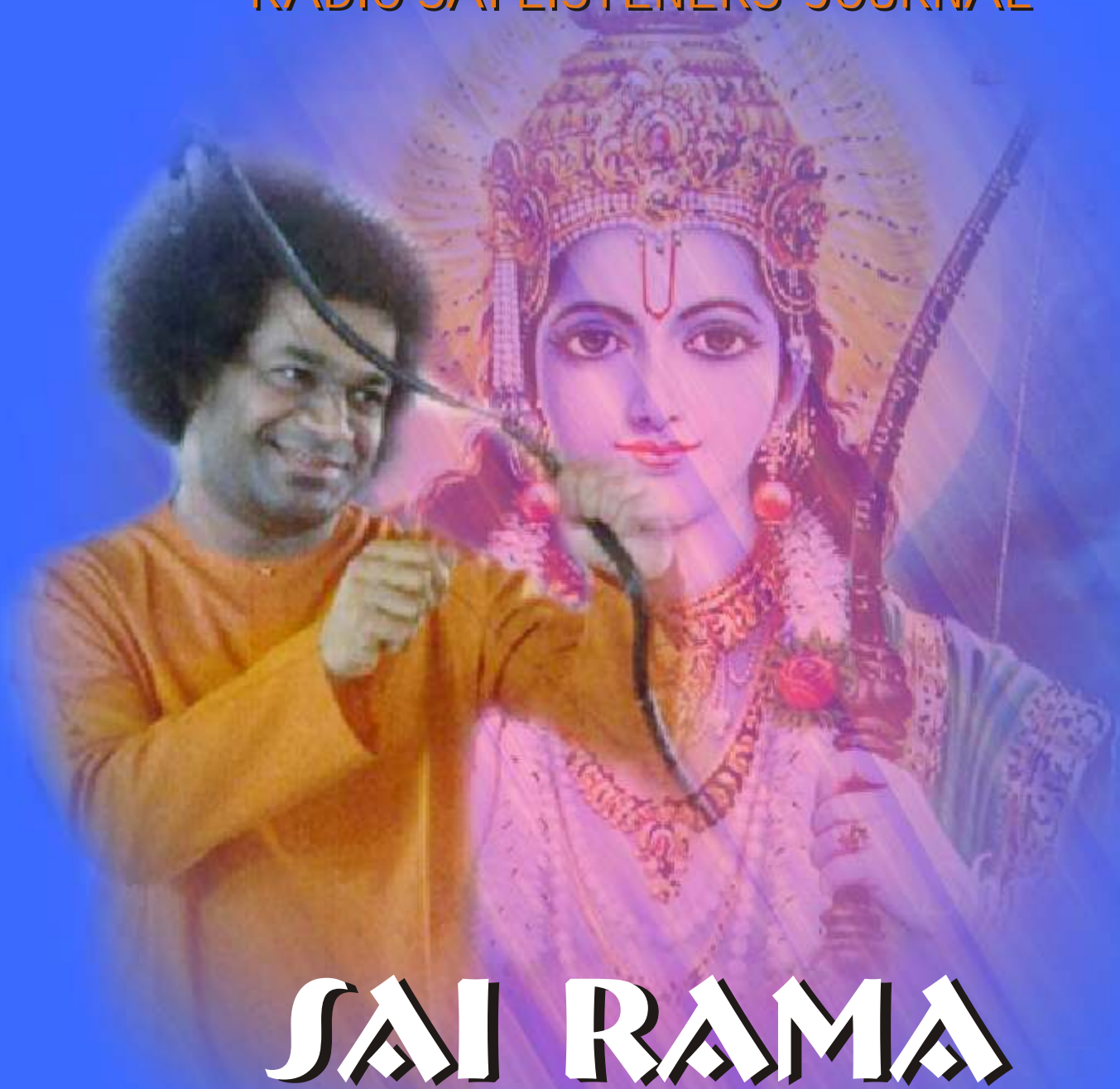




HEART TO hEART



RADIO SAI LISTENERS' JOURNAL



SAI RAMA

Cover Story

The Indweller of Hearts

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PRANAMS AT THE LOTUS FEET

Journal

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Between You and Us

Dear Reader,

Sai Ram, and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. So, how did you like our Sivarathri special? We are simply dying to know!

As we wrote in our last issue, we did a live TV broadcast on Sivarathri evening, from 5 PM to 8 PM. Millions saw it in India and they were absolutely thrilled. We have a special article on that effort. Subsequently, we sent the data files to the U.S, where special arrangements had been made to stream the program during the weekend. So this year, many people in different parts of this country and America have been able to see the spectacular events of Sivarathri almost immediately or very soon after. In some respects, we do have to be grateful to modern technology!

The 30th of March is Rama Navami. The name Rama evokes great joy, and Ananda in Swami. No surprise in that because Rama is truly the embodiment of Sathya and Dharma. Not that the other Avatars are any less; far from it; however, among the people, Rama's name has become synonymous with these two basic values. As late Mr. V.K.Narasimhan [whom some may remember as the late Editor of Sanathana Sarathi] often used to say, there were many great kings like Alexander the Great and Akbar the Great, but Rama is remembered more often than these so-called great kings. Why? Because Rama stood for Truth and Righteousness. In fact, in India, even to this day, people talk of Rama Rajya as the ideal. It means a reign where Truth and Righteousness prevail and there is Justice.

Gandhi was a great devotee of Rama, and constantly chanted His Name. He once said that his breath may stop but not his chanting. About the Name, Swami has spoken so many times. On 30th January 1948 when an assassin pumped bullets into Gandhi as he was coming for the evening prayer meeting, Gandhi muttered He Ram twice and died. In the Gita, the Lord says that one must die remembering the Lord in the very last minute. Swami has repeated this many times and also narrated humorous stories to drive home the point. And, above all, Swami stresses that one cannot remember the Lord in the last moment, unless one makes it a habit. In other words, Chanting the Name or Namasmaranam must always be going on, like background processing in a computer! What do you think?

All the best. Jai Sai Ram.

SGH TEAM

The Rama story

The Rama *Avatar* is the first of the three great *Avatars*. Thousands of years ago, the Lord took birth in Ayodhya as the eldest son of Emperor Dasaratha, choosing the Emperor's senior-most wife Kausalya as His mother. Aspects of Him were born as His brothers (Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrugana) to the other two wives of Dasaratha.

When the Princes were in their teens, Dasaratha sent Rama and Lakshmana along with Sage Vishwamitra to the forest, to guard from demons the sacred rituals then being performed by the Sage. Later in the court of Emperor Janaka, Rama lifted the mighty bow of Siva, winning thereby the hand of Sita, the foster daughter of Janaka. Along with the wedding of Rama and Sita, the marriages of the other Princes were also celebrated.

Years later, Dasaratha decided to step down and crown Rama as the Emperor. But just hours before the auspicious ceremony, Kaikeyi the third wife of Dasaratha cashed an old promise given to her, and made Dasaratha banish Rama to the forest for fourteen years, while her own son Bharata was nominated to the throne.

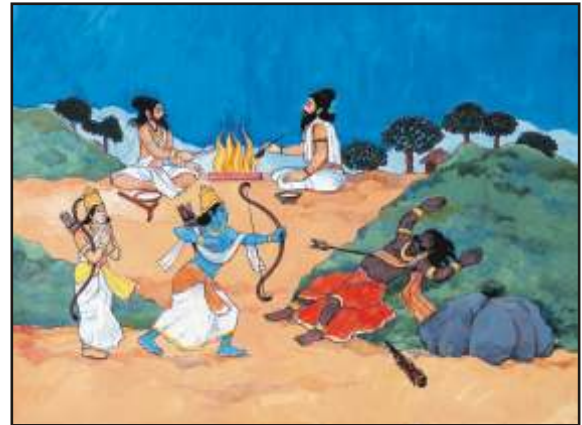
Bharata the surprise beneficiary was unaware of the scheming of his mother, as he was then in his grandfather's kingdom. Rama happily obeyed His father, and at once left for the forest, with Sita and Lakshmana accompanying Him.

Unable to bear the separation from Rama, Dasaratha breathed his last and Bharata was immediately sent for. He hastened back to learn that his father had died of grief and that his dear Brother had been banished to the forest, all for his sake! Bharata refused to ascend the throne, rushed to the forest, and pleaded with Rama to return and rule. But Rama was firm in standing by His word given to His father and step-mother. Bharata returned disappointed, donned the garb of a hermit, lived in a village, and administered the kingdom on behalf of Rama, symbolically deriving authority from the sandals of Rama, reverentially placed on the throne.

After Bharata's departure, Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana withdrew deep into the forest. There one day, Sita was abducted by Ravana, the evil ruler of Lanka, even as Rama was engaged in capturing for Sita, a golden deer.

Rama and Lakshmana then began their long arduous search for Sita. In the process, they befriended Sugriva, the Vanara (monkey) leader. Hanuman, a minister of Sugriva, became a great devotee of Rama. Sugriva offered help in the search for Sita. As a part of the process, Hanuman jumped across the ocean to the island of Lanka, and there located Sita held captive by Ravana in a garden.

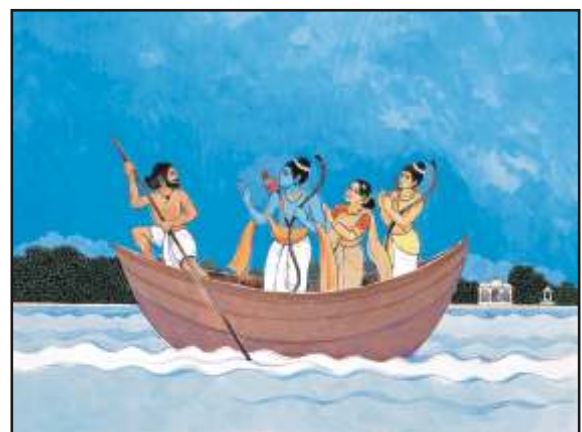
Rama then invaded Lanka along with the Vanara warriors,



Rama and Lakshmana protect Vishwamitra's Yagna



Rama weds Sita



Crossing the Ganges on Guha's boat

The Rama story

building a bridge across the ocean for the purpose of crossing it. A lengthy battle ensued at the end of which all the evil doers perished, including Ravana, who was slain by Rama. Sita was rescued, and Rama, Lakshmana and Sita triumphantly returned to the mainland, flying in the very same aerial chariot of Ravana in which Sita was earlier carried away. After reunion with Bharata who was counting the days, the entire party entered Ayodhya, much to the joy of the people.

The exile having been duly completed, on an auspicious day Rama was duly crowned, a ceremony that had to wait for fourteen years because the *Avatar* had a promise to keep. Rama ruled righteously for several years. His reign is symbolic of peace, prosperity and justice, and even today is held up as a model for governance.

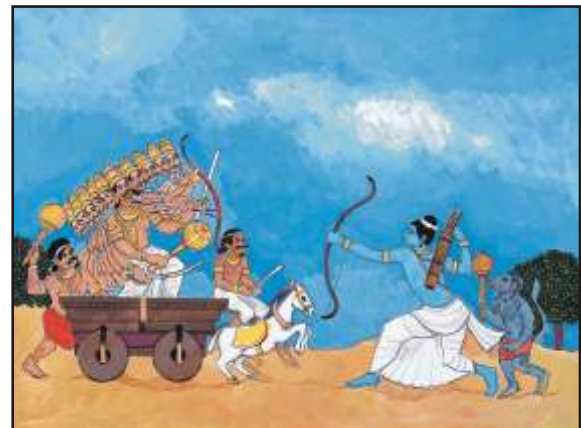
Rama was God Incarnate, but He never proclaimed His Divinity. In every respect, His life was an emphatic message of how one ought to live, always adhering to *Sathya* and *Dharma*. Rama was an ideal son, an ideal brother, an ideal friend, an ideal master, and an ideal King.

The Rama *Avatar* proves that the one who protects *Dharma* and stands by it, will himself be protected by that very same *Dharma*.

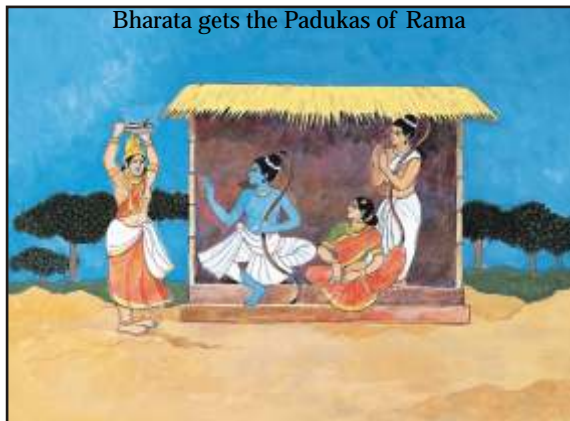
The accompanying paintings have been done in the traditional Karnataka style.



Building the bridge across the ocean



Rama vanquishes Ravana the king of demons



Bharata gets the Padukas of Rama

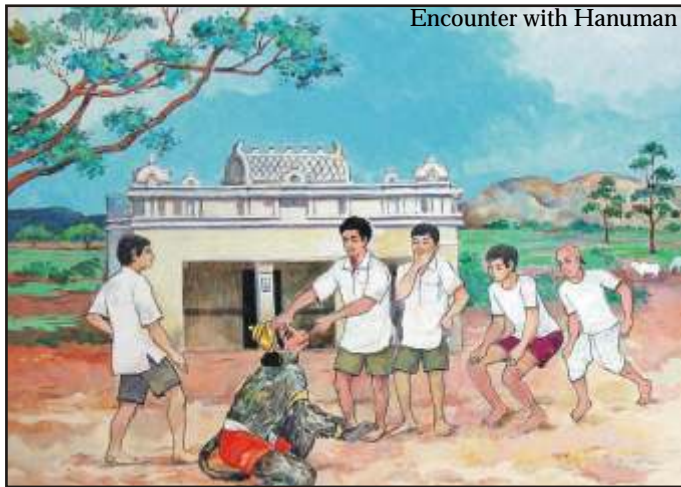


Sita wants the golden deer



The coronation of Rama after the great victory

Sai Rama



Long back, about 65 years ago, in a remote and tiny hamlet, there was a group of boys of ages 5 to 11 going along the streets. Among them was a boy named Satya. He was their Guru, their leader. They came to a Hanuman temple and all of them decided to take a pradakshina, or a circumambulation of the deity. So off they went to offer their obeisances to Hanuman. Except little Satya. But how could the group be without their leader? So they dragged him too...in spite of his protestations. He had barely put a few steps around the temple when, from somewhere, a huge monkey appeared on the scene, obstructing his way. All efforts to shoo it away were in vain. The circumambulation project had to be shelved. And the monkey too mysteriously disappeared as if the purpose of its appearance was accomplished. It was only later that Satya revealed that what appeared as a monkey was really Hanuman imploring Satya not to go around him. RAMA was not to go around Hanuman. It was He, Hanuman, that had to go around RAMA!!.

A few years later Satya declared his Avatarhood. He was now Satya Sai Baba. Many scoffed at Him. Many fortunate ones became His devotees. That included the Rajah of the princely state of Venkatagiri. On the invitation of the Rajah, Swami made a number of trips to the town of Venkatagiri in the late fifties and the early sixties. He used to stay for weeks together in their palace. On one such occasion, He was spending an evening chatting with the members of the royal family, while the Rajah was in his puja room meditating on his chosen deity, Lord RAMA. Suddenly, Swami got up, walked into the Rajah's room and came back after a few minutes. The Rajah emerged only after a few hours. He was in bliss. With watery eyes he told the family members "Swami has given me darshan as my Lord RAMA!!".

A few more years later, it once happened that Eshwaramma, mother of Swami, was bed ridden. One afternoon, Swami went to the side of her bed and called out "Griham Ammayi, how are you?" She opened her eyes but was transfixed for some time. Swami blessed her and went His way. Later, Eshwaramma called for Peddabottu, another elderly devotee and confided "Sister! Do you know? Swami is God!". Peddabottu laughed "Amma! Have you realized this truth only now?" Eshwaramma continued "You know, this afternoon when Swami sat next to me....I saw him with a crown on his head. There were bow and arrows in hand! Blue was his complexion. He is verily Lord RAMA!"

Many are such wonderful experiences that leads one to the conclusion that Swami is none other than RAMA come again. But, there lies the mistake! Yes, you are reading it right....it is a mistake! Swami is not merely RAMA come again. He was RAMA before the Rama Avatar. He was RAMA during the Rama Avatar and He is RAMA forever! That is because Rama is not the name of an ancient prince of Ayodhya, blue in complexion and with a bow in his hand. Rama is something more....in fact something absolutely fundamental.

The word Rama is explained in Sanskrit as "Ramayatheethi Ramaha", meaning: one who gives happiness. Now, at a gross level, if we see our Swami, there is no other person in this world who inspires such genuine happiness in millions of people just by His darshan. One should only see the faces of the devotees when they see Swami....Absolute, out of the world joy! Therefore, Swami qualifies to be called RAMA.

At a subtler level, RAMA is another name for the formless Atman resident in the hearts of men. In Swami's own words:



Sri Rama Navami is a sacred day, for it gives you a chance to remember God and your need to realise Him. Rama, truly understood, is not the Son of Dasaratha or of Kousalya; nor did He lose Seetha and lament for her. Rama is not to be limited to one achievement, the killing of Ravana and the reclamation of Seetha.

On the great Pattabhishekam day, when the entire Ramanaya story was well nigh coming to a close, Anjaneya who had an increasing desire to know the truth, and who was till then afflicted by a slight trace of doubt peeping in now and then, asked, Rama when the guests had left, what His Reality was and prayed that It might be made known to him. Rama smiled and

Sai Rama

directed Sita to satisfy Hanuman's curiosity.

Seetha then explained that She is the MoolaPrakrithi, who caused Maya and enabled the Nirguna to appear as Saguna. The Atma Rama which is everywhere, the cause, the consequence and the conclusion, the will and the way, the being, the becoming and the ending, can be made visible and active only by a touch of Maya.

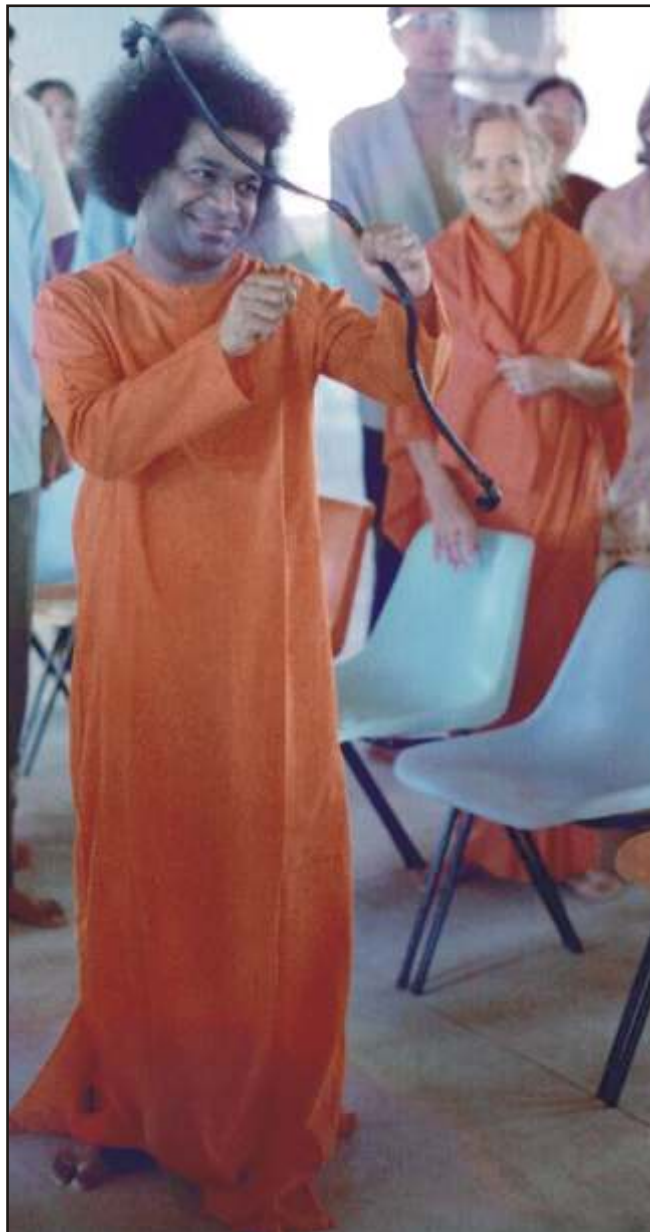
Seetha said that the entire Ramayana was Her Leela or Play. It is the description of the activity produced by Maya and believed by the ignorant to be the real activity of the Super Impersonal Absolute.

So, Rama is in all beings as the very core of their existence, without Rama there can be no Rama or joy, happiness or well-being. Because Rama is within you, you rejoice, you are pleased, you are happy, you

feel blissful.

Rama is Prema, Love. So, see the Rama in all and love them and serve them.

As Swami says, all joy has its source in the atman. The joy that is found even in the fleeting and ephemeral things of the world too has its root cause in the atman. That is why God is described as Raso vai saha, as Bliss, as one who confers happiness, as RAMA. Swami has any number of times made known to us His reality as nothing but this principle of bliss. He often says: I AM I. It is for this reason that Swami is qualified to be called RAMA. That is the real meaning of SAI RAMA.



Sai Rama

Pearls from the Ramayana



The stories of the Lord are thrilling to listen to. Over the years we had the good fortune reading several great and poetic accounts by great sages and saints of the Lord's earthly sojourn as RAMA. Valmiki, Tulsidas, Kamban....just to name a few.

But what if God himself were to tell his own story? The exact intentions of His actions? What if He were to dive deep into the ocean of His leelas and give you the pearls of wisdom? You would consider yourself extremely fortunate, won't you? Well, you and me are indeed fortunate. Because, in the next few pages, we have Swami Himself speaking to us on the Ramayana! Go ahead! Enjoy!

When You Recognise The Supreme Reality



When Rama, along with Lakshmana and Sita, was moving in the forest and talking to several *Rishis*, there used to be congregations where the women used to sit on one side and the *Rishis* used to sit on the other side and discussions used to take place. In the place where all the women were sitting, Sita also joined them. Rama and Lakshmana, because they were living in the forest and because they were wearing clothes appropriate to the forest were also looking like the *Rishis*. However, between the two, Rama was showing a certain amount of Divine Light.

In the place where Sita was sitting, some of the women went to her and asked: "Have you come alone or have you come along with your husband as well?" She replied that her husband too had come. With the women wanting to see and find out who her husband was, they were asking her many questions. Sita, a sacred woman given to righteous conduct all her life, would not get up when all the *Rishis* were present and say, "Here is my husband," by way of introduction. She would not do that; and knowing what was passing through Sita's mind and recognising her reluctance to get up and point to her husband, one of the women asked Sita by pointing at one of the men, "Is that person your

husband?" She then replied in the negative by just nodding her head. Another woman came and asked her, "Is that person whose hair is tied up in knots your husband?" She again nodded her head in the negative. In this way, when many women came and asked Sita, pointing at the wrong person and asking the question, "Is that your husband?" she was nodding her head to indicate a negative reply. When Rama who was sitting there was actually pointed out, Sita said neither, "yes" nor "no." She simply exhibited a significant, happy and pleasant smile.

Our *Vedantha* teaches us something which is exactly similar to this story. If you point at the wrong thing and if that is not the supreme reality, then you say "no." Anything that is shown and is not the right thing should call forth the comment, "this is not that," "this is not that," and so on. When you put your finger on supreme reality, the *Brahman*, then you are in supreme bliss and happiness. Such is the nature of *Vedantha* that we are able to give today to you, young students, with pure and unwavering hearts. I am glad that you are attempting to acquire the good things of our culture and the teachings we are giving you.



On Maya

You are also being told a few things

about *Maya*. Just as our own shadow will always accompany us and will not separate from us, so also *Maya* will always accompany God and will not separate from Him. There is a very good illustration of this fact in the *Ramayana*. At the time Rama, accompanied by Lakshmana and Sita, was moving in the forest. The forest was a thick one and there were no wide roads and they could only follow a narrow path; the way they were walking was such that Rama was going in front, immediately behind him was Sita, and Lakshmana came behind Sita. In this way, all the three, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were moving forward along a narrow path. In order to be able to recognise and understand this situation, you hold up your three fingers. The first finger represents Rama, God or *Paramatma*. The second finger immediately behind represents Sita or *Maya*. The last finger in this row of three, represents Lakshmana or the *Jiva*.

Paramatma, *Maya* and *Jiva*, these three are going along in a narrow path in the wild forest of life. After a little while, Lakshmana, whom we have symbolised as *Jiva*, has got the desire and the ambition to have a look at God or *Paramatma*. What is it that he has to do in order to fulfil his desire? There are only two ways of looking at Rama or getting his *darshan*. One is for Sita, who is in between, to move away a little and let Lakshmana have

Pearls from the Ramayana



the *darshan* of Rama. Alternatively, if Sita insists on staying where she is, Lakshmana has to move aside a little. To get Sita to move away, he may have to push her out from the place where she is standing, but then he will be offending Rama. So what Lakshmana did was to pray to Sita in all humility and ask her to give him a chance of having *darshan* of Rama. Sita, in all her graciousness and in all her kindness, said, "Yes, certainly you can have the *darshan* of Rama," and just stepped out a little. So if you get angry with *Maya*, and if you want to use force and your own strength on *Maya* and push her out of her place and then have the *darshan* of the Lord, you will not succeed. *Maya* then will play tricks with you. Not only that, God will not allow such a thing to be done. The only way, therefore, to fulfill your ambition is to recognise that *Maya* is the inseparable shadow of God Himself and pray in all humility and ask for an opportunity by which *Maya* will stand aside.

Hanuman and Dharma



In *Ramayana*, we have the story of Hanuman. He sets an example to all of us by the manner in which he conducts himself. When he comes close to Rama, he shows extreme humility and respect. What is the reason for Hanuman exhibiting such humility in the presence of Rama? The reason for such behaviour lies in the description of '*Ramo Vighrahan Dharmaha*' of Rama. Rama is the embodiment of *dharma* and therefore in the presence of *dharma*, he shows humility. The same Hanuman, when he went to Lanka, had put himself on a pedestal higher than that of Ravana, because Ravana asked him to squat on the floor like a monkey. The reason for this is that while in the presence of *dharma*, Hanuman is humble and obedient but in the presence of a boasting king he would not show any humility. In the same manner, you should bow down to *dharma*, and show respect to teachers

and elders. On the other hand you should show courage and prudence when placed in a predicament which is *adharmic*. Even then, you should not take to anarchic methods.

How to be near The Lord



When Rama was going to the forest, he told Sita to stay back and serve his parents. He said that he would come back in fourteen years. But Sita gave up all her comforts to accompany Rama to the forest. Because she sacrificed everything, she could have the company of Rama. What is the reason? Sita thought, believed and put into practice the ideal that to a wife, her husband is of utmost importance. This is the essence of the culture of our land.

However, the enticement of *Maya* at times is irresistible. In the forest, it so happened that Sita was attracted by the golden deer, although she gave up much more valuable things earlier in life. Rama went after the golden deer to secure it for her. The final result was that Sita had to leave Rama and go away. Sita had to lose the sacred company of her husband, and she was taken away to Lanka. It implies that when she gave up *kama*, or lust, Rama was near her; but the moment she was attracted by the desires, Rama became distant from her. If you want Rama to be with you, *kama* has to be given up. If you have worldly desires, then Rama will not be near you. You have to choose between Rama or *Kama*, that is, either you cling to God or to his *Maya*.

The Ideal of Lakshmana

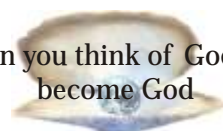


During all the years of his service to Sita and Rama, Lakshmana was sitting at their feet and did not even look closely at Sita's face. When Sita was being carried away by Ravana over the Chitrakoota Mountain, she dropped several of her jewels so that people could find them and convey the news to Rama. When Rama and

Lakshmana became friendly with Sugriva, he brought the jewels, which his followers had gathered and showed them to Rama. At that time Rama asked Lakshmana if he could recognise the jewels. Lakshmana said that while he could not recognise the other jewels, he could certainly recognise those which Sita wore on her feet. When Rama asked how he could recognise these, Lakshmana replied that every morning he used to go and touch her feet; hence he was quite familiar with them.

Lakshmana was looking at the wife of his brother as his own mother and was looking only at her feet. He never looked at her face. Lakshmana would always bend his head low if he found some other woman coming in front of him. Lakshmana was a person of exemplary character. The vision and the eyes of the young people today do not bend even if we bend them by force. If they use their vision for unsacred purposes, disturbance of the mind will surely follow. The first important *sadhana* is to control our vision. Lakshmana had such sacred thoughts and mind. If only he is taken as an ideal example and we follow him, there will be no doubt of our own elevation.

When you think of God you become God



As soon as Rama, Lakshmana and Sita arrived, Bharatha prostrated before them and, as a result of his being overjoyed, he went and embraced his brother Rama and felt exceedingly happy. He made his brother Rama sit in the chariot and he himself was leading the chariot. When Rama was sitting in that chariot and Bharatha was leading the chariot through the streets of Ayodhya, the citizens of Ayodhya could not distinguish between Bharatha and Rama. The reason for this was that Bharatha was also wearing his clothes and his hair was

Pearls from the Ramayana



like Ramachandra. Moreover, the brilliance in Ramachandra's face was exactly the same as the brilliance in Bharatha's face. Their bodies were different but their ideas, their thoughts and their views were identical. Bharatha was continually thinking and uttering the name of Rama. Consequently, Rama's form and Rama's brilliance entered Bharatha's body.

That is why it is said "*Brahma vid Brahmaiva bhavathi.*" One who has the knowledge of *Brahman* will become identical with *Brahman*. As he was continuously thinking of Rama, he was transformed into Rama. Citizens who came to garland Rama could not recognise who was Rama and who was Bharatha. They put all the garlands on Bharatha thinking that he was Rama.

ADHYATMA RAMAYANA, The spiritual essence of the Rama Story



Man has got five working organs and five sensory organs. Altogether he has got ten *indriyas*, and Dasaratha literally means the human body which has got five working organs and five sensory organs. Dasaratha symbolises this chariot of the human body which has got ten organs. Dasaratha also attracted three *gunas* in the form of Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. The four *Purusharthas*: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* are symbolised by Dasaratha's four sons. Dasaratha was one who proclaimed such a significant inner meaning to the world and urged the people to lead an ideal life.

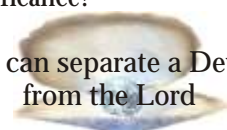
Sita is the daughter of the king of Mithilapura whose name was Videha. Videha means one who has no body or one who has no consciousness of his human body. The capital of Dasaratha was Ayodhya. Ayodhya means a city into which enemies cannot enter. Dasaratha had such noble qualities and ideals that he was

carrying on the rule of his country in an exemplary manner. Sita can be identified with wisdom, and Sita marries Rama or becomes one with Rama who is *dharma*. When wisdom comes together with *dharma*, in the ordinary course, such a good event will meet with some obstacles. It is customary and quite natural that every good thing is met with by some obstacles. As I state often, pleasure is only an interval between two pains. If there is no pain at all, there is no value for pleasure. Sita is the embodiment of wisdom and she had been taken away by Ravana, who symbolises selfishness and ego.

If one wants his little wisdom to disappear, all that one has to do is to promote his selfishness, jealousy and ego. Ravana symbolises selfishness, jealousy and ego. To make a search for Sita, who had been taken away by the bad qualities, selfishness, jealousy and ego, Rama, in the form of *dharma*, along with the other *Purusharthas*, i.e., *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, makes a journey. Here Lakshmana is to be identified with the mind. We should notice that Rama, the embodiment of *dharma*, combines with Lakshmana, who is identified as mind, and goes to the forest, which signifies life. In that forest of life, Rama searches for wisdom in the form of Sita. In this context, there is an argument between the two brothers Vali and Sugriva. Sugriva can be compared to the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Here the inability or the weakness which is called *dhirathwa* has been destroyed in the form of Vali; and Sugriva, who symbolises the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, comes out victorious. Along with Sugriva, who symbolises *viveka*, or the ability to distinguish right from wrong, we have Hanuman. The combination of Sugriva and Hanuman is like the combination of *viveka* and courage. The *viveka* and courage went together in search of Sita, the wisdom. They meet with one

obstacle in the form of an ocean of *moha*. Thus the ocean of *moha* had to be crossed and this crossing was effected with the help of courage in the form of Hanuman.

After crossing the ocean, they encounter the three *gunas*: the *rajas*, *thamas* and *sathwa* on the opposite bank of the ocean. They are Ravana, Kumbha-karna and Vibhishana representing the three *gunas* respectively. The *rajas* and the *thamas*, Ravana and Kumbhakarna, were removed from the scene and finally the *sathwa Guna* gets the upper hand in the form of Vibhishana. He has been crowned the king. After making Vibhishana the king of Lanka, Rama has the vision of wisdom born out of experience, in the person of Sita. Rama, prior to finding Sita, could be called a *Brahmajnani* but when he found Sita, symbolising the knowledge of experience, there is a reunion of the knowledge of experience with the pure *Brahma Jnana*, and the culmination was the coronation, the story which we called *Sahasrārtha Ramayana*. This description which has now been given can also be called *Adhyatma Ramayana*. It is only when we can understand this interpretation of *Adhyatma Ramayana*, there is some benefit for us and a possibility of the realisation of the nature of *Atma*. If we keep on thinking of *Ramayana* in the human form of a king Dasaratha, a son Rama and look only superficially, how can we know the real significance?



None can separate a Devotee from the Lord

Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna one day went to Sita and made a complaint and said that Hanuman was with Rama all the twenty-four hours, and that he is not giving them any opportunity for doing service to Rama. They requested her to arrange that whatever services have to be done to Rama, be distributed

Pearls from the Ramayana



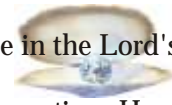
equitably amongst them. Then they made a long list of services to be rendered to Rama from the morning till the next morning. They also prayed to Sita that all these services be approved by Rama. Rama looked at the list and approved all the services and suggested that they be distributed amongst themselves. He suggested that they go and tell Hanuman that nothing is left so far as Hanuman is concerned. When these brothers met Hanuman, they told him that the entire list of services has been drawn up and that they were distributed amongst themselves. They said that no service was left for him and that he would have nothing to do from the next day.

Hanuman thought for a little and thought of the name of Lord Rama and then he asked Lakshmana that if any other service was left over, it may be allotted to him. The three brothers looked at the list very carefully and came to the conclusion that nothing was left. They agreed that if anything is left, Hanuman may take the service. Hanuman said, there was one service,

which was left over and he requested that this be given to him. When kings or elders or wealthy people yawn, at that time it was customary to make a noise with the fingers in front of the mouth. Hanuman asked that this service be allotted to him. From that time, Hanuman insisted that wherever Rama went, whether it is in his bedroom or in the bathroom, Hanuman must be present. Thus he insisted, because one does not know when Rama would yawn. When Rama yawned, he should be present there. Thus, it so turned out that the little service which was left to Hanuman necessitated his continuous presence and made Hanuman stay close to Rama always.

What we should see here is that in spite of all the attempts made by Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna not to leave any service for Hanuman, it is the sacredness of Hanuman that has resulted in his getting a service by which he could be with Rama at all times. No one can separate a real devotee present from his Lord.

Participate in the Lord's Mission



Once upon a time Hanuman met Vibhisana. Vibhisana conveyed his anguish to Hanuman. "Hanuman, how fortunate you are. I am constantly thinking of Rama, but I have failed in getting Rama's darshan. From the moment I wake up, throughout the day, till I go to bed I chant Rama's name incessantly. But I have not been able to see Rama." Hanuman replied, "Vibhisana, you are merely uttering Rama's name by mouth. But you do not participate in his work and mission. It is not sufficient if you chant Lord's name. But you should contribute in his work. It is ten months since Sita has come to Lanka. Have you made any efforts to free Sita? Rama's name can be compared to current and participation in His service is compared to a bulb. Name is the current; service is the bulb. You can attain Divinity only when you combine chanting of Lord's name with participation in His service."

Hospital Statistics

Upto 29th February 2004

BANGALORE SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Cardiac Surgeries	4,128
Cardiac Catheterisation	7,141
Neuro Surgeries	3,485
CT Scans	12,602
MRI Exams	13,345

PUTTAPARTHI SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Heart surgeries	13778
Cath procedures	13946
Urology surgeries	22579
Ophthalmology surgeries	22702
CT scans	3654

The True Meaning of Surrender



What exactly is surrender? To give yourself entirely, unconditionally and absolutely to God is surrender. To attain that state, you should first develop friendship with God. What is friendship? Is it saying, "Hello!"? No, not at all. Feeling of oneness is true friendship; the two must feel alike and think alike. The Telugu word *Maitri* (meaning friendship) has two syllables, one is *mai* and the other is *tri*. This *tri* stands for the three planes of a human being, namely, body, mind and soul. Thus the word *maitri* connotes a feeling of oneness at all these three levels. Such a state alone can be called a state of true friendship.

Divinity can be attained only when the body, the mind and the soul are all surrendered at the Lotus Feet of the Lord. As long there is a feeling of duality, a sense of I and you, the notion of mine and thine, the Divine state cannot be attained. Your true reality is the *Atma* (the individual Soul) which is a wave of the *Paramatma* (Universal Soul). Krishna has declared that He is in everyone and every being. Thus, you do not have a separate existence; the individual and the Universal are one and the same. Just because bodies are different, you think that you have a separate existence. If, however, you seek friendship with God, you must give up this body-consciousness. You must follow the command of the Divine. But these days, selfishness has taken precedence over obedience to God's commands. If you disobey God's commands, if you do not pay heed to them, can there be any true devotion? Always abide by the wishes of God and realise that this is the right path to Divinity.

Purandara Dasa, a great devotee of the Lord, once

declared: "O God! I forgot you in my previous birth and that has resulted in my being born again. This time, if I install You in my heart, there will be no rebirth; I will become a liberated soul." These days, everyone is harassed by doubts of various kinds. As long as there is a feeling of attachment to the body, doubts cannot be overcome. Proper exercise of discrimination alone would lead to the Truth. For example, Purandara Dasa asked himself: "There are isolated trees on mountain tops that are otherwise barren. Who planted these trees, who watered the saplings, who protected them, and who provided the fertilizer? Who painted the feather of the peacock with such a glorious combination of colours? O God, you are such a wonderful artist!" The green parrot sports a nice red beak; who gave the parrot the red beak? Scientists have no explanation for all these wonders of Nature because their approach is purely worldly and materialistic. This is not the proper way of understanding Reality. Truth can be grasped only through the path of spirituality. God is the fountainhead of all existence and the will of the Divine is the cause for every happening. Nothing happens in the Universe without the *Sankalpa* (will) of *Ishwara* (God). You must have this belief implanted firmly. Don't ever imagine that you are a low and an ordinary mortal. You are nothing of that sort; you are truly speaking a child of God, a spark of the Divine. Therefore it is that Purandara Dasa sang: "As long as I am aware of Your presence in my heart, I do not feel lost. You are the real doer and not me. You impart knowledge. You protect and You also reprimand when necessary. There is nothing that is not Yours. I am wholly Yours. When You, the Lord Almighty, are doing so much for me and are taking care for me, how can I be called poor?" Like Purandara Dasa, all of you also are a spark of the Divine. He realised that he was; you too should.

A Model Study Circle

Dear Reader,

We find from many letters received by us that a good many of you are using our feature GETTING SPIRITUALLY BETTER in your Study Circle. In this context, some material we had prepared earlier is reproduced below. Basically, it is a model for how the Study Circle might be conducted. We prepared a few such models because many people approached us and asked us for advice on this matter.

What follows is the transcript of a fictitious proceeding. It is not an actual transcript but just an imaginary one, scripted to give some idea of how the proceedings might be conducted. This is just one model, and many others could be followed. This model corresponds to a situation where the Circle has already decided in advance on the topic. Thus, everyone is supposed to have done study in advance, and this is where our feature GETTING SPIRITUALLY BETTER could help.

In a later issue, we hope to present another model.

Hope you like what we have to offer, Jai Sai Ram.

SGH TEAM.

Model 1 for Study Circle Proceedings

Presented below is a model for how the Study Circle session could be conducted. It is presented as a transcript of the actual session. Of course, the transcript is imaginary. It is intended to give an idea of how points generally come up for discussion during the meeting, and how they must be steered by the Convenor. Clearly, the Convenor has to put in a bit of advance work and planning. In the model given below, a topic has been chosen in advance, and the members have been asked to come prepared. The topic chosen for discussion is: DESIRES. After the preliminary prayer etc., the session proceeds as follows.

CON: Sai Ram. I offer humble salutations at Baba's Lotus Feet and pray that He guide us. Today, we shall explore the general topic of desires. Desires are the main stumbling block to spiritual progress, and Swami has commented upon them any number of times. We shall try to recall some of those teachings and digest them. I had asked the Secretary to make copies of Baba's sayings on desires and distribute them. Have you all

received a copy?

CHORUS: Yes, we have!

CON: Good! Hope you have at least glanced through them before coming here.

MR. A: I can't understand how desires can be all that bad. I feel hungry. My body desires food. Unless I eat, I will wither and die. So, please explain to me why desires are being criticised!

CON: Our brother has raised a good point. His comment highlights why enquiry is needed! There is a thing called a legitimate basic need, and there is another thing called craving. We should carefully distinguish between the two. Desire refers to the latter.

Let us take food. The popular saying is: One must eat to live and not live to eat. Swami has clearly spelt out what one must eat and how much of it. Eating must always be in moderation; no stuffing business! Some people try to fast and do so in excess, mistaking it to be an austerity that would please

the Lord. Krishna makes very clear in the Gita that to torture the body is to torture Him! In short, eating is required but must be in moderation and for sustaining the body.

Let me now turn to eating for the sake of eating, i.e., eating consequent to a craving. People have a craving for all sorts of things ice cream, fast food, etc. This is not necessarily good.

MR. B: Does that mean I should not eat ice cream?

CON: No, it does not mean that. Just that you should not have a craving for ice cream. Don't get worried if you do have a liking. Just make sure you gradually decrease your wanting to eat ice cream that's all. Let's stop talking about food and move on to other aspects of desire.

MR. C: I am not sure how practical or relevant this business of curbing desires is. Let us take meat eating. People say that slaughtering animals is bad. There is a person who likes meat but is ready to accept that slaughtering is bad. So, this person

A Model Study Circle

gives up meat. But will that make any dent on the meat industry? Hardly. So, one might argue: "Why bother? Why give up eating meat? I don't slaughter anyway."

CON: Your argument highlights the importance of discrimination and perspective while engaging in enquiry. I wish to start with the basic objection to meat eating. A foreigner once told Baba: "Meat is important for me. It gives me proteins." Swami replied: "May be meat gives proteins for your body. It will not give spiritual proteins." This conversation is recorded by Hislop in his book *Conversations with Baba*. I suggest you look it up.

The point simply is this: If I eat meat, it would taint my mind and seed cruel feelings. Remember, food is not just the solid or liquid stuff we consume. Besides the gross material that we take in, we also take in the subtle stuff associated to the food. This subtle matter is [subtle] food for the mind. The mind being subtle, its food also is subtle. The mind is nourished by [subtle] food just as the body is nourished by gross food. We must make sure that the mind gets a proper diet. Anything that pollutes the mind is objectionable. It must be avoided at all costs, if one is serious about spiritual progress. Meat definitely taints the mind; it most certainly obstructs spiritual progress. So, it must be avoided at all costs. Is that clear? Swami has explained all this in great detail, and we should go back to these teachings.

As regards the impact on the meat industry, Swami says that if one by one people give up meat, then one fine day, the meat industry would have to close down.

MR. D: I am not too sure about that.

MRS. E: I wish to submit that there can be an impact. Take the mad cow disease. After its outbreak, many

have given up eating beef.

MR. D: May be, but they have not given up eating meat!

MRS. F: Actually, even from a purely body point of view, many doctors advise giving up meat. This has made many to turn vegetarians.

MR. D: But that has not shut down the meat industry or made any impact.

MS. G: About impact, I would like to draw attention to the tobacco industry. In America, there is a definite wave against smoking, and this does appear to have caused concern to the Cigarette industry.

CON: OK, I think we have had enough views on the matter. Let me offer an interim summary:

1. We need to be clear about the difference between a real need and a craving.
2. We must practice restraint, abstention and control because it is good for us.
3. If everyone does so, then it would automatically have an impact on society. For example, in many cities of Europe, people have gone back to the bicycle. This has done good all round.

Let us move on. I now wish to pose the following question: "What is the basic problem with desires?" Let us say I want to collect old pens or watches. What's wrong with this desire? What objection can be raised to that? Mind you, I do not want you to argue about pens or watches but go to the root of the problem! Who is going to lead from here? Yes, you young lady.

MS. H: Desires as we normally understand them, are related to the senses. Animals have senses and humans too.

MR. A: That clearly shows that senses have come from God. Why then give senses a bad name?

MS. H: Wait, please allow me to continue. I am coming precisely to that point. God has endowed all of us with senses for survival in the world. The world is the domain of the senses. The problem is that the senses drag the mind out into the world.

MR. D: But isn't that what the senses are supposed to do?

MS H: No, the mind is not supposed to get dragged by the senses into the world.

CON: Sister, may I suggest that you clearly explain the difference between the lower beings and humans, where the senses are concerned?

MS. H: I shall. Swami says that there is a hierarchy [where humans are concerned]. First there is the Atma. From this is born Aham or I. And from Aham is born the mind. Thus, says Swami, the mind is the grandson of the Atma. The senses are born from the mind. Thus, in the case of humans, the mind must be the master of the body and the senses. In turn, the mind must follow the Atma or soul, whatever one wants to call it.

MR. J: What about animals?

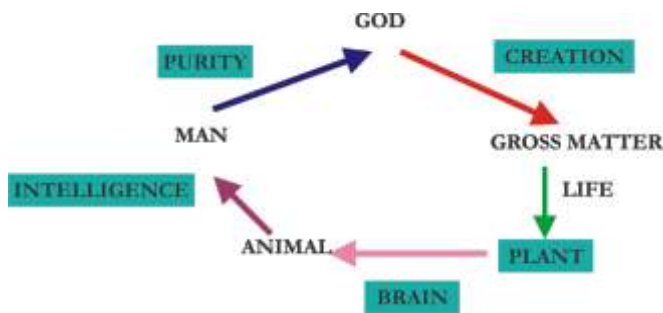
MS. H: The animals are, to use modern lingo, hard-wired. They have a brain with limited capability but no mind, no discriminating power, no Buddhi. They cannot distinguish between good and bad, between right and wrong. Swami has made that very clear. Baba has also added that man has been specially blessed with Buddhi or the power of discrimination. By properly using the Buddhi, one can make it to God.

MR. D: I wonder if this Buddhi is a

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blessing really! [Laughter.]

CON: Let me intervene at this point to call attention to an important aspect of evolution. Scientists say that the Universe originated in a Big Bang. First the gaseous clouds were formed, then the stars, and finally the planets. Here on planet earth, life originated in a primitive form, and then slowly evolved through various species to man. The spiritual view is that all the preliminaries were merely to set the stage for man to evolve back to God. One can diagrammatically represent it as follows:



Man is only a short distance from God. As Swami says, man is already 85% Divine. Human birth is given to leap back to God, and not slide backwards. This is where mind and sense control becomes important. ... Carry on lady.

MS. H: Thanks brother. Let me come back to the business of desires and link them to what our Convenor has just said. There are many things in this world that can give pleasure. Some are material and some are subtle. They can give pleasure to the senses or to the mind. For example, eating sweets gives pleasure to the tongue. Success in business gives pleasure to the mind.

MR. A: But what's wrong with that?

MS. H: Wait! Give me a chance to complete! Now what was I saying? Oh yes. The point is this. Pleasure is available in the world in a million forms. The senses are

attracted to them, and the mind too. The problem is that NO worldly pleasure lasts for ever. It has to be transient since the Universe itself is transient. If there is pleasure today, there has to be pain tomorrow. As Swami often reminds us: Pleasure is an interval between two pains. The big question is: Does anyone want pain?

MRS. E: Permit me to recall a verse of Shankara that Baba often quotes. It is in Sanskrit; I shall give the English translation. Shankara says,

*Wealth, progeny, youth, and power,
All these pass in a fleeting moment*

CON: Thanks for that quote. You have made an important point. Sister H, please continue. You are giving us valuable insight.

MS. H: Thanks for the compliment! To continue, let us ask the basic question: "Why do we want to be happy?"

MR. D: That is a weird question! I mean who ever wants to be sad?

MS. H: You haven't really answered my question. Why does everyone, from a little child to an old man, seek happiness? What is the fundamental reason for this?

MR. B: I know. Swami has given the answer. He says that happiness is our true nature.

MS. H: Bliss, not happiness. I reserve the term happiness for the feeling we get when we have pleasant experiences in this world. Bliss is the joy we experience in the Inner World.

CON: Sisters and brothers, we have come to a very crucial point. Please pay very careful attention to what Ms.

H is telling us.

MS. H: Bliss is the true nature of God. The Sanskrit word for Bliss is Ananda. Swami says that one of God's names is Brahmananda, meaning, the One of Infinite Bliss. We are all sparks of the Divine; therefore, Bliss is also our true nature.

MR. D: But what has all this got to do with the pursuit of worldly happiness?

CON: Patience, my dear brother, patience! Without patience, how can we achieve purity?

MS. H: Thanks brother! In a moment, I shall connect Bliss with the pursuit of [worldly] happiness. When a baby is born, it is pure and very close to God.

MS. G: That's true. Swami has said this many times, and also added that Jesus was always like a child. That was why he was pure. Baba says that we must all try to be like little children for at least five minutes everyday. This is the simplest way to try to be pure.

MS. H: Exactly. Sister G's remark makes my job easier. OK, a new-born baby is pure and innocent. It knows nothing about the world, not yet. Babies often smile. How come? Has the little one won a million-dollar lottery? The baby knows absolutely nothing about the world, and still it is happy. How is this possible? The answer is the baby is happy because it is in its NATURAL state and experiencing Bliss.

As days pass, the baby grows up. Its hunger for Bliss continues but slowly it begins to forget the source. This is because it has started paying more and more attention to the outside world. So it starts looking for Bliss in the outside world. Can you get Bliss in this transient world? No, never. But the baby does not know this. It

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comes across things that give temporary happiness, and slowly starts getting hooked on to them. For example, it develops liking for toys, and soon, it is ready to fight for them.

The baby is dragged from inside to outside, and then hooked on attachment. Attachment is a coin with two sides; one side is pleasure and the other side is pain. The baby does not understand it. When it grows into a boy, it still remains ignorant. Indeed, the ignorance stays through teenage, youth, middle age and even old age!

CON: Sister H has done a wonderful job. Let me allow her to take a short break and sip some water, while I underscore what she has been telling us. She has made the following points.

1. We all are sparks of the Divine.
2. Therefore, our true nature is Bliss. Bliss is our natural state. That is why Swami often says that people do not ask why a person is happy. It is only when a person is sad, that people enquire about the reason.
3. As we grow up, we rapidly forget our true nature. But the inner hunger for Bliss is there.
4. This hunger drives us here and there, and quickly we end up in the outside world looking for Bliss. Bliss is totally absent in the outside world, but the world is full of imitation stuff called pleasure.
5. The mind and the senses do a con act, and sell us this imitation stuff and we fall for it. We become perfect suckers! We fail to realise that the world is temporary, and that transient things can give only transient happiness. It is only the Eternal that can give Eternal Happiness or Bliss. And you know who is Eternal!
6. In short, we are [unconsciously] looking for Bliss in the wrong place. We can look there till doomsday but we will never find it. We will find only pleasure and pain in alternation.
7. The mind and the senses collude

and create desires; and desires mislead us; they make us [unconsciously] look for Bliss in the world. As I just said, we can never find Bliss in a dual world.

MR. B: You know something? I think I now understand why Swami often sings the Bhajan: Hari Bhajana Bbina Sukha Shanti Nahi at the end of many of His Discourses. It means that without singing the glory of God, one cannot find peace and happiness.

MR. C: I have a question. OK, I sing Bhajan; I feel blissful. But after a while, that feeling evaporates, and I am back to square one, immersed in problems.

CON: Bliss is associated with a particular state of mind. If you move away from that state, you will perforce go back to square one.

MR. D: Be practical, Sir! We can't be singing Bhajan all day long. So clearly, Bliss also is temporary!

CON: Bliss is NOT temporary; your experience of it can be. The question about how to be constantly in a state of Bliss is an important one, and we shall explore it in a later meeting. I think it is time for Ms. H to resume her remarks and then wrap up.

MS. H: Let us look back to where we started. We began by discussing desires. Very simply, desire is an urge that is born out of our quest for happiness. I want to be happy. I think seeing a movie would make me happy. This leads to a desire to see a movie.

Now we are in quest of happiness because Bliss is our natural state. Actually, we are quite ignorant about our true state as well as about true Bliss. But this we do know: we want to be happy, and if possible, always. So we go chasing happiness. Misguided by the senses, we look for

it in the wrong place. We look for it in this ephemeral world. The world is dual. If there is pleasure, pain is sure to be hiding behind it. We may experience pleasure now, but be assured that pain will follow later. Pleasure and pain are like the two sides of a coin. Can we ever have a coin with just one side?

MR. J: I have been silent all along; so, let me be heard. I wish to ask a question. I understand what you are saying, at least in outline. But what has all this got to do with spirituality?

MS. H: Ah! That's a good point. You agree that life must be spiritualised? You agree that we must go back to where we came from? We have come from God and to God we must return you agree on that? ...You agree? Good!

Now we must clearly understand that God is Bliss. Going back to God therefore implies seeking Bliss. If Bliss is what we want, then we must look for it in the right place, i.e., Inside.

MR. D: Inside?

MS. H: Yes, Inside.

MR. D: I don't follow.

MS. H: When I say Inside, I mean the Heart, the spiritual heart that is. This Heart is the residence of God. It is the seat of the Atma or the Soul, whatever you want to call it. By the way, Atma and God mean the same thing. Recall what Swami often says: Real Happiness [or Bliss] is union with God.

MRS. I: Is this how one must interpret Swami when He says, "Be Happy!"?

MS. H: Absolutely! When Swami says, "Be happy," it means that we must seek God inside and unite with Him. It does not mean that we rush

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to a night club! [Laughter.]

To continue, if we keep looking for eternal happiness in the outside world, then we are wasting our time. Nothing, and I repeat nothing, in the external world can give eternal happiness.

MR. C: Can I chip in with an example?

CON: Please do.

MR. C: There is a scientist. He works hard and one day he wins the Nobel Prize. He is deliriously happy when he hears the news. A month or so later, he makes the trip to Stockholm to actually receive the Prize. Again he is very happy. Years pass. He becomes old. His productivity comes down. Young scientists have appeared on the scene, and they are now in the limelight. This old man goes to meetings, but he is hardly recognised. People even make snide remarks that he is a has-been. He is pained. Happiness one day, pain some other day.

CON: A good illustration of Shankara's teaching that was mentioned earlier. Back to you Ms. H.

MS. H: So, the bottom line is: Desire is something that drags one away to imitation products. The mind and the senses are so clever, that they can easily fool everybody and con people into believing that the world offers real happiness.

Be clear! Worldly desires always lead only to worldly happiness. By its very nature, worldly happiness is temporary. Our goal is PERMANENT happiness or Bliss. Desires drag us away from our real goal, i.e., Bliss. Desires are an unnecessary distraction and an unwanted obstruction. If we want to get back to God real quick, then we had better switch off desires as fast as we can.

CON: Thanks sister, you have done a marvellous job.

MR. D: Listen! All this is easily said but it is not practical in the least.

CON: You must understand that no one is asking the all desires be instantly switched off like one flicks a switch. But surely one can try a 'brown out'. In this context, I would like to recall a story once narrated by Swami.

There was a young man who was very much addicted to opium. A wise man came to the village where this young man resided. He told this young chap, "You must give up this bad habit. It is not good for you." The young man replied, "Sir, I would certainly like to give up this habit. I know that it is not good for me. But you see I have been hooked on opium for years, and it is not easy to give it all up overnight. The wise man said, "OK, I agree with you. Now have you got a chalk? If so, bring it." The young addict was puzzled but did as he was told. The wise man held up the chalk and said, "Every day before you consume opium, take this chalk and write OM three times with it. Afterwards, you can take opium, but only as much as is the size of the chalk. Do you agree?" The young man nodded. The young man faithfully followed the instructions. Day by day, the chalk kept getting smaller and smaller. And with it, the quantity of opium that he took also decreased. Thus, he avoided all problems associated with severe withdrawal symptoms, and one fine day, he was off the hook altogether.

Let us get back to desires. You can try out a similar strategy. Many people dine out; say you do so once a week. Decrease the frequency to once in two weeks; next, use the money saved for some service work. After a while, make the frequency once a month, and so on. In short, the trick is to

gradually tone down; this way, almost all desires can be overcome. Remember, if you seriously make the effort, then Sai will help. If we take one step, He will take ten and come towards us. If we are determined, He is determined to help us!

I think the time has come to have a summary. Who will do it? Mr. A? You will do it? Thanks; go ahead.

MR. A: I shall be brief.

1. We all have come from God, and therefore our intrinsic nature is Bliss.
2. Once we come into the world, we promptly develop hunger for happiness. Actually, it is a hunger for Bliss, but we don't know that. We think we want worldly happiness and go looking for it desperately.
3. We look for any kind of happiness we can latch on to.
4. We go shopping in the market place called the world. It is full of imitation products, and we promptly fall for them.
5. In this process, we are totally misled by the mind and the senses, which act in unholy collusion.
6. We end up with a lot of sugar-coated pills. These pills taste sweet to start with but soon become bitter.
7. We don't know what to do. So we go shopping again. More pills and more bitterness.
8. We never learn; life after life, we make the same mistake.
9. And now, Sai has come to tell us where we are going wrong. He says, "Come to Me, and I will give you what you really want."
10. Sai continues: "To come to Me, you have to give up desires. You say impossible? No, it IS possible! Just replace the desires you now have, i.e., worldly desires, with desire for ME!"
11. Desire for worldly objects leads to trapping in the cycle of birth and death. Desire for God leads to eternal liberation from this cycle.
12. Once again, just convert worldly desire into desire for the Divine the latter is a more safe currency!

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CON. : Thanks brother that was a real crisp summary! I now suggest that we give a big hand to all participants for their lively participation. [Applause.]

Mr. Secretary, I hope you have kept notes of the proceedings. As years go by, the log-book would be very useful. I also suggest that you post on the bulletin board, a summary of today's proceedings. This would be useful to all, and could even attract more members to our Circle.

May I remind you that the topic for the next meeting is Swami's saying: Less Luggage, More Comfort, Make Travel a Pleasure.

I now request you to join me in a prayer to our Lord.

Dearest Lord Sai, offering our Love, we express our deepest gratitude to You for being with us throughout, for deftly guiding us across sticky points, and for enlightening us via Your instruments here. We now pray for Your Grace so that we can assimilate the lessons learnt here and put them

into practice, for we know that practice is what pleases You most. Once again, with Pranaams at Your Lotus Feet.

We shall now bring this session to an end, with our usual closing prayer. Thank you, and Jai Sai Ram.

So, what do you think of this model? Do you think it could be helpful to you? How do you conduct your Study Circle? Why don't you share some of your experiences so that others too may benefit?

Good News!

Dear Reader,

Sai Ram and here is some good news. We are happy to inform you that two books, closely related to our serial GETTING SPIRITUALLY BETTER have been produced by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, and meant explicitly for use by STUDY CIRCLES. These books were released at the time of Swami's Birthday in 2003. Copies were distributed to various senior office bearers from various countries. The books are entitled:

1. GUIDE BOOK FOR STUDY CIRCLES.
2. WORK BOOK COMPANION FOR THE GUIDE BOOK.

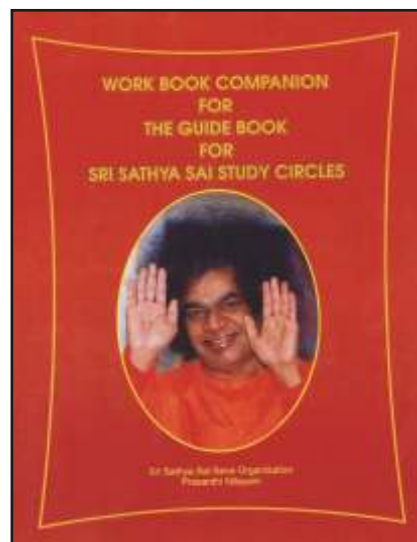
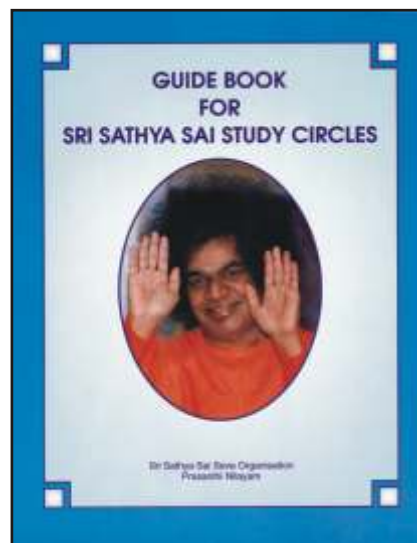
In America, copies can be had from the Tustin Book Centre. Devotees in other countries may contact their respective Central Co-ordinators for information about how to get these books.

At Prasanthi Nilayam, they are available at the lecture hall above the North Indian canteen.

We trust this information would be of some use to you. Also, would you be so kind as to pass on this information to all you think would benefit from it?

Thanks in anticipation. Jai Sai Ram.

SGH TEAM.



If You are GOD!

A Musing

Dear Reader,

Recently, Radio Sai broadcast a talk by Prof. Venkataraman in the series MUSINGS. Many listeners have written to us asking that the transcript be made available. H2H takes pleasure in doing so. The transcript follows. We hope you would like it and if you do, perhaps you could draw the attention of others who might benefit by reading it.

Thanking you in anticipation.
Jai Sai Ram.
SGH TEAM.

Transcript of talk by Prof. Venkataraman

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prasanti Nilayam.

Today I am going to give myself a real tough assignment. We have been receiving many spiritual questions from listeners, and it is about time I start responding. I have thus chosen as the topic for my broadcast today, a question or rather I should say a set of comments, sent to us by a listener. Believe me commenting on this listener's comments is a tough job! Let me try it anyway. I shall first read out the remarks as sent. This is what the listener writes, after listening to our broadcast series on the Krishna-Arjuna Dialog. He says:

You said that Krishna tells Arjuna that "I separate Myself from Myself so that I can love Myself". It means that I, the saint, I, the scholar, I, the fool, I, the thief, I, the murderer, I, the debauch, are all in essence, I, the God.

Krishna further explains that all attachments and desires a person exhibits are only reflections of the Divine Love that He has within Him and hence inter alia



expressions of the Divine Bliss that He, the God really IS.

When ordinary human intelligence, which is nothing but a spark of the Supreme Divine intelligence, plans events and happenings meticulously, the mighty Cosmic Intelligence would definitely have planned the design parameters of His sojourn in various bodies in various births spread over God knows (or

I should know but apparently don't in My embodied State) how many millions of aeons.

That is, I, the God, in my disembodied State have already decided the various roles I would be playing in various births. Under the circumstances, why worry? Let Me be me. If I want to drink let me drink. If I want to enjoy let Me enjoy. If I want to be merry let Me be merry. Because that is what I decided to do before I separated Myself from Myself. I have covered Myself in the embodied state with a Self-created delusion. Yet since the plot, scenes, dialogue, and delivery of the whole drama is pre-scripted, whether I am aware of it or not I am still God. Under the circumstances let me enjoy the life I am leading whatever it is. If I do a wrong thing let Me enjoy the wrong doing. If as a result of that wrong doing I suffer let me enjoy that suffering. If I am insulted let me enjoy that insult. Let me watch with

enjoyment how beautifully I, in another role, in another embodiment, am insulting Myself in the insulted body. Let Me enjoy the loss I, the God have caused to Myself or enjoy My own cunningness, or the meanness with which I myself in another body have caused that loss to Myself. Let Me enjoy My own intelligence or the lack of it. Let Me enjoy My own stupidity or Scholarship.

If You are GOD!

A Musing

*Let Me enjoy My being a scoundrel or a
s a i n t .*

*In this context then, what is sin and what is
merit? There are no such things. Both are
illusions I have covered My deluded mind
with, in the embodied state.*

*In essence it all boils down to what our
Beloved Swami says" The past is beyond
recovery. The future is not certain. The given
moment is now. Do the best you can".
That is I, the God have already played out
my previous role. Though I, the God in my
disembodied State have designed My future
roles also, since I have chosen to hide that
knowledge from Myself in the embodied
state, I do not know My future role. So at
best in My embodied State I am aware of
the role I am playing right now. The person
who is living this moment is none other than
the Omnipresent Lord Himself. So this
present is nothing but the part of one long
Omnipresence. In that Omnipresence there
is no past and no future.*

*So why bother what happens? Be what you
want to be. In due time you will be what you
will be. If I, the God want to be a scholar I
will be one. If I, the God, want to be a saint
I will be one. If I, the God want to serve
Myself in other embodied beings I will do so.
On the other hand if I, the God, want to
merely eat, drink and be merry,
fine let Me be so. Ultimately I AM, I AM.
A H A M , A H A M A S M I .*

*So we reach the conclusion that I, the God,
whatever role I am playing in the present life
should remember that it is a role chosen by
Me only and I should enjoy thoroughly what
I am undergoing. That is I, the God am
beyond dualities. I AM GOD. Let me not
compare Myself with others simply because
there are no others. All roles are Mine. I
alone AM. So let Me be always, in our
Beloved Swami's words, "BE
HAPPY.BE HAPPY. BE HAPPY."*

JAI SAI RAM.

That is what the listener wrote in his
letter to us. By the way, the opening
words of the listener are his
paraphrase of what he thinks

Krishna says. As far as I can recall, in
the Krishna-Arjuna dialog as we
broadcast, nowhere does Krishna
speak the words our listener has
written. Thus, these words would
seem to be his understanding of what
Krishna teaches.

Getting back to the remark itself, it is
a pretty long one, is it not? You can't
blame me if I struggled with it for a
long time to understand what is
implied. Finally I came to the
conclusion that in essence, what the
writer says is the following:

1. When the One becomes many, it
is that One who is masquerading in
many forms.
2. Everything that happens in
Creation is pre-ordained by The One
or God Almighty.
3. Thus, whatever 'I' the individual
or Jivatma do is already ordained by
'I' the Paramatma.
4. There is no difference between 'I'
the One who ordained and 'I' the one
who wears the vesture and performs
various actions. Therefore, all that 'I'
do has been decided by me and me
alone in advance.
5. Since 'I' am the One who decided
and 'I' also am the One who is acting
now, where is the question of sin or
merit, bad or good? The question
does not arise at all and 'I' can
therefore jolly well do what 'I' please.

That, roughly speaking, summarises
what, according to me, the Listener
has said. I hope my paraphrase is fair
and accurate. I am sure you will agree
that the problem that the listener is
raising is a tough one. After reading
his letter many, many times over, I did
a lot of thinking. Let me now share
with you what I feel about the whole
issue raised by our listener. Obviously
a complex remark like this has to be
dealt with slowly and carefully at
various levels. And clearly, every level
of analysis can reveal only a bit of the
truth. After that, one has got to
patiently put together the pieces and
try to make some sense of it all. I

hope you will keep this in mind, while
I place before you my response. Let
me start off with the analogy of a
drama troupe, an analogy that is quite
useful in this case.

The troupe members stage plays and
although the different actors play
different roles, they all have read and
know the whole script. And although
each one of them knows what the
play is all about, yet while actually
play acting they do not show it.
Instead, they react or appear to react
to situations as they happen. So what
does this mean for us? Firstly, life is a
Drama scripted and directed by God.
The official dialog is Dharma, but
just as some actors of ordinary drama
ad lib, as they say in America, some
actors in the Cosmic Drama also
deviate from the official script and ad
lib, meaning they stray from Dharma.
In other words, knowing the script in
advance and following it
meticulously are two different things.
Let us remember this while we move
on to other perspectives.

Next, I would like to consider water
flowing in a stream. As we all know,
water is made up of water molecules,
each molecule being a combination
of an oxygen atom and two hydrogen
atoms. The water molecule is
extremely tiny, and there are trillions
of them in one cubic centimetre of
water. It is because the molecule is so
tiny that we cannot ever see them
with our naked eye. Now scientists
have shown that these tiny molecules
are restless and keep moving
randomly as also with various
velocities. Since the molecules are
tightly packed, they naturally collide
all the time with each other. To
understand this phenomenon, just
imagine a big ground say like the hill
view stadium in Prashanti Nilayam,
full of people. At the end of the
function or program to attend which
all these people came, the members
of the public would all rise and start
walking off in different directions.
Naturally, in the process, many

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A Musing

people would be bumping into others. Basically this is the result of congestion, and what happens in gases and liquids is something similar. Naturally the collisions are more frequent in liquids than in gases, on account of the higher density. This phenomenon of random molecular collisions is referred to in physics as Brownian motion and was explained for the first time by none other than Einstein, in a landmark paper published in the year 1905.

Let us now zoom out and instead of looking at individual molecules in the water, look at the entire stream. We would then find that the water now appears to be flowing fast in one direction that is downstream. In other words, the molecules all move *en masse* in one specific direction. What I want you to note from this example is that when the same system is observed at two different levels or two different scales of length as we would say in physics, we see two different things. In one case we observe random motions while in the other we see a well directed drift.

My third point. Our friend has referred to two 'T's, although I am not sure if he is conscious of the difference between the two. One 'T' is the Lord Supreme or Paramatma who ordains everything. The other 'T' is the individual on Earth, who is a Spark of the Divine but not the whole of the Divine, at least not till full Realisation is attained. This is an important point one is the WHOLE while the other is just a part of that WHOLE. This other 'T' is the Jivatma, and you and I fall into this category. Now our listener, in one breath as it were, is mixing up the two 'T's. In fact this is evident from the way he types the word Me. Sometimes, it is a lower case 'm' while at other times it is the upper case 'M'. Clearly this mixup is not deliberate but unconscious yet it reveals the underlying subtle confusion between

the two 'T's that I just referred to. One must be very careful in not confusing the wave with the ocean. True the wave is a part of the ocean. Equally true that the water in the wave is just as salty as the rest of the water in the ocean. A chemical analysis would show that the wave and ocean are not different. And yet, we all know that in some matters, there IS a difference, a huge difference in fact. I am sure I do not have to elaborate on that. So, what is my point? Simply this:

Paramatma is the One who ordains, but here on Earth, actions are performed by the Jivatma [except of course in the case of the Avatar, which anyway we are not considering here]. The Jivatma on Earth cannot claim the same rights and privileges as Paramatma. I mean we know this to be true even in ordinary, so-called secular life. One man may be the President of a country while another may be just a commoner. In many respects, the two are equal. Both can vote, both have to pay taxes, and both are subject to the same laws. Yet, the President has powers and privileges that the commoner does not enjoy. Please bear this in mind.

Let me now try to put all this together in the context of the comments made by our listener friend. This allows me to say the following:

1. There are two basic levels from which we can look at Creation. One is from above Creation and the other is from within or below, whichever way you prefer to describe it. This is rather like looking at the entire stream standing on the bank on the one hand, and getting into the water and looking at individual molecules on the other. In other words, while making statements, we must be careful about the perspective we are adopting.

2. If we are viewing from above Creation, then we get one perspective while if we are looking from below,

we get an entirely different perspective.

3. When one is above, there is sheer Oneness that is what Vedanta says and that also is what Swami tells us repeatedly. To use jargon, this is the state of Pure Advaitam. Clearly, in this state there is neither good nor bad. When our friend says, "In this context then, what is sin and what is merit? There are no such things. Both are illusions I have covered My deluded mind with, in the embodied state," he is no doubt right but he is obviously speaking from the perspective of sheer Oneness. I am sure everyone including our friend, who I hope is listening, would agree.

4. Let us now climb down from this dizzy state, and get into Creation. That is to say we observe the Universe from within the Universe. We look around and see what we normally describe as either good or bad. How did these things suddenly pop up? The answer has been given by our friend. He says, "both are illusions I have covered my deluded Mind with." That is right. To put it in Vedantic terms, when one enters the world of duality, which, unfortunately is what we all are immersed in, we inevitably see duality around us. True it is a trap set by the Mind, but then we are caught in the trap that we have to accept. So, duality results when the Mind is allowed to get deluded.

5. The Mind should not be allowed to get deluded and make a person assume that Paramatma and the Jivatma are identical. No doubt they both are Divine in origin. True that qualitatively they are same, just as the wave and the ocean are qualitatively the same. But the differences must also be understood and respected. The Paramatma is the Divine in Totality while the Jivatma is but an aspect of that Totality. If Paramatma is the entire fire, the Jivatma is but a tiny spark of that fire.

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6. In other words, the Jivatma who is under the spell of duality cannot claim license to do anything and everything saying, "After all it is 'I' who ordained everything".

7. Contrary to the point of view adopted by our listener, below Creation or in the state of duality, there IS a clear difference between the two 'I's that our writer is implicitly referring to. The 'I' who preordained is the Universal 'I'. It is, as our listener writes, the Atma or AHAM. But the 'I' who performs actions in the world is the lower or individual 'I', and this lower 'I' is bound by ego. Therefore there is no way this lower 'I' can claim perfect identity with the Higher or Universal 'I'.

8. That identity can be claimed only when the lower 'I' attains, what is referred to in Vedanta as Self-Realisation, which is the same as reaching the perfect state of Advaitam.

9. And when one attains that state, that person will never say, like our friend does, "If I want to drink let me drink. If I want to enjoy let Me enjoy. If I want to be merry let Me be merry," and so on. That is because a person in the Advaitic state does not recognise such a thing as drinking and being merry. Being merry is connected with body-consciousness, and a person in the state of Oneness is by definition above body-consciousness. On the contrary, whatever actions such a Self-Realised though still embodied Soul would perform would be a true reflection of God.

10. The above point is very important. Again and again Swami tells us that Divinity is where Prema or Pure Love, Daya or Compassion, Kshama or Forbearance exist. When a person attains Self-Realisation, these virtues shine forth in such a person, as they did in the case of

Ramana Maharishi and Ramakrishna, to name two examples. Can we ever think of these people making such comments as quoted earlier?

I hope you agree with what I have said so far. Basically what I am saying is that we must recognise that though we individuals are in principle God, we are not so in practice. You will surely recall what Swami often says in the context. He says, "The difference between you and Me is that I know I am God but you do not." Now why does Swami say that? The point is simply this. It is not enough to know that one is God in the head. One must FEEL it in the Heart. It is only when we feel Prema, Daya and Kshama constantly in our Heart that we truly rise to the level of the Divine or, to use the language of philosophy, attain Self-Realisation.

Assuming all the above, let me now proceed to the next step in my analysis. The question before us is: "What precisely is my role when I am immersed in duality?" The answer has been clearly spelt out by Swami. Quoting Shankara often, He asks us to shun bad company, avoid seeing bad, focus only on seeing good, hearing good and doing good, etc. I am sure even our friend would agree without any reservations whatsoever, that this is what Swami exhorts us to do.

If you agree with what I have just said, then we must ask, "If there is no such thing as good and bad, then, what precisely does Swami mean by asking to be good and all that?" The answer is simple and straightforward. Swami's advice is meant for one who is immersed in duality that is to say for you, me and our listener friend, and NOT for one who has achieved Realisation. None of us can claim to have come anywhere near Self-Realisation, which automatically means that we all are unfortunately steeped deep in duality. That is why we see pleasure as pleasure and pain

as pain. Hence, immersed as we are in duality, we cannot make the sort of arguments our friend has offered and pretend that there is no difference between Dharma and Adharma. We just have to accept that for us this difference exists, and that we have to steer clear of the bad and stick to the good.

Not merely that. Swami teaches an important lesson, which incidentally has been taught by every one of the earlier Avatars. This is an important point and I do hope you will pay careful attention. Incidentally, this point has also been made by Krishna in the Krishna-Arjuna Dialog. The point is simply this. Suppose there is a person who has achieved Self-Realisation. According to the text book for this person, clay and gold are not different in value, there is no such thing as sin or merit, and so on. That does not mean that this person can do what he or she likes! On the contrary, the Lord is very clear about what such a person shall do. In brief, this Realised person must lead an ideal life that others would be inspired to copy. That precisely is what our Swami is doing all the time. I do hope all that I have said thus far would make it quite clear to everyone, including our listener friend, why Swami keeps on saying MY LIFE IS MY MESSAGE. We should also not forget what Bhagavan adds as a corollary. He says: YOUR LIFE SHOULD BE MY MESSAGE. And what does that mean? Many things, among which is that we cannot drink and be merry as our listener seems to advocate!

The message is loud and clear, is it not? Do you agree? What do you think? Why don't you write and tell us about your views on what I have been saying. You can reach me via the e mail address: listener@radiosai.org

Thank you and Jai Sai Ram.

Perseverance !!

In the 60's, a well-known musician and drama actor brought his son to All India Radio for audition. After the recording, AIR rejected him saying his voice was not suited for broadcasting. Years later, it is a well-known fact that AIR cannot have a day without broadcasting his voice. The son was none other than our KJ Jesudas.

In 1962, four nervous young musicians played their first record audition for the executives of the Decca recording Company. The executives were not impressed. While turning down this group of musicians, one executive said, "We don't like their sound. Groups of guitars are on the way out." The group was called The Beatles.

In 1954, Jimmy Denny, manager of the Grand Ole Opry, fired a singer after one performance. He told him, "You ain't goin' nowhere.... son. You ought to go back to drivin' a truck." He went on to become the most popular singer in America: Elvis Presley.

When Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in 1876, it did not ring off the hook with calls from potential backers. After making a demonstration call, President Rutherford Hayes said, "That's an amazing invention, but who would ever want to use one of them?"

When Thomas Edison invented the light bulb, he tried over 2000 experiments before he got it to work. A young reporter asked him how it felt to fail so many times. He said, "I never failed once. I invented the light bulb. It just happened to be a 2000-step process."

In the 1940s, another young inventor named Chester Carlson took his idea to 20 corporations, including some of the biggest in the country. They all turned him down. In 1947 - after seven long years of rejections, he finally got a tiny company in Rochester, New York, the Haloid Company, to purchase the rights to his invention and process. Haloid became the 'Xerox Corporation' we know today.

She was the 20th of 22 children. She was born prematurely and her survival was doubtful. When she was 4 years old, she contacted double pneumonia and scarlet fever, which left her with a paralysed left leg. At age 9, she removed the metal leg brace she had been dependent on and began to walk without it. By 13 she had developed a rhythmic walk, which doctors said was a miracle. That same year she decided to become a runner. She entered a race and came in last. For the next few years every race she entered, she came in last. Everyone told her to quit, but she kept on running. One day she actually won a race. And then another. From then on she won every race she entered. Eventually this little girl, who was told she would never walk again, went on to win three Olympic gold medals!!! She was Wilma Rudolph !!

The Moral

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experiences of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved. You gain strength, experience and confidence by every experience where you really stop to look fear in the face.... You must do the thing you cannot do. And remember, the finest steel gets sent through the hottest furnace. A winner is not one who never fails, but one who NEVER QUIT! In LIFE, remember that you pass this way only once! Let's live life to the fullest and give it our extreme best. Have a blissful life...

Sathya Sai Baba, Transplanter of My Heart

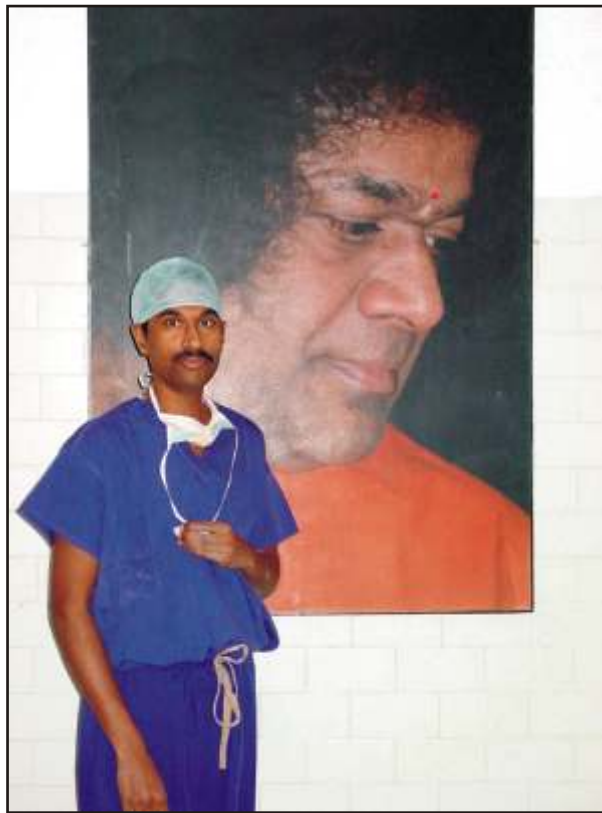
Some time ago, Radio Sai broadcast a series relating to the experiences of Sai doctors. The articles on which this series was based was taken, with due permission of course, from the book inspired medicine, edited by Judy Warner, and published by Leela Press in USA. We present below the transcript of the article by Dr.. Valluvan Jeevanandam of America, with notes from our side.

Dr. Jeevanandam is a brilliant heart surgeon with heart transplant as his specialization. To start with, he was a non-believer, as is often the case. And then came a day when it was time for him to become a Sai doctor and serve the Lord. Over now to Dr.. Jeevanandam.....

Baba says that He will call us only when it is the proper time. The first time I heard about Swami was in 1980. My aunt took my mother, sister, and me to visit Kodaikanal and insisted that we go to see Baba there. She said He was a holy man who would grant interviews, materialize things, and predict the future. At that time, there were about 200 devotees in Kodaikanal. I could have had close, personal experiences with Baba. But my mind refused to accept anything spiritual at that time.

I spent the subsequent ten years finishing medical school and my residency in cardiac surgery. Religion and spirituality were the last things on my mind. My sole focus was making a lot of money, buying a huge house, driving luxurious cars, and eating at the best restaurants. A life of material wealth was mine for the taking.

Baba started me on the divine path without my ever realizing it. My parents have always been religious, especially my mother. I have disappointed her many times by not learning *Slokas* and doing daily prayer. My parents moved to Arizona and began attending the Sai Baba center in Mesa. Whenever my family and I visited them, they would take us to Sunday Bhajans. That was not exactly what I wanted to do during



my short vacations. I would even try to schedule the plane flights to avoid the Bhajans. But with my mother's guidance, I started to listen to and actually enjoy Bhajan tapes. My interest in Baba was further heightened when I read Howard Murphet's Sai Baba: Man of Miracles. Baba was no longer an entity to run from, but not one to be believed either. Bhajan tapes slowly replaced pop music as the preferred music in the car.

The most dramatic event occurred in November 1992 during a visit to Arizona for Thanksgiving. I had

prepared for the long flight with the usual set of novels and other time-consuming materials. After I got on the plane and opened my bag, none of the reading material I had packed was there. The only book was The Vision of Sai by Rita Bruce. Absolutely nothing else! Without any options, I started reading the book, clearly expecting to fall asleep within half an hour. Well, I was never so mesmerized and moved by a book. Swami had finally caught me. I was previously a non-vegetarian who really enjoyed every meat dish possible. I stepped out of the airplane a vegetarian, much to the utter astonishment of my wife and parents. I have remained a pure vegetarian, despite eating at some of the fanciest restaurants in the world. All my previous acquaintances were astonished.

I was finally on the divine path toward Swami.

The next big event that catapulted me toward Swami occurred in April 1993. We had a guest speaker at one of our Sunday Bhajans who told us about the new Super Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi where cardiac surgery is done absolutely free. Because I was also a cardiac surgeon, I was introduced to the speaker. During the conversation, he said that the availability of artificial heart valves was limited in India and asked whether there was anything I could

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do to help. I had absolutely no idea how to proceed further. Valves are very expensive in the United States and, being a new attending physician, the spirit was there in wanting to help, but the wallet was not. This was to become one of Swami's amazing *Leelas*.

The next day, I got a call from an old friend from whom I had not heard in a year. It seemed that he had switched jobs and was working for St. Jude Medical, the largest manufacturer of heart valves in the world. Furthermore, he was in charge of the Asian market. He arranged for me to buy valves at cost and, in addition, arranged for a matching donation from his company. In one telephone call things went from impossible to reality. Later, a representative who sold sutures contacted me. He had a huge overstock of very expensive heart sutures and wanted to know if there were any hospitals doing charity work that could use them. Swami was guiding me through an incredible shopping spree. Finally, it was the middle of May, and I had a lot of equipment but no time off to take it to India. We were short on faculty, and there was no relief in sight. My prayers to Swami were answered when we were finally able to recruit a very good surgeon. However, he wanted three weeks off to visit his family in Japan. Without my asking, my boss came to me with a proposition. Since the new attending physician was taking time off, how about if I took an equal amount of time off in July? I was dumbfounded. Even without asking, I was being given time to visit Puttaparthi. Swami was reeling me in.

I set out to India with more than \$30,000 worth of equipment. Of course, the Customs Officer in the Bombay Airport, sensing a big financial bonanza, wanted to charge import duty despite my telling him it was all charitable donations. I started

praying for Swami's help. Just then the supervisor arrived. The second he heard it was for Swami's hospital, he ordered his men not only to help pack the sutures in a suitcase, but to help transport everything to the domestic terminal for the trip to Madras. Swami is always testing one's faith, but He will always come to the rescue at the bleakest moment.

Three months later, Dr. Jeevanandam received an invitation to speak in the second international symposium on cardiovascular medicine, being held in Puttaparthi. And so, to Puttaparthi the young doctor went. We pick up the story from there.

The Symposium ended, and I had to stay an extra day to catch my flight back to the United States. In the morning, Swami granted me an interview. I had not expected this, although I had previously written down a list of questions in case I was granted this privilege. I went to the interview room with several others whom I do not remember, and with Dr. Donald Ross, probably one of the greatest surgeons in the world. Imagine me, an upstart, sitting next to this luminary. Only Swami can pull these diverse groups of people together.

I had practiced all my questions and was "ready for Swami." Of course, the second I went inside, I completely melted. I was totally overwhelmed. I sat down across from Swami, and He started talking about very practical things such as money, family, and work. By this time I had completely forgotten about my "wish list," but Swami went right down the list, item by item. It was as if He were reading what I had written. He truly knows everything.

At the end of the interview, Swami gave me some Vibhuti, and I left for

Bangalore. I had put some very precious things in a bag: Swami's Vibhuti, other mementos from the conference, and some pictures presented to me by a doctor who, in turn, had received them from Swami. I checked into the hotel in Bangalore and went to the airport at night for a flight to Bombay. To my horror, I had misplaced the bag. I probably left it in the taxi from Puttaparthi. There was no way to retrieve it. I told my contact about this at the Bangalore airport about 30 minutes before departure. However, no one even knew which taxi I had traveled in from Puttaparthi. I felt I had lost the most precious things in life. I got on the plane, and the doors closed. Then there was a delay. I was getting a little anxious, as I had a connection to make. Just then, the doors reopened, and airline officials asked if I was on board. I thought I must be in a lot of trouble. A person came to me, dropped off the bag with all of my precious belongings, and left. I did not know him, nor did any of my Bangalore contacts with whom I later spoke. This was another one of Swami's miracles!

By the way, since that interview, I have become much more comfortable discussing God's work with my patients. Many of them are desperately ill and come to our institution because their cases are hopeless. I tell the patients that, although I will do my best, there is certainly a chance they may die, and that God is the one who determines that. I am just a humble instrument of God's action. I try to steer their hopes away from me and have them focus on God. The patients who truly believe in God and say they will completely leave it "in the hands of God" have recovered remarkably well. This is the power of faith and prayer.

And now, a few fascinating medial experiences that Dr. Jeevanandam has had.

Sathya Sai Baba, Transplanter of My Heart

We had a patient at Temple University who had a massive heart attack, became very unstable, and was rushed to surgery. He needed several important blood vessels bypassed but, when his chest was opened, we found that the heart attack had been so big that all the usual landmarks we use to find the vessels were completely obliterated. I searched for more than 20 minutes without finding any vessels. Everyone in the operating room was getting nervous for, if those vessels could not be found and bypassed, the patient would surely die. I was dissecting on the back of the heart to find the vessels, frustration and anxiety mounting. Just then, I heard the words, "Sai Ram." No one else in the room was a Baba devotee, so those words startled me. In addition, I felt a sharp pinch in the middle of my chest just where I wear Swami's materialized ring as a necklace. My hand moved involuntarily, and I made a cut in the patient's heart. Right there, in an area where we never would have found it, was the main artery. Two others were found quickly, and the patient did very well. Everyone in the operating room wanted to know how I had done that. I told them it was luck, but that it was helpful to have God on our side. Clearly, I was acting as an instrument of the Lord. Ever since then, I have, on occasion, felt a pinch on my chest in the exact spot where the ring is touching me. Of course, this makes me instantly think of Swami.

Another story involves Arunan Sivalingum, an eminent retinal specialist. At the young age of 37, Arunan was considered one of the foremost ophthalmologists in the world. He was health conscious, despite leading a very busy and stressful life. He experienced some nausea and vomiting and went to the emergency room at his institution. The most likely diagnosis was an ulcer, so he was being prepared to

receive a gastroscopy. As a part of the routine, he also had an EKG, which showed a massive heart attack. He was rushed to the cardiology suite, and an angiogram revealed massive coronary artery disease. He became unstable and was rushed to the operating room. The surgeons performed bypass surgery but were unsuccessful in recovering the heart. They placed him on a temporary heart-assist device and debated what to do with this dying patient.

This is where Sai incidents take over. It so happened that one of the doctors in charge of the intensive care unit had just attended our conferences on transplantation and end-stage heart disease. She immediately encouraged the surgeons to refer him to us at Temple. In addition, Arunan's wife was best friends with the wife of our medical director of transplantation. Arunan was transferred early in the morning and went directly to our operating room. He was unconscious, was on a ventilator, had his chest open, was bleeding, and had poor blood flow. The mortality rate of such a patient is about 80 percent. I took one look at him and my heart sank. Here was an important member of society, a young, energetic husband and a father of four, including a newborn. Only a miracle could save him. Just then, the nurses pulled back the sheets in preparation for surgery. There was a picture of Swami. Arunan's mother, a long time devotee, had taped a picture of our Swami to his upper arm. My nurses were surprised. They exclaimed, "Hey, that's the dude in the picture at your house Val." I started thinking that maybe now we had a chance. We started the surgery and proceeded to stop the bleeding, take out the temporary device, and implant a more permanent artificial heart. The idea was to get him better and wait until a heart transplant could be done. The surgery was tricky, and we barely got him through. He was

transferred to the intensive care unit in a grave condition. The slightest complication would mean death. He remained unstable.

I had to go to a very important meeting in San Francisco I had postponed attending many times. I left him in capable hands and boarded the cross-country flight. Arunan continued to bleed, but his blood flows were acceptable. I kept in constant contact by sky phone. Then, his flow started to go down. He was starting to die. Opening his chest again would surely have killed him. I gave a bunch of orders, but things were looking bleak. At that time, my plane began its descent into San Francisco, and the sky phones were shut off. The only option was to pray. I told Swami that Arunan was completely in His hands. There was nothing we could do. That was around 6:00 p.m. on the West Coast. I went to the hotel room fully expecting disaster. I called the hospital in Philadelphia and spoke to the resident, who was giddy with happiness. At exactly 9:00 p.m., 6:00 p.m. on the West Coast, and also Swami's special number, a miracle had happened. Arunan stopped bleeding, and his blood flows improved dramatically. By the next day, he was off the critical list and did spectacularly well with the device. He ended up going home and even operated on patients while on the device. It was truly a miracle.

That was only the beginning. He was on the device without any complications, which is rare, for more than nine months. With Swami's guidance, I was contemplating a career move to Chicago. But I felt a personal responsibility to have Arunan's transplant done before I left Philadelphia. During a Sunday Bhajan, I prayed hard to Swami. I did not want to leave without finishing what we had started on Arunan. During meditation, my beeper went

Sathya Sai Baba, Transplanter of My Heart

off. A heart available, but there were seven people ahead of Arunan. I told the coordinator to send blood for matches on everyone. The coordinator asked twice about sending blood on Arunan because he was so far down on the list. I insisted. Through divine grace, every one of the patients above him tested poorly. Swami had designated this heart for Arunan. We proceeded with the transplant. I placed Vibhuthi on Arunan and, again, there were more than 15 people in the room watching, but no one actually saw me do it. The transplant was truly divine. It went without a hitch. I could feel Swami taking over the operation. There was no other way for it to go so perfectly. The new heart jumped back to life. Everyone in the room was absolutely amazed; this was the best heart anyone had seen. Arunan has done great since then and, with Swami overlooking things, he will continue to do so. He has become a strong devotee and has sent his curriculum vitae to Swami to ask for permission to work at the hospital in Puttaparthi. I am sure that Swami will get him there one day. Swami has always said He will open His hands, and the best doctors will come. They just come at different times and by different paths.

About fifteen months after all this happened, Dr. Jeevanandam was back again in Puttaparthi. Just before he was about to return to America, Swami granted him an interview. Over now to the doctor's description of what happened.

Swami graced us with an interview at the absolute last moment. When He asked me what I wanted, I said, "Your blessings," and He told me that I always had them. He asked again, and I said, "Your grace," and He gave me the same answer. Finally, I said, "Whatever you desire Swami." He materialized a silver ring with an Om sign. He asked what silver meant.

Purity, He replied. He then took back the ring, blew on it and it became gold, with His picture on it. He put it on my finger; again, a perfect fit. During our personal interview, Swami had asked where my diamond ring was. I told Him that I wore it as a necklace. He then took off the ring that He had just materialized, blew on it, and it disappeared. I guess if you don't use it, you lose it. Swami then asked about my work. "Fine," I said. He responded, *No good, too much jealousy*.

That was the first time Swami had said that there was a problem with work. Externally, everything was perfect. We had built a new house, I was director of the largest transplant program in the United States, and my career, with Swami's grace, was blossoming. But Swami knew, and He clearly predicted the future. He then materialized a nine gem (Navaratna) ring for me, which I wear along with the other ring, on a necklace.

Time passed, and unknown to Dr. Jeevanandam, events were shaping towards his migration to a different place. The doctor was about to leave for India for yet another visit, and just then something happened.

Just before I was to leave for India, I received a call from the University of Chicago, asking me if I would be interested in interviewing for the position of Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery. I wanted to postpone speaking to them until after the trip to India, but they insisted, so I went for a day. Certainly, being asked to be the department chief at a very young age, in such a prestigious institution, could only be influenced by Swami's hand. I was happy to be asked, but Temple University countered with a similar offer, and it was going to be much easier to stay where I was. When I arrived in India, Swami was in Whitefield,

On arrival, Dr. Jeevanandam became immersed in work, and weeks flew by. And then....

On the day I was to leave, I fully anticipated another of Swami's usual *Leelas*, figuring He would postpone the interview until the last possible minute. Of course. He was as unpredictable as always. The second I passed through the gates of Brindavan, several devotees came directly to me and said Swami wanted to see me for an interview in the morning. Swami started with the usual *How are you, doctor?* He then went ahead and solved one of my main dilemmas. When we perform bypass surgery, it is conventional practice to use veins as grafts for the procedure. I like to use arteries instead, as they are naturally meant to handle high pressure. Veins are obtained from the legs; they are long, and easy to work with. Arteries are obtained from the arm, chest wall, or the stomach they are much shorter and less forgiving in terms of length. Why not maintain the artery in its natural state instead of transforming a low-pressure vessel, such as a vein, into an artery? It is much more technically demanding and tricky to do this, so only about 5 percent of cardiac surgeons do this type of operation routinely. In my practice, and at Swami's Hospital, we had implemented a system of using arterial grafts as much as possible. However, there is no way to prove if this is better, and we won't know for at least five to ten years. I've always wondered whether the extra effort was worth it but, despite the lack of conclusive medical data, I believed in my heart that it was. Then Swami answered my dilemma by describing how I do not use veins, that I use arteries, which is a better and more advanced technique. I no longer need scientific proof. Swami validated all of the extra work involved in using arterial grafts.

I started asking Him about Chicago

Sathya Sai Baba, Transplanter of My Heart

and, before I could finish, He took my hand in His, told me He knew about the move, that He had arranged it, and that I must go. It was a direct command from the divine.

As swami foretold, Dr. Jeevanandam did move to Chicago, but the movement was not an ordinary event; rather, it had a beautiful divine touch, as Jeevanandam explains:

We, indeed, moved from Philadelphia to Chicago. It would never have happened without Swami being so forceful. Every time I thought of all the things we were giving up in Philadelphia, Swami's words came to mind. From a practical point of view, the move did not make sense. The program was more established at Temple University; I made more money there, we had an incomparable house; and I had the respect of the

community. But faith in Swami and His forceful words made the move possible. At one point, I was really having doubts, and I wrote a letter to Swami from my office. I asked for a sign that this move really was what He meant. Just then, my secretary knocked and said a Dr. Mulder was calling. I told her to take a message, but Dr. Mulder was persistent. I took the call, and he said he was an alumnus of the surgery department of the University of Chicago. He gave me a ten-minute discourse on why I should move. I later found out that no one at the University of Chicago knew of a Dr. Mulder. It was Swami Himself giving the sign I had wanted. He always answers our prayers, just in different ways than one would expect.

This is just a small sampling of my experiences with Bhagavan Baba. Since I have witnessed and participated in Swami's miracles, my

entire attitude toward life has changed. I have been taught humility, compassion, and to serve mankind. Swami sets high standards, and I do not know if I can ever reach them. But, with His guidance, I have been directed onto the right path. I have a long way to go, but my Lord and Guru, Sai Baba, will surely get me there.

The End

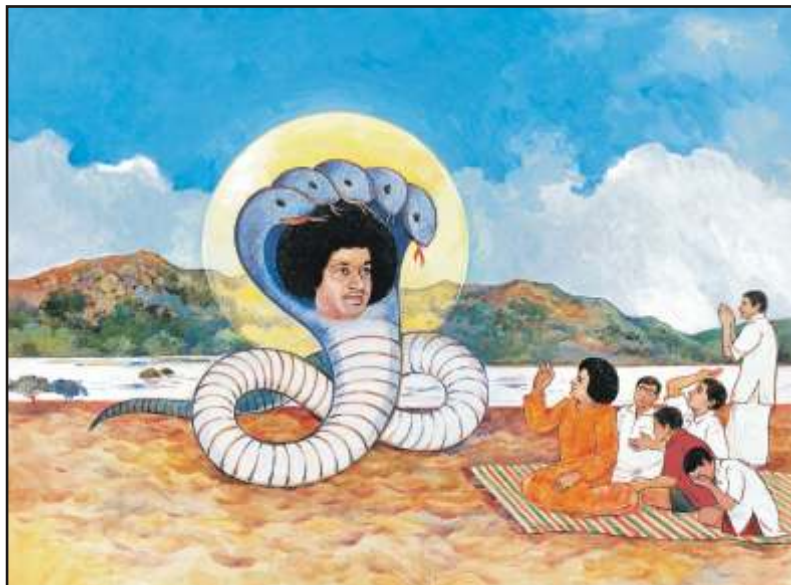
Well, Dear reader, what do you think of it? Do you like this article? If so, why don't you tell others about it so that they too can read it and experience Ananda.

By the way, we shall publish later the transcript of the interview with Dr. Jeevanandam that was broadcast over radio Sai. Also, the transcript of the interview with Dr. Sivalingam, who received the heart transplant! Watch out!!

Coming next..... In H2H !

Sai Leela !

Leelas involve a dizzying mixture of fun, frolic, pranks and spectacular miracles of an Avatar. bringing back those marvellous memories of Puttaparthi in the forties and fifties, is this special feature, on the Leelas of Lord Sai.



Just because of You

Dear Young readers!

You are the hope of tomorrow. There is no force greater than a young mind inspired.....It can set ablaze an entire nation, nay, the whole world ! Creative energies and talents are hidden deep inside you, unmanifest ! And there comes a moment in your life when a Spark of Divine Love finds its way into your heart.... It sets ablaze the heart !

Great poems are written, great speeches are made....

The world is taken by fire...

Just what the spark of Sri Ramakrishna did to Swami Vivekananda...

Here is a similar outpouring of great creativity, by Amrita Kaul , a student of Swami.....it is a tribute to the spark that set her heart ablaze!

A shroud of silence. A single voice. An unstoppable force. A string of five words that traveled through the air yet stood still in time. A clap of thunder. A wave of joy. A sense of responsibility and pride.

“MY STUDENTS ARE MY PROPERTY”

Spine-chilling isn't it? To be personally owned by the Lord God of all. Impeccable behavior, unwavering faith and the strictest of discipline that these five words impose upon the listener, yet a feeling of gratification that nothing can possibly match and makes it all seem worthwhile.

How can mere man-made words describe a feeling so divinely sublime? Mere words! So inadequate and feeble. Eighteen years of searching has proven futile, as will the remaining years of my life to find a word or a phrase that interpret the feeling of drowning in love. To be drowning and not gasping for anything more in the world, an overwhelming sense of “forever-ness”, no past, no present, no future. Have not the scholars of the universe found this word? Will anyone ever find it? Over time I have learnt to believe that this word must exist

somewhere within the vastness of love. This one word must echo endlessly, yet remain unheard, and that in the final breath of life is this word of eternal bliss whispered ever so softly into our ears, for that is when the thoughts

cease, and the heart beat stops and the realization of this omnipotent word is evident.

The journey never ends, yet I shall undertake it, just because of you. Claiming me as your own is a debt that

cannot be humanly repaid. But all that I shall do, shall be in your name. Yet, as fortunate and blessed as I may seem, I cannot cease to ask you for strength and faith to bravely climb life's hill. To be Yours is a responsibility awarded to the noblest of beings, and to know that I qualify into your regiment is reason enough to believe that You shall grant me the equanimity appropriate of a Sai Soldier.

Lead me on Master, not to fight the war, but to end it. Hold my hands and channel my energies to where they are dwindling. Close my eyes and teach me to look deep beyond the surface. Give me the power to rest while in motion.

As I read these words again and again, I feel the atmosphere thicken and time curdles to a stop. I've been chosen to play a part. The realization is profound. My mind is racing to find THAT word, and there You stand,

before my mind's eye telling me to wait, I shall find what I am looking for in time, but until then, I must wait, wait, wait, wait, wait..... And I will wait, JUST BECAUSE OF YOU.



Going Live on Sivarathri

Sai Ram, Dear Reader!

I hope you are aware that this year, the Sivarathri proceedings were telecast live in India for three hours, from 5 PM to 8 PM. The editorial in an earlier issue made a mention of this. It was an amazing experience, considering that none of us have had any experience of this sort thing before. But then, that is the way things happen in Swami's Mission.

The idea of a live telecast took root some months earlier when an effort was made to webcast, in a limited way that is, the last day of the *Dasara* proceedings. That is the day when the seven-day *Yajna* is brought to a grand finale in the *Poorna Ahuti* function. This webcast was not really done by us but by another group, and we merely provided a camera signal. The webcast was quite limited in scope, and to just the city of Madras/Chennai, where thousands of devotees gathered in the Sai Centre Sundaram saw live what was going on.

Came Birthday, and by now we were in the picture. This time, we taped the function, and later did a webcast in the evening for devotees in Sundaram, Madras, and subsequently to the US where the webcast was seen by many groups there. Of course it was a delayed webcast, but the viewers saw it within hours of the event and at a convenient time too, that is in the evening.

One more practice round of web streaming to the US and this was during Christmas. This too went off well. So much so, when Prof David Gries of Cornell University came here in early January for his annual stint of teaching in Swami's Institute, we got together and worked out a road map for starting regular streaming service internationally, even as we now have

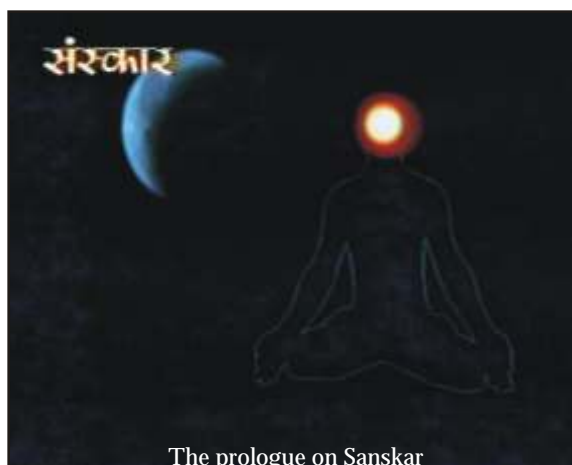
international radio streaming service.

By this time, the Sivarathri fever was mounting, and Mr. Gopal Srinivasan who through his continued munificence has been driving many of our technical developments said: "Listen, you are already telecasting



three times a week a TV program called SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS FROM PRASHANTI NILAYAM on Sanskar TV channel. It is quite popular and eagerly looked forward to by thousands all across the country. Why not go live on SR day? In fact, we must!" One thing led to another and Gopal sought the Divine blessing, which was given. From that moment, there was no turning back.

So what does a live telecast mean and what arrangements did we have to make? Quite a lot. First and foremost, we had to line up four



cameras to cover the scene. Fortunately, we now have four good digital cameras and we managed to identify four choice locations that would enable us to have good video coverage. Next, we had to pipe the signals to a central control centre, complete with monitors. Seated at the control centre were three persons, one of whom was the Director. The second person controlled the video mixing and the third controlled the audio level. This was not enough. We had to provide a talk-back system so that everyone could communicate with everyone else. This was a hands-free system, the sort pilots wear while piloting an aircraft; that is to say, there are headphones, and a small attached mike. The Control system was established inside the Mandir, yes, the place where normally we have Bhajans, with Swami sitting in His chair. On an earlier occasion, to be precise on Birthday of 2002, we did a live radio broadcast over Radio Sai. On that day too we had set up our control facilities [much smaller than this time] inside the Mandir. And you know what? After the morning functions were over, Swami suddenly came inside the Mandir and He was quite surprised to see a whole lot chaps who normally are not found there! There was a sort of quizzical look in His eyes, and He just walked away. We were all terribly scared! So this time, I took the precaution of telling Swami several times in advance that we would be working from inside the Mandir. Not only that, we all had special photo-badges that said in big bold letters: MANDIR DUTY.

The arrangements did not stop here, and there were a number of other things that had to be done. We had already laid a

Going Live on Sivarathri

fibre-optic line from the Mandir to our nerve centre in the IT Centre [we have described the inauguration of the IT Centre in an earlier issue of H2H]. This cable would carry the composite audio-video computer signal to the IT Centre, from where it would go by a leased 2 MBPS line to Bangalore. This line is available to us



The crew

all the time and used by many here. However, for this function, we blocked all other users at our end.

Bangalore was not our destination but Bombay/Mumbai. Sanskar does its uplink in Bombay, to the THAICOM satellite, which then beams the signal down on the country. So we had to lease a 2 MBPS line from Bangalore to Bombay. Thus, our signal was supposed to go from Prashanti Nilayam first to Bangalore and thence from there to Bombay.

All this sounds very simple and straight forward on paper but in practice, it turned out to be quite tricky. The first thing we realised was that when a service provider says that he is offering a 2 MBPS line, we ought not to take it literally; there is a lot of fine print, and in actual practice the throughput turns out to be much lower. We could not get anything more than 500 KBPS, which meant that the picture quality would take a beating. We discovered this to our horror while doing some preliminary

tests. It was just about 10 days or so to D Day, and we had not yet established a firm link to Bombay. By the way, we from Prashanti Digital Studio were doing all the ground work here in Prashantinilayam, while Mr. Ramesh Babu, a senior associate of Mr. Gopal Srinivasan, did all the technical liaison at the uplink station in Bombay. Here I should not forget to mention the excellent logistic support given to Ramesh by devotees in Dharmakshetra without the Sainet, the internet is nothing!

OK, we were bowled out in the first round on this link from Bangalore to Bombay. How did

we come through? This is where the yeoman work done by Ramesh needs special mention. He huddled with the technical experts of the service provider, and arranged what was constantly referred to as a "tunnel" on the communication link. Frankly, I don't quite know what this tunnel is but believe me, it sure did make us see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel!

The clock was ticking and we were inching towards D Day. While things were generally under control back here, there was still a lot of nail-biting going on regarding the Bangalore-Bombay link.

Tests were being done all the time, and slowly our figure crept up to 1 MBPS and thence on to 1.2 MBPS audio signal included. We were streaming video signals all the

time from Prashanti Studio to Bombay and found that 1.2 MBPS was the best we could get. It was a take-it-or-leave-it situation. We just grabbed it no other choice, since the expectations of viewers had been raised sky high. What about picture quality? Not bad; quite good; not the very best but OK.

Three days before D day, at midnight, a 20 minute program on tape was streamed from our Studio and actually telecast! This was a trial. We taped the program as received in TV receiver, and things seemed to be OK. We were now beginning to feel more confident.

D Day minus one, that is, Tuesday, 17th February. On Tuesdays, there is a regular Sanskar telecast of our program at 9 PM. We had already sent the digital tape for this program to Sanskar TV ten days earlier [by courier] but decided to try out a live telecast from our studio. It was done but there were one or two minor glitches. One of these had to do with getting the proper signal from Bombay for us to switch on and come on the air. To be more precise, the countdown procedure we had adopted earlier was forgotten! The glitches were minor but they taught us a lesson for the next day.

Finally, the big day was here! From three days or rather nights before



The commentators

Going Live on Sivarathri

this, our boys and several people here who were helping, were slogging, and believe me it was truly hectic. For not only were we telecasting live but we were also providing video viewing in and around the Sai Kulwant Hall. We had established 120 TV monitors on CCTV network so that everyone in every nook and corner of Sai Kulwant Hall could watch the proceedings comfortably. Besides this, four big screens had been set up to enable people gathered on roads also to watch. All this was done to prevent the crowd surges that were witnessed in earlier years. It was a lot of work but it paid off. One elderly lady whom I met after the event said that thanks to CCTV she was able to sit comfortably in the Poornachandra Hall and witness the proceedings yes there were 20 monitors in the PC Hall too! By Swami's Grace we were able to offer this unique service which has never been done before. What I am trying to convey is that there was a lot we had to do and there was practically no rest during the preceding four days and nights they were absolutely hectic. Please understand, we had to work within very restricted slots, that is, a couple of hours in the afternoon between end of morning Darshan and commencement of evening Darshan. And that meant, most of the work had to be done at night.

Oh yes, I should not forget to mention that we had to set up a TV antenna on top of the Mandir. This was a tricky business because Mandir access is highly restricted especially on account of security. Finally, we got the antenna and the receiver going at 1 AM on

Tuesday morning! By the way, connecting 120 TV sets by cable is no joke; one crew was working on this for three nights, for that is when they



could work. I hope all this gives you some idea of the slogging that has to go on in the background.

Finally, D Day! The morning function was over and it was announced that the evening function would commence at 4 PM. We were all in the Mandir by 2 PM, tense, anxious and biting our nails, figuratively that is! Though we were to go on air at 5 PM, we started the streaming trials from 3 PM itself just to make sure all the necessary adjustments at the Bombay end



could be done in advance. This was one of the lessons we had learnt from earlier trials. We had mobiles all over the place and were in constant touch with Bombay. We worked out a count down procedure 30 seconds before air time, a person from Bombay would tell us, "You will be on air 30 seconds from now." At 20 seconds he would say, "20 seconds to go!" Meanwhile, we were watching the regular Sanskar program on a TV tuned to receive that channel. Imagine that! A TV set inside the Mandir!! We had to keep an eye on our monitors also.

There was a slightly tricky element here. You see that though TV signals travel with the speed of light, there is a 10 second delay in the conversion of our camera signal into a computer signal ready for transmission. Thus our signal reaches Bombay 10 seconds after our cameras produce them. Next, at Bombay end there is another delay of 10 seconds before our signal goes through the computer there to the satellite. So, in the end, there is a 20 second between what people in SK hall see and what people see on their TV screens. We had to keep that in mind. In other words, we had to start 20 seconds before the preceding TV program ended. By Swami's Grace and mobile phones and all that, we did it perfectly, and the net result was there was absolutely no blank screen. When the previous TV program ended, ours came on just like that! Boy, were we relieved!

The story does not quite end here; in fact this is where it really begins. What did we show? Well, we did not exactly cut to SK Hall; we

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had a nice prologue that introduced the viewer to what Sivarathri is all about, the spiritual significance, the folklores associated with it etc. Also some vintage shots from yesteryears. All this was for about 20 minutes.

At the end of the prologue, the commentators took over and we cut to SK Hall to show the proceedings as they were taking place there. We had an old student of ours who took care of the English commentary while for Hindi we had two persons. We deliberately gave a lot of importance to Hindi because we had a huge segment of viewers in the North where Hindi is understood better. The Hindi commentary was handled by a devotee and a professional sent us to from Bombay.

While we were on air, we had to constantly be alert, not only with respect to the telecast but also with respect to local problems. For example, soon after went on air, we discovered that despite all earlier trials and setting adjustments, the sound as received on the TV receiver was not good; there was some jarring sound. So Bombay had to be informed and adjustments made there. I had to run here and there and cueing people as needed. Especially with respect to the commentary, I had to signal these people what to say and when. The commentators were a bit uncomfortable to start with because they had to sit on the floor and there was a terrific ambient noise from the Public Address system. But we had to live with it. But this was not the end of our problem. People walked in and out of the Mandir as they pleased. For example just after Swami left, which was at about 7 PM, a large number of people started coming

into the Mandir. They all wanted to worship there! I had a tough time keeping them out. They just would not understand that we were doing a live telecast and needed quiet! Almost everyone looked daggers at me even while I tried to function like a bouncer! Finally, I managed to bolt the door but my problems were not over; the Chief Minister of one State who had come was now making his exit and his Security wanted to use the Mandir as the gateway. So all these gun-toting chaps had to be let through!



OK, were our problems over? By no means! The moment Swami left, people just started getting up and leaving. I mean, how could we show thousands getting out! What would people outside think? This is where forward planning helped. We had ready, stuff taped from the morning. We just switched to that and the commentators were now allowed to have a field day. They were now in their elements and enjoyed every minute of it.

What about the high-point, that is, the Lingodbhavam? Well, we had done a lot of planning about that. We had arranged for each cameraman to send his tape immediately after the event to the control room. Here we

were supposed to do the replay. Unfortunately since we did not have proper tape recorders, we used DV Cameras for that purpose, four of them! But it worked, and people all over the country saw the Lingodbhavam replays several times, in slow motion too.

A couple of juicy stories! During the telecast, one person came running from the SK Hall screaming, "CCTV off in our sector! Do something immediately!!" Crisis management! We sent a person and he found that when a fat devotee sat on it, the cable snapped! So the cable had to be repaired on the spot. Lesson bury the cable! Hope to do that this summer when Swami is away!

Another incident. Suddenly, just before start of the afternoon proceedings, we hear that a team from a reputed TV news channel was here and had been permitted to video tape the event. We had worked out with security a spot for them to shot from. But you know what? These media people [there was one more from Delhi] are not only professional but very used to having their own way. So, they came, and said, "We don't like this spot," came to where our camera was, and just moved it aside! It was like a Western and we were getting pushed around in our own backyard! I had to rush and do some mediation, practicing all the virtues taught by Swami this is when bookish knowledge had to be quickly translated into practical knowledge!

There were happier moments too. While the telecast was going on, one person came to me and said, "Sir, every shop in the village is showing the program and thousands are

Going Live on Sivarathri

watching". Another excitedly told me, "My wife who is in Calcutta called me just now on the mobile and told me that it is fantastic." This was most gratifying.

One difficult moment. Just after Lingodbhavam, Swami suddenly leaned forward and for a second it seemed as if He was far from well. Knowing the anxiety this would cause to viewers, Gene Massey who was at the Director's control, quickly switched to another camera view. Real fast thinking. We of course saw it all but the viewers in the country saw it for just a fraction of a second; but even that was enough for it led to so many mails and phone calls. Anyway, Swami was back in form in just five minutes and continued His Discourse. After that He sat for Bhajans and left. And you know what? He made a surprise visit at 1.40 AM. Attendance in the hall was thin

but those who were present, students mostly, sang with fantastic gusto! There were no mikes and this was the most robust singing one can ever witness. I have seen this many times. Boy, do they beat the hell out of the drums to keep everyone awake?! Swami enjoyed it immensely, and luckily we have it all on tape.

And so, one more Sivarathri passes off into history. Perhaps some of you may recall we offered excerpts from old issues of Sanathana Sarathi in an earlier issue. Who knows? Decades from now, what you now read may be offered for devotees of that period in the same fashion!

Shakespeare said, "All that lives must die, passing from here to Eternity." Hemmingway wrote a book with the title "FROM HERE TO ETERNITY" which later became a

classic movie starring Frank Sinatra, Montgomery Clift and several others. It also won Oscars I believe.

Why am I bringing this up? Because, at the basic level, Sivarathri is a reminder of the journey from here to Eternity. From Eternity we have come here; now that we are zhere, we must avoid being trapped here for eternity through the 'birth again, death again' syndrome! The eyes must be on the Road to Eternity and not on the Road to Bali or Road to Rio [old timers would know what I mean by this]!

Hope you liked this feature. Why don't you write and tell us what you think, even if it is not favourable!

Jai Sai Ram.
G.VENKATARAMAN



Grama Seva in the Nilgiris

SRI SATHYA SAI SEVA ORGANIZATIONS
TAMILNADU NILGIRIS DISTRICT
SRI SATHYA SAI GRAMA SEVA -- 2003

As part of our beloved Bhagwan's 78th birthday celebrations, Grama seva was conducted in 78 villages of Nilgiris district during the year 2003 by the sevadals of Sri Sathya Sai Seva organizations, Nilgiris district.

The theme of the Grama Seva was Educare since Swami lays a lot of emphasis on educare and has declared it as the Vedas of the 21st century, "EDUCARE" was chosen as the

most appropriate theme for the 78 grama sevas. In educare, Swami explains about the five elements and the importance of living in harmony with nature.

Water is one of the five elements and the scarcity of water was a

problem faced by many villages of Nilgiris district this year. Due to scarce rainfall and afforestation, many water sources had dried up. There was need to educate the villagers on the importance of trees and protection of water sources. Hence as part of grama seva it was decided to identify the water sources in the villages and plant special tree saplings like weeping willow etc., which had the property of enhancing the water in the water sources. The saplings were to be planted near the water sources.

On 13-7-2003, Guru poomima day, the Grama seva was started by the Divine grace of ever loving Bhagwan. Sevadals from all over the District gathered at the Sri Sathya Sai Community Centre Yellanalli. The sevadals set out for Grama seva in lorry and jeeps chanting the divine name and singing bhajans.

The sevadals after reaching the village formed into a group. Bhajans were started and they proceeded to the main temple of the village. After offering pooja and prayer in the

local temple, saplings were planted in the temple premises where pits were dug by the sevadals. The village elders were made to plant the saplings while the sevadal members chanted the sacred Gayathri Mantra and sprayed vibudhi in the

pits. Mean while Bhajans were being sung continuously. After that the sevadals proceeded to the water sources in the villages and dug pits and planted saplings. Groups of sevadal members went past every house in the village singing non-stop Bhajans and giving laddoos, Swami photo, vibudhi and a pamphlet on educare to each family. After visiting each and every house, the sevadal members boarded the vehicles and set out for the grama seva in the next village.

When the sevadal members reached every village, the villagers welcomed them and took them to their temple.

They also took part in digging pits and planting the saplings along with the sevadals. Children and elders sang Bhajans along with the procession and they guided the sevadals along the entire village. Due to the spiritual effect of the

Bhajans which were never stopped from the start to the end, the entire village was filled with divine vibrations and the villagers showed their love by offering tea and coffee to the sevadal members. The purpose of the Grama seva and the main features of educare were explained to the villagers.

In this way Grama seva was completed in 78 villages from July to November. Every morning, the sevadals assembled in the Sri Sathya Sai Community Centre. The Grama seva was completed each day by 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. The houses in each village were scattered and it was mostly a hilly terrain. It was indeed a difficult job to go door by door without missing a single house. But the sevadal members, especially youth, did not feel any difficulty due to the grace of

Bhagwan. They could feel His presence everywhere. Due to the Divine grace of our compassionate Lord, grama seva was completed in 78 villages. The Grama sevas in the remaining 38 villages was completed by the various samithis in the district. The members of each samithi in the district visited nearby villages and conducted grama seva in the same way, keeping educare as the main theme. The Grama Seva gave an opportunity to both the sevadal members, youth and the people of those 78 villages to experience the love of the Divine



Bhajans in Village Temple



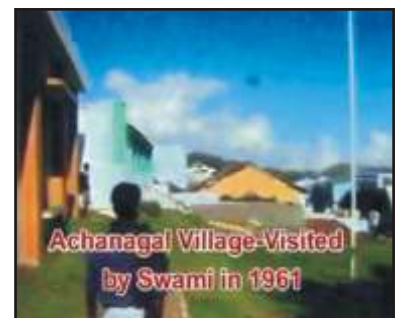
Planting of Tree Saplings



Explaining about Educare to Villagers



Distribution of Prasadam & Educare Pamphlet



Achanagal Village-Visited by Swami in 1961

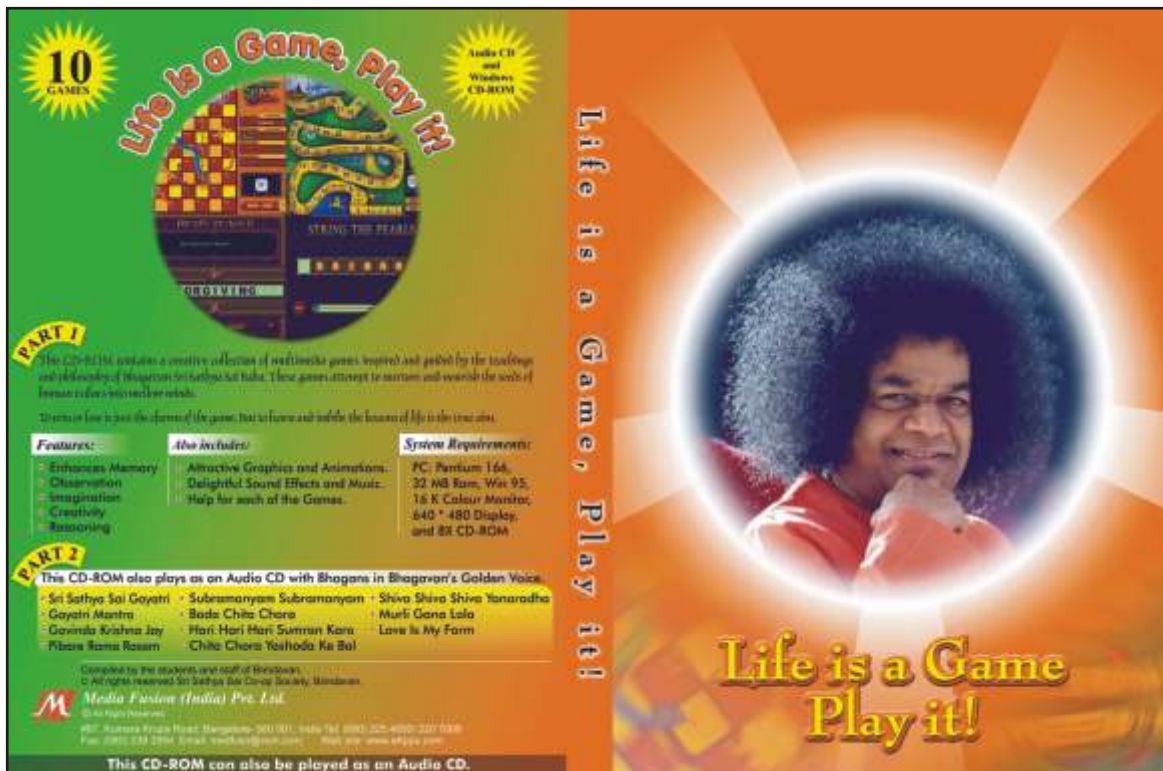
Darshan at Prasanthi Nilayam

in the early sixties.....



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Man himself is God; all matter, even in the moon, is suffused with the Divine Presence. To search for God with the instruments in the laboratory, is like trying to cure pain in the stomach by pouring drops in the eye! There is a technique and a special instrument for that purpose which the past masters in that science have developed and spoken about. Equip yourselves with a clear eye, through detachment and love, sharpen your sense of discrimination so that it has no prejudice or prediction; then you can see God in you, around you, in all that you know and feel.

– Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL