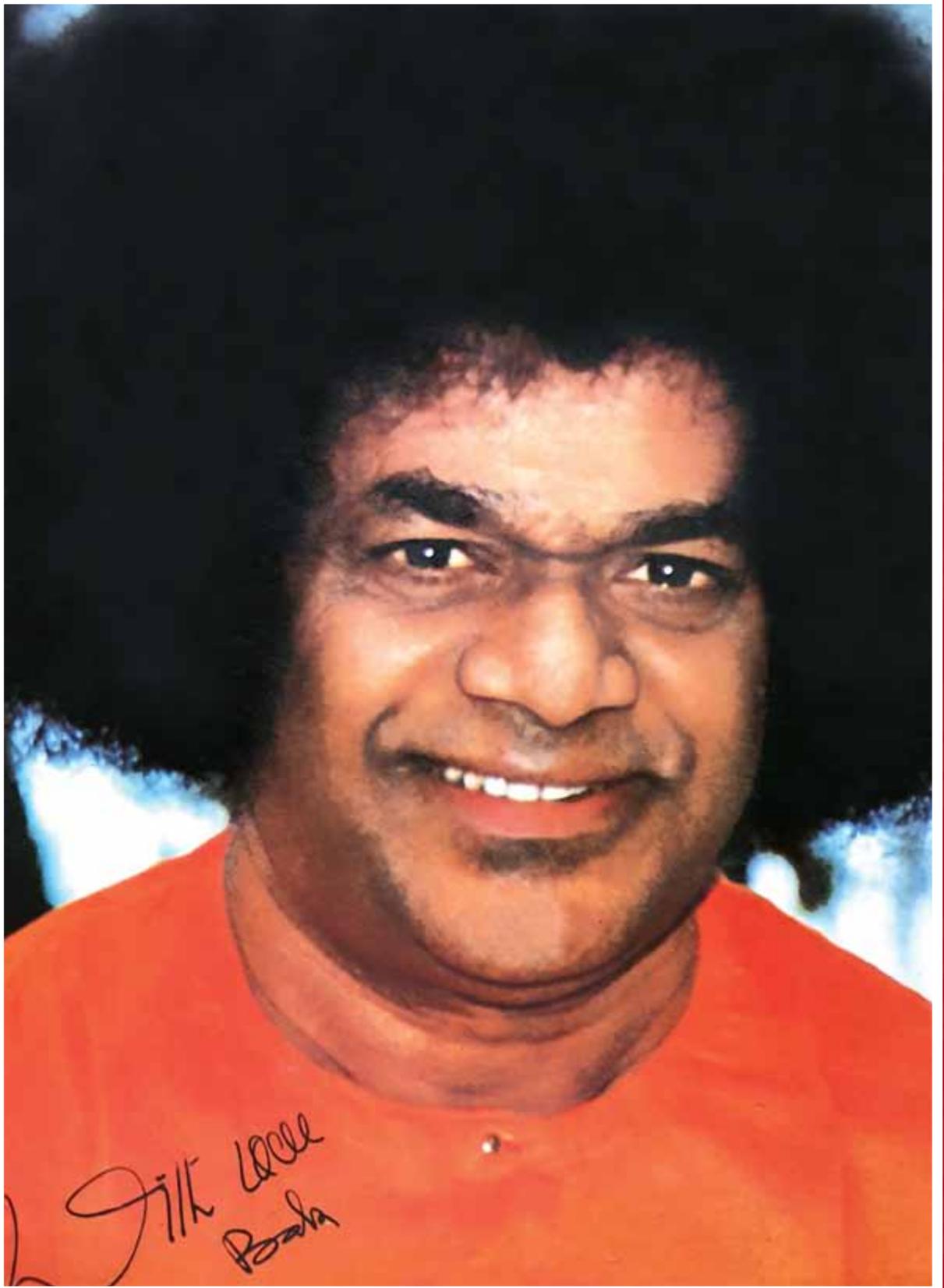


Sanathana Sarathi

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Jill Love
Bush

Sanathana Sarathi

Devoted to the Moral and Spiritual Uplift of Humanity through

SATHYA • DHARMA • SANTHI • PREMA • AHIMSA

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"While the father earns money and maintains the family, the mother nurtures the children, keeping in view their education and behaviour. It is mainly due to their mother's influence that children come up in life. All over the world, it is women who are powerful. There is nothing that they cannot do by their inner power."

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AVATAR VANI

THE GLORY OF WOMANHOOD

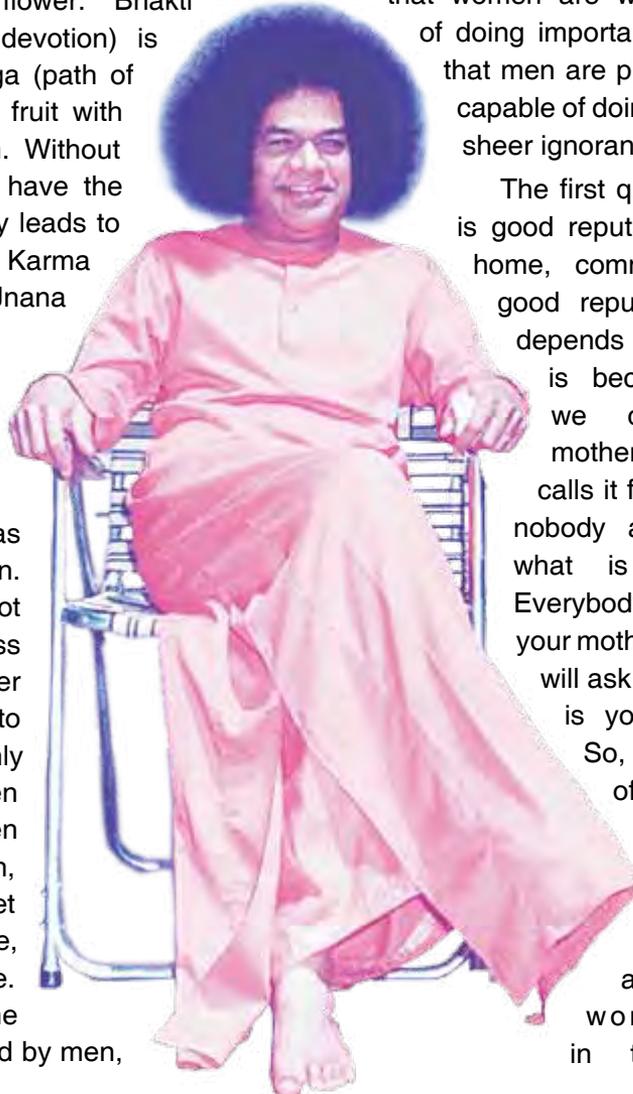
EVERYONE CALLS HIS COUNTRY MOTHERLAND

Embodiments of Love!

KARMA MARGA (PATH OF ACTION) is a beautiful flower. Bhakti Marga (path of devotion) is a raw fruit, Jnana Marga (path of wisdom) is the ripened fruit with all its sweetness within. Without the flower, you cannot have the fruit. A raw fruit naturally leads to a fully ripened fruit. So, Karma (action) is the basis of Jnana (wisdom).

Reputation of a Country Depends upon its Women

In this world, which is full of action, to be born as a woman is a great boon. But ignorant men do not recognise the greatness of women and consider themselves superior to them. Men have only three powers, but women are endowed with seven powers: reputation, wealth of virtues, sweet talk, intelligence, fortitude, courage and patience. The true nature of the woman is not understood by men,



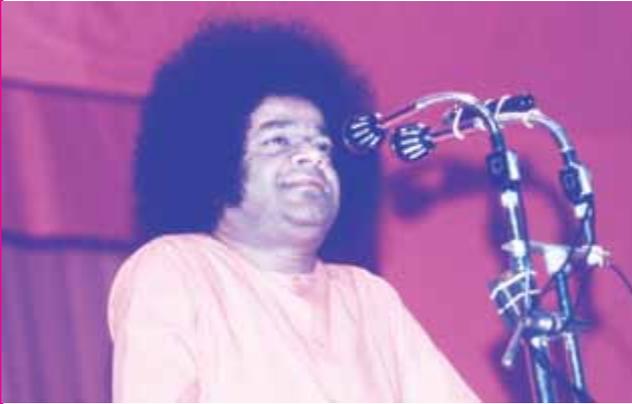
not only in this country but also by men in overseas countries. Men generally consider that women are weak and incapable of doing important work. They think that men are physically strong and capable of doing hard work. This is sheer ignorance.

The first quality of the women is good reputation. Whether it is home, community or country, good reputation of all these depends upon women. It is because of this that we call our country motherland; nobody ever calls it fatherland. Similarly, nobody asks the question, what is your language? Everybody asks, "What is your mother tongue"? Nobody will ask the question, "What is your father tongue"? So, be it the esteem of the country, the greatness of the language or the progress of society, they all depend on women. Everyone in this world says,

"This is my motherland. This is my mother tongue. This is my religion". Do you see anybody who does not declare like that?

Women are Capable of Tendering Good Advice

Women are very intelligent. They have a deeper understanding of religion and spirituality. If man wants to perform a religious ceremony, he will always consult the women in the house. If the husband wants to complete an important work successfully, he cannot



do it without the cooperation of his wife. If he does not consult his wife first, the work undertaken by him will not be successful. Even if the husband is bad, his wife should give him good advice. She should act as a minister to tender sagacious counsel to her husband. Mandodari was the wife of Ravana. As we all know, Ravana was a wicked man. It was because of the advice of Mandodari that he was able to live for such a long time. She always counselled him, "Ravana, you have pride because you think you have physical strength, knowledge of scriptures and power. But if Sita determines to curse you, you will be reduced to ashes. Therefore, know the power of women and behave properly".

Women Uphold the Prestige of the Family

If man wants to perform Yajna, his wife should sit with him. Similarly, his wife should

participate in all acts of charity that man performs. King Harishchandra considered truth as most important. When he gave in charity his entire kingdom to Sage Viswamitra, his wife Chandramathi was with him. Otherwise, he could not have been able to perform this great act of charity. So, wife is called Ardhangi (better half of husband). Not only that, it is the woman who maintains the reputation of the family. That is why she is called Grihalakshmi (wealth of the house). Man may earn money,

In devotion, women stand first, men slowly follow thereafter. Women are ahead in the spiritual path as well. Wisdom is woman, devotion is woman. Without devotion to God, one is nowhere. Many women attained liberation through their devotion to God. So, women are not weak or inferior. They deserve equal respect like men.



but it is the woman in the house who upholds the prestige and dignity of the family. It is she who cooks and serves food to everyone in the house. That is why she is called Sampada or wealth. Wealth is not only currency notes. Wealth does not consist of only money; it consists of good health, good qualities, purity and cleanliness also. Virtue is wealth, health is wealth, bliss is wealth, purity is wealth. All these are different forms of wealth. As a woman has all these qualities, she is known as Grihalakshmi. She always upholds the dignity and respect of the family as she has the quality of speaking sweetly and softly. In ancient times, if the husband was talking to another man in the drawing room, she would be in another room. It is the woman who upholds the respect of the family in this way.

Women are Endowed with Great Power of Discrimination

Another great quality of the women is their Buddhi (intellect). Women are more intelligent than men. They have better concentration and perform all tasks in a better way. Men have their discriminative ability only with regard to their job. But it is only women who act intelligently in all situations. For example, both men and women drive scooters, motor cycles and cars these days. Ask the police department who get involved more often in accidents. There are not many accidents when women drive. What is the reason? The reason is that women have better concentration. Not only that. You go to any university and enquire. Mainly it is the girls who score first class and first rank. For Bhagavan, both men and women are the same, but if you really see, this is the true situation (*laughter and applause*).

Women always use their power of discrimination to discover what is good and what is bad. When the husband wants to give his daughter in marriage, he will look at the education and profession of the future bridegroom while his wife will check the family background and reputation. It is the woman who verifies the antecedents of the bridegroom and future prospects of the alliance. On the other hand, man takes decisions in haste and repents later. *Haste makes waste, waste makes worry. So do not be in a hurry.* Man shows his courage only in words but the woman has strength in her heart. When man comes from office exhausted, disappointed and depressed, his wife gives him the glucose injection of her sweet, soothing and encouraging words. Men know this but they will not openly admit (*laughing and clapping*).

Man prospers in life due to the support of his wife. Only women can understand all the aspects of a situation; men have only superficial understanding. In spite of many

invasions of foreigners on our country, the culture of Bharat is still alive due to the women of this land.

Women have the Qualities of Peace and Humility

Women have the quality of peace. They maintain the peace of the family in spite of many problems they face due to some relatives. They quietly suffer within themselves but do not show outside to save the name and respect of the family. Men have inflated ego because they work in office and earn money. Even though women also work and earn money, they do not have this kind of ego. They are always humble. Sometimes women also quarrel but they are mostly quiet and peaceful. The courage of man depends on the strength of his wife at home. Men only pretend that they are courageous, but women are actually more courageous than men. Many women occupied high posts in several countries. Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India for 15 years. Similarly, a woman was the Prime Minister of U.K. In Sri Lanka also the Prime Minister and President were women. So, women have immense courage to lead and protect their countries.

In devotion, women stand first, men slowly follow thereafter. Women are ahead in the spiritual path as well. Wisdom is woman, devotion is woman. Without devotion to God, one is nowhere. Many women attained liberation through their devotion to God. So, women are not weak or inferior. They deserve equal respect like men.

While the father earns money and maintains the family, the mother nurtures the children, keeping in view their education and behaviour. It is mainly due to their mother's influence that children come up in life. All over the world, it is women who are powerful. There is nothing that they cannot do by their inner power. It was due to the tender care of Sita that Lava and

Kusha attained greatness. Rama became God as He was born to Kaushalya.

Spiritually speaking, all are females in the world. God only is Purusha (male). In a way, the entire world is a girls college. When a drama is played in the girls college, the king, queen, ministers, servants, etc., are female, though they don the dress of a male as per their role. In this world, food, sleep, hunger and fear are common to both men and women; both eat, cry and harbour desires. The differences lie only in the body.

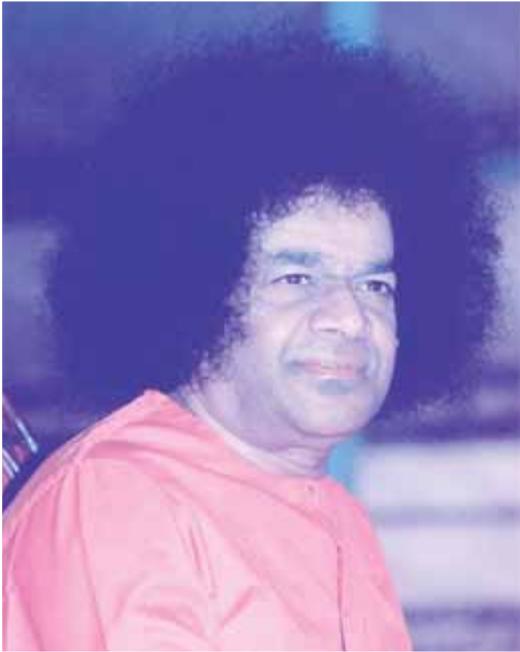
In order to show the qualities and capacities of women and showcase the difference between men and women, Krishna once enacted a drama. Krishna posted a watchman at the main gate of Brindavan and asked him, "See that no woman enters Brindavan". One day when Radha came to the gate, she was refused entry by the watchman. When she asked him the reason, the watchman said that

women were not permitted to enter Brindavan. Then Radha said, "Brindavan belongs to all, Govinda belongs to all". She asked him, "Who are you and why are you here"? The watchman replied, "I am a man. That is why I am here". Radha then said to him, "It is your imagination that you are man. In this world, there are no men; all are women only. God alone is man. He is the Purusha. All others are the creation of God, the Prakriti. The entire universe is Prakriti and God is the only Purusha".

The world symbolises womanhood. Everybody calls his country motherland. All bodies are born from the mother earth. We call our country motherland. For everyone, mother is most important. Motherly feelings are supreme as they ensure the welfare of the country, the progress of society and the family.

(To be continued in the next issue...)

– **Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 19th April 1996.**



Engage yourselves in Puja, Dhyana or Japa with single-pointed attention, so that when you rise, your face must be lit with the illumination of awareness. The door is fitted in the house to facilitate the entry of those whom you desire to come in. Watch the door so that dogs and donkeys, dust and dry leaves, do not rush in through that door. The senses and the mind are doors through which malefic influences can infiltrate into your consciousness and find a home therein.

– *Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Chapter 2

THE BIRTH OF A BHAGAVATHA

*M*AHARAJA PARIKSHIT WAS the very self of Abhimanyu, who had attained the heavenly abode of heroes. When Parikshit was an embryo, growing in the womb of Uttara, he saw the sharp arrow let off by Aswatthama flying towards him, emitting sparks of fury and terror, bent on his destruction. But at that very moment, he saw also, a Person of Brilliant Charm armed with a Terrific Wheel, breaking that death-dealing arrow into a hundred pieces. The royal foetus was filled with wonder and gratitude.

He pondered deep on the identity of his Saviour. "Who is He? He must also be dwelling in this womb, with me, because He could see the arrow at the very moment I saw it! But He has such intrepidity and skill that He could destroy it before it reached me. Can He be a uterine brother? How could He get hold of that wheel? If He is endowed with a wheel, how did I miss having it? No. He is no mortal." He argued thus for a long time within himself.

He could not forget that Face, that Form. He was a Boy, with the splendour of a million suns. He was benign, blissful, blue like the clear sky. After saving him so dramatically and so mercifully, He had disappeared. He had the Form always before him, for, he was seeking to see it again. Whomsoever he saw, he examined to find out whether that form corresponded with the form he had reverentially fixed in his mind.

Thus he grew in the womb, contemplating that Form. That contemplation transformed him into a splendour-filled baby. When at the end of the period of gestation, he was born into the world, the lying-in-room was lit by a

strange light. The female attendants of Uttara were dazzled by the brilliance. Their wits were overcome by wonder.

Recovering herself, Subhadra, mother of Abhimanyu, sent word to Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas announcing the birth. The Pandava brothers were overwhelmed with joy, when they heard the glad tidings for which they were waiting anxiously. They ordered that bands play, and guns be fired in honour of the event, for, a scion had been born for the royal family, a successor to the Pandava throne.

People heard the peal of guns and sought the reason for the joy. They rushed towards Indraprastha in large masses of enthusiasm. Every corner of the kingdom gushed with joy at this event. Within minutes, the city was transformed into a heavenly garden, fit for gods to give audience to men. Yudhishtira distributed several varieties of sweets to all who came. He granted several cows as gifts to Brahmins. He instructed the ladies of the court to give golden caskets full of saffron and Kumkum to women. Brahmins were awarded silk clothes and precious gems. Citizens were transported with joy, for the dynasty had now secured an heir. Night and day, they revelled in hilarious exultation.

Next day, Yudhishtira called the family priest, Kripacharya and performed the rite of Jatha Karma (first cleansing) to the infant. He satisfied the Brahmins by gifts of various costly jewels. The scholars and priests blessed the child and returned home.

On the third day, Yudhishtira called to his presence renowned astrologers as well as famous palmists and soothsayers, for, he was

very eager to know whether the fair name of the kingdom and its culture would be safe in the hands of the prince who had come to carry the burden of the state. He received them at the palace with traditional hospitality. They were given appropriate seats in the hall. They were offered scents and silks.

The king bowed before them and joining his palms in reverential adoration, he prostrated before them, and prayed, "Oh, wise men, who know the past, present and future, examine the horoscope of the infant that is born, calculate the positions of stars and constellations, and the planetary influences that will guide his life and tell me how the future will be shaped". He noted the exact time of birth and placed the note on a golden plate before them.

The Pandits took that note, drew up the plan of planetary positions and studied it with great care. They communicated to one another their increasing joy as they began to draw conclusions. They were in great joy themselves. They could not get words to express their amazement.

The doyen of the group, a great Pandit, at last rose and addressed King Yudhishtira thus, "Maharaja! I have till this day examined well nigh thousands of horoscopes and prepared concerned plans of the zodiacs and constellations. But I must admit I have never yet come across a more auspicious grouping than is indicated in this horoscope. Here, all the signs of good augury have assembled in one moment, the moment of this prince's birth. The moment indicates the state of Vishnu Himself! All the virtues will gather in this child. Why describe each glory separately, the great Manu has again come into your dynasty".

Yudhishtira was happy that the dynasty had such good fortune. He was indeed overpowered by joy. He folded his palms and bent low before the scholars who had given him such good news. "This family is lucky to claim such a gem as its scion, through the blessings of elders and

of Pandits like you as well as the blessings of the Lord, who is our guardian. You say that the boy will develop all virtues and will accumulate fame. But of what use is all that if he has not acquired the quality of reverence towards Pandits, Sadhus and Brahmins? Please look into the horoscope once again and tell me whether he will have that reverence".

The leader of the group of astrologers replied: "You need entertain no doubt on that score. He will revere and serve the gods and the Brahmins. He will perform many Yajnas and Yagas (sacrificial rites), prescribed in the ancient texts. He will earn the glory that your ancestor, Bharata, won. He will celebrate even the Aswamedha (horse sacrifice). He will spread the fame of this line all over the world. He will win all things that gods or men covet. He will outdistance all those who have gone before him". They extolled him thus in various ways to their hearts' content. They stopped because they were nervous to recount all the excellences; they feared they might be charged with exaggeration and flattery if they continued to detail the conclusions they had drawn from the horoscope of the baby.

Yudhishtira was not satisfied. He wanted to hear more from them of the excellences of the character of the Prince. Pandits were encouraged by this yearning. They said, "Oh king, you seem to be eager to know about some more aspects of the child's fortune. We shall only be too glad to answer any specific question that you may feel inclined to put to us".

Noting their enthusiasm, Yudhishtira came forward and asked them, "During the regime of this prince, will there be any great war? If war is inevitable, will he achieve victory"? "No," said the Pandits, "He will not be pestered by any foe. He knows no failure or defeat in any undertaking of his. This is absolutely true, an unshakeable truth".

Continued on page 20...

Interview

ENTHRALLING ENCOUNTERS WITH ETERNITY

Among the few fortunate devotees, who came to Swami in the early years of His Avatarhood, Sri Raja Reddy was exceptional. He had the rare privilege to stay in the Divine Presence and enjoy His blissful divine proximity for nearly three decades. In this interview, he reveals the spiritual heights attained by him and profound teachings received by him under the direct guidance of Bhagavan Baba.

Q: To begin with, please tell us how you came to know of Swami and how your relationship with Him blossomed?

Raja Reddy: Originally, I was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. From my early days, I was almost a hero-worshipper of Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna, you may be aware, had very little respect for miracles. In fact, he went to the extent of saying: “Do not visit miracle men”. That was the background, I was coming from. But my mother used to go to Bhagavan much earlier, in the early fifties. Then, I was a student studying in the Loyola College, Madras (Chennai). I was advised by my mother to go and have Darshan of Bhagavan. He was at that time a guest of one Sri Hanumantha Rao, who was a Transport Commissioner in Chennai. It was the first time that I had the good fortune of coming into physical contact with Bhagavan.

Q: Did you see Him?

RR: Yes, I went there and I saw Bhagavan. I was most attracted by His gentle, loving voice and speech. And then He went on moving His hand in air – in His usual inimitable style. I, then, asked Him why He was waving His hand in that particular manner. After all, since I was educated, I was a little inquisitive. But Swami didn't give a direct reply. He said: “Then, why



are you wearing a tucked-in shirt”? I said: “This is how we should be in our college”.

Q: So, He gave you a question instead?

RR: Yes, and answered it indirectly! It was brief but very loving speech and I was very much impressed by that; that is how that chapter of

the first meeting closed. After that, I went to college for my studies. I studied there for about five years. I had taken Economics Honours. It was a very disciplined and good college.

Q: When was your next interaction with Swami?

RR: My next interaction was on 4th October 1956. That was when the first hospital in Puttaparthi, Sri Sathya General Hospital, was opened. It was opened by the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri Bezawada Gopala Reddy. And I was present there on that occasion.

Prior to that, I had finished my studies and was totally absorbed in my Sadhana (spiritual practice). I am a sort of incorrigible introvert – that is what I would say of myself! I used to have my own meditation, my Bhajans, my yoga sessions and things like that. So, with that background, I went to Baba. And the very first question I asked Him was: “Are You a realised soul”?

Q: What was His answer?

RR: He just pointed to a light in the room with His hand. He said: “This is the hand; this is the shadow of the hand on the wall. There is no such realisation”. What He meant to say was: “I am the Original! You are the shadow; there is nothing to realise for Me! You have to realise”. That is how it was. I had to read in between the lines. And then, of course, I was totally absorbed by Him – it was just irresistible! His power was something unique! And I became His regular follower.

Q: Did He call you again? Did you go back again to Parthi after that?

RR: Yes! After that, I went home but then I returned and settled down with Bhagavan, because I was in search of a Sadguru, a spiritual master. During this time, I was drawn by Swami Sivananda from Rishikesh too, who is no more. He passed away many years ago.

When He was alive, I had half a mind to go there and take Sannyasa (become a renunciant) or that sort of a thing. So, with that background, Bhagavan absorbed me; gradually He put me in Bhajans, in driving His car and looking to His various duties; getting His bath ready and His bed, and so many other opportunities! He has been immensely graceful to me – giving me all those chances to do Seva, and so it went on.

But, of course, I had been a sceptic in my own way – not easily giving into everything; because at that time, at the back of my mind, I always had Sri Ramakrishna's influence, not to believe in miracle men. So much so that at one time, knowing my doubting mind, Swami revealed Himself to me. It was in Ooty and Baba was relaxing on a cot; only we two were there in the room.

Baba said: “If you are a devotee of Vishnu, you will see the Parama Jyoti (Supreme Light) coming from My heart; if you are a devotee of Siva, you will see it from My forehead, where the third eye or the Jnana Netra (eye of wisdom) is located”. I, of course, saw a Jyoti (Divine Light) in the heart area, as I had been a devotee of Lord Krishna right from the very beginning.

Q: Did that have any change in your outlook?

RR: Not a change exactly, I told you I am a born sceptic! I would not yield that easily; I have an ego too! As I told you, we were in Ooty at that time and after Baba went out of the room, I took His torch which He had kept under the rug. I thought: ‘Will it give me the same effect? Let me try it!’ Immediately, Baba caught me red-handed! He came inside and said: “What shall I do to make you believe”? He Himself was at a loss, so to say.

Q: So, He caught you red-handed with the torch!

RR: Silly fellows that we are! You know how ego comes into play and you get all sorts of doubts! But it is better to get rid of all this to start with.

Q: You could see a Jyoti in His heart; which is a very unusual thing.

RR: I did have Darshan of the Jyoti, no doubt; but I must tell you the fact that I had doubts too!

Q: As you went along, were these doubts getting cleared?

RR: Yes! He was very gracious to me. I used to sleep on the floor and He used to sleep on the cot. Early in the morning, I used to meditate and I had some wonderful experiences, like rising of the Kundalini (spiritual energy within envisioned as a coiled serpent) and waves and waves of bliss! Also, I used to see floodlights during meditation. I cannot explain, but they had a wonderful, pleasant effect.

As I told you, I was an incorrigible introvert. I am so even until now! I don't know if you have seen the Old Mandir; Bhagavan's bed was in one room and next to it were His shelves where we used to keep His things, and then there was the bathroom. So, I used to sleep there near the shelves, and Baba was in the other room on the bed.

Once all of a sudden something happened. It was like half of the sun's circumference was falling on me! It was an incredibly huge light coming! It was rather shocking. That was a great experience; it did not last long enough to shatter me off but then I had the shock enough! Of course, Baba was behind all this but He used to pretend He did not know anything.

At one time, I had a difference of opinion with Baba – you know ego coming out! We were stationed in Bangalore (Bengaluru) – in a devotee's place. And I took it so much to heart that I thought I must back off. And, in fact, I did back off. It was a three hour bus journey to return to my home. But half way through the journey, as I was having a snack in a wayside hotel, I don't know what happened! My whole

heart was being wrung like a wet towel. I could not stand it! Automatically, tears started flowing from my eyes unendingly. So much so that the other inmates at the hotel thought: 'Poor fellow; he must be suffering from some agony!' In spite of myself, the tears would not stop. It was a ceaseless flow. I could not stand it anymore; I was finished! I took the next bus to Bengaluru and said to myself, "Come what may, I am going back to Baba"! When I reached, I saw Baba sitting quietly on the bed, writing a letter to me!

Q: Writing a letter to you?

RR: Yes! He was writing: "Where will you go when you leave Me"? From then on I decided, He is Sakhshat Hridayanivasi (Supreme Indweller)! And nothing can be done without His permission. When He has your heart under His control, you cannot do anything! You are finished. Your brain does not work. So, that is how it happened and that is when I decided: "No, Baba! I will not go anywhere without Your Will – it cannot be done"!

Q: So, it was a sort of ego-breaking experience?

RR: Yes, it was Hridayavasi realisation. I came to realise that He knows absolutely everything; it was something fantastic! And you know all the rest of it – whenever a thought rises in the mind of anyone of the devotees sitting there, it at once gets registered there in Baba's Solar Consciousness, so that He reacts immediately!

Q: You had that sort of experience?

RR: It has happened umpteen number of times so that it has become commonplace. My wife and my son had also such experiences. Once Swami was giving an interview; and He called my wife too. There were some rich people around Him. Then she had a faint thought in her mind: 'He gives special attention to rich people'! Swami was talking then about something else, but He immediately turned to

her as if following her thought and said: "Why? Because under them there are so many other people who are working; and they will all be benefited by it!"

Q: Everybody working under the rich person can get influenced.

RR: Not only that, so many people will be benefited if one at the helm is corrected. Naturally, His heart goes out to other people also; they also stand to benefit. So, instead of catching every small ant, catch hold of the queen ant! That is what Baba is doing; and that is what Swami Vivekananda used to do too.

I had some doubt regarding Baba's ways and I was thinking about it but I did not express my thought. That is how it happens when His physical form is present there, immediately those thoughts come. If you were there as a third person, you would not understand anything at all.

That is why in Baba's Discourses too – many that I have heard, not recently, but in the earlier days – there used to be a lot of 'loss of linkage' so to say, between one statement and the other. When doubts used to arise in the minds of the audience, He used to stop whatever He was explaining and answer them then and there. So naturally, sometimes that correlation used to be missing.

Q: The other person might feel that this is not coherent; but actually it is.

RR: It is! See, actually He has come for Jiva's (individual's) sake; and not for publicity or any adulatory nonsense! That is how He operates – it is something wonderful!

Q: You had the privilege of being with Baba that other people can only dream about. So, please tell us more – how His routine used to be in those days and how He interacted with other people?

RR: Even during informal conversations, Bhagavan, in those days, used to allow

devotees or people who had come there to express their doubts and He used to clarify their doubts immediately. At the same time, He would give them direct experiences too, which are known to some of us.

One thing I have noticed in Bhagavan – while in contact with individuals, He always treats an individual as an individual; He is not enamoured of crowds. He wants to give instructions to every individual. He corrects them Himself and He develops them, for He has intense interest in the evolution of the individual. That is something very remarkable of Bhagavan! For instance, there used to be one Sri Jawa from Joy Ice Cream; he was the proprietor of the company. Before coming to Bhagavan, he was very well-off financially. In those days, Joy Ice Cream was very popular in Bombay (Mumbai) too – like Kwality Ice Cream now. And before coming to Bhagavan, He was used to taking alcoholic drinks. So much so that even small children in his family used to take to it, just for fun; this practice was so much impregnated in his family.

He came to Bhagavan when He was staying in Gwalior Palace, Mumbai, which is, of course, now demolished. So there, when He was in Baba's Presence for the first time, Baba said, "Hello, Jawa"! And that's it, there was some inner transformation in him and he threw his drinking habit into the fire instantaneously. Therefore, Bhagavan takes particular interest in the development of the individual, come what may; but at the same time not hurting the individual, as if He has been his friend right from his birth!

Q: How about Sri Jawa's family?

RR: They too have had beautiful transformations. And Baba gives an inner strength. It is not easy for liquor addict to leave it overnight! This is how Baba enters into an individual, into the depths, because

He is Antarayamin (the indweller)! He is not satisfied with your show or other things – no! He goes straight into the core. It is so wonderful! That is why Bhagavan can converse with anybody; He needs no intermediary, no introduction.

Everything is an open book to Him and He wants transformation in each one of us. We are many a time ‘an absolute alien’ to our self, not knowing anything at all!

Q: He goes through our minds without any barriers!

RR: Oh yes, like open books. I have no doubt about it; it’s a common experience, as common as drinking water.

Q: Tell us more about those experiences.

RR: He has His own inimitable ways. Bhagavan had given me the opportunity to sing Bhajans. I was leading Bhajans for decades, right from 1958 until 1983; that is, up to my 60th year.

Q: That is more than twenty five years!

RR: Yes. When I was 60 years old, one day, as usual, I started a Bhajan. All the students were singing with fresh and booming voices. Naturally, Bhagavan wanted to give them more chances and I was also getting superannuated. So, one fine morning as I was sitting there to sing a Bhajan, all of a sudden the microphone was taken away from me. Being with Him for so many years, I ‘knew’ of Swami’s ways and could get the hint. So, I did not react at all.

Then, after the Bhajans were over and Arati was performed, Swami just looked at me; it was just a glance, but very deep. Believe it or not, for about two-three days, I was just floating in bliss. Just a look, nothing else! But it was a completely out-of-the-earth blissful feeling! So, that was a wonderful experience I had.

In other words, in His own inimitable way, His message was: “O fool! Don’t go on dragging your feet into the Bhajans right through until

the grave! Come on, go off the ladder! Evolve from Bhajans to something more intense and increasingly inward, something more direct”. That was His superb indirect lesson. One must be blessed by Him to take it in the right way. You cannot revolt, ego does not play a part.

Q: What was the first miracle of Swami you witnessed after you started visiting Parthi?

RR: Miracles had become such a commonplace occurrences with Baba that they ceased to be miracles! I used to hear of Baba materialising Vibhuti, and when I came to Him I was mentally prepared for it because my mother was an old devotee.

I have seen quite a few interesting incidents. Swami used to go in a ‘trance’, meaning, He used to, so to say, leave His body whenever there was any danger to any devotee, anywhere. What used to happen was that His body would become almost like a rigor mortis – almost death-like. And it would fall like a stick. So, as attendants on Him, we had to take care of His body by not allowing Him to fall or get hurt. On one of these instances, I was not very well acquainted with this process of His ‘trance’ and while He was ‘gone’ from His body, He went on pulling His hair and had quite a handful of His hair in His hand. Then He asked for water, which I readily gave. Next, He swallowed the hair and washed it down with water! Later, when He returned to normal consciousness, He asked me, “Did I swallow any hair”? I said, “Yes, Baba”. Remember, I was not acquainted with these divine acts. Even one hair is enough to damage the digestive system; and this was a whole bunch! What happened next was something unimaginable. The hair which was wet, which He had swallowed, was coming out from underneath His heart! That was something mind-boggling.

Q: Any instance, where you could recall Swami's humour.

RR: As I told you, I was a worshipper of Swami Vivekananda. Baba would say, "You will just pick up Viveka (which means wisdom) and then play with him". I thought, as I was so full of Vivekananda and his ideas, I would, spiritually, go to such heights. But what really happened was, after I was married, He named my son Viveka! And that is how He played this prank on me. But imagine, Swami said this many years ago, in fact, decades before my marriage! He had no connection with my marriage whatsoever.

Q: Swami has such a good sense of humour.

RR: Tremendous! We used to burst into peals of laughter when He would impersonate somebody so perfectly.

Q: Have you witnessed any instance of 'divine healing'?

RR: Once I was suffering from piles and experienced profuse bleeding, as a reaction to a wrong homoeopathic medicine that was given to me. I had to go to Bhagavan as there was a function and I had to participate in that procession. So, I told Bhagavan about my situation and immediately He gave me Prasadam. Believe it or not, the moment I took it, the problem was gone! It was not a joke! I used to suffer for days because of bleeding piles.

I will narrate one more incident. This concerns my wife's cousin, Sri Suresh who is a sincere devotee of Bhagavan. At that time, he was probably in his thirties and was well qualified with a Chemical Engineering degree and an MBA done in Ahmedabad. He was highly placed too in his profession.

Suddenly, he developed cancer in the thigh. Remember, he was young and had two small kids, a boy and a girl. He went to

Dharmakshetra (Mumbai) to have Baba's Darshan and there Baba saw him and said, "Yes, cancer cancelled"! Mind you, that was a very dangerous type of cancer and he had been given an ultimatum of six months by the doctors. He had tried chemotherapy and everything else by then.

Q: He is still around?

RR: Yes, hale and hearty after decades! He has a job in a German Company in Pune, India, and he is on the move, globetrotting 15 days in a month. His son and daughter are well placed too.

Therefore, He is very vivid about the entire past, present and future of everybody. All the states of consciousness – waking, dreaming, deep sleep and complete bliss – are under His control. Here is one instance.

Everybody in my wife's family is a staunch devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba. In fact, my wife's grandmother and grandfather had been to Shirdi and had Darshan of Shirdi Sai when He was on earth in His physical form. At that time, her grandmother was pregnant with her father.

Just before our marriage, when my wife was in Puttaparthi, she had a dream. She dreamt that Shirdi Sai Baba came in her dream early in the morning and gave her a rosary – Japamala. She was enjoying the dream, but the whole episode ended abruptly when she was woken up by someone saying, "Come on! Wake up! Baba has called us for an interview"!

So, then she had to hurry to Baba's Presence. Baba, then, had to talk to others too and after some time, she was called in. When He saw her, He said, "Kya? Kaisa Hai"? (how are you?). And then immediately materialised a rosary for her! Finally, He said, "Sapna Sach Hua"! (the dream has become true!)

There are two facets implicitly stated by Baba in this incident. First: 'I have complete control

over Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupti' (waking, dream and deep sleep) states. Second: 'I am the same as Shirdi; Shirdi Sai and I are not different'. In her dream, Shirdi Baba gave her a rosary and she was woken up by somebody, and she was unhappy for having been disturbed. And here, Baba completes the dream! It is something fantastic!

Q: What has been the transformation in your life after you met Swami?

RR: As I explained earlier, when I came I had little respect for miracles, and it was commonplace for Baba to do miracles. He used to pluck a Seethaphal (custard apple) and by the time it reached your hand, it would turn into an apple! These instances were happening all the time. He used to take a slab of stone and throw it up; by the time it returned, it would turn into a sugar candy!

He is, in fact, changing our minds like pots of clay! These miracles are nothing. By His grace, my mind is so evolved! I sit for meditation three times a day and that has been a habit for not years but decades. Even when I used to drive Baba's car, I used to meditate and drive! That is because I did not want to lose that experience. I told you earlier that I was an incorrigible introvert. I generally do not tell others these experiences, but I used to feel an inexplicable ecstatic bliss. It was something so fine to experience that you did not want to leave it either, but then at times you had to.

Baba has very kindly advised us to link our Namasmarana (chanting His name) with our breath. When you inhale and exhale, you link His Name to that. It could be "Sai Ram! Sai Ram"! or whichever Name. Then, there is real happiness. Our mind is the horse rider and breath is the horse; you catch hold of

the horse, the rider is automatically in your hand!

Q: Do you think there is a difference in the quality of people or kind of devotion now, compared to the earlier days?

RR: One cannot delve into people's minds. People come to Him with many motives – ulterior as well as divine. It was so even then. But Swami's way always has been the same. He used to say, "Miracles are My visiting cards. Once you get acquainted, you will naturally come into the fold. I am the Big Shepherd, with capital 'S'! You are the sheep and I am the good shepherd. So, to perfect you into My fold, I give you My visiting card".

Yes, there are all sorts of people, but then, it should start somewhere. People do start with ulterior motives and desires, but later, Baba has a way of moulding minds like pots of clay – which He alone can do! He is a 'parapsychologist'; a psychologist par excellence!

I don't know how far the students have witnessed that, because every mind is an open book to Him; there is nothing to hide. Ultimately, He wants everybody to benefit from His Avatarhood. He has come for us and He does not require anything. He is bliss personified!

Q: When you are at your residence now, in Mumbai or in Parthi, do you feel any difference?

RR: No, Absolutely not! I don't miss Him at all. Only I like to see Him now and then. Therefore, twice a year, I come to Puttaparthi. In those years, I used to be with Baba, now Baba is with me! There I used to be in His physical presence, now Baba is in me – in bliss! In essence, He is with me. I am absolutely happy and He is guiding me day in and day out!

(Courtesy: Sri Sathya Sai Media Centre.)

*Symbols of Divinity***THE STORY OF THE GAYATRI TEMPLE**Bishu Prusty

ANYONE WHO HAS HAD THE privilege of visiting the Gayatri Temple at Prasanthi Nilayam would have experienced how this sacred shrine is a powerhouse of serenity and sublimity. Hundreds gather here every morning and evening to soak themselves in the blissful Darshan of the Divine Mother.

The story of this holy shrine goes back to 1966 when Bhagavan visited the city of Madurai. On that occasion, He stayed for nine days in the house of one of His beloved devotees, Sri P.S.A. Subramania Chettiar. The Chettiars then had the opportunity to worship the Feet of Bhagavan. Till this day, they have in their altar the actual footprints of Swami in yellow turmeric on a sacred cloth. Indeed, worshipping the Feet of Swami was this family's way of offering their devotion to the Lord.

In 1991, Bhagavan Himself celebrated the 80th Birthday of Sri Subramania Chettiar in Puttaparthi. In gratitude, Sri Chettiar then had made a pair of silver Padukas of Bhagavan. Swami most graciously put His Divine Feet on those Padukas and gave it back to the family for worship. Once Sri Chettiar returned to Madurai with those blessed silver Padukas, whenever anyone came to him with a problem, he would ask the person to place their prayer at these Divine Padukas. Someone who did not have a child became a parent, someone else's illness was cured, and so on. When Sri Chettiar witnessed these miracles of faith, he decided to seek Bhagavan's permission to make hundreds of such Padukas and distribute them so that more people benefit from His

*Mother Gayatri, Prasanthi Nilayam.*

grace. That was the genesis of the Sai Paduka movement leading to the establishment of the Sri Sai Padhuga Trust in 1995. Every year, the Paduka Pratishtha Mahotsava would be held in Bhagavan's physical presence, and on each of these occasions Sri Chettiar would go to Bhagavan and seek His direction to make a statue of a deity to commemorate the occasion. That is how Prasanthi Nilayam was blessed with the lovely shrines of Sri Rama, Hanuman and Karthikeya.

In January 1998, Sri Chettiar and his son Sri Srinivasan Chettiar were at Prasanthi Nilayam. During this period, Sri Chettiar fell ill and was hospitalised. While the father was recuperating in Bhagavan's hospital, one morning, Swami asked his son Sri Srinivasan, "What are you going to install this year"? They had not yet made any plans whatsoever for the Paduka

festival that year as it was nine months away. Sri Srinivasan went blank. The only thing he could say was, "Swami, You please guide us as to what we should make".

But Bhagavan was silent. Then on the spur of the moment, Sri Srinivasan began to put forth many ideas. "Swami, should we make a statue of Dattatreya or of Siva-Shakti or Vishnu and Lakshmi..." Bhagavan did not respond favourably to any of these suggestions. Finally, Srinivasan became quiet as he was clueless. Swami then said, "You go to your father tonight. See him in the hospital. He will tell you what to do".

When Sri Srinivasan narrated the entire conversation he had with Swami to his father, Sri Chettiar said, "Srinivasan, what should I tell you... from early hours of the morning today, the moment I close my eyes, Mother Gayatri appears in my dream. She keeps coming to me. She is so beautiful, so serene! Her presence is so soothing. But I don't know why she is constantly appearing in my vision... I have never worshipped her or meditated on her. Let alone meditation, I have never thought about her or even know anything about her... Please ask Swami the significance of all this".

The next day, Bhagavan called Sri Srinivasan for an interview again and Swami immediately asked, "What did your father say"? "Swami, he had a vision of Gayatri," Srinivasan replied. Bhagavan instantly exclaimed, "Ah Gayatri! Gayatri Pettu... make Gayatri statue"! Thus came the direct direction from the Divine.

Without losing a second, Sri Srinivasan got on to the job. He went to Jaipur in Rajasthan and met a pious sculptor and gave him the detailed instructions about the shape and dimensions of the idol as Bhagavan had told him. "It has to have 5 faces and 10 hands with all the weapons. It should be six feet in height so that it is clearly visible to all." Bhagavan had instructed.

Sri Srinivasan paid 50 per cent advance to the sculptor and the artist began his work. Sri Srinivasan travelled to Jaipur often to inspect the progress of the work. During one of these visits, he found that the sculptor was deep in sorrow. When he gently enquired, the sculptor revealed that there was a hole inside the stone. He did not know what to do as he had made about 90 per cent progress with the statue. In fact, it was almost ready – the faces, hands and legs were complete and only the torso needed to be finished. The sculptor was devastated. He could have concealed the hole and proceeded with the work and no one would have known. But deep within he felt: "I cannot do this with the idol of the Divine Mother and especially when it is going to Prasanthi"! So, the work had stopped. Sri Srinivasan consoled the sculptor and in fact commended him for not hiding the defect, and then immediately came to Bhagavan.

When he narrated the unforeseen turn of events, Swami's instant reaction was, "See, how good this man is! He is so honest! Tell him not to be anxious. Ask him to take one more stone and do the work again. This time, it will come out even better! And it will happen in time, do not worry".

This time, from start to finish, the sculptor completed the task in just one and a half months – that is, less than half the original time, and it was a masterpiece. It was indeed a miracle!

In early October 1998, the statue which weighed 1,400 kg was brought from Jaipur in a lorry and placed in Poornachandra Auditorium. Now Srinivasan prayed to Bhagavan to bless the idol. Swami lovingly consented and the moment He saw the statue, His face shone with joy and He said, "See how beautiful she looks! It has come out so well"! So saying, Swami started keenly looking at every inch of the statue. While He did that, His hand passed

over various parts of the idol - the faces, the hands, the feet and so on... Sri Srinivasan was thrilled! He knew that every time Bhagavan touched it, it was not an ordinary event. It is indeed those benedictory moments which transformed the Gayatri statue from a stone to a living Gayatri Mata!

Sri Srinivasan was lost in bliss. He woke up from his reverie when Swami suddenly asked, "What do you feel about the statue, Srinivasan"? In complete supplication, Sri Srinivasan said, "Swami, now that Your eyes have fallen on the statue, Mother Gayatri has indeed come to life! She is looking most beautiful, powerful and sacred"! Bhagavan simply said, "No, no, I have not done anything. The sculptor has done a great job! How much did you pay him"? That was Swami's humility!

Sri Srinivasan mentioned the advance amount he had given and added, "He is a devoted man; he will accept any compensation". But Bhagavan immediately said, "No, no, but I do not accept this! He deserves much more! Is he here? Call him"... When the sculptor came in, Bhagavan complimented him profusely saying, "Bahut Achchha Bahut Achchha" (very nice, very nice) and then said, "The best part about this statue is that you adhered to truth. You could have concealed the defect, but you decided to walk on the path of Sathya. I am very happy".

With a wave of His hand, Swami created a green emerald ring and put it on his finger. He then went inside and returned with a big envelope. In it was five times the amount that Sri Srinivasan had given to the sculptor. Bhagavan smilingly handed it to the devoted artist and also honoured him with a shawl, a memento and so on. In the end, He told Sri Srinivasan, "You can give him whatever more you want. He has spoken the truth"!

Bhagavan always says that the cosmos emerged from Truth. Here too, the Eternal

Truth was being installed by Bhagavan through the practice of the principle of being truthful in our thought, word and deed.

The date for the consecration was fixed – 9th October 1998. Before the consecration and installation, for three days, a Yajna with elaborate rituals was held in one of the halls



Bhagavan consecrating the Gayatri Temple.

inside Prasanthi Nilayam. Scores of people from Madurai were part of this historic event. The Chettiars had also brought a golden Krishna statue to be offered to Bhagavan. On the morning of the installation, the Divine Mother was brought in a grand procession, in a specially designed open vehicle, from the hall to the temple site.

More than 100 women were part of this procession carrying sacred articles, bangles, jewels, flowers, fruits and the like. Once the deity was taken to the pedestal with utmost care amidst Bhajans and Vedic chants, Bhagavan gently placed turmeric, vermilion, sacred rice and other holy items in the marked spot and He Himself installed the Divine Mother. Thus was born the Divine shrine of Mother Gayatri!

In fact, on many subsequent visits of Sri Srinivasan, Swami would often ask him, "How is your Gayatri"? and go on to describe the way the Mother was dressed that day – the colour of

her Sari, the size of her Bindi (decorative mark worn by women in the middle of the forehead), the Prasadam offered to her and so on. It was as if everything that was being done to Mother Gayatri was reaching Mother Sai.

In the Discourse that Bhagavan delivered on the day after the installation, He said, "Yesterday, Abhishekam was done by pouring honey, milk, curd, etc. The purpose of this ritual is only one – cleansing and purification of our heart". He then added, "What is needed is not just Archana (worship), but Arpitam (complete surrender)" – a surrender so total that we lose

consciousness of our body and mind, and become one with the Cosmic Consciousness that the Mother symbolises and radiates.

The journey which began at Madurai was now complete at Prasanthi Nilayam resulting in the establishment of a shrine which could help the devotees to shine in their spiritual path.

A video documentary on this entitled "The Story of the Gayatri Temple" can be seen in the "Sri Sathya Sai Official" YouTube channel link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ielrq1D4pVw>

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Hearing this, Yudhishtira and the brothers Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva looked at each other and shared great joy.

Meanwhile, Yudhishtira began to speak. He had said, "If that is so...", but before he could complete the sentence, he hung his head and was plunged in thought. The Pandits noticed it; they said, "You seem to be anxious to know something more. You have only to ask, we shall readily answer all questions". "Of course, I am happy at all the answers you have given. He will be virtuous, famous, triumphant over all, loving and kind, treating all equally. He will perform many Yajnas and Yagas. He will have no enemies. He will bring honour to the dynasty and restore its reputation. All this gives me great joy. But I would like to know also, how he will meet his end". The brothers saw Yudhishtira getting rather upset at the anxiety which agitated him over this problem. His voice had faltered a bit, when he put the question.

They consoled him and said, "Why worry about that at this stage? The end has to come some day, some way. It is something that cannot be avoided. Something will cause it; some circumstance will bring it about. Birth

involves the conditionality of death. We are afraid; the extreme joy of this incident has queered your line of thought a bit. We think this much is enough. We shall leave the rest, in the realm of doubt. Let us not probe further. Let us leave it to God".

But Yudhishtira could not somehow give up his desire to know how such a virtuous ideal prince would end his career on earth. He imagined it must be a truly wondrous finale to a glorious life. So, he wanted the astrologers to tell him about it.

The scholars set about the calculations again and took a pretty long time over it. Watching this, the king became excited; he hastened them and pressed for a quick answer. They gave the reply, "This prince will give up his kingdom as the result of a sage's curse". Yudhishtira wondered how such a paragon of virtue could ever invoke upon himself the curse of a sage. He was shocked at the possibility.

Meanwhile, the Pandits said, "Our calculations show that he will be bitten by a serpent". Yudhishtira lost heart at this news. All his joy evaporated in a moment. He became very sad and dispirited.

THE LOVE THAT CANNOT BE DUPLICATED

S. Lakshmi Menon

MANY MOMENTS make up a life – some happy, some sad, some remarkable, some mundane. But there are certain moments which stand out in our lives because they are moments filled with the Presence of God. What then of moments when we experience the tender love and infinite compassion of a living, loving God who showers us with His love and grace in His physical presence and envelops us with His Divine protection when we are away from Him physically? Such moments are many in the lives of the devotees of Bhagavan; however, the bond that He shares with His students is something truly unique.

God is a Part of our Every Moment

When we enter the portals of Bhagavan's holy University, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, either at the women's college at Anantapur or at the men's campuses at Puttaparthi, Brindavan or Muddenahalli, it is as though we have entered a new world, a tranquil world, untouched by the noise and turmoil of the world outside. In these sanctuaries of Bhagavan's immense love, we learn many lessons. To my mind, the most important lesson we learn is that spirituality is not something separate from daily living.

In fact, the way of the Spirit is the base on which the way of the world truly rests. God is not to be worshipped on certain days, or at



Anantapur College for Women, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.

certain times; God is a part of every moment. God is not separate from anything; He is Omnipresent because nothing is too 'small' for Him. He is in everything. The Kathopanishad declares that God or Brahman is *Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan* (subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest).

From the smallest need to the biggest emergency, we experience Bhagavan's watchful and loving care that manifests in the most practical of ways. To our pleasant surprise, we realise that God wants to be totally involved with our lives. He wants to help us in every way; it is we who distance Him because sometimes we think we should not 'trouble' Swami for silly matters. The Omnipotent and Omnipresent One cannot be troubled! The Omniscient One is aware of everything, but He likes us to pray so that we become

aware of what we truly want and through our dependence on Him, we build up this sweet relationship with the Divine.

“How can I Rest?”

During my days as a student at Anantapur, when the holidays approached, we students used to face some problems getting confirmed railway reservations, especially for students from ‘far-off’ places of India like West Bengal, Delhi and the North-east. Those days, in the eighties and the nineties, direct long distance trains were not that many, and railway ticketing was not computerised. Flights were not even an alternative! Typically our journeys took a couple of days. From the sheltered environs of the Anantapur campus, to suddenly enter the hustle and bustle of cities like Bengaluru, Chennai or Kolkata was like a minor culture shock!

But while travelling, we used to concretely experience Swami’s presence. People would mysteriously appear to help us on our way and then just as mysteriously disappear when we turned around to thank them. Meanwhile our confidence got further boosted when on one occasion, we heard of Bhagavan’s response to the words of some devotees. These people, well-meaning no doubt, told Swami that now that the students were all going home for holidays, Swami could take some rest, finally. Swami often used to declare during those days that His only ‘property’ consisted of His students and that He spent 75% of His time with them, because all His hopes for the world rested on them. Swami’s reply to these people was very thrilling for us. He said, “How can I take rest now? I have to go with each and every one of them, travel with them and see that they reach their homes safely. So, how can I rest?” The following incident stands testimony to this wonderful statement of the Lord.

Superior Love at Play

It was the spring of 1992. We were a group of 21, travelling from Anantapur to Kerala. Many among us had completed our courses of study, and so we had a lot of luggage too. I still do not know how it happened; now, it would be an unthinkable risk to take, but on the day of our homeward journey, we had only ‘current’ tickets and no reservation. We boarded the train at mid-morning from Anantapur station and we would all be reaching different parts of Kerala the next day. The train came, we got into the carriage that came in front of us, many of us stuck like refugees near the washrooms; but the resilience of youth did not deter our high spirits! We thought we would confront the Train Ticket Examiner (TTE) when he came and not worry till then. Cross the bridge when you come to it, since there was no other choice. But all the while, each of us was silently praying to our Lord to see us safely through this journey.

After some time, to our dismay we learnt that this particular coach (or compartment) would be going a relatively shorter distance with this train, and then it would get detached at a station that we would reach at midnight. So, we decided to disembark at Dharmavaram railway station and relocate to another coach that would go all the way to our destinations in Kerala.

With tonnes of luggage, including musical instruments like the Veena, it was indeed a daunting task. As planned, we got down at Dharmavaram, and forming a human ‘chain’, we were passing on pieces of our bags and baggage to another coach, much further ahead. That was when a TTE accosted me and demanded what we were up to. I had really no answer and no time to explain, so I mumbled something incoherent and continued to supervise the ‘operation’. The train would be

leaving any moment. He watched us for some time and then he asked me, a little impatiently, "Are you students from Sai Baba's college at Anantapur"? On hearing Bhagavan's name from a total stranger, I stopped in my tracks and paid attention. Then he went on. "See madam, we got a message from our 'superior officer' that a group of girls students from Sai Baba's college at Anantapur would be coming by this train and that we were to keep 21 berths ready for them at Dharmavaram". As I listened open-mouthed, he went on, "If you don't care to claim those berths right now, I am going to dispose them of to others". There was nothing else to do, and no moment to lose. After that, we quickly re-assembled and triumphantly went to claim our reserved berths. I tried to ask the TTE who this 'superior officer' was, and how did he send the message and so on, but he was extremely vague and after checking our tickets, disappeared. We had told no one of our plight. Also, we would never have known that this arrangement had been made for us, or whom to approach to avail of this facility. If we had not got into the 'wrong' coach, God knows what might have happened!

The 'wrong' coach made us meet this TTE, much as 'wrong' turns in life or by fate lead us to our goal, when God is in command. In this world, help seldom comes free. There are always 'strings attached' in worldly give-and-take. But in this case, it was sudden, unexpected help that came unasked, in our time of need. We had been anxious, but perhaps, in the exuberant and trusting faith of the young had truly surrendered to Swami. We believed that somehow things would be taken care of. We never imagined it would be done in such a royal way though! I so distinctly remember the comfortable berths, even the Veena had one all to itself!

Self-confidence is Sai-confidence

The story does not end here. I was to travel till Thiruvananthapuram, but I had to get down at a smaller station called Aluva, and then board another train, since this train was only till Kochi. I got down and went to the ladies' waiting room that was next to a small cafeteria. The room rapidly filled up with many women, but after a while, I heard some commotion and then to my surprise, I saw that people were hastily leaving en masse. On enquiring, I was told, some rioting had suddenly erupted in the town, on account of a religious issue and a violent mob was approaching the railway station. I was stuck there, all alone with my entire luggage and nowhere to go. I could hear the mob coming nearer. I just quietly sat inside, all alone, and strangely, I did not feel any sense of panic. It was one of those times when I was sure Bhagavan would protect me. So, I waited. I heard sounds of shattering glass next door, and shouts and yells and slogans. After some time, there was silence. Slowly, people started coming back. I too got up and went to investigate. I found out then that the mob of rioters had come till the cafeteria next door, smashed the windows and so on, and then simply retreated back the way they came. Some "invisible hand" had made them turn back and go away from where I was sitting, solely relying on the Lord without whose Will, not even a blade of grass can move. The same Lord, who had assumed the guise of a "superior officer" of the Railways, the one who mysteriously answered unasked, unwritten petitions, was at work here too. Of course, there could be rational explanations and many were suggested to me later on, but at that point of need, it was not rationality but Faith that worked and kept me strong.

The Inimitable Divine

When you live in the proximity of the Divine, miracles are very common. After

a while, you even take them for granted. I was asked by a Catholic priest, who was an external examiner during my B.Ed. Course at Thiruvananthapuram, whether Sai Baba's miracles are true. This was one question I had least expected! "Does He really create things? Have you seen it?" My spontaneous reply to this was, "Miracles are not miracles in Swami's presence, but very natural to Swami". That the sun should rise everyday and send beams of energy to sustain the earth is a great miracle. But we take it for granted. We do not question why there should be life only on Earth and not on Venus or on Mars. We do not stop to marvel at the wonder of it. We simply believe and it becomes a part of our psyche and we accept it. So too it is with Bhagavan Baba. His devotees, after having experienced Him, believe in Him and so for them, nothing is impossible for Him. Why talk of the paranormal or the supernatural and get into intellectual debates?

In the crass materialistic and divisive world that we inhabit, what could be a greater miracle than someone providing free medicare, educare and sociocare of the highest quality to thousands of people, with no strings attached, no questions asked about caste, creed, religion, nationality, race, gender or any such consideration? Need is the only criterion here. That is why, from the 'naxalite' regions of interior Andhra to the parched city of Chennai, Swami's Drinking Water Supply Project reaches out with the same concern – of alleviating human distress. There are people who try to prove scientifically that this is all very clever trickery, that there is some 'catch' somewhere and certain TV programmes even have so-called magicians reduplicating the creation of Vibhuti, in front of small children, in order to 'enlighten' them.

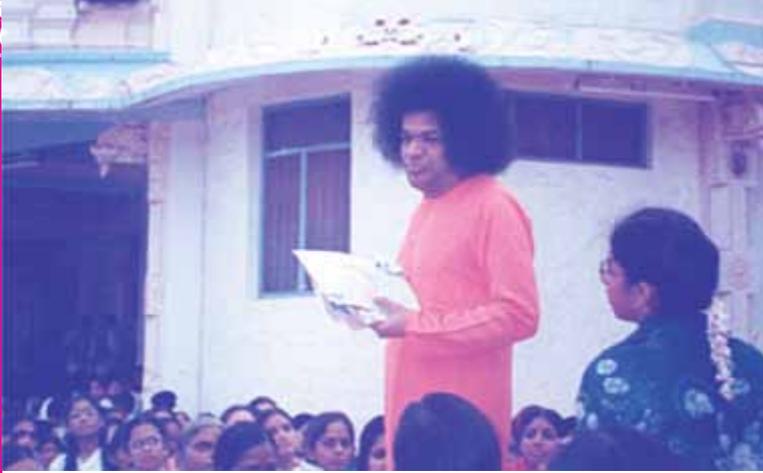
It is typical of materialists and certain scientists to try to debunk the essence of

phenomena and to focus their tunnel-vision at the 'how' of things and never on the 'why'. That is why very often, they miss out on the bigger picture or miss the most obvious facts that are clear to the layman. Hence, these so-called rationalists do not even pause to realise that Swami's Vibhuti has certain qualities which can never be duplicated. The Vibhuti of our Beloved Lord has healed, cured, 'cancelled' cancers, warded off calamities, averted accidents, protected during disasters, made the dumb speak, the crippled walk, the blind see and the same Vibhuti manifested at one time could taste bitter to one and sweet to another. It would be interesting to see a reduplication of all this, and that too outside the confines of a laboratory, without 'controlled' conditions. Bhagavan cannot be copied because of who He is and why He incarnated.

Finally, miracles are natural to Swami, because they are an expression of His immense, all-encompassing love for suffering humanity. It is His infinite compassion that gushes forth as holy ash and chains and rings and talismans or a golden Siva Linga in response to the prayers of millions of devotees on Sivarathri day. However, to comprehend even a minute fraction of this Divine phenomenon, one has to have a heart that can believe in the possibility of love in a loveless world. Such a love that seeks no returns, which is gentle, immediate, patient, forgiving, overwhelming and kind and radiates to all beings, human and animal and insect, irrespective of whether it is understood or not, and very often misunderstood by narrow human minds, is something that can only be experienced, never explained.

Another Sweet Moment

To illustrate the simplicity of His Divine nature, I recall yet another sweet moment from my student days. It is a healing that comes to mind. Once we students had all come



Bhagavan with the students of Anantapur Campus.

to Puttapparthi from Anantapur for Swami's Darshan and those days, we were allowed to take trays of toffees for 'birthday blessings' from Bhagavan. I was sitting behind a girl holding such a tray. Swami came near us, picked a whole fistful of chocolates and showered them merrily all over us and walked away. After He had gone quite a distance, I found a sister next to me suddenly weeping uncontrollably. I knew she was not too well; she had some eye ailment, that needed a minor surgery. And then she told me what had just occurred.

She had some problem in her eye, due to which she would see black spots in her vision. A doctor at home had advised minor surgery, but she was terrified of being operated upon. When Swami came for Darshan, these black spots in her eye covered Him too and she could not see Him clearly. She was very remorseful at

this and that is when a toffee thrown casually and playfully by Swami hit her eye and dislodged her glasses. She was in tears but after a while, she wiped her eye, still throbbing with the direct hit from Swami, when to her amazement she discovered she could see clearly! The black spots that had plagued her vision for weeks had simply melted away through that love-missile!

Life with Sai – a Journey of Love

This is what Swami is – sweet, simple, natural, unostentatious, mischievous, joyful and compassionate beyond compare. He watches over us, as He often says, like how the eyelids guard the eyes. And yet, He never expects anything in return. He used to tell us about the value of gratitude; of showing it to our alma mater, our parents. The only thing He ever expected from His students was to bring a good name to Him and to be ideal in society. His life is a silent saga of love and our life with Sai is a challenging but blissful journey of hope and love towards a truly meaningful existence.

(Courtesy: Sri Sathya Sai Media Centre.)

– The author is a former student of the Anantapur Campus of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and is currently Teaching Faculty in the Department of English of the Anantapur Campus.

Select any Name of His, any Name that appeals to you, select any Form of His; every day when you awaken to the call of the brightening East, recite the Name, meditate on the Form; have the Name and Form as your companion, guide and guardian throughout the toils of the waking hours; when you retire for the night, offer grateful homage to God in that Form with that Name, for being with you, all day long. If you stick to this discipline, you cannot fail.

– Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

To Holog with Salama

My Dear! you will find it deep within yourself. Think it many times, ponder it, it tells you about your true nature, it gives you hope, it gives you new life, it points the way, it proves to you that God is within you and you are not man, man is God, it shows you that it is possible for you to realize God (Swamiji) but you and you alone must ponder this work deeply, you will find that you will begin to know what is meant by the statement: "The Self" cannot be explained, the mind knows of its existence, "The Self-GOD" is within man, you are that Self, all else is illusion of the mind's creation, the mind that creates, preserves, and destroys.

My Love! The great joy, the subtlety of the bliss, that you will feel, as you come closer and closer to your Real Self; if you strive to find your self by using your mind, you will strive and strive in vain. Because the mind, cannot give you the truth; a lie cannot give you the truth; a lie can only entangle you in a web of deceit; but if you realize your self, awaken your true, fine, beautiful qualities above you - nothing below you - nothing, to the right of you - or to the left of you - nothing; and dissolve your self into that nothingness, that would be the best way you could explain the realization of the Self. and yet that nothingness would not be the absence of something like the nothingness. That nothingness is the fullness of everything, the power of the existence of that appears to be everything. - Baba -

To Hislop with Blessings

My Dear! You will find it deep within yourself. Think it many times, ponder it, it tells you about your true nature, it gives you hope, it gives you new life, it points the way, it proves to you that God is within you and you are not man, man is God, it shows you that it is possible for you to realize God (Swamiji) but you and you alone must ponder this work deeply, you will find that you will begin to know what is meant by the statement "the Self" cannot be explained, the mind knows of its existence, "the Self-God" is within man, you are that Self, all else is illusion of the mind's creation, the mind that creates, preserves, and destroys.

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above you – nothing Below you – nothing, to the right of you – or to the left of you – nothing; and dissolve yourself into that nothingness, that would be the best way you could explain the realization of the Self and yet that nothingness would not be the absence of something like the nothingness that nothingness is the fullness of everything, the power of the existence of that appears to be everything.

– Baba –

BHAGAVAN'S SIVARATHRI MESSAGE

HAVE STEADY FAITH IN THE ATMA

What can the evil effects of Kali Age do to a man whose heart is full of compassion, whose speech is suffused with truth and whose body is dedicated to the service of others?

(Sanskrit Verse)

CHANT THE DIVINE NAME CONSTANTLY

Embodiments of Love!

IN THIS WORLD, ALL THE beings are classified into four categories: 1) Andaja, that which is born out of an egg 2) Pindaja, that which is born out of the mother's womb, 3) Udbhija, that which is born out of the earth 4) Swedaja, that which is born out of sweat.

Dharma Protects you from all Sufferings

Under each category, there are 21 lakh types of species. Hence, it is said that there are 84 lakh species in God's creation. The 84 lakh species are subjected to three types of sufferings, viz., Adhibhoutika, Adhidaivika and Adhyatmika. Adhibouthika refers to the diseases that are caused by man's attachment to the physical world. It also refers to the diseases that are caused by insects like mosquitoes and flies. Adhidaivika is related to the suffering caused by natural calamities like earthquakes, floods and epidemics like cholera and plague. Adhyatmika refers to the sufferings that result from wrong food and bad habits. It also indicates to the suffering caused by cruel animals and wicked people.



What is the remedy for these three types of sufferings? One should have strong faith in the Self. That is the panacea for all sufferings. One should strive to experience Atmic bliss for which nine paths of devotion are prescribed: *Shravanam* (listening), *Kirtanam* (singing), *Vishnusmaranam* (contemplating on Vishnu), *Padasevanam* (serving His Lotus Feet), *Vandanam* (salutation), *Archanam* (worship), *Dasyam* (servitude), *Sneham* (friendship), *Atmanivedanam* (self-surrender). Man can get rid of his afflictions by taking to any of these nine paths.

Before the commencement of the Kurukshetra War, Duryodhana and Dussasana

prostrated before their mother, Gandhari, seeking her blessings. Gandhari, being the one of pure heart, steady mind and selfless love, blessed them saying, *Yatho Dharmah Thatho Jayaha* (victory is where Dharma is). Then they went to their preceptor, Dronacharya, to pay their respects. He blessed them saying, *Yatho Dharmah Thatho Krishnah, Yatho Krishna Thatho Jayaha* (Krishna is where righteousness is; where Krishna is, there victory is). You are born as a human being but are you following the Dharma that is prescribed for a human being? If so, your Dharma will certainly protect you.

Today, man is subjected to hardships because he has forgotten the source of his origin. A fish is born out of water. It cannot survive even for a while without water. It is happy only when it is in water, the place of its origin. What is the source of man's origin? Lord Krishna declared in the Bhagavadgita, *Mamaivamsho Jivaloke Jivabhuta Sanathana* (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being). From this it is evident that man is a spark of the Divine. He originated from the principle of Atma.

Having been born from the Atma, man should always contemplate on the Atma. He will become restless and face hardships if he forgets the Atma. So, never forget the Atma, the source of your origin. Have faith in the Atma. Respect it and revere it. Treat Atma as the basis of your life. This is the Dharma that man should adhere to. You may occupy positions of authority, you may have wealth and prosperity, but none of them can protect you. Only faith in the Self can protect you. You may involve yourself in any work you like, but you should have unwavering faith in the Atma.

When a mother goes to the river to fetch water, she leaves her child in the cradle. On her way back, she may be conversing with

other ladies while carrying a potful of water on her head. But her mind will be constantly focused on her child. She wants to get back home as quickly as possible, lest her child wake up and start crying. Likewise, your mind should be constantly focused on the Atma in all your activities. That should be your aim.

Focus your Mind on God

You participated in the Bhajan throughout the night. While doing Bhajans, you may sing various songs with different tunes and beats, but your mind should be constantly fixed on the Atma. All your actions must be done with the sole purpose to please God. Arjuna asked Lord Krishna how he could fight in the war if he had to constantly think of God. Krishna replied, "O simpleton, it is your body and the senses that are involved in the warfare. Such being the case, you can always focus the mind on God".

Direct your mind on God instead of on the senses. As I pointed out yesterday, senses are responsible for both merit and sin. If you put them to misuse, you will incur sin. If they are used in a proper way, it results in merit. Speak softly and sweetly and cultivate good mind. Only then will you earn the respect of others. *You cannot always oblige but you can speak always obligingly.* Cultivate right vision. Evil looks will put you in danger.

Keechaka cast his evil looks on Draupadi, which eventually led to his death at the hands of Bhima. Do not listen to evil talk. Kaikeyi paid heed to the evil words of Mandhara, which ultimately led to Rama's exile whom she had loved much more than her own son, Bharata. Today do you find any woman having the name Kaikeyi or Mandhara? No. Society will not respect those who indulge in evil talk and listen to evil. So, you should always speak good and listen to good words.

If you happen to hear something evil, do not share it with others. What is the purpose in causing unrest to others by telling them something which has caused unrest to you? Today there are people who not only lend their ear to evil talk but also spread the same to the rest of society causing a great deal of unrest. *Paropakaram Punyaya, Papaya Parapeedanam* (one attains merit by serving others and commits sin by hurting them). Let your tongue utter such words which will give joy to others. This is precisely what you have done the whole night. You sang the Name of God which gave joy to one and all. When you think of God, there will be no scope for criticism or talking ill of others, but there is a type of prayer in which the devotee reminds God of those who troubled Him.

Once Vidhura prayed to Krishna thus, "O Krishna, why don't You come to my house? Never did I tie You to a pillar and whip You the way Sakkubai's mother-in-law did. Never did I try to harm You the way Kamsa did. Never did I abuse You the way Sisuphala did. Then why don't You visit my house"?

You may be aware of how Sisuphala hurled abuses at Krishna in the open court, questioning the latter's credentials to receive the grand offering made by Dharmaraja at the conclusion of Rajasuya Yaga. He said,

Do you think that you deserve this honour because you stole the Saris of the Gopikas when they were having a bath? Or do you think that you deserve this because you spent all your time in the company of cowherds? Stop this self-aggrandisement and shut up!
(Telugu Poem)

Because Sisuphala had crossed his limits, Krishna took the plate in which the offering was made and hurled it at Sisuphala, which in a trice beheaded him. Krishna's act was

appreciated by one and all. Many people are under the impression that Krishna used His Chakra (discus) to kill Sisuphala, but in fact, it was only a plate that beheaded him.

Fill your Heart with Sacred Feelings

When the time is not favourable, even a stick in hand will turn into a snake. On the contrary, if your time is favourable, even if you stamp on a snake, it will remain harmless like a stick. In order to enjoy favourable time always, you must fill your heart with sacred feelings.

The history of Bharat (India) is replete with many examples that bear testimony to this truth. Such sacred history is being forgotten today, and people are resorting to unrighteous means and setting bad examples. Learn the sacred lessons that the history of Bharat teaches. Cultivate sacred feelings. Let your ears listen to sacred stories. Let your tongue utter sacred words and let your hands perform meritorious deeds. Do you know why God has given you hands? Is it merely to feed your stomach? No. They must be used in the service of society. Do you know why feet are given? Not to wander in the streets like a vagabond, but to visit sacred places.

People see anything and everything with their eyes wide open, but when they visit a temple, they close their eyes while standing in front of the beautiful image of the Lord. What an irony it is! Senses can lead you to either sin or merit. It is your duty to put them on the right path and earn merit. Then God will fulfil all your wishes. You don't need to ask Him.

Do not ask, oh mind, do not ask. The more you ask, the more you will be neglected. God will certainly grant you what you deserve without your asking. Did He not grant the wish of Sabari, who never asked? Did He not redeem Jatayu, who never asked but sacrificed his life for His cause?

(Telugu Poem)

Yesterday evening at 6 o'clock, the most auspicious time arrived, during which the emergence of the Linga took place. Why is Sivarathri considered auspicious? The reason is this. The moon has 16 Kalas (aspects) and so too the mind. On the day of Sivarathri, 15 are merged and only one remains. If the 16th

aspect is also merged, one attains Divinity. This total merger will take place only when one chants the divine Name continuously and wholeheartedly.

– Excerpted from Bhagavan's Discourse on 22nd February 2001 on the occasion of Sivarathri at Prasanthi Nilayam.



Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences

EPIP Area, Whitefield, Bengaluru - 560066

Tel: 080-28004600 Extn. 4640, 4641, 4441. Email: academicblr@sssihms.org.in

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield, Bengaluru is offering 4 years course leading to Bachelors degree in **Nursing, Bachelors degree in Anaesthesia and Operation Technology, Cardiac Care Technology, Imaging Technology, Medical Laboratory Technology and Perfusion Technology** under the aegis of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bengaluru, Karnataka. **All the courses are meant for only Girl Students and it is totally residential programme.**

Applications are invited from candidates who fulfil the eligibility criteria as given below.

Age: Candidates should have completed **minimum 17 years and maximum 25 years of age on or before 31st of December** in the year of application for admission.

Qualification: 10+2, PUC or any other qualifying examination conducted by Boards / Councils / Intermediate Education established by State Governments / Central Government and recognised as equivalent to two year Pre-University examination by the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences / Association of Indian Universities (AIU).

Subjects 10+2 / PUC: Candidates should have passed subjects of **Physics, Chemistry, Biology and English (PCBE) individually and must have obtained a minimum of not less than 45% marks put together in all these subjects.** For B.Sc. Imaging Technology, the candidate should also have passed with **Mathematics, Biology, Physics, Chemistry and English with an aggregate of 45%.**

Candidates desirous can apply by logging into our website www.sssihms.org. Incomplete applications, applications in a different format and applications not meeting the eligibility criteria will be rejected. The applications will be entertained from **1st April 2021 to 30th June 2021.** The calendar of events for the entrance exams will be put up on our website.

– Director

THE GENESIS OF SRI SATHYA SAI GOKULAM

Balachandra Rayker

MY FATHER, SANMARG KRISHNA Shet, and I had gone to Brindavan in September of 1970. Needing to speak with Swami, my father sought an interview. Being invited for one, we were waiting near the "bungalow" as Swami's residence was called prior to Trayee. It was at around 3 p.m. when Sri Ramabrahmam, caretaker of Brindavan and a great devotee of Swami, stopped by and spoke to us. There was a cow, by name 'Yagnamatha' munching grass in a corner. Pointing to it, he said, we use the milk from this cow for Swami. But the milk is drying. My father then sought his opinion, if he could give a cow to Swami from some that we had at home. "Why don't you ask Swami, as you will be speaking to Him shortly anyway", he replied. When my father did ask Swami during the interview about offering a cow, He said, "Okay, bring the cow over and I will start Gokulam".

In the first week of December 1970, a calf was born which was sheltered in our home in Mangaluru. In the last week of December, we decided to take the cow and the calf to Brindavan. My parents sat in front of the lorry (truck) along with the driver, while I sat in the back along with the cow and the calf amidst the bales of hay. The lorry was part of a regular service to transport roof tiles, everyday. Such an experienced driver lost his way while driving overnight, and we reached the town of Pavagada in the morning, instead of reaching Brindavan (Bengaluru). By the time he found his way back to Brindavan, it was 1 p.m. in the afternoon.

While we were busy trying to find our way back from the detour, Swami was making arrangements for us. At around noon, anticipating the comfort of the cow, He got a truck to dump some mud to create a ramp for the cow to get down from the truck. There was a Poornakumbham by a group of women who also had turmeric, Kumkum (vermillion), flowers, fruits and Arati for a royal reception. No one knew why they were standing or to whom the reception was being offered. They were just following instructions from Swami.

When we entered the gates of Brindavan, Swami was waiting to receive us. They asked that the truck be parked, with the back near the mound of mud. Placing a plank from the back of the truck to the heap of mud, the cow and the calf were brought down. Pointing to where I was standing, He joked, "place the plank on his head", to bring a smile on my face after a long exhausting journey. The women offered welcome with Poornakumbham and



performed Puja with turmeric, Kumkum and flowers followed by Arati. Swami asked, "Does the cow eat bananas" and fed bananas to the cow. "Do they eat apples," He asked, and fed it apples. "The cow looks like a poor Brahmin," He commented on its sleek physique. We learned later that the calf was named Shankara.

We were then treated to an unforgettable honour. Swami invited all of us to have food with Him. "Where are they?" Swami asked me, referring to the driver and cleaner of the truck. I ran out and brought them for lunch to Swami's residence. Swami was served at the table, while the five of us sat on the floor. It was a delicious feast with Basundi, bananas and many dishes. I cannot forget the Basundi lunch even now! After the food, we were called

into the interview room. After talking with all of us in the interview room, He materialised two pendants. He gave them to the driver and cleaner. He asked the driver to stop drinking alcohol and materialised Vibhuti as well for him.

In 1976, Swami took my father in His red car to show him Sri Sathya Sai Gokulam, Puttaparthi. It has grown a lot since then. A chance talk with Sri Ramabrahmam prompted this small offer to Swami. Swami not only accepted it, but involved Himself, spent so much time making all arrangements and blessed us all profusely. We are forever grateful to Him.

– The author Sri Balachandra Rayker is a long-standing devotee of Bhagavan from Mangaluru.

**Statement of Ownership and other Particulars of the Newspaper
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Date: 1-3-2021

(Sd) **K.S. RAJAN**
(Signature of Publisher)

RAMAYANA THROUGH SAI BHAJANS

THE STORY OF THE EPIC Ramayana came alive when Sri Sathya Sai Media Centre made an enchanting and innovative musical

"Raghunandana Hey Raghunandana", "Sri Rama Charanam Sri Rama Charanam Sri Rama Charanam Bhaje", "Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram", "Karuna Samudra Sri Rama". The programme concluded with the video screening of the Bhajan "Rama Rama Rama Sita" sung by Bhagavan.



"Ramayana through Sai Bhajans", a musical presentation.

presentation "Ramayana through Sai Bhajans" in Sai Kulwant Hall on 31st January 2021. The programme which started at 5.00 p.m. showcased the divine and sacred life story of Lord Rama through Sai Bhajans accompanied by an enrapturing commentary and beautiful illustrations on the LED screen. This most elevating and lively programme, based on the book "Ramakatha Rasavahini" written by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba included popular Sai Bhajans which included



Launch of the new YouTube channel "Sri Sathya Sai Kids World".

It is not the outer quality that matters; it is the inner strength that imparts value and significance. The heart has to be pure. Constant recollection of the glory and majesty of God, who is the Indweller, through the instrumentality of the Name, helps to purify the heart. That is the B12 vitamin that promotes spiritual health. There is no need for any other tablet.

– Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

About Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust Publications Division

On 1st January, 2009, Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust (SSSST) commenced operations with four divisions; the Bhakta Sahayak divisions (one in Prasanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi and another in Brindavan, Bangalore), the Publications division, and the Media division.

The Publications Division caters to:

- 1) The publication and distribution of spiritual, religious, and educational Sai Literature and the production and distribution of audio and visual multimedia, photographs, calendars, and diaries for the benefit of visiting pilgrims and devotees all over the world. All the literature and publications are based on the teachings, philosophy, message, and values of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.
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Turn your Feelings Towards Me

I do not like Bhajans that promote rivalry, envy or egoism that emanate from intolerance. I appreciate and reward humility, fortitude, sympathy, service, brotherliness and constant remembrance of God. When you yearn to have My picture on your heart, you must turn the lens of the camera towards Me, shouldn't you? Turn your intellect, your emotions, your feelings, your activities towards Me, then certainly, My picture will be imprinted on your heart. If your lens is facing the world and worldly things, how can My picture be imprinted upon your heart?

– Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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