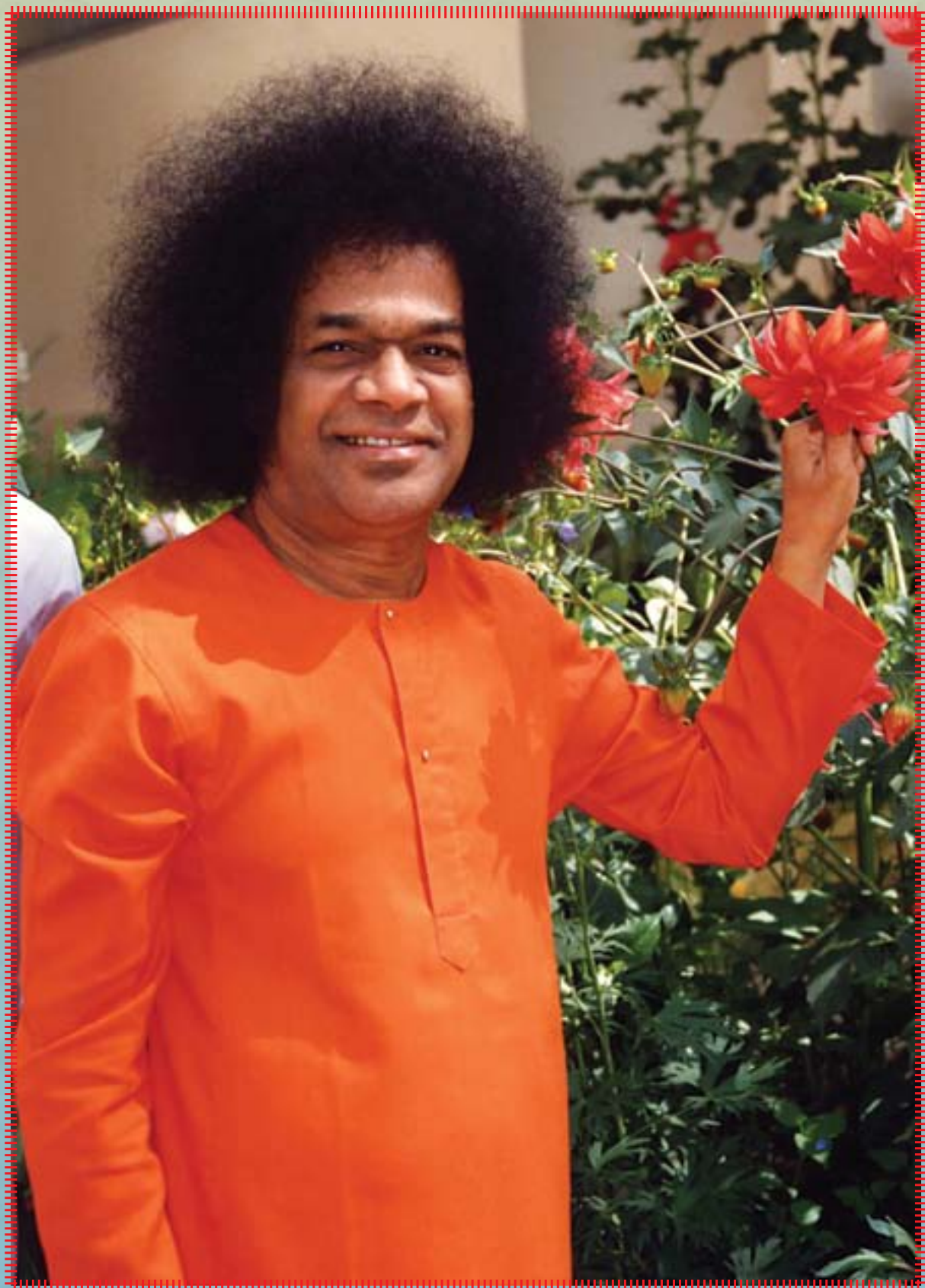


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Editor **G.L. ANAND**
Assistant Editor **P. RAJESH**

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E-mail: subscriptions@sssbpt.org
editor@sssbpt.org
For Audio Visual /

Book Orders: orders@sssbpt.org
ISD Code : 0091
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Telephone : 287375

Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust Telefax : 287390
Sri Sathya Sai University -
Administrative Office : 287191 / 287239
Sri Sathya Sai Higher
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become a good person."



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AVATAR VANI

RECOGNISE THE SUPREME SIGNIFICANCE OF LOVE

GET RID OF DESIRES AND BE FREE

Embodiments of Love!

IN THIS WORLD CONSTITUTED BY three Gunas – Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas (serenity, passion and sloth), man is subjected to happiness and sorrow.

Earn God's Grace and Experience True Happiness

Man is engulfed in Moha (attachment), because of which he cannot experience happiness. Once he frees himself from attachment, he will experience real happiness. Moha breeds the evil qualities of Ahamkara (ego) and Mamakara (possessiveness) in man. One who is filled with ego will not be loved by others. It is therefore necessary for man to get rid of Moha. *Moham Hitva Priyam Bhavati* (one who is free from attachment is dear to all). Man should therefore gradually reduce his worldly attachments.

Apart from attachment, man should control his anger because anger is the cause of grief. *Krodham Hitva Na Sochati* (one

who conquers anger will be free from grief). As long as man has anger, he can have no peace and happiness. He should therefore get rid of anger to secure peace and happiness in life. An angry man is the enemy of all mankind. The first requisite for a person embarking on a spiritual journey is the control of anger.

One with anger will not be successful in any of his endeavours.

He will commit sins and will be ridiculed by one and all.

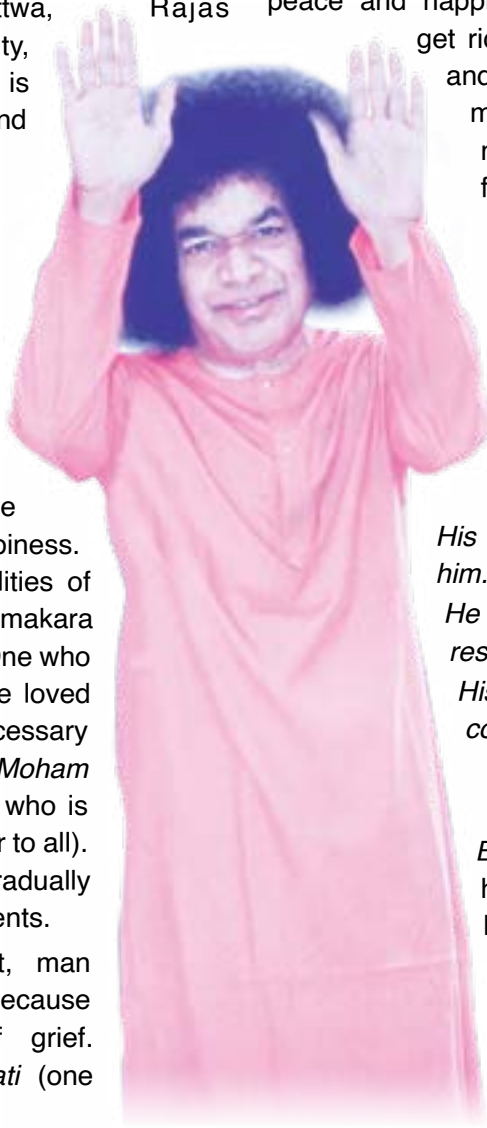
His own people will abandon him.

He will lose all wealth and respect.

His anger will ruin him completely.

(Telugu Poem)

Kamam Hitva Sukhi Bhavati (man becomes happy when he conquers his desires). Life is a long journey and desires are the luggage you carry. *Less luggage more comfort makes travel a pleasure.*



So, man should make the journey of life easy by reducing the burden of desires. He should discriminate between what is necessary and what is not, and leave what is not necessary, thus reducing his burden.

Equanimity Leads Man to the Spiritual Path

Human life is like an ocean consisting of the waves of pleasure and pain. Man is happy when his desires are fulfilled and unhappy when they are not fulfilled. Pleasure and pain are inseparable in life. *Pleasure is an interval between two pains.* It is not possible for man to enjoy happiness without experiencing unhappiness. Man cannot relish happiness without hardship and pain. Pleasure and pain are the two sides of the same coin or two cotyledons of the same seed. In fact, hardships enhance the happiness that follows. Pleasure and pain, profit and loss are inextricably linked in the world. Man should have equanimity in both the opposites and consider difficulties as opportunities for transformation. In this way, he can advance on the path of spirituality and earn the grace of God. Man can experience real happiness by the grace of God only. But he is unable to attain God's grace because he does not exercise control over his thoughts, words and actions.

See no evil, see what is good;

Hear no evil, hear what is good;

Talk no evil, talk what is good;

Think no evil, think what is good;

Do no evil, do what is good;

This is the way to God.

Develop Sacred Vision

But man today sees only the faults of others. What kind of a person are you if you always look at the faults of others? Instead, man should see his own faults and rectify them.

He should have good thoughts. Then only will he perform good actions and become a good person. So, man should develop sacred vision. Here is a story to illustrate this.

One day, Krishna summoned Duryodhana and Dharmaraja and asked them to make a study of the people in the kingdom. He asked Duryodhana to find out how many good people existed in the country. He asked Dharmaraja to find out how many bad people were there in the kingdom. Duryodhana went round and reported that he could find no good man anywhere. If there was any good man, that was himself, he said. Dharmaraja reported to Krishna that he could find no bad man anywhere in their Dharmic kingdom. He could find some badness only in himself. Dharmaraja had a sacred vision. So, everyone appeared good to him. On the other hand, Duryodhana had evil feelings. So, everyone appeared evil to him. Everything depends on the vision of the onlooker. If one looks at the world with a good mind, everything will appear good to him.

The entire cosmos is the Srishti (creation) of God. It is the manifestation of the Divine. Prakriti (Nature) is another name of Srishti. Nature thus has a Divine origin. Five basic elements which constitute Nature are also present in all living beings. Hence, the same Divinity is immanent in all. When man realises this truth, he will have no room for anger, hatred and envy. Though there are myriad forms in the universe, they are all basically one as the same Atma is present in all. Therefore, man should understand the unity that underlies the apparent diversity.

Communion with the Divine is True Yoga

Recognise the supreme significance of love. Develop love for God. Love for God is true devotion. Communion with the Divine is true yoga. Other yogic practices are merely

his reality. He should use his Buddhi (intuitive intelligence) to experience his oneness with the Divine or Brahman. What is the meaning of *Prajnanam Brahma* (Brahman is Supreme Consciousness)? It is Constant Integrated Awareness. Total awareness is the nature of Brahman. As man is an aspect of Brahman, ignorance is not his nature. As fire is covered by ash, Brahman is covered by ignorance. If man blows away the ash of ignorance, the fire of Brahman (Absolute Divinity) will be revealed to him. The fire of Divinity is always shining in

man, but man covers it with the ash of desires and ignorance.

To give another illustration. Suppose there is a tree on which numerous birds are sitting and creating a mess below by their droppings. How to drive the bird away? When you sing a Bhajan and clap your hands, the birds will fly away. Our life is also like a tree on which a big flock of birds in the form of our desires have gathered which pollute our heart. To get rid of desires, sing Rama, Krishna, Govinda.

– **Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 12th April 1996.**



I have been offering you advice and directions about Seva for some years but I am not satisfied with the extent to which you have been putting them into practice. Your aim should be to please Me, to satisfy Me, to follow My directions. I have come with certain tasks as My Mission. I too have certain vows to fulfil! They have been mentioned in the Bhagavadgita also. I have to establish the supremacy of Dharma; I have to bear the Yoga Kshema (burden of welfare) of those who are immersed in thoughts of Me alone. So, the best way to please Me is to see Me in all beings and serve them just as you would like to serve Me. That is the best form of worship, which will reach Me.

– *Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Chapter 4

THE PENITENTIAL YAJNA

THE NAMAKARANAM (NAMING) Ceremony of the Prince gave great delight to the subjects of the State as well as the inmates of the palace, and members of the royal household. But Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandava brothers, felt that something more had to be done. He was not content with the joyous festival alone. He called for an assembly the same evening of all the elders, the scholars, the Pandits, the subordinate rulers and leaders of the people. He prayed that Lord Krishna preside over the gathering and confer joy on all. The sages Vyasa and Kripa also attended.

Coming to the assembly, Yudhishtira stood before the gathering a few seconds in silence, before he fell at the feet of Lord Krishna and Sage Vyasa. He then turned towards the rulers, scholars and leaders and said, "I was able to defeat the foes through your help, co-operation and best wishes, as well as the blessings of the Lord who is present here and of the sages and saints who have installed Him in their hearts. We were able by means of that victory to win back the kingdom that we had lost. Again, through these blessings, the light of hope has gleamed in hearts, darkened by despair about the continuation of this dynasty. The Pandava line will be continued by the prince who was named today by the Lord as Parikshit.

"While all this delights me, I must announce before you that I am overwhelmed with sorrow at the contemplation of another side of the picture. I have committed countless sins, killing

kith and kin. I feel I must do some expiation for this; or else, there will be no happiness for me or for my dynasty or for my people. Therefore, I wish to take this opportunity to seek your advice on this matter. There are among you many who have known the Reality and attained Brahma Jnana (knowledge of the Absolute); we have also the great sage Vyasa here. I expect you to suggest some expiatory rite by which I can rid myself of this colossal quantity of sin that I have accumulated as a result of this war."

When Yudhishtira posed this problem in great humility and with great contrition, Lord Krishna said, "Yudhishtira, you are famous as Dharmaraja and you ought to know Dharma. You know the intricacies of Dharma and morality, of justice, of right and wrong conduct. Therefore, I am surprised that you are afflicted with grief over this war and this victory. Do you not know that a Kshatriya incurs no sin when he kills a foe who has come to the battlefield armed with the intention to kill? Whatever injury or pain or loss is inflicted on the battlefield during the fight with armed foes is free from sin. It is the Dharma of a Kshatriya to take up the sword and fight to the very end, without any thought of self, to save his country. You have only observed your Dharma. How can Karma (activity) along the lines of Dharma be sinful? It is not proper to doubt this and give way to despair. Sin cannot touch you, surround you or bother you. Instead of exulting over the festival of the naming of the newborn prince, why should you dread imaginary calamities

and seek remedies for non-existent sins? Be calm; be happy”.

Vyasa too rose from his seat and addressed the king. “Sinful and blameworthy acts are inevitable in battle. They should not be the cause for grief. The chief aim in battle should be the protection of Dharma from its foes. If that is kept before the mind, the sin will not affect the fighters. A putrid wound has to be treated with the knife; it is not sinful to inflict the surgery. A doctor who knows the surgery, and knowing, does not save the man by doing it, incurs sin. So too knowing that the foe is the source of injustice, cruelty, terror and vice, if these boils are not treated by the surgeon, knowing the cure, because he is reluctant to use the knife (the surgeon being the Kshatriya), he incurs sin by remaining quiet, not by using the sword. Dharmaraja, you are speaking under a delusion. I can understand others less wise being afflicted by these doubts, but I wonder how you are worried over this fear of sin?

“If however our words do not carry conviction, I can suggest another remedy too. That will remove all fear. Some rulers in the past have resorted to it, after the conclusion of wars, for the removal of the effects of sin. It is the rite of Aswamedha, the Horse Sacrifice. If you desire, you can also perform this rite, as an expiatory ceremony. There can be no obstacle for that. But believe me, you are innocent of sin even without any expiation. Since your faith is shaky, I am suggesting this rite for your satisfaction.” After this statement, Vyasa resumed his seat.

At this, all the elders, scholars and leaders rose as one man and applauded the valuable suggestion given by Vyasa. They shouted, Jai Jai, in order to demonstrate their approval and appreciation. They exclaimed, “Oh! How auspicious”, “How significant”, and they blessed Dharmaraja in his endeavour to free

himself from the sinful consequences of war. But Dharmaraja was still heavy with grief. He was not free from fear. His eyes were wet with tears.

He pleaded with the assembly, most piteously. “However much you assert my innocence, I am not convinced. Somehow, my mind does not accept your argument. Rulers who were engaged in wars might have cleansed themselves by means of the Aswamedha Yajna. Those were ordinary wars; they were the usual type. But my case is something very extraordinary. My sins are three times more sinister, for, (1) I have killed kith and kin, (2) I have killed holy elders like Bhishma and Drona and (3) I have killed many crowned heads. Alas, my fate! How monstrous have been my actions?

“No other ruler could have done so much of iniquity. Not one, but three Aswamedha Yajnas have to be performed to cleanse this quantity. Then only can I have peace. Then only can my dynasty be happy and secure. Then only can the administration of my kingdom be safe and meritorious. This must be kindly accepted by Vyasa and other elders and sages.”

When Yudhishtira spoke thus, tears dropped on his cheeks; his lips quivered with sorrow; his body was bent with remorse. Seeing this, the heart of every sage melted with pity. The subjects of the king were moved in sympathy. Vyasa and even Vaasudeva were affected. Many Pandits shed tears, without being aware of it. The assembly was struck dumb with astonishment. All knew in a flash how soft the heart of Dharmaraja was. The brothers too, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva were standing with folded palms, in reverential humility, awaiting the word that will assure relief from the Lord who was in the Presidential Seat.

Then, the assembly with one voice, approved the three Aswamedha Yajnas, to relieve the distress of Dharmaraja. One sage gave expression to the opinion of the assembly. He said, "We shall not stand in the way of your desire. We accept it wholeheartedly. We shall celebrate the Yajnas in the best Sastric way, until the final rites. For, we seek peace of mind for you, more than anything else. We are prepared to do anything which will give you satisfaction". This was acclaimed by everyone in the gathering.

Hearing this, Dharmaraja said, "I am indeed blessed. I am blessed indeed". He gave his grateful thanks for the promised co-operation. He walked towards the place where Krishna and Vyasa were seated and he fell at their feet. He held the feet of Krishna and pleaded, "Oh Madhusudana! Didn't You hear my prayer? Didn't You witness my grief? I pray that You grant us Your Divine presence at the coming Yajna, that You ensure me the fruit thereof and save me from this burden of sin".

Krishna smiled and lifted him up from the ground before Him. He said, "Dharmaraja! I shall certainly answer your prayer. But you have taken upon your shoulders a burden as heavy as a range of mountains. This Yajna is no small affair. Moreover, the performer is the celebrated king, Dharmaraja! That means, it has to be celebrated on a scale befitting your status. I know that you have no wherewithal for this very expensive undertaking. Kings derive money only from their subjects. To spend on a Yajna, the money squeezed out of them is not desirable. Only well-earned money can be used for such holy rites; else it will bring evil instead of good. Nor can your subordinate rulers come to your help, for they too have been miserably impoverished by the late war. It is clear they have nothing to spare. Aware of all this, how could you expect

to celebrate three Aswamedhas in a row? I wonder how you found such audacity in spite of these adverse conditions. And you have already announced it publicly in this great and distinguished gathering. You did not give Me even a hint about this costly idea. Then, we could have thought out some plan. Well, it is not too late. We shall take a decision after some more deliberation. It does not matter if some delay is caused".

Dharmaraja listened to these words of the Lord and laughed a hearty laugh! "Lord, You are playing a drama with me, I know. I have never decided upon an act without deliberation. Nor have I ever worried about money or the wherewithal. When we have as our guardian, You with Your inexhaustible Grace, why should I worry about anything? When I have the Kalpataru (wish-fulfilling tree) in my garden, why should I worry, seeking roots and tubers? The all-powerful Lord who has been guarding us all these terrible years as the eyelids guard the eye, will not give us up, at this juncture.

"For You who can whiff huge mountains into dust, this little pebble is no problem at all. You are my Treasure, My treasury. You are My very Breath. Whatever You may say, I will not hesitate. All my strength, all my wealth is You and You alone. I place all my burdens, including the burden of State and this new burden of the three Yajnas on Your Feet. You can do anything You like. You may value my word and carry out my intention or You may discard it and cancel the Yajnas. I have no concern. I am equally happy, whatever You do. It is Your Will, not mine."

Of course, with the Lord who resides in the heart, no special pleading is needed. The Lord melted. He lifted Dharmaraja and helped him to stand. "No; I spoke in jest to test your faith and devotion. I wanted to demonstrate to these subjects of yours how strong is your

faith in Me. You need have no worry on any score. Your wish will be fulfilled. If you follow My instructions, you can procure very easily the money needed for the celebration of the Yajnas. You can get it without harassing the rulers and squeezing the subjects.”

On hearing this, Dharmaraja was delighted. He said, “Lord, we shall honour Your command”. Then Krishna said, “Listen. In bygone times, a ruler named Maruth performed a Yajna, in a style that no one since then could approach. The hall where the Yajna was celebrated along with every item connected with it were of gold. Gold bricks were given away, as gifts to the priests who officiated. Golden images of cows were given instead of cows, and plates of gold were distributed instead of lands! The Brahmins were not able to carry them home and so, they took only as much as they could lift or carry.

The rest they just cast away. Those pieces of gold are now available in large quantities, for your Yajnas. You can collect them”.

Dharmaraja did not agree; he had qualms about it. He said, “Lord, that is the property of those to whom it was given. How can I make use of it, without their permission”? Krishna replied, “They have cast it away, fully conscious of what they were doing and what they were discarding. They are not alive today. Their children know nothing about the existence of this treasure. It is now under the earth. Remember that all treasure inside the earth, which has no master or owner, belongs to the king of that realm. When the king wants to take possession of it, no one has the right to object. Bring that treasure soon and prepare for the celebration of the Yajnas”, commanded Lord Krishna.

Understand My Reality

People may be very near (physically) to the Avatar (divine incarnation), but they live out their lives unaware of their fortune; they exaggerate the role of miracles, which are as trivial, when compared to My glory and majesty, as a mosquito is in size and strength to the elephant upon which it squats. Therefore, when you speak about these 'miracles', I laugh within myself out of pity, that you allow yourself so easily to lose the precious awareness of My Reality. My power is immeasurable; My truth is inexplicable, unfathomable. I am announcing this about Me, for, the need has arisen. But, what I am doing now is only the gift of a 'Visiting Card'! Let Me tell you that emphatic declarations of the Truth by Avatars were made so clearly and so unmistakably only by Krishna. In spite of the declaration, you will notice in the career of the same Krishna that He underwent defeat in His efforts and endeavours, on a few occasions; you must also note that those defeats too were part of the drama which He had planned and which He Himself directed.

– Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Mesmerising Moments with the Divine Master

Rani Subramanian

I GOT MY FIRST DIVINE CALL IN 1950. I was then in Nagpur (then capital of Madhya Pradesh, Central India); so, I had no opportunity to hear about Swami. It was Ms. Kamala Sarathi, a devoted lady who is like a sister to me, who first told me about Swami. When she was in Delhi, she heard about Swami through a person who was teaching her music. This person was a classical singer who used to sing in Prasanthi, and he told Ms. Kamala that she must go and see Baba. So, Kamala Sarathi came to Swami first, and she returned very much impressed with His Presence. Everything about Puttaparthi touched her very much and she wrote to me saying, "The next time I go, you must come because you are really missing something! He is a very great soul! He is supposed to be Bhagavan". At that time, we did not have the conviction that He was God.

Oh! The Unforgettable Odyssey

Though I told her I would accompany her on her second visit, I could not do so because of domestic compulsions. I finally went with her on her third visit in 1950. On this trip, I had brought along my two kids, a son and a daughter. The train stopped at the small Penukonda station for hardly two minutes. I had to literally throw my luggage quickly from the train. And then we found a horse cart – not a bullock cart – to go to the bus stop. And on that day, there was a bus breakdown – the bus which was to leave for Bukkapatnam (nearest village to Puttaparthi those days), was under repair. The bus driver said: "Amma, we are trying to repair

it; and until it is repaired we cannot move; we don't know what time we can leave".

So, we waited for hours and finally got into the bus. There were about 10-12 of us, as apart from K a m a l a

Sarathi and her two music masters; my sister's children were there too. When we reached Bukkapatanam, it was almost 11 o'clock in the night. Then, from there we had to take a bullock cart to come to Puttaparthi, as in those days that was the only transport available. But actually we had to walk, because the bullock carts mainly carried luggage and very small children. They said: "As far as possible, all the adults may please walk, and we will take the children, because they cannot walk for two hours"! There were no other bullock carts either, because it was too late in the night!

It was pitch dark! There was no road; there were just cart tracks, wide enough for a cart to go, which kept bouncing up and down on the stones. It was quite an experience for me as I



had never been to a place like that before! In any case, we were fine and we reached at 1 o'clock in the night.

Welcomed by the Lord

In that darkness, suddenly we saw somebody; it was Baba! How did He know we had arrived? He came with a big, long torch. And He flashed it on us. There was a big grill door, not a wooden door, which He opened and then flashed the light to see who had come. Next, He came near my elder sister, Kamala Sarathi, and asked her: "Have you had something to eat? I can get you something, but it will just be some flattened rice and Channa (chick peas); I can't give you more than that. If you would like some water, I can give you some. What do you want"? My sister said, "Swami, You don't worry, we have got everything; we are alright". He said, "If you are fine, then you sleep now, and I will see you in the morning". And He left. In the morning, we went in and settled down. There was a big shed, meant for devotees. And at the end of the shed was Swami's shrine where His chair was kept. They used to put a curtain in the middle, like a partition, and the same place would also serve as Swami's altar. That is where He would come and sit for Bhajans. At the end of the Bhajan, they would pull the curtain. We were all there in the same shed. And Swami's room was a tiny enclosure in the courtyard, where there was a well. Then, Swami came to where we were. In those days, Swami would be in and out of that shed any number of times. He would come at any time – 9, 10, 12, 2, or any other time – and go around talking very informally to everyone. There was no discipline required. You could ask Him any question at any time you wanted. He was always available!

So, He came in the morning at 8.00 or 8:30, and said, "You are all well settled". He also said that there was a waiting room and we could put

our bed and trunks in a small area there. There were hardly 20-30 devotees there, so it was actually no crowd at all. Prasanthi Nilayam had not yet been built then.

The Inscrutable Indweller

When Swami came in the morning, He spoke to both my sisters. Then He looked at me, turned around and left without asking me anything. On the next day, He came and did the same thing – He talked to them, looked at me but no word to me. Then, I think, it was on the third day that my elder sister was feeling sorry for me, and told me: "We feel, He has been talking to both of us, but He is not talking to you; we are feeling sad about it. Today I am going to ask Swami why He is doing this"!

So, when Swami came, she asked, "Swami, why are You ignoring my other sister? You have not even asked who she is! Why are You doing this"? He said, "I have a reason. I know her feelings and thoughts. She is not comfortable here, in this atmosphere, or with My Form. She thinks 'His Hair, His Robe! I have not seen anybody like this!' She is feeling a little strange. So, I am giving her time. I am not ignoring her, but giving her time to settle with her own self, and to be at home. Everything is so strange to her; she cannot understand and is very confused. So, at this stage, I cannot tell her anything". I felt He was giving me His Kripa (grace) to help me settle down! He can give you those good vibrations to settle your minds, as He is everywhere. Inside and outside, it is only Him! So, Swami went back, and a few days after that He told me to come for an interview. Then, He enquired where I was from and other details, and finally asked, "What is your programme"? I said, "Swami, I have permission to stay here for only ten days. My in-laws have given me permission for only ten days. I have to get back after that as they don't know anything about where I am going or

who I am meeting! They will be very concerned about me; so, I cannot extend my stay”.

He said, "You stay here for at least a month or more! I will tell you when to go". I said, "But Swami, I will have to inform them. I don't know anything! How will I inform them"? He said, "I will arrange to send a telegram; you give Me the address and don't worry about anything. I will send it for you". Then I said, "Alright, Swami".

What I am trying to convey here is that, at that time I did not understand all this because I was not open to a spiritual life! Spiritual life is different from worldly life. Similarly, spiritual behaviour too is poles apart from worldly behaviour. He was preparing me to that state of acceptance. I got the message straightaway – "If you want to follow Me, you have to follow the way I want you to follow Me. You cannot say 'Swami, I will stay for 10 days only'! You cannot take decisions"! He made it very clear. And now, I have got several experiences, and I am convinced that once I start following Him, it is going to be an arduous path, because there will be opposition. But if you want Him, you have to be prepared for all that. So, I accepted that, and after that, He started talking to me and everything was alright.

No Progress without Pain

In those days, we had to go to the hills for morning ablutions. There were no bathrooms. Mosquitoes were biting but there were no fans. All sorts of things could happen, for example, the rain could get all your things wet, but you have to be calm. If you are complaining, there is no merit; only demerit. Acceptance is merit! That came to us very clearly. So, it was a very difficult time and Baba made us taste all that to test our devotion to this path! If you are devoted, you can bear hardships and any inconveniences without grumbling!

Also we realised that He was a difficult Master, but a very Great Master – meant for a very few people who are willing to face whatever He says! And He said we should not try to understand Him. I find in my own case, that understanding comes when you are humble. Our intellect is of no use! How can we understand Bhagavan? To understand Divinity, grace has to come from Him! And that grace comes when we do perform, that is, lead our lives according to His guidance.

Spirituality is an Inward Journey

Those days, He used to come in and out of our rooms, and sit, eat and play with us; it was a very close relationship. So, one day He said, "You are reading so many books"! We asked, "Then Swami, what should we read? We also want to educate ourselves as we don't know much about spiritual life. We thought all this reading would help". Then He said, "Read the lives of saints, you will get the message. All this is of no use! It will just give you a heavy head. You will know all intellectual stuff – full of Advaita (non-dualistic) knowledge. There is no need for all that. Just read the lives of saints. They have reaped it; they have gone on the spiritual track, and they have realised it. The whole pilgrimage is inside, you cannot seek it outside; it is not available outside at all; forget it! It's an inward journey".

And giving us more clues, He said, "When you get doubts, sit quietly and pray to Swami: Swami, I don't understand, please reveal the meaning, and tell me what I have to do now. Ask Me for help, but sit down and contact Me through prayer". He has told me, "Rani Maa, if you ever have any problem, you must pray, but pray sincerely; pray ardently and not superficially. Sit calm, go deep within yourself and pray. I will show you My omnipresence".

Once He came into our room in Prasanthi Nilayam – in those days, He used to come and give us talks in our own room! We did not

have to go into any interview room. And we were allowed to go to His room too, any time we wanted. He had given permission to certain devotees to go upstairs to His room, and we were among them.

Even though I had this privilege, I did not want to take undue advantage of this precious opportunity, and run up to His room every time I had a doubt, because He would come to our rooms too, and then we could ask Him.

I have another sister who is a Brahmacharini, who did not marry because she was seeking God; she was our fourth sister. She and I were in the room, and Swami came into the room. He looked at us and said, "You are not convinced yet that I am God, right? You have got doubts about My Divinity, is it not?" He asked us a straightforward question.

We kept quiet and just looked at Him, which meant 'Yes'! We could not tell Him directly; He knows everything, why should we? Then He said, "It is but natural! It is nothing unnatural. How can you believe if somebody just comes and tells you 'I am God!'? There's nothing wrong; it is very natural!"

You must Test My Omnipresence

We thought He may not like it, but He said it was very natural! So, we were happy with ourselves that we had been, in a way, forgiven for our doubts. Then He said, "But there is one thing you must do to remove your doubts. You cannot always live with doubt, so try it! If I am God, I must show omnipresence; nobody else can be omnipresent – only God can do that!"

Ordinary Gurus cannot guide us, the way Baba is doing for us. He said, "You must test My Omnipresence"! And He insisted: "You have to do it! There is no other way! Only then will your doubts go". How could we test His Omnipresence in Puttaparthi? He is already there! He said, "When you go back to

your respective places, test Me whether I am omnipresent! You have to do it for your own sake".

That in itself proves what a great Guru He is! He did not say, "I told you I am God; why should you have doubts? Why can't you believe"? Instead, He said, "It is natural! Everybody has doubts; but doubts can be removed by your own efforts in your own life".

Once He told me: "Rani Maa, if you have got My grace, it is because you have lived that life"! It may not be to perfection. You see, when you come to this path with Baba, it does not mean you will become perfect overnight! We have got many shortcomings, many imperfections, which we have to transcend as human beings.

For, spiritual life is completely different from what we were used to; our whole life has to be re-oriented, re-organised; it is a big task. Our thoughts, our words, our deeds, everything has to be spiritualised. It is not easy, because we have formed a habit over many births – thinking one way, talking the other way – not in just one birth! We have been living like human beings for many lifetimes, and now suddenly, we have to live a divine life!

What it Means to Lead a Spiritual Life

What is spiritual life? It is a Divine life where you are connecting yourself with the Source all the time! That is, thinking, talking and functioning from the level of Divinity. That is what Baba told us: "You must test My Omnipresence". And He said: "You have earned My grace only because you have worked with your Self; not that you have achieved it. You start educating yourself, but you have to pass a very big exam – the Ph.D; the last one". This may take many births for me. But I cannot give up. Even if I have come till the 10th, at least, I have come from 1 to the

10th! That is why Baba said: “Look at one step only! Why do you want to know ‘where will I go’?, or ‘how far I will reach in this birth’? That is all wrong!” He told us personally: “Don’t look ahead! Just look one step forward”!

Let us say I have temper or I have greed or I am not very friendly or I am very selfish; whatever shortcoming I may have – each one has a different one; it could be anything – Baba wants you to be selfless. He said: “That should be your priority; you should put the other person first always. You must forget yourself; that is the ultimate realisation”!

What is the ultimate in Self-realisation? To forget yourself! We always want this and that only for our own self – this body! That is forbidden in the spiritual path; you have to forget yourself. First see God in yourself; you must be convinced that He resides in you. You cannot see God in everybody till you see God in your Guru first; secondly in your Self – as the Indweller!

Testing the Lord

So, Swami said: “Go and test Me”. And I tested Swami. My husband was a doctor and so, when any illness took place in the family, I could get doctors any time I wanted. Once when my husband was on a tour – he had to tour the whole of Madhya Pradesh – my son became very ill, and had 103-104 degrees fever for five days! One doctor came and saw him, and at first he thought that it was malaria, and then he said it was influenza; he could not find the precise cause. So, he went on treating, but my son did not respond to any medicine! Then, on the 4th day, he came and told me: “I have treated him for malaria, and for flu, then for dengue, and I have been changing medicines, but since he is not responding to my treatment, it is not working. So, I suspect, it could be typhoid. To get a proper diagnosis for typhoid, we have to do a blood test. Tomorrow

evening, I will come and take his blood, and if it is confirmed after the test, I will start the treatment for typhoid”.

My son was maybe 5 or 6 years old, and his fever was not coming down at all! He became delirious! His brain was a muddle. He could not recognise people; he did not know what was happening. He would say all sorts of irrelevant things! He did not recognise I was his mother; he just looked at me and was running away from the bed and was babbling! I could not understand why he was talking like this! I did not know; I thought it was a kind of brain fever or something similar! I was trying to put him into bed, but he wanted to run! I was worried and wondered what had happened to him.

Then immediately, Baba’s thought came in my mind: ‘I told you to test My omnipresence! Now is the time for you to test! Go and pray to Me’. Not that I heard a Voice or something; it just came into my own mind. I told the maid to somehow manage and look after the child, and I will just go and pray.

So, I went to my shrine. It was 9 o’clock and I talked to Swami: “Swami, You said to test Your Omnipresence. Today I need Your Omnipresence, because this child is behaving so queerly. I cannot even understand what is happening. I want Your help! Please come and do something. If You really come and save him, You must fulfil three conditions of mine. One, when I go back now, he should be fast asleep; he should not be running and saying all sorts of things! Then I will know You are omnipresent. The second is, when I get up in the morning, and when I check his temperature, it should be normal – exactly 98.4 degrees – I will not even accept a 99! The temperature usually goes up again in the afternoon. So, when I will test again in the afternoon, and in the evening,

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MY EXPERIENCES WITH BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA*

Dr. Goteti Saraswati

AFTER COMING BACK FROM Badrinath trip with Bhagavan, I did not go to Puttaparthi to participate in His Birthday celebrations. But I went there for Sivarathri 1962. As soon as I decided to go, many from Amalapuram also decided to go, saying, "Madam would not go there without a reason, let us go and see".

After returning from Sivarathri, four-five of us local devotees sat together and thought of holding a Saptaham. What is a Saptaham? How was it to be done? Was there to be chanting or Bhajans? In villages, Saptaham means that they would sing Bhajans with hand cymbals. I did not know. I thought, may be that is the way it would be done. So, we decided that we would conduct a Saptaham. We also thought that we would call Swami for the Saptaham as if Swami was in our pocket! That is what we thought. How would Swami come? What would be the requirements? We did not think of any of these things. We just thought we should call Swami. We wrote a letter and gave it to Sri Bhadram for sending it to Swami, "Swami, we are doing a Saptaham here. Please do come. Let us know what we should do". Swami sent a reply immediately, "If you do a Saptaham at Amalapuram, only those at Amalapuram would see it. So, conduct the Saptaham at Puttaparthi instead". But how to do it? Sri Bhadram was going up and down with messages between Swami and me, regarding what should be done, how and so on. He told me, "Amma, it seems Swami is going to do a Yajna". How to do a Yajna? I



did not know anything. Sri Kamavadhani had just come to join us. We met him. He made arrangements. I have all the correspondence with me. Since Swami has asked for the Saptaham to be done at Puttaparthi, we will do it. What name should we give it? Sai Ram Saptaham? Sathya Sai Saptaham? When we asked Swami, He replied, "No, call it Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna". He wrote and replied with this name. Who is this Veda Purusha? What Jnana? All Greek and Latin for me. What is this? Such a long tongue-twister name? What Saptaham is this? But this is what Swami had said.

Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna

From that time, we started all the arrangements of the Saptaham such as

* Continued from February 2021 issue.

which priests were to be called, and so on. We thought our Konaseema is Karma Bhumi, Thyaga Bhumi, Veda Bhumi. This region around the Godavari is called Konaseema. We selected Pandits from here, and wrote to Swami. Swami said, "Don't restrict yourself to Konaseema. Since this is being done for the first time, everyone would be eager to see it. So, we will call everyone". Then Kuppa Bairaga Sastry from Krishna district and many other Vedic Pandits were called. We collected all supplies from here and wrote to Swami. "Ghee for offering in the sacrificial fire, Darbha grass mats for the Pandits to sit on, we will bring all that". Swami wrote, "Yes, whatever is easy for you to bring, bring all those things". For this Saptaha Jnana Yajna, many preparations had to be made. Swami would give instructions on what was to be done, and how, who should be called. Swami said, "Bhadram is doing things like a street play! He has no experience"! Swami used to write so many things.

Journey to Puttapparthi

We had to take all the material and cross the Godavari river. There was still time before the Yajna to begin. I took all the things and wanted to go a week or ten days early. Everything was made ready, put in a boat for crossing the Godavari. But Godavari was in spate. We could not cross at Rajahmundry (Rajamahendravaram). We had to go to another place to cross. When we kept everything ready, police arrived and said, "Godavari is in high flood, madam, we cannot allow you to cross. Punts cannot cross. Please return". What could we do now? There was another village nearby. I sent word to my client Sri Sathyanarayana in that village, "I am coming to your house tomorrow, early in the morning. Please be ready". Our travel was on the Godavari. No roads. The next morning, we started off. I don't remember whether I took

Sri Bhadram or my sister along. Once again, we loaded everything into a boat. Since I am a doctor, I wore my stethoscope, carried my kit, saying, "I have a patient in that village, I have to go". All right, so we began. We went to that village and drank coffee. There was nobody stopping us there. We crossed the Godavari there and came down to another town with all the luggage. From there, we caught a bus to go to Rajamahendravaram where we booked the material as freight and started by train. When we reached Dharmavaram the next day, the luggage had not arrived. The person there told me that it was coming by another train. It would reach by next day afternoon. We stayed that day at Dharmavaram station and took the luggage the next day. At Dharmavaram, we hired a vehicle and came to Puttapparthi.

If we have to talk about that Yajna, those who saw it should tell you. Where the Veda Pathasala was located, that area, Swami got it levelled. Large sheds were put up there. There was a dais made for all the Pandits. Pits for the sacrificial fire were also made. Swami got everything done according to the scriptures. On the first day, there was a procession for Swami to go there. He started from His room. That procession was like one in heaven. Indraloka or Vaikuntha. Swami was in yellow robe. Flowers were being showered from both sides, and there was a traditional musical band. As He came inside, all were mesmerised. Swami came to see the priests, along with Brahmins bearing vessels of milk. There were 30-40 of them. On seeing Him, believe me, all those priests got up at once, and started chanting Vedic hymns together. It was really thrilling. Swami, surrounded by all of them chanting Vedas. 'In which world, are we?' We felt that way. Swami blessed all of them, gave them Padanamaskar and said, "Poor fellows! You have taken a lot of trouble

to come here for the first time. Drink this milk"! After this Yajna, it was held every year. I would be there doing service for two-three months, from Dasara to Birthday.

– The author, a gynaecologist by profession, was a devotee of Bhagavan for over five decades.

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it should be continuously 98.4. He should be absolutely normal in every sense! Then I will believe You have helped him".

Swami had told us that to contact Him, you have to do Japa, chant His Name. He is Hridayavasi (the Indweller) and He is listening not just to me, but everybody else too, because He is within everybody. So, the message will reach Him. I had a Mantra, so I started chanting my Mantra while I sat for a while in the prayer room.

Then I got up and returned to the bedroom, and I found him fast asleep! Then I asked my maid: "When did he go to sleep"? She said: "Amma, a few minutes after you went, he went off to sleep". And even after I went, he did not get up; he was fast asleep! And in the morning too, he got up very normal. None of that babbling was there. He recognised me as he has always been. I took his temperature in the afternoon and evening – it was 98.4! What more did I need?

God's Firm Answer

At that time, Swami was in Venkatagiri, with the Maharaja of Venkatagiri and He was talking to them at 9 o'clock. He used to stay with the king and Kumara Raja (the king's son) during the festival of Sri Rama Navami. Maharaja used to take Swami by car to Venkatagiri. He was a great devotee of Lord Rama and for him, Baba was his favourite deity.

So at that time, when I prayed at 9 o'clock, Swami was talking to Maharaja of Venkatagiri, and He went into a trance! He just fell back and they could not understand what happened!

Kumara Raja, thought Swami had suddenly fallen down as if He was unconscious!

When He came around, they asked Him: "Swami, what happened"? They had heard about trance but had not witnessed one till then. So, they asked Him: "Was it a trance? Did You go anywhere"? Swami confirmed this. Then they asked Swami: "What happened. Why did You have to go in a trance"? Swami replied: "One of My devotees, Rani Maa, was in great trouble". He told them my name! He said, "Her husband has gone on a tour; he is not there, she is alone with her two children. Her boy has got delirium from high fever. She is very worried and troubled. She prayed to Me: 'Swami, come and show me Your Omnipresence'! So, I went and saved the boy. Now the boy is alright".

Venkatagiri Maharaja happily said: "Oh, very good"! But Kumara Raja, the younger one, said: "Swami, next time this Rani Maa comes, I want to see her. And I also want to see the little boy whom You saved. Will You show them to me"? Maharaja did not ask all this because he had accepted Swami totally, but the younger Raja wanted proof. Swami said: "Don't worry, she comes here every six months".

(To be continued ...)

Courtesy: Sri Sathya Sai Media Centre

– The author, a devout and dedicated devotee for nearly sixty years, came to Bhagavan Baba as early as 1950. She was called 'Rani Maa' by Bhagavan. Her life was a treasure-chest of scintillating experiences of Swami's Divinity.

BHAGAVAN'S EASWARAMMA DAY MESSAGE

PARENTS SHOULD INCULCATE VIRTUES IN CHILDREN BY THEIR EXAMPLE

What greater gift is there than the gift of food?

What greater deity is there than one's parents?

What greater morality is there than promoting the public good?

What righteousness can excel more than compassion?

Is there any gain superior to the company of the good?

Is there any disability worse than enmity?

Is there any death on earth worse than infamy?

Is there anything more valuable than lasting fame?

Can anything be more sustaining than remembrance of the Lord?

Is there a heaven higher than inner joy?

(Telugu Poem)

HUMAN EXISTENCE WITHOUT GOD'S GRACE IS VALUELESS

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

IF CHILDREN ARE TO BE PERSONS of good character, adhering to good practices, the parents should be of good character and exemplary conduct.

The great teacher, Adi Sankaracharya, was the child of parents who were highly virtuous and noble in their conduct. For the great name attained by Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, the credit goes to their parents. Many great men achieved name and fame by following in the footsteps of their parents.

A Lesson Gandhi Learnt as a Boy

If Gandhi, who was an ordinary person, was able to achieve greatness and world renown, it was because of the lessons in good behaviour which he learnt from his mother. The mother used to observe a vow: she would take her food only after the cuckoo sang in the

morning. Once when Gandhi was a boy, the mother was waiting for a long time to hear the call of the cuckoo. Observing this, Gandhi went out of the house, imitated the call of the cuckoo and came in and told his mother that the cuckoo had sung and that she could take her food. The mother, who saw through her son's trickery, slapped him on the cheek and said, "You wicked fellow; what sin must have I committed to bear a son like you"? She felt sad that such a child should have been born to her. Her grief touched the heart of Gandhi. From that moment, Gandhi took a firm resolve never to utter a lie again.

In his childhood, Gandhi used to be full of fear. There was a maid in his home called Rambha. Gandhi disclosed to her how he was always afraid. Rambha told him: "Child, always recite the name of Rama. By chanting Rama's name, your fear will go away". From that time, Gandhi was always chanting the

name of Rama. The habit of reciting Rama's name, which began in his boyhood, continued right up to the moment of his passing. Nor was that all. By adhering to the chanting of Rama's name, Gandhi was able to achieve his aim of winning the country's freedom by non-violent means. For such a life of purity and virtue, the parents were primarily responsible.

Today Parents themselves Lack Good Qualities

Unfortunately, today, because the parents themselves have no purity of character and lack refined qualities, and do not lead regulated lives, evil practices and wickedness are growing all over the world. When the parents get up from their beds abusing each other, their children get up assailing each other. Because of the malefic effects of the Kali Age, parents tend to be quarrelsome. Fathers are behaving like Hiranyakasipu. Because of such parents, Bharat is witnessing the spread of unrighteousness and evil practices.

Whatever strength one may possess, without the strength of the Divine, he is a weakling. What happened to a valiant person like Karna? He had physical prowess, intellectual abilities and great scholarship but lacking Divine support, he met with a pitiable end.

Only he is a real man who harmonises in his life the body, the mind and the Atma. A life based on the body and the senses is an animal existence. One who is totally dominated by the thoughts and fancies of the mind is a demon. One who ignores the calls of the body and the mind and follows the call of the Spirit is Divine. The animal, the demonic and the Divine possibilities are immanent in the human condition. Hence, one who values only the body and follows the inclinations of the senses is comparable to an animal. In a sense, the animal may be considered superior to such a



man because it has "a season and a reason" for its behaviour. But one having the human form, who craves for sensuous pleasures alone, is worse than an animal.

Character is more Important than Wealth

Parents are responsible for the good or bad conduct of the children. It is the parents who lead children to the highest levels or cause their fall to the lowest depths.

Parents today are concerned solely about the material welfare of their children and have no concern for their moral and spiritual well-being. When a child is born, the parents desire that he should be educated, sent abroad, encouraged to make as much money as possible by whatever means. This is all that they teach their children. People today earn money in so many different ways, from begging to dacoity. It is not wealth that is important. Character is primary. Parents do not teach the children to cultivate good qualities. They do not control children who go astray. They condone the lapses of the children and often encourage them in their bad habits. They are encouraged in their wrong ways even as Duryodhana was encouraged by

his father, Dhritharashtra. It is because of such parents that the children today take to wrong ways. Dhritharashtra was not only physically blind, but lacked also the eyes of wisdom. He was totally blind. Parents today are tending to be equally blind. They don't correct the mistakes of their children or chastise them. Parents have the right to warn and correct their children.

Ensure World Peace by Winning God's Love

The foremost thing which man has to acquire today is God's love. This love will secure world peace, peace in society and peace in the home. Through the individual's love and morality, there will be peace and security in the home. By individuals winning the love of God, society secures peace and order. When the people have got the love of God, the world as a whole enjoys peace and happiness. Happiness and peace are not to be found in wealth, position or power. All these generate only fear and anxiety and not peace and happiness. Today, even highly educated persons do not recognise this truth, pose as devotees, but follow the examples of their parents.

There is nothing great about being a father. No father can rejoice merely when a son is born. Only when the people praise the virtues of the son will the father rejoice over his birth. A righteous son redeems himself and his family. Verily, they alone are fit to be called parents who bring up such virtuous children.

Prahlada declared, "He alone is a father who tells his son: Child, realise God. He is a true Guru who leads the disciple to God". Such teachers and parents have become rare these days. All that had brought fame and glory to the country in the past has become a waste because of the decline of moral values and behaviour. The education system is

utterly vitiated. There is no attempt to promote human qualities. Noble and Divine feelings are absent. It is utterly unbecoming of those who call themselves human beings to behave like animals with no devotion to God.

Responsibility of Parents Towards Children

Every effort has to be made to experience Divine love and purity. One who has secured love can accomplish anything. Nothing is beyond his reach. Hence, one should be worthy of God's grace. Without Divine grace, man is no more than an animal. Man should strive to control his senses, develop good qualities and lead an ideal life. Parents are primarily responsible for bringing up children who will lead such ideal lives. Therefore, they have to reform themselves.

Today parents all over the country are worried about the conduct of their children and are not at all happy. They lament about the behaviour of their children, but do not realise that they are themselves to be blamed. If the parents had brought up the children on right lines, would they go astray? Pampering the children in various ways, they are allowed to go about like street dogs. How can such boys be reformed? It is impossible. When wealth grows, arrogance increases and morality declines.

Men should realise that without God's love, human existence is utterly valueless. A bird like Jatayu earned God's grace. A simple old woman like Sabari won God's love. But men today, despite their scholarship and scientific knowledge, are making no attempts to secure God's love. What is the use of this education or science? True science should serve to promote the progress of the nation. But today, in the name of science, the world is being destroyed.

Victory Can be Attained only by God's Grace

Students should remember that this country was known in the past as a land where people led truthful and righteous lives. Krishna told Arjuna that he should consider God and Dharma (righteousness) as most important. Because the Pandavas adhered to righteousness and had firm faith in God, they could ultimately enjoy all prosperity and happiness. Because of their love for God, they could bear with fortitude all troubles and difficulties. What was the fate of the Kauravas who ignored God? Not one of Dhritrashtra's hundred sons survived. Despite all the resources they had and the valiant commanders who were on their side, God was not on their side.

True victory can be attained only by God's grace. Students! Strive for securing the love of God. Today, love is being misused for satisfying the senses, with deplorable results. (Swami related the dialogue between Yajnavalkya and his wife, Maitreyi, over attachment to the things of the world and pointed out how Maitreyi was as ready to give up worldly possessions as the sage himself). Today, such couples are rare. There must be such couples who will give birth to virtuous children. Only virtuous children can bring a good name to the country.

Of what use is a son who does not use his hands to perform good deeds, who does not use his tongue to utter the Lord's name and who does not cherish in his mind truth and compassion? This is the triple purity that makes human life sublime.

Students should dedicate their lives to the service of others. Cultivate love. Remember the great mothers in the past who gave to the world Avatars from time to time. What is the inner

significance of observing today as Mother's day? It means that women should become such great mothers. The fathers should be exemplary in their conduct. When the fathers are not setting the right example, the children should be such as to have the courage to correct the parents. But unfortunately there are neither exemplary parents nor exemplary children.

Mother Easwamma was the Repository of Noble Wishes

Mother Easwamma was the repository of noble wishes. As Sai's glory began to spread far and wide, she came to Me one day and said, "Swami, I am pained to see small children of our village walking all the way to Bukkapatnam to attend school. Please construct a small school". Conforming to her wish, I established a small school. After some time, she wanted a small hospital also to be established here. She said she could not bear to see the mothers taking the trouble of carrying their children to Bukkapatnam for medical treatment. Accordingly, I got a small hospital built. The small school that I established has become a big university today. The small hospital that I constructed has become a super speciality hospital. These mighty tasks could be accomplished as a result of the Sathya Sankalpa (noble wish) of Mother Easwamma and Nitya Sankalpa (Divine Will) of Sai. Her last wish was to provide drinking water to the village. She pointed out that the women had to take great pains to draw water from deep wells, which had almost dried up. I immediately provided drinking water to the village. Now under Sri Sathya Sai Water Supply Project, I have provided drinking water to the entire district of Anantapur.

— **Excerpted from Bhagavan's Easwamma Day Discourses.**



TELE. NO. 33
SHRIDAYAR
WHITEFIELD

TELE. NO. 30
PRASANTHINILAYAM, P. O.
ASANTHAPUR DT.

My Dears! what is primarily needed for one who wants to ultimately surrender himself entirely to The Lord is a consciousness of perfect security under the protecting grace of the supreme Lord. This consciousness can never leave us if we constantly practise the remembrance of Him. Verily, remembrance itself is Darshan. The repetition of God's name must lead to dedication of all your actions to Him. This remembrance will be yours even when you are intellectually and physically active in all the walks of life when you consider that those activities are performed in the name and for the sake of The Lord. During your off-moments do not fail to keep your thoughts engaged in the contemplation of God and at the same time meditate upon the truth that all your physical and mental powers have their source and inspiration from the cosmic energy of the Divine.

With Blessings
Baba

TELE. NO. 33
BRINDAVAN
WHITEFIELD



Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

TELE. NO. 30
PRASANATHI NILAYAM P.O.
ANANTHAPUR DT.

My Dears! What is primarily needed for one who wants to ultimately surrender himself entirely to the Lord is a consciousness of perfect security under the protecting grace of the supreme Lord. This consciousness can never leave us if we constantly practise the remembrance of Him verily, remembrance itself is Darshan. The repetition of God's name must lead to dedication of all your actions to Him. This remembrance will be yours even when you are intellectually and physically active in all the walks of life when you consider that those activities are performed in the name and for the sake of the Lord. During your off-moments do not fail to keep your thoughts engaged in the contemplation of God and at the same time meditate upon the truth that all your physical and mental powers have their source and inspiration from the cosmic energy of the Divine.

With Blessings
Baba

How Can I Ever Repay Him...

Lakshminarayana Kote

I WAS THE ONLY STUDENT WHO WAS wearing ear rings when I joined Swami's College at Whitefield in 1976. Bhagavan lovingly called me 'Kammalwala' and continued to address me by that very name until He asked me to return home in 1990, to shoulder family responsibilities, when my father fell severely ill.

Close Proximity of Swami as His Student

When I joined the hostel, the hostel strength was barely a hundred and twenty. The hostel building we see today was a lovely little water tank. We lived, forty boys, in a dormitory behind the Kalyana Mandapam. The rest of the students were housed in a garage-turned-into-hostel near the main gate. Brindavan was full of trees in those days. The facilities were minimal but we never felt the discomfort because Swami would spend a lot of His time with us then. He would come to our dormitory at any time; be it in the morning at 5.30 a.m. after Suprabhatam, breakfast time at 7.30 a.m. or any other time of the day. He would often peep into the classrooms during the college hours. When He used to go to the Sai Ram Shed for giving Darshan to the devotees, invariably, He would come to the hostel, spend a few minutes and enquire about the students' well-being and academic progress.

Since the college was adjacent to the Mandir, whenever we were free from lectures in the college, we used to rush to the bungalow and 'steal' a Darshan or two! Often Swami would be talking about some incident from the scriptures and time would stand still for us till

He reminded us that we should return in time for the classes!

Swami would have lunch with us in the hostel once in a while and on such occasions, He would Himself serve us sweets individually. In those days, a new tradition was started whereby two boys from the hostel would take breakfast, lunch, tiffin and dinner to the Mandir everyday. Swami thus gave us so many opportunities to interact with Him. In fact, He would talk to us personally during those occasions and make us sit and eat in His presence, filling our plates and hearts to the full. He would talk to us about our parents and other family members and enquire about our studies.

In the old bungalow, there used to be a 'safe room'. Swami would sit there everyday for at least an hour and it was there that we used to get the blessed opportunity of doing Pada Seva. Bhagavan used to spend time with the students joking, narrating stories with values, and correcting our conduct ("young boys should stand straight"; "you should be steady; not keep shifting your posture every few minutes. The body is like a pot and the mind is like water in the pot. If the pot shakes, the contents in it also shake"...). He would stress on the need to have steady devotion to God and be disciplined in our daily routine. He would constantly bring alive pages from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata and the Upanishads and we would realise the wealth of lessons they contain for modern

man. Swami's metaphors were always drawn from the contemporary times and as such made sense to us. It always was very riveting to listen to Swami.

Bhagavan was very strict as far as discipline was concerned. He would not compromise when it came to these matters. It would be a gentle reminder in the beginning followed by a stern warning, in public, if warranted. If the student's conduct did not improve, Bhagavan would distance Himself from him. If still he did not rise to the occasion, He would ask the Warden to send the student back to his parents. But every sincere attempt to improve was encouraged and relations would be back on track. In this way, Swami played the role of a loving Mother and a strict Father in all our lives.

Opportunities to Sing in Swami's Presence

It was in my II PUC that I got a chance to sing in public during Bhajans in the Divine presence. Thereafter, He encouraged us to give many programmes in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Whatever I am able to sing, it is entirely due to His grace and blessings. He formed a students' music group. He gave us the glorious chance to sing "Sai Katha", the life story of Bhagavan through music. The lyrics were written by Sri Adinarayana Rao and Sri Rajeshwara Rao composed the music.

Bhagavan took all of us – the music group – to Chennai for recording 'Sai Katha'. Bhagavan Himself was present with us in the HMV Studio when the recording was going on! It was just before going to Chennai that Swami Himself took out the earrings from my ear and instructed me to wear pant instead of a dhoti. This was the extent to which Swami would shower His personal care and attention on each one of us.

Bhagavan was always interested in listening to "Rama Katha". Whenever any guest used to come, He would ask us to sing "Rama Katha". Hirok Changkakoti and I were the ones blessed with this chance, then. We really don't know how many times we would have sung it. In 1985, when we did the Grama Seva, Bhagavan had come to the villages like Ammagondapalem and Kammavaripalli. There was the installation of idols of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman in a temple. Even on that occasion, He made us sing the Rama Katha. To this day, we include a part of it, when we give a music programme on every 1st January.

The music boys had great chances from Bhagavan. Being seniors, He used to give minute instructions. He would take us into the interview room or green room in the Poornachandra Auditorium and make us practise the songs. He would teach us how to render the songs, especially the nuances and the variations of each line. In Brindavan, He used to take us to the house of Smt. Ratanlal. She too, like a loving aunt, gave us milk with turmeric and ghee, which was very good for the throat. There have been occasions when Swami used to climb all the way to the 2nd floor of the Brindavan hostel and oversee our practice sessions.

He used to tell us to sing with a free and full voice, but not to shake the head, not to make odd faces while singing. One of our brothers was a very talented singer with a voice often compared to the legendary Ghantasala. However, he used to have a contorted expression on his face when immersed in his singing. During one such session, Bhagavan came up with a mischievous remedy and quietly asked me to get a mirror. When he began singing and was lost in the depths of the song, Bhagavan Himself held the mirror in front



The author singing in a music programme.

of his face and thus corrected this tendency of his. Importance should be given for Bhava, Raga and Tala, Swami always stressed.

Many a time, He used to take us on a picnic. The cars would turn off the road, go into a forest – like place with lots of greenery and we would have a real good time. Swami would make us eat to our hearts content, sing Bhajans, ask us to play on musical instruments while He Himself played the Talam (hand cymbals). It was so blissful to be in Swami's Sannidhi that I even forgot my home. In my 15 years of stay near Swami, I went home only four times. In 1978 January, He Himself brought me to Alike and Chokkady with Him.

I am ever indebted to my mother Savithriamma and my father late Sri Kote Parameshwarayya for not only did they give birth to me but they also set me on the path to the Divine and encouraged me to yearn for Divine proximity. From my childhood, father would take me to Parthi. Every time Swami would call us for an interview and He Himself asked me to join His College. While I was a student, He not only looked after my education but also my daily needs. He even gave me the pocket money that I needed. My father completely surrendered me to Bhagavan and

was never worried about me as he felt I was in the safest hands. Bhagavan also took my brother Subbappayya into His fold. He was there with Him for about 20 years.

I had ample opportunities to observe Radhakrishna at work. Radhakrishna was my senior and he drove Swami's car. He was a very simple person, a good friend and a guide. From the beginning, he guided me as to how to conduct myself in Swami's presence. Swami always used to send me with him either to Parthi or Whitefield if any

work was there. The manner in which he used to attend to Swami's daily needs, was a great inspiration for me.

Precious Moments Spent with Swami

It was in my III year Degree, that the old bungalow of Bhagavan was demolished. In its place, Trayee Brindavan was to be constructed. Before the demolition of the bungalow, some of us were given the responsibility of shifting all the things from the bungalow. From 5 a.m. to 8 p.m. in one single session, we emptied the bungalow. Swami was very happy with all of us and appreciated our hard work. When Trayee Brindavan was being constructed, Swami used to stay at 'Devi Nivas', the house of Rajmata of Nawanagar, near the college. When Swami shifted to Rajmata's house, I had the opportunity of breathing the same air, and eating and sleeping in the residence of Bhagavan. I even had the golden opportunity of having food sitting on the same table with Swami. Can I ever express my gratitude to Him for all this? He used to take me in His car many a time from Parthi to Brindavan. He took me twice to Ooty and once to Kodaikanal. How merciful and loving Bhagavan is!

For my postgraduation, I came to Prasanthi Nilayam. Swami then asked me to stay in the students' hostel. Once, during my final M.A. examination, I could not complete revising the portions in time. So, I had lemon tea and sat through the night trying to finish cramming the notes. In the examination, I was nauseous and felt ill. When I went for Darshan in the evening, Swami directly came to me and asked me why I had studied throughout the night? "You should be relaxed before the exam, never have tension. It was because of My blessings that you could complete the examination!"

One day Swami (the Revered Chancellor) called me and asked me whether I knew any poems written by the then Vice Chancellor – Prof. V.K. Gokak. I replied in the negative. Swami Himself selected the poems written by Prof. Gokak and Smt. Sharada Gokak, gave it to us to tune and set to music. This was in preparation for the Vice Chancellor's 75th birthday! He heard all the songs in the interview room, corrected the tune and music, gave a final touch and made us present a music programme.

During the 60th Birthday celebrations of Bhagavan, the students were blessed with an opportunity to give a programme in the Hill View Stadium. He had asked me to sing 'Radhika Krishna Radhika' for the Birthday evening Jhula programme. He took personal interest and taught me each line in the song, making me repeat after Him every nuance. Each boy of the group will never forget the precious moments spent with Swami during those days.

Shower of Divine Grace

After the 60th Birthday celebrations, in April, He took me to Ooty. When we returned

from there, I found myself in 'cold storage' or the 'workshop'! He suddenly stopped talking to me. The Principal called me and told me that I should join the Central School for teaching. I was never too keen on teaching. I told the Principal that I could not join until Swami tells me directly. Swami sent a senior professor to me and said that it was His wish. For five years, I taught history to X, XI and XII class students. Bhagavan kept me in 'cold storage' for three years. Those three years seemed like an eternity for me. That was a tough period personally. It was that period that taught me where actually I stood without Swami. If Swami is there with you – you are a hero, if not, you are a big zero.

After that lean period, Swami took me to Kodaikanal for a month. It was again a joyous period. He made me offer Arati to Him after the



The author offering Arati to Swami.

Bhajans. Things were again back to normal. I understood the real meaning of Swami's oft quoted saying, "Pleasure is an interval between two pains".

continued on page 31...

UGADI AND TAMIL NEW YEAR FESTIVALS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

PIETY AND FESTIVITY MARKED the celebration of the holy festival of Ugadi at Prasanthi Nilayam. The venue of the celebration was Sai Kulwant Hall which was tastefully decorated for the festive event. The programme on 13th April 2021, the day of Ugadi, started at 8.00 a.m. with regular

types of knowledge, spiritual knowledge was most important for man's life. Man, Bhagavan added, should acquire this knowledge and spread it. He should perform his duty with his best abilities and strength while focusing his mind on God, Bhagavan said. He cautioned one and all not to waste their time in idle



Panchanga Sravanam in Sai Kulwant Hall.

Veda chanting by the Prasanthi Mandir Veda Group. The traditional ritual of Panchanga Sravanam followed this which was conducted by a noted Vedic scholar Dr. K.T.V. Raghavan. Dwelling on the predictions of the New Year named "Plava", the learned scholar urged the listeners to follow the values of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa in their life and redeem their human birth. Bhajans followed next and concluded with Arati.

The programme in the evening started with regular Veda chanting by the Prasanthi Mandir Veda Group at 5.00 p.m. What followed next was an illuminating Discourse of Bhagavan which was played on the LED screen. In His Discourse, Bhagavan emphasised that of all



Andhra Pradesh devotees leading Bhajans.

pursuits. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan, "Narayana Bhaja Narayan, Narayana Bhaja Narayan, Narayan". Bhajans which followed Bhagavan's Discourse were led by the devotees of Andhra Pradesh. Arati to Bhagavan marked the conclusion of the programme.

On the Tamil New Year day on 14th April 2021, the programme began at 8.00 a.m. with regular Veda chanting by Prasanthi Mandir Veda Group. This was followed by Bhajans which were led by the Tamil Nadu State Bhajan Group. The morning session in Sai Kulwant Hall concluded with Arati at 9.30 a.m.

In the evening, the programme began with sacred Vedic chants at 5.00 p.m. by the



Bhajans led by Tamil Nadu State Bhajan Group.

Prasanthi Mandir Veda Group. At 5.30 p.m., the devotees were blessed with a Divine Discourse of Bhagavan, in which Bhagavan stated that happiness and sorrow in the life

of man were of man's own making. When man performed good actions, he would have happiness and when he performed evil deeds, he would get sorrow in life. Thus, happiness and sorrow were in man's own hands, emphasised Bhagavan. Man should never hurt anyone, enjoy equanimity and perform meritorious deeds, Bhagavan said in conclusion. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan, "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin".

After the Discourse of Bhagavan, singers of Tamil Nadu State Bhajan Group led the Bhajans which concluded with Arati at 6.30 p.m.

...continued from page 29

My father was a heart patient. Swami had given a bracelet and advised him not to worry about his health. He had also given him a Siva Linga for the devotees of Chokkady. After the 1990 summer course, one day Swami called me and instructed me to go to Chokkady, my native place and continue the work that my father was doing as he was not keeping well. He created Vibhuti and gave me and asked me to keep coming to Prasanthi Nilayam.

Sri Sathya Sai Vidyakendra, Chokkady was started in 1988 with Bhagavan's visit. I became the Correspondent of the school. We, the devotees of Chokkady, had the opportunity of presenting a Yakshagana programme in the Poornachandra Auditorium in the Divine presence. Swami was very pleased and showered His love by giving all of us pants and shirts.

The school blessed by Him is an English Medium Residential School from 1st Standard to X Standard. We are having 600 students

from all over Karnataka. Here too in our Vidya Kendra, Chokkady, whatever the problems we face; it is all solved easily through His grace. We can always feel His presence at each step we take.

I am really grateful to Him for giving me the opportunity of singing before Him during the Bhajan sessions even today.

Swami always says that we cannot repay our debt to God and to our parents and whatever He has blessed me with is but a testimony of my eternal indebtedness to Him. For all that Swami has done to me, I in my own humble way, want to do whatever service I am capable of. Words can never sufficiently convey what His Love means to me. I am ever indebted to Him and pray that He keeps me ever engaged in serving Him at His Lotus Feet.

– **The author, a talented Bhajan singer of Prasanthi Mandir, had close proximity of Bhagavan as a student and a singer. He completed his M.A. from Bhagavan's College in 1985.**

NEWS FROM SAI CENTRES

AUSTRALIA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 95th Birthday of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, 25 volunteers from Sri Sathya Sai Centre of Strathfield planted 950 plants, shrubs and trees at Hudson Park with the help of the Strathfield Council on 21st November 2020. In an official release, the Strathfield Council complimented the SSSIO by stating, "Sathya Sai volunteers have been working with the Council to protect and improve our local environment for over 30 years. On 21st November, 25 volunteers planted an astounding 950 plants at Hudson Park, in celebration of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's 95th Birthday. These plantings will have a myriad of environmental and urban health benefits, including local biodiversity conservation, improved air quality, climate change mitigation, storm water retention, urban cooling and livability". The official Strathfield Council release can be accessed at: <https://www.strathfield.nsw.gov.au/sathya-sai-and-strathfield-councils-super-planting/>

SSSIO volunteers from the New South Wales (NSW) Region commemorated the 95th year of the Advent of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba with many events. The celebration started with SSSIO volunteers from NSW Region West practising Ceiling on Desires for 95 days and utilising the savings to purchase 2,800 birthing kits which help to prevent fatalities and infections during childbirth. On 5th December, 90 volunteers assembled the



Birthing kits for children to prevent fatalities at childbirth.

birthing kits for distribution to women giving birth in underdeveloped countries across the world. This initiative has been a part of the regional service activities for the last three years, in partnership with KIT International (formerly Birthing Kit Australia). In addition to this, Young Adults of NSW Region West, in collaboration with Samaritan's Purse, a not-for-profit charity, collected 72 shoe boxes filled with toys, hygiene items, school supplies and fun gifts. The items were sent for distribution to children in Cambodia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines during Christmas 2020.

MEXICO

From 7th September to 3rd November 2020, the "Semillas de Amor" (Seeds of Love) project was organised as an offering of love to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to commemorate His 95th Birthday. As part of this project, ten SSSIO coordinators, who had received advance training to care for plants,

installed urban gardens in their homes. This project was designed to develop human values, such as patience, tolerance, sacrifice and love, among the participants. It highlighted appreciation for organically-grown vegetables; eating chemical-free food, recycling, and the importance of 'reuse and reduce' in protecting the environment. The initiative also promoted family integration, reducing ecological footprint, and above all, recognising the presence of God in Nature and strengthening the relationship between God and man through Nature.

UKRAINE

Over the last five years, SSSIO volunteers in Pavlograd have distributed food packages to the needy twice a year. In mid-November 2020, the volunteers brought joy and relief to needy families by delivering packages of cereals, pasta, sunflower oil, squash caviar, tea and other food supplies. The volunteers were grateful for the opportunity to serve their communities and were happy to serve the elderly who are often lonely and financially challenged.

RUSSIA AND ADJOINING COUNTRIES

In November 2020, public meetings were held across Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan. About 350 people from 22 cities participated in these public outreach events, including 165 newcomers who learnt about the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and the activities of the SSSIO. In Russia, the attendees also received information about integral education for the youth. Spiritual songs were sung at many events and guest speakers addressed the audience.

Representatives of the Kharkov Group in Ukraine were invited to the Indian Reiki Centre for a study circle. After the two-hour session,

many were filled with tears of joy and expressed gratitude for the opportunity. A group from Kiev met the migrants and discussed the dangers of addiction with 12 teenagers. Children received sweets and personal hygiene products.

ABU DHABI

On 5th and 6th December 2020, SSSIO volunteers distributed 126 hampers at Camel Camp, located in a remote desert near Abu Dhabi. These hampers contained



Serving the needy in Abu Dhabi.

hygiene products such as shaving kit, hair comb, mouthwash, shower gel, toothbrush, toothpaste, cream and shampoo. In addition, sugar, tea, and coffee packets were packed in the hampers. The next day, volunteers distributed rice, oil and lentils to 80 people. On Christmas day, SSSIO members supplied rice, wheat flour, oil and lentils to 250 needy families. In addition, SSSIO members bought groceries for a family whose breadwinner had lost his job.

CAMEROON

In late December 2020 and early January 2021, SSSIO volunteers in Cameroon distributed over 750 packets of food and supplies to orphans, refugees, leprosy patients,



Distributing food to the needy in Cameroon.

blind and physically challenged children, and people living in slums as well as needy people, around the country.

KAZAKHSTAN

As pandemic-related quarantine regulations eased in December 2020, SSSIO volunteers in Kazakhstan resumed serving low-income families in four cities. In south-eastern Kazakhstan, 60 people received hot food along with masks, gloves and clothing. Packets containing vegetable oil, cereals, vegetables, fruits, sweets and hygiene products such as washing powder and toothpaste were provided to 11 large families.

SOUTH AFRICA

The SSSIO of South Africa designed a national ecological challenge called “The Eco-Brick” project and invited all 13 Regions to participate. Each region was given specific instructions to create Eco-Bricks by filling two-litre plastic bottles with non-biodegradable items such as plastic and polystyrene, weighing between 400 and 500 grams. SSSIO

volunteers, in collaboration with the National Go-Green team, chose to construct a sign about Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s divine message, Love All – Serve All, using Eco-Bricks. They created an 18 m long sign using 586 Eco-Bricks and 294 kg of plastic at the Sri Sathya Sai School in Chatsworth, Durban as an offering of love on His 95th Birthday. Also, a 3.6 m high concrete wall was constructed and decorated with Baba’s pictures. The volunteers completed the project between 24th October and 22nd November 2020. This endeavour created awareness about protecting the environment and making ecologically responsible decisions such as reducing plastic usage. The participants also pledged to cut down on eating packaged foods and practice ‘Ceiling on Desires’. This project has paved the way for future eco-friendly activities using Eco-Bricks, such as building garden boxes, garden walls, and shoe racks at schools and Sri Sathya Sai Centres in South Africa.

USA

On 8th September 2020, a small grass fire that started in Ashland, Oregon turned into the deadly Alameda Fire, which burned for about ten miles along the Bear Creek Greenway. Thousands of structures and businesses were destroyed and tragically, three people died in the disaster. The SSSIO-USA Pacific Northwest Region volunteers sprang into action and purchased flashlights, extension cords and hygiene kits, and shipped them to the Grants Pass Sri Sathya Sai Centre, which delivered the supplies to relief centres in Ashland, Talent, Phoenix and Medford. Many people who lost their homes in the wildfires were elderly and residents of mobile homes in trailer parks; they were extremely grateful for the supplies, having lost almost everything in the fire.

– Sri Sathya Sai International Organisation

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.
- 2) The publication and distribution of Bhagavan Baba's monthly spiritual journal - Sanathana Sarathi - in English and Telugu languages. Since 2011, e-version of the magazine is also released simultaneously and is available in the popular Interactive PDF format on www.sanathanasarathi.org.
- 3) Maintaining a reporting channel www.theprasanthireporter.org, which covers all the major activities taking place in Prasanthi Nilayam, and publishing an e-newsletter 'Sai Spiritual Showers'- for free distribution.
- 4) Providing library and Reading room for visiting devotees, with a very large collection of books written by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and books on Bhagavan besides various spiritual and religious books.

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On Sanathana Sarathi official website – www.sanathanasarathi.org – subscribe for paperback and e-versions. Single monthly editions are also downloadable in English and Telugu languages at <http://bit.ly/sarathienglish> and <http://bit.ly/sarathitelugu>.

Other Books By Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, Publications Division (In English)

1. Sai Sathya Sakha
2. Summer Showers In Brindavan, 1972
3. Satyopanisad I
4. Satyopanisad II
5. Gurudev
6. Namasmara
7. Bhakthi And Health
8. Life Is Love, Enjoy It!
9. Life Is A Challenge, Meet It!
10. Life Is A Dream, Realize It!
11. Bhagawan And Bhakta
12. Body And Mind
13. My Dear Ones
14. Seval
15. Silence
16. Suffering
17. Surrender
18. Atma
19. Do You Know
20. Gopikas Of Brindavan
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22. My Beloved Ones
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27. Dharma
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30. Life
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36. Guidelines To Active Workers
37. Sri Sathya Sai Anandadayi
38. Truth, Auspiciousness, Beauty
39. Sai Baba's Mahavakya On Leadership
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42. Summer Showers In Brindavan, 1973
43. Summer Showers In Brindavan, 1974
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45. Sathyam Sivam Sundaram Vol – 2
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51. Divine Inspirations Vol-3
52. Divine Inspirations Vol-4
53. Divine Inspirations Vol-5
54. The Light of Love
55. Bhagavatha Vahini
56. Dharma Vahini
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58. Gnyana Vahini
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63. Vidya Vahini
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67. Loving God
68. Love and Suffering, My Road to Liberty

69. Chinna Katha Book-1
70. Chinna Katha Book-2
71. Chinna Katha Book-3
72. Living with God
73. Capturing Divinity
74. Full Flame 2 unconditional Love
75. Fragrance, A Tale of Love
76. Sai Nandana: 60th Birthday
77. Sai Nandana: 75th Birthday

Telugu Books Available As eBook

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2. Upanishad Vahini
3. Dharma Vahini
4. Dhyana Vahini
5. Gnyana Vahini
6. Sandeha Nivarani
7. Leela Kaivalya Vahini
8. Prasnottara Vahini
9. Sutra Vahini
10. Geetha Vahini
11. Prasanthi Vahini
12. Sathya Sai Vahini



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Attain God through Love

God is the embodiment of love. Love is His nature. His love pervades the cosmos. This love is present in one and all. Just as God manifests His love in the world, everyone should manifest his love. Prema (love) has been described as beyond speech and mind. It is said to be Anirvachaneeyam (indescribable). This love cannot be got through scholarship, wealth or physical powers. God, who is the embodiment of love, can be attained only through love, just as the effulgent sun can be seen only through its own light.

– *Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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