing. We cannot live without computers in the present times, but to save ourselves from the viruses, which are nothing but bad thoughts which get into our minds, we need a virus-scan. And I tell you, this Exhibition is like a perfect virus-scan. Once you have seen this, bad influences will not affect you.”

*P:* That's interesting. So, the exhibition was the anti-virus, what is the pop-up blocker?

### **Sai Youth...the Backbone of the Wonderful Presentation**

*S:* He said, "That is the divine devotional music of the bhajans that is always on inside the Exhibition hall. Whenever we get a sensual thought," he said, "if we think of the Lord, – be it Rama, Krishna, Jesus, Allah – that acts as a pop-up blocker and safeguards us from harmful elements. Only then can we be useful instruments to society." And then referring to the Sai Youth at the Exhibition Hall, he said, "Rarely will you find so many youth so humble and serving people with so much concern and dedication. I have also seen how, when they go to the villages, they first touch the feet of the elders and then offer them clothes and food. I do not know of anybody who does this except Sai Youth. But for the Youth's enthusiasm, we would not have had such a wonderful presentation here in Chennai."

*P:* That's absolutely true, and it was there for everyone to see wasn't it? After the Prema Jyothi was staged here in Prasanthi Nilayam by the Prashanti Digital Studio, it must have been purely because of their initiative and interest that it went first to Chennai from here.

*S:* Oh, yes. They worked very hard for it. More than 150 youth from different Samithis in and around Chennai worked tirelessly for a few weeks to make it happen. It was no easy task, I tell you, to convert the barren land into a temple of worship. When I went there first, work was going on in full swing. The panels, which had come from Puttaparthi in huge vehicles that are generally used to transport Hyundai cars, were being carefully unloaded, assembled and erected. Soon, the lights, fans, carpets, floral decors – everything happened in record time including the fabulous entrance.

*P:* Oh, the entrance! Tell me more about it. The entrance of Prema Jyothi here in Puttaparthi was grand. A 150 feet wide massive structure resembling an ancient South Indian temple, it left everyone in awe. Even Swami was glued to it when He saw it on the Inauguration day!

*S:* That's great. I missed the exhibition in Puttaparthi but I must tell you the entrance here was also a magnificent construction. It made people feel as if they were entering Prasanthi Nilayam because it was a three dimensional huge structure with three domes and with the same architecture and colors as you see in the Sai Kulwant Hall. And the rest of the area and the walls were draped with garlands and huge curtains of yellow, orange and white. It gave such a pleasant and vibrant look. And as soon as you entered the hall, there was a large picture of Swami with a compassionate smile as if welcoming you to come and bask in His Love.

*P:* That is wonderful.

S: And before I forget, I must tell you how, just before the inauguration, once all the arrangements were done, including decorating the trees lining the entrance with colorful lights, all the youth were in for a surprise. They looked up at the sky and there was a delightful rainbow! It just gladdened their hearts and filled them with more vigour.

P: Swami always knows how to inspire His Youth, doesn't He?

S: No doubt about that. In fact, they distributed at least three hundred thousand leaflets with complete information about the exhibition in Chennai, and I heard every house received it with reverence and joy. They also had local dailies and television channels flash news about Prema Jyothi continuously for a few days, and went personally to invite the distinguished citizens of the city.

P: Oh boy! That is a lot of work.

S: Not only this, on September 7, a group of 12 went to Puttaparthi to get trained as guides in the Prashanti Digital Studio. And this helped a lot as it gave them a complete perspective of the Exhibition, and because of that they could do a fantastic job in explaining every aspect of the presentation very clearly to dignitaries and devotees alike. In fact, was so impressed that he said, "I really appreciate your dedicated work. When you are explaining the panels, you do it with so much joy and enthusiasm as if you are showing your own family album to a friend! And I see that you do this with everybody, be it a young individual or an old person. This is real dedication. It is exemplary."

### **All 180 panels Translated into Tamil by the Youth volunteers!**

P: It was the same here, Sundar. The students and staff working in the Prashanti Digital Studio were always in attendance taking devotees around with great joy. The captions for the panels were in Telugu and Hindi apart from the regular English. And if a devotee did not understand these languages, to the extent possible they found somebody who could explain it to the visitor, especially a foreigner, in his or her language.

S: That was nice of them. But in Chennai, language was not an issue because everybody in Chennai follows Tamil or English, and the Youth had taken pains to translate all the 180 panels into Tamil and had them printed and displayed below the regular English.

P: That was good homework done. It would have helped the visitors a lot.

S: Oh yes. I remember many people, especially the old, standing in front of the panels, patiently reading the captions, looking at the picture again with keen interest, and moving on only after they had absorbed in full what was being conveyed.

P: Yes, it was the same when it was held in Puttaparthi too. In fact, there was also a Radio Sai booth here where they demonstrated the 24 hour radio

channel live over the internet, as well as the WorldSpace digital radio. Not only that, you could also subscribe to their daily inspirational email service "Sai Inspires" online.

S: Prashant, all this was there in Chennai, too.

**"I cried for 15 minutes after seeing the video-clips!" - A Gowthami**

P: Oh, that is great. And what about the video clips? We had six TV monitors in Puttaparthi showing small clips on Swami's *leelas*, His Hospitals, the Godavari Water project, the Mobile Hospital and so on.

S: Yes, I know what you are talking about. All these too were there in Chennai. In fact, a special video on His visit to Chennai was also there in a separate enclosure at the far end of the hall and people could relax there on comfortable chairs as they listened to soothing music in the background. Many were in tears after seeing these shows. In fact, a lady, Ms. A. Gowthami wrote in the feedback diary, "I really enjoyed this and cried for 15 minutes after seeing the video clips." Frankly, even I could not contain my tears when I saw it for the first time, especially the Mobile Hospital presentation which shows the pathetic condition of the poor, and the way Swami is reaching out to them is really very touching.

P: Oh, yes. Even in Puttaparthi, I remember people breaking down seeing these five minute presentations. Actually, even Swami was moved!

S: I can imagine that. His heart is softer than butter. No being with so much compassion has ever walked on earth.

**Every Minute Detail was Attended To!**

P: Absolutely, and Swami, on the inauguration day, also heard Radio Sai on the internet as well as on the digital Radio. Did you have a Radio Sai booth there?

S: Oh yes, in fact, beside the exhibition hall, there were seven booths. Apart from the Radio Sai booth, there were also stalls for Sanathana Sarathi subscription, Sai Literature, a Bal Vikas counter, a CD stall and so on. And what is more interesting is, besides a refreshments stall, they had a playpen for kids, too.

P: That, I would say, is attention to detail.

S: Yes, the youth in Chennai were truly charged; they were overjoyed that Prema Jyothi was first coming to Chennai after Puttaparthi and wanted to do everything possible to make it a memorable experience for every visitor. They even had nearly wheelchairs ready to take lovingly the elderly around the exhibition. It would take two hours to show one person the whole presentation, but they did it smilingly. Touched with this service, a lady Ms. Nivedita R. said, "The service the volunteers rendered to my physically

indisposed mother is really commendable. I can never forget this.” Another devotee Mr. W. S. Sundarayajam said, “The volunteers ensured that my family had a divine treat. I felt that I was in a temple having the Lord’s Darshan.”

*P:* When there is purity in our feelings and absolute openness in our dealings with others, filled with unblemished love, the results cannot be anything but beautiful.

*S:* Absolutely, Prashant! And I saw many instances of this during Prema Jyothi in Chennai. For the volunteers it was not work, it was worship. You know, they also had a medical camp running all the time, with doctors taking turns, just in case any visitor needed any help. And at the exit, there was always one Youth bidding farewell lovingly and handing over to everybody a photo of Bhagavan and a Vibhuti packet. Later, they even started giving *Likhita Japam* note books to devotees, and pens and chocolates to kids too.

*P:* It is because of such dedicated service that everybody who came to the Exhibition felt His Presence. Swami says, “Where there is love, there is God.”

*S:* True, but the most poignant scene was the last day.

*P:* Why, did any troublesome event happen on that day?

### **A Painful Adieu for the Youth!**

*S:* No, nothing can go wrong with Swami’s work. It was more special, that’s all. On the final day, that is, October 2, 2007, they had sweets and *sundal* (a snack made of chick peas) distributed to everybody who came there. And as the last few devotees were leaving the hall, they started singing Bhajans.

But the way the youth were pouring their heart out to Swami with love and gratitude, singing with all their devotion and zeal, brought tears to my eyes. For the Youth and others associated with the exhibition in Chennai, it was like Swami was there with them for those eleven days in the form of those priceless pictures. You see, even though we know and say that God is Omnipresent, not being fully realized we long to see His captivating form, His pristine eyes, His compassionate look and His divine charm. And when the Youth saw devotees from Indore already at the site to take the Exhibition now to the state of Madhya Pradesh, it was hard for them.

*P:* I can understand that, Sundar. Who wants to miss Darshan? Having stepped inside the ashram, who wants to leave Puttaparthi and return to the outside world again? We know we have to carry Swami in our hearts and make every place a Prashanti, but it takes a while to get there.

*S:* Very true. As we discussed earlier, for the many devotees that came to this Exhibition, it was no less than Swami’s physical Darshan. I remember one devotee Mr. K. Krishnamurthy, who had come from Mysore, saying, “I

completely merged in bliss. I never realized the two hours I spent here.” But there is one final scene which is etched in my memory forever.

As the youth concluded their bhajans and sang the Arathi “Om Jaya Jagadeesha Hare..” in the last session on October 2nd, at the far end of the hall, there was a devotee who was looking at each of His photos covetously for the last time. And lost in prayer, it looked like she was too immersed in a conversation with her Inner Self. A few minutes later, her eyes brimmed with devotion and tears slowly cruised down her sublime face. And then, she smiled. Probably, Swami heard her prayer. Maybe she got her answer. Maybe Swami blessed her with the experience she was longing for. But as the light of the camphor glowed brightly, she, too, *shined*. Her heart was now as if one in love with that Light of Love, ‘Prema Jyothi’.

### **Everyone Carried The ‘Prema Jyothi’ Home...**

*P:* You brought the scene alive so beautifully. I can imagine what kind of experience it must have been for that lady. We, in our lives too, get those flashes of moments in our lives when we are filled with bliss, when we are connected with our Maker. And this exhibition, I think, helped many to establish that precious connection with their Inner Self, which is nothing but Pure Love.

*S:* Absolutely, and Swami is only an outward manifestation, a concretization of that all-powerful Pure Love that is there everywhere – within and without.

*P:* So beautifully put, living up to your name, Sundar! What a glorious time we have had today discussing only about His Love!

*S:* Yes, I did not even realize we have spent more than an hour. That is what happens every time we begin to talk about Swami. He is such a Phenomenon!

*P:* Absolutely. I hope we will meet soon later and continue our *satsang* (godly discussion) another day.

*S:* Of course, as He wills. Sairam, till then.

*P:* My friend, Sairam.

## **FEATURE ARTICLES**

### **IN QUEST OF INFINITY – Part 10**

*By Prof. G. Venkataraman*

*Please note, there are many diagrams and figures not printed in this text version. Please see the net version for these images.*

Loving Sai Ram and greetings once again. I wonder how many of you appreciate how far we have “travelled” in our quest for Infinity. Some of you might feel that it seems to be an endless journey. So it might seem but when we come to the “end” of our journey, you would perhaps get a terrific surprise! I don’t want to spoil it for you by telling you something about it right away, but I thought I would provoke you with that remark to launch you on a guessing game!

OK, let’s get down to business and look back for a moment to see how far we have travelled. After “wandering” all over the physical Universe, we realised that we must find out something about how the Universe came into existence. No doubt God created it, but can we, using our [God-given] skills, find out something about the details? That was the exploration we were engaged in, and that revealed to us the following:

1. The Universe came into existence with a so-called Big Bang.
2. This Big Bang, we can now say with a fair amount of certainty, happened about 13.8 billion years ago, with a small margin of error of course.
3. When the Universe was born, it was incredibly tiny but soon began to grow; this occurred through the expansion of “space-time”. For our convenience, we visualize this as the expansion of a balloon say.
4. There is hard experimental evidence for such an expansion, and this was first obtained by Hubble, named after whom there is now a space telescope – every kid these days has heard of the Hubble telescope though few of them might know anything about Hubble himself [see QFI – 02 for a profile of Hubble].
5. Careful examination then revealed that about 300,000 years or so after birth, electromagnetic radiation began to fill the entire Universe, and at that time the temperature of this radiation was quite high.
6. As the Universe expanded and this radiation had more and more space to occupy, the temperature dropped; today, it is about  $2.8^{\circ}$  absolute.
7. Called the Cosmic Microwave Background [CMB] this radiation was accidentally discovered in the late sixties and constitutes [one of the] strong evidence for the Big Bang.
8. Meanwhile, it was found that the current rate of expansion of the Universe was not enough to explain its size, assuming that at birth the Universe has a size of almost zero. This, among other things led to the idea of Inflation, which was given a respectable shape [with many lingering questions though] by Alan Guth.

9. Subsequent studies have shown that Inflation, an event of unimaginable proportions MUST have occurred – at least that is what most believe.
10. The above facts related to astrophysics and cosmology have got increasingly connected to the micro world also. First, looking at the radiation from stars, people developed theories about the elemental composition of stars. Then when it came to energy produced by stars and their subsequent fate, people went down to the level of nuclei and even protons and neutrons to discuss the physics of stars.
11. Slowly, people have started relating the physics of very small distances to the nature of the very tiny Universe. Just to remind you, for the cosmologist, very small distance means something like  $10^{-30}$  cm and below, going even as far down as  $10^{-48}$  cm. Of course, this also means that one is talking of the Baby Universe when it was incredibly young – I have mentioned all this earlier.

The point I want to drive at via the above recap is that we have now begun to seriously connect the Big and the Small. We know that philosophers have been talking about it for a long time. Modern science has successfully linked the seed to the tree and the DNA to the human body. But now, taking a giant leap, man is trying to link the Cosmos at the macro level to the infant Universe, indeed to the instant of Creation. Man is attempting this via the latest developments in the physics of elementary particles. That is roughly where we were last time, and towards the end of that instalment, I was beginning to tell you something about String Theory, the hottest topic in particle physics today. For your convenience, I have given separately in a box, a thumb-nail portrait of String Theory. I strongly urge you to at least glance through this once, so that you may appreciate better what follows.

As described in the box, in String Theory, the starting point is that it is not particles but strings that are basic to the physics of small distances. Although it is yet to hit the headlines in terms of making spectacular predictions that have come true [that is what Einstein's Theory of Gravitation achieved, way back around 1915-1920; see QFI - 02], String Theory nevertheless has many pluses going for it. These include:

- It is a theory tailored to the world of the very small and based on quantum mechanics, the inclusion of which is a basic and mandatory qualification for any theory to be taken seriously.
- String Theory in its current version, evolved after many modifications and improvements, and is able to accommodate SUSY or Super Symmetry, which allows for a symmetry between quarks and leptons.
- In that sense, String Theory may be seen as a part of the various attempts made during the last few decades to tie up the strong, the weak and the electromagnetic force under one umbrella. For many years, physicists have been searching for such a Grand Unified Theory [GUT] but have not come up with a really good one. String Theory has all the potentialities of emerging as the final winner – that is one more plus for it [in addition to these cited earlier].



- Nasty problems called infinities, have dogged all theories of the world of the small – technically called quantum field theories – and it takes a lot of ingenuity to overcome the difficulties posed by these unwelcome infinities. By comparison, String Theory does not suffer that much from this disease.
- Most importantly, String Theory makes room for gravitation in a natural way. This is a huge bonus because a conventional “marriage” between Einstein’s classical and very powerful theory of gravitation and relativistic quantum mechanics [that came later], a “marriage” that is absolutely mandatory when one enters the world of the small, is next to impossible. That traditional difficulty is overcome in String Theory, almost in passing it seems. It is this very impressive aspect of String Theory that makes it very appealing to many. Incidentally, whereas GUT type theories unify only the strong, the weak and the electromagnetic forces [three out of the four basic forces known], String Theory offers the possibility of bringing **all four** forces [that is to say the three mentioned above AND gravitation] under one single regime – and that is a real great attraction. If it clicks, String Theory would be the ultimate theory, which is why some tout it as the ***Theory of Everything*** [TOE].

At this stage, I should mention that some daring physicists said, “Why only strings? Why not membranes?” Then a smarter guy said, “Listen, particles can be viewed as zero dimensional strings. The usual string is a one-dimensional string while the traditional membrane [like that in a drum] is a two-dimensional string. Why not three-dimensional or four-dimensional strings? Indeed, why not a n-dimensional string?” Mathematicians are like that! Sometimes they really go wild, but out of such flights of fancy, many discoveries also emerge. By the way, these multi-dimensional membranes are sometimes simply called *branes*. So if you want to sound smart and someone is trying to tell you something about String Theory, just put on a wry face and mutter wisely, “Oh, you are talking about branes, are you?” The other person would begin to look at you with respect. [That lesson on one-upmanship comes free, compliments of H2H!] But one thing about String Theory is that it comes with many more dimensions than we are used to and that might make you pretty uneasy, quite legitimately too. More about these extra dimensions next; but meanwhile, if you want to know more about strings, please see BOX 1.

Let me now attend to the puzzling question of extra dimensions. We are supposed to live in a world that is essentially three-dimensional; that being the case, what on earth do these fanciful extra dimensions mean? To answer this question let us go back to Einstein who in a manner started it all, though not with strings. One fine day he said, “Folks, I have news for you. Yes, the world we live in does have three dimensions of space. But you know something? Time is also a kind of dimension and we need to consider time along with space. I therefore propose that we must talk of four-dimensional spacetime rather than merely of three dimensional space.” At that time, Einstein’s pronouncement was a great shock but over a century, we have got used to that idea. In fact, modern satellites cannot work properly if we did not use the big man’s ideas in designing them. I am told that these ideas are used even in the GPS systems now found in many cars!

That's OK but what about this huge proliferation in dimensions, with people quite comfortably talking about ten and eleven dimensions? Was it not making things unnecessarily complicated? Why all this in the first place? Well, let me tell you that physicists are quite smart and what with all the fierce competition around they would not mess around with higher dimensions [brought in along with strings or branes, call them what you will], unless there was mileage; and there sure was.

There is a fairly long history in this business of proliferation of dimensions. As I told you just now, everyone always accepted that we live in a space of three dimensions. In addition to space, there was of course Time, and it was believed till Einstein came along, that space was space and time was time and that the two shall remain distinct. In 1915, Einstein changed all that with his famous theory of Gravitation. He talked about a unified spacetime rather than space and time separately. Mercifully, this concept of unified spacetime was not normally required except in special circumstances, as for example, when one deals with astrophysical objects.

Around 1919-1920, a young scientist named Kaluza in USSR read Einstein's by now classic work on general relativity and gravitation. He then said to himself, "Einstein says that gravity is just a manifestation of curvature in 4-D spacetime. Is it possible to understand the electromagnetic force also in the same manner?" After pouring over the problem, Kaluza came to the conclusion that if Einstein's 4-D space was made 5-D, then both gravity and electromagnetic forces could perhaps be regarded as suitable curvatures of this higher dimensional space. It was a bold idea, in a sense extending Einstein's path-breaking concept to a new height. Basically, it was an attempt to see the basic forces in terms of higher dimensions. We must remember that in 1919, only gravitational and electromagnetic forces were recognised as basic forces of Nature; the weak and strong forces operating in the nuclear domain were unknown then.

Kaluza wrote a paper and sent it to the Master for comments. When Einstein received the manuscript, he wrote back:

The idea that this representation of the electric field can be achieved through a five-dimensional cylinder-world never occurred to me and would seem to me to be altogether new. I like your idea at first sight very much. .... If no apparently and irreparable objection occurs to me when reading your detailed exposition, I will be pleased to present your paper on the subject to the academy here.

*Just one week later, Einstein wrote,*

I have read through your paper and find it extremely interesting. Nowhere, so far, can I see an impossibility. On the other hand, I have to admit that the arguments brought forward so far do not appear to be convincing enough.

Cold water for Kaluza! Two years later, however, Einstein changed his mind and wrote as follows:

I am having second thoughts about having restrained you from publishing your idea on a unification of gravitation and electricity two years ago. ... If you wish, I shall present your paper to the academy after all, provided you send it to me.

And that is how Kaluza's radical idea got the highest blessing, with a delay of two years. I must stress that Kaluza did not unify the gravitational and electromagnetic forces in the way we understand unification of forces now. Basically what he had done is the following: While Einstein gave a geometric way of looking at gravitation, that is as the curvature of 4-D "space", Kaluza was saying, "Listen, if you make 4-D 'space' into 5-D 'space', then you can interpret **both** gravitation and electromagnetism as appropriate curvatures of this 5-D "space".

Einstein's four-dimensional world based on spacetime made room for a **geometric** interpretation of gravity, while Kaluza's extension to five dimensions allowed room for the electromagnetic force to be interpreted in a similar fashion, along with gravity of course. However, both these descriptions were classical. With the advent of quantum mechanics in the late twenties, Oscar Klein in Sweden wondered how these descriptions would get modified in the quantum picture; and one fine day, Klein came up with an equation which was a five-dimensional extension of what is called Schrodinger's wave equation. This allowed one to engage in a quantum analysis of what happens in a higher dimensional world under the combined influence of gravity and the electromagnetic force.

Kaluza's extension of Einstein's idea and its subsequent adaptation to the quantum world by Klein came to be called the Kaluza-Klein theory. It was a nice toy to play with and that was about it; nothing much more came out of it except one interesting idea about what happens to the extra dimension. That is what I shall briefly deal with next, for this idea lingered, for many decades though in limbo, until it became resurrected and found an important role to play.

When Kaluza and Klein started talking of the fifth dimension, people said: "Listen, Einstein has already complicated life by declaring Time to be space-like, married space and time into one entity which he calls spacetime. And now you fellows are talking about a fifth dimension. If this fifth dimension really exists, why on earth don't we see it or experience it? Where has it hidden itself?" This is an interesting question that played a very useful role by leading to the idea of **compactification**. Basically one says, that the extra dimension "curls" itself so much that at the "practical" level, it appears as if the extra dimension is not present. It simply says that the extra dimension is so small that for normal purposes it does not appear to exist, or even if it did, it does not bother us. Question: "Can the compactified dimension ever make its presence felt? If so, under what conditions? And what on earth does it imply?" All good questions, which we shall now try and deal with.

Let me start with the first question. The figure above should make it clear that compactification is believed to make the extra dimension so small that it would hardly affect our normal lives. OK, the stock market would not be affected but can this compactified dimension ever make its presence felt? Sure, when we start exploring phenomena at very small scales. How small is small? Maybe around  $10^{-43}$  cm or so.

Well that takes care of the first of many questions that crop up. Now to the second question: "What do these extra dimensions of String Theory mean? What are they telling us?" That is a tougher question but one can attempt a speculative answer as follows. You see, when Einstein took the first step about a hundred years ago, he essentially said, "You know? If we think of space having four instead of three dimensions as usual [by making time into a "pseudo" dimension if you will], then we can explain gravity by using this "fourth" dimension. Then came Kaluza who said, "Hold on a minute; I think if we go beyond Einstein and add two extra dimensions instead of just one as Prof E did, then we can explain not only gravity but also electromagnetic forces."

That's OK but now with String Theories, we have a big proliferation with 10 or 11 dimensions [and maybe even more by some accounts]; what happens now? People are wondering whether the extra dimensions are in any way related to several new and exotic attributes of elementary particles. What I mean is this. When we think of classical particles [I mean like what Newton considered], we would certainly attribute a mass to the particle and also a electric charge if it possessed one. Thus, we would say the proton has a mass of so much and a positive electric charge of one unit. Similarly, the neutron has a mass of so much but has zero electric charge; and so on. However, thanks to intensive investigations in the post-war years, it became clear that elementary particles have all kinds of exotic attributes like spin, colour [in some cases], baryon number and lepton number [as applicable], and so on. All these properties, by the way, are **not** related to the physical space we live in. Maybe they are related to the extra dimensions coming out of the latter-day exotic theories like String Theory, including various versions of it; that certainly is an interesting guess but we really do not know. I am sure we will hear more on this subject in the years to come; the last word has certainly not been said – that is my impression, and I hope I am correct!

Space as we know can have many more dimensions that we actually experience. These extra dimensions we do not make any impact on us in our normal life because they have been compactified to a size too small for us to see or experience. Thus, while String theorists need 11 dimensions for developing their theories of the microscopic world, we need not lose any sleep about the extra dimensions they invoke because they are too small as far as we are concerned!

To sum up this part of the discussion regarding extra dimensions, I should say the following:

- It now seems inevitable that for getting a complete theory in 4 D [3 space + and time], we have to start with a “parent” theory in higher dimensions. The number of dimensions could be 10, 11, or even higher. The issue does not appear to have been settled yet.
- After the higher-dimensional theory is fully worked out, we must descend to 4 D to make contact with the *real* world. This calls for compactification of the extra dimensions in a suitable manner and to a suitable size.
- Size of the compact dimensions? No one knows for sure but most guesses are that the size is very small, of the order of  $10^{-43}$  cm.
- Would all compactified dimensions have the same size or would the sizes be different? No one knows.
- When does compactification occur during the evolution of Universe? No one is sure but it must have been very early, like say around  $10^{-30}$  sec or so.
- Does the size of the compactified dimension stay constant or vary with time? No one knows for sure, but almost everyone agrees that these compactified sizes remain constant from the moment compactification occurs.

The story of extra dimensions does not quite end here. Strings and branes and their relationship to gravity has led to an interesting idea. To explain this, I must start with the figure below. This figure illustrates how gravity might operate on different scales of length. (a) shows how the gravity lines of force radiate from a particle in accordance with Newton’s law, which is OK, especially when the particle is at rest. This radiation pattern is typical of what is called the inverse-square law. That is to say the force is inversely proportional to the square of the distance between the particle and the point where the strength of the force is being measured. This is conventional behaviour. (b) shows something much more complicated though in a schematic manner. Here the cylinder shows a two-dimensional space, of a line plus circles everywhere as I have described earlier. Let us say there is a particle in this space. In a small region of this 2-D space, around the particle, represented by a small circle, gravity force lines do appear to radiate radially outwards. In other words, in this limited region, the behaviour appears to be Newtonian. However, to infer that the behaviour is Newtonian in this space is wrong. That is what this figure seeks to illustrate. Just follow the lines beyond the small circle. We see then that the lines spread out in a very special way and indeed in some regions the lines are parallel to the axis of the cylinder – very different from radial behaviour you would agree. In other words, in this space as a whole, Newton’s law does not work! This raises a question. We all assume something taught in high school, namely, the force law in Newton’s theory obeys the rule:

$F$  is proportional to  $(1/r^2)$ .

Question: “How well has this law been actually tested in the lab?” The answer is: “At large distances, like over the solar system for example, the law has been tested with fairly high accuracy.” That’s fine but what about small distances? Here the story is: “It has been tested to distances of the order of

say a mm or so but lower than that, especially at very small distances, there has been no check.” As a matter of fact, some theorists have suggested that if there are extra dimensions and the extra dimensions are compactified etc., then at small distances in 3 D space, the force law might could behave like

$$F \text{ is proportional to } (1/r^{2+n}),$$

where n is some number. In other words, instead of an inverse square law, gravity might follow an inverse (2+n) law, where n is some number. Reacting to this, some people said, “That’s interesting but not exciting enough; anything really exciting?” It turns out there are many exciting implications if gravity does not follow what Newton thought it did. Let me mention just one of these amazing implications.

Earlier when I introduced strings, I merely said they were quite tiny with incredibly small sizes; I did not specify their shape, except to consider one simple case, that of a straight string. It turns out that strings can be of two basic types, open at both ends or closed into a loop. According to one picture, the string that represents the electron is of the open type while the string that represents the graviton or the quantum of the gravitational field is closed; and this difference has an incredible implication.

Consider an example, where the electron and the graviton live in a (2 + 1) dimensional world. I have chosen this artificial case just for illustration. A string is a 2D object and it is easy to depict it on a plane as I have done. The extra dimension is the one that is supposed to get compactified; keep this in mind please. With this simplification, I try to depict the force lines emitting from the electron and the graviton.

This figure illustrates what happens to the force lines emitted by an electron and a graviton, existing in 2-D space, in a Universe which has one more dimension that is compactified. As mentioned in the text, the electron is a string with open ends while the graviton is a loop. Now the interesting thing is that the two ends of the electron are anchored in the 2 D space; which means that they can move about only within the plane, i.e., the 2 D space. The graviton, on the other hand, is not so constrained and can move into the remaining dimension [compactified though it may be for the beings in the 2-D space]. This fact is schematically illustrated here by showing the force lines emanating from the electrons as being confined to the plane while the lines emitted by the graviton radiate not only into the plane but also escape into the other dimension. There is thus an extra freedom that the graviton enjoys and this has deep consequences that are explained in the text.

You may think this is all a kind of hocus pocus. Not if you think about it a bit, and to assure that there is a real life analogue to this.

This figure offers a simple analogy to illustrate how while the graviton can escape out of the plane, the electron must remain confined to it. What you see here is a billiard table with two colliding billiard balls. Clearly, the balls must

move on the table; however, the sound produced by the collision is not confined to the table and can escape into the room; indeed that is how we hear the sound of balls colliding when we watch a billiards game in progress. Now the interesting thing is that whether or not such things happen in particle physics might even be tested soon in Geneva with the world's biggest particle machine, the LHC getting ready at CERN the European Laboratory for High Energy Physics. Here they would be shooting protons and anti-protons at each other, with these particles not only travelling at nearly the speed of light but also packing an incredible amount of energy. During such collisions, physicists expect the production of mini black holes! And such experiments might indeed reveal whether all this fancy scenario has any basis!

To get back to the graviton escaping from the confines of 2-D space, the story does not end with what I have described thus far. Remember I said the graviton would escape from the 2-D world into the third dimension? In terms of the universe we live in, it means that gravitons that rule gravity here can escape from our Universe [of 3+1 dimensions] into "another Universe" [!] that is so near yet so far!

Is your head spinning? No wonder! That is the way things work out in this business. Maybe I should not give you more dizziness; why don't I reserve that for the next issue? OK? Well, so long and take care please! Things are sure going to get curiouiser and curiouiser as they say! Meanwhile, I urge you once again to reflect for a moment on the amazing beauty and mystery of the Universe we live in.

People say the Universe is an accident. May be it is for them; but I find would find it amazing if a whole bunch of molecules got together by accident to form the first living being, descended from which was Shakespeare, who churned out incredible plays, unmatched over five hundred years. Maybe, as Sir James Jeans once said, if we set a million monkeys on a million typewriters and allow them to press the keys, which of course they would do at random, and print out all that is typed, then after millions of years we would end up with all the sonnets of Shakespeare. Some think this might even happen but I tend to feel like Fred Hoyle [a great astrophysicist who actually coined the word Big Bang] did; Fred Hoyle said, "This is about as likely as a tornado sweeping across an auto junk yard, collecting all the bits and pieces lying there and assembling them into a Boeing 737!" The words may not be exact, but the essence is quite close to what Fred said!

As for me, I concur with Gandhi who once began his message with the words, "There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything; I feel it though I cannot see it!"

Think about it!! Good luck and Jai Sai Ram. See you again, and take care.

### **Box 1 – String Theory**

In this Box, I offer a brief outline of String Theory as we need to know it. From a historical point of view, the theory has evolved over thirty years in a

meandering sort of way, and what I present is a gist of the current picture. As I have indicated elsewhere, there are basically two camps where this theory is concerned. The devotees of one camp are so thrilled that they unabashedly hail it as the **Theory of Everything** [TOE]! The sceptics, on the other hand, say, “Oh yeah? Well, prove it!”

Now you might wonder how come physicists who are generally very critical of theories unless it passes through fiery tests are willing to shower praise on a theory that has yet to prove itself. Is it some thing like a potential “prodigy”? Is it a case where one side is waiting for the great moment while the other side is waiting for the bubble to burst and TOE to vanish without even a whimper? Time alone would tell; but meanwhile, the excitement is not without reason, and to help you get a glimpse, let me now present a few details of this much-hailed theory in its current Avatar, shall I say?

For hundreds of years physics has operated on the intuitive assumption that the basic building blocks are particles; this was so in the time of Newton, whose mechanics often assumed even objects like a stone and even the earth could be safely regarded as a particle, when certain aspects of motion were concerned. That is the beauty of physics – to be able to explain complex phenomena with at times amazingly simple assumptions. Once this mountain is crossed, the details earlier glossed over are addressed so as to make the theories and models more realistic.

If Newton thought it convenient to deal with matter as particles when he could get away with it, so did Einstein, when he extended Newton’s mechanics to the realm where speed of objects becomes comparable with the speed of light. [Once again I stress that the size of objects was not forgotten; it was just put away temporarily on the back burner when breakthroughs had to be made – this has always been the case; one step at a time.]

After Einstein, the next big breakthrough in Physics came when quantum mechanics entered the picture – this happened over a period, the first phase of which lasted from about 1924 to 1930. Here too one had to deal with matter, and the basic building blocks were once again regarded as “particles” [although with a dual character – about that, later]. Now what exactly are these so-called particles? This can be understood as follows: Let us start with a short piece of string that is absolutely straight. We assume that the string has no thickness whatsoever; obviously, such a string can never exist but we are talking of an idealised situation. A string of the type just mentioned is said to be a one-dimensional object. Suppose the length of this fictional string is made smaller and smaller, till the length becomes zero. We then have a mathematical point – no size at all! An object of this type but with a mass is what we normally refer to as a particle in physics. In this sense, the mathematical point I just described becomes a string in zero dimensions. The piece of ideal string that I described becomes a string in one dimension; and soon I shall introduce you to strings in higher dimensions.

So you see when physicists started talking of strings instead of particles as they had done for centuries, they were really trying to open new doors. Any



mileage in that? Sure! I explain this in greater detail in the main body of this issue but here I would just like to say that when one starts dealing with elementary particles, it is not just the mass of the particle and its electric charge that describe it but many other subtle attributes. For many years, the question was: “Where do these come from?” Additional dimensions provided the clue. I leave those aspects for explanation elsewhere and stay with the main headlines regarding String Theory.

Even as the pioneers were exploring various aspects of strings, a few bold [and rash?] physicists said, “Why only strings? Why not membranes?” That was the first step. Soon people began to say, “Why only two-dimensional membranes? Why not membranes in higher dimensions like three, four and so on?” Thus, people began to talk of “branes” rather than strings! Thus, one had zero dimensional strings, the traditional particles, then the first generation strings in the form of open straight string, curved string and closed loops; after this came strings in 2, 3 and various higher dimensions, all called “branes” for short.

One might ask why physicists did confine themselves to 0-dimensional points for a long time? The answer is that 1-dimensional objects are much harder to work with and often cause technical problems including the violation of special relativity’s mandate that nothing can travel faster than the speed of light. One fine day when physicists decided to take the plunge and enter the world of strings, they found that the clash with relativity could be avoided by going to higher dimensions. But was this not like replacing one problem with another? Why did physicists waste their time chasing the rainbow as it were? What was there in it for them? That is an interesting point.

You see, physicists are human and they too sometimes ask: “What’s there in it?” Well, before String Theory broke out like a huge rash, many tried very hard to bring together quantum mechanics [QM] and general relativity [GR]. This was a very difficult match making, because in physics, there were no theories so different. QM was non-classical while GR is a classical theory. QM deals mainly with the very small while GR was mostly applied in the realm of the very large and proved itself very successful there.

When it came to the physics of very small distances – and I am here talking of distances like  $10^{-43}$  cm – clearly, QM **cannot** be bypassed. Also, since large masses are involved [when one is talking about the Baby Universe] and very small distances, gravity too could not be ignored. So this was a domain where QM and GR **had** to coexist. Many physicists tried very hard to work out a “treaty” [read quantum theory of gravitation] but it was proving very difficult and it was all very frustrating. That was when string theorists said, “Hey, you know what? Suppose particles were not particles but strings; not just strings in one dimension but in many dimensions; then presto, we are able to predict the existence of the graviton.”

Here I must pause to tell you that graviton is the name given to the basic particle associated with gravitation. The naming has been done by analogy with happened in the case of electromagnetic field, where the quantum was

called the photon. The story of the electromagnetic field started in the nineteenth century, as a well-formulated classical theory [due to Maxwell] but in early twentieth century, there came a point when the classical electromagnetic field had to be “quantised”. This could be done by invoking a particle called the photon, the quantum of electromagnetic energy. So by analogy physicists said, “When we succeed in quantising the classical gravitational field introduced by Einstein, we would have a particle called the graviton, which would be the particle of gravitational energy.” And now String Theory was announcing, “Listen guys, we can pull the graviton out of our String Theory!” It was almost like a magician producing a rabbit out of a hat!

So suddenly physicists were saying, “Look, here is a theory that gives you the graviton without all the hassle we faced earlier trying to arrange a shot-gun marriage between QM and GR. OK, we need more dimensions but remember earlier efforts have already signalled that if you want quantum gravity, then you HAVE got to start talking of ten dimensions and the like.” In String Theory that kind of talk is easier; all this plus the stuff about extra dimensions I have presented elsewhere ought to be enough for us here.

I should also mention, that there were many other benefits available from String Theory but before I do that maybe I should clarify what a theory of physics means, and how it is different, if at all, from a model. This is necessary because in physics we have both models and theories. Let me start with familiar things like classical mechanics, relativity, quantum mechanics and so on. What is their status? Now classical mechanics and quantum mechanics provide a general framework, which specify a set of rules according which physics shall be done. I realize this is a very sloppy way of describing things but it adequately captures the spirit of the issue for us.

Classical mechanics received a foundation with the pioneering work of Galileo and Newton and was thereafter amplified by many such as Lagrange. Basically classical mechanics is a **type of grammar** that allows one to calculate how objects move when subjected to a force. This worked fine for a couple of centuries until a few, Einstein in particular, discovered that these rules break down when the speed of the object becomes comparable to the speed of light, classical mechanics beings to fail. How do we know? From experiments. What does that mean? It means that when an object is moving close to the speed of light and one tries to predict the dynamical behaviour of the particle using Newton’s “grammar”, the predictions do not agree with what is found via experiments in the lab. New rules had to be developed and the pioneer in that game was Einstein. Einstein did not throw out completely the mechanics developed by Newton and those that followed him. He said, “Newton’s rules work OK when the speed of objects is small compared to that of light. If the speed becomes comparable to that of light, then use my rules. My rules are such that when the speed is small, they automatically give the result that Newton’s rules give. So my relativistic mechanics is really a super set of Newton’s mechanics; one may say it is non-relativistic.” In other words, if Newton’s mechanics is called CM Ver 1.0, then Einstein’s can be called CM Ver 2.0.

Einstein's path breaking extension came in 1905. But around the same time, some physicists were becoming very curious about the dynamics electrons in an atom would follow. Niels Bohr of Denmark who had moved to England to pursue advanced studies there was one such. He found that when Newton's mechanics was applied to the electrons in an atom, the predictions went haywire, even if the electron moved at speed much less than the speed of light. In other word, Newton's rules were failing not only in the domain of high speeds but also in the domain of very small distances and for a very different reason it seemed. Thus, Bohr laid the foundation for a new mechanics that would be useful in the domain of the small. These developments occurred in a series of path breaking discoveries to which many contributed [these include de Broglie of France, Schrodinger of Austria, Heisenberg of Germany and finally, Dirac of England]. At that point, say around 1928 or so, a new quantum mechanics had been developed, tailored specially for the domain of the small. And then Dirac made one more brilliant leap forward, by bringing Einstein's relativity and quantum mechanics together into new grammar called relativistic quantum mechanics. This happened around 1930 or so; but all was not over; there were some major glitches still and they got cured later thanks to many people's contributions. However, those matters do not concern us now.

I went into this historical digression because I wanted to draw attention to one important point which is that from around 1950 onwards when particle physics began to gallop, the "grammar" they used was the highly refined and perfected version of quantum mechanics called by pundits as "relativistic quantum field theory". So if you want to show off a bit and drop technical jargon, then do not forget this phrase – relativistic quantum field theory! It may win for you some young admirers! The most important point that comes out of this is that grammar is different from a model; a grammar gives a set of rules that are applicable under certain conditions. What about a model? There some simplifications are made that lead to a convenient physical picture that is very helpful but without complications.

You might be getting tired of all this apparent rambling and asking yourself, "Why on earth can't this self-appointed tour guide stick to one direction and take us through, especially since this journey looks like being long?" Valid complaint but you see like every conscientious tour guide who wants to earn his tip, I want to point out all the details of the local landscape and also narrate bits of the local folklore before moving on; you may say it is the *Dharma* of the tour guide!

More seriously, the point I really wanted to make was that when one assumed that the basic building blocks of matter were really particles [that is, strings in zero dimension], one had, when one tried to build a unified picture within the umbrella strong, the weak, and electromagnetic forces, and using the apparatus of relativistic quantum field theory, a model called the **Standard Model**.

Now what is a model as compared to a theory? A model is a simplified picture of an actual complex situation that has the merit of describing most of the

essential behaviour **without** unnecessarily complicating matters. Let me give a simple example. Take our earth; you know it is a “ball” about 12,000 km in diameter. For many purposes, one takes this to be a perfect sphere with a radius  $R$  where we give a value for  $R$  as obtained from experiments. In fact, we do the same for Mercury, Venus, Mars and so on, the various planets in the solar system. Believe it or not, we can, under certain circumstances, make things even simpler and treat all the planets as points and even the Sun itself as just a point, each with an appropriate mass!

This is how high school students are often introduced to the elements of planetary dynamics, and you would be surprised how beautifully this works. Of course, only up to a point. When one becomes fussy, one must take into account the fine print. In the case of the earth, for example, we have to take note of the fact that the earth is NOT a perfect sphere; further, the density of the earth is NOT uniform throughout and so on. When one does very detailed calculations as one has to on many occasions, for example in relation to satellite orbits etc., all this fine print is needed. A model is thus a simplified picture that is good enough for describing most of the essential features, without bothering about the fine print. The fewer the simplifications, the more realistic is the model; keep that in mind please.

The Standard Model that I referred to is a wonderful model, perfected by the involvement of hundreds of physicists from all over the world, and has done remarkably well in the field of elementary particles. Thus, many are quite content with it and do not wish to look beyond. But the fussy ones are not satisfied with yesterday's triumphs and crave for a theory, which does not keep out gravity, as the Standard Model does, and that is where String Theory gets a lot of mileage. All this lengthy preamble brings to me to what I really want to say. That is the following: Standard Model, wonderful though it is, has about 20 free and adjustable parameters. The Model does not say, “The numerical values of parameters are as follows.”

In physics, one has frequently got to deal with adjustable parameters; conservatives on the other hand, like to keep the number as small as possible. Parameters are like taxes, generally detested! Indeed, some snobs often say, give me ten parameters and I can fit even an elephant.” The idea conveyed is that with a lot of built-in flexibility, the model can be twisted any way to suit any circumstance! This is no doubt an extreme view but shows how at the end of the day, physicists are quite uncomfortable with too many parameters. The situation with the Standard Model is that while there is universal appreciation for the way it has tied up so many diverse facts in particle physics, it has too many parameters for comfort. String Theory pundits said, “Folks, the days of parameter proliferation are over. Here in our new and revolutionary Theory, we have just a parameter or two.”

This economy of parameters was most welcome, at least to the purists, but it came with a price. When the first generation string theorists started actively trying to explain all particles as different “avatars” of the vibrating string, that is to say, the string vibrating in one mode was an electron, the string vibrating in another mode was a proton and so on, there was a new problem. In the

course of the calculations, the theorists encountered “negative probabilities”. Now this is indeed a weird concept. I mean let us say A asks B, “What do you say is the probability that while it is sunny now, there would be rain in the evening?” B might say, “I reckon there is a fifty percent chance,” or something like that. Suppose B says, “You know what? I think there is – 23.4 % chance there would be rain.” If B were to say such a thing, A would walk away thinking his buddy has gone bananas! No wonder, for what on earth is the meaning of minus 23.4%? That was the problem here too! But then these wizards working on String Theory said, “Hey wait a minute! You have a problem with negative probabilities? No problem! We can get rid of it by going to higher dimensions like say ten!”

To some of us this might seem too much, like getting rid of one fantasy with another! But then, people struggling with unifying good old quantum mechanics with gravity had already discovered that if at all they wanted to do that, then they would have to make space have 10 dimensions. So the String Theorists picked up courage and said, “Hold on a minute. Don’t get turned off by these extra dimensions. They are actually reminding us about something that people attempting to unify GR with QM had discovered earlier, namely that if gravity and quantum mechanics have to come together, then many more dimensions would be needed. So take the appearance of many dimensions in String Theory as a good sign and press on.”

It is not possible to cover the rich history of the evolution of the String Theory, even if it spans a mere twenty years or so. It is too full of technical details much beyond the reach of all of us, me included. So let me just give the gist, which is as follows:

First, one saw various versions of String Theory, with the author of each version politely signalling that his version was it. The various versions, I should mention, include all sorts of strings, including those of dimensions higher than one, that is to say membranes in various dimensions [ a concept dealt with briefly in the main body of this issue]. After a period during which a lot confusion reigned as to which version is to be preferred, there emerged a package called M theory for short. The grapevine has it that M in M-theory could stand for **master**, **mother**, **mystery**, **membrane**, **magic**, or **matrix**. Some have speculated that the M is actually an upside down W (for Witten, the man who gave M theory a great push; his portrait is presented in BOX2). The world of String Theories can be visualised as a planet [Planet M if you prefer], the different versions churned out thus far being islands and oceans on this planet! This highlights the fact that though superficially the different theories look different, there is an underlying unity.

M Theory, I should strongly emphasise, is yet to be explored thoroughly and when that happens, a lot more clarity is bound to emerge. But the question still being asked by many sceptics, especially the Standard-Model loyalists, if I might call them that, is: “Well, we agree that there is a lot of fancy mathematics, but physics is all about the real world. What does String Theory, including the much advertised M-Theory version, have anything to say about the REAL world? Has it got any verifiable prediction to offer?” It looks like

there might be, but I shall reserve for the next issue. Meanwhile, I feel obliged to say something about Witten, often hailed as the Pope of String Theory. A profile of this amazing man is presented next.

### **The Amazing Edward Witten**

Edward Witten was born in August 1951 in Baltimore, Maryland, to a Jewish family, the son of Lorraine W. Witten and Louis Witten, the latter a physicist specializing in gravitation and general relativity. Edward received his bachelor's degree in history (with a minor in linguistics) from Brandeis University.

Witten planned to become a political journalist, and worked briefly for George McGovern's presidential campaign. He then attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison for one semester as an economics graduate student before dropping out. From politics he returned to academia, enrolling in applied mathematics at Princeton University before shifting departments and receiving a Ph.D in physics in 1976 under David Gross, the Nobel laureate in Physics in 2004.

After completing his PhD, Witten worked at Harvard University as a Junior Fellow and at Princeton as a professor. He was a Professor of Physics at Princeton University from 1980 to 1987. He was also briefly at Caltech from 1999 to 2001. Currently he is the Charles Simonyi Professor of Mathematical Physics at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey.

Witten has made several contributions to theoretical physics. Witten's extensive work in the area of theoretical physics has also involved a large number of highly mathematical results. He has been active primarily in quantum field theory and String Theory and in the related areas of topology and geometry.

In 1990, Witten was awarded Mathematics' most prestigious award, the Fields Medal. Often described as the Nobel of Maths, it is awarded once in four years. Witten became the first physicist to win the Fields Medal. Sir Michael Atiyah said of Witten, "Although he is definitely a physicist, his command of mathematics is rivaled by few mathematicians... Time and time again he has surprised the mathematical community by his brilliant application of physical insight leading to new and deep mathematical theorems... he has made a profound impact on contemporary mathematics. In his hands physics is once again providing a rich source of inspiration and insight in mathematics."

Witten has been honored with numerous awards, including a MacArthur Grant (1982), and the National Medal of Science (2002). In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Witten as a member of the Pontifical Academy of Science. Witten also appeared in the list of **TIME** magazine's 100 most influential people of 2004. Since 1992, Witten has been on the board of **Americans for Peace Now**.

At the time Witten was presented the Field's Medal [for his contributions to Mathematical Physics], the presenter said:

"Physics was always a source of stimulus for Mathematics so that Mathematical Physics is a legitimate part of Mathematics. In classical time, its connection with Pure Mathematics was mostly via Analysis, in particular through Partial Differential Equations. However, the quantum era gradually brought a new life. Now Algebra, Geometry and Topology, Complex Analysis and Algebraic Geometry enter naturally into Mathematical Physics and get new insights from it.

In all this large and exciting field, which involves many of the leading physicists and mathematicians in the world, Edward Witten stands out clearly as the most influential and dominating figure. Although he is definitely a physicist [as his list of publications clearly shows], his command of mathematics is rivalled by few mathematicians, and his ability to interpret physical ideas in mathematical form is quite unique. Time and again he has surprised the mathematical community by a brilliant application of physical insight leading to new and deep mathematical theorems.

**Here is a Q & A session with Edward Witten that gives you a flavour of his tastes and his personality. We don't say you would be able to understand all that is presented, but at least you would get a glimpse of what geniuses are like. Readers with a physics background may be able to get a bit more.**

### ***What is M theory?***

M theory is a name for a more unified theory that has the different string theories, as we know them, as limits, and which also can reduce, under appropriate conditions, to eleven-dimensional supergravity. There's this picture that we all have to draw where different string theories are limits of this M theory, where M stands for Magic, Mystery or Matrix, but it also sometimes is seen as standing for Murky, because the truth about M theory is Murky. And the different limits, where the main parameter simplifies, give the different string theories -- Type IIA, Type IIB, Type I, and there's eleven-dimensional supergravity, which turns out to be an important limit even though it isn't part of the systematic perturbation expansion, then there's the E8xE8 heterotic string, and there's SO(32) heterotic string.

So M-theory is a name for this picture, this more general picture that will generate the different limits through the different string theories. The parameters in this picture we can think of being roughly  $\hbar$  [hbar], which is Planck's constant, and that determines how important the quantum effects are, and the other parameter is  $\alpha'$  [alpha prime], which is the tension, related to the tension of the string, that determines how important stringy effects are. So traditionally, a physicist looking at Type IIA, for example, by traditional weak coupling methods, explores this little region, and if asked how his theory is related to Type I theory, the answer would have to be, "Well I don't know,

that's

something

else."

And likewise, if you ask this observer what happens for strong coupling, the traditional answer was, "Well I don't know." In graduate courses, you learn that you can do more or less anything for weak coupling, but you can't do anything for strong coupling. What happened in the 90s was that we learned how to do a little bit for strong coupling, and it turned out that the answer is Type IIA at strong coupling turns out to be Type I in a slightly different limit, SO(32) heterotic, and so on. So we built up this more unified picture, but we still don't understand what it means

### ***What is K theory and what does it mean for string theory?***

K theory is a mathematical theory that studies topology using matrices, using operators that don't commute with each another. What topology is, first of all, is the branch of mathematics where you don't care about the shape, so for example, a lumpy ball is equivalent to a round ball. But if there are holes, you do care about that, so a donut is different from either of these two. So, mathematicians learned, around 1960, that there was a very powerful tool in topology based on matrices, and that tool was K theory. And since quantum mechanics is about non-commuting operators, or matrices, there has always been a kind of naive analogy between K theory and quantum mechanics. An analogy that seemed naive to most physicists, but was often drawn by mathematicians such as Michael Atiyah.

However, we learned in the last few years that some questions about string theory, but slightly specialized questions usually, are usefully addressed using K theory. What K theory really addresses is a little bit subtle to explain. If you want to understand the charges carried by the D-branes, that's a question that leads to K theory. Or I might say at an even more basic level, D-branes are these strange objects whose positions are measured by matrices, and studying those matrices leads to K theory.

So K theory is the sort of topological underpinning of D-brane theory. But as physicists we're interested very much in whether the ball is round or lumpy, as are different things in physics. We wouldn't want to play baseball with a lumpy ball. So, the topology is just one side of the story.

### ***What is noncommutative geometry and why is it important in string theory?***

Well, one thing which we know about for sure in string theory is that the ordinary classical ideas about geometry are approximations, and don't really work precisely. But what you should really replace them with is not clear. However, there's a naive ideas about strings which really only works for open strings. Open strings are strings with endpoints, like in the original Type I



superstring, where a particle was represented by a piece of string with charges at the ends. I've labeled the charges as  $q$  and  $\bar{q}$  for quark and anti-quark, but that's modern terminology that might not have been present in the early days of string theory.

Once you've got open strings, they can join together, I'm going to call my open strings A or B, and they join end to end. But there are two ways of joining them. I could join them with A on the left and B on the right, or I could join them with B on the left and A on the right, and I get two different outputs. And it's very much like taking two matrices A and B and multiplying them together. So there's some noncommutativity in the interactions. And when you take account of the fact that string theory is all about geometry, somehow this is geometry where noncommutative objects are built in. In fact I've mentioned now a couple portions of it. There's the noncommutativity of joining strings, and there's the matrices that don't commute, which are related to K theory and also to the D-brane positions and so on.

Anyway, coming back here, you can try to systematically describe open string physics at least in terms of noncommutative ideas introduced in geometry, and you can get a general answer of some kind, but it's rather abstract and very hard to use. However, in the last couple of years, it was discovered that there's a certain limit with a very strong background magnetic field in which things simplify, and you can actually say something simple and useful based on the noncommutative geometry. That's a case where the rather abstract and hard to use noncommutative geometrical concepts actually come down to Earth and become useful.

### ***Why is it so hard to break supersymmetry in string theory?***

Well, if I knew the answer, if I knew how Nature has done supersymmetry breaking, then I could tell you why humans had such trouble figuring it out. But I can say one thing about it. When supersymmetry is not broken, it's easy to get a zero cosmological constant in string theory. And although a zero cosmological constant might not be the truth, it's incredibly close to the truth. If you break supersymmetry, if you do it the wrong way, you're going to get a cosmological constant that's much too big, and then you may well get associated problems, such as instabilities, runaways and so on. So it's easy to find ways that string theory could break supersymmetry, but they all have bad consequences. So I assume we're missing something, which is the answer to your question.

### ***How can the cosmological constant be so close to zero but not zero?***

I really don't know. It's very perplexing that astronomical observations seem to show that there is a cosmological constant. It's definitely the most troublesome, for my interests, definitely the most troublesome, observation in

physics in my lifetime. In my career that is.

***What has been the most surprising or interesting thing that you have learned in physics?***

I'm going to interpret the question to be what's the most interesting thing I've learned in my career, whether I discovered it or not. It's something I've learned, perhaps through the work of other people or from textbooks. So in that sense, the most surprising thing I've learned, even though I had nothing to do with discovering it, is that strings can describe quantum gravity.

***What has been the most surprising or interesting thing that you have learned in science outside of physics?***

Well it's not that amazing that to me, a lot of science is physics. So, for example, I can't give you an answer in terms of chemistry, because physics underlies chemistry. I could give you an answer in biology. Biologists have learned lots of wonderful things. But it's hard to properly maintain one's sense of wonder about them, for some things that were known so long that we all remember so little that we take them for granted. But there's the theory of evolution, which is an amazing insight. And there's the understanding of the genetic code, that's a marvelous insight.

Of course, if we move on to math, which you might think isn't physics, but which is much closer to what I know, then there are lots of fun and exciting things there. I hardly know what to tell you because, again, there are lots of things that are really wonderful but which we take for granted because it's all known. Like there's calculus. Calculus is pretty amazing.

But... it's not the first thing that comes to mind in answering such a question, because such a question tends to make you think of more recent discoveries. But... if I just have to ask, of everything I've ever learned in math, what's the most amazing and surprising -- it might be that calculus should win the prize, even though it's not so new any more.

## SPELLBINDING SAI – Part 1

*By Prof. N. Kasturi*

*This is the transcript of a talk delivered by Prof. Kasturi many years ago. This is being brought to you from our archives and we regret that we do not have the exact date of this talk, but we can say with reasonable surety that it was in the month of October in 1987.*

It is a very difficult assignment that has been given to me to speak on Sai Baba. Because He is a phenomenon that has so many facets; and that is yet a mystery - though I have been with Him for over 30 years now. The longer you are with Him, the more mysterious He becomes. And He Himself has acknowledged and declared that it is very difficult to understand Him; not just recently when people tried to investigate Him, but even from His boyhood.

### The Landmark Letter

In the spiritual museum that they have in the college which was opened about 15 days ago (most likely, September 24, 1987), there is a letter - a photocopy of a letter - that Baba wrote to His elder brother when He was 21 years old. The date is there as 1947, when there was no post office in Puttaparthi. The nearest post office was five miles away. As you can see from the note paper, it talks of the Bukkapatanam post office and not the Puttaparthi or Prashanti Nilayam post office. It has also got a picture of Baba as He appeared at that time.

His elder brother was rather disappointed with Him because he had great hopes that he would pass His university examinations and get into some cushy job whereas He had given up His studies and was collecting people around Him, and was being lionized by all sorts of people. He thought that He had strayed away from the usual path of educated people in our country.

So he wrote to Him a letter protesting against His behavior. And this letter was in reply to that. In that letter, because His elder brother was a Telegu pundit, Baba wanted to go one step over His elder brother and replied in poetry - His elder brother also reveled in poetry. And there you will find Baba saying the purpose of His coming. He tells him, "You don't understand Me. You cannot understand Me." And He says, "Not only you, but the whole world, however they may try, whatever they may do, it's not today, for however long they may try, they cannot understand Me."

### God with No Name

**"I have no name and I have no place which I must claim as My own. I don't belong to Puttaparthi, I don't belong to this place. I was not a native of this place or that."** And He says, *Ye Perutho Pilachenanu Palakutunu* - "I have no special name; call Me by any name, I will answer." *Ye Uru Teskonipoinanu Podhumu* - **"Which ever place I am taken to, that is My place."**

Imagine a young man of twenty saying that He has no name! That He will answer to everywhere. And that whichever place you belong to now, that is His place. Every place is His place. If we see the present and what it is becoming - the whole world is His place.

### **A ‘School Boy’s’ Care for Humanity**

There is a poem that He had written there in Telugu where He says, **“I have got a purpose for which I have come; I have undertaken a great mission. I have resolved upon one thing which I will carry out. And that is, I will give *Ananda* to the entire mankind and save them through that *Ananda*.”**

Now imagine this for a boy who has lived in Puttaparthi – somebody has described it as a village which is five minutes from the Stone Age – born in that village, and in a very poor family. (Baba did not have money to even purchase buttons for His shirts. And He used to have thorns collected from thorny plants – long ones – and used them for His buttons). Imagine a boy born in such circumstances; studying in a school up to what we call the fourth form (grade) and leaving school after two months, during his fifth form. I went to that school and inspected the admissions register and the furniture. And sat on that same bench in which He was sitting when He was studying. Think of a boy like that, in fourth form, two months and into fifth form, talking of mankind?

Edgar Mitchell – the sixth man who walked on the moon – and now a great follower of yoga, writes in his book that he has seen earth as a spaceship from the moon. He speaks of the ecstasy that he felt when he saw the earth from the moon - a beautiful precious blue gem placed on dark velvet. He gives a beautiful description of the earth from the moon. And in the next paragraph he writes about the agony that he felt that man is not able to live upon this beautiful spot in peace! “He hates and he exploits and he gives full vent to all his base passions” he writes. Further he asks, “When will man think of mankind? What we want is to rise from man to mankind.”

And here is a village boy, five minutes from the Stone Age! Baba was saying that the first jeep that penetrated into Puttaparthi was such a piece of curiosity that people asked the driver if they could push it to some distance. And it was considered a great example of status if you have pushed it a few feet. And even the elders of the village took the chance to push the jeep a little and they were very proud of what they had done. That was the type of culture and development that Puttaparthi had. And a boy who grew in such circumstances, talking of - “I have come on a mission to give *Ananda* to entire mankind?”

**“I have come on a Mission...”**

And then the next line in that poem is this: **“Those who stray away from the righteous path, from the path of dharma, I will hold them by the hand and save them; that is My vow. I have come on a mission that you can’t**

understand. I am not your brother; I am not your Sathya Narayana Raju whom you can say: 'Why are you throwing away your books? Pass our B.A. degree examination and become an officer in the government.' No! I have no name. I have no native place; I have come to give *Ananda* (bliss) to entire mankind. I have come to correct people from straying away from the straight path - wherever they may be, who ever they may be."

And then the third line: "I have come to spread Love, *Prema*." How? "By removing the great grief of people who are poor, distressed and downtrodden. I will remove their grief and give them what they lack. It may be material means, or it may be spiritual strength, whatever they lack, I will give."

You can say, Sai Baba is famous for this. He will do this; this is His greatness. But what is His greatness? What is it for which He says, "I can say that I am even proud?"

That is: "Whoever worships Me with *niyama* and *nishta*, with proper conditions; I will save them, I won't give them up."

That is what the Gita says too: "*Ananyas Chintayantomam Ye Janah Paryupasathe, Tesham Nithyabhiyuktanam Yoga Kshemam Vahamyaham.*"

Lord Krishna declares, "Whoever thinks of me incessantly, I will be always with them and look after their welfare completely."

Though, of course, Baba has given another meaning to it. It is said, in the Gita you find quotes, but if you watch Sai Baba and His activities and speeches, you will find them to be a commentary on the Bhagavad Gita. Returning to this statement that "Whoever worships Me with *niyama* and *nishta* under certain conditions, I will never give them up. I will be always protecting them, that is my *ghanatha* (greatness)."

The quote from the Gita says: "Whoever worships me with single minded devotion; I will always be with them. And I will give them happiness in this world and joy in the next."

Now, this particular line has been explained by Baba in another manner. "*Ananyas Chintayantomam...*" *Ananya chinta* is usually explained as single minded, that is, 'without any other thought if they worship Me'; some people interpret it as without loyalty to anybody else or without any other thought.

"They should not be worried by any other thought. They must rely entirely on Me, dedicated entirely to Me." That is the usual meaning that is given to this quotation.

**God and His Devotee are One!**

**But Baba says: "No! That is not the meaning. "*Ananya chinta*" means the thought that 'He is different from Me'. That idea of difference you**

should not have. If you worship Me, or adore Me, or revere Me, without this thought: ‘He is different. I am separate. He is He. I am I. And I am not He, He is not I.’ If you do not have *anya chinta*, the feeling that there is a separation between you and another person, then I shall support and foster you.”

That is the new interpretation that Baba has given. “He is another” this feeling you should not have, because there is no another. We are all One. And if something happens to somebody, it is as good as or as bad as happening to us.

That apart, what are these *niyama* and *nishtha*? What are these conditions that Baba says, “which alone will enable you to get My grace.” Of course He has later on explained that it is not formal worship that He requires.

### **Purity, not *Phalam* and *Pushpam***

In the Gita it is said: *patram, pushpam, phalam, toyam*. Lord Krishna says, “That you can offer Me *patram*, some leaf at least (*bilva* or *tulsi*); or *pushpam*, some flower; or *phalam*, some fruit; or *toyam*, some water for worship – that is enough for Me.”

But Baba says: “**No. Not even that *patram, pushpam, phalam, toyam*. What is the use of *patram* which gets dried; or *pushpam* that fades; or *phalam* that rots or *toyam* that evaporates? No. What is wanted is the *patram*; the leaf that is your heart.**”

He gives some meaning for all that and says that what you must do to worship Him is only *Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, and Prema* (Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love). It is the inner attitude that is. He doesn’t care whether you address Him as Rama, Krishna, Shiva or Rajarajeshwari.

Once during the final day of Dasara – the ten day period of the worship of God as a Mother, we worshipped Him. We made Him sit and adored Him chanting the *Lalitha Sahasranaama* (1008 names of Mother Goddess). And He was sitting all the time.

Imagine, how is it possible for Him to tolerate being worshipped as Mother Lalitha? Or being praised as God? Anybody’s head would turn. Imagine if you and I were worshipped as God! I feel miserable even when I am put on this extra height, and given a soft cushion and kept at least fifteen feet away from you as if I am a very important person who should not mix with you, or sit intimately with you. So, how much more miserable should a man feel if he is not genuine, and if he is simply made to sit twice a day, and you are praising Him as Lord Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Mother Gauri and Saraswathi without end; something must be wrong with his brains if he tolerates all that. But He is very clear headed and a very competent person, and that itself is an indication that He must be some phenomenon which you and I cannot understand.

Coming back to *niyama* and *nishtha*, His conditions for adoration and reverence are quite different. You may belong to any religion; you may address Him by any name.

### **Finding a 'Yogi'**

As a matter of fact, some of you must have read Arnold Schulman's book. He has written a book called "Baba". It is an interesting book in where he says that he came over to India, and like many tourists, he too had a list of things that he must see in India like the Tajmahal, a cobra probably, a tiger hunt, and then a yogi.

So he saw everything except the yogi, and he asked someone where he can find a yogi. And they said: "You go to Whitefield." And he came to this 'yogi' (Sai Baba). And that 'yogi' called him in for an interview. Inside the room there were others too, and he got His vibhuti and it struck him as rather strange that simply by a wave of His hand, this 'yogi' is able to get some white powder! Then he heard Him ask somebody: "You've got appendicitis?" And then He gave her some vibhuti. When he came out he asked: "Do you have appendicitis?" The other person said, "Yes. But I didn't tell Him!"

He thought it rather strange and he congratulated himself that he had seen a 'yogi'. Then he went back. And he writes: "I went back to the familiar world of mouthwash and deodorant." Further he says, "I have been to India and I have seen the much talked of yogis and I have found them to be a set of exploiters and the disciples are psychopathic compulsives." So he dismissed the whole lot of gurus, teachers and yogis in India as systematic exploiters and psychopathic compulsives. And then, Baba worked up on him.

Whenever He speaks, you must have observed that He quotes or sings one poem. Once He started with a song about Himself. *Vishwamellada Vyapiyeevelayuvaadu*. Which means, "He who is present all over the world". It is not exactly 'world', you may say, all over the cosmos.

### **Measurements of Cosmic Dimensions**

When Baba went to East Africa and returned, there was a big meeting to welcome Him home as if He had gone somewhere across the seas. It was considered a great achievement by His devotees. People ask me very often, "Has Baba gone to foreign countries?" Because it is then that we value a person more. And when I say, "Yes, He has been to Africa", they rather look with quizzical eyes! Going to Africa of all places! First, he should go to America and return, because we are honored there! But Africa! But Baba first goes only to countries that are just coming out of their colonial rule and are trying to find their feet and are relatively poor.

To continue the story, at that public meeting, I was translating His discourse in Telugu into English. The platform was about thirty feet wide. He was at one end, I was on the other. And then He started saying, "What is all this function that you have arranged? I have been only to one of the rooms of My mansion!

When the master of the house comes from the drawing room to the dining room, you don't make a big fuss and say, 'oh He has come from one room to another' and we have a meeting and garland Him, and then praise Him that He has come." In essence, He was saying all this is nonsense.

Then He used the word *Prapancha mey na illu*. And I translated it. Of course, it is sometimes difficult to get the right word quickly. So I said, "The world is My mansion." And I was rather proud that I used the word 'mansion' for '*illu*'. So I was bucked up with myself and thought everybody will appreciate that word. I didn't say 'house' or 'home' or some of those common place things, but a much better term - 'mansion'. So I patted myself on the back.

But then Baba turned to me and said, 'No!' It is difficult to translate Baba. Because He not only speaks in Telugu, but He watches the English and tries to find out from where all the ideas have come! You must have seen Dr. Bhagavantam (who used to translate often in the 1970s) being corrected a number of times.

So, when He turned to me and said, "No!" It gave me a shiver. "No! Not the world!" He said shaking His finger at me. And then He proceeded towards me. I thought that was the end of it. I am no good. He was going to ask me to clear out. Therefore, when He was proceeding towards me, I also proceeded towards Him, because if He was going to give me a slap or something it is better to receive it half way than compel Him and make Him walk the whole distance! So I came right to the center. And at the center, luckily there was no mike, so only I who could hear what He said; otherwise the whole audience would have heard it. But it was worth hearing.

### **The Master Supreme**

**He said, "No! Not the world, but the Universe!" And, of course, I stood aghast! Imagine a person, a five foot figure, standing before you and saying, "The Universe is My mansion!"** I was, in fact, 'taller' and 'older' than Him! More 'educated' you can say, translating His speeches. It is something very thrilling that you could have a person of that human form and size declaring: "No, not the world! The Universe!" When He corrected me in that fashion, I simply fell at His feet. And fifty thousand people watched this and wondered 'What is this man doing?' Then He gently pulled me up by the shoulder and directed me towards the mike and said, "Carry on your work." Now, that is Baba.

*(To be continued...)*



## HONOURING HIM THE RIGHT WAY

- By Rev. Ted Noffs  
Pastor of the Wayside Chapel, Sydney.

(Excerpts from his speech at Baba's Birthday Celebration in 1986)

*Rev. Ted Noffs, Pastor of the world renowned "Wayside Chapel" in Sydney, was the keynote speaker at the 61<sup>st</sup> Birthday celebration of Bhagavan Baba in Australia in November, 1986, organised by the co-ordinating committee of the Sathya Sai Organisation of New South Wales in Sydney. The background of Rev. Noffs and the "Wayside Chapel" as well as their philosophy are closely akin to the Sai Principles, and have been documented in the article titled, "The Family of Humanity" in the December 2005 volume of Heart-2-Heart. Twenty-one years have gone by since then and the speech deserves a global audience, another clarion call to all devotees this year, our Beloved Swami's 82<sup>nd</sup> year of advent. For Sai devotees all around the world, Rev. Noff's speech would give a lot of food for thought. We are pleased to share this with all our readers.*

### **Celebrating in the Correct Way**

Ladies and Gentlemen! It is a great honour to be involved with you this afternoon in the celebration of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's 61st Birthday. The words spoken and the music we just heard have already honoured a great living human being, a great spiritual giant, a person who might be described only in Messianic terms.

There is nothing more important in the world, at this moment, than that men and women, and boys and girls, might be lured into a consciousness of the need to recognise our familyhood. That is what I sense this afternoon in this auditorium. We are thinking in terms of that achievement. That in itself is a momentous objective of the ministry of your Master, Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

How can I speak about someone who has influenced the world so greatly, already, in His present lifetime? You already have indicators of the fact that the Messiahs of the past, the great spiritual giants, have been recognised after their deaths. But in the lifetime of this great leader, Sai Baba, so much has been achieved. That in itself is an important point.

I would just like to share with you my own feelings of the importance of His ministry. I believe, first of all, we should recognise Him to be a person who manifests in the world, great, new and wonderful things. We live in a world of destruction, where people are constantly destroying things and one another, destroying the planet and its ecology, destroying their own mind and body. But here is a person who is constantly manifesting new life, beautiful and creative things. We must recognise His manifesting power.

So, how do we begin to celebrate His birthday in the right mind and attitude? As we see the whole life of Sai Baba, we begin to realise that we are speaking

about a person of great faith. He does not look around and say, "Is there anybody else up there." He does not look around the planet for someone! This is where religion has got it all wrong, all religions, including my own. Remember the great words of Jesus: "The things I have done, you can do, and greater things than these you can do." But you never hear those words preached in a church. And yet, Jesus said that we all possess within us enormous spiritual potential, gifts of making a new world, creating a new universe.

### **Co-Workers with Divinity**

Every one of us is to be a co-worker with the Divine power. We are to recognise a stamp with a Divine imprint, and our task is to recognise the Divinity within us. And Sai Baba recognises this great Truth and says to all His followers: "You are to be people, who in your own homes should become Christ figures. You are to realise your potential and all the possibilities of your life." I am often criticised when I say such things in churches. And people say, "But you cannot say that; there is only one Christ, and He alone is the only one." But Jesus never said that. He said that every one of us can reach that level of Spirituality. Jesus was a man, who became a Christ. Any person in this auditorium today, or elsewhere, may be looking upon themselves as men and women, with a particular name, but should know that they could become Christ figures. That is what this is all about - the whole story of Sai Baba. And yet, we have constantly with us, a whole misunderstanding of the human potentiality and possibilities. Our task is to realise our potentiality to the full. I believe we should be honouring this extraordinary person, who is alive with us in the world today, for emphasising this fact. Look around at the institutions He has created and the lives that have been changed through His influence. See what one person, realising His potentiality, has achieved in his lifetime. Cannot you say to yourself today, I am going to leave this auditorium, go out into the world, and manifest a new world for men and women, boys and girls, to enjoy it forever? That is what this birthday is all about. It is not just a matter of coming here and singing songs, and saying our prayers, and going on our way and saying, "that was lovely."

### **Transforming the Planet**

That was not the objective of Sai Baba, who founded this great Spiritual force on this planet. He would be disappointed I am sure, if you left the auditorium and did just that. He wants you to go out and help to transform this planet and make the world a new and more beautiful place to live.

The death of a lonely person cared for by our 'Outreach' programme was reported at the Chapel this morning. This man who died at the Concord Repatriation Hospital had given the Wayside Chapel as his 'next of kin.' No next of kin in terms of a mother, a father, a son or a daughter - only one little institution, the Wayside Chapel. But Sai Baba must be next of kin to countless millions of people around the world. Is this not terribly important?

When I look at your ministry and the work you are doing, this is what you have got to take as a philosophy - the words of your own Master, the teachings of

this great man. You have got to put them into practice. Do not stand back and say, "Somebody else is doing it," because they are not. You are to be the person doing it. Twenty-one years ago, outside the Wayside Chapel, a girl was dropped almost unconscious from an overdose of drugs. She managed to crawl inside the building before she collapsed. We found her there several hours later. I had never seen a drug overdose in my life. I looked around for a doctor, a nurse or a social worker, who may have known what to do. I discovered that in the whole of Sydney, there was not one available. Not one hospital could take her. So we have to set up our own drug programme in Australia.

Did I look around and say, "Well, isn't there somebody, some authority somewhere who can do it?" No. God calls upon you to do it. You are to be the authority. You are to be the pioneers. You cannot leave it to anyone else. What was required in the past of seasoned warriors, is today required of more recruits to serve humanity. That should be the theme of our age. You might say, "I am nobody; I am only a person humbled; I have got no potentiality and no possibilities."

### **"Here I am, Lord!"**

But you have; you are to be it; you are to be the Saviours of the world in this age. The world needs another Christ, but where is He? We must go out and look for Him. Perhaps he said, "Here am I. Send me." You have got to say that. If your Sai movement is to be counted, or if it means something to you, you have got to stand up and say, "Here I am Lord! Send me wherever you want me to go, and whatever you want me to do."

The world renowned comedian, Tony Hancock, reminded me of what the human heart needed and the hunger within. When I met him I recognised his inner loneliness and I had never seen a sadder face in my life. Instead of talking about some of his jokes, he spoke about religion. He spoke about the hunger in the hearts of men and women, and the hunger in his own heart for religion. Little did I know that a few hours later he would be dead! He died of a drug overdose. The greatest comedian who brought laughter to the world, was himself very lonely, and knew no laughter in his own heart. You meet so many people everyday, who you think are self-sufficient and do not need anything.

You may sing together and gather with friends at religious meetings. It is not enough. Your task is to follow the teachings of this great leader, Sai Baba, this great spiritual giant, whose birthday we celebrate today, and the greatest birthday present you could give Him is to be like Him - to manifest your love for all beings and to manifest things for all-time, for the planet to enjoy; for the rest of human history. That is your task.

We are confronted today by so many varied problems. I find that the needs of humanity always outstrip the resources available to meet them. You know that? That is an axiom. You never catch up. You never arrive, but you are always travelling on. Your task is to go out into the world and transform this

city, this nation, and the entire world, into one beautiful human family. That is what it is all about.

I have a creed which most of you know and I share it with you. One day I hope the whole world will say it. It is also the creed of Sai Baba, in a different way:

***"I AM a Catholic, but I AM also a Protestant. I happen to be a Jew, but I AM also a Buddhist. I AM a Muslim, I AM a Sikh, I AM a Hindu, And I AM SAI BABA. I AM all of those things because I AM a HUMAN BEING. No one in the world can ever be a stranger to me."***

That is the distinctive philosophy I believe, that should somehow encompass the planet, and we here in Australia are very privileged to understand these things. If you go out there to all those Australians, you will be amazed that they do not really believe in Anglicanism or Catholicism. Every Australian, even children, understand that what matters most is not religion, but the Family of Humanity. And they want your help to become a part of that family. They want Sai Baba to be an instrument in making that family a reality in the world. We should be able to say, "I love you, you are mine." One of the four principles, the four bastions of Sai Baba is Love, a commitment to other human beings. Merely talking about it is not enough. We have to go out into the world and care for the less fortunate. This is what Sai Baba is about. Is it not the great point of His ministry and His life, that Sai Baba has given the world Unity, Harmony and a sense of Divinity? For that we all should be thankful to God. For many more years to come, I hope Sai Baba's Ministry will expand this Message of Unity, Harmony and Divinity, for the whole world to benefit.

## **HARNESSING THE HEART**

### **...LIVING UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF CONSCIENCE IN DAILY LIFE**

*Dear reader, starting from this month, the Birthday month of the Avatar, we begin a special column in our feature article section which will bring you stories of people— from eminent personalities to the ordinary Joe on the street – who have passionately pursued their Inner Call (or ‘The Voice of Conscience’ or ‘The Divine Direction Within’ – whatever you may call it) and have found greater peace and fulfillment in their lives. Many a time, it may not be the smartest move or the most logical thing to do, going by the majority opinion in today’s society; often, it may even result in putting the individual in very trying situations which could have been avoided if he/she had not ventured onto the ‘road less traveled’. But ultimately it is these people who live life with absolutely no regrets, are successful and enjoy greater peace. Not only this, it is because of such individuals that the world is still a beautiful place, in spite of the incessant incendiary news we hear non-stop. The media, we know, is more often than not, depressing with negative news and sensationalism. Few take interest to highlight anecdotes of enlightened individuals, or tales of virtue and sacrifice of ordinary citizens. If they did, the powerhouse of positive consciousness it would generate, could change our world for the better much sooner than we can imagine. We, at H2H, would like to do our bit in expediting this process and that is the principal reason we have started this special column.*

*Moreover, in the August 2007 issue, we had the cover story “Enlightened Leadership – A Matter of Heart, Mind and Soul” and the heartening response we received from many readers asking for more of such encouraging anecdotes, propelled us to offer such articles on a sustained basis. And that is another reason for the launch of “Harnessing the Heart”. Just like the current story of Mrs. Priya Davis, every issue from now on will bring you tales of everyday people who have fearlessly and zealously followed their Heart, and in spite of the many challenges, from within and without, have emerged victorious. This triumph, we believe, is truly inevitable as one can never underestimate the power of the soul, even though at times, it may take longer than one expects. We hope this will serve to fill you with confidence to follow your Higher Self, and feel assured that the ‘Golden Age’ that we all look forward to, is not a utopia. It is, in fact, very much within our reach. We just have to believe in it and dare to make it happen!*

## **CAREFUL CHOICES**

***By Mrs. Priya Davies***

**Upon Bhagavan Baba's instructions to her mother, Priya Davies moved to India from Canada in 1978, to study at His school in Ooty. She later attended what was then the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Women in Anantapur from 1981-1982, where she completed**

**her intermediate studies. Thereafter, she pursued her university education at Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. Priya currently lives in Toronto, Canada and works in the healthcare advertising industry. She is also a final year student in homeopathic medicine.**

Approximately five years ago, I was hired by my current employer, an advertising company in downtown Toronto as the Office Manager. My role was to manage the Operations department and Human Resources. A Reception/Admin person reported to me directly. Let's call her Liz.

### **HR with a Human Face**

The day I signed my offer letter, I was advised by my direct supervisor, the Vice President of Operations, that there has been a long standing "issue" with Liz's performance as the Receptionist/Administrator and she may need to be "let go" hinting clearly that being the one with the new HR role, I would have to fire her. I replied that I completely understood if there were issues, however I would not be comfortable letting her go as: (1) I have no work relationship or history or issues with Liz and (2) I don't feel comfortable in "letting someone go" unless all other avenues to resolve the issues had been exhausted and I had given all opportunities to Liz to change things around.

I requested to have three months to work with Liz and if there were still performance issues, I would then put her on a PIP plan. The PIP, or the Performance Improvement Plan, is a type of probationary period. It would detail specific feedback, instructions and goals to be reached in order to come off probation. This was reluctantly agreed to.

The next three months proved to be very grueling as the employee did indeed have memory issues, was not comfortable with computer technology, was slow in her pace, and many areas of her job consequently were not handled well by her. On the other hand, there were other areas of her performance where she was excellent, such as her verbal communication skills, telephone manners, people skills, and so on.

Liz also needed lots of time off work due to aiding a sick parent. In spite of my coaching and training, her performance in her weak areas did not improve much; or rather there would be a honeymoon period of great effort, and then she would rapidly taper off to her status quo of being really good at some things and performing poorly at other tasks.

At the end of the three months, my supervisor, who was of a paranoid nature, did not feel comfortable about my giving the employee the PIP plan as she felt the employee may become resentful of being on probation and may "sabotage" computer files, etc. She decided to go ahead and terminate Liz's employment.

I was not comfortable with this and I expressed my feelings. Her father's illness was not something she could control and I respected the fact that she made it a priority to look after him. I felt an employer should value an

employee who showed such sense of love and respect for an ailing parent. It spoke well of her as a human being. Also, I felt that Liz was valuable enough in her own way and that I could help her with some of her tasks and give her further coaching over time. Everyone deserved a second chance and so did she, I argued.

At the last moment, just five minutes before the termination meeting, my boss changed her mind and did not go through with the termination. Liz was extremely popular in the office and whoever fired her would reach new depths of unpopularity, which my supervisor was not willing to risk for herself. For a year or so, things fluctuated from good to bad and back again. Coaching helped as long as re-training was done yearly as Liz had a tendency to forget certain training pieces over time.

### **Fire or Be Fired**

Now our agency was famous for having a "revolving door". The two main principals of the business, the CEO and his wife, my boss, had a tendency of firing people very quickly if they didn't fit into the rigid, fear-filled, automaton-like environment they were trying to maintain. My boss commented to me daily about Liz's alleged incompetence, hoping I would give in and fire her.

About a year and a half into my employment, she and her husband, the CEO, called me into their office and told me that I had a great future there and that if I wanted to get ahead in my career, I needed to fire the "stupid" lady who was holding me back. This was said to me with much more finality than the daily comments I had received during the year. I realized at this point we were at the crossroads.

Faults aside, I knew that Liz was devoted to her job. She traveled almost three hours a day, each way to get to work. There was no one that could match her wit and competence on the phones. Sure, she might not be as fast a worker as others but some things have to be weighed to see what is more important. Managing people is not like running an automated machine. It is not about cut-and-dried corporate black and white behaviour. It's about dealing with warm-blooded human beings who have strengths and weaknesses, who have potentials and who have bad times. We don't throw out an elderly parent or a relative just because they're not as "useful" or if they're having troubles, do we? I don't think anyone should get away doing things in the business world with the kind of behaviour you would not do in one's personal life. We've got to strive towards what Baba refers to as unity in thought, word and deed.

Anyway, the ultimatum by the two principals of the company was weighing on my mind: I had to choose between staying true to myself and the values I cherished - or my aspirations for my rapid rise in the advertising industry.

## **Moving On and Up**

After that meeting, I quit my job because I would not do the wrong thing to get ahead in my career. I had no other job to fall back on, but I felt good and knew something would come up. Sure enough, I was offered a fantastic job a few weeks later running the administration for a ferry company. While at this new job, I sometimes missed the old office as the people (other than the two bosses) had been lovely to work with. A few months later, I heard that my old boss and the CEO had been "let go" themselves by the parent company. When I heard this news, I thought to myself in passing, it would be nice to work there now without the two bosses. The environment there would now be positive and harmonious.

A day later, there was a message on my cell phone from the new President, who had been a Director when I was there, asking me to return to them. I went back the next month and have been there ever since. Liz is still here and works with me every day. We have our ups and downs. But for the most part, it's great and getting better.

## **Righteousness Protects The Right**

Today, I am glad that when the two former principals gave me the final deadline to choose between firing Liz or getting fired - I stood my ground and walked away from making a choice I would regret forever. I think as a result of that adherence to what I saw as Right Conduct, today I am enjoying my professional life in a healthier and more productive atmosphere.

Knowing consciously the "right thing to do" is much easier than practicing it every day, every minute and in every situation (hence the ups and downs). Doing the right thing every time can be challenging and when we slip, it is not the sort of thing we want to share - along with our fears and doubts of making mistakes. For every 10 good things I've done, I've probably made a few unwise choices too.

I think what's important is knowing that the goal of perfection is everyone's right - yet when we make mistakes - and we will from time to time... - then let's love ourselves no matter what, forgive ourselves, be patient on ourselves and each other, as we're all on this journey together - towards that goal of perfection and devotion and self-knowledge. It's just that some of us are extra ahead or further behind than others in our self-realization. But it's all fine. It's not a race.

A very dear Sai sister sent this to me at a moment when I did not feel particularly proud of myself. Swami says..."March on with your eyes on the goal. Do not brood over the mistakes committed and failures suffered in the past. Do not follow the whims and fancies of the mind any longer. They will fill the ear with praise or blame and drag you away from the spiritual path. Follow the call of the Divine arising from the hearts of all living beings."



*Dear reader, we are sure, you too might have been through similar situations in your life and been faced with dilemmas which made you take rather tough but morally right decisions, which later filled you with a great sense of satisfaction and inner contentment. Please do share such inspiring anecdotes with us at [h2h@radiosai.org](mailto:h2h@radiosai.org). This will not only help build an amazing collection of 'triumph of the conscience' stories but also will embolden others to take to this path with greater determination.*

**- Heart2Heart Team**

## **SERIAL ARTICLES**

### **SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI**

#### **Part - 35**

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

#### **ACT X - SCENE 4**

*A few years pass. Sathya is now a bit older. The scene is Venkama Raju's house in Puttaparthi. Seshama Raju has finished his work in Kamalapuram and has now moved on to Uravakonda. The members of the family are discussing what to do about Sathya.*

VENKAMA RAJU: [to Easwaramma] Easwari, our Seshama has been transferred to Uravakonda, and soon he will go there. It is good for Sathyam also to go there and continue His studies. That is the only way open. What do you say?

EASWARAMMA: What am I to say? ..... You have already declared that it is good and the only way open.

VENKAMA RAJU: Easwari, you don't seem to like the idea.

EASWARAMMA: I don't know....I just don't understand anything .....You first sent Him to Kamalapuram for study; and now you are saying Uravakonda. ....I only know that my child will be away from me, and that is causing me pain. Other than that, I've nothing to say. Who can understand a mother's anguish!

*Seshama Raju enters*

SESHAMA RAJU: Have no worry, mother. Sathyam will be with me and study under my care. Will not the elder brother feel responsible and be concerned about the welfare of his younger brother?

EASWARAMMA: Did I not send him to Kamalapuram, believing you would be responsible?

SESHAMA RAJU: Why then are you having doubts now about Uravakonda?

EASWARAMMA: Seshama, it is not a question of doubts or hesitation..... I simply ask: Should a small boy have to go to so many places just to study?

SESHAMA RAJU: Mother, one must go where opportunities for study are available. It is my responsibility to see that Sathyam is properly educated. Just leave it to me and stop worrying.

VENKAMA RAJU: Seshama, as you say.

EASWARAMMA: Seshama, look for a house with good water supply!

SESHAMA RAJU: Mother, did I not tell you before that water scarcity was a problem with those other places? Tomorrow when I go to Uravakonda, my first priority would be to look for a proper house, OK? ..... Grandfather, why don't you also come with us to Uravakonda?

KONDAMA RAJU: Me? If you wish, you can come and see me here whenever you feel like it! For me, Puttaparthi is the entire Universe. .... What do You say Sathyam?

SATHYA: Not only for you, grandfather! No matter where I go, in the end I shall come back to Puttaparthi. Not only for Me but for one and all, this place is the entire Universe.

## SCENE 5

*Sathya goes to Uravakonda with His elder brother Seshama Raju. He is admitted to the High School there. The scene is the School Assembly that takes place before the classes commence. All the students are assembled there. The Head Master of the School asks Sathya to lead them all in prayer.*

HEAD MASTER: Students, we are reassembling after vacation for school commencement. We will start with a prayer song by Sathya Narayana Raju, a smart boy from the Kamalapuram High School who has now joined us. Sathyam, come here and sing the prayer song.

*Sathya sings, and His singing is greeted with loud applause.*

TEACHER: What a wonderful song! My boy, who wrote it? Is it Rabindranath Tagore?

SATHYA: No Master, I wrote it.

TEACHER: You wrote it! Such pure Sanskrit and at such a small age? Amazing! What beautiful lyrics, and how melodiously you sang! Very good, vEry good.

HEAD MASTER: Students, this small song explains beautifully the concept of National Integration, as also Universal Love and Brotherhood. That is Sathyam's greatness! From now on, Sathyam will lead the prayer sessions every day. Today's session is over, and you may now go to your respective classes.

## ACT XI- SCENE 1

*The scene is Seshama Raju's house in Uravakonda. Sathya is at home. The new academic year has just commenced, and Seshama brings new notebooks for Sathya.*

SESHAMA: Sathyam, ....Sathyam, Here are Your notebooks. This one is for English, this one for Telugu, this for composition, this for mathematics, and this for rough work. When did they say they will give the text books?

SATHYA: In another two or three days.

SUSEELA [to husband]: You are just too much! This is only the first day, and He has just returned from attending a new School. Why talk books and lessons so soon?

SESHAMA RAJU: Suseela, why does one go to School? Is it not for study? So, what's wrong with my asking these questions? ...[to Sathya] Well, have they started the lessons?

SATHYA: Today, we had Telugu and geography lessons.

SESHAMA: Very good. Are You paying proper attention to the lessons, or are You thinking about poems and songs?

SATHYA: I listen carefully in the class. And brother, I sang the prayer song. The Head Master liked it very much and has asked Me to sing the prayer song everyday. The Telugu Teacher asked Me who wrote the song.

SESHAMA: Who wrote the song?

SATHYA: I wrote it.

SESHAMA: Fits in! ..... That's why I keep on stressing that what You need are not songs, poems and prayer but study. Study is most important; concentrate on that!

SATHYA: Hmm.

SUSEELA: Sathyam, what's that prayer song? Sing it once.

*Sathya sings*

SESHAMA: Very good! You sang very well.

SUSEELA: My dear boy, the song is very nice!

SESHAMA: In addition to singing, concentrate also on Your studies. Mother and Father have entrusted You to my care. Therefore, study hard and make sure I get a good name!

SATHYA: Have no fear, brother. In days to come You will know more about Me, and then you will recognise Who exactly I am.

SESHAMA: I don't want words but action!

SATHYA: You will see for yourself!

## SCENE 2

*Sathya's class in the Uravakonda High School.*

TEACHER: Among the Nations of the world, our sacred land of Bharat has a unique place. Our culture and strict adherence to moral values have earned great fame for the country. You must speak in English about the greatness of Bharat. Can you explain the geographical greatness of our country? English only. Who will do it? You Suresh, ..... Gafar Khan, .....Krishna Rao, .....Ramesh, .....Ramesh,....Subba Reddy, ....Bangaru.....Sit down, you useless fellows! Is there no one who can say what I want in English?

SATHYA: I can explain, sir.

TEACHER: Yes?

SATHYA: [Speaks in English].

TEACHER: Very good! Did you notice how beautifully Sathyam spoke? And you, all of you are absolutely useless! Teaching you is like making an offering to stone. Yesterday, I wore my throat out, teaching you that lesson; and today, when I ask you to repeat it, you are all standing like flag-posts! .... I know how

to punish all of you....Sathyam, come here..... Look, squeeze the nose tight with Your left hand, and slap hard on the cheek with Your right. They will not get any sense till they are punished..... Why this stony stare? These are Your teacher's orders; go ahead and do as told.

*Teacher calls out the serial number of the students, while Sathya pretends to punish. This makes the teacher angry.*

TEACHER: [to Sathya] What's the meaning of this? When I tell You to slap, You are patting their cheeks as if You are applying sandal paste! Don't You know how to slap? ... Come, I'll show You...COME HERE!

*Teacher repeatedly slaps Sathya very hard.*

TEACHER: This way, this way, this way, this way! .....It is a student's duty to obey the Teacher's command, understand? Now go and sit in Your place.

*The bell rings, and the teacher leaves. Students then crowd around Sathya.*

RAMESH: Raju, why were You so silent when the Master was thrashing You so severely? You did not even cry; why?

SATHYA: The teacher is *Guru*, and *Guru* is equivalent to God. It is therefore not proper to insult or show disrespect to the teacher. The teacher did not punish Me for lack of knowledge of the subject. I was at fault; I did not exactly do what the teacher commanded Me to.

### SCENE 3

*Seshama Raju's house in Uravakonda. Seshama comes home from outside. He calls and his wife opens the door. As per Indian custom, he washes his feet before entering. His wife is concerned that Seshama is using too much water.*

SESHAMA: Suseela, .....Suseela!

SUSEELA: Yes, ...coming!

*Seshama washes his feet.*

SUSEELA: Great! There is only one pot of water left, and if that also is exhausted, we will have no water for tomorrow.

SESHAMA: That's no problem. We can always send Sathya to fetch more water; if He makes two trips, we will have four pots. Where is He?

SUSEELA: It's an hour since He went out. I sent Him to get a bundle of firewood, since our stock is exhausted.

SESHAMA: I wonder whether He is fetching firewood or lost in storytelling.

*Sathya comes*

SUSEELA: There He comes, even as we are speaking about Him!

SESHAMA: Why so much delay in getting the firewood?

SATHYA: Brother, near our house there were only small twigs. So I walked a mile to collect these. They are from the forest and will burn well.

SESHAMA: Hmm.... There is no water in the house. Get up early in the morning, and bring four pots. Don't forget!

SATHYA: Brother, I don't forget anything!

SESHAMA: Alright. Deposit the firewood in the kitchen, wash Your hands and feet, and come. Your sister-in-law will give You something to eat. After that, go and study Your English lessons. Go now.

END OF ACT XI - SCENE 3

*(To be continued)*

## GITA FOR CHILDREN - Part 37

(Continued from the last issue)

### Chapter 17

26. 'Let Me now get back to the subject of *Gunas* and fill in with a few details I have not covered earlier. I shall explain, with examples, how *Gunas* colour what people feel and do.'

27. 'Let Me start with food. As you know, some people live to eat while others eat to live. The *Sattvic* person is basically of the latter type. He is extremely careful about his food habits.'

28. 'To start with, a *Sattvic* person does not eat anything and everything. He eats only that which is healthy for the body. Not for him the popular junk foods!'

29. 'Next, he is very careful about cleanliness. Not only does he insist on the food itself being clean, but also his body. Thus, he would not eat without bathing, and would further take care to wash his hands and mouth before starting to eat.'

30. 'The *Sattvic* person would eat only at regular times, and in perfect moderation. No overeating for him. Further, before eating, he would reverentially offer the food to God, and while eating he would remain silent, thinking about God.'

31. 'The *Rajasic* person is very different in his food habits. Addicted as he is to the pleasures of the world, he lets his tongue dictate his choice of food. He eats like a gourmet but pays for it all in the end! He does sometimes realise his mistake but by then it is too late!'

32. 'The *Tamasic* person is even worse. He is ready to eat anything and everything, and one shudders even to mention the kind of stuff he eats! Fool that he is, he doesn't even bother to check if the food that he eats is adulterated or not.'

33. 'Let Me now turn to the different attitudes that people have to *Yajna* (sacrifice). The *Sattvic* person performs *Yajna* mainly to invoke the blessings of God on one and all, which is very commendable.'

34. 'The *Rajasic* person performs *Yajna* both for show and to demand benefits from God. He almost considers the *Yajna* to be a business deal – "God I perform the *Yajna* and therefore You give me this and that!"'

35. 'The *Tamasic* person sinks even lower, getting even the procedures all wrong! As if this is not enough, he dares to make evil demands on God! That is to say, he tries to convert *Yajna* into witchcraft!'

36. 'Next, I shall discuss the attitude of the three types to austerity. Austerity, as you know, is a kind of strict discipline, both mental and physical, aimed at internal purification, that is, purification of the Mind and the senses. Austerity covers all aspects – thought, word, and deed.'

37. 'Let me start with fasting, a common type of austerity. In accordance with the command of the scriptures, the Sattvic person not only fasts but also chants the Name of God all the time. This way, his stomach not only gets some rest – by the way, it is a good idea to give some occasional rest to the stomach! – but by chanting the Name the man also sanctifies the act of fasting.'

38. 'Some *Rajasic* people also fast but all the time their mind is on when the fast would end and what type of goodies they can eat after that! One is at a loss to understand why these people fast at all! By the way, some even fast for pure stunt value!'

39. 'The *Tamasic* fellow too is perverted in his own way. Unable to understand what moderation means, he sometimes literally tortures his body in the name of observing austerities. This fool does not realise that by doing so, he is actually torturing Me!'

40. 'Thus *Gun*as make people do the same thing in many different ways, and with very different attitudes too. Let Me now move on to the subject of charity.'

41. 'Properly performed, an act of charity is an expression of compassion. That is why the scriptures commend charity. While the *Sattvic* person offers charity the way it should be, with humility and no expectation of reward or benefit, the *Rajasic* person will make every effort to get all the mileage he can. He is a real stunt man, and goes all out for publicity! As for the *Tamasic* person, he makes sure he gives the wrong thing to the wrong person at the wrong time! Not only that, he often gives with utter contempt for the receiver!'

42. 'Arjuna, this world is a deceptive mix of *Sat* or Truth and *Asat* or untruth. Life is a journey where man has to avoid untruth and be guided by Truth. If man thinks he can do it all by himself, he is sure to get into all kinds of trouble and problems. But if he reposes total faith in Me and worships Me with one-pointedness, then I will drive him through, even as I am now driving your chariot!'

## End of Chapter 17

(To be continued)



## WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

### CREATING A LAND OF LOVE...

*A group of people who had forgotten to laugh or cry and were made to live like subhumans by a callous society, just because they had contracted an infectious disease (which is actually curable), are now not only smiling with joy brimming in their hearts, but are also looking forward to making beautiful lives out of themselves. Those who were society's outcasts are now outstanding testimonies of the Power of Love. Read this story and you will know how we can create a 'land of love' anywhere if our intentions are pure and if we are dependent on none else but the divine.*

Naya Bazaar Kustha Ashram lies some distance away from the township of 'steel city' Rourkela, in Orissa, a state in North East India. 'Kustha', in Oriya (the language of the state) means leprosy. In this colony, amid rundown mud thatched houses, live around 300 people, labeled as lepers and permanent outcasts by society and made to suffer a life of ostracism, poverty and neglect.

This was the case, a few years ago, but not true anymore. Now, this area has turned into a land of love which can turn even the most stone-hearted individual into a 'Mother Teresa' or a 'Mahatma Gandhi'. The turnaround brought about in this despised-by-all settlement by the Sai workers of this region is most stunning and stands as testimony to the power of Pure Love that Bhagavan Baba is. To start with, the Sai volunteers did not call them 'lepers'. They explain:

**"We never call them as lepers, but as 'Narayanas' (embodiments of God). We don't have to remind them about their grim existence and future by using a word and name that reminds them of their disease - but a name that reminds them and us too about their real nature – divinity."**

In this article too, we will use this word "Narayana" while we share with you this touching story of a group of people most wish to forget. Vivekananda Sahoo, a former student of Bhagavan's University, who hails from this state of Orissa, gives us this moving account:

#### **The Drought of Love**

Akin to Naya Bazaar (mentioned above), there are four more colonies in and around Rourkela – Durgapur, OMP Backyard, Tarkura and Sector-6. Each accommodates around 250-300 Narayanas. This western part of Orissa has the maximum number of Narayanas in the state, particularly in the Sundergarh District.

On any evening, one can - if he/she has the courage - make one's way through the muddy track that leads to Naya Bazaar Leprosy Colony and find

Shanti decorating the idol of Sri Rama with champa flowers (*Michelia Champaca*) in the local temple for the evening bhajan. You can see her next putting a beautiful garland of jasmine and marigold flowers around a photograph of Bhagavan Baba; her eyes now brimming with tears. Under the photo is etched the words: "Why fear when I am here?"

After the bhajans, she may tell you how Swami has transformed her life from a curse to a blessing. With tears flowing down her cheeks she narrates how in her adolescence she was diagnosed with leprosy. Her family members were frightened that they too would contract the disease and therefore kept her in confinement, in a room at the edge of the village. "For the first few weeks I kept crying, and asking, 'Why me?'" says Shanthi. After six months in isolation she was taken away to a clinic and has not seen her family since. "I felt forsaken by my own family but this was my fate and I had none to blame." The disease robbed sensation in her right foot; it became so damaged that eventually it had to be amputated. While she was being treated she met her husband - also marked for life by leprosy.

Shanti's story is only representative of the hundreds in the colony. In fact, her tale finds an echo with all the other 250 odd inmates. They are all social outcasts, treated with scorn by one and all. Even if cured by medication, they remain socially ostracized. Once infected with leprosy, the sufferer is soon forsaken by all family members and friends. Leprosy is contagious, and as the disease slowly eats away their hands and feet, Narayanas are forced out of society. They can not find work and often end up begging to survive, and living in substandard colonies. The social rejection is, in fact, so great that even when many are cured of their deadly disease, they end up living in isolated settlements. Those affected are forced to live and die a forgotten and humiliating life. Though the people's affected body parts have no physical pain, their lives are punctuated with a deep emotional pain. The stigma that attaches to them is worse than watching body parts like the tips of the nose, fingers and toes just disappear.

In such pathetic circumstances, nearly 300 families live at the colony. They survive on a meager government pension which many supplement with weaving. But their main occupation is begging. Many of the disabled who stand outside the temples and at road junctions in Rourkela carry the marks of leprosy. One man, who has lost several fingers, said that he rarely leaves the colony because people outside are too hostile.

Forlorn, devastated and without any hope of improving their lot, they live in colonies which are rarely visited by outsiders. Shunned by the government and society, the Narayanas often find consolation in vices like drinking and drugs.

### **The Force Called 'Pure Love'**

It was the year 1985, when the climate in the colony began to undergo a radical change. Inspired by the Pure Love of their Master, Bhagavan Baba, a group of spirited Sai youth had ventured into this so called 'god forsaken' area

to sow the seeds of Divine Love. Determined to serve the residents of the colony, they found within themselves the necessary love and patient endurance to achieve their purpose - virtues which they attribute to a Strength beyond their own. Thus, a story of reaching out against almost insurmountable odds, portraying the indomitable human spirit, began to be played out – all according to the Divine Director's plan.

The first task that the youth undertook was to warm the hearts of the colony residents, which had dried up with the pain of many cruel years. Every evening the Sai Youth would share their time and goodwill, looking into their eyes, listening to them, and inspiring them with comforting words. At first the reaction was that of suspicion and mild hostility, but the youth persisted in their efforts.

Slowly, the youth gained their trust and achieved the first challenge of instilling respect and self-worth in the hearts of these abandoned souls. Beautiful things happen when we regain the buoyancy of our human spirit. The Narayanas, who were bereft of the hope of being loved by anyone, found warm eyes, understanding hearts and empathetic smiles. Their hearts, frozen from a lifetime of neglect, now began to warm up. They were unable to fathom how the Sai Youth were so different from others in the world outside. They wanted to know what goaded them to display such selfless love and concern. The Seva dals, at this point, realized that mere words would not suffice. They gently waited for the language of love, so beautiful and profound, to convey the sweetness and power of the Cosmic Heart that was beating behind all their actions, and one day it happened – the wall broke and tears flowed copiously.

Gopal, an elderly man who had been in the colony for more than 30 years, through tear stained cheeks, said, **"This is the first time someone has spoken to me with so much of love and respect, my son!"** Many of the Narayanas were still unable to think through the reason why the Sevadals, brimming with the fountain of youth, would abandon their free evenings to spend time with them. They wanted to know more about the Youth and their motivation.

What unfolded next changed them forever. By way of explanation, the youth sang a song about 'Love walking on Two Feet' - a phenomenon called Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and about the rays of His Love reaching out to millions all over the world. On hearing the greatest love story etched in history between man and God, the Narayanas found someone who could redeem their lives. They listened with rapt attention and fervent hearts about this miracle of love. Tears rolled from their eyes, just like the way a seed which is sown in the soil sprouts when the first shower of rain drenches the earth.

### **Unbounded Selfless Service**

In a bid to normalise the leprosy sufferers' lives, the Sai youth began to attract other people's attention to the Narayanas' plight and worked to improve the

standing of the colony members in society. They had to battle against the prejudice that Narayanas are afflicted for the sins they committed in previous lives. The youth were never tired of convincing people that showing love towards another human being is the most powerful way to receive the blessings of God.

Apart from the change that it brought in the lives of the Narayanas, the impact that this seva had on the Sai Youth is tremendous. After working with these Narayanas in close quarters they know that to have a 'normal' body is nothing short of a miracle and some of the experiences they have had doing this service is simply extraordinary. **One concerns a young man who was cleaning the wounds of the Narayanas in dedicated and heartfelt service. After some time, he started to feel the sensation in his right hand was slowly decreasing and becoming numb - an early sign of leprosy! Incredibly, a calm resignation took him over, as he felt this happened while serving those so much in need. He simply prayed to Bhagavan to give him enough strength to carry on serving. Miraculously all the symptoms vanished! It is now ten years since this happened and he is still serving the Narayanas with tremendous zeal and love! The way the Lord takes care of His workers is unimaginable.**

**Another sevadal volunteer describing his motivation for working at the colony, says, "I choose to work for them because child Narayanas are the most unfortunate, uncared-for lot in our society; deprived of everything for no fault of their own. Born of infected parents, they lose what little they have right in the beginning – from education to entertainment. Leprosy is not hereditary, but the healthy children of leprosy patients are compelled to spend their life in unhygienic and filthy conditions. They are deprived of all physical, social, educational, vocational and cultural development."**

Over a period of time, five leprosy colonies, housing about 2000 residents were adopted in this loving way by the Sai Organisation. They started with Bal vikas classes for the children, then expanding into bhajans, Narayana seva, and other activities. There are also Medical and sadhana camps organized here.

### **With Love, All Is Possible**

The Samithi distributes artificial limbs to people who have lost them due to leprosy on a day known as "Disabled Day". Once a month the Medical Camp provides an opportunity for cleaning and dressing of the Narayanas' wounds by doctors and local Sai youth volunteers. The stench coming from the wounds is sometimes unbearable, and it requires every ounce of a person's determination to carry out the task. The volunteers and doctors also identify patients who need further medical attention and refer them to the relevant hospitals and specialists.

One such Narayana, lets call him Jai, was complaining of severe stomach pain. On investigation, it was discovered that he had a tumor in his stomach.

The Sai volunteers took Jai to a private hospital where the doctors recommended an immediate operation. The operation would cost Rs. 20,000 and another equal amount would be needed for the post-operative care and medication. The volunteers struggled to collect the amount from among themselves, as Rs.40,000 is quite a sum! But the dearth of funds did not dissuade them from going ahead – they had to provide the right treatment for Jai even if it meant hardship for themselves.

The Sai sevaks deposited the required amount at the hospital and the operation commenced. After a grueling seven hours, the doctors emerged from the operation theatre triumphantly. A 3.5 kg tumor was removed from the patient's abdomen to everyone's relief. The hospital managers, witnessing the selfless attitude of the Sai workers, wanted to speak to the Sai Youth. **They were moved by the patient's plight and the enthusiastic youngsters' spirit of sacrifice. They said, "Your dedication and devotion to a fellow human being who is a complete stranger, is so inspiring and worthy of emulation. Allow us to be a part in this mission of selfless seva too. We are waiving Rs 20,000 for any post operative care. And in the future, we will treat any patient that you bring here absolutely free."** Needless to say, the Sevadals were completely taken aback and overcome with joy as they reflected how the fragrance of God's Love affects others with compassion so powerfully.

### **New Lives for the Neglected**

There are other elements of the Narayanas' lives that the spirited Sai youth have been able to improve. Their harsh daily existence requires them to beg - this being the most traditional way of earning their livelihood in a society that does not allow them to work. So, these Narayanas can be seen sitting outside temples, and going from door to door, looking for alms. Unfortunately, during the summer months, Rourkela turns into a blazing oven resembling one of the furnaces at the Rourkela Steel Plant, as even the road asphalt melts in the scorching sun! No one dares even to venture out in these blistering months, except those forced to beg to survive. Risking sun stroke the Narayanas used to start out no matter what the temperature, for they had no choice – the only alternative being to starve to death.

This was their terrible situation till the Sai Samithi came to their rescue with an initiative called 'Amrutha Kalash' – 'Pot of Nectar'. **Every Sai family now saves a fistful of rice on a daily basis. When the lady of the house prepares food for her family, a part of the rice grains are kept aside to be given in alms while chanting 'Sairam'. When the blistering summer months set in, the Samithi collects all the set aside rice and other food grains from all the devotee homes and distributes these as two month's rations for each of the colonies. For the family, it may be a small act, but for the Narayanas it is life-saving in every way.**

### **Elevating Love...**

On one of the regular visits to the colonies a few devotees observed that the Narayanas have a great deal of difficulty drawing water from the well. Their mutilated fingers and hands were not able to grasp the rope to draw the water. A scarcity of funds did not deter the Sai Organisation from remedying this situation. **Twenty days after the idea surfaced, a water project for the colony was born, when an electric pump was fitted to pump the water to an overhead tank. Now the Narayanas easily procure clean and pure drinking water by a simple turn of the tap, which is, after all their right.**

Sarita Maa, a 72 year old lady, smiled joyfully when after veda chanting and bhajans, the project was inaugurated with a gush of fresh water flowing down into an earthen pot. She carried the pot of water to the temple and asked the priest to perform *abhisekham* (worship) for her "Sai" first, then and there. One could not help but be reminded of Sabari's devotion to Lord Rama, from the grand epic, Ramayana.

### **From Lepers to Luminaries of Love**

The children of Naya bazaar colony are now in their Bal Vikas Group 3 classes. These children chant the Vedic hymns "Rudram" and "Chamakam" with right intonations. They are encouraged to continue and complete their studies in the local school provided to them by the government and a few bright and deserving students' fees are also sponsored by the Samithi so that they can complete their graduation.

Although their living conditions and physical appearance is heart-breaking, their faith in God is now exemplary and their spirit is soaring.

Who, but only an embodiment of Pure Love, can inspire such incredibly inspiring acts and make divine beings out of ordinary mortals. Let us make our lives a saga of Pure Love just like His - and like St. Francis of Assisi, who was also moved by God to care for such suffering Narayanas, pray:

*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.  
O Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.*

## **SAI MEDICAL CAMPS IN MALAWI – MAGNIFICENT AND MOVING**

***What does an impoverished African nation struggling to improve the standard of living of its people, plagued with a full-blown AIDS epidemic, abject poverty and a pervading sense of hopelessness, have to do with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba of India? He has neither forgotten them nor failed to deliver divine comfort, medical care and a sense of hope.***

Even as world bodies and international aid agencies debate policies and budgets, for many in Malawi, the name of Bhagavan Baba stands for selfless service and divine compassion that comes to their doorstep. They know Him as someone who sends His angels to infuse hope in their lives and relieve them of their agony.

Maintaining His outward distance from the drama of humanity's foibles where some nations are reeling from the giddy heights of wealth and prosperity while others are sadly languishing in disease, ignorance and poverty, Bhagavan Baba continues to silently propel His devotees in every nook and cranny of the globe to live in His image, as exemplars of His message, practicing love, sacrifice and purity, just as He has for the past eight decades. His divine gaze misses no detail of suffering and pain and His compassion reaches out to millions around the globe, right where they live, be it in Fiji or Africa, Latin America or the Middle-East.

### **Sai Movement in Malawi – Small yet Solid**

The story of the Sai movement in Malawi is a story of the power of pure intent and its potency to make a discernible difference. The Sai movement in Malawi consists of a small, yet strong and committed group of men and women, a group that has come under Sri Sathya Sai's spiritual guidance. Inspired by His teachings and driven by a desire to translate them into action, they have surged ahead to deliver the desperately needed services in local communities, in the form of medical care, completely free of cost and without any hidden agendas.

**"Fulfillment lies in dedicating whatever talent a person has, to serve the rest of humanity, indeed all living beings. Service to man will help your divinity to blossom, for it will gladden your heart and make you feel that life has been worthwhile. Service to man is service to God, for He is in every man, and every living being, in every stone and stump. Offer your talents at the feet of God by serving others with love," says Bhagavan Baba.**

### **Malawi – Attractive and Agonising**

Located in Eastern Africa, Malawi is among the most beautiful countries of the continent. Popularly known as the 'Warm Heart of Africa', it is surrounded by Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. Lake Malawi, formerly Lake Nyasa, occupies most of the country's eastern border. The north-south Rift

Valley is flanked by mountain ranges and high plateau areas. It is a place of great scenic beauty. Lilongwe is the capital of Malawi and Blantyre is the commercial capital. **Most Malawians rely on subsistence farming, but the food supply situation is precarious and the country is prone to natural disasters of both extremes - from drought to heavy rainfalls - putting it in constant need of thousands of tonnes of food aid every year. More than half the population lives below the poverty line.**

**Tens of thousands of Malawians die of AIDS every year. Malawi is rated as one of the poorest countries in the world. There are good hospitals in the country but they face an acute shortage of doctors of various specialization. Medical equipment and supplies are also in short supply.** Against such a dismal background, for several years now, the Sai Organization of Malawi has been playing a pivotal role in bringing medical relief to the local population and much of its success is due to the strong support it has enjoyed from the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Service Organization of the United Kingdom. As you read further, you will see how Bhagavan Baba, the single unifying force, is binding varied groups of inspired individuals from different continents, to make the earth a better place for all of us.

### **The Sai Organisation in Malawi Blossoms**

The Sri Sathya Sai Service Organization of Malawi is relatively young as it was formally formed in 2001. Prior to this, since 1980 devotees used to get together every Thursday and hold bhajans at each other's homes. Later on, the spiritual sessions began to be conducted at the Hindu temple. Study circles were also held and a review and discussion of Bhagavan Baba's gospel inspired the group to translate His divine words into action by engaging in service activities. In a country that is one of the world's HIV hotbeds with high AIDS infection rates, the need for providing medical care, comfort and aid was paramount.

### **The Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins with a Single Step**

With the help of the Malawi Blood Transfusion Centre (MBTS), the Sai group started organizing regular blood donation camps which were held every three months. In 2002, the MBTS was a newly incorporated agency in Malawi. Funded by the European Union, it is the first one of its kind in Malawi. It provides blood testing and other blood-related services.

**Thanks to the dedication, devotion and sense of discipline displayed by the band of Sai volunteers, the blood camps held by the Sai Service Organization have now become a regular project. Various hospitals rely on them for a consistent and dependable supply of blood. Group members are also listed on an emergency data base.**

Gaining confidence and experience from the highly successful blood donation camps, the Sai Organization inched further to serve at local hospitals by providing nutritious food for the patients.



## **Serving God in the Ailing**

The typical diet of the Malawians is Ufa, which is white maize flour cooked like a paste called 'Nshima'. This thick starchy porridge made from corn or cassava is accompanied by some curry or relish. From a nutritionist's point of view, this food is low in calcium, nutrition, iron and vitamins content. Hence malnutrition among patients is an added concern.

The paediatric ward, of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital – the largest Government-run hospital which was in dire straits, was chosen for service on the last Saturday of every month.

Serving hands-on, the volunteers noticed the disturbing lack of hygiene in the wards which was further aggravating the condition of the patients with already depressed immune systems. In some facilities, the absence of even the basic medical supplies and equipment led to severe complications that could have easily been avoided.

The painful scenario of deprivation, disease and poor medical conditions led the Sai group to explore an option where they could provide top class medical services to the Malawians in a controlled environment, with adequate medical supplies and equipment and a reduced risk of infections caused by poor hygiene.

## **His Love in Flow - Easter 2004 Marks First Medical Camp**

In April 2004, the Sai Organisation of Malawi urged Dr. Upadhyay from the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Service Organization of the United Kingdom to organize a medical camp by bringing in doctors from various fields of medicine so that the ailing and economically disadvantaged Malawians could benefit.

**During the holy weekend of Easter 2004, as though to emulate the example of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, a team of 28 doctors and volunteers came all the way from the United Kingdom and conducted the very first eye-care camp at Chikwawa, south of the city of Blantyre. This was a fantastic camp where more than 5,000 patients were treated for visual impairment.**

The milestone effort began with a widespread publicity campaign aimed at informing the local population about the camp. Vehicles were sent out into the targeted geographical areas to transport the patients, especially those who were partially or fully blind due to mature cataracts.

Designated personnel screened and directed patients to appropriate doctors. Medical treatment was provided by the British team in an organized and efficient manner. Surgeries were performed under sterile conditions.

The blessed patients, who were actually seeing the world after long spells in some instances, could not believe their eyes when they were given glasses – both sunglasses for post-cataract surgery care as well as reading glasses,

entirely free of cost. An adequate supply of medicines brought all the way from the UK was also given to every patient at no cost.

**At the end of the 5 days, many wounds and burns were healed. The local people were dancing with joy when after years they could see clearly, thanks to the cataract operations performed by the UK team. Till then, many had resigned to the thought of living the rest of their lives with full or partial visual impairment.**

### **‘Sai Eye Camps’ Pan-Africa – Celebrating Baba’s 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

Soon, all the Sai Centres in Africa decided to conduct cataract operations to honour Baba’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Two local eye specialists, Dr. Msukwa and Dr. Kaluwa, who had helped the Sai organization with the camp in 2004, came forward once again to help in this noble cause.

**From July 2005 to November 2005, five eye camps were held to cover as many southern Malawian areas as possible. About 518 people benefited from this effort. A special case was a man unable to see for 36 years because of a mature cataract, who had his eyesight restored. He could not believe what had happened to him and called it a ‘miracle’. These camps proved to be very successful in all respects.**

### **Medical Camp at Chiradzulu Hospital: 9-14 September, 2007**

By the beginning of 2007, the Sri Sathya Sai Organization had gathered enough experience, confidence and momentum to aspire for more effective opportunities to serve. They hoped to hold a large medical camp that would deliver relief and treatment to a significant number of suffering Malawians. The challenge was to bring together doctors of international caliber from a variety of specializations along with nurses, pharmacists and volunteers, a sizeable array of medical equipment and medical supplies and dispense pain relief, medical attention, diagnosis, surgeries and end or reduce the suffering of the local population. **In Malawi, the AIDS scourge has cut life expectancy to a shocking 36 years, and an estimated 900,000 people are infected with HIV. According to the Department of Health, 50,000 to 70,000 people die each year from AIDS-related ailments.**

### **Sai Medical Volunteers Surging Ahead**

Seeking divine guidance from Baba, the devotees once again called upon Dr. Surendra Kumar Upadhyay, of the United Kingdom, to organize a team of doctors for a week long medical camp. Once Dr. Upadhyay’s team committed to travel from the United Kingdom and participate in the medical camp, the Sai Organization of Malawi prepared a public information campaign and spread the word about the camp and its services using print media and radio broadcasts. **The need for medical aid was so great that the local population responded with gusto. Over 6,000 patients poured into the week-long camp.**

Coming from places far and wide, patients sought relief from a variety of ailments including ring worms, viral flu, pneumonia, severe chicken pox, cataracts, cancers, tumors, hearing problems among a fairly young generation, malaria, cerebral malaria, gynaecological problems...you name it and the patients had it.

Sadly, every year, about 60,000 AIDS-afflicted children are orphaned in Malawi. Not surprisingly, some conditions among the children were acute and highly disturbing. This included a condition generally observed in abused children and described in medical parlance as 'frozen watchfulness'. It is characterized by children's facial expressions of never smiling, appearing unhappy or scared.

Given the ghastly drama of life and death that has been played out before their very eyes and the emotional trauma they have suffered due to it, many Malawian children appear to be in the state of 'frozen watchfulness' all the time. They have suffered neglect at the hands of an uncaring society and humanity at large that has no time to pause and cast a look of concern at their plight.

**The vicious cycle of pain, disease, death, illiteracy and extreme poverty has robbed the children of Malawi of any reason to smile. Yet all that changed suddenly when several thousand of them found their way to the Sai medical camp where they were received by the Sai devotees lovingly, into a warm embrace.**

The Sri Sathya Sai Baba Service Organization of Malawi held the medical camp at Chiradzulu which is 25 kilometres from the city of Blantyre. It was officially inaugurated by the Honourable Mr. Henry Mussa, the Member of Parliament of Chiradzulu East and also the Minister for Transport in the Government of Malawi. It was served by a team of dedicated, caring and loving medical professionals who included Ophthalmologists, General Practitioners, Paediatricians, General Surgeons, Anaestheticians, ENT surgeons, Pharmacists, a Dental Surgeon, a Microbiologist, a nurse and volunteers who all flew down from United Kingdom to spend days in selfless service with the love of Sai in their hearts.

Thirty-six members of the UK team joined hands with the local Sai organization volunteers at the base of the camp held at the Chiradzulu District Hospital. The whole team was housed at Amitofo Care Centre which nearby has a beautiful Buddhist temple in Mapanga. The Amitofo Care Centre has an orphanage that houses children orphaned mainly because of parents who died of AIDS.

Interestingly, the Amitofo Care Centre is funded by the Taiwanese Government. Malawi is one of only six African countries to maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan rather than China. In an effort to help rein in the AIDS epidemic in its African ally Malawi, Taiwan has offered free anti-retroviral therapy to benefit over 1200 Malawians living with HIV to date.

Since 1998, Taiwan has helped set up a hospital in Mzuzu in northern Malawi, the main stopover town in the north of the African country of 12 million people. In June 2006, the Department of Health (DOH) also established a clinic in the Mzuzu Central Hospital and started delivering free anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) to Malawians afflicted by HIV. Since these mobile clinics are already in the north of Malawi, the Sai Organization decided to concentrate its efforts in the southern part of Malawi where the need is the greatest.

### **Care for Children Comes First**

The Sai Medical camp started on September 9 at Amitifo Care Centre where the orphans were checked by the team of doctors. There are 218 children in this orphanage with children ranging from 2 ½ years to 15 years of age. The group held Thursday prayers at Amitifo Buddhist temple, joined by the orphans who started the session with Buddhist chantings, followed by Sai bhajans. The whole atmosphere had beautiful vibrations and it felt simply divine to all present. The name of the one God was chanted in different languages, through the medium of various faiths, in the true spirit of the Sai organization that believes that "There is only one religion, the Religion of Love."

Fifteen nurses were hired from the Nursing School of Malawi to translate all communication between patients and doctors. Every department ran a full day of consultation, diagnostics, surgeries and treatment.

### **Helping Eyes to See Again**

At the Ophthalmology department, Dr. Msukwa and Dr. Upadhyay treated the patients and conducted 41 cataract operations. Everyone received sunglasses, reading glasses and a month's supply of eye drops and necessary medicines for post-operative care. In total, over 1,000 pairs of reading glasses were distributed during the camp and 250 cases of special made-to-measure glasses were also handed out. The patients were, undoubtedly, happy to receive the glasses and could not believe that they were dispensed for free. They were overwhelmed by the kind of treatment and said they had never seen so much love before. Baba's compassion and concern touched them all deeply.

**Some of the older ladies wanted to express their heartfelt thanks to the doctors who performed their cataract operations and restored their vision. When they were all set to leave for their respective villages, they spontaneously broke out into a dance and sang to them out of joy, proving that at times such as these, music and dance express inner joy way louder than even words!**

General cases that received attention included instances of viral flu, pneumonia, severe chicken pox, HIV, and a lot of other problems. Medication was given to the patients. There were 15 special cases treated with Thermal Imaging for pain relief during this camp.

## After Care Support

In a touching gesture to provide totally professional and loving care to the patients, a member of the UK medical team, Dr. Dhiru Mistry stayed back after the camp for follow-up cases. Speaking of his experience at the camp he said:

“The camp has been a great success. As per Swami’s personal example, we served the poor and the needy at a level He wants us to do.

There are many organizations in the world that are doing great work. **What makes us different is that we have been inspired by our Lord to serve with unconditional, non-judgmental love, and not to seek any rewards, remuneration or gratitude for the effort. In the end, serving with such an attitude of humility where we see ourselves as His instruments makes a great difference in the way the service is rendered. Every action, word and motive is filtered through the Sai lens which is all about heartfelt and pure love.** I feel so privileged to be associated with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s mission... He has given us so many quotes, that sound catchy and simple enough to understand, but when one studies the quotes closely, dissects them and reflect on their details, I mean finer details, there is more to it than saying rhyming words such as “Help Ever Hurt Never” or “Love All Serve All” and “Hands That Serve Are Holier Than The Lips That Pray.”

“As far as I am concerned I can only make a small contribution, I cannot cure things, but what I can give with His grace is love and support and pray that things improve. It is very sad to see children die in the wards and patients suffering without any counseling.”

## The Anxiety of AIDS

Describing the typical scenario at the camp, Ms. Jaishri Mistry, another volunteer from the UK, observes,

“Throughout the day, patients continued to pour in. One in five women had high blood pressure. Due to widespread AIDS the average life span for men is about 37 years of age. Women are left to look after the children. There are many elderly men and women and hardly any young men. The country teaches and educates everyone on HIV/AIDS and this information is constantly advertised practically everywhere in public places and hospitals. But many people are very ignorant and do not want to have the free test done. Even though, physically the symptoms are all there, i.e. pneumonia, heavy breathing, bones sticking out, loss of weight, etc. You see fear in their faces but you cannot force them to get tested. If detected early, the treatment can be started and they then have a better chance of living and survival rather than ignoring it till it is too late. Many patients are able to lead somewhat normal lives and able to provide for themselves and their children once they are on the medication.” Given the need for creating awareness about the illness and its possible treatment, the camp played a vital role in educating the uninformed Malawians about hope of their survival.

The ENT (Ear, Nose, Throat) department saw cases of ear infections, throat infections, etc. Hearing aids were provided to the patients including younger ones in the age group of 15 to 45 years. Diagnostic procedures such as CT scan, BP scan, x-rays were done in order to arrive at a proper diagnosis. Patients suffering from goitre, cheek cancer, para-pharyngeal abscess, neck lumps, nasal problems, nasal septal deviation were also attended to. Even one case of larynx cancer was seen.

The medical professionals and volunteers in the general surgery division handled 31 operations, mostly hernia related. There was also a case of an acute nasal block which was corrected through surgery.

**A patient named Agnes Sankhani, had a huge tumour the size of a football, surgically removed from her back. After the three hour long operation, she was absolutely fine. So overjoyed she was with the love and dedication of the doctors and volunteers that she choked as she spoke of her experiences. She had never felt such love and care, she said.** Dr. Dhiru Mistry, who stayed back to take care of the follow-up cases removed the stitches from her back. Agnes felt as if an enormous load had been shed off of her back and continues to be greatly relieved by this happy and unforeseen development in her life.

### **Exemplary Care for Children**

Dr. Nadisha, a paediatrician at the camp observed that there were many cases of infectious acute cerebral malaria. HIV related malnourished children were also treated. Mothers with gynaecological problems sought help in droves and considerable education about nutrition was imparted to the patient population. Some of the other health issues that were addressed at the medical camp include undiagnosed paediatric conditions like Hydrocephalus, TB, congenital heart defects, untreated epilepsy, cerebral palsy, etc.

Most of the common paediatric conditions were treated with the available medication. The pharmacy was quite well-equipped and ran efficiently. High calorie supplements were given freely to children suffering from malnutrition.

Another Paediatrician Dr. Nikila Pandya shares an interesting anecdote:

“I saw this patient, a young boy and felt he had not just abscesses on his leg but a deep seated infection in the bone. Yet I had to confirm with an x-ray. I wrote a form and sent him for an x-ray before prescribing the treatment. He came back saying the machine was not working. I was very disappointed because we couldn't start treatment for the problem he was suffering for a long time. The only other option was to refer him to the hospital in Blantyre with a referral letter. I did the same with little hope that this boy will find his way up there. That was the end, I thought. Next morning, during my prayers, I kept thinking of this boy and what would happen to him.....will he go to Blantyre or not?

“Suddenly that afternoon I was busy seeing the patients and had sent another child for x-ray hoping that the machine had been set right and I was still feeling bad for the previous day’s young patient with the leg abscesses. Just then, as I was thinking about him, one of the volunteers enters my room with this boy from the previous day who had been on my mind and in my morning prayers. **He had miraculously come back to see if the machine was working and had the x-ray done and came to see me. We confirmed the diagnosis of bone infection osteomyelitis and started a prolonged course of antibiotics. Someone had heard the silent prayer and answered it for me.....the Lord was listening to my thoughts that morning. He was indeed running the entire camp.**”

The team handling pathology cases dealt with patients who had undiagnosed diabetes, about 8 cases of bilharzias, one case of bilateral axillary abscesses which was later diagnosed as TB. Palm injuries were drained surgically and diagnosed as possible Staphylococcal infection using a microscope.

Microbiologist Dr. Dev Kothari, recalls how happy and grateful the patients were for receiving such high quality and loving medical services. He says: “What really mattered to them was the explanation for their ailments given lovingly. One lady I remember who had severe infection of the palm after a knife injury, joined her hands (after the surgery) to thank me. But I told her to thank the Lord and not me.”

Hundreds of patients had their pus discharging abscesses, injuries including car accidents, burns and other such severe wounds treated and dressed lovingly for the first time in their lives. There was a special case of a lady who came with a match-stick stuck in her ear which was removed with forceps. Then there was another case of Burkitt’s Lymphoma in the eye which had burst and become infected as gas bubbles in the tissue could be seen under the microscope.

### **Swami’s Vibhuti to the Rescue**

**Dr. Hema Patel, from the UK brought a small container of *Vibhuti* (sacred ash) with her which she used on wounds and burns. Miraculously, she has been using this *Vibhuti* ever since and it never runs out. It is quarter full all the time. In her experience, the healing for the patients has been tremendous just with healing power of the holy *Vibhuti*.**

### **Relief from Long Standing Dental Traumas**

The dental team at the camp realized that the local hospital had a very limited teeth extraction facility. The team of Sai volunteer dentists trained the local staff at the hospital how to deal with basic extractions and taught them how to perform procedures such as the root canal, fissure sealants, composites and amalgams. **The necessary composite curing light and amalgamators were brought from the UK and left in the hospital for the Department of Dentistry to carry on using them. Also the medical team left behind**

**enough material for over 500 root fillings and possibly up to 1000 composites in the future.** There were rampant infections involving Herpes Zoster virus and occasional Kaposi's Sarcoma. A few fibromas (benign tumours) were excised with the help of the ENT surgeon also. Over 600 extractions were done and over 50 fillings were carried out within the first 5 days.

The dentist from the local Chiradzulu hospital was really grateful for all that he had learnt from the UK doctors and the equipment and materials that he had received to keep for continued use. Educating the local medical teams and volunteers about the latest medical procedures was an added bonus of the camp. Even the dedication and love experienced by the patients and local Malawians had a lasting effect on them.

The camp witnessed unparalleled dedication and professionalism from the team of five pharmacists and three assistants who dispensed over 24,000 items of medication to over 6,000 patients within the 5 days of the camp.

Most of the medicines used and dispensed during the camp were brought from the UK. Many medicines were donated by local well-wishers. Some medicines were brought from pharmaceutical companies as well. Apart from the doctors from the UK, a local doctor also helped the pharmacy team.

Great care was taken to ensure all the dosages were checked properly and interpreters were used to make a patient understand the exact dosage and how to have it.

All the patients who came to the camp were fed the local food - UFA, vegetable curry and dal or lentils. On Thursday they were also treated to sweet rice. The post-operated patients were given porridge. The patients were overjoyed when they were served rice which is considered a local delicacy.

The colossal success of this first-of-its kind medical camp was due only because of the divine energy of Bhagavan Baba permeating its every aspect. His presence came through loud and clear in the love and dedication demonstrated by the very sincere doctors as they approached patient after patient smilingly, never running out of patience. Indeed it was their warmth and friendliness for each patient, their genuine sense of concern and the assuring tone of their voice that drew patients in huge numbers every single day. The very fact that they were attended to with such consideration and grace assured them that they were in safe hands.

### **“Everyone was talking with love” - Joseph Judge Phiri**

Joseph Judge Phiri came to the camp for a general health check up and said, "I can't go to any doctors because I cannot afford them and also I'm not sure whether I will get the right treatment. I heard through word of mouth that in this camp, the patients are served with love, and hence I came to have a check up. I was diagnosed with high blood pressure and blood sugar. The most overwhelming part of the whole camp was the way everyone was talking



with love and respect to all the patients. I'm very happy with the service which was rendered here in the camp. The doctors are really nice." As he was saying this, he was choked with emotion and couldn't say anything further.

### **Getting 'Real' Medicines**

Another patient John James Bigula had been complaining of chest pain before he came to the camp. He said, "I'm very happy with the doctor who attended to me. **All the villagers of Maltope village in the Chiradzulu district were saying that the doctors are giving 'real' medicines.** At that moment of the day, I was worried about my chest pain which was severe. At the camp, the doctor did a thorough check up and found a problem with my leg which I had not disclosed to the doctor. I was impressed with the treatment and also with the diagnosis."

### **Infusing Hope and Love in HIV Infected**

Says Loveness, also a patient who came for treatment, **"The whole village was talking about the people who were treated for HIV. The medicines which were given to them were taken by the patients and they are feeling better now. It actually works!"**

When the patients came for treatment, there was not even a smile on their faces. This is a typical expression of an average Malawian, struggling to get through life, one day at a time. When they were treated by the doctors and were about to leave, they felt so tongue-tied and that they could not express anything by way of words. The experience moved them so deeply that some cried, others thanked the doctors with gestures and the yet others simply broke into a dance to communicate their joy.

The children who came to the paediatric ward were kept entertained with face painting and balloons blown to various animal shapes. Toffees and biscuits were also distributed to the young patients. All patients were provided soft drinks and water since they had come from far off places and stood in the queue for a long time, patiently waiting for their turn.

### **Praise from a Malawian Government Representative**

**Honourable Mr. Henry Mussa, the Member of Parliament of Chiradzulu East and also the Minister for Transport in the Government of Malawi thanked the Sri Sathya Sai Organization profusely for arranging such a generous and caring medical camp. He said, "People of this district are very poor. I thank Sri Sathya Sai Organization for organizing a camp in this area. All the people here need a lot of medical attention." While addressing the crowd, he urged the people to make the best use of the doctors who had come from UK and were distributing free glasses and medicines.** The purity of intent and the nobility of the effort at this camp were hard to ignore. Many individuals and groups, regardless of whether they knew who Sri Sathya Sai Baba is, felt drawn to do whatever they could to support the initiative. This included Malawians of various faiths such as

Muslims, Christians and Hindus who offered their services at the camp and brought food for the doctors as a spontaneous gesture of their love. It served to unite many divergent groups - the patients, the local politicians, medical practitioners (both British and local), pharmacists, nurses, volunteers and the local population.

The medical team that had come all the way from the UK to share their professional expertise and their love for Bhagavan Baba's teachings, displayed amazing humility by adapting graciously to the local conditions.

### **He Loves and Shines Through All**

The volunteers' only mantra through the camp was to allow their love for Bhagavan Baba to gush forth in their interactions with each ailing embodiment of His divinity in Malawi. As Dr. Dhiru Mistry rightly pointed out, it is one thing to intellectually process Bhagavan Baba's catchy teachings such as "Love all, serve all" and quite another to put them into practice. The camp provided all those who served there the rare chance to actually walk the talk, for the love of Sai.

Their participation and concern for the plight of Malawians whom the world seems to have forgotten, reminded the team that each person is a cell in the organic body of society. Unless each cell is well, the whole cannot be healthy. If we must live in the awareness of God's omnipresence in everyone and everything around us, then we cannot conveniently blind ourselves to the pain and sorrow of our fellow beings and limit our vision only towards self-aggrandizement.

The single and most valuable take-away from the experience for all parties concerned was how easily barriers of language, culture and economic status succumb to the power of divine love. Bhagavan Baba's example and gospel of loving service to fellow beings has repeatedly proven to be the foolproof solution to the deadly threats of disease, greed and hatred facing humanity, our planet and eco-system. Explaining how the power of love is at once so simple and strong, Baba says:

*"Every blood cell, every nerve, must tingle with love, with eagerness to share that love with the forlorn. When love has filled the heart, it has really been transformed into Divinity, for, God is love and love is God... Love the world as the vesture of God, no more, no less. Through love, you can merge in the ocean of love. Love cures pettiness, hate and grief. Love loosens bonds; It saves man from torment of birth and death. Love binds all hearts in a soft silken symphony. Seen through the eyes of love, all beings are beautiful, all deeds are dedicated, and all thoughts are innocent. The world is one vast kin."*

**- Heart2Heart Team**

## PRASHANTI DIARY

### **1 October, 2007 – Special Darshan for Gujarat Devotees**

The evening of 1 October turned out to be one of those longer ones. In the morning Swami had not granted darshan. In the evening too, the clock struck five and the singers struck the harmonious note of the *Pranava* "Om". There was no sign of Swami. A huge crowd of devotees from the western state of Gujarat had arrived. The thirst for darshan could be felt even on the cool floors of Kulwant hall.

There was an audible gasp of joy and relief as Swami came out at about 5:05 pm. But Swami was in the car and the windows too were raised! They say that a drowning man grasps at even a straw floating on the water. Everyone craned their necks and stretched themselves to catch a glimpse of Swami. They say that familiarity breeds contempt. But with Swami this is absolutely false. Each time we see Him, a mere awareness at what we are beholding raises goose bumps on the skin. **As He has said, "My moving amidst you is a boon that the Gods of the highest heavens crave for."**

However, Swami took a detour after the ladies side and headed towards the interview room. There was applause as Swami descended from the car. He chose to come out and there were smiles and even a kind of joyful laughter. Water seemed to sprinkle on the parched hearts and people in their excitement to receive the showers of grace, got up in their places. Bhajans went on as Swami came and occupied the centre stage. Swami sat there filling their hearts with His divine darshan as bhajans continued. Four, five, six, seven bhajans went on. Swami suddenly turned and said something. Everyone thought that He was going into the bhajan hall. But He moved in the opposite direction. Moving along the teachers' block, He descended the slope towards the old-students' region. He moved slowly amidst the crowds.

And then, the Ganges seemed to gush and flood the moistened hearts of all the devotees. There was such joy that discipline took a backseat as it allowed devotion to become the driver. Especially the devotees from Gujarat almost formed a wall so that all could see Swami and Swami could see all. Swami went along the lines collecting letters, speaking and granting *padanamaskar*. He then moved amidst the students. He took a turn around the marble block where the students were seated and went around satisfying all as He passed by. He blessed a new CD that the vedam group had released. He blessed the birthday boys and many took the opportunity to touch His feet. Swami then went into the bhajan hall from the rear door. He granted close darshan to all assembled in the bhajan hall too. Aarthi was offered at 6:05 pm and Swami then retired.

### **2 October, 2007 – Cultural Programme by Gujarat Youth**

2 October, 2007 marked the 138th birth anniversary of the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi. And so it was no surprise when Swami blessed the youth from the state of Gujarat (the state in which Mahatma Gandhi was born) to put

up a programme in the evening in His Divine presence. The backdrop was put up and the stage was set from 2:30 pm itself.

Swami came out for darshan at about 4:20 pm. He went around the darshan rounds and then after a brief halt in the interview room, came straight to the stage and blessed the programme to begin. The programme was very simple but very nicely portrayed. It was actually adopted from a popular email forward. The story opens in a classroom in which the conversation between a professor and student runs as follows.

*Prof:* So you believe in God?

*Student:* Absolutely, Sir.

*Prof:* Is God good?

*Student:* Sure.

*Prof:* Is God all-powerful?

*Student:* Yes.

*Prof:* My brother died of cancer even though he prayed to God to heal him. Most of us would attempt to help others who are ill. But God didn't. How is this God good then? Hmm?

*Student is silent.*

*Prof:* You can't answer, can you?

Let's start again, young fellow. Is God good?

*Student:* Yes.

*Prof:* Is Satan good?

*Student:* No.

*Prof:* Where does Satan come from?

*Student:* From...God...

*Prof:* That's right. Tell me son, is there evil in this world?

*Student:* Yes.

*Prof:* Evil is everywhere, isn't it? And God did make everything. Correct?

*Student:* Yes.

*Prof:* So who created evil?

*Student does not answer.*

*Prof:* Is there sickness? Immorality? Hatred? Ugliness? All these terrible things exist in the world, don't they?

*Student:* Yes, sir.

*Prof:* So, who created them?

*Student has no answer.*

*Prof:* Science says you have 5 senses you use to identify and observe the world around you. Tell me, son, have you ever seen God?

*Student:* No, sir.

*Prof:* Tell us if you have ever heard your God?

*Student:* No, sir.

*Prof:* Have you ever felt your God, tasted your God, smelt your God? Have you ever had any sensory perception of God for that matter?

*Student:* No, sir. I'm afraid I haven't.

*Prof:* Yet you still believe in Him?

*Student:* Yes.

*Prof:* According to empirical, testable, demonstrable protocol, science says your God doesn't exist. What do you say to that, son?

*Student:* Nothing. I only have my faith.

*Prof:* Yes, Faith. And that is the problem science has.

*Now the student said* Can I ask something to you Professor.

*Student:* Professor, is there such a thing as heat?

*Prof:* Yes.

*Student:* And is there such a thing as cold?

*Prof:* Yes.

*Student:* No sir. There isn't.

*(The lecture theatre becomes very quiet with this turn of events.)*

*Student:* Sir, you can have lots of heat, even more heat, superheat, mega heat, white heat, a little heat or no heat. But we don't have anything called cold. We can hit 458 degrees below zero which is no heat, but we can't go any further after that. There is no such thing as cold. Cold is only a word we use to describe the absence of heat. We cannot measure cold. Heat is energy. Cold is not the opposite of heat, Sir, just the absence of it.

*(There is pin-drop silence in the lecture theatre.)*

*Student:* What about darkness, Professor? Is there such a thing as darkness?

*Prof:* Yes. What is night if there isn't darkness?

*Student:* You're wrong again, Sir. Darkness is the absence of something. You can have low light, normal light, bright light, flashing light... But if you have no light constantly, you have nothing and its called darkness, isn't it? In reality, darkness isn't. If it were, you would be able to make darkness darker, wouldn't you?

*Prof:* So what is the point you are making, young man?

*Student:* Sir, my point is your philosophical premise is flawed.

*Prof:* Flawed? Can you explain how?

*Student:* Sir, you are working on the premise of duality. You argue there is life and then there is death, a good God and a bad God. You are viewing the concept of God as something finite, something we can measure. Sir, science can't even explain a thought. It uses electricity and magnetism, but has never seen, much less fully understood either one. To view death as the opposite of life is to be ignorant of the fact that death cannot exist as a substantive thing. Death is not the opposite of life: just the absence of it. Now tell me, Professor. Do you teach your students that they evolved from a monkey?

*Prof:* If you are referring to the natural evolutionary process, yes, of course, I do.

*Student:* Have you ever observed evolution with your own eyes, sir?

*(The Professor shakes his head with a smile, beginning to realize where the argument is going.)*

*Student:* Since no one has ever observed the process of evolution at work and cannot even prove that this process is an on-going endeavor, are you not teaching your opinion, sir? Are you not a scientist but a preacher?

*(The class is in uproar.)*

*Student:* Is there anyone in the class who has ever seen the Professor's brain?

*(The class breaks out into laughter.)*

*Student:* Is there anyone here who has ever heard the Professor's brain, felt it, touched or smelt it? No one appears to have done so. So, according to the established rules of empirical, stable, demonstrable protocol, science says that you have no brain, sir. With all due respect, sir, how do we then trust your lectures, sir?

*(The room is silent. The professor stares at the student, his face unfathomable.)*

*Prof:* I guess you'll have to take them on faith, son.

*Student:* That is it sir... The link between man and god is *faith*. That is all that keeps things moving and alive. .

The student then reveals that his conviction is because of his acquaintance with Swami through Bal vikas and Seva Dal programmes. The Professor is impressed and he too expresses his desire to see Swami.

Swami was very pleased with the programme. He created a ring for the student and a chain for the professor! Then He gifted each and every

participant with white cloth pieces. He called all the youth members and spoke with some of them.

Still not satisfied, He went down to pose with them for group photos. After immersing everyone in the bliss of His love, Swami asked the youth members to sing bhajans for Him. Needless to say the bhajans were full of vigour and vitality. After a few bhajans, Swami received Aarthi and left for His residence.

#### **4 October, 2007 – The Vishwa Rupa Darshan Day**

Swami came out for darshan at 5:05 pm in the evening of October 4. The bhajans had begun and Swami went straight into the bhajan hall at the end of His darshan rounds. Swami sat for the bhajans till about 5:35 pm. He appeared to be very radiant, yet had an emotional air about Him. Every bhajan seemed to touch Him and as He sat, He kept looking all around. It was as if He wanted His gaze to fall on everyone present in the hall. As the bhajans were going on, Swami called the secretary of the Central Trust, Sri Chakravarthi, and spoke to him. The bhajan group dimmed the volume of singing and accompaniment as the conversation turned out to be a long drawn one. The conversation lasted for one whole bhajan. Then Swami smiled and continued looking at everyone. At 5:35 pm, Swami went into the interview room. He came out at about 6:00 pm and immediately asked for Aarthi. However, during the Aarthi, Swami came into the bhajan hall. He sat till the final *Loka Samastha* was sung. Then, calling Prof. Anil Kumar, He had the following announcement made.

***"Today is a very auspicious day. From this moment on till 7:00pm, in the direction of the airport, one can have the Vishwa Viraata Swaroopa Darshan. It can be seen by people - irrespective of their nationality, colour, caste."***

A wide array of emotions passed over people's faces as they heard the announcement. Swami seemed to be the only non-confused soul in the whole assembly. A rare wave of chatter and excited talk broke out in the bhajan hall and Swami left with a satisfied and loving look. The whole of Parthi and the neighbouring villages too seemed to get galvanised. All roads seemed to be leading towards the airport. The auto rickshaw stand emptied in no time and taxis were all full. All vehicles - motor and non-motor- headed towards the airport and well, only one who was at the scene knows the euphoric impact it had on all. Parthi must never have seen such a motorcade in its brief yet vibrant history.

To add to this, at about 6:30 pm, Swami's Porte too headed towards the airport. The ashram wore a deserted look as all its inhabitants moved towards the airport. The main road was clogged with vehicles and it resembled a one way. No vehicle seemed to be headed towards Parthi and all faced the South-Westerly direction towards the airport. Parking space was a problem, but the devotees went in the vehicles as far as they could. Then jettisoning the vehicles, they proceeded on foot to the precincts of the airport. Swami's car

was parked in the centre of the runway just opposite the terminal building.

Swami's car was naturally the focus of people's attention and the locus of the mammoth crowd. In a matter of 20 minutes, more than 10,000 people had assembled in the airport. It was completely dark and the only lights were from the tail lamps and head lights of Swami's Porte. Of course there were occasional flashes from cameras and the small screen lights of mobile phones. Chants of Sai Gayathri rent the air almost everywhere. Near the car, it gave way to frenzied shouts of "Bolo Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Ki... Jai ". Swami sat in the car just staring ahead. He seemed to be waiting for something. People were in a devotional fervour and if the runway could be replaced by a river, the scene would have reflected the Maha Kumbh Mela.

All of a sudden, Swami's car that was dark, lit up as the interior lights were switched on. There was a mighty applause and everyone's faces too seem to be lit up by virtue of the light being put on in the car. The crowd was now on its feet and the security cordon around Swami's car was now almost non-existent. People were so charged and they wanted to catch just a glimpse of their beloved Lord. There were discussions of requesting Swami to return to the Mandir as the crowd was becoming uncontrollable. But then Swami did something that was so natural of Him. He asked for the door to be opened and He seemed to be too keen to get out of the car and be amidst His devotees. The door opened and the chair started to move. But then there was a sudden onrush of devotees. In the darkness of the early night, the whole scene appeared like the " Kanyakumari-pearl necklace" episode - only that it was now waves of devotees trying to offer their garland of Love, Devotion and Gratitude. The crowds were literally surging and people near the car requested Swami to return into the car. There were repeated pleas to the devotees to be calm and seated but they seemed to hear none of it. A kind of mob mentality set in and indiscipline was in display too. Swami still wanted to get out of the car and be in the midst of devotees. But the raging waves of devotees seemed to make that move physically impossible. They were almost squeezed flat on the sides of the car and it was physically impossible for Swami even to come out. For once it seemed that God was proposing which man was disposing!

The car now started and waded its way amidst the crowd and parked in another spot. Somehow, Swami wanted to be on the tarmac in the airport and it was purely His will that the car was still there. Such a scene had never been seen and even today it was not being seen (!), for along with the devotees, darkness enveloped the whole airport runway. The chants grew louder and now people did not know what was happening. Swami was the only calm figure in the entire assembly. He got the car parked at a little distance away from the runway and then the same story was enacted. Swami wanted to come out of the car but it was physically impossible with the crowds swarming around the car. Meanwhile, the whole of Prashanti Nilayam was literally empty. It was reminiscent of how the gopikas would rush to Krishna, leaving their houses unlocked, forgetting whatever they were doing. Swami for the third time got the car parked at another spot. Again the same story – He was not able to come out.



From a distance, even in the darkness, the scene was awe inspiring, to say the least. There were at least 12,000 people and the vast assembly brought to the mind images of the vedic chant "*Sahasra Shirsha Purusha*". In a way, though Swami was not being "allowed" to do what He wanted to by the crowds - the crowds themselves seemed to symbolise the cosmic form. Often Swami says that when it is said that the Lord has a thousand eyes and ears, He is not a funny looking being. It is symbolic of Him pervading every being in the Universe. From a distance, this aspect became very clear. Moreover, the media picked up on some wild rumours which had no substantiation. The beauty of Swami's actions is that everyone benefits out of it. Whatever be anybody's motive, His motive is only the welfare and happiness around. He has not caused pain to one little thing in His whole life and led every moment of it for others. He does not care for the "taints" and "extolling" that the world may shower on Him. The Truth needs no verification nor does it change, whether a majority accepts it or rejects it.

At about 7:45 pm, Swami's car started to head out of the airport. But the roads were all blocked. Even Swami needed half an hour to travel the 8 kilometres to the Mandir. He reached Yajur mandir only at 8:30 pm and retired only by 10:00 pm.

Whoever may say anything, in matters of spirituality, it is only the experience of the heart that counts. And it is faith alone that leads to the experience. Once man told God, "Why don't you reveal yourself to the world? Everyone can benefit." God replied, "I would love to do so. But tell me how should I do that?"

"Why don't you do a miracle? A miracle that will stun everyone?"

"What sort of miracle do you suggest that I do?"

"Hmm....well let me see. Why don't you turn the whole ocean red?"

"My dear! That will not work."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because sometime back, someone asked me to make it blue. But today, you have scientific explanations for its blue colour!"

God then went on to tell him, "If you don't have faith, every experience seems co- incidental. But with faith, every breath, every heartbeat, every moment becomes a divine experience."

The feelings in everyone who witnessed the divine drama were profound and sublime. The experience, well, can be put off as coincidental and "nothing much", or it can be considered the fruition of the wait of lifetimes. Swami is Truth and Love.

## **7 October, 2007 – Gifting Marble Statues to the Hostel**

The old mandir premises (bhajan hall mandir) had been cleaned and all the things there had been neatly classified and sorted out over the last three days by the students and some staff of the Ashram. There were so many items and Swami had decided to give away many of these treasures. There were beautiful marble statues of Lord Rama, Lakshmana, Mother Seeta and

Hanuman. Swami wanted these to be given to the senior boys' hostel for installation in the shrine.

In the afternoon, eight research scholars had assembled in front of the Yajur Mandir with the statues which were comfortably more than a ton each! The statues had been decked with saree, dhoti and jewels. All waited for Swami to come down, bless and consecrate the statues before the installation in the hostel. Swami came out of Yajur Mandir after the evening bhajan started, about 5.05 pm.

The minute Swami came down, He glanced at the statues and immediately asked, "What is happening here?" The warden of the senior boys' hostel went up to Swami and prayed to Him to bless the statues. Swami immediately came towards the statues. He sat before them and kept looking at their faces. He was so pleased and happy. Now the boys came one by one to Swami and sought His blessings. Swami blessed the silk sarees and robes that then went on to decorate the statues. The statues were also garlanded as Swami looked on. He blessed the coconuts and had the vermilion spot placed on the foreheads of the statues. He asked them, "How do they look?" Pat came the reply, "As beautiful as you, Swami."

After having spent a few minutes gazing at the statues, Swami very unexpectedly posed for a group photo! The boys were all so excited and thrilled at this gesture. They also posed alongside Him. The pictures were taken. Then as Swami was going into the car, the photographer requested Swami to pose alone with the statues. And Swami agreed to do so! A picture was taken and then Swami went to the car to proceed for Darshan. As the car started, Swami blessed everyone with *Abhayahasta* (raised Hand in blessing). In the darshan hall, Swami gave joy to one and all by going around on the wheel-sofa for a round before going into the bhajan hall for bhajans and aarthi.

### **11 October, 2007 – Blessings for Kerala Youth**

There was a build up in the numbers of youth at Prashanti Nilayam on October 11. This time the youth were from 'God's own country', the popular adage that goes with the state of Kerala. Everywhere the eyes traversed, only orange scarves were seen. Though the gathering was so huge, the discipline and silence was commendable. There were also youth sitting in the front on the marble block - a huge gap separated the ladies from the gents. An artiste in Carnatic vocal was due to perform in the divine presence.

Swami arrived at about 4:30 pm. He went around slowly in the car and granted darshan to all. As He descended from the car near the interview room, he called the State President of Kerala and enquired about the details of the evening programme. Then He went into the interview room. When it was 5:00 pm, the regular bhajan time, all were beginning to think that maybe Swami would attend bhajans in the bhajan hall, but Swami came out! As soon as He came to the centre stage, He said that He would like to go down. There were smiles and joyful claps everywhere as the wheel-sofa was brought down

the ramp. With a mischievous smile playing tenderly on His lips, He came along the lines of the youth, down the marble block and He seemed to accept every letter that was presented to Him.

He gave that beautiful opportunity to all the assembled Kerala youth to give vent to their devotion and feelings. If one travels with the sun, one can see the earth brightening up in its wake and the darkness just disappearing. That must be exactly how the students behind Swami's wheel-sofa must have felt when smiles blossomed and remained on the faces of the youth as Swami kept smoothly gliding by. Swami's mere presence has such a calming effect.

Hot heads seem to experience coolness and cold hearts feel warmth! Everyone finds reason and ways to associate with His physical form. For some, it's a touch, while for others it's a smile, while for still others it may even be the Divine neglect that they feel. "Swami knows I am here and so He did not look at me." But everyone feels that whatever Swami did was only with a purpose - never by mistake!

Well there was this student who, it seems, came third in the "lines" that come from hostel. And Swami apparently spoke to the boy who had been fourth in the same "lines" and had not even looked at the third place boy. This boy was in tears at the "grave injustice" that had been meted out to him. He could not believe that God was capable of such "partiality"! But he too felt that, Swami had purposely done it. So you see, every breath He takes, means something to someone, somewhere! And everything is for our own good and growth.

Swami went around the entire gents side and then came back to the centre of the marble block where the youth were seated. He called a lad and began speaking with him. After interacting with him for a while, He waved His palm and brought out a chain. He put it around the lad's neck as everyone applauded in joy. Swami looked up slowly and then if one had a telescope, one could have seen another mischievous smile at the corner of His lips. There was something else in His "mind". He began to come down the marble block once again. And He moved a little towards the ladies side of the youth. Moving along their lines, He suddenly took a turn and came along the students. He accepted the letter from our "third place" student and immediately, tears of sorrow were replaced with tears of joy. Again the boy was crying!

Ah! What was witnessed this day is indeed representative of what Swami has been doing all His life. And yet He carries on tirelessly doing the same, day after day. He went around speaking to some more students. He asked some as to what they planned to do during the winter vacation. He blessed the youth once again on His way back to the stage. By the time He was back on stage it was already 5:30 pm. Swami asked the youth to start bhajans. He sat enjoying the bhajans and in the meanwhile, blessed prasadam to be given to all. At 6:05 pm He received Aarthi and left.

## 15 October, 2007 – Dasara Yagnam Begins

The morning of October 15 was scheduled for the beginning of the week-long Yajna to commemorate the Dasara celebrations. The bhajan hall had been occupied with students in saffron *dhotis* and *anga-vastrams*. There was the resonant sound of vedic chants as the priest conducted special prayers and Poojas. The priests who were to perform the Yajna arrived chanting mantras. Soon, at about 9:10 am, Swami came in the car. He came into the bhajan hall to bless all the priests and the boys who had assembled there.

The head priest went to Swami and after a short conversation, Swami asked for the ceremonial clothes to be presented to the priests. The priests came forward one by one as Swami personally handed to them the silk clothes - dhoti and Angavastram. As soon as they received them, the priests went and changed into the new clothes. They were back in 5 minutes as Swami sat waiting patiently for them. They sat around Swami and began chanting. It was such a beautiful scene and was reminiscent of the Vedic times when disciples sat around the feet of the Sadguru and learnt the ancient lore. Swami at the center of the circle of chants looked so wonderfully Divine and glorious. After the chanting was complete, Swami told all the priests to head to the auditorium and begin the Yajna. He then went into the interview room. The priests left and there was a message for all the boys chanting vedam also to leave.

All the students too left for the auditorium as Swami sat just outside the interview room and watched the procession of the boys. It was only after all the boys left that Swami too left for the auditorium. Inside Poornachandra, everything had been kept meticulously ready and clean for the Yajnam. The flame was kindled in the traditional manner with vigorous stirring of a wooden rod on another wooden base. As the first wisps of smoke emerged, one priest cupped his palms and blew gently to fan it into a flame. The little kindled spark was treated like a tiny baby with all the care and concern. Soon the wisp grew into clouds of smoke and the sacrificial pit burst forth into flames. The orange flames rose higher with each addition of ghee. The two "oranges" on stage were brilliant - symbolic of sacrifice. Seeking Swami's blessings, the Yajnam began. The air was filled with chants and as always the scene filled one with a sense of wonder and awe.

At Swami's corner, the priest was involved in Surya-namaskar (Worship of sun through postures). He started with lighting up the lamp near him and then after a few chants, went up to Swami. He prostrated fully and then as the beginning of his prayers, placed a rose on His feet. Going around Swami, he started his day. The Rudram and Chamakam were continuously chanted as the offerings continued at the yajna flames. Swami sat watching the proceedings till about 11:00 am. At that time, He permitted the boys to leave for Grama Seva. Bowing to Him, the students left for service in Puttaparthi. Swami sat for another 15 minutes and then He too retired.

In the evening, there were two speakers scheduled to deliver talks. Swami came out at 5:15 pm. He was on the wheel-sofa. He went around the ladies

and gents side granting darshan. The gents side was filled up by the sevadal who had just completed their service. As soon as Swami came to the main stage, He asked for the Vedam to stop and then told the Vice Chancellor to introduce the speakers of the evening. The first speaker was Prof G Venkataraman. He spoke very powerfully on how Swami's message alone is the hope for the new world. There seem to be problems everywhere and they are so strongly interconnected that no solution seems comprehensive enough. Swami's message of Love alone is the solution. The second speaker was Prof. Veerabhadraiah. He began with Swami as being close to him as his father. He narrated in flowing Telugu, incidents from the lives of Sai devotees and had the audience paying rapt attention to him.

After the speeches, Swami asked for bhajans to begin. Swami sat for the bhajans keeping beat with His hands. That brought so much enthusiasm among all present. The bhajans were sung with full gusto and swing. After a few bhajans, Swami received Aarthi. As He was leaving, He said, "The bhajans were very good." Smiles blossomed on all the faces!

### **17 October, 2007 – Third day of Dasara Yagnam**

Swami came out at 10:45 am on the morning of October 17 and went straight to the Auditorium where the yajnam was in progress. He then proceeded to the ladies side corner of the stage where the Poojas were on. He sat there witnessing the proceedings. Like bees around a honey laden flower, the priests all began to move to that corner of the stage one by one. Soon, the only people left on the main stage were the veda chanting students! The priests all gathered around Swami's chair and began chanting the concluding hymns of the day. Swami sat listening to that and then received Aarthi and to everyone's surprise, instead of retiring to His residence, left for Sai Kulwant Hall!

In Kulwant Hall, Swami came out and sat in full public view granting darshan to everyone. The Veda chanting students had also reached Kulwant hall in their orange dhotis. Swami told all of them to go into the bhajan hall after a while. Swami too went into the bhajan hall and told the boys to sing Aarthi. He also told the Veda teacher to do Aarthi! By the time He left for the morning, it was 11:20am!

In the evening, He came out at around 4:45 pm. Much to everybody's delight, He came on the wheel sofa and went around both the ladies and gents sides. He came straight on stage and after a few minutes, commanded the Veda chanting to stop. There were two scheduled speakers for the day.

The first speaker was Sri G S Srirangarajan, from the School of Business Management, Accounting and Finance. He spoke on how a grand "Karma Yajna" was also accompanying the "Jnana Yajna" going on in the Poornachandra auditorium. He outlined the essential features for every act to become a Karma Yajna, viz. it should be done as an offering to God, be complete, be without expectation, and so on. The talk was well appreciated.

The next speaker was a student from 2nd year M Sc class, Sri Natesh Shankar Shetty. He spoke on the Motherly Love of Swami. Basing it on the bhajan "Janani Maa", he brought out each of the aspects of Swami portrayed in that bhajan. He concluded by expressing his deepest sense of gratitude to Swami and said it was the best gift Swami could give him as that day was his birthday also. As he concluded and went to Swami, the Lord looked at him and asked (as if He didn't know), "Your birthday?" Then waving His hands He materialised a beautiful ring. Putting it on his finger, He blessed him. Then Swami asked for bhajans to begin. After three bhajans, He received Aarthi and retired for the day at about 6:20 pm.

## **21 October, 2007 – Vijayadasami Day**

The morning of October 21 was the glorious dawn of the Vijayadashami - the grand conclusion of the festival of Dusshera. In the morning, the shutters of the Poornachandra Auditorium were thrown open and people started filling the hall. The priests, after conducting the initial poojas on stage, moved to the bhajan hall in Kulwant Hall. Swami arrived to the bhajan hall directly. He distributed new saffron dhotis to all the priests for the special occasion. He also gifted silver ladles and spoons with which to make the offerings in the sacrificial fire. Then, He gave a bundle in which were packed many materials befitting the yajna and told them to offer it in the fire. All the priests made good of the opportunity to fall at His feet and seek His blessings.

Ah! How blessed indeed are we that God has come to teach us how to Love Him. It does not matter what path we take. It doesn't matter if we are liberal or orthodox. God's love is so pristine and pure. The mother never checks for the language or grammar of the child's cries. The response is immediate and spontaneous. Seeing Swami toiling day in and day out talking and acting out the same lessons again and again only for benefit of mankind is such a touching and humbling experience. God is not bound to anything and yet He takes up on Himself the task of Loving and guiding all. He teaches us the perfect way to make the perfect offering and then as the Yajna Purusha, He Himself accepts the offerings. What a perfect example of "Bhramaarpanam" and then "Aham Vaishvanaro Bhutva." Seeing Swami in action is seeing the scriptures come alive.

The priests then headed to the auditorium. All the people in Kulwant Hall too rushed there. Swami slowly came on stage. He sat for a while in the gents side corner. Then He came right in front of the flames. Ah! What a beautiful sight! One for the Gods to see! The orange of His robe became one with the orange of the flame, symbolic of the Truth that the one offering and the one accepting the offerings are one and the same! The flames rose higher and higher and a gentle smile played on His lips. Ghee was poured in and the bundle that Swami had given was put into the sacred pit. Swami sprinkled holy grains on all the priests and then even blessed them with holy water. The Poornahuti (ceremonial close) then was performed. The head priest and his wife went around the Yajna fire and Swami, the Yajnapurusha.

After that, Swami went to the ladies corner of the stage where the "Sahasra linga" (thousand lingas) had been worshipped throughout the week long Yajna. He blessed it and then showered His benediction on all priests. The aarthi was offered to Him. As the priests then lined up and descended the stage, Swami sat next to His dear students who were chanting the Vedas. He sat on stage for ten more minutes. He spoke to a few students and then retired for the morning.

In the evening, Swami came out on stage after the darshan rounds. There were two speakers scheduled to speak. The first was Sri Ajit Popat and the second was Sri S. V. Giri. After the two elders had spoken, there was a burst of joy as Swami got up and agreed to speak to all. He did not want the discourse table and was very eager to get started. He began to speak even before the mikes were brought! A standing mike was placed before Him and He began. (Given below is a comprehensive summary of what He spoke)

*Vijayadashami is a festive day for all but for a few it is also a very sad day. (Swami at this point was overwhelmed with emotion) That is because, on this day, the old body is given up. But, the body is only physical and is impermanent. Laxmibai came to the previous body (Shirdi Sai) and He materialised two gold coins for her and giving it to her said, "Keep these with you always." (At this point, Swami materialised two gold coins and gave them to the translator.) These coins are made of gold and have that date embossed on them.*

*These are the coins of Sathya and Dharma and they will support and guide everyone. Truth is God. If one follows Dharma with Sathya, all problems will be solved. With Truth in heart and Dharma in hands, march ahead. No other sadhana is needed. If Dharma follows the principle of Sathya, all sins will be gone.*

*"Mamaivamsho Jeeva Loke Jeeva Bhootha Sanatanaha." God is one and everything and everyone are reflections of God. Rama, Krishna, Allah, Jesus - all these are only names of the same God. To know this Truth is more important than doing all sadhana, charity, etc. Follow this Truth and victory is certain. "Ekam Sath Viprah Bahuda Vadanti." The Truth is one alone. All the rest will pass away like clouds. And anything done with the changeless Truth in heart, becomes Dharma.*

*Nowadays, the times are such that we notice a new trend. Boys falling in love with boys and girls falling in love with girls. They live and behave like husband and wives. But how long is this? Maybe one or two years. Later all change. It is only for temporary satisfaction of the senses. When you love anyone, know that you are loving God. But that love is not permanent. It will change. True Love is changeless. The moment body is gone, who is related to whom? The body has senses and it is bound to fall. It is never permanent. But the Dehi, indweller, is permanent. The indweller has no birth or end; no bondage or liberation.*

*This Dehi is Sathya Swaroopa. While leaving the body at Shirdi, Baba said, "Do not take this body as the basis. It will be gone. And then, none should cry. It is but natural that it will perish. Experience it as long as it lasts and then remember, it was only a dream." After Baba left His mortal coil, the body was kept for three days with the hope that He may come back. It was Abdul Khan who reminded, "Let us all remember what Baba told us." It was then that the body was taken from Chaavadi to the Samadhi. Remember, the body has its limitations. Each day, we are moving closer to the end of the body. So keep love as the most important and fill your hearts with the Truth. Follow Dharma. These are the coins given by Baba. Sathya and Dharma are the most important. Keep them with you day and night - in all the three worlds and the three periods of time.*

*It is no use to just verbalise all this. It is most important to work. No use speaking with the mouth, speak with your heart. Then alone will all this get imprinted. Lakshmibai's daughter asked her for the coins but she said, "It has to go back to the giver." All the activities that are done are only to sanctify time. But if you want to sanctify your life, you have to follow these two - Sathya and Dharma. Remember that you are all sparks of God. No other sadhana is as important as following these. Turning beads without transforming the mind is of no use. Whatever you say or do, base it on Truth. Discourses and the study of scriptures are only for "Kaala Sarthakam" (sanctifying time). For "Janma Saarthakam" (Life's fulfillment) develop a relationship with God. God's Love will never change. It is permanent. Develop that. Do not have any differences. Do not differentiate based on religion. All the different names and forms belong to the same God.*

*The Matham (religion) is never bad. It is the Mathi (mind) that makes all the confusion and negative. Matham is that which purifies the Mathi. Very soon the whole country is going to be united. All will live as brothers and sisters for that is the Truth. Swami often tells, "Lead your life with Sathya and Dharma"(Swami then sang the song Sathya Dharmamu Santhi Premalatho). That's all that needs to be done. The Vijayadashami day is one to begin a new life.*

Swami concluded His discourse with the song "Bhaja Govindam". He then settled in the chair and asked for bhajans to be sung. Two bhajans were sung after which Swami received Aarthi and left the Kulwant Hall.

## **24 October, 2007 – “Samatha” Drama by Children from Prakasam District**

Thousands of devotees from the Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh had assembled in Prashanti Nilayam to have Swami's blessings and also had come prepared with a programme to put up in His presence if and when He permitted. Swami very graciously agreed to their programme and so the stage had been set by about 2:30 pm itself. Swami came out at about 3:20 pm. He completed the darshan rounds and then went into the interview room. It was about 5:00 pm when the interviews were over. Swami was looking a little tired,



but He just looked at the clock in the bhajan hall and said, "It is time for the drama."

The Swami who came out to see the programme was so different. He looked so lovely and radiant. He was very enthusiastic for the programme to begin and as seems to have become the custom nowadays, the devotees brought a beautiful silver lamp for Swami to light. Then a white marble *lingam* was also consecrated by Swami. The lamp was also very significantly shaped in the form of Swami's Sarva Dharma pillar. Then devotees from both the gents and ladies side came to Swami and offered roses. Finally two tiny tots offered the roses and then the programme began.

The drama was a musical entitled, "Samatha". It portrayed how the bombs, guns and advancement of modern science have no real power. Power lies in Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-Violence. There were well choreographed dances to bring about the concept of religious harmony. The five values of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema and Ahimsa teach humanity that they are the true rulers of the Universe.

There was also a wonderful dance based on Shirdi Baba who always propagated the unity of all religions. The scene depicting the glory of Haridas singing for God was also powerfully shown. Emperor Akbar asks his court singer, Tansen, how Haridas is able to sing better than him. The reply comes, "While I sing for the Lord of this kingdom, he sings the glory of the Lord of the Universe. Hence the difference between our singing is the difference between the Universe and the kingdom!"

The climax was a patriotic dance in which the three colours of the Indian Tricolour were used to bring beauty and enthusiasm among everyone present. After that, the final formation was made. Swami said that He would like to go down for the group photo. The children were overjoyed as they surrounded Swami. Swami smiled and stood up for the photograph. As He wended His way back to the stage, almost every child took the golden opportunity to fall at His feet. Swami then received Aarthi and left for his residence.

## **25 October, 2007 – Programme by Youth from North East India**

Swami had permitted cultural presentations by the youth from Assam, Manipur and the other North Eastern States of India on October 25. By about 2:30 pm the stage had been set and all waited in readiness for Swami's arrival. Swami came in the car at about 5:00 pm. He completed the darshan rounds and went into the interview room. But not for long, He came out immediately, sat on the stage and asked for the programme to begin.

Announcements were made in both English and, surprisingly, in chaste Telugu. The formal rose and card presentations followed after which the first item began. It was the popular Assamese Bhortal dance. Composed by late Narahari Burha Bhakat, an ardent devotee of Srimanta Sankardev, it was a dance with brisk footwork and clanging of huge cymbals. The rhythmic dance

was a blend of feminine grace and masculine power. It was performed for about 20 minutes and it built up to a wonderful climax. There was a very appreciative applause after its completion.

The second item was the "Dhol Dholok Cholom" dance from the state of Manipur. The Divine Radha-Krishna stories find their expression in these dances. Yaosang is a huge religious festival of Manipur and is associated with the worship of Lord Krishna and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. The youth from the Thoubal district of Manipur presented this item. Their acrobatic skills were brought to the fore as they leapt around banging the drums in feet-tapping rhythms. There was so much energy in the dances that one could feel the vibes everywhere. The pounding of the drums vibrated in the inner beings of all present. The dance reached its climax with rapid swirling of the dancers with their drums along with a fast rhythm. All watched with gaping mouths as the dancers made their final formation.

Swami was very happy with the performances. In fact, as the dances concluded, all the dancers bowed and went back to their places. Swami Himself called all of them to come up to the front. One particular dancer in yellow dress impressed the most with his acrobatic steps. He was the lead dancer. Swami called Him and materialised a green diamond ring for him. All the dancers simply began falling at His feet and He sat patiently blessing all of them. There was so much joy on all their faces. Satiated with the Love they had received, they began to file out but Swami was not satisfied with the Love He had showered. He called them and told them to sit around Him in a neat semi-circle so that group photos could be taken.

After the group photo session, Swami told them to start bhajans. He seemed to enjoy the bhajans a lot. Though it had become quite late, Swami sat for more than 5 bhajans. He blessed the prasadam to be distributed to all.

Then He received Aarthi and as He was leaving, He blessed the copies of the group photos taken and said that they must be handed over to the group, which was done.

## **SWAMI AND ME**

### **BABA AND “JUST PLAIN BILL”**

*By Mr. David Cornsweet*

**The way the Divine works all over the world in every millisecond with the only aim of bestowing peace, love, security and bliss to millions, is simply astounding and is impossible to document. But just like you do not need to drink the whole ocean to know the taste of sea water, a few incredible instances are enough to give us a glimpse of the glory of the Avatar. When you read below the story of “just plain Bill” of Southern California you will see how the Lord is at work all the time. Here is the story narrated by an ardent devotee of Bhagavan, Mr. David Cornsweet:**

To understand the incident in its entirety, it is useful, at first, to know what “just plain Bill” is like.

#### **Delight Through Dollar Bills**

I had met Bill over twenty years ago. Bill was adept at playing the stock market and had amassed a great deal of wealth while still a relatively young man. Seeing him, you would not have known this as he dressed, acted and lived normally with little show of his financial status except in one way: Bill loved to give money away both to charities and to those in need directly. In fact, Bill gives away an amount equal to or more than he makes each year, which is quite considerable. Further, he would not allow himself to be recognized for his many acts of charity.

For example, a respite house for infants and babies with AIDS was in need of a large amount of money to redo an entire house that they had been given by their local government. It needed to be done up with the necessities for dealing with the afflicted children and this outfitting was very costly. They were starting a fund-raising project and hoped to have the necessary money in the next few years or so, as the service was desperately needed.

Bill had made more money than he had thought he would that year. He was looking for a new charity to give the additional money to. When he heard about the plight of this worthwhile cause, he not only gave the extra money he had made but covered the entire cost of the refit which was two and a half times the already sizable amount he originally had planned to donate. Bill did this deed and many others long before he had heard of Swami or His teachings. To Bill, it was just the right thing to do and he wanted no recognition. In fact, he insisted that everyone call him Bill, just plain Bill.

#### **Searching Beyond the Material**

Yet with all his wealth and good deeds, Bill felt a spiritual vacuum. He often felt lonely and unloved. By Swami's grace, he started to learn a bit about

Vedanta and, over the last few years, he started reading about Sai Baba. He loved hearing stories of Swami's miracles and *leelas*, especially when it related to how our Lord helps those in need. Bill had several pictures of Swami and meditated frequently. Yet he still felt somewhat empty. He had a sharp mind and that, in a way, had continuously got in the way of his being able to accept God. He had a number of friends who were deeply involved in spiritual pursuits but Bill struggled to find faith.

As Bill's eightieth birthday approached at the end of July 2007, he started to experience some dizziness and found that he was having a hard time walking. Upon examination by CAT scan, it was determined that he had suffered a mild stroke. Undeterred, Bill attended the two parties held in his honor by his friends who deeply loved this man. While he needed assistance to walk, he made the parties enjoyable and later told me that he realized that while he had little family of direct blood, he did have a large family of direct love.

Shortly after the parties, Bill's symptoms began to worsen. Another CAT scan showed that he had suffered several more strokes. Due to his weakness, Bill checked himself into a hospital. After several days, he had enough of that and resolved to go home, especially since the doctors told him that, while they could do more tests, not much else could be done at the hospital for him. As my wife and I are quite close to Bill, we arranged the home care the doctors insisted on and Bill headed home.

This was on a Sunday and my wife and I were planning to fly to Puttaparthi the following Thursday. We felt we would have to alter our plans as I had promised Bill that I would be there for him in such situations. On Monday, Bill's condition worsened and he told me that he was ready to "check out."

Several years ago, Swami had materialized a bit of Vibhuthi for me and I had a small amount left. That night was our Sai center meeting and one of my friends had just returned from seeing Swami. He had an interview in which Swami gave him some Vibhuthi and he graciously shared some with me for Bill. I left the meeting early to go see my friend and give him the Vibhuthi.

Bill did not look well at all. In fact, another friend of his told me that he felt Bill was indeed ready to go. I felt the same and thought the vibhuthi might help his passing. As Bill was not eating or drinking much at all, I placed a bit of the Vibhuthi in a glass of water and offered it to him after telling him what it was. He drank it down with great relish, talking about how sweet it tasted and how good it felt. As I left that night, I thought that it would be the last time I saw my friend...but Swami had other plans.

### **Marked by the Divine Insignia – "Aum"**

When I went to Bill's house the next morning, he greeted me with a strong "how ya doin' Davey" (he is the only one who calls me that). I was stunned. His speech was clearer, his mind was sharp and his eyes were sparkling. My wife visited him later that day and noticed that he had developed a rather large bruise on his arm. Upon closer inspection, she noticed that it resembled

an “AUM”. By the time I saw it, it was much clearer. Indeed, it looked like the symbol of the Pranava. Swami had signed His work! This was on a Tuesday. My wife and I were still wondering whether or not we should proceed on our trip to see Swami and asked Him for some type of sign as to what to do.

On Wednesday, I received a call from Bill's young caretaker. He was in a bit of a panic. It seems that when he was helping Bill out of the wheelchair this “stuff like baby powder appeared right between them and flew everywhere.” As this young man had only first heard of Swami the day before, he had no idea what he was seeing and was more than a bit scared. I calmed him down and explained the situation to him. He was a little skeptical, but how could he deny his own direct experience of Swami's grace? Needless to say, this young man has quickly developed more than a bit of interest in Swami. When I went to see Bill, he reported he was feeling much better and, in his own gruff style suggested that we go and see Swami. Accordingly, we left the USA on Thursday to begin our journey to Sai, arriving in the Divine Presence the following Monday afternoon.

On the following Friday, Swami called me to His Lotus Feet. I gave Him the letters I was carrying for some of the devotees from our area, including a letter thanking Him for His help with Bill. I had a chance to talk to Swami and said, “Swami, you saved this man's life.” Swami just looked at me and smiled. I then showed Him the picture of the bruise; Swami smiled and lovingly traced the AUM with His finger on the picture, and as He did so, He said, “AUM” in His very sweet voice. He returned the picture to me and I decided to give it to Bill on my return to the U.S. Swami then mimicked a hug, something that Bill loved to get. “I'll pass on this too to my friend,” I said to myself.

We returned in early September. I saw Bill the day after our arrival. He was able to walk with a bit of help and greeted me with one of those special smiles that I so treasure and his signature “How ya doin”. Then, I shared with him the interaction with Swami and showed him the pictures that were taken at the time by one of the students, which I had framed for him. I especially shared the hug. He loved seeing the pictures and the hug, especially, but didn't seem to want to take the pictures home with him. He looked at them several times when we were together but seemed to “forget” to take them when he left.

Bill seemed to be preoccupied with something and talked a lot about what he wanted to have happen both as he was dying and after his death. He told me that he wanted to die at home surrounded by those he loved and was concerned about making sure that the charities he supported were taken care of.

In late September, Bill took a turn for the worse and, while his mind was clear, his body started to deteriorate. One day, I went to see him and thought he looked too dehydrated. I convinced him to allow me to take him to the hospital. Upon examination, it was determined that he had suffered another series of strokes and he was admitted. After several weeks of tests, treatment and care, he was transferred to inpatient rehabilitation. He stayed

there for a number of days until it was felt that he could go home (something he really wanted), returning frequently for outpatient rehab.

Throughout this time, Bill and I talked about Swami, His teachings, seva, spirituality and love. A week or so after his release from the hospital, we were told that he was not able to do the three hours a day of therapy required for the outpatient program and an in home rehab program was suggested. Before that could be instituted, I noticed that Bill seemed to be having difficulty breathing. I took him to his doctor and was told that he had a mild case of pneumonia. Bill was definitely not happy about having to go back to the hospital again. This was on Thursday, October 11, 2007. What I was unaware of was that Bill needed to finish some of the paperwork that ensured that his estate would continue to support the charities that he so loved.

### **Giving 'Life' After Death**

On the following Saturday morning, I, along with several of his friends, an advisor and his attorney witnessed Bill sign the last papers necessary to secure the foundation he was establishing for charitable purposes. I asked him if this is really what he wanted and if it made him happy. Again, I witnessed that beautiful smile as he strongly said, "Yes".

That afternoon, he told one of his dear friends that he wanted to go home, that he was "done". When she told me, we arranged for a group of his friends to meet with Bill and his doctor. Bill repeated his request with the full knowledge of what it meant. I asked to be left alone with him to make sure that he really understood what he was asking. He clearly let me know that he was ready to go home, meaning more than just back to his house. As I had promised him long ago that I would do all in my power to make sure his wishes about being at home with his friends were followed, I helped him check out of the hospital and return to his condo.

Having completed the work necessary to secure the charitable foundation, Bill was ready to 'let go'. I now understood the look that He had given me while I was in Parthi - He had not saved Bill's life but rather had given Bill an extension of life to complete the task set out for him by Him.

### **Traveling To Love, With Love**

As the word went out regarding his condition, Bill's friends came to see him. They were from all walks of life. Cooks and maids, doctors and lawyers, retired professionals close to Bill's age, and pre-teens – all came to see him. Each had a story of how this man had affected their life with his love, charity and humor. It was a sad, joyous time as we all laughed and cried together thinking about Bill and the many ways he impacted us all. The love was palpable. Though Bill couldn't talk and was growing visibly weaker, he loved having his friends around.

Calls came in from as far away as South Africa and he listened to them on his speakerphone. We read to him the numerous e-mails, cards, notes and

letters written by friends that had known Bill most or all of their lives. Bill would often smile and squeeze the hand of whoever was closest indicating his awareness of the messages.

On the morning of Wednesday, October 17, I was meditating and praying to Swami. Obviously this whole situation was at the forefront of my mind. Suddenly, I had the very strong feeling that Swami was guiding me to tell Bill that He loved him and He was completely around him, and that He would take him in His arms whenever he 'let go'. I shared this with Bill when I got to his house later and got one of his sweet smiles. Bill passed peacefully into Swami's arms later that night at 11:11 p.m.

Thus three of Bill's four wishes regarding his death had come true: (1) to die at home; (2) surrounded by his friends; and (3) that the passing be peaceful in his sleep. The fourth was that he did not wish to suffer - and this provided another example of divine compassion stepping in. Unfortunately, the pneumonia he had contracted was not responding to medication and this meant that his death would likely be caused by suffocation, as the lungs would fill up with fluid. This would obviously be traumatic for him (and us) and I felt very upset knowing the fear Bill had over experiencing a painful ending to this life. However, when the nurse came to check on Bill that last morning, amazingly she found that his lungs were completely clear of fluid! The loving Lord had arranged for him to die later that day, peacefully in his sleep, just as he wished.

Thank You Swami, for so directly letting Bill know that You loved him and for being with him, especially at the final moments of his life. Thank you Swami, for making Bill's life so meaningful, and such an inspiration to all of us who knew him. Thank You lord, for allowing all of us to come together in celebration and acknowledgement of this wonderful man who lived your teachings in so many ways. May Bill's story of love and seva be an inspiration for all of us. And thank You Swami, for letting me have such a great friend as 'just plain Bill'.

## IN HIS COMFORTING CARE...

**This is a poignant yet profound tale of a former student of the Anantapur Campus of Bhagavan's University.**

"Love My Uncertainty," Swami says. Life with Swami is never certain. Swami delights in throwing unexpected experiences our way. This is His way of making us grow and learn; of weaning us from our own limiting, comfort zone; of making us reach for the stars that He has planned for us. What is most certain is that He is our best friend, our confidant and One who with limitless love makes us grow and glow.

### **Education for Life**

When I joined the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (now Sri Sathya Sai University) in 1982 after completing high school in Mumbai, my mother told me to write down my experiences and my dreams. As I went through my journals, recently, I came across this long forgotten dream in my final year of college. In my dream Swami asked me to chant a verse from the Bhagavad Gita, "Ye Tu ..." In my nervousness, I found reasons to delay the chanting, "Should I sing, chant or recite the verse, Swami?", I asked.

"In any manner you want", Swami waved my question aside. I tried, but was unable to remember the verse fully. My friend tried to prompt me, but Swami said "SShh!" and asked her to be quiet. Swami expects each one of us to make our own individual effort and take steps on our own two little feet. As we fall and waver, He will hold us and even carry us over difficult terrain. The effort, however, has to be made by us.

I realize how patiently and lovingly, Swami has guided me every step of the way. Nine years later, I was expecting my second child. My first-born son was twenty months old and extremely active. I was extremely tired and listless throughout the pregnancy. Sometime in the seventh month, the doctors diagnosed that the baby's lungs were not developed and that the actual extent of the development (or the lack of it) would only be clear when the baby was born and started to use the lungs. After the diagnosis, Swami came in my dream and gave a white cloth with a verse written on it, "*Ye Tu Sarvaani Karmaani ...*" He asked me to place the cloth on my abdomen twice a day and assured me that He will take care of everything. When I woke up, I remembered that I had a kerchief in the altar blessed by Swami. I faithfully placed this kerchief on my abdomen everyday.

I went through all the prayer books that I had, trying to find a prayer that began with the words "*Ye Tu Sarvaani Karmaani ...*" After I had read all the prayer books that I had, I took the Bhagavad Gita and started going through this stanza by stanza. Finally, I found the highly significant verse in Chapter 12 verse 6 and 7. The rough English translation of the two verses is as follows:

*But those who worship Me, surrendering the fruits of all actions to Me,*



*regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, meditating and worshipping Me  
with single-minded yoga.*

*For them, whose thought is set on Me, I become very soon, O Arjuna!  
the deliverer from the ocean of birth and death.*

### **Our Nearest and Dearest Friend**

Two weeks before the due date, the baby was born and the doctors told us that the left lung was seriously under-developed. In the neo-natal unit, we used the same kerchief for the baby as well and played the Gayatri Mantra sung in Swami's voice as often as we could. Swami came in many of my dreams during that time and showered His love on me. In one such dream, He placed His right hand on my head. As He pressed His hand on my head, He came near and bent His head until His face was just a few inches from mine. All the while, Swami looked deep into my eyes. When I woke up, I could still feel Swami's hand on my head.

Strange are the ways of the monkey mind. Instead of being overjoyed with His blessing, I was deeply distressed. "Why should Swami bless me when it is my baby who needs His help and blessing?" I cried in my heart. I was not very experienced then and did not realize that He knows who needs what, when, where and why.

From that day onwards, the baby's health deteriorated rapidly and the doctors told us to be prepared for the worst. Every time the phone rang, we steeled ourselves for the call from the hospital. Ten days after the baby's birth, Swami came in my dream again.

"Swami!" I cried, "The baby is very ill."

Swami replied in a very detached manner, "What can I do for that?"

"Swami! You are the only one who can save her."

Again, Swami looked deeply into my eyes and asked, "Why?"

With Swami's "Why" ringing in my ears, I tossed and turned throughout the night until the phone rang early in the morning. It was the call from the hospital. With one word, Swami had prepared me for the most difficult day of my life. During the next days, weeks, months and years, whenever I was deeply in grief, Swami would come in a dream or send a message through someone to console me; mostly with the tenderness of a gentle mother and once or twice with stern words of a strict father.

### **The Real Mother**

Now I realize that He is the real mother for all of us. I realize too, that we are only caretaker mothers, taking care of the children that He has given us, in the best way we can and thereby enriching our life. He has taken care of our children before they were born to us; He takes care of them while they are with us and will continue to take care of them after they leave us as well.

My husband and I had not told our son about this experience, as he was only two years old then. We had not discussed this with many people either; except for very close relatives and friends who were with us then. Six years later, just before our son's eighth birthday, Swami came in my dream with a question, "When do you plan to tell your son about this? Fifteen minutes before you tell everyone? Do you think it is fair to him? For his spiritual growth, he needs to know." Safely ensconced in our comfort zone, He jolted us out of it once again. In His own special way, Swami was telling us to share our experience with others.

Traveling along the path of life is very much like a ride on a roller coaster. There will always be ups and downs, unexpected twists and turns. As long as we remember that the most important person in our life, God, is right there with us on the roller coaster, holding our hands, it becomes a joyful ride to be cherished all the way.

## THE DIVINE ALCHEMY

*By Mr. Jeremy Hoffer*

**Mr. Jeremy Hoffer has been an active member of the Sai organisation for 17 years, holding positions at the regional and central levels. He has a Bachelor's degree in History and a Masters degree in Education from the University of Denver. He now works as a teacher in Denver, USA helping to create educational opportunities for low income children.**

*Deva Deva Sai Deva  
Mi divya charanaaravindamulaku  
Na prema poorvaka  
Shata koti pranamamulu (Telugu)*

I offer my most loving and humble pranams to Bhagavan. Respected elders, brothers and sisters, Sai Ram.

As a young boy growing up in America, I never imagined that I would travel the world, let alone come to the other side of the planet, to a remote Indian village like Puttaparthi. For many, America is a dream land, a land of opportunity for thousands who go there every year in search of a better life. But for me, the road to a better way of life began here, in this tiny corner of Andhra Pradesh, at this abode of highest peace, and home of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. While the miles I've traveled may be great, the transformation I've undergone is greater. Shortly after my first trip, people I knew began to say, "Jeremy, we don't know what it is about you, but you've changed." Even my father said to me, "Jeremy, I don't totally understand who Sai Baba is, but based on the positive change I've seen in you, He must be all right." And thus began my new life.

### **Guarded and Guided by Him**

Bhagavan caught hold of me at a crucial and formative time in my life. I was 18 years old, without direction, and in bad company. But Bhagavan had other plans for me. After learning about His Incarnation, I began studying Sai literature, participating in the local Sai center, and making trips to see Him at just the same time that the budding youth wing in the Sathya Sai Baba Organization was beginning to blossom. I joined a group of 18 youth from the United States who attended Bhagavan's Summer Course in Brindavan in 1995, and was fortunate to attend both the first and second World Youth Conferences. Thereafter, I did my final year of college in Hyderabad where I lived and worked with the Hyderabad youth group. Now at age 36, I have spent exactly half my life under Bhagavan's care, and am eternally grateful to Bhagavan for carrying me safely across those important years of my youth.

### Three Important Lessons...

With humility, I offer this august gathering a few of the lessons I have learned along this journey:

- **First, take refuge in the words of Sai.**
- **Second, take Bhagavan to be your only friend.**
- **And third, engage whole-heartedly in good work.**

And now I'd like to elaborate on each of these lessons I've learned.

**First, take refuge in the words of Sai.** Bhagavan says that, "The mind is the source of all suffering." And just as a thorn can be used to remove a thorn, so too can suffering of our confused and wayward minds be relieved by thinking about the words and ideas of Bhagavan. But these words must be meditated upon. Food cannot be digested with only one chew, and mental peace cannot be gained from a quick or occasional reading of Sai's teachings. In my experience, it often takes the mind many years to grasp the meaning of His teachings.

For example, Bhagavan often describes the spiritual path as a house: the foundation is self-confidence, the walls are self-satisfaction, the roof is self-sacrifice, and the house is self-realization. For years I listed to this analogy, and it remained largely unclear all the while. Only after some years of working on this puzzle did it begin to occur to me that Swami is describing a sequence of events, and that each stage must be passed through to get to the next. Nothing can happen without self-confidence. With self-confidence we can begin to engage in the world and to extract from it our own desires – self-satisfaction. But sooner or later, we must learn that satisfying our own desires doesn't give enduring peace and happiness. It is at this point that we must begin to use our own potential to relieve the suffering of others. And only after this "roof" of self-sacrifice is constructed can the mansion of self-realization be secured.

Perhaps the truth of this simple teaching came quickly to others. For me, it took time to digest. But my point is that we must all put effort into understanding, in a deeper way, the words of Bhagavan, and not skim too quickly across the surface. Mental peace can be attained if we all take refuge in His words.

**My second lesson: take Bhagavan as your only true friend.** For young people, friendship is very important, and often misunderstood and misused. Swami often says, "Tell me your company, and I'll tell you what you are." The influence of the company we keep is very powerful, especially in the years of our youth. So, being in good company is essential for a good life. But the real meaning of friendship deserves to be explored carefully. Bhagavan explains to us that, "God is the only true friend." We should then ask ourselves, "Who is a friend?" A friend can provide company and companionship – that's true. But a true friend is the one who knows the deepest reservoirs of our hearts, whose care for us is perfect and

inexhaustible and who is closer to us than any other. And who but God can be that friend?

Once Swami patted me on the chest and said, "This is not a two-seat sofa; this is not musical chairs...Your seat is on that plane, but My seat is in your heart." True *sneham*, or friendship, should not be cheapened by putting all things into our hearts. We should reserve our love for God, for who can truly satisfy the pain and deepest yearning of our hearts, but Him?

**Lastly, we should engage whole-heartedly in good work.** Wrong use of the body leads to all kinds of troubles. But to escape this suffering, we should put our body to good uses. Swami has prescribed that Seva is the proper use of the body, and also a powerful tool for spiritual transformation. "Bend the body, mend the mind, end the senses," Bhagavan has said. I'd like to share an experience to illustrate this point.

In the USA, the youth regularly take up a variety of service projects. One extraordinary opportunity came in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina devastated the coastline of the southern states of Louisiana and Mississippi. Sai youth responded quickly, locating a town that was not receiving much assistance, and sending a large truckload full of needed supplies to Tylertown, Mississippi. Not satisfied with this initial effort, we organized a second trip to repair the roofs and homes of poor victims who could not afford to have their roofs replaced after the terrible storm. Such large-scale projects are inspiring to be a part of, but another example I'd like to share illustrates well the power of doing service even on a relatively small scale.

### **The Magic of Selfless Work**

Because winters can be very cold and snowy in many parts of America, homeless people run the risk of freezing without proper clothing and footwear. A few winters ago, some members of our group noticed that some homeless men in our city had only plastic bags over their feet as footwear. So we made a decision that the following winter we would buy 75 pairs of boots and distribute them amongst the homeless people. When we went to the store to buy these 75 pairs of boots, we were pleased that the owner of the store himself took care of us. It took quite some time to buy so many boots and at some point in our work together, the owner of the store said to us, "Boys, 75 pairs is a lot of boots. Would you mind if I ask what you intend to do with them?" So we explained that we planned to give them away in winter to people without good shoes.

**He was just quiet for a little while and then the store owner said, "Boys, in all the years that I have been in the shoe business, I have never seen anyone come into my store to do what you are doing. I will sell you these boots, but I will only charge you the price that I have to pay for them myself. I am only sorry that I did not know about this earlier, else I could have worked with my suppliers to get the boots even cheaper. Please contact me next year so we can work together to do this good work."**

Finally after we paid for the boots and were leaving his store, the owner said, "Boys, every year I invite my employees and their families to come and shop in my store before Christmas, and I give them a very big discount. I want you two boys to also come in with your families, so I can give the same opportunity to you too."

### When Love is Put in Action

On the day we planned to give the boots away, our youth group had a meeting to talk about our work. Very often, the poor and homeless are treated badly, even by people offering them services. We all agreed that we would work differently. We reminded ourselves that God is the indweller of every living being, and therefore, we would treat every single person as if he were Swami Himself, and give only love towards one and all. As the long line of people began filing into the downtown church where we were giving away the boots, the poor and homeless were at first very restless and aggressive with each other and with us. But our group continued to treat them all in a loving manner. Very quickly, the atmosphere began to change. Soon, everyone became peaceful, orderly and happy. Each person was invited to sit down in a chair and be served food and drink while they waited their turn to find a pair of boots. When their turn came, our workers peeled off the old shoes and socks from their worn and tired feet, and carefully fit them with a new pair of socks and boots, and sent them on their way happy and recharged.

At the end of the day, after almost all of the boots were gone, there was one man who had received his pair of boots and was about to leave, when he noticed another man who could not find a pair of boots to fit him. The man without boots was very discouraged as his shoes were in very bad condition and not fit to last through the tough winter months. **Observing this, the first man with boots in hand went over to this man and gave him his boots and said, "Here, it looks like you need these boots more than me. My shoes are in better condition than yours, so please take my new boots." With this, the man walked away smiling.**

We need not wait for hurricanes to befall us for opportunities to serve. In fact any act of love directed to relieve the suffering of another person is worthy service. In this work love is the essential ingredient. Service is nothing more than love in action. It has the power not only to uplift the downtrodden, but also to transform us into more selfless loving human beings. A very nice Telugu song captures Swami's message about service:

<i>Desham ante matti kadu, desham ante manushuloiye Deshani premiddam, tyagani chupiddam Pavitramuga jeevinchi pavana charitanu pondi Swardhammunu vidanadi Sathya Saini</i>	The nation does not refer to the landmass but the conglomeration of its people Let us love our country, Let us live by sacrifice Let us lead sacred lives and be virtuous
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<p><i>cherudam</i></p> <p><i>Mana shaktini manamu telesi yuva shaktini chatudam Grama gramalona sevalenno cheyudam Sevalennaina avi kashta sadhya mulaina Okari nokaru cheri manamu Swamini sevinchudam</i></p> <p><i>Sai mata biddalam andaram Sathya Sai mata biddalamey andaram</i></p>	<p>Let us let go selfishness and gather at the feet of Sathya Sai</p> <p>Let us recognize our inner strength and harness the power of youth Let us serve in myriad ways the poor in the villages Even if the task is challenging, let us work with unity and serve Swami in all</p> <p>We are all children of Mother Sai, We are all, in fact, His.</p>

Dear brothers and sisters, I'm not sure we can truly fathom the significance of the World Youth Conference. That we are here in attendance must be a boon earned over many lifetimes. We have all come far to be here – by plane, train, and automobile, but on the path of transformation, we all have more to go. On behalf of the world's youth, Bhagavan, I pray you will carry us all the way to our destination and bless us with the strength to be Ideal Sai Youth. Jai Sai Ram!

## **H2H SPECIAL**

### **ENTHRALLING ENCOUNTERS WITH ETERNITY**

#### **Conversations with Mr. Raja Reddy, Part 2**

*(Continued from previous issue)*

**Among the few fortunate devotees, who came to Swami in the early years of His avatharhood, Mr Raja Reddy is exceptional. He was one of the most privileged who came to Bhagavan as a teenager and continued to stay in the Divine Presence enjoying His blissful divine proximity for nearly three decades. A sincere spiritual aspirant right from his childhood, the story of His encounters with 'The Eternal' is most fascinating. We had an enthusiastic Sai worker go over to his home in Mumbai to interview him and below is the transcript of the second part of that conversation. We had the first part in the October issue.**

**RR:** Everything is an open book to Him and He wants transformation in each one of us. We are many a time 'an absolute alien' to our self, not knowing anything at all!

**Q:** He goes through our minds without any barriers!

**RR:** Oh yes, like open books. I have no doubt about it; it's a common experience, as common as drinking water.

**Q:** Tell us more about those experiences.

**RR:** He has His own inimitable ways. Bhagavan had given me the opportunity to sing bhajans. I was leading bhajans for decades, right from 1958 until 1983; that is, up to my 60<sup>th</sup> year.

**Q:** That is more than twenty five years!

#### **Bliss Beyond Bhajans**

**RR:** Yes. When I was 60 years old, one day, as usual, I started a bhajan. All the students were singing with fresh and blooming voices. Naturally, Bhagavan wanted to give them more chances and I was also getting superannuated. So one fine morning as I was sitting there to sing a bhajan, all of a sudden the mike was taken away from me. Being with Him for so many years, I 'knew' of Swami's ways and could get the hint. So I didn't react at all.

Then, after the bhajans were over and aarti was performed, Swami just looked at me; it was just a glance, but very deep. Believe it or not, for about 2-3 days, I was just floating in bliss. Just a look, nothing else! But it was a completely out-of-the-earth blissful feeling! So that was a wonderful experience I had.



In other words, in His own inimitable way, His message was: “O fool! Don’t go on dragging your feet into the bhajan right through until the grave! Come on, go off the ladder! Evolve from bhajans to something more intense and increasingly inward, something more direct.”

That was His superb indirect lesson. Only you must be blessed by Him to take it in the right way. You can’t revolt, ego doesn’t play a part.

### **‘Gone’ from His Body**

**Q:** What was the first miracle of Swami you witnessed after you started visiting Parthi?

**RR:** Miracles had become such a common place occurrences with Baba that they ceased to be miracles! I used to hear of Baba materializing vibhuti, and when I came to Him I was mentally prepared for it because my mother was an old devotee.

I have seen quite a few interesting incidents. Swami used to go in a ‘trance’, meaning, He used to, so to say, leave His body whenever there was any danger to any devotee, anywhere. What used to happen is that His body would become almost like a rigor mortis – almost death-like. And it would fall like a stick.

So, as attendants on Him, we had to take care of His body by not allowing Him to fall or get hurt. On one of these instances, I was not very well acquainted with this process of His ‘trance’ and while He was ‘gone’ from His body, He went on pulling His hair and had quite a handful of His hair in His hand. Then He asked for water, which I readily gave. Next, He swallowed the hair and washed it down with water!

**Later, when He returned to normal consciousness, He asked me, “Did I swallow any hair?” I said, “Yes, Baba.” Remember, I was not acquainted with these divine acts. Even one hair is enough to damage the digestive system; and this was a whole bunch!**

Just then, He opened a button and what happened next was something unimaginable. The hair which was wet, which He had swallowed, was coming out from underneath His heart! That was something mind-boggling.

### **Playful Conscience**

**Q:** Any instance, where you could recall where He could tell somebody’s past and future.

**RR:** As I told you, I was a worshiper of Swami Vivekananda. **Baba would say, “You will just pick up Viveka (which means ‘conscience’) and then play with him.” I thought, as I so full of Vikekananda and his ideas, I would, spiritually, go to such heights. But what really happened was,**

**after I was married, He named my son Viveka.** And that's how he played this prank on me. But imagine, Swami said this many years ago, in fact, decades before my marriage! He had no connection with my marriage whatsoever.

**Q:** It was a good joke!

**RR:** Ah, yes.

**Q:** Swami has such a good sense of humour.

**RR:** Tremendous! We used to burst into peals of laughter when He used to impersonate somebody so perfectly.

### **Immediate Divine Healing**

**Q:** Have you witnessed any instance of 'divine healing'?

**RR:** Once I was suffering from piles and experienced profuse bleeding, as a reaction to a wrong homeopathic medicine that was given to me. And I had to go to Bhagavan as there was a function and I had to participate in that procession. So I told Bhagavan about my situation and immediately He gave me *prasadam*. Believe it or not, the moment I took it, the problem was gone! It was not a joke! I used to suffer for days because of bleeding piles.

I will narrate one more incident. This concerns my wife's cousin, Mr. Suresh who is a sincere devotee of Bhagavan. At that time, he was probably in his thirties and was well qualified with a Chemical Engineering degree and an MBA done in Ahmedabad. He was highly placed too in his profession.

**Suddenly he developed cancer in the thigh. Remember, he was young and had two small kids, a boy and a girl. He went to Dharmakshetra (Mumbai) to have Baba's Darshan and there Baba saw him and said, "Yes, cancer cancelled!"** Mind you, that was a very dangerous type of cancer and he had been given an ultimatum of six months by the doctors. He had tried chemotherapy and everything else by then.

**Q:** He is still around?

**RR:** Yes, hale and healthy after decades! He has a job in a German Company in Pune, India, and he is on the move, globe trotting 15 days in a month. His son and daughter are well placed too.

Therefore, He is very vivid about the entire past, present and the future of everybody. All the states of consciousness – waking, dreaming, deep sleep and complete bliss – are under His control. Here is one instance.

## **The Same Sai Consciousness**

Everybody in my wife's family is a staunch devotee of Shirdi Baba. In fact, my wife's grandmother and grandfather had been to Shirdi and had darshan of Shirdi Sai when He was on earth in His physical form. At that time, her grandmother was pregnant with her father.

**Just before our marriage, when my wife was in Puttaparthi, she had a dream. She dreamt that Shirdi Baba came in her dream early in the morning and gave her a rosary - *japamala*. She was enjoying the dream, but the whole episode ended abruptly when she was woken up by someone saying, "Come on! Wake up! Baba has called us for an interview!"**

**So, then she had to hurry to Baba's Presence. Baba, then, had to talk to others too and after some time, she was called in. When He saw her He said, "*kya? kaisa hai?*" (How are you?). And then immediately materialized a rosary for her! Finally He said, "*sapna sach hua!*" (The dream has become true!)**

There are two facets implicitly stated by Baba in this incident. First: 'I have complete control over *jagrat, sapna, shupti*' (*waking, dream and deep sleep states*). Second: 'I am the same as Shirdi; Shirdi Sai and I are not different.' In her dream Shirdi Baba gave her a rosary and she was woken up by somebody, and she was unhappy for having been disturbed. And here, Baba completes the dream! It is something fantastic!

The former Vice Chancellor of Baba's University, Sri Hanumantappa, had said: "I have traveled the world, I have yet to come across such a human values based University where it is completely free from bottom to top! It's highly unimaginable. And so is the Hospital, free for the visitors to stay! What further Love can be extended?"

And not only that, if this is on the curative side, on the preventive side, He gives us water so that we don't succumb to any diseases in the first place. It is indeed unbelievable! Everything is offered free.

## **Metamorphing Matter and Minds**

**Q:** When has been the transformation in your life after you met Swami?

**RR:** As I explained earlier, when I came I had little respect for miracles, and it was common place for Baba to do miracles. He used to pluck a *seethaphal* (custard apple) and by the time it reached your hand it would turn into an apple! These instances were happening all the time. He used to take a slab of stone and throw it up, by the time it returns it would turn into a sugar candy!

He is, in fact, changing our minds like pots of clay! These miracles are nothing. By his Grace my mind is so evolved! I sit for meditation three times a day and that has been a habit for not years but decades. Even when I used to drive Baba's car, I used to meditate and drive! That's because I didn't want to

lose that experience. I told you earlier that I was an incorrigible introvert. I generally don't tell others these experiences, but I used to feel an inexplicable ecstatic bliss. It was something so fine to experience that you didn't want to leave it either, but then at times you had to.

**Baba has very kindly advised us to link our *namasmarana* (chanting His name) with our breath. *Uchwas and Nichwas* - when you inhale and exhale, you link His name to that. It could be "Sairam! Sairam!" or whichever name. Then, there is real happiness. Our mind is the horse-rider and breath is the horse; you catch hold of the horse, the rider is automatically in your hand!**

**Q:** Do you think there is a difference in the quality of people or kind of devotion now, compared to the earlier days?

**RR:** One can't delve into people's minds. People come to Him with many motives - ulterior as well as divine. It was so even then.

But Swami's way always has been the same. He used to say, "My miracles are like visiting cards. Once you get acquainted, you will naturally come into the fold. I am the Big Shepherd, with capital 'S'! You are the sheep and I am the good shepherd. So, to perfect you into my fold, I give you My visiting card."

Yes, there are all sorts of people, but then, it should start somewhere. People do start with ulterior motives and desires, but later, Baba has a way of molding minds like pots of clay - which He alone can do! He is a 'Para-psychologist'; a psychologist, par excellence!

I don't know how far the students have witnessed that, because every mind is an open book to Him; there's nothing to hide. Ultimately, He wants everybody to benefit from His Avatar. He has come for us and He doesn't require anything. He is Bliss personified!

**Q:** When you are at your residence now, in Mumbai or in Parthi, do you feel any difference?

**RR:** No, Absolutely not! I don't miss Him at all. Only I would like to see Him now and then, therefore, twice a year I come to Puttaparthi. In those years, I used to be with Baba, now Baba is with me! There I used to be in His physical presence, now Baba is in me - in bliss! **In essence He is with me, so why should I bother? Baba doesn't talk to me these days, do you know that? But I don't require His talking! I am absolutely happy and He is guiding me day in and day out!**

## **GET INSPIRED**

### **GURU NANAK AND MOOLA**

*As 24 November this year is celebrated as Guru Nanak's birthday, we have this short tale from the many inspiring stories of his life.*

On the way to Sialkat, which is near Pasrur, Guru Nanak rested outside the town under a wild caper tree, which stands there to this day. His companion Mardana asked "Why do you prefer the wilderness to the comforts of town?"

"There is no comfort in a place where there is no truth," replied the Guru. "The air of the town is filled with falseness. No one can safely breathe it."

"Master, I am hungry," said Mardana, "and unlike you, I can't live on just the air."

"Go into town," said the Guru, "and ask at every shop; 'My master would like a half-anna of truth, and a half-anna of falsehood.' He who answers will feed you."

Mardana, much amused, went into town and stopped at each shop. Some thought that he was insane and others made fun of him. However, at a certain shop, Moola, the owner, replied, "Tell your master that life is false, and death is true."

And just as Guru Nanak had said, Moola offered to give Mardana food. Then, he asked to be taken to the man who asked for such things. When Moola saw the Guru, he recognised his greatness and humbly bowed before him asking, "Show me the true way."

"Seek it and you shall find it," said the Guru. "It is found by searching and lost by talking."

Moola was much impressed by Guru Nanak and followed him for many days, even to Kabul, until the Guru told him to go back to his home and family.

"I want to be a renunciant," said Moola. "I want to give up the world and be a holy man."

"It is not by shirking our duty that we become saints," said the Guru, "but by how we handle our responsibilities in our daily lives."

"Then why is it that people leave their homes in search of God?" he asked.

"There are those who actually seek the truth and there are those who only seek to escape their responsibilities," said the Guru, "but the way I have come to show is to live in service to God in the daily world, keeping His Name on our

lips and in our minds. Renunciation of outer things does not make for inner righteousness. Words are meaningless unless translated into action."

Guru Nanak then repeated to him the Jap Ji (what is now one of the most famous Sikh scriptures), and Moola returned home to live the life of a householder, keeping all his Guru's teachings in his heart.

Guru Nanak and Mardana had an occasion later to visit Sialkot and the Guru wished to see his student. Mardana went looking for Moola, but his wife, fearing that her husband would wish to leave again, convinced Moola that he could die in the wilderness if he went. And so he hid himself away until Mardana left.

When told this, the Guru said, "This is the man who said that life is false and death is real, but now he seems to hold to falseness. So be it. But who can escape death? It comes to all no matter where they live."

## FROM EMPTINESS TO JOYFUL EMPATHY

Right before the jetway door closed, I scrambled aboard the plane going from LA to Chicago, lugging my laptop and overstuffed briefcase. It was the first leg of an important business trip a few weeks before Christmas, and I was running late. I had a ton of work to catch up on, half wishing, half praying I muttered, "Please God, do me a favor; let there be an empty seat next to mine, I don't need any distractions."

I was on the aisle in a two seat row. Across sat a businesswoman with her nose buried in a newspaper. No problem. But in the seat beside mine, next to the window, was a young boy wearing a big red tag around his neck: 'Minor Traveling Unattended'.

The kid sat perfectly still, hands in his lap, eyes straight ahead. He'd probably been told never to talk to strangers. Good, I thought. Then the flight attendant came by. "Michael, I have to sit down because we're about to take off," she said to the little boy. "This nice man will answer any of your questions, okay?"

Did I have a choice? I offered my hand, and Michael shook it twice, straight up and down. "Hi, I'm Jerry," I said. "You must be about 7 years old."

"I'll bet you don't have any kids," he responded.

"Why do you think that? Sure I do." I took out my wallet to show him pictures.

"Because I'm six. I was way off, huh?"

The captain's voice came over the speakers: "Flight attendants, prepare for takeoff." Michael pulled his seat belt tighter and gripped the armrests as the jet engines roared. I leaned over and said, "Right about now, I usually say a prayer. I ask God to keep the plane safe and to send angels to protect us."

"Amen," he said, then added, "but I'm not afraid of dying. I'm not afraid because my mama's already in heaven."

"I'm sorry," I said.

"Why are you sorry?" he asked, peering out the window as the plane lifted off.

"I'm sorry you don't have your mama here." My briefcase jostled at my feet, reminding me of all the work I needed to do.

"Look at those boats down there!" Michael said as the plane banked over the Pacific. "Where are they going?"

"Just going sailing, having a good time. And there's probably a fishing boat full of guys like you and me."

"Doing what?" he asked.

"Just fishing, maybe for bass or tuna. Does your dad ever take you fishing?"  
"I don't have a dad," Michael sadly responded.

Only 6 years old and he didn't have a dad, and his Mom had died, and here he was flying halfway across the country all by himself. The least I could do was make sure he had a good flight. With my foot I pushed my briefcase under my seat.

"Do they have a bathroom here?" he asked, squirming a little.

"Sure," I said, "let me take you there." I showed him how to work the 'Occupied' sign, and what buttons to push on the sink, then he closed the door. When he emerged, he wore a wet shirt and a huge smile. "That sink shoots water everywhere!" The attendants smiled.

Michael got the VIP treatment from the crew during snack time. I took out my laptop and tried to work on a talk I had to give, but my mind kept going to Michael. I couldn't stop looking at the crumpled grocery bag on the floor by his seat. He'd told me that everything he owned was in that bag - poor kid.

While Michael was getting a tour of the cockpit the flight attendant told me his grandmother would pick him up in Chicago. In the seat pocket a large manila envelope held all the paperwork regarding his custody. He came back explaining, "I got wings! I got cards! I got more peanuts. I saw the pilot and he said I could come back anytime!"

For a while he stared at the manila envelope.

"What are you thinking?" I asked. He didn't answer. He buried his face in his hands and started sobbing. It had been years since I'd heard a little one cry like that. My kids were grown -- still I don't think they'd ever cried so hard. I rubbed his back and wondered where the flight attendant was.

"What's the matter buddy?" I asked. All I got were muffled words, "I don't know my grandma. Mama didn't want her to come visit and see her sick. What if Grandma doesn't want me? Where will I go?"

"Michael, do you remember the Christmas story? Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus? Remember how they came to Bethlehem just before Jesus was born? It was late and cold, and they didn't have anywhere to stay, no family, no hotels, not even hospitals where babies could be born. Well, God was watching out for them. He found them a place to stay; a stable with animals."

"Wait, wait," Michael tugged on my sleeve. "I know Jesus. I remember now." Then he closed his eyes, lifted his head and began to sing. His voice rang out with a strength that rocked his tiny frame. "Jeeesus looooves me--thiiiiis I knowwwwww. For the Biiiiible tells meeeeeee soooooo....."

Passengers turned or stood up to see the little boy who made the large



sound. Michael didn't notice his audience. With his eyes shut tight and voice lifted high, he was in a good place. "You've got a great voice," I told him when he was done. "I've never heard anyone sing like that."

"Mama said God gave me good pipes just like my Grandma's," he said. "My Grandma loves to sing, she sings in her church choir."

"Well, I'll bet you can sing there too. The two of you will be running that choir."

The seat belt sign came on as we approached O'Hare. The flight attendant came by and said we just have a few minutes now, but she told Michael it's important that he put on his seat belt. People started stirring in their seats, like the kids before the final school bell. By the time the seat belt sign went off, passengers were rushing down the aisle. Michael and I stayed seated.

"Are you gonna go with me?" he asked.

"I wouldn't miss it for the world buddy!" I assured him. Clutching his bag and the manila envelope in one hand, he grabbed my hand with the other. The two of us followed the flight attendant down the jetway. All the noises of the airport seemed to fill the corridor. Michael stopped, flipping his hand from mine, he dropped to his knees. His mouth quivered. His eyes brimmed with tears.

"What's wrong Michael? I'll carry you if you want." He opened his mouth and moved his lips, but it was as if his words were stuck in his throat. When I knelt next to him, he grabbed my neck. I felt his warm, wet face as he whispered in my ear, "I want my mama!" I tried to stand, but Michael squeezed my neck even harder. Then I heard a rattle of footsteps on the corridor's metal floor.

"Is that you baby?" I couldn't see the woman behind me, but I heard the warmth in her voice. "Oh baby," she cried, "Come here. Grandma loves you so much. I need a hug baby. Let go of that nice man," she knelt beside Michael and me. Michael's grandma stroked his arm. I smelled a hint of orange blossoms.

"You've got folks waiting for you out there Michael. Do you know that you've got aunts and uncles and cousins?" She patted his skinny shoulders and started humming. Then she lifted her head and sang. I wondered if the flight attendant told her what to sing, or maybe she just knew what was right. Her strong, clear voice filled the passageway, "Jesus loves me - this I know..."

Michael's gasps quieted. Still holding him, I rose, nodded hello to his grandma and watched her pick up the grocery bag. Right before we got to the doorway to the terminal, Michael loosened his grip around my neck and reached for his grandma.

As soon as she walked across the threshold with him, cheers erupted. From the size of the crowd, I figured family, friends, pastors, elders, deacons, choir members and most of the neighbors had come to meet Michael. A tall man tugged on Michael's ear and pulled off the red sign around his neck. It no

longer applied.

As I made my way to the gate for my connecting flight, I barely noticed the weight of my overstuffed briefcase and laptop. I started to wonder who would be in the seat next to mine this time...and I smiled.

**Swami says, “Love is of three kinds; Swartha or self centred, which like a bulb, illumines just a small room; Anyonya or mutual, which like moonlight, spreads wider but is not clear; and Parartha which like the sunlight, is all pervasive and clear. Cultivate the third type of love that will save you. For all the service that you do to others, through love, is actually service done to yourself. It is not others that you help, it is yourself that is being helped.”**

*-- Author Unknown --*

## THE STORY OF 'LOVE'

Once, there was a beautiful paradise-like island where our Feelings and Qualities lived: Happiness, Sadness, Knowledge - all the array of human emotions, including Love. One day, it was announced to the Feelings that due to the weight of Selfishness the island would soon sink, and everyone should prepare their boats and leave as soon as possible.

All the Feelings made ready to leave without delay – except for Love who had grown so fond of the island she wanted to stay until the last possible moment. However, after some time of visiting all her friends and favourite places, she realized that the island was fast disappearing and she needed to ask for help from the other departing Feelings to escape.

She spotted Riches leaving in a large luxurious yacht. Love called out in all affection, "Riches, can you take me with you?" Riches replied in a cold and huffy voice, "No, I can't. There is so much gold and silver on board that there is no place for you."

Close behind Riches, came Vanity who was departing the island in a most elegant vessel. "Vanity, please help me! I need to get off the island" Love said in all sweetness. "I can't help you Love. You will get wet and might damage my boat," Vanity answered, rather haughtily.

Love then spotted Envy, who seemed inseparable to the duo of Riches and Vanity. Envy's boat was a rather poor attempt at emulating the other two, but Love did not care – she only wanted to escape the sinking island. On hearing Love's humble request Envy retorted, "No way. If you come on board who will notice me as people are always thinking about you. The world will be better off without you."

Love then spied Sadness who was coming close behind Envy, so Love asked for help, "Sadness, let me go with you." But Sadness excused himself saying rather drearily, "No - go away. I am so sad that I need to be all by myself for a while!"

By this time, Love was growing a little anxious, as the waters were lapping at her feet. But she picked up on hearing the sound of laughter and merriment and saw Happiness coming in a joyful flotilla of small boats. "Hey Happiness! Happiness, hello!" But as much as she tried to get Happiness' attention it was to no avail – Happiness was too wrapped up in her own pleasure to notice Love's calls!

She wondered what would happen to her? Would she be lost forever as the island went down under the weight of Selfishness? And as she watched the other Feelings disappearing out of view she felt a well of compassion for them – they had rejected her and would never know the gift of her presence.

Suddenly, she heard a kindly voice, "Come here, Love. I will take you." The owner of the voice was a wise looking elder and true to his word he took her to dry land, all the while keeping a rather reserved silence. His identity remained a mystery as Love felt so overjoyed she forgot to ask his name. And

though the journey was over a vast distance, it seemed to go by in a twinkle of an eye. Then the elder went on his own way, giving Love a parting smile of affection.

Later, Love realized how much she owed the esteemed old gentleman and sought out the help of Knowledge. She asked him who had come to her aid.

"It was Time," venerable Knowledge answered. "Time?" wondered Love. "But why did Time help me?" Knowledge smiled with deep wisdom and answered, "Because, only Time is capable of understanding how valuable Love is."

Adapted from: Inspirational Quotes, May 2007

## MULTI-FAITH QUIZ

*This quiz concerns religious festivals celebrated all around the world in the month of November. We offer you only a few illustrations of the rich tapestry of spiritual expression, as people rejoice in communion with God this month.*

1. Celebrated on 1 November, the Christian Holiday of All Saint's Day honors and recognizes all of the Saints of the Christian Church who do not have a specific day named in their honor. But in Santiago Sacatepequez, which is located just 40 minutes from Guatemala City, All Saints' Day is celebrated on November 2<sup>nd</sup> as a festival, with giant kites.

What is the significance of the flying of the giant kites?

- A. To raise the souls of the dead to Heaven.
- B. To ask for the Saints' blessings in return.
- C. To connect people to their favourite Saint.
- D. To pray for joy.

2. On 9 November, *Diwali* - also called *Deepavali* - a major Indian festival, is celebrated. Also known as the "Festival of Lights," it symbolizes the victory of good over evil, and lamps are lit as a sign of celebration and hope for humankind. In one of His Diwali Discourses, Bhagavan said: "The flame of a lamp has two significant qualities. One is to banish darkness; the other is a continuous upward movement. Even if a lamp is kept in a pit, the flame is directed upwards."

What connotation did He give about the upward movement of the flame?

- A. It reminds us to look up to God.
- B. It signifies a Positive outlook to life.
- C. It denotes the path to Wisdom and Divinity.
- D. It builds Faith and Devotion.

3. The Bahá'í Faith is a religion that was founded in the 19th-century in Persia, by Bahá'u'lláh, whose name means "The Glory of God". His Birthday is celebrated on 12 November. Bahá'u'lláh was a member of one of the great patrician families of Persia. The family could trace its lineage to the ruling dynasties of Persia's imperial past, and was endowed with wealth and vast estates. Turning his back on the position at court which these advantages offered Him, Bahá'u'lláh became known for his generosity and kindness which made him deeply loved among his countrymen.

What is the essential message of Bahá'u'lláh?

- A. Sacrifice
- B. Unity
- C. Charity
- D. Justice

4. There are really a number of Children's Day observances around the world. Although the United Nations and UNESCO observes 20 November as the Universal Children's Day, in India it is celebrated on 14 November.

After which famous Indian personality is this day observed?

- A. A Film star
- B. A Legendary Cricketer
- C. The First Prime Minister
- D. A Spiritual Guru

5. In Japan, 'Shichi go san' is celebrated on 15 November. On this day parents take boys of three and five years old and girls of three and seven, to give thanks to the Gods for a healthy life so far and to pray for a safe and successful future.

What does the name 'Shichi go san' signify?

- A. The ages of the children.
- B. A most revered Japanese deity.
- C. A favourite sweet of children.
- D. A rare flower grown only in Japan.

6. Buddhist holidays are joyful occasions. The 'Buddha Elephant Festival' also takes an important place in these. A festival day normally begins with a visit to the local temple, where one offers food or other items to the monks and listens to a Dharma talk. The Buddha Elephant Festival is a big Elephant Festival celebrated by Buddhists each year on the third Saturday in November. At one point Buddha used the example of a wild elephant that is harnessed to a tame one.

What is the significance?

- A. To train him to be strong.
- B. To teach that every new learner should be helped by an older one.
- C. To teach him friendship.
- D. To help him be calm.

7. Just like Hindus who celebrate the Festival of Lights, the 'Loy Krathong' Festival takes place in all parts of Thailand on the full moon night of the Twelfth Lunar month. All Thai people buy or make a "Krathong", which is made of Styrofoam surrounded by banana leaves, with flowers and a candle in the middle.

What do the people do with this 'Krathong'?

- A. They keep it in their shrine at home.
- B. They present it as a gift to each other.
- C. They let it float away on a river.
- D. They take it to a Temple and offer it to their chosen Deity.

8. In November 2007, in Nepal too the Festival of lights will be observed, from the 7th to 11th. It is the second biggest festival after 'Dashain' and is called 'Tihar'. Tihar' Festival lasts for five days and people worship Laxmi – the Goddess of Wealth. All the houses are cleaned and decorated with the belief that Goddess Laxmi will enter the house that is the cleanest. People light candles and oil lamps so that the whole place looks illuminating.

Besides Goddess Laxmi, who else do they honour?

- A. A few chosen animals.
- B. The Planets.
- C. The oceans.
- D. A holy mountain.

9. As we all know, Thanksgiving Day, is a traditional holiday to give thanks to God at the conclusion of the harvest season. In the United States, Thanksgiving is on the fourth Thursday of November and is a four day weekend which usually marks a pause in school and college calendars. On this holiday, a Thanksgiving meal is prepared with all the trimmings; it is a time to gather with family and friends and to give thanks for one's many blessings. The first ones to celebrate this festival in the US were the Pilgrim Fathers. After leaving England, to which country did the Pilgrims first sail to, before venturing across the Atlantic Ocean?

- A. Italy.
- B. America.
- C. Spain.
- D. Holland.

10. On November 24, Sikhs celebrate the first of the 10 Guru's - Guru Nanak Ji's Birthday who is also the founder of Sikhism. Sikhism, which comes from the Hindi word 'sikh', meaning "disciple," is one of the three religions most widely practiced in India .

Sikhs celebrate Guru Nanak's Birthday with an Akhand Path, a reading of the Sikh Holy Scriptures, the Guru Granth Sahib, continuously from beginning to end.

For how many days is the Holy Book read?

- A. 1 day
- B. 2 days
- C. 5 days
- D. 7 days

----- ANSWERS

1A

According to their tradition, the kites are flown to raise the souls of the dead to Heaven and to turn away evil spirits. The inhabitants of Santiago, Sacatepequez believe that on November 2nd they can communicate with their ancestors and send good messages. For this reason, they design beautiful kites with many colors to communicate messages of happiness. Also, on this day a group selects the best kite design and gives a prize to the winning family.

2C

In His discourse, Bhagavan tells us: "The ancients have taught that the upward movement of the flame denotes the path to wisdom and the path to divinity. However, the external light can dispel only the external darkness, but not the darkness of ignorance in man. When Narakasura was killed all those who suffered under him were overjoyed. Having led a life of darkness till then, both internally and externally, they celebrated the occasion by lighting lamps. There is significance in lighting lamps. The flame of one lamp can light the whole array of lamps. That one lamp symbolizes the Parama Jyothi (supreme effulgence). The others symbolize the Jeevana Jyothis (light in individual selves). Deepavali is celebrated in order to teach this truth to the world. People celebrate this festival by bursting firecrackers signifying the victory of good over evil.

The inner meaning underlying the Indian festivals should be rightly understood. On each festival day, people have a sacred bath early in the morning and wear new clothes, keep their houses and surroundings clean.



Thus the festivals teach us the importance of internal and external cleanliness. The Vedas declare, "Anthar Bahischa Tat Sarvam Vyapya Narayana Stithaha", God is present within and around. So, one has to be pure both internally and externally. It is the water that helps to keep your body clean. But it is love that keeps your heart clean. You should celebrate the festivals in full realization of their inner significance".

3B

The essential message of Bahá'u'lláh is that of Unity. He taught that there is only one God, that there is only one human race, and that all the world's religions represent stages in the revelation of God's will and purpose for humanity.

4C

India's first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was born on 14 November. He liked children and was regularly photographed with them. Children called him Chacha (Uncle) Nehru. After he became Prime Minister of India, his birthday was observed as Children's Day in India.

5A

The festival of 'Shichi go san' is named after the ages of the children taking part - seven (shichi), five (go), three (san). These ages in particular are celebrated both because these years are seen as important age markers in the stages of a child's growth and because odd numbers are seen as signs of good luck in Japan.

6B

Buddha used the example of a wild elephant that is harnessed to a tame one to teach that a person new to Buddhism should be helped by an older Buddhist. This festival is characterized by the spread of love and goodwill.

7C

In the evening, Thai people go to places where there is a river, or a pond to launch their "Krathong". As they go, all bad luck is supposed to disappear. The people usually make a wish at the same time. Some people believe that if the candle remains burning until the 'Krathong' is out of sight then their wish will come true. By the end of the evening, there are hundreds of flickering lights bobbing up and down on the water. Quite often there are also firework displays as well as shows and beauty contests.

8A

During the five days, crows, dogs and cows are worshipped and honored with vermilion, garlands and delicious food for what they have done in the lives of

humans. Crows are regarded as the messenger that brought news even during the times when there were no postmen. Dogs are the most obedient animals and they guard our house as true guardians. Cows are also a symbol of wealth in Hinduism and the national animal of Nepal. During Tihar, the Newari community in Nepal also observes 'Mha puja' – a ritual of worshipping one's own body and life. On this very day, the Newari New Year which is also known as Nepal 'Sambat' begins. The festival ends with 'Bhai Tika' – 'Brothers' day' when sisters pray for him for a long and healthy life to safeguard their lives.

9D

The Pilgrims who sailed to America aboard the Mayflower were originally members of the English Separatist Church (a Puritan sect). They had earlier fled their home in England and sailed to Holland (The Netherlands) to escape religious persecution. There, they enjoyed more religious tolerance, but they eventually became disenchanted with the Dutch way of life, thinking it ungodly. Seeking a better life, the Separatists negotiated with a London stock company to finance a pilgrimage to America and first set ground in Plymouth Rock which is now part of Massachusetts.

10B

Sikhs celebrate Guru Nanak's Birthday with an Akhand Path, a reading of the Sikh Holy Scriptures, the Guru Granth Sahib, continuously from beginning to end. This is done by a team of Sikh men and women, each reading for 2-3 hours over 48 hours, beginning two days before and ending early on the morning of the birthday. The most famous teachings attributed to Guru Nanak are that there is only one God, and that all human beings can have direct access to God with no need of rituals or priests. His most radical social teachings denounced the caste system and taught that everyone is equal, regardless of caste or gender.

## QUIZ ON BABA'S BIRTHDAYS

1. We all know that when our Beloved Bhagavan was born on November 23rd, 1926, His father and grand-father, and His siblings Venkamma, Parvathi, Seshama Raju and His neighbour Subbamma were present too.

Who assisted Swami's Mother Easwaramma during her delivery?

- A. Swami's elder sister Venkamma
- B. A Midwife
- C. Swami's neighbour Subbamma
- D. A pious local lady doctor

2. After Swami declared that He was an Incarnation of Shirdi Baba, the number of devotees kept on increasing with the result that, in a few years the Old Mandir could not accommodate them. Even sheds and makeshift Pandals around the Old Mandir were inadequate during festivals.

In answer to the prayers of the devotees, Baba agreed for a more spacious place. Thus, the idea of New Mandir [Prashanti Nilayam] was conceived and was constructed at a place to the south of the village of Puttaparthi.

On which Birthday was Prashanti Nilayam inaugurated?

- A. 20<sup>th</sup>
- B. 25<sup>th</sup>
- C. 30<sup>th</sup>
- D. 35<sup>th</sup>

3. On His 28<sup>th</sup> Birthday, in 1954, Swami took the first step in giving concrete shape to an important dimension of His Mission. What did He do?

- A. Lay the foundation stone for the General Hospital in Puttaparthi
- B. Declare the Publication of Sanathana Sarathi
- C. Announce the establishment of a Veda Pathasala in Prashanti
- D. Construct a mosque for the Muslims of Puttaparthi

4. On 22nd November 1975, on the Golden Jubilee [50th Birthday] of our Beloved Bhagavan, He inaugurated the 50 feet high pillar called - The Sarva [means entire, whole, every kind of] Dharma [means righteousness, morality, virtue, duty, the dictates of God, code of conduct] Stupa [a pillar], in the shape a lotus bud, on which the symbols of some of the major religions of the world can be seen.

The significance of these sacred symbols have been explained by Bhagavan so that we can understand the truth that all religions lead man on the path to God. The 'Om' of Hinduism, for example, means "Listen to the primeval Pranava 'AUM' resounding in your heart as well as in the heart of the universe"; the Cross of Christianity signifies, "Cut the 'I' feeling clean across and let your ego die on the cross, to endow on you eternity", etc.

Of all the major religions, which religion does Baba mainly stress on?

- A. Hinduism and Buddhism
- B. Christianity and Hinduism
- C. All religions of Indian origin
- D. None of them

5. Bhagavan Baba unfurled the model of The Shri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning to the world on the eve of His 56th Birthday.

When Swami inaugurated this marvelous edifice on the 22 November 1981, it was truly, as Prof. Kasturi writes, "The dawn of the Sai era of re-education of man for the establishment of peace on earth and goodwill among all peoples."

Among other Universities in India, what was number of this Institute?

- A. 106
- B. 108
- C. 109
- D. 110

6. The Engineers who were to construct the 65 feet high Hanuman Statue in the Hill View Stadium in Prashanti Nilayam for the 65th Birthday, were at a loss regarding the design of the huge structure taking into account the huge weight, the load distribution on all sides, stability, etc.

When they went to seek Bhagavan's help, how did He help them out?

- A. He came in the dream of the architect and revealed the design.
- B. He materialized an idol to show how it should be designed.
- C. He drew the design Himself.
- D. He asked them increase the base of the statue and reduce the height of Hanuman.

7. On Nov 12, 2003, Bhagavan Baba, the teachers and students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Anantapur Campus, organized a social service project in which 78 physically challenged persons were selected from various villages and gifted them with tricycles, crutches, calipers, artificial limbs, wheel chairs, walking sticks, etc.

Then Bhagavan cut a cake! What was the occasion?

- A. It was Bhagawan's Birthday according to the Indian Calendar
- B. It was the birthday of Mother Eswaramma
- C. It was the Anniversary celebration of the Anantapur Campus
- D. It was the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Warden of the Anantapur Campus

8. On November 23, 2001, Radio Sai came on the air for the first time when Bhagavan pressed a button in Sai Kulwant Hall, as a part of the Birthday celebrations.

In which country was the uplink station of Worldspace from where the signal was received by satellite and send to Prashanthi Mandir?

- A. America
- B. U.K
- C. Australia
- D. Singapore

9. On November 23, 2004, the day of Swami's 79th Birthday, drinking water was formally released from Andhra Pradesh to Chennai.

From which River was this water being channeled?

- A. Godavari
- B. Krishna
- C. Kaveri
- D. Ganga

10. Each year, the month of November draws several thousand devotees from around the globe and all corners of India to Prashanti Nilayam. The week of November 23, 2006 which marked Bhagawan's 81st birthday celebrations, was no different. Devotees thronged Prashanti Nilayam to witness the 25th annual convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) - a deemed University, and the inauguration of Sri Sathya Sai International Centre for Sports - an indoor stadium of international standards, and a momentous gift from Bhagawan to His students.

How long did it take to build the Sports Centre?

- E. 4 months
- F. 8 months
- G. 9 months
- H. 6 months

----- ANSWERS

1C

Bhagavan Baba was born on 23rd November 1926 in Puttaparthi, a remote village of Andhra Pradesh in India, in the Ratnakar family of Sri Kondama Raju, who was the grandfather of Bhagavan's physical body. Sri Kondama Raju, who lived separately from the family contemplating on God day in and day out, had full faith in the prophecy of his Guru Venkavadhoota that God would incarnate in his family. He lived a long life of 116 years to realize and experience the divinity of his grandson, who was by his side to fulfill his last wish of pouring water into his mouth when he breathed his last in 1950.

He had two sons, both named after his Guru Venkavadhoota, Sri Pedda Venkama Raju and Sri Chinna Venkama Raju. The divine child Sathyanarayana Raju (called Sathya or Raju in childhood) was the fourth child of the devout couple, Sri Pedda Venkama Raju and Srimati Easwaramma.

Subbamma came to the Raju house, to be of assistance at the time of the birth of the baby.

*Ref: Shirdi Sai Parthi Sai – H2H June 2006*

2B

Bhagavan Baba inaugurated it on 23rd November 1950 on his 25th birthday and named it Prashanti Nilayam (the abode of supreme peace). Previous to that year, the Birthday had been rather informal. Swami delighted the Mother and the Father and their sons and daughters by visiting their home and going through the ritual of lunch in their company. After the parents had placed a few drops of oil on his cluster of hair, the ceremonial bath was administered and Swami fulfilled the longing of one devotee by accepting the robe and dhoti he placed at His feet. All those present then touched His feet praying for boons and blessings.

3A

The foundation of the Prashanti Nilayam Hospital was laid on 23 November 1954, and the Hospital was inaugurated on 4 October 1956. Many devotees toiled to help build the hospital by carrying stones, bricks, cement, and other articles on top of the small hill on which it was constructed. From the hospital, one could get a bird's eye-view of the river Chitravathi, with the hills in the background.

The Hospital initially had twelve beds, six of them for confinements, according to the needs of the time. The Hospital catered mainly to the villagers and devotees. The doctors and the paramedical staff were appointed by Swami. They worked voluntarily without any remuneration.

4D

Baba says: "I have not come to speak on behalf of any particular Dharma (religion), like the Hindu Dharma (Hindu religion). I have not come on any mission of publicity for any sect or creed or cause; nor have I come to collect followers for any doctrine. I have no plan to attract disciples or devotees into My fold or any fold. I have come to tell you of this Universal unitary faith, this Atmic principle (principle of the spirit), this path of love, this Dharma of Prema (nature of love), this duty of love, this obligation to love."

"Let the different faiths exist, let them flourish; let the glory of God be sung in all languages in a variety of tunes. That should be the ideal. Respect the differences between the faiths and recognize them as valid so far as they do not extinguish the flame of unity,"

5C

Swami said:

"You are aware that there are now 108 universities in India. This University is the 109th, one more than that traditional total. May all the universities succeed and serve the country well. But this university must be distinct from the rest and attain a unique status."

*Ref: Cover Story: Modern Education's Divine Manifestation – H2H Nov 2006*

6B

When they approached Bhagavan, Swami told them that a certain pose of Hanuman would give them the required structural stability, and to illustrate what pose He had in mind, He materialized on the spot a golden idol of Hanuman, the way He wanted!

Later, the engineers did a complete structural analysis through computer simulation and discovered that indeed this particular structure was far more stable than anything they had come up with earlier!

*Ref: Cover Story: Glorious Sai, His Wisdom – H2H Nov 2005*

7A

12th November, 2003, (the date fixed by Bhagawan for the distribution ceremony) happened to be Bhagawan's Birthday according to the Indian Calendar (Bahula Tadiya Karthika Maasam). To commemorate the 78th Birthday of our Beloved Lord, the function at the Sai Kulwant Hall began with Bhagawan lighting the Lamp, and then cutting the Birthday Cake.

To the surprise and delight of all the people gathered in the hall, Bhagawan expressed a desire to speak, too! Bhagawan spoke for nearly twenty minutes, without any translation! Bhagawan's loving and soothing words to the handicapped were like balm to a depressed heart. They brought tears to the

eyes of all who were present there. Bhagavan comforted the patients by saying that they should not feel unhappy because they are deprived of the full and proper use of their limbs. Those who have all their limbs intact do not use their body for the good of others, nor for the service of others, Bhagavan said. He exhorted the handicapped patients to develop confidence, and to work with such commitment that they put to shame the full-bodied. Bhagavan promised them every possible help, and asked them not to hesitate in expressing any of their problems to Him. Bhagavan said that if any of them were interested in further studies, He would provide them admission in one of His institutions.

*Ref: Window To Sai Seva: A Birthday Gift from Anantapur – H2H Jan 1st 2004*

8C

When Swami pressed the button, a message was flashed from the Mandir to Melbourne in Australia by cell phone - we had two cell phones just in case one of them failed! - and the person in the Melbourne uplink station of WORLDSPACE switched on the computer which then started sending a pre-recorded program to the satellite. That program was received by a receiver we had set up in the Mandir, and this signal was fed to the Public Address system. Thanks to all this, the people assembled in the Sai Kulwant Hall heard the inaugural program, which lasted seven minutes - we had arrived! By the way, when Swami pressed the switch, a big board that was kept in the Hall lit up and that was the symbolic inauguration.

*Ref: Cover Story: Spreading His Message, the Digital Dimension – H2H Sep 15th 2003*

9B

A few days later, water reached the zero point crossing on Swami's Birthday date according to the Telugu calendar. This was a happy event, with Sai Krishna getting the Krishna water released on His birthday according to one calendar and reaching that same water on His birthday according to another calendar! Soon after this, bus loads of Chennai residents converged on Prashanti Nilayam to express their gratitude

*Ref: Cover Story: The Chennai Citizen's Conclave... Divinity Diffuses all Differences – H2H Mar 2007*

10A

The indoor stadium was built in a record four months time and inaugurated on November 22, 2006, by His Excellency President of India, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. Offering his reverential pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan, the President praised the value-based education offered at Bhagavan's institutions saying it combines spirituality with social responsibility.

*Ref: Sai World News: Love of Science and Signs of Love – H2H Mar 2007*



## QUIZ ON HEART2HEART

**This quiz tests your recall powers from reading Heart2Heart. This being the month of November, all the questions are based on events from Bhagavan's life that have happened in this month. And in the answers we have included the links to all the stories and articles from which they have been taken. So please click on these links and enjoy reading about His glory.**

1. Traditionally, on every second Saturday-Sunday of November, Akhanda Sai Bhajans [24-hour continuous singing] are held globally. When did this actually start?

- A. The Thirties
- B. The Forties
- C. The Fifties
- D. The Sixties

2. By the beginning of the 1980's, there were three colleges, in Anantapur, in Bangalore and in Puttaparthi respectively. Soon the time was ripe to fuse all these into a University, and that step was taken in 1981. Established by Bhagavan on the 22nd of November, 1981, and comprising of three campuses - Prashanti Nilayam, Brindavan and Anantapur, the Institute draws its inspiration from the penetrative declaration of Bhagavan Baba, who is also its Revered Chancellor:

*"Students are the very foundation of the nation. To make the foundation strong, the people, the government, the parents, the teachers and the students - all have to coordinate their plans and their efforts. These five elements, these five vital forces have to work together towards this end. Students and teachers are the most valuable asset which can render the University an ideal one."*

What is the purpose behind Swami attracting students?

- A. To provide the best academic education
- B. To make India known globally
- C. To lead students on the spiritual path eventually
- D. To find good disciples to run His mission

3. On 23rd of November, in 1990, Swami made a 'Historic Declaration'. "There are countless people in this country, who cannot afford the huge costs of going abroad, and seeking a heart surgery. The poor have no proper place to go to, for such expensive operations, even in this country. Next year, we are going to establish a fully equipped, modern hospital at Puttaparthi, at the cost

of hundred crores of rupees, where all cardiac patients will be given treatment, totally free of cost. Besides this, patients and their attendants will be provided facilities for their food and stay, totally free of charge. The first operation will be performed on the 22nd of November, next year."

What kinds of operations were performed on the opening day?

- A. A heart surgery and a brain surgery
- B. Three heart surgeries and an eye surgery
- C. Four Open-heart surgeries
- D. Three Open-heart surgeries

4. On Nov 19, 1995, on the occasion of the 70th Birthday celebrations, Bhagavan magnanimously declared that the 19th of November will henceforth be celebrated as Ladies' Day to highlight the sacred qualities of women and lay renewed emphasis of the quality of motherhood. This day is much anticipated by the lady devotees every year in memory of Mother Easwaramma, who stands as a crest jewel of womanhood.

Ever since, it has been the privilege of women to celebrate this day as Ladies' Day in His Divine Presence at Prashanti Nilayam. On this day all the Mandir activities starting from the morning *Suprabhatham* to the *Nagarsankeertan* are carried out exclusively by ladies.

In which year of Ladies Day celebration did Swami also inaugurate the Easwaramma Women's Welfare Project?

- A. 2000
- B. 2001
- C. 2003
- D. 2004

5. Of all the prayers gifted to us by Swami, which is the one on which he lays a lot of stress and gave it as a birthday gift on one birthday?

- A. Asato Maa Prayer
- B. Sarva Dharma Prayer
- C. Universal Peace Prayer
- D. Sathya Sai Gayatri

----- ANSWERS

1B

This is mentioned by Mrs. Geetha Mohan Ram, one of the very early devotees to come to Swami. She says,

"In 1945 my grandfather started the Akhanda Bhajan that we now do in a global way in the month of November. At that time we used to do it as a family Bhajan. Eight families would get together for Bhajans on every Thursday in their houses by rotation. So this went on from 1943 to 1944. They finished one year and then thought on that day let us have a 24-hour repetition of *Namasmarana*. So my grandfather wrote to Swami that He should bless them to start *Akhanda Bhajan*. The reply came, 'My blessings are there and I am coming for *Akhanda Bhajan*.'"

*Ref: Miscellaneous: His Love Throughout My Life - Sep 2005*

2C

Swami compares His strategy for attracting students with what Yasoda the foster mother of Krishna once did. Yasoda was becoming a bit tired of Krishna's pranks and the complaints from the villagers. So one day she decided to catch Krishna and punish Him. But Krishna went into hiding. To draw Him out, Yasoda said in a loud voice, "Krishna, come here and see what I have in my hand. I have something You like very much, butter. Come and get it!" Yasoda no doubt had butter in her outstretched hand but in her other hand, concealed behind her back, she held a stick! Swami says that Yasoda wanted to first attract Krishna with butter and then apply the stick! Baba adds that He first attracts students with the prospect of earning a University Degree. Once they are in, He leads them by the hand on the spiritual path!

*Ref: Cover Story: Temple of Learning, The Genesis - Nov 1st 2003*

3C

Dr.A.N.Safaya, the Director of SSSIHMS recalls:

"A miracle indeed, it was, when, on 22nd November 1991, the surgeon's scalpel touched the skin of the first patient, at 9:00 AM, sharp, as predicted a year ago by Bhagawan, in His public Declaration! On that day, when the Prime Minister of India cut the ribbon and entered the magnificent central dome, accompanied by Bhagawan, several Governors, Chief Ministers and Union Ministers; it turned out to be the best setup, with the state-of-art equipment, most modern fittings and fixtures, and was fully functional. The set-up was one of the finest in the country. Nay. Comparable to the best in the world. Who turned the tides, between the 18th and the 22nd November? Swami did it; our prayers and faith in Him, did it. I, along with thousands who worked and witnessed the Inauguration that day, will testify it!"

His Word had come true! Needless to say, all the four open-heart surgeries performed on that Opening day were a great success.

*Ref: Cover Story: Temples of Healing, His Word Took a Form - Nov 1st 2003*

4D

On Ladies' Day, 19th November 2004, Swami inaugurated the Easwaramma Women's Welfare Project. As a follow-up to it, with Swami's infinite Grace and Blessings, the Easwaramma Women's Welfare Trust was established to benefit women at large. It was founded on the teachings of Bhagavan to reach out to the problems of women in a meaningful way, and bring peace and comfort, without any distinction of religion, caste, colour or creed.

*Ref: Prashanti Diary - Jan 2005*

5C

The Universal Prayer:

Lokaa Samastaa Sukhino Bhavantuu  
*Om Shanti Shanti Shantihi*

May the entire world be happy.  
Om Peace, Peace, Peace

"Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu (Let all beings in all the worlds be happy). Include this universal prayer in your prayers every day. This is my birthday message to you."

*Ref: Quotations - Nov 15th 2003*

## **THE HEALING TOUCH**

### **A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE OF 'LIQUID LOVE'**

#### ***The stirring story of the service at the Blood Bank in SSSIHMS***

The piped in music fades out and a sincere voice comes on the air: "Om Sri Sai Ram. Here is an important announcement. Group A+ blood is required urgently. Willing donors may contact the Blood Bank at Ext: 317. Thank you. Sai Ram." Within 10 minutes of the announcement, five donors with A+ blood reach the blood bank of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield, Bangalore.

A thirty two year old housewife has to be operated for a brain tumour. During the planning stage of her surgery, it becomes clear that she will require large quantities of cryo-precipitate, a component of blood, during the operation. The surgeons inform the blood bank regarding the requirement and in no time, they are able to post her for surgery. During the course of her treatment, she receives a total of 138 units of cryo-precipitate and 26 units of whole blood and components! The surgery turns out successful and she is able to go back home to her family, completely cured, happy and whole!

Another patient is a 29-year old man from Bangalore. He needs to be operated upon for an aortic aneurysm. During his post-operative phase, he receives a total of 46 units of blood and components. This time too, the blood bank promptly organises blood and its components in the required quantities. His recovery too is smooth and uneventful.

The Blood Bank of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences has become its perennial source of the life-saving elixir needed in such complicated surgeries. Many such patients consider themselves lucky to have been treated at Bhagavan Baba's Hospital, a state-of-the-art tertiary care medical facility set up in Whitefield, Bangalore, for those most in need. It not only offers the entire medical treatment totally free of cost, but also relieves the patient and family of the burden of organizing blood for the surgery involved, a practice quite common in Indian hospitals – both government and private, including the very expensive ones.

We all know nearly all major surgeries require safe blood to replenish the loss suffered during prolonged procedures. Most hospitals depend either on the patient's families to provide the needed quantities of the right match or ask them to pay for the supply the hospital may arrange for them from outsourced agencies. But such a mercenary practice holds no place in the Sathya Sai Medicare system where the only currency that is traded freely is pure, unconditional love.

Many of the patients who depend upon Bhagavan Baba's compassion and generosity for their treatment are typically so poor that they can't even afford a

train ticket to reach His Hospital from the various parts of the country and neighbouring nations.

At Bhagavan Baba's directive, His hospitals provide the patients with all necessary facilities during their treatment. Once a patient enters the warmth of the Sathya Sai Healthcare system's embrace, both the patient and his/her family heave a sigh of relief because the system shoulders the entire responsibility of patient care in every conceivable area, which includes arranging for the needed blood supply during and after surgery.

Dr. Nandita Ghosal, the Blood Bank Officer who heads the Hospital's blood bank, comparing her tenure with the Sri Sathya Sai Institute with other hospitals she has worked earlier, says, "In other hospitals, blood can become very difficult to organize, especially in cases of rare blood groups.

"I've seen many cases elsewhere, where surgeries had to be cancelled due to lack of blood, where cases had to be terminated before the completion of the surgery, and worse still, where a patient's life was lost due to loss of blood.

"Whatever may be the case, in outside hospitals the patient needs to pay for the supply. The prices per unit range anywhere from Rs. 300/- to Rs.1500/- per unit. (On an average, most surgeries need 1-6 units of blood, and the requirement can even exceed 50 units in rare cases).

It is true that there are costs involved in screening the blood and ensuring it is safe for transfusion, but the present prices of blood far outweigh the actual costs. It is unfortunate that blood has also become a commodity whose price is dictated by its demand and supply," she says.

"Here, in our Hospital, with Bhagavan's Grace and the generosity of the people who have been touched by the service His Institution is rendering, arranging blood, even of rare groups, has never posed a major problem. Any amount of stress is harmful to the patient and impedes his or her healing. When everything, including blood, is taken care of, the healing is accelerated. It makes such a difference to the patient's family and also to his or her recuperating process. When we say 'free treatment', we mean it, in all respects," says Dr. Ghosal.

### **Answering a Life Saving Need**

Explaining the blood collection procedure, Mr. J. Sai Kiran, Senior Manager of the Hospital's Laboratory and Blood Bank, explains, "Our Institute is licensed by the Regional Drug Controller to collect, store, process and transfuse blood, as per the prescribed norms. As far as procedures and standards are concerned, there is no difference between our blood bank and any other widely known blood banks.

We maintain the same quality standards, and on many counts exceed them. What makes the Sathya Sai Blood Bank stand apart is the purpose behind our existence. Whereas other blood banks supply blood for a price to the

individual, our blood bank collects blood only for the in-patient requirements of our Institute. The patient is absolved of all responsibility of finding the adequate supply, the right match or making any payment.”

Hear him narrate the patient's story. “The lady had a complicated blood disorder called dysfibrinogenemia, due to which blood clots very slowly. Her thrombin time (TT), one of the indicators of clotting efficiency, was almost three times than that of a normal person. The TT parameter could be improved, i.e. the TT could be brought down by transfusing the patient with cryo-precipitate. In the concerned case, she was given 55 units of cryo before surgery and 83 units after surgery, along with 26 units of whole blood. This worked wonders as her TT improved considerably. This episode shows to what extent Swami's Hospitals can go to help a patient. We could have simply denied the patient treatment quoting high risk, but we went the extra mile to save a 32 year young life.”

For the 6-8 surgeries, which take place in both the Cardiac and Neuro departments of the Bangalore Hospital everyday, approximately 45 units of blood and components are required on a daily basis. In complicated cases, the daily requirement of blood and the components can go up to 80-100 units. What makes the effort even more unique is that almost 98% of the blood is collected on a voluntary basis i.e. for every 100 units of blood collected, 98 units are donated by voluntary donors!

These are healthy men and women who appreciate the pure motivation of the Sathya Sai Healthcare system and appreciate the benefits it is delivering to the poorest of the poor in the highest professional manner possible. The goodness of the system evokes such altruism and generosity from them. Only a miniscule portion of the donors include members of the patient's family. The other 2 % is through autologous (from the patient himself) and directed donations. From January, 2001 till September, 2007, a total of 23,281 units of blood, have been collected, which upon processing makes close to 45,000 units of whole blood and blood components.

### **Inspiring the Gift of Life**

Such a generous supply of this sap of life comes to the Hospital largely due to the support of the *Seva Dal* or the service wing volunteers of the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organisation mainly from the state of Karnataka. These dedicated volunteers play a very vital role in mobilizing donors. They organize batches of college students and employees of many private and government companies to come to the Hospital and share the gift of life that is in each of us to give.

Mr. K. Viswanath, Bangalore District Service Coordinator, plays a pivotal role in creating awareness about the Hospital and the need for blood across various colleges and companies in the area. He says, “When the Hospital came into being, we visited many colleges in Bangalore to explain to their management the nature of the Hospital and sought their help in mobilizing

students for blood donations. No one has ever disagreed with the nobility of the mission.

“As well, the devotees of Baba and the former students of the Bal Vikas program (Sathya Sai Education in Human Values) have now emerged as another reliable group for us. Growing up nurturing the human values that Bhagavan Baba personifies, many of them are now employed in various companies where they inspire and encourage their colleagues to follow in their example and donate blood. There have been instances when devotees have traveled over 75 kms just to donate blood. Enthusiasm, civic consciousness and caring are such contagious and uplifting qualities that over the years, many colleges and companies have made it a part of their work culture to come and donate blood at our Institute.

For example every year, employees from TVS Motors, Hosur come and donate blood, as do the employees of GE Medical Systems, SAP Labs, SRIT, TCS and Ram Kumar Mills. We also receive college students from the MVJ Group of Educational Institutions, RBNMS (Ulsoor), Acharya Institutions (Peenya) and many other institutes, including the nearby Brindavan campus of the Sri Sathya Sai University. Such is the overwhelming response from the community to the Hospital’s blood needs that we do not even need to use the print media but rely mostly on word of mouth. Sometimes we announce in the local Sai Centres and only occasionally post notices in order to create awareness about the need for blood,” he adds.

“The procedure for blood donation is very simple,” explains Mr. Sai Kiran, the blood bank manager. “After filling out a form and screening the donor for suitability for blood donation, she/he is bled by the phlebotomist. Usually 350 to 450 cc of blood is collected from each donor in a blood bag, which contains chemicals to prevent it from clotting and provides food for the live cells. The process of bleeding is completed within 10 minutes. Once the donation is completed, the blood donor is given a mandatory snack even as they are observed for their well-being.”

The treat for the donor includes a glass of flavoured milk, biscuits, nuts and dry fruits. Before he or she leaves the blood bank, each donor receives a packet of *vibuthi* or the sacred ash, an appreciation card, a photo-calendar of Baba and of course, the inexpressible joy that accompanies any act of selfless giving and participation in the treatment of an ailing fellow being.

“In the case of large groups of donors, we provide a conducted tour of the Hospital and also screen a film about the work being done here. We capitalize the blood donation opportunity by turning it into a memorable experience which every blood donor may cherish. He or she is made aware that they have made a real difference - in most cases, the difference between life and death,” Kiran adds.



## **A Safe and Perfect Procedure**

During blood donation, normally 350 cc of blood known as one 'unit' is drawn from the donor. The body makes up the loss in volume within a couple of hours and in cells within a few days. However, as per national norms, between successive blood donations, a 3-month gap is mandatory and there are also certain health conditions the donor should meet in order to be able to safely donate blood.

After collection, the blood is tested for HIV, HbsAG, HCV and Syphilis, then cross-matched with the patient's blood to ensure there is no adverse reaction between the patient's blood and the donor's blood. The blood may be separated into components, namely packed red cells, plasma, platelets and cryo precipitate.

The advantage of componenting is to provide the patient a tailor-made solution for his requirement. If a patient is anaemic, she requires hemoglobin or packed red cells, whereas if patient is low on protein, he requires plasma. If the blood component is not separated, both the patients would have received whole blood. Thanks to componenting, from the donor's point of view, his or her blood can benefit more than one patient, a truly gratifying thought.

"The whole blood and its components are stored in special refrigerators, which maintain the temperature at a precise degree. Once the request comes from the operation theatres, the blood bags are thawed (in case of frozen components) to reach room temperature and after the required cross-match tests they are then sent up to the operation theatres through the responsible and reliable *Seva Dal* volunteers and ward boys.

Sai Kiran, along with technicians and biomedical engineers, is also responsible for the proper running of the equipment used in the blood collection, screening, processing and storage, which are all state-of-the-art, and well-maintained. He is accountable for maintaining the necessary documentation for scrutiny by the Drug Controller during regular inspections – a prerequisite for renewing the Institute's license to collect blood. It is the dedication of the entire team which ultimately ensures that the patients receive safe blood.

## **Finding a Blood Angel**

The efficiency and sincerity of the system continues to grow on others, such as its donors. Many are the instances where blood donors, receiving a call from the Hospital rush from their place of work or home at odd hours to donate blood. Supratim Roy's is one such instance. A software engineer by profession, he works in a private company in Electronics City, situated in the suburbs of Bangalore. As a person with O-negative blood, one of the rarest blood groups, he is in constant demand.

For instance, once when O-negative blood was urgently required for a case, Sai Kiran was able to obtain his contact details from the internet and contact Supratim around 8 pm in the evening. Even though still at work, Supratim Roy drove 30 kilometres to come down to the hospital. After seeing the Institute setup and knowing that his blood would not be sold, as he had observed during his earlier blood donations elsewhere, Supratim was glad and offered to come again, whenever there's a need for blood of his group.

Recalling his primary phone call to Supratim, Sai Kiran, who has himself donated 23 times since he joined the Hospital in 2001, says, "During the first phone call, when I explained to Supratim about the patient, he turned suspicious and enquired whether I was related to the patient! He probably thought I was some kind of a middle-man, arranging for the blood for a small fee! I could make out that he was unable to believe that we were taking such pains to organize blood at our Hospital, all for free. Thanks to the positive understanding Supratim has now acquired about the Institute, he is always ready to help us, and is a mere phone call away!"

### **No Greater Gift**

Blood is the rare gift of life that still cannot be made outside the human body. It is a perishable commodity with an expiry period of 35 days. Surgeons generally prefer to use fresh blood, especially in paediatric cases, where they prefer blood collected less than 72 hours ago. Care is therefore taken to collect only the needed groups of blood and in the required quantities, as per the needs of the patients awaiting surgery.

The Sathya Sai Blood Bank takes special care to optimize on this valuable resource. The surgeons play an important role in its responsible use by performing surgeries using improved techniques, which minimize blood loss. Beating heart surgeries, minimally invasive surgeries and endoscopic procedures are means by which the blood requirement, as compared to traditional surgeries, is reduced to a great extent. In cases of very rare groups, through an autologous donation, the patient is requested to donate blood before surgery, and the same blood is transfused back during his or her own surgery.

This is also the safest type of blood that a patient can get. Research is also on to prepare a substitute for blood, which can perform the same functions as the human blood. It would, of course, take many years before it can be made available for use, and that too, at a reasonable price. Till then hospital systems across the world will continue to rely on fellow human beings to donate this life-giving element.

For a super-specialized facility where complicated surgeries are conducted every day, lives hinge on the timely availability of blood in the needed group. Luckily, the Hospital's donors realize this fact and rejoice in their good fortune to be able to share this gift of life as their two drops worth in the colossal humanitarian project of Bhagavan Baba.

With time, the unique Sathya Sai Healthcare system is not only providing free of cost tertiary medical care that meets the eye but also creating greater sense of civic consciousness, unconditional love and service opportunities for thousands who joyfully come forward to save the lives of seemingly complete strangers.

In the end, every donor realizes an inner connection with everyone else that gets further strengthened by the common blood line that they now share with a patient. Baba says, "There is only one caste, the caste of Humanity. And one is conferred with true happiness, only when he or she is of help to others. Service has twin benefits – inner joy to oneself and happiness to others." When we help another heal, we heal ourselves of our selfishness, and when we help save a life, we widen our mental horizons and broaden our own hearts. A million life lessons from a single act of kindness make the act of blood donation in this Hospital a truly spiritual and elevating experience.

*If you have a rare blood group, you have the exclusive privilege of being able to participate in the treatment of a fellow human being who is as 'rare' as you. On the other hand, if yours is a common blood group, then there are more patients of your blood group and the opportunity to serve that you have is immense. The surgeon might be the best of surgeons, and the equipment the best in its line, but without safe blood, the operation is impossible.*

*If you are in Bangalore, and would care to participate in this act of selfless giving at Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Bangalore, contact Sai Kiran at:*

[laboratoryblr@sssihms.org.in](mailto:laboratoryblr@sssihms.org.in)  
+91-80-28411500 Ext: 317.

## YOUR SAY

### Feedback from our Readers on the October Issue

#### Feedback on the cover story 'Beauty, Bliss and Blessings...of Sathya Sai in Chennai'

Dear Heart2Heart Team and Radio Sai,

I wish to thank you for the very uplifting story written by Prof G. Venkataraman titled *Beauty, Bliss and Blessings...of Sathya Sai in Chennai*. Thank you very much for your tireless seva to bring these beautiful stories home to me and spreading His Holy Word around the world. We desperately need Swami's Grace and Bliss every second to turn around a lost and violent population into a loving one.

Stories like this one tell us why His Holy Presence came to Earth to help us realize and see again who we really are, in dire need of help and Blessings. The many stories you have sent, I treasure all in my heart.

I am Jutta Benner. My first Home are the Stars, of course, my second Home is in Germany; I am German, my third Home presently is in the USA in Charleston, Oregon on the beautiful Pacific Ocean.

From Ocean to Ocean, from Heart to Heart, Sai Ram and thank you so very much for your love and your loving work.

Many blessings,  
Jutta Benner

Sai Ram H2H team,

I was just going through the article *Beauty, Bliss and Blessings...Sathya Sai in Chennai*. I am from Chennai but I currently live in New Zealand. I had a wonderful experience from start to finish, with Swami planning and executing my trip in January 2007 for the yagnam, and later for His visit to the hospital that I work in. I know that Sai's leelas are not unusual, for He is the Lord of this entire Universe. I travelled all the way across the globe to see our loving God and He blessed me abundantly and I have wonderful memories of His Grace and love.

Sai Ram  
Bhanu

Sairam Sir,

Thanks for your enlightening and illustrative report. Felt as though we were physically present there...May our Swami bless your attempts to unfold some

more of Him to us. We all thank you once again.  
Regards,  
Jayaraman R.G.  
Ulsoor, Bangalore.

Sai Ram!

I really enjoyed reading the cover story on Swamis' Chennai trip (part 3). In fact, after reading the article, my mind was thinking about Swami for couple of days without showing its monkey nature (if I may say so). I was so immersed in Swami's thoughts that He inspired me to write a few small poems (I am not competing with the greats though!). Here is one -

*I entered this world crying, You gave me the hand of my mother,  
I entered the school with fear; You gave me the hand of my father,  
I entered the society with loneliness; You gave me the hand of my sister,  
I entered the realms of uncertainty; You gave me the hand of my relatives,  
I entered the arch of Prashanthi Nilayam, and You gave me Yourself!*

I request the editor to also post other Leelas like how Swami got His license and many more of His Leelas!

Jai Sai Ram!

Saminathan Ramachandran

[We will be having more stories in the coming issues – H2H Team]

### **Feedback on 'Quest for Infinity'**

Sai Ram,

We are so fortunate to read about the wonderful mystery of nature and the planet where we live, through each segment of QFI. We pray to Swami to give you enough strength to continue this article forever and our million salutations to Swami for using the h2h team as a perfect tool to reveal the mystery of His beautiful work in the cosmos.

Barathi Rajashekar

### **Feedback on 'Sai Medical Camps in Fiji ...Love in Action'**

Our most humble and loving salutation to His lotus feet..... Baba has always resided in the hearts of his devotees here in Fiji and of course all over...as Baba says "our presence is His presence". We have always eagerly awaited His appearance and now here He is with all his love and blessings, not only for His devotees but for one and all. This confused and troubled tiny island nation has attracted our Sai's divine attention. We are indeed so fortunate. What else do we want or seek but His love and attention. We are so blessed. We love you Sai.

Sandhya, Suva,  
Fiji Islands.

Respected H2H team,  
Sairam. The article "Sai medical camps at Fiji" is very inspiring and terrific. It is a great show of unity, dedication, love and compassion exhibited by people from four different countries working together for selfless service in a difficult environment and helping the needy. It is only Bhagavan's grace behind them directing right through. They truly followed 'love all and serve all' as repeatedly told by Sri Bhagavan. My thanks to your team for bringing out such a nice article.

Ramesh

Sai Ram to h2h team,  
It was stirring to read that Swami's devotees from New Zealand, Australia, U.S.A. and Fiji participated in service to the suffering patients at Fiji .Fifty medical professionals and many more volunteers served over five thousand patients during June 2007. Unlike other countries Fiji does not constitute a large piece of land. Imagine it is a wide spread group of over three hundred and thirty islands of different sizes and population who are frequently suffering the onslaught of military coups and consequential political turmoil.

It would have been the toughest task to conduct medical camps in those islands - but for Swami's Grace on those dedicated doctors and volunteers who served the fortunate patients. The picture of bhajan singing Sai devotees in the hall at Labula speaks of all the wonders happening in Fiji.

Jai Sai Raama, Krishna Prasad

### **Feedback on "How to Build Character That Lasts"**

Sai Ram,  
The article "How to Build Character that Lasts" is an eye-opener. It's a must read for one and all. May Swami bless this great Nation with peace and joy for one and all.

With love,  
H.G Krishnan

Sairam to all of you,

That was truly inspiring. I was in Parthi a few days before the World Youth Conference but could not stay. I read a few excerpts and heard from friends

about what Swami had said during this time but nothing about the speakers.  
Thank you for sharing this wonderful event.

Regards,  
Kanthi Ayyagari

### **Feedback on 'How the Saffron Shaped Me'**

Dear Heart2Heart Team,

Thank you so much for publishing the article by Ms. Sutopa Sen. I can well relate to her candid account of feeling lost and disconnected from Swami, overwhelmed by the trials of life. Her honesty and spirit are so powerful. Indeed, life with Swami is never easy, but we must somehow pray for the strength to face our challenges with dignity and grace, like His children ought to. It is so inspiring to read that it is possible to embody Swami's teachings even in the midst of difficulties, though the world may seem to conspire against us. Thank you for giving us all so much hope.

Sincerely,  
Ellesha Wanigasekera,  
Toronto, Canada

Dear Editor,

I read the talk by Ms Sutopa Sen and found it very inspiring. It was more like my own story. I passed out of His institute this year. I am at Jaipur which is far from my home and far from Puttaparthi. Most of the people out here in my college don't know about Swami. So, I used to feel depressed that I have no one to talk to about Him. Browsing through h2h is my only way to be in touch with the Sai world. Thank you so much for bringing a ray of hope in my dark days.  
Sairam!

Sai Ram,  
The article 'How The Saffron Shaped Me' by Ms. Sutopa Sen was really inspiring. It gives an insight into the lives of many devotees of how Swami really takes care of everybody if we follow his teachings. Any single act of Swami has a great meaning. A gift of a saffron robe means sacrifice. We should sacrifice our bad qualities to be near Sai. A good article indeed. Please provide more such articles especially by students and ex-students.

VS Venkataraman Iyer

### **Feedback on 'Learning To Love...'**

Sai Ram H2h team,

Most wonderful article about 'Learning To Love'. It came at the right time for me. Swami's way of answering latent questions and sorting out our lives in different ways! Much loved and appreciated article. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Savita

Sai Ram, H2H Team Members,

The article "Learning to Love", is a reflection of Swami's students' knowledge and a very good understanding of the subject. It gives a deep insight on the Topic of 'Love'. We pray for Swami's Blessings for these excellent students and for your efforts, to reveal more us.

S. Pathy, Toronto, Canada

### **Feedback on 'Incredible Blessings ...The Startling Story of Benjamin'**

Jai Sairam!

I am Dr. Krishnamurthy from Coimbatore. I read the article "Incredible Blessings- the Startling story of Benjamin", with great interest. I am a medical graduate and my wife is also a medical graduate. I will put my feelings simply as follows -

"We Are Lucky People To See God In Person, Living Like A Human Amongst Us."

All of us, everyone of us has done something good in our pervious births, for seeing, feeling, admiring with awe, Divinity during our life time. Blessed are Benjamin and his parents, grandparents, and also all of us.

Dr.S.Krishnamurthy,  
Coimbatore.

Dear Sir,

When I read 'The startling story of Benjamin' I started crying, tears flowing continuously on realizing the Love, Sai has for all of us. I have realized long back, it is not the medical field, not the doctors - but only divine love that heals all. I wonder, will I ever get to touch the Lotus feet of Bhagavan Sai once in this birth?



Yours sincerely,  
Dr. Mrs. S.R. Rathinam,  
MNAMS, Prof. of Ophthalmology and Head of Uveitis Service.

Aum Sai Ram,

My eyes were filled with tears when I read the article. Bhagavan's Mercy knows no bounds and this is yet another example.

ESV Krishnan,

Lagos, Nigeria

Hi,

I have always heard of numerous Sai stories, however I am not a devotee. I have always felt a connection but I could never place my finger on it. When I read the article on Benjamin I felt a truly deep sense of connection so strong that I had goosebumps all over, like being touched by a heavenly figure.

Regards,

Kubashni Govender,

South Africa

### **Feedback on 'Prashanti Diary'**

Sai Ram Brothers and Sisters,

This is just to inform you that all of you are performing an invaluable service by bringing out Prashanti Diary. It is so wonderful with lots of details and sprinklings of pictures. It seems that we are in Parthi. Thanks so much.

Love, Giridhari

### **Feedback on the Quiz Section**

My respectful greetings and gratitude to you all.

I go through the multi-faith quiz and now the frequency of attempting the quiz has increased. We all in our family sit and discuss the answers. We feel

happy when we get the right answers in the first attempt itself. It boosts our morale and we learn in the process. I thank you sincerely for your continuing service.

With regards,  
ASG Mohanraj,  
Manipal, Karnataka

### **General Feedback**

I am a devoted reader of your website. I only discovered it six weeks ago and it has become a very happy morning addiction of mine. Everyday, I wake up, turn on the computer and get to share Swami's thoughts for the day. I find something new daily to inspire me. Thank you for the time, effort and expertise that all of you who do this work are doing for me and the world.

I feel so lucky - maybe that's the wrong word, blessed is more accurate, to be able to share a small slice of the world you are inhabiting. Thank you, for bringing Sai Baba into my home everyday. The importance of your work cannot be overstated. This letter is to demonstrate how much Holy Baba is necessary for all people, including a forty-three year old, raised Catholic woman from California - me. Thank you again, the web-site is lovely.

Much Love,  
Valerie Peerenboom

Om Sai Ram,

I am an ardent devotee of Baba for some years now. He has guided me on numerous occasions. It's just recently that I came to know of the web site and got myself enrolled. The articles that have been sent to date are very inspiring. It gives me immense pleasure to read more on Baba's glory. My husband and I are based in Dublin and these articles are the only means for us to stay in touch with Baba.

On a personal front, I particularly remember one incident wherein I had to make a very crucial decision of my life and prayed to Baba on his birthday i.e. November, 23rd to make a decision for me and he made that decision which has changed my life around for the good. Please do keep up the good work. Thank you for the inspiring articles on Baba. May he always guide us to the right path.

Sheena Pillai.

Om Sai Ram,

I have read some articles from various heart to heart journals. What I feel now, is that I have wasted half of my life in worldly things. Because the kind of literature I have read and heard through Sai Global Harmony cannot be put in mere words - it's something more than that.

I have no experiences to share with unfortunately, but I feel that those people are so lucky who have served Swami their whole life and are serving still. I am in fact nothing in front of those divine souls. *(We are all equally divine in the eyes of Sai – H2H Team.)*

The articles make my eyes numb with tears - not because of sorrow but because of joy. At the end of every article a question is put up "Dear Reader, did this article inspire you in any way? Would you like to share your feelings with us?" I will say it has shaken me to an extent which I can not describe in words. Please pardon me for that.

I had never been to Prashanti Nilayam before nor had an opportunity to see Swami; but if Swami wishes, then I will definitely have an opportunity to see Swami. If not, He is with me always.

My humble thanks to Swami for giving me an opportunity to listen to His golden voice through His Bhajans or Divine Discourses on Sai Global Harmony satellite radio at World Space. This is just not like any other radio station broadcasting music or dramas. For me, it's more than that. Again I have got no words to describe.

Om Sai Ram,

Gajawelli Shekhar Narayan,  
Vishakapatnam.