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Special Issue

**The Divine Glory and Memories of
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

Sanathana Sarathi





Sanathana Sarathi

Devoted to the Moral and Spiritual Uplift of Humanity through

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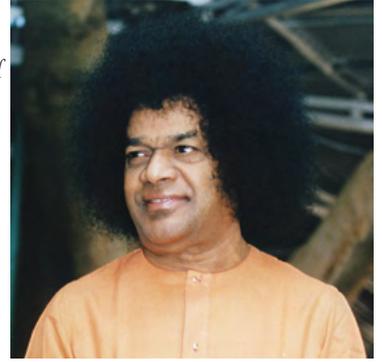
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"You are the mirror of society. You should always think of the welfare of society. When others are happy, you should feel happy. When others are unhappy, help them to become happy. It is not the blood circulation or the movement of the body that are important; your actions are important."

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SEVA AS SADHANA

SEVA IS ONE OF THE MOST POTENT MEANS TO ATTAIN God's grace. That is why Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba gave His fundamental message to mankind in just four words: Love All, Serve All. Seva is in fact love in action. As Bhagavan says, the best way to love God is to love all and serve all while seeing Him in all. So, man should transform love into service and service into worship. This, Bhagavan declares, is the highest Sadhana. Seva is the spark which removes the darkness of ignorance from the heart of man and shows him the light of spirituality and divinity. Bhagavan says, "A life without Seva is a temple filled with darkness. Only the light of Seva can illumine the spiritual aspirant".

Explaining the purpose of Seva, Bhagavan says, "Seva is a great opportunity to see the God indwelling all". Seva should therefore be performed with full conviction that divinity is immanent in all. Then Seva becomes Sadhana, a spiritual discipline, to reform and uplift man. Hence, a spiritual aspirant should undertake it with all his heart, mind and soul. This is the type of service Swami has prescribed for the members of all Sathya Sai Organisations because it reforms and reshapes man and helps his inherent divinity to blossom. Bhagavan however cautions all those engaged in Seva activities not to exult over their acts of Seva. He says, "Do not believe that you can by means of Seva reform or reshape the world. You may or you may not. That does not matter. The real value of Seva, its most visible results, is that it reforms you, reshapes you. Do Seva as Sadhana; then you will be humble and happy".

The basic requirement for Seva in Sai Organisations therefore is transformation and evolution of the individual. Even great social reform movements can degenerate without this basic principle of Seva. As Bhagavan says, "No society can find fulfilment, no social ideal can fructify without the blossoming of the spirit of man". As the world has seen, many well-meaning social reform movements in the world failed because they did not take into account the transformation of the individual and blossoming of human spirit as their basic requirement. The result was that in place of monarchs and feudal lords, the world got dictators and despots.

The Divine Mission of Seva as Sadhana exemplified by Bhagavan in His life is being carried forward by millions of people belonging to all religions, races and nations who perform Seva as Sadhana in all parts of the world without any publicity or fanfare. This is what makes the Sathya Sai Organisation a unique Seva movement in the world.

Humbly offering this special issue of Sanathana Sarathi at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet on His 90th Birthday, I pray to Him to grant us all the strength to rededicate our lives to selfless service of mankind considering Seva as Sadhana.

— Editor

AVATAR VANI

DEVELOP LOVE FOR GOD AND EXPERIENCE UNITY

Man acquires wealth through speech. It is through speech that he creates relationships and attachments. He also gets into bondage through speech. Speech can be the cause of his death too.

(Sanskrit Verse)

LOVE IS MAN'S REAL STRENGTH

Embodiments of Love!

SPEECH IS VERY VALUABLE BUT does not cost anything. Speech should be pure, sweet and bereft of emotions. The Bhagavadgita says: *Anudvegakaram Vakyam Sathyam Priya-hitham Cha Yat* (one should speak only

truthful, pleasing and well-intentional words, which are beneficial to others).

Transcend the Mind and Experience the Atma

Man performs all activities due to sunlight. But there is no connection between the activities and the sun. Similarly, the mind and intellect work on account of the light of the Atma. Without the light of the Atma, the mind and intellect cannot function. Like the sun, Atma has no attachment to duties and activities. Just as man gets sunlight from the sun, he gets strength from the Atma. Atma is the witness. The results of good and bad deeds do not affect the Atma. When the water is flowing, the image of the moon in it appears to move. But the moon does not move.

What is the cause of man's troubles, sorrows and worries? Ego and attachment are the cause. Attachments, happiness, sadness, all arise in the mind. Mind and intellect are the instruments. It is through these instruments that we get the experience of everything. The instruments are the cause of our problems. If we remove these instruments, we can experience the bliss of the Atma.



You build a house. Even though space in the house is one, you divide it into drawing room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, etc. What is the reason for calling them by different names? It is because there are walls in between them. If we remove the walls, it becomes a big hall. We get bound because of the connections we create. We think of someone as father, someone else as mother and so on. They are all our imagination. Truth is the Atma; that is real. We have forgotten our real nature. Because of Bhrama (delusion), we have forgotten Brahma (Supreme Being).

The body is made up of five elements. Though the body is inert, we can feel it because of the vibrations of the mind. The mind gets wisdom because of the radiation of the Atma. The radiation of the Atma is the source of all the powers of man. How is it that we forget the power of the Atma? In Kaivalyopanishad, it is mentioned that fire is produced when one piece of wood is rubbed against the other. When we churn the mind and intellect by investigation, the light of wisdom arises in us. This wisdom shines in everybody. But the time duration of attaining it, getting aware of it, varies with each person. Consciousness shines in everybody. Just as light is the nature of the sun, coolness is the nature of the moon, for man Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute) is his nature. For obtaining Atma Sakshatkara (Self-realisation), for realising one's Self, no effort is required. Those who do not know this secret make a lot of effort and fatigue their mind. They do not understand the existence of knowledge about themselves within themselves. This sacred awareness pervades throughout the body. We should develop this Prajnana (awareness). We find

Love is man's real strength. Love is God. God is love. Do all actions with love. Develop love more and more everyday. By love, you become God. If you develop perfect love, God becomes yours. Develop this wisdom.



it difficult because we do not perform our duty properly.

Consciousness Shines in All

The ash that comes out of the fire covers the fire. After you blow off the ash, you can see the fire. You get this awareness without any spiritual effort because divine consciousness is there in you. Because of the ash of ignorance, you have ego and attachment. Remove these and you will see the Atma in everyone. Everyone is a form of the Atma and consciousness shines in all. That consciousness is Atma. If you develop this awareness, you do not need any other spiritual practice. You are unable to recognise what is sacred because of the veil of ignorance due to your worldly feelings. Your involvement in worldly matters and giving importance to them is the root cause of this ignorance.

The body is just an instrument which moves and performs all actions. Man does not get the desired fruit of his actions because he does not put the body to proper use. You should discharge your duties earnestly. Everyone should perform his duties whether he is a child, a youth or an old man.

In childhood, one develops absorbing interest in play and enjoys the company of one's playmates. In youth and middle



age, one is engrossed in cultivating worldly relations and earning money. In old age, one repents for not having this and that; one still craves for money without contemplating on God even at that ripe age. Unable to give up his vices and follow the path of righteousness, man gets trapped by the consequences of his actions and thus wastes his precious human birth. (Telugu Poem)

If the train comes late, we criticise the railway department, blame the government and society because some people do not carry out their duties at proper time. But we do not learn the lessons which we ought to learn.

This body is a den of dirt, and prone to diseases; it is subject to change from time to time; it cannot cross the ocean of Samsara (worldliness). It is nothing but a structure of bones. Oh mind! Do not be under the delusion that body is permanent. Instead take refuge at the Divine Lotus Feet. (Telugu Poem)

But why has this body been given to us? *Sariramadyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam* (body is meant to undertake righteous actions). The body has been given to perform righteous deeds and to act with discrimination. Man should perform the duties enjoined on him. The body has no power of discrimination or knowledge; it is only the mind and intellect, which have Viveka (discrimination), knowledge and power. Man today does not exercise fundamental discrimination. He has only selfishness, selfishness, selfishness. He uses his intelligence to obtain what is good for himself alone without giving attention to the good of society. In this way, he uses his body in wrong ways. He does not use it to follow the path which leads to enlightenment.

Love Makes you Divine

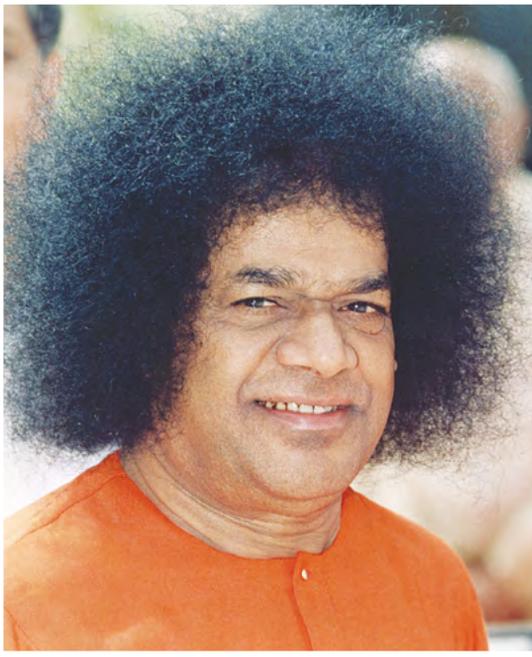
If you put wheat in the flour mill, you will get wheat flour. If you put rice, you will get rice flour. But if you put food in the body, only faecal matter will come out. If you keep pickle in a jar, it remains intact for one year. If you put pickle in the body, it will rot in a short time. The nature of the body is like this. But the body is necessary for man to attain high ideals. So, in order to attain the goal of life, he should dedicate the body to God. Man should put his body on the right path and shine as an exemplary human being. But man performs spiritual practices which are temporary. He should realise that permanent Ananda is within him only, and not outside. Every man with human qualities should perform righteous actions. Sharpness of intellect and high learning are valuable. But good conduct is of highest importance. Only he who has good conduct can be called a human being. But man today is behaving in a childish way. Discipline is very important for man to attain God. But the discipline should not be imposed by any external force; it should evolve on its own from the love that is inside man. Love is man's real strength. *Love is God. God is love.* Do all actions with love. Develop love more and more everyday. By love, you become God. If you develop perfect love, God becomes yours. Develop this wisdom.

People from distant places, different nations have come here after spending a lot of money. Why? Their love for God is the reason. If they did not have that type of love, they would not have come this far, undergoing so many difficulties. Love is there in everyone. Consider everyone as a temple of God. Have true love for society, not illusory love. Have love for the entire world. Love everyone in the world. First develop love in you. Then expand your love



to your family, to society and the nation. When the individual carries out his duties without fail, his family will progress. In the word 'Samaja', 'Sam' means that which you have attained, 'Aja' means pure. Samaja (society) means acquiring purity. When society progresses, we also progress. Perform all actions and spiritual practices, keeping the welfare of society in mind. You are the mirror of society. You should always think of the welfare of society. When others are happy, you should feel happy. When others are unhappy, help them to become

Live with the awareness and vision that all are one only. Do not think that you are separate from others. Only then can you experience Divinity. Develop love for God and achieve oneness. Put the Mahavakyas, *Tattwamasi* (That thou Art), *Prajnanam Brahma* (Brahman is Supreme Consciousness) into practice. There is bliss and strength in Divinity. Practice is your life breath. There is bliss and strength in Divinity. Separate threads are not strong. They acquire strength when woven into cloth. Unity is very necessary. Attain oneness by doing service to society. You will find divine bliss in oneness. When you travel alone, you may have fear and you may have to



The ash that comes out of the fire covers the fire. After you blow off the ash, you can see the fire. You get this awareness without any spiritual effort because divine consciousness is there in you. Because of the ash of ignorance, you have ego and attachment. Remove these and you will see the Atma in everyone.

happy. It is not the blood circulation or the movement of the body that are important; your actions are important. Spirituality is not living alone in solitude. Spirituality connotes having equal vision for all, living among all and serving all with *Ekatma Bhava* (feeling of oneness).

Develop the Feeling of Oneness

Move in society with equanimity, keeping the focus of your mind and heart on God.

face several difficulties. But when you travel with ten persons, the strength of all of them will be yours. To experience the strength of unity is Ananda.

Understand the Principle of Unity of Mankind

The world is a mansion, in which each country is like a room with a different name such as India, Japan, America. Though the countries have different names, people

living in them are the same. Understand this principle of unity of mankind. With unity man can achieve anything, but effort has to be made for it.

Spending a lot of money, scientists have gone into outer space with enormous experience and effort. But they do not know their own heart. Man should look within himself rather than venture into the outside world. Whatever we see outside is but a reflection of the inner being. Whatever is not inside does not exist outside.

For example, when you close your eyes, you cannot see anything. When you open your eyes, you see all that is visible. What you see is your own creation. It is your eyes that create everything. Everything is inside you. The whole world is inside you. This is the sacred teaching of scriptures. The Pandavas lived in the forest for 10 years. For one year they changed their names and lived incognito. What is the meaning of living incognito? It is to live without being seen by anybody. It is like our own inner power. We do not know about it. But it is there inside us. It is only through this power that we are able to walk, talk, sing and act. All the feelings are also within us. Hatred and anger come from inside. They cannot come from outside. But we see only material objects. Our outlook is materialistic. This is ignorance! What we see outside is partly true. For example, we see a fat fair person who is 6 feet and 2 inches tall. This is only partial truth. We can know the full truth when we come to know about his qualities and conduct. When you do not have human qualities and if you say, "I am a man", what you say is only half correct. You should say repeatedly, "I am a man, not an animal". (Swami repeated this three times). If I am a human being, I should have human qualities, not animal qualities. Otherwise, I am not a human being.

Who is Manava (man)? 'Ma' means ignorance, 'na' means without, 'va' means to conduct oneself. One who conducts himself without ignorance is a human being. There is another meaning of the word Manava. 'Nava' means new, 'ma' means without. So, 'Manava' also means "I am not new". You have taken several births. Swami knows, but you do not know about them.

Lead a Divine Life

That is what Lord Krishna taught Arjuna in the battlefield. He said, "It is out of ignorance that you are trembling with fear, thinking that you are going to kill others. In fact, you are not the one who is fighting. I fight, I take life and I give life. I do it all. You have become feeble because of the weakness of your mind. You are suffering because of your attachment to your relations who are temporary like passing clouds. Before marriage, there is no relationship between husband and wife; before the birth of the child, there is no relationship with the child. You cannot understand this till you know that you have had several births. If you think about it, you would know that you had many births earlier". "I am unable to believe this," said Arjuna. Then Krishna replied, "Take a small example. You married my sister Subhadra on a particular date and you remember this. But if someone asks you, where you were on 26th April you do not remember. What is the reason? It is because you do not give importance to this date as you would give to your wedding day. The reason for not remembering your previous births is also similar".

An optimist and a pessimist looked at water in a tumbler. The optimist said that

continued on page 39 ...



DASARA CELEBRATIONS 2015

FOUR IMPORTANT FEATURES of Dasara celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam as started by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba are: nine-daylong worship of the Divine Mother and Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva, and seven-daylong Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna and deliberations of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha.

Worship of the Divine Mother

Worship of the Divine Mother in her three forms of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati for nine days marks the celebration of Navaratri festival. This worship began in Bhajan Mandir on the morning of 13th October 2015 by the Mandir priest who made offerings of vermillion and flowers on a Kalasha containing water of sacred rivers along with chanting of Vedic Mantras. The worship continued in this sacred manner for another two days in the Bhajan Mandir. On 16th October 2015, the Kalasha was taken to Poornachandra Auditorium in a procession of Ritwiks and students led by Nadaswaram musicians. It was set up on

the left side of the auditorium and worship of the Kalasha symbolising the worship of the Divine Mother was carried out from 16th to 22nd October 2015 during the performance of the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna. The worship of the Kalasha concluded with Arati at the Poornahuti of the Yajna on 22nd October 2015, the sacred day of Vijaya Dasami. The water in the Kalasha sanctified by worship was then sprinkled on devotees by priests and students in the entire length and breadth of Poornachandra Auditorium.

Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva

Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva also began on the first day of Navaratri, 13th October 2015. At 8.00 a.m. the students and faculty members of Brindavan, Muddenahalli and Prasanthi Nilayam campuses of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning along with senior students of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School circumambulated the Bhajan Mandir, offered salutations at the Samadhi of Bhagavan and departed to designated villages to distribute Bhagavan's Prasadam consisting of food packets and clothes to the villagers at their doorstep.



Ritwiks carrying the Kalasha in procession to Poornachandra Auditorium.



Distribution of Bhagavan's Prasadam to villagers.

During the nine days of Grama Seva, Bhagavan's Prasadam was served to nearly three lakh villagers in about 160 villages of Puttparthi, Bukkapatnam and Kothacheruvu Mandals of Anantapur district. A group of 30 youth led by Sri Ajit Popat specially came from the U.K. and performed Grama Seva with students. The Grama Seva concluded on 22nd October 2015 when the students of Anantapur Campus of the Institute distributed Bhagavan's Prasadam in Prasanthi Nilayam township after the Poornahuti of the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna.

Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna

Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna was performed in Poornachandra Auditorium



Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna in Poornachandra Auditorium.

from 16th to 22nd October 2015. The proceedings of the Yajna began after the arrival of the procession of Ritwiks in the auditorium from Bhajan Mandir amidst chanting of Vedic Mantras on the morning of 16th October 2015.

Soon afterwards, the process of producing the sacred fire for the Yajna was started by two priests by churning one piece of wood over the other. The fire was produced in this sacred manner at 9.15 a.m. After seeking the blessings of Bhagavan, the fire was placed in the Yajna Kunda

for offering oblations in it. Thereafter, four priests started offering oblations in the Yajna Kunda along with chanting of Vedic Mantras while another group of four priests started recitation of Krishna Yajur Veda. Worship of the Divine Mother by a priest and his wife, performance of Surya Namaskar by another priest and Parayana (ceremonial recitation) of sacred texts by three elders and some students started simultaneously. The entire Poornachandra Auditorium resounded with Vedic chants by priests and students sanctifying the entire environment with spiritual vibrations.

The performance of the Yajna continued in this sacred way for seven days and concluded with Poornahuti (final oblations) on Vijaya Dasami day on 22nd October 2015. The auditorium on this day was full



Huge gathering of devotees in Poornachandra Auditorium.

to its seams with devotees who came to witness this grand spectacle. After the priests brought the precious material of Poornahuti along with a silver Dharani (large spoon), the process of Poornahuti started. A silver chair was placed near Yajna Kunda for Bhagavan where He used to sit for presiding over the Yajna in earlier days. With Veda Purusha Bhagavan Baba thus presiding over the Yajna, the priests offered Poornahuti in the Yajna Kunda amidst loud chanting of sacred Vedic chants and auspicious notes of Nadaswaram music. The sacred Kalasha water was thereafter sprinkled on the entire

assembly of devotees. While Bhajans led by students continued in the auditorium, Arati to Bhagavan at 10.00 a.m. marked the happy conclusion of the Yajna.

Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha

While Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna was conducted in Poornachandra Auditorium in the morning, the deliberations of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha followed by illuminating Discourse of Bhagavan and music and cultural programmes were held in the afternoon in Sai Kulwant Hall as part of Dasara celebrations. Erudite talks were given by four faculty members of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and three guest speakers.

The first talk was given by Sri Sai Manohar, Assistant Professor, Muddenahalli Campus of the Institute on 16th October 2015. Reminiscing his schools days as a student of Bhagavan, the learned speaker narrated how Bhagavan taught him that God is the indweller of man. He emphasised the power of faith and prayer by narrating how Bhagavan brought Karanam Subbamma back to life to fulfil His promise to her and how Brindavan students pleased Bhagavan by their intense prayer. The second talk was given by Kumari Isha Sai, Assistant Professor, Anantapur Campus on 17th October 2015. Referring to Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna, she explained that its main teaching was sacrifice. Quoting a verse from scriptures, she said that only by performing sacrifice could man attain immortality. The next faculty member of the Institute who addressed the gathering was Dr. T. Ravikumar, Associate Professor, Brindavan Campus of the Institute. Speaking in the fourth session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha on 19th October 2015,

the learned speaker narrated various incidents from his school days how Beloved Bhagavan as Divine Mother guided him to the path of goodness and shaped His life by His loving guidance. He also narrated how Bhagavan cancelled the cancer of his father. The faculty member who spoke on 21st October 2015, the sixth session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, was Sri R. Siddhartha, Assistant Professor, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of the Institute. Stating three main attributes of God, the learned speaker said that God is all-powerful, mysterious and fascinating. Illustrating these attributes with a number of incidents from the life story of Bhagavan, he concluded his talk with the wise counsel that man should never try to understand the Avatar; he should experience Him and derive bliss.

The first guest speaker who addressed the gathering in the third session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha on 18th October 2015 was a renowned Telugu scholar from Tenali, Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, Dr. N. Narayana Murthy. Speaking in chaste Telugu and interspersing his oratory with lyrical poetry the learned speaker gave the essence of Puranas (mythological texts) and highlighted the glory of Sai Avatar who, he said, was the Avatar of truth and love and who showed path of Dharma to man. The second guest speaker was Dr. Medasani Mohan who spoke on the topic "Saraswati Vaibhavam" (the glory of goddess Saraswati) on 20th October 2015. Illustrating the theme of his talk with anecdotes from epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the erudite speaker explained the Saraswati principle. He concluded his talk with a beautiful poem on the glory of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the auspicious occasion of Avatar Declaration Day. In the extended session



of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, Sri Ajit Popat, an ardent devotee of Bhagavan from U.K., addressed the gathering on 23rd October 2015. Revealing the vast treasure of his experiences of Bhagavan's Divinity, Sri Popat listed out six important instructions he received from Bhagavan: purify the vision, clarify the thoughts, sanctify the intentions, verify the actions, sanctify the Sadhana and simplify the life. Devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall listened to his fine piece of oratory for more than one hour with rapt attention and greeted it with a loud prolonged applause at the end.

Bhagavan's Divine Discourses

A salient feature of the proceedings of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha was the Divine Discourses of Bhagavan, audio clips of which were played on public address system daily from 16th to 22nd October 2015. In His Discourses, Bhagavan exhorted one and all to develop moral values considering it as their sacred duty. "Without morality, you cannot call yourself a human being," said Bhagavan. Man, Bhagavan said, should inculcate divine qualities of truth, love, peace, righteousness and divinise his life. This, He added, was the goal of human life. Laying great emphasis on the values of Indian culture, Bhagavan advocated its propagation to sow the seeds of love and unity in the heart of man.

Music and Cultural Programmes

Dasara celebrations were also marked by a wide variety of musical and cultural programmes from 16th to 22nd October 2015. The first musical presentation was made by the students of Muddenahalli Campus of the Institute on 16th October 2015. Beginning their programme with a composition in Sanskrit "Sarva Papa Hara



Devotional music offering by the students of Muddenahalli Campus.

Lakshmi" (goddess Lakshmi who destroys all sins), they next sang a Hindi song "Tujh Se Juda Hoke Jaaon Kahan" (where can I go after separating from You?) and followed it with a scintillating instrumental piece and a composition comprising the Sanskrit verses of the Bhagavadgita. They concluded their beautiful presentation with a song in praise of Lord Rama "Deena Dayalu Rama" (Lord Rama, the protector of the destitute).

The next musical presentation was made by the students of Brindavan Campus on 17th October 2015. Beginning with a prayer song to Lord Ganesh, they next sang "Ambe Bhavani Namostu Te" (salutations to goddess Parvati). Instrumental Bhajans followed next. They concluded their soulful



Devotional songs by the students of Brindavan Campus.

presentation with a popular Hindi song "Chalo Bulava Aaya Hai Maata Ne Bulaya Hai" (the Divine Mother has called).

The students of Anantapur Campus made a musical offering at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet on 19th October 2015. Beginning





A programme of devotional music by the students of Anantapur Campus.



An insightful drama "Avatarana Uddharana" was presented by the students of Prasanthi Nilayam.

their programme with a Telugu song "Enta Bhagyamo" (how fortunate we are), they next sang a English song "You are my everything, Swami" and followed it with a Mira Bhajan "Darshan Deejo Aaj" (give Your Darshan today). An evergreen number "We love You dear Sai, we love You" marked the end of their musical offering.

20th October is the historical day when Bhagavan Baba declared His Avatarhood at the age of 14 years in the year 1940. On this day, the alumni of Anantapur Campus offered a soulful musical tribute to Bhagavan with a Bhajan session in Sai Kulwant Hall from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. In commemoration of this important event in the history of Sai Avatar, a very insightful drama entitled "Avatarana Uddharana" (descent of the Avatar) was presented by the students of Prasanthi Nilayam. The drama explained profound spiritual truths through questions followed by narrations and dramatisation enunciating answers to such questions: Why does God incarnate in human form? What is Dharma? How to serve God? Who is a true devotee? etc. Beautiful dances of children, elevating theme and thoughtful direction made the drama an impressive presentation.

Two exhilarating musical presentations on the sacred day of Vijaya Dasami, 22nd October 2015, provided the grand finale to Dasara celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam. First, an accomplished Carnatic classical singer Sri Garimella Balakrishna Prasad made a soul-stirring Carnatic music offering to Bhagavan in the form of Annamacharya compositions. Beginning his programme with a devotional number "Jai Deva Deva" the singer enthralled the devotees for nearly one hour with Carnatic music compositions and concluded his concert with a captivating number "Neerajanam ... Neerajanam" dedicated to Lord Venkateswara.

A thrilling Sitar recital was the final offering of Dasara celebrations which was made by Ms. Roopa Panesar and party who kept the audience spellbound for nearly one hour by an instrumental piece, fusion music and Bhajan tunes which included popular Bhajans "Prema Mudita Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram..." (recite the Name of Rama with your heart full of love), "Bhasma Bhushitanga Sai Chandrasekara" (Lord Sai who bears ash on the body and is adorned with moon), "Vanamali Radha Ramana" (Lord Krishna who is dear to Radha).



SWAMI ENTERED MY LIFE IN Geneva in 1976. I was visiting Geneva for an ILO Conference and was staying with my friend, Dr. Sunil Guha, a Senior Official at the ILO, Geneva. One evening, which happened to be a Thursday, I heard the sound of Bhajans beautifully sung by a group of singers in his house. After the Bhajan was over, I enquired from Dr. Guha what was all this about. Sunil's wife told me that every Thursday, the group meets to sing Bhajans and perform Arati of Swami. I did not know

whether I had been able to visit Puttaparthi or not. I told him that I had not visited so far but I would do it as soon as possible. After finishing my assignment at the Ministry of Commerce, I joined the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in 1982 as the Policy Advisor. In 1983, I went to Bangalore (now Bengaluru) for a Board Meeting of HPCL. So, I thought that as I was so close to Puttaparthi, I should take this opportunity to go there. I reached Puttaparthi late in the evening. Immediately, I approached the accommodation office. Volunteers were very

Dr. Vijay Kelkar

SWAMI IN MY LIFE

Regarding Swami's love for us all, one episode is etched in my memory. Once I suggested to Him that in order to make the Super Speciality Hospitals in Bengaluru and Puttaparthi financially viable, we could charge at least for the materials cost, such as medicines, etc. His response was, "Can a mother ever charge for her love or for her caring"? This response was indeed quintessential Swami!

what she was talking about. So, she showed me Swami's photograph and my attraction to Him was almost instantaneous. I cannot explain why or how, but I instantly came to know that He is here to protect me and my family. Dr. Guha told me about Swami and His Ashram in Puttaparthi and asked me to visit whenever I could, but he also told me that I would be visiting the Ashram only when He called me to come.

My First Visit to Puttaparthi

In 1977, I shifted to the Ministry of Commerce from the Planning Commission and I again visited Geneva in 1978 from Delhi on an official mission. Sunil enquired

polite and helped me to find accommodation in one of the nearby hostels. I was told to reach the waiting area at 5.30 in the morning. I was perhaps too anxious. So, I could not sleep well that night and reached a little earlier to be in the line in time. As I recall, there was no Sai Kulwant Hall at that time. I was struck by the silence and discipline of the devotees assembled as well as of the volunteers. Swami suddenly appeared at the end of the entrance and started walking. While He was walking, He stopped to talk to devotees accepting letters from their outstretched hands. I had an excellent Darshan and I decided to go to Puttaparthi,

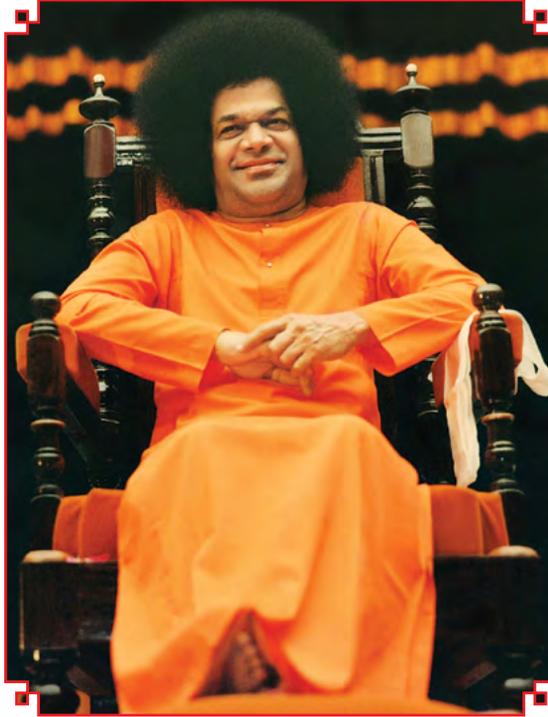


whether from Delhi or wherever I was posted, at least once in a year if not more often. I continued this practice by trying to visit Puttaparthi once in a year from the year 1983 onwards.

Shower of Divine Blessings

I noticed that over the years I was receiving Swami's blessings in different ways on my each visit. Firstly, it used to be only Darshan. Later on, on a few instances, I was fortunate to listen to His lectures to the students at specific functions including a graduation ceremony.

Swami granted me His divine grace to allow His Sparshan (touch) when in 1989 I visited Puttaparthi with Prof. Bhanoji Rao, one of His most ardent devotees. Prof. Bhanoji Rao was then the Professor of Economics at the National Singapore University. When Swami saw Prof. Bhanoji Rao, He lovingly talked to him. He also allowed Prof. Bhanoji Rao and me to do Padanamaskar. As I bowed to keep my head on His Lotus Feet, I still cannot describe what happened to me at that moment. I suddenly felt that my entire energy flowed from my body through my head into Swami! The experience never happened to me ever again although I had the blessings of His Padanamaskar later too. Prof. Bhanoji Rao also introduced me to Swami's writings, His philosophy and His teachings. These appealed both to my heart



and mind. I could see that His exhortation was not towards any particular religion. He emphasised again and again the presence of divinity in each one of us. One of His important messages was to offer selfless service and love to one and all. The other important message was the importance of shedding one's ego and material attachments.

In 1991, the Government nominated me to UNCTAD as a Director. This was a prestigious assignment although I was quite unhappy to leave Delhi as our economy was in turmoil and I was hoping to work with the new Government to help overcoming the deep economic crisis. As soon as I received the information about my posting in Geneva, I came to Puttaparthi and Swami granted me interview.

This was my first Sambhashan (dialogue) with Swami. He was full of love and affection and told me that I should not be disappointed as I would come back and serve the country for many more years. It is only because of His grace that on my return to Delhi in 1994, I was invited by the then Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas to become the Petroleum Secretary. From there, I was posted as the Finance Secretary in 1998 by the new Government. In 1999, I was posted as the Executive Director in the International Monetary Fund, Washington



D.C. From Washington I superannuated from the Government of India Service in 2002, but Swami's grace continued and I was invited by Sri Jaswant Singh, the then Minister of Finance to become his Advisor in his Ministry putting me incharge of India's Tax Reforms. During 2003-2004, with the support from the Finance Minister and my colleagues of the Ministry of Finance, I could lay the foundation for India's New Tax Regime. Swami's blessings continued and in 2008 the President of India appointed me as the Chairman of 13th Finance Commission. The Finance Commission is a constitutional body in charge of allocating tax revenue between Centre and States as well as among the States. Once again, Swami ensured that I did not make any mistake in carrying out this important responsibility and our Report did introduce a number of important reforms in India's Federal Finances. What I am saying is that it is entirely the blessings of my parents and Swami that I could undertake the tasks of initiating Policy Reforms entrusted to me by the different governments.

Swami's Love for Mankind

Swami also showered His grace and blessings on my wife, Lata and my daughter, Sujata. I used to envy Lata's relationship with Swami. I think it was a very special relationship. Swami also took care of Sujata when she was studying in the U.S.A. for her undergraduate and graduate studies up to the obtaining of the Ph.D. in Immunotoxicology. Sometimes, I

used to doubt whether my advice was right in suggesting to Sujata, to pursue Ph.D. in Science. A Ph.D. in U.S.A. in Science is extremely demanding and Sujata had to face many challenges as she determined to complete her Ph.D. in the shortest possible time, and which she indeed achieved. When I asked Swami whether I was right in suggesting that path to her, He told me that I did the right thing and she would do very well in her profession. He gave her a locket with carving of Durga and He told her that the locket would give her strength. Sujata always tells me that on wearing that locket, she indeed felt secure and strong.

Regarding Swami's love for us all, one episode is etched in my memory. Once I suggested to Him that in order to make the Super Speciality Hospitals in Bengaluru and Puttaparthi financially viable, we could charge at least for the materials cost, such as medicines, etc. His response was, "Can a mother ever charge for her love or for her caring"? This response was indeed quintessential Swami!

I am convinced that whatever little bit I could do in my professional life, it was entirely because of Swami's blessings. At this stage of my life, I now ask His guidance to pursue a spiritual path.

– The author, Dr. Vijay Kelkar, a Trustee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, is currently Chairman of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) and India Development Foundation, New Delhi.

Service to man will help your divinity to blossom, for it will gladden your heart and make you feel that life has been worthwhile.

– Baba

BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA HIS IDEALS

S.S. Naganand

Service to man is the first stepping stone (also called Sopaana in Indian philosophy) to realise the God that is present within you. The second stepping stone is the spiritual practices you must adopt. If these two steps are taken, you automatically climb the third step of following the ethical path in life. This will lead to Trikarana Shuddhi, which is, unity of thought, word and deed.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION, “Who am I”? has engaged the attention of great thinkers and human minds. Divine personalities have also expounded on the answer to this profound question. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba not only answered it in words, but also demonstrated it by action. The answer to this question has been unequivocally given by Baba saying, “You are God”.

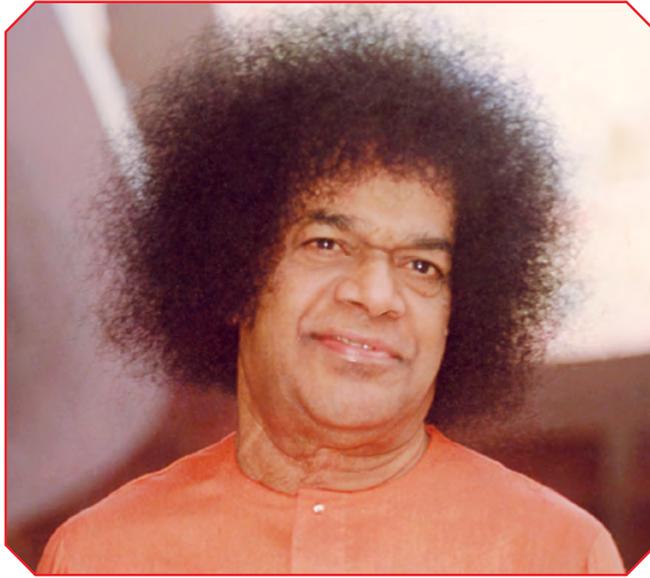
Brahman Pervades Everything in this Universe

In Hindu philosophical thought, there has been deep engagement with all facets of the human being with reference to the Divine Being or God, or by whatever name He is called. The expression used in the Vedas is “Brahman”. Brahman must not be confused with the triumvirate of gods, namely, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara, the creator, the protector and the destroyer of the universe respectively. Brahman is the Supreme Being. The great Mahavakyas, *Tattwamasi*, meaning “That Thou art”, and *Aham Brahmasmi* meaning “I am Brahman”,

have received a great deal of attention in all schools of Hindu philosophy. The Advaitic School, which was elucidated and expounded by Adi Sankaracharya over a thousand years ago, understood these Mahavakyas found in the Brahma Sutras (which are a part of the Prasthan Trayas or the three great expositions of truth – the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras) as indicating that God is immanent in everything, be it animate or inanimate, in this universe. This was illustrated by the famous saying, *Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan* (Brahman is subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest). Thus the answer to the question formulated should be, I am God. Swami repeatedly asserted that He is God, but quickly followed it up always by indicating, “you are also God”. With this as the basis, Swami preached that human beings are divine beings and therefore addressed them in many ways in His Discourses, such as, *Prema Swarupulara*, meaning embodiments of love, or *Divyatma Swarupulara*, meaning embodiments of the divine Atma. This was His constant reminder



that human beings are divine and one needs to constantly remind oneself about this. God is the very embodiment of love. In Swami's words, *"You are seeking joy and peace in far-off places. But the spring of joy is in your heart. The haven of peace*



is in yourself". If this Supreme Truth is borne in mind, the approach of every human being in all situations and in all relationships will be infused with love. All negative qualities which demean the human spirit will have no place in the mind of the one who bears this principle in mind all the time.

Realise God through Service of Man

Recognising that the abstract is always difficult to constantly remember and practise, Swami adopted a hands-on approach to His preaching. He said that the principle of universal love, founded on the premise that all beings are composite parts of the eternal divinity, has to be practised by adopting humane methods for realising this absolute truth. Swami therefore propounded the need for man to serve his fellow beings. Service should be with love, compassion and empathy. In the practise of Seva in this form, one tends to slowly discover that divinity exists everywhere and in every being. Swami has said, *"Service to man will help your divinity to blossom, for it will gladden your heart and make you feel that life has been worthwhile. Service to man is*

service to God, for He is in every man, and every living being, in every stone and stump. Offer your talents at the feet of God. Let every act be a flower, free from the creeping worms of envy and egoism and full of the fragrance of love and sacrifice". This

was a practical way in which Bhagavan taught us to realise divinity.

While addressing students and lay devotees, Swami often talked about spiritual practices such as prayer, congregational singing or Bhajans, Japa or the contemplation on the Divine Being by the chanting of a Mantra like the Gayatri Mantra, meditation or the observance of silence so that the mind is able to hear the heart de-hors the clutter and the clamour of mundane existence. He emphasised that these spiritual practices were as important as the practice of Seva. He often commented that one could not realise God by going to the forest and practising deep penance. God has to be seen while being a part of the society, which Swami put so aptly in the maxim, *"Head in the forest, hands in society".* Even in the normal day-to-day life of a human being, this approach is an excellent panacea for modern-day problems. Contemplation on the Divine with Namasmara or the recollection of the Divine Name all the time while one is engaged in any activity elevates the activity to the level of worship.



Hear the Voice of your Conscience

Leading a life as propounded by Bhagavan, we tend to contemplate on the action we are taking. The indweller or the conscience, which is constantly talking to us amidst all the noise of the world, keeps telling us that what we are proposing to do is wrong, that it is not good for us and that our senses are leading us astray. Often, the voice of the conscience is suppressed by the mind, by the garrulous conversations that we have, and the constant side-stepping that we do when we find something inconvenient. Constant practice of Seva and spiritual practices help one to pay careful attention to the voice of the conscience, which will then lead one towards an ethical and morally upright path. Swami has taught us this in so many ways.

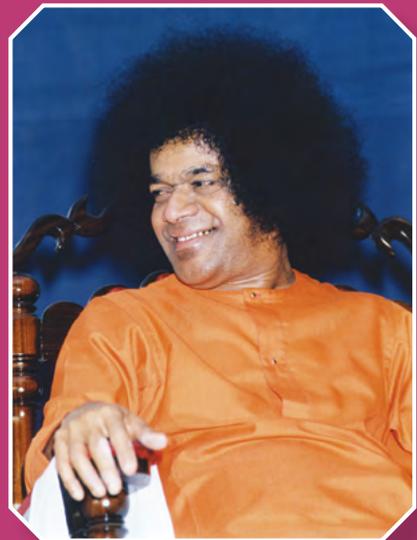
Swami has given us the most significant direction in the adage, *Manava Seva is Madhava Seva* (service to man is service to God). One has to serve humanity to realise God. In fact, service to man is the first stepping stone (also called Sopaana in Indian

philosophy) to realise the God that is present within you. The second stepping stone is the spiritual practices you must adopt. If these two steps are taken, you automatically climb the third step of following the ethical path in life. This will lead to *Trikarana Shuddhi*, which is, unity of thought, word and deed. When this becomes your constant practice, you will then see that there is divinity all around you and not merely within you. The realisation of this is the main objective of man's life. The concept of Jivan Mukti refers to a person who has so realised God that in this very life he has become liberated. As the word "Mukti" indicates, he is liberated from all attachments, from all wants, from all negative qualities and attached only to the Divine all the time. By carefully following Swami's teachings and contemplating upon them, it is easy to reach this stage. However, the first step has to be taken by you if you want to discover the answer to the question, "Who am I"?

– The author, Sri S.S. Naganand, is a Trustee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.

The grace of God cannot be won through the gymnastics of reason, the contortions of yoga or denials of asceticism. Love alone can win it, love that needs no requital, love that knows no bargaining, love that is paid gladly as tribute to all living beings, love that is unwavering.

– Baba



Descent of the Divine

*Silently He descended, that day in
November*

*Leaving the heavens waiting, He
became our family member.*

*Immersed in our worldly pleasures, we
didn't know*

*Born was Sathya Sai amidst our
desires, low.*

*The light of His Being sent vibrations
worldwide*

*And over the years He called us to His
side.*

*To waste this blessing is missing His
drama*

*Let's breathe it in and follow our
Dharma.*

*Atma walks this earth, His Feet we can
touch*

*Despite ourselves, we have all chanced
so much.*

*Siva Sakti spreading fast, His Mission
working through*

*Such energy, this world before never
knew.*

*Our children and theirs will experience
Prema*

*New generations uplifted while reaping
their Karma.*

– Elma



From our Archives

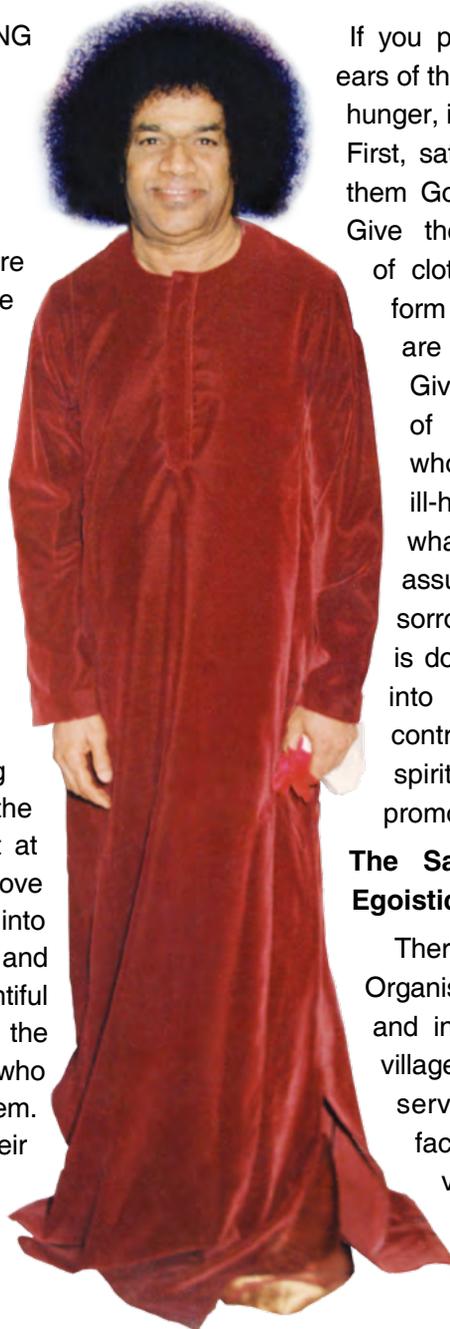
STRIVE TO BECOME EMBODIMENTS OF LOVE

BHARATIYA CULTURE BELONGS TO ALL MANKIND

*Y*OU MUST BE THINKING about the gift you have to offer to Swami on this Birthday. You can be happy that you have given Swami a proper gift only when you love your fellowmen, share their sufferings, and engage yourselves in serving them. That is the only gift I wish for. The present given to God has to be pure, steady and selfless love.

Improve Villages to Make them Ideal

On this Birthday, I have only one desire. I am desiring this only to promote your Ananda. You are planning programmes for the coming 60th Birthday. Even before the 60th Birthday, you must adopt at least 6,000 villages and improve them through proper means into ideal villages. Rich people and people in power have plentiful servants. But the distressed, the poverty-stricken, and those who suffer have no one to serve them. Go to such people and be their friends, their kith and kin, their closest well-wishers. Let them welcome you as such.



If you pour spirituality into the ears of those who are tortured by hunger, it will not be assimilated. First, satiate their hunger. Give them God in the form of food. Give them God in the form of clothes. Give God in the form of peace to those who are afflicted with anxiety. Give God in the form of medicines to those who are suffering from ill-health. Give God in whatever form which will assuage fear, pain and sorrow. It is only when this is done can spirituality soak into the heart. If you act contrary to this, instead of spiritual feelings you will be promoting atheism itself.

The Sai Principle has no Egoistic Urge

Therefore, units of our Organisation have to provide and increase in these 6,000 villages, education, medical services, communication facilities. There are villages where people struggle for want of water to drink.

The Government cannot by itself provide all these conveniences. Without the cooperation of the people the Government cannot do anything. Government is not a free entity. It is based on people's support. It can work only when the people cooperate actively. Without depending on Government, you must carry on the development of society through your own strength. That is real Sadhana, real Seva. Strive to become embodiments of Prema. Be ready to offer all your capabilities and skills to the Lord of All. It is God's Love that rewards you when you engage yourselves in Japa, Tapa or Yaga (repetition of God's name, penance, ritual of sacrifice). What greater achievement can you strive for than receiving Love Divine from God? However, you must understand well the nature and significance of this Love. The principle of Divine Love has no trace of ego or blemish. It is fully free from selfish attachments. Whatever Sai does, whatever Sai thinks, whatever Sai says, whatever Sai observes, it is all for your sake, not for Sai's sake. My only desire is your joy, Ananda. Your Ananda is My Ananda. I have no Ananda apart from yours.

Illumine your Lives by the Sunshine of Vairagya

A small seed carries within it the potential of becoming a big tree. The Cosmic Form is not a mere aggregation of various objects. It does not signify the one in the many. The Cosmic Form means that which contains within itself everything. You cannot see the vast tree contained in the tiny seed. Likewise, the Atmic Principle contains the macrocosm in microcosm. Equally, the divinity present in God (the macrocosm) is present in man in a subtle form like the fire in a matchstick. You cannot get fire out of a damp matchstick. Man is filled with the fire

Develop self-confidence, which is the basis for any nation's progress. On that foundation of self-confidence, erect the walls of Ananda (bliss). Then place the ceiling of Vairagya (detachment) on them. Live under the roof of Thyaga (sacrifice). This is the way to Self-realisation.

of divine wisdom and sacredness. But it is not perceptible in spite of spiritual exercises, severe penance and many good deeds. The reason is that the mind is dampened by Ahamkara and Mamakara (egoistic and acquisitive tendencies). It is only when this dampness is removed by the sunshine of Vairagya (detachment) can illumined life become possible.

All are the Embodiments of Divinity

Manifest the divinity that is in you. Only then can you be a true Vyakti (individual). Practise Sadhana for this purpose. Jettison your worldly attachments. Develop love so that you may get rid of divisive feelings in you. It is extremely unfortunate that man should waste his life, which is so precious and sacred. Life is short and man should make good use of his divine potentialities without wasting time. Two hands have been given to man for feeding himself and rendering service. Work, work and work! That is your duty. Consider what is appropriate in a particular situation and act accordingly.

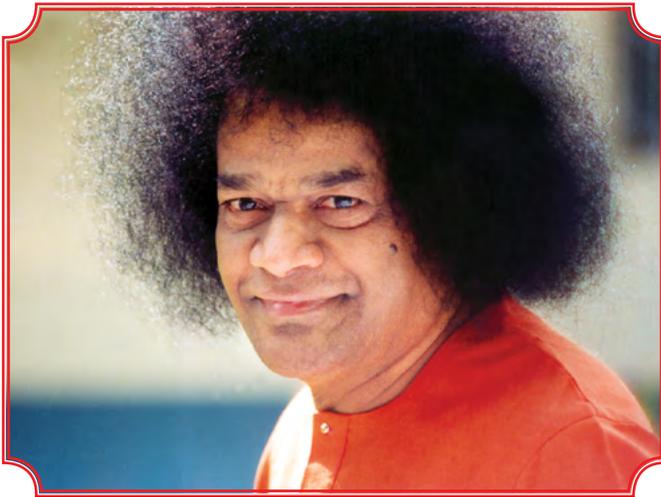
God is present in all beings. Everything in the cosmos is a form of the Divine. The Divine power sustains everybody at all times. Hence, every man is the embodiment

continued on page 27...

LORD OF THE UNIVERSE

R.J. Rathnakar

Some people seek remedial measures when they feel their Graha Balam (planetary position on their horoscope) is not favourable to them. Swami's Anugraha Balam (the power of grace) is the only remedy for all the ills that afflict mankind today. As a result of our past merits, we have come to the Lotus Feet of Sai Bhagavan, who is the Lord of the universe. Blessed are those who utilise this golden opportunity and walk in His footsteps.



D EHO DEVALAYA PROKTHO JIVO DEVA
Sanathana, Body is verily a temple. The Self is God.

But where is the proof that we are all gods?

Is it possible for others to tell us that we are gods?

Can we know it without anybody telling this to us?

Do we have to seek help from others to know our reality? When we start questioning in this manner, thousands of other questions will arise. We can never know what we are supposed to know. Understanding dawns only when we stop questioning. Once a seeker

asked Ramana Maharshi, "What should I do to know my reality"? He gave a crisp but profound reply, "Chumma Iru" – meaning, "Be quiet." Reflection will be clear only when the waves subside. Similarly, one can have the vision of the Self only when the mind is stilled.

God is the Lord of Nature

Nature is but a reflection of God. Everything in the creation is a proof of the existence of God. Nature incessantly strives for the well-being of all living beings. Earth which is one among the five basic elements provides support for us to live and move about. Water rains down from clouds, and comes gushing as rivers to quench our thirst. Fire keeps us warm from within our body, and helps us in many other ways externally. We will not survive for even a minute without air. Therefore, wherever we go, or whichever way we turn, air always engulfs us and sustains our life principle. The fifth element sky or space provides support to each and everything in the universe.

God is the Lord of Nature. One day Swami's sister, Smt. Venkamma Garu, procured a stock of bricks for building a house. That day, thick clouds in the sky threatened to pour down. Being worried about those bricks getting drenched in the rain,

Venkamma Garu hurriedly started making efforts to cover them. She sought the assistance of her neighbours and also asked Swami for help. Swami was hardly thirteen years old at that time. Looking at the anxiety of His sister and also that of the neighbours, He pointed His right hand towards the sky and said in a loud voice, “Venkamma! Do not worry. I will not allow the rain to fall”. That was it! All those thick clouds dispersed in no time. The blue sky became clear as if the god of rain Varuna withdrew the clouds in obedience to Swami’s command.

On another occasion, in a place called Madikeri in Karnataka, thousands of devotees had gathered to hear Swami’s Discourse. Swami asked Sri Kasturi to speak first. The clouds were threatening to burst any moment as the sky became a glittering stage for the display of lightning and sound effects. Sensing the anxiety of the gathering, Sri Kasturi tried to instill courage and confidence in them by narrating some instances of Swami warding off rains and floods in similar situations. Though he put up a brave front, he himself had some trepidation in his heart.

Thereafter, Swami started His Divine Discourse and, as usual, it was a torrential flow of Divine wisdom, filling everyone’s heart with love and peace. Indeed we cannot grasp the ways of the Lord but, as if to prove a point, Bhagavan sang not one but three Bhajans at the end of His Discourse. As the devotees were about to offer Arati, Bhagavan again took the mike and spoke these reassuring words, “Kasturi tried to infuse courage in you but he himself was worried about the impending downpour. How can the rain god cause any inconvenience to you when you have gathered here from distant places to listen to My Discourse! I

assure you it will not start raining until all of you disperse from this place. I will give you another twenty minutes”.

True to the divine assurance, it started pouring down only after twenty minutes. Do we need further proof to say that Nature abides by the Will of God?

The Omnipotent Lord

Scriptures say, *Darshanam Papa Nashanam* (vision of the Lord destroys all sins). We are aware that innumerable devotees got solace and succour after taking refuge in Bhagavan and praying to Him. When Swami commanded, “Get up and walk”, it was enough for patients, who came to Him on stretchers or wheelchairs, to be able to get up and walk normally. Such mind-boggling incidents are still afresh in the minds of old devotees. We know the thrilling experiences of many devotees who are beneficiaries of Bhagavan’s grace and are leading happy and healthy lives after being relieved of their suffering. They gratefully acknowledge that a mere look or touch of Bhagavan nullified their bad Karma. There are innumerable instances where Bhagavan cured patients of their physical and mental ailments, to the utter disbelief of their doctors and which is beyond the realms of medical sciences. The laws of Nature are applicable to mere mortals like us, not to an Avatar who has the supreme authority to control and alter the powers of Nature and use them the way He wants.

Grace of God Protects Man

Those were the days when I was studying in school. One day, along with other students, I was seated in the Mandir verandah as Swami came out to grant His Divine Darshan. He gracefully glided His way among students accepting their letters



and speaking to some of them. Then He slowly came and stood in front of me.

“What is your name?” He asked.

“Rathnakar, Swami!” I replied.

“What is meant by Rathnakar?” He asked again.

As I did not know the answer, He asked people around me, “What is meant by Rathnakar”? Someone replied, “Ocean, Swami”.

Then Swami again looked at me and asked, “What is the colour of the ocean”?

“Blue, Swami,” I replied.

At once He created a beautiful ring studded with a blue stone, and slipped it onto my finger. My joy knew no bounds. After Swami went inside, many gathered around me to touch the ring in reverence and adoration.

I too cherished the ring very much. However, it did not stay with me for long, for reason not known to me. One day Swami took the ring from me and changed it into a diamond ring.

The next day I went to Bhagavan and pleaded, “Swami, I am not feeling comfortable with this ring”.

When everyone around me was exclaiming, “Aha... Swami gave you a diamond ring”! naturally I felt embarrassed.

After I pleaded with Swami two or three times, He blew on it and changed it into a ring with Shirdi Baba’s image on it. I was not happy with it either and prayerfully indicated to Him my dissatisfaction as He slipped it onto my finger.

“Why? Are you not happy with it”? He asked

Neither did I say yes nor no.

Swami again blew on it and turned it into a ring carrying the images of Sita, Rama and Lakshmana.

I then mustered some courage and appealed, “Swami, kindly give me a ring with Swami’s image on it”.

“Alright. You are Rathnakar, the repository of Navaratnas (nine kinds of diamonds),” saying this, Swami again blew on it and turned it into a Navaratna ring, and slipped it onto my finger.

I thought it would not be proper on my part to repeat my appeal, and so accepted it happily.

After some time, one of those nine corals was lost while playing, I suppose.

A kind of fear and anxiety gripped my heart. I ran and showed the ring to Swami. He took it in His hand and said, “Nothing seems to be lost”. I said in a low voice, “The coral is lost, Swami”! He smiled and said again, “Nothing is lost, see”. When I saw, I found the coral intact on the ring! I was astonished beyond words. I prostrated at His Lotus Feet.

A few months later, my trouble surfaced again as the pearl and the ruby were lost. With anxiety writ large on my face, I went and sat in Swami’s presence.

“What is the matter”? He asked.

I showed the ring.

He gave me a look of admonition as if to say, “Oh, you have lost them again”.

He took the ring and blew on it two times. Lo, the two missing stones were back in their original position!

While slipping it onto my finger, He said, “Do I have no work other than keeping track of the things you lose and preserving them?

At least from now onwards keep it safely”.



Saying so, Swami allowed me to take Padanamaskar.

To the Master who controls the nine planets, creating nine gems is just a child's play. Some people seek remedial measures when they feel their Graha Balam (planetary position on their horoscope) is not favourable to them. Swami's Anugraha Balam (the power of grace) is the only remedy for all the ills that afflict mankind today. As a result of

our past merits, we have come to the Lotus Feet of Sai Bhagavan, who is the Lord of the universe. Blessed are those who utilise this golden opportunity and walk in His footsteps.

May Swami shower His grace and blessings on all at all times!

Samasta Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu.

– **The author, Sri R.J. Rathnakar, is a Trustee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.**

...continued from page 23

of God. Once you have that faith, you will not be inclined to follow the wrong path. Everyone should strive to recognise the divinity that is present in all. This effort has to be made by everyone. Human birth has been given for this purpose.

Lead a Godly Life

Students! As future citizens of the nation you have to conduct yourselves in an exemplary manner. Remember that there is no special merit in so-called spiritual exercises. Every action in daily life calls for Dhyana (concentration) and has to be sanctified by performing it as an offering to God. A farmer tilling his field should feel at the same time that he is tilling the field of his heart. While sowing seeds, he should sow the seeds of good qualities in his heart. While watering the field, he should think he is watering the field of his heart with love. In this way, everyone can pursue the spiritual path without the aid of rosary or betaking himself to the forest. Today, the foremost need is the promotion of unity. Irrespective of physical and ideological differences, the Atmic principle is common to all.

It has to be recognised that individuals are integrally related to society like the

different organs in a body. Humanity is a limb of Nature and Nature is a limb of God. If this integral relationship is understood, where is the ground for hatred? No one should consider himself as insignificant or unimportant. Everyone, small or big, is a vital part of the whole and is essential for its proper functioning like all the parts in a rocket. Any small defective part may cause the rocket to explode. Likewise, in this vast cosmos every being has a significant role to play to ensure its smooth functioning.

Develop faith. Without faith life is a waste. Man today believes in everything except God. This is his misfortune. God is omnipresent. The man who has no faith in God has no faith in himself. Develop self-confidence, which is the basis for any nation's progress. On that foundation of self-confidence, erect the walls of Ananda (bliss). Then place the ceiling of Vairagya (detachment) on them. Live under the roof of Thyaga (sacrifice). This is the way to Self-realisation. Chant the name of the Lord to secure mental peace and purify the heart. You can then lead a godly life.

– **Excerpted from Bhagavan's Birthday Discourses.**



Music and Cultural Programmes at Prasanthi Nilayam

BHAGAVAN'S 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Pilgrimage of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand Devotees

A GROUP OF DEVOTEES CAME on a pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam from Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and presented a music programme on 26th September 2015 and a drama on 27th September 2015 as part of Bhagavan's 90th Birthday celebrations.

The music programme presented by a famous Sufi Singer Sri Sachet Tandon comprised popular Sufi songs which included "Sai Nazar Rakhna Moula Nazar Rakhna" (Oh Lord Sai, cast a look of grace)," Sai Tere Bina Ika Pal Chain Na Aave" (I cannot live without You even for a moment), "Teri Deevani Mein Teri Deevani" (I am mad for You). The singer concluded his fine presentation with the famous Qawali "Damadam Mast Kalandar".

The drama entitled "Paramatma Ki Khoj" (search for God) presented by the youth of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand on 27th September 2015 portrayed the evolution of soul and its joining the source. The soul



The drama "Paramatma Ki Khoj" by the youth of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

which has its origin in God gets enmeshed in worldliness and ultimately merges with God after a long and arduous journey of search and suffering. This journey was depicted through the episodes of Ravana, St. Thomas and Shirdi Sai Baba. Elevating theme, powerful dialogues and excellent acting of the youth made the drama an admirable presentation.

Music Concert by Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music

The students and staff of Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music presented a captivating music programme on 30th September 2015 as part of 90th Birthday celebrations of Bhagavan. Beginning their presentation with Adi Sankara's famous composition "Bhaja Govindam" as translated in Telugu by Bhagavan Himself, they followed it with a lyrical number "Sai Murari Vanamali Giridhari (Krishna who lifted Govardhan mountain). Soulful rendition of a composition by Bhagavan followed next. Before the final number, a Marathi Abhang, they presented a lively instrumental ensemble, adding richness to their mesmerising music concert.

Pilgrimage of Karnataka Devotees

More than 2,000 devotees came from the State of Karnataka on a pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam and presented excellent dramas on 3rd and 4th October 2015 as part of Bhagavan's 90th Birthday celebrations. The first drama "Pavitra Jal" (sacred water) performed by Bal Vikas children of Karnataka on 3rd October 2015 depicted the mythological stories of the



A scene from the drama "Pavitra Jal" by Bal Vikas children of Karnataka.

descent of the rivers Ganga and Kaveri on earth to sanctify the life of Bharatiyas and to generate progress and prosperity in this sacred land. The drama also showed how people in their folly were polluting the sacred rivers. It concluded with the teaching of Bhagavan who provided water to millions of people through Sri Sathya Sai Water Project and thereby underscored the importance of water in the life of man. The mythological stories were beautifully illustrated by visuals on the LED screen and interspersed with thrilling dances of the children. Earlier ten meritorious students of Karnataka studying in Junior Colleges were awarded prizes for their high score in their essay writing competition held by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Karnataka in September 2015.

Bal Vikas children of Karnataka presented their second dance drama "Nature: The Guru" (Nature is man's teacher) on 4th October 2015. Depicting the mythological story of King Yadu, son of Sage Yayati, who learnt from his Guru Dattatreya that Nature was the best teacher, the drama showcased that all elements created by God viz., earth, air, sky, water and fire taught valuable qualities to man, namely patience, forbearance, selfless love, forgiveness and



The drama "Nature: The Guru" taught valuable lessons.

equanimity. This drama was also profoundly illustrated by pictures on the LED screen and was beautifully embellished with scenes of Nature and dances of Bal Vikas children.

Pilgrimage of Devotees from South Africa

A contingent of over 100 devotees came from South Africa to Prasanthi Nilayam on a pilgrimage organised by Sathya Sai International Organisation. On 9th October 2015, a group of these devotees performed a drama entitled "I am I" which depicted how gadgets like iPhone had made man a slave of technology, thereby making his life mechanical, artificial and miserable. Illustrated by visuals on a LED screen, the drama highlighted the fact that what man needed was not information through iPhone but transformation in order to know his real 'I', the inner Self and realise his reality which is 'I am I'. Man should turn to the teachings of Bhagavan Baba and perform the journey from iPhone to Sai Phone, the drama concluded. After the drama, the devotees of South Africa made a soul-stirring presentation of devotional songs in English, Zulu and Sanskrit.

Besides the above programme on 9th October, these devotees led Bhajans and performed Veda chanting during the course of their weeklong pilgrimage.

Cultural Programmes by Students of Sikkim and Assam

The students of four schools under Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini Project from Sikkim and Assam came to Prasanthi Nilayam on a pilgrimage and performed cultural programmes on 10th and 11th October 2015.

On 10th October 2015, first the students of Sathya Sai Gurukulam Academy, Pakyong (Sikkim) enacted a drama entitled "Bhagavan Bina Koi Apna Nahin" (no one



A scene from the drama "Bhagavan Bina Koi Apna Nahin".

is our own except God). Based on the teachings of Bhagavan on the importance of Seva (selfless service), the drama taught a valuable lesson in caring and sharing when a sick old man, helped by a group of Sai students at the time of his need, later rendered loving service to another old and sick man who happened to be the father of a student, a friend of Sai students. After this, the students of Prashanthi Vidya Mandir Secondary School, Gangtok (Sikkim) performed a dance drama on the power of faith and devotion. The drama depicted how a bandit attained the grace of Lord Krishna by his faith and devotion after attending a devotional session conducted by a Pundit on the life story of Lord Krishna. The dance drama also included a beautiful dance of

Gopikas and Krishna and concluded with a group song "Sai Tere Charnon Mein Koti Pranam" (millions of salutations at the Lotus Feet of Sai).

On 11th October 2015, the students of two schools from the State of Assam presented dance dramas on the life of a great saint scholar of Assam, Sankaradeva. The first dance drama enacted by the students of Sri Sathya Sai Prashanthi Divine Valley School, Dibrugarh portrayed the life story of this great social and religious reformer and depicted how this great luminary influenced the life of the people of Assam and brought about unity and harmony in society. The second dance drama enacted by the students of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar, Golaghat showcased that this pioneer of Bhakti



A dance drama on the life of great saint scholar of Assam, Sankaradeva.

movement in Assam made performing arts as part of religion, enriching the religious life of the people of Assam. The thrilling dances by the students of both the schools showed that the poetic and artistic contributions of this saint scholar and poet were still a living tradition in Assam.

60th Anniversary of Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital and its New Extension Block

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of inauguration of Sri Sathya Sai General

Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam, its staff members enacted a drama titled “Manasu Maralaya” (transformation of mind) on 2nd October 2015 in continuation of their last year’s drama “Deho Devalaya” (body is the temple). The drama depicted how the powerful mind of man along with its five allies, namely, tension, blame game, desires, gossip and restlessness robs man of his health and happiness and causes dreadful diseases like blood pressure, diabetes, ulcer, migraine, fibromyalgia, etc. Presented beautifully in the form of a socio-medico fantasy and illustrated with appropriate slides on LED screen, the drama not only taught vital lessons on health education in a most entertaining way but also elaborated



Drama by the staff of Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital.

on the two main methods of controlling the mind and using it for man’s spiritual growth, viz., the practice of meditation and recitation of Soham Mantra as taught by Bhagavan Baba.

A new extension block of Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam was inaugurated on 23rd October 2015 to add to the facilities of medical services to patients. The Chief Guest of the function was Prof. (Dr.) M.C. Misra, Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi who unveiled the plaque to formally inaugurate the new block of the hospital.



New Block of Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam.

In his introductory speech, Dr. V.K. Varma, Medical Superintendent of the hospital, dwelt upon the exemplary service provided by the hospital doctors and staff who worked with the motto “Manava Seva is Madhava Seva” (service to man is service to God) as per the guidelines laid down by Bhagavan Baba. Speaking on this occasion, Sri S.S. Naganand, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust said that in this hospital as in all institutions of the Sai Organisation, the only concern of the doctors and staff was how to serve others in the best possible manner. This is what has made it a shining example for all other institutions, said Sri Naganand. Appreciating the quality healthcare being provided by the hospital totally free of cost to patients, the Chief Guest, Prof. M.C. Misra observed that the model of values-based medical service exemplified by Bhagavan Baba in His institutions was worthy of emulation by other institutions in the country. Sri Ramesh Wadhvani and Dr. Ravi Dabir of the Prasanthi Trust, U.S.A. also spoke on this occasion. While Dr. Ravi spoke about the genesis of the hospital, Sri Wadhvani gave a vote of thanks. A felicitation function was also held on this occasion in which eight staff members of the hospital, who have been rendering honorary service for over 30 years, were honoured.



Divine Love

Dr. Narendranath Reddy

We should have priority for God in our lives. A spiritual seeker's first priority should be God. Swami says, "Most of the devotees have part-time devotion, but want full-time benefits from the Lord"! To be near and dear to God, we should think about God, talk about God, fill our lives with God and do God's work.

WE ARE BLESSED TO BE contemporaries of the Poornavatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba – love walking on two legs. We are fortunate to have experienced His love and grace in abundance.

Whenever there is decline in the practice of Dharma, the Lord, who is beyond name, form, attributes, causation and the confines of time and space, takes birth in human form for the redemption of mankind. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has come down to show us the path of liberation through the practice of the five cardinal human values, Sathya (truth), Dharma (righteousness), Santhi (peace), Prema (love) and Ahimsa (non-violence) – the undercurrent of all values being love. Those who came in contact with the Avatar were fortunate to receive the three boons of Darshan (sight), Sparshan (touch) and Sambhasan (speech). His very sight absolves us of our sins; His divine touch gets rid of our bondage of Karma, and His nectarine speech gives us peace beyond worldly comforts. His life is His message, and His message is love. As the moon can be seen only by moonlight, Lord Sai, who is the embodiment of love, can be experienced only through love.

Tenth World Conference and Pre-World Conferences

The Sathya Sai International Organisation has conducted Pre-World Conferences in 16 countries in preparation for the Tenth World Conference to be conducted in November 2015 at Prasanthi Nilayam, commemorating Bhagavan's 90th Birthday. The theme of the Tenth World Conference is "Love is the Source; Love is the Path; Love is the Goal". I was blessed and fortunate to participate in 14 Pre-World Conferences, and I was amazed and moved to witness the love of Sathya Sai devotees for Bhagavan. Swami has said, "Wherever My work is done, I install Myself there", and we could witness His divine presence at all these conferences. The grand finale of the conferences was in September. More than 1,700 devotees attended the 15th Pre-World Conference in Durban, South Africa and more than 2,000 people, of which 650 were Sathya Sai youth, attended the last Pre-World Conference in the island of Mauritius. Many of the attendees had tears of joy in their eyes at the divine bliss they experienced, listening to Bhagavan's glory and His message. On the eve of the 11th September conference in Mauritius, as we were driving by the

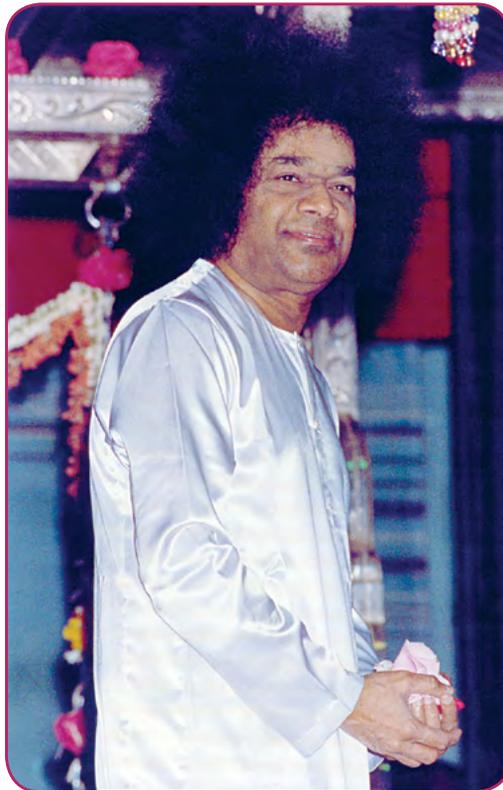


seashore, we saw a beautiful rainbow in an otherwise clear sky, indicating divine presence. On 11th September 2015, we witnessed the outpouring of love and grace in the small island of Mauritius, heralding a new era of divine love which will saturate the whole world and usher in the golden age.

Uniqueness of Sathya Sai Avatar

We are indeed blessed to have this unique Avatar amidst us – unique in many ways. But I would like

to emphasise the historical significance of this Avatar, recollecting that His love, His glory and His mission took root and spread in more than 120 countries of the world, during His lifetime. Another unique feature of this Avatar is His teachings, which are the essence of all the scriptures. We can hear and read the divine words of the Avatar directly from the audio and video recordings, the Divine Discourses and the Vahini books written by Him, without intermediaries. The third unique aspect of this Avatar is that there are many educational institutions (temples of learning), many medical institutions (temples of healing), many humanitarian projects, and Sathya Sai Organisation that were planned, founded, inaugurated and nurtured by the Lord Himself. These institutions are founded on love and love alone, and present a blessed opportunity for spiritual



seekers to participate in these wonderful, sacred works initiated by Bhagavan Baba. His instruction is for us to realise our innate divinity and that we are the embodiments of divine Atma or divine Love.

One day, I had the good fortune to travel with Bhagavan in His car. Many devotees threw flowers and garlands at the car as it passed. Among them was an elderly western lady devotee. She was very fragile and weak, and when she tried to throw

flowers on Swami's car, they fell only on herself. Swami noted this and said, "Narendra, did you watch that lady? She wanted to throw flowers on My car as an offering but the flowers fell on her". Swami continued, "Without knowing, she did the right thing. She is worshipping God within herself". What a profound teaching from the Divine Master! Swami says, "Don't seek God outside, but see God everywhere and within yourself".

Qualities of Divine Love

Then, what is love? Swami says that divine love is permanent, unconditional, pure and selfless, whereas human love is temporary, conditional, impure and selfish.

Many years ago when we were in Brindavan, students had the blessed opportunity of taking individual photographs



with Beloved Swami. One by one, they came and stood with Swami for their photograph. All of them were happy and jubilant for this golden chance to have a picture with the Lord of the universe. Bhagavan then told us, "See, people come and go – but I am always here". Thus, He was teaching us an important lesson that human relationships are temporary and God alone is true and eternal.

How to Love God?

Then, how do we love God? First, the intensity of love is important. Swami, in His infinite grace, during the 2007 Youth Conference proclaimed, "Think of Me intensely for 11 seconds with love and concentration, and I will appear before you and talk to you".

Second, we should have priority for God in our lives. A spiritual seeker's first priority should be God. Swami says, "Most of the devotees have part-time devotion, but want full-time benefits from the Lord"! To be near and dear to God, we should think about God, talk about God, fill our lives with God and do God's work.

Third, one should have one-pointedness in the divine pursuit. While all names and forms are His, the spiritual seeker must focus on one name and one form. Since Swami is the Guru of all gurus, being God Himself, we should hold on to Him solely, with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

Fourth, our love should be for love's sake. While God can grant us anything we ask for, we should pray for God's love only. Jesus has said, "Seek ye the Kingdom of God, and everything shall be added unto you." Swami says, that our name, fame, wealth, power, position are all zeroes, but if we put God as number One in front of everything, they

become millions and billions. If we remove that One, everything is a zero. With God, we are heroes and without God, we are zeroes. The true devotee of God, like the Gopikas of yore, asked only for God's love.

Nurture Divine Love

Then how do we nurture divine love? We can expand divine love by making God our own. We need to develop an intimate personal relationship with God as mother, father and friend. Swami says that it is ignorance to put distance between man and God.

Once, my mother had a major stroke and was admitted to a hospital in an unconscious state. Medical experts opined that her chances of survival were poor. Meanwhile, I faxed a letter to Swami praying for His guidance and blessings. Amazingly, within 24 hours, she turned around and came out of coma, opened her eyes and started saying "Sai Ram". My doctor friends were incredulous and said, "Your Sai Baba must have cured her"! When my mother was well, I asked her if she thanked Swami for saving her life. She replied, "Why should I thank Him? He is part of our family and of course He takes care of us because of His love for us". I was baffled by her response. After a few months, when we were in Prasanthi Nilayam, I expressed my gratitude to Bhagavan for saving my mother's life. I also expressed my disappointment to Swami that my mother did not thank Him for His divine grace. In His profound love and compassion, Swami said, "That is the right attitude for a devotee. You should not feel separate from God. You only thank an outsider – not a close family member". Therefore, we should always feel that God is our very own – closer to us than our own breath.

Next, we can nurture our love for God by keeping holy company (Satsang). It is good to associate with like-minded people, who have the same interest in loving and serving God. Lastly and most importantly, we should nurture divine love by repeating God's name, or Namasmarana. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's name is the essence of all Vedas, Upanishads and scriptures. Our lives will be redeemed simply by chanting His sweet, divine name, "Om Sri Sai Ram".

Signs of Divine Love

Finally, how does one know that one has love for God? First, a true lover of God will become fearless. Swami tells us, "Why fear when I am here", exhorting us to become fearless. The first sign of divine love is complete and absolute fearlessness (Abhaya).

The second sign of possessing divine love is having peace that passeth understanding, as mentioned in the Holy Bible. Swami's dwelling is called Prasanthi Nilayam – abode of supreme peace, and not just Santhi Nilayam – abode of peace. Swami says

our hearts will become Prasanthi Nilayam, wherever we are, if they are pure and filled with divine love.

The third sign of divine love is equanimity at all times. In the historic letter Swami wrote to His brother on 25th May 1947, He revealed His divinity and explained His divine mission. In this letter, He gives the definition of devotion – stating that His true devotee will treat all pairs of opposites with equal-mindedness. Just like the proof of rain is the wetness of the ground, the sign of living in divine love is possessing equanimity at all times, all places and under all circumstances.

In His infinite compassion, Bhagavan Baba showed us the path to experience divine love so that we are ever peaceful, happy and blissful. Let us pray to Bhagavan to give us the strength to love Him and serve Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

– Dr. Narendranath Reddy is the Chairman of Prasanthi Council, the administrative body of Sathya Sai International Organisation.



If you have the capacity to draw the Lord to yourself, He will come to you and be with you. Be like a flute. Be hollow, straight and light. Offer no hindrance to His breath. Then, He will come and pick you up from the ground. He will breathe Divine music through you, playing upon you with a delicate touch.

– Baba

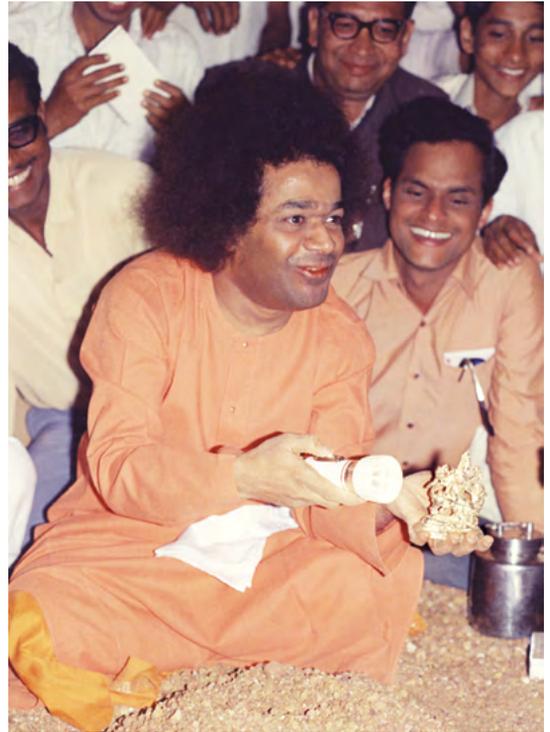


EXPERIENCES WITH SWAMI AT RIVERBED

Janet Bock Bicker

WHILE SITTING ON THE verandah of Swami's residence in Brindavan (Bengaluru) during my second trip to India in February 1972, a devotee asked Swami about the appropriate way for devotees to speak about Him. He said, speakers should tell of their own experiences and quote from His words. I think Baba was telling us, there is a way to share His message and give an illustration of how His teachings apply in our lives as part of our Sadhana (spiritual practice) of Atma Vichara (self-enquiry). In this way, we share the teachings and also demonstrate their role in our lives. In practice, an experience linked with a teaching can lead to a deeper understanding of the experience and the teaching. That cycle of experience connected to Bhagavan's teaching leads to the next experience, and the next teaching, becoming a virtuous circle of self-enquiry.

A few days after this conversation, Baba announced that He would take us and a newly arrived group of westerners to a nearby riverbed. In the evening two days later, our taxi followed a caravan of cars, from Brindavan, Baba's residence at Whitefield, until we reached a narrow country road bordering the sands of a dry riverbed. When Swami's car arrived, grass mats were arranged in a circle, and Swami



instructed the westerners to sit in front. I held my camera and set my small tape recorder on the ground. Then Baba looked at me and said, "Sing Bhajan". Surprised, I started singing a Bhajan, not realising that I had heard it twice but had never sung it. I reached the end of what I knew, realising I did not know what came next, when suddenly I heard Baba's voice singing and leading me through the Bhajan to the end. I felt embarrassed, or rather my ego did, but then Baba invited questions from the group.



Indra Devi asked: Where does the free will of man end?

Baba replied in Telugu, and Dr. S. Bhagavantam translated: Free will is always there, it does not end. But what should end is an incomplete or incorrect will. Free will is something which should not end and which should be always there. That free will is God.

Indra Devi: But if the free will has no end, where does surrender come in?

(Baba through translator): It looks as if you are taking a wrong meaning of the word surrender. Surrender is surrendering your feeling of humanness and accepting the feeling of divinity. That is surrender.

Indra Devi: That would be merging, more than surrendering.

Translator: Surrendering is different, merging is different. Surrendering your notion of being human and accepting the notion that you are divine, this is what is meant as surrendering. You are interpreting surrender first of all with a certain amount of ego, as if your mind, your powers, your abilities are your property. This is not what you are surrendering. What is your own? In truth you feel that it is your power, your self and so on that you are surrendering. But what is it that you possess in reality? And who is surrendering, and to whom are you surrendering?

Baba asked for more questions.

Dr. John Hislop: Well, Swami said that our present eye sees the world as a series of foreign objects and we cannot change those objects, but we can change our eyes so they see only God. But what are those eyes that see only God? The only eyes I know are discrimination and reason. What eyes does Swami mean?

If you put water from a holy river such as the Ganga into a bag and you drop this bag into the ocean, that bag of holy water is floating on the ocean but it has not merged with the ocean. At any time, the bag of holy water can be removed. In like manner, you have the consciousness of your body. If you put some divine thoughts in your mind while maintaining the consciousness of your body then, so long as you continue that body consciousness, the divine thoughts can be removed from your mind because the two have not yet merged.



Translator: Swami means the eyes of wisdom. The eyes you are referring to, reason and discrimination, can only see human bodies and what has been created. But Swami is referring to the eyes which He calls the eyes of wisdom by which you can see something different. When you are able to look with divine sight, which He calls the wisdom vision, instead of human eyes, it is only then you will see all these various shapes and forms of people as forms of God.

Dr. Hislop: That's something else than discrimination and reason then, some other kind of eye?

Translator: That is the divine eye. There is no question of discriminating and seeing with the eyes which you have now. These eyes will not enable you to discriminate, these will only enable you to see human forms.

Dr. Hislop: Yes, but one sees things and uses his reason and discriminates. In what way is that different from the eye of wisdom?



Translator: All the time you are still talking about discriminating what you see with these eyes. You have not yet reached the stage of pure divine sight. You are having, to some extent, your own ability and then you are talking of your discriminating ability and you are mixing these two and causing whatever differentiation you want to make. But when you move on to the state of being divine, then there is no question of your discriminating and enquiring. You have not yet reached the goal, but along the path you should not forget the goal, you should bear it in mind. It is only when you have the goal in your mind and you keep your attention on the goal, that you can reach the goal. But if you have no attention on the goal, if you do not know what your goal is and keep it in mind, how are you going to reach the goal? It is only until you reach the goal that you keep your attention or your concentration on the goal. But once you reach the goal, this attention on the goal and the goal become one.

Baba in English: That is merging.

Translator: It is on the path that your aim at the goal culminates in the goal and the two become one; and when your aim at the goal and the attainment of the goal become one that is called merging. Merging is one thing and your realisation that you are that goal itself is a different thing. For example, there is an ocean. If you put water from a holy river such as the Ganga into a bag and you drop this bag into the ocean, that bag of holy water is floating on the ocean but it has not merged with the ocean. At any time, the bag of holy water can be removed. In like manner, you have the consciousness of your body. If you put some divine thoughts in your mind while maintaining the consciousness of your body then, so long as

you continue that body consciousness, the divine thoughts can be removed from your mind because the two have not yet merged.

Dr. Hislop: Oh, that's what is meant by putting the bag of holy water in the ocean!

Translator: Yes. A river flows and merges into the ocean. From that moment, you cannot separate the river from the ocean. This is the example of the man and his feeling that he is a man in a body being converted into the feeling that he is divine. When that happens, the man or woman and the feeling that he or she is divine cannot be separated. When consciousness of the body is helped by various spiritual practices of Sadhana like meditation and then it merges into Divinity, it is possible afterwards by your conscious effort to come out of (separate from) the merging. This is referred to by the words Daivamsa Sambhutham, that is to say that (similar to the bag of holy water) an aspect of God has descended at a particular time. There is a very subtle difference between an aspect of Divinity having descended on a human being, and Divinity itself. Divinity itself is called Daivatvam; but when an aspect of Divinity descends on a human being that is referred to as Daivamsa Sambhutham.

Dr. Hislop: And that happens? That happens to people?

Translator: It is not a question of it happening, it is happening right now at the present moment.

Hislop: Happening? Right now?

General laughter.

Translator: There is no question of doubting it, it is happening right now at the present moment.

Dr. Hislop: All over the world or just in India?



Translator: In Divinity, there is nothing that is not possible. While most remain at a certain stage of development, a certain stage of divine evolution, it is right that we ask ourselves these questions and we may have a doubt whether such a thing is possible. But after reaching a certain stage, there is no scope for such a doubt at all.

Dr. Hislop: Do these things happen just in India or in other parts of the world, too?

Translator: For Divinity, there is no place like America or India or England. It can happen to anyone, anywhere, provided they follow the spiritual practice of self-enquiry, Atma Vichara. So long as a person pursues self-enquiry, no matter where he or she is, this descent of Divinity into him or her shall happen and will happen.

Hearing Swami's teaching in His own voice intensified my process and my experience of self-enquiry. My feelings

...continued from page 9

the glass was half full. The pessimist said, the tumbler was half empty. The optimist is full of happiness. The pessimist sees the thorn below the rose; the optimist on the other hand sees the rose flower. Pessimism and optimism both depend on Drishti (vision or attitude). The two are closely related. Hopelessness arises out of faulty vision. The optimist and the pessimist walk on the same path. The optimist looks up and sees the sky and the stars whereas the pessimist looks down and sees pits. Both are walking on the same road. But there is difference in their vision and their points of view. Change your vision and see everything as God. Understand the difference between vision and spectacles. We see colours with our natural vision. With blue-coloured spectacles, everything appears blue. But we cannot blame the spectacles.

of failure and embarrassment because I did not know all of the Bhajan when Baba asked me to sing was an example of my ego judging me the way it often judged others. Baba explained this process in a Discourse when He said, "The mind projects on others its own defects and deficiencies. That is its deadliest effect on our progress. One has to overcome this nefarious tendency" (May 21, 1970). From this I learned that the defects and deficiencies we think we see in others are but a mirror image of our own, and although we cannot change those around us, we can change the judgmental nature of ourselves and see a different reflection in the mirror.

– The author along with her late husband Richard Bock made many famous films which include "Aura of Divinity", "The Endless Stream", "Universal Teacher".

When you see the world with the spectacles of love, the entire world will appear to be full of love. Everything turns into love. Spectacles cover the eyes, but do not obstruct the vision. God is full of love. When you wear the spectacles of love, you see the correct colour and get the complete view. When the mind and intellect are proper, vision will be good. Without love, whatever spiritual practice you undertake will be a waste. Do not speak ill of any individual, nation or religion. Everything is God's creation. Discharge your duty, rid yourself of hatred, develop love and lead a divine life. Fill your life with Ananda.

(Bhagavan brought His Divine Discourse to a close with the Bhajan, "*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram*".)

– Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 26th April 1997.

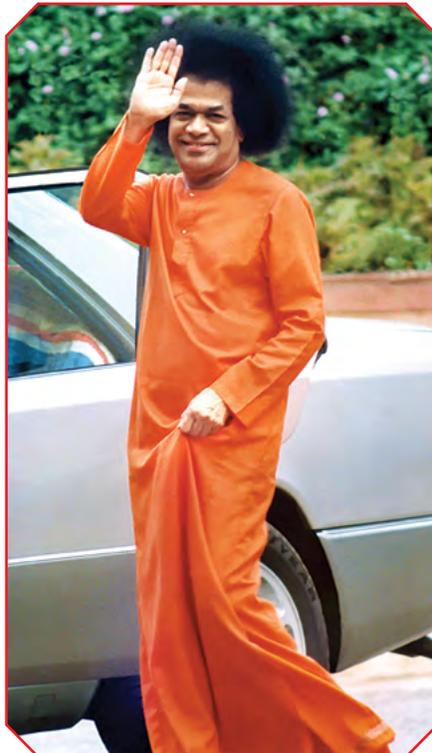
IN LOVE WITH HIS LOVE

Dana Gillespie

I hear His voice in every note of music, in every teardrop of joy and most importantly, I feel His Presence in my heart and I see it in the hearts of others and my life can never be the same again.

I HAD NO IDEA THAT 35 YEARS AGO my life would change completely, triggered off by reading Howard Murphet's book "Sai Baba: Man of Miracles". Three weeks later, I jumped on a plane and arrived in Puttaparthi knowing no one and knowing nothing about what to do in Ashram life. I had never slept in a dormitory as a child; so, it was a bit of a shock to be in the famous Sheds but it was always worth it, just to be able to get a glimpse of the Lord, even though it was always from afar.

I was happy just for this blessing and after 12 years I had just assumed that was how it was meant to be. But things really changed for me after I was asked to sing for Sai Baba's 70th Birthday, and as I had just made my



first Bhajan CD, I assumed that this was the style of music He wanted but I was told that He wanted me to sing Blues, the kind of music I do professionally. I know that many people then did not understand this style of music but Swami was so gracious and kind and He showed me that He was teaching people to see that His Message of Love could be sung in ways other than Bhajans. I have lost count of the times I have sung for Him, especially at His Birthdays, as it all seems to have merged into one glorious memory and I know what an honour it has been to sing knowing that He is sitting just a few feet away from me. I have always felt that things told by Swami in the interview room should really remain

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SRI SATHYA SAI CENTRAL TRUST IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY

G.S.R.C.V. Prasada Rao

DECLARING THE PURPOSE of His incarnation on earth, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has said, “The purpose of this Avatar is to help man recognise and regain his divinity which he has seemingly lost”. He instituted and demonstrated two main methods to attain this goal of human life – unconditional love and selfless service of mankind considering service to others as service to God.

About the Founder

This is the basic principle of all the institutions and organisations set up by Him. Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation and Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust in India and Sathya Sai International Organisation in other countries were founded by Him to show this path of love and service to man in order to transform and rise to divine level. A loving God to His devotees, a universal teacher and humanitarian to others, Bhagavan has inspired millions across the world through His teachings of truth, love, peace, right conduct and non-violence. His gospel of unconditional love expressed through selfless service continues to inspire thousands of voluntary initiatives by members of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation and others worldwide.

Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust

Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust is a public charitable Trust founded in 1972 by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba with the

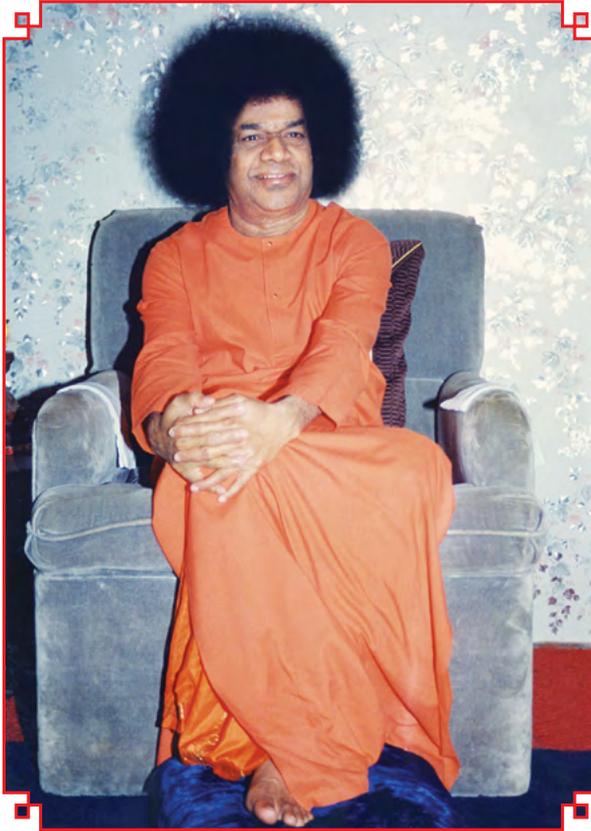
objective of extending relief to the poor, including education and healthcare and any other objects of general public utility without any discrimination of caste, creed or religion. Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust is not a religious Trust.

Currently led by a Board of Trustees consisting of nine members, the Trust operates a number of medical, educational and service institutions for the benefit of all without any discrimination of caste, creed, religion or nationality. In the field of healthcare, it has two super speciality hospitals, two general hospitals and two mobile hospitals. The super speciality hospital at Prasanthigram, Puttaparthi is a 300-bedded hospital with 14 operation theatres (3 for cardiac, 3 for ophthalmology, 3 for urology, 3 for orthopaedics and 2 for plastic surgery). The super speciality hospital at Whitefield, Bengaluru with 333 beds has 8 operation theatres (4 for cardiac and 4 for neuro). These two super speciality hospitals functioning under the aegis of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust are not only architectural marvels but also beacons of light to guide mankind how the best medical services should be provided totally free of cost to the poorest of the poor with love and compassion as per the guidelines laid down by Bhagavan.

Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital at Prasanthi Nilayam was the first medical institution set up by Bhagavan in the



year 1956. Two decades later, Bhagavan set up another Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital at Whitefield, Bengaluru in 1976. These two hospitals are model healthcare centres to poor villagers where they receive best medical care with love and kindness. Both of them have redefined health and added a new meaning to healthcare delivery by their dedicated service without



any monetary considerations. The two mobile hospitals have added a new dimension to healthcare by providing medical services to villagers at their doorstep.

Besides the hospitals, the Trust operates a number of educational institutions which provide values-based integral education to students. It has a four-campus university, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, with its campuses at Prasanthi Nilayam, Whitefield (Bengaluru), Anantapur and Muddenahalli (Karnataka). Set up by Bhagavan in 1981, it was adjudged by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of the University Grants Commission as the crest jewel of the Indian University System. The Trust also has three schools, namely, Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School (Class I to Class XII) and

Smt. Easwaramma English Medium School (Class I to Class X) and Sri Sathya Sai Gurukulam, Rajahmundry.

All the institutions (both medical and educational) provide their services free of cost. The Trust has also established massive projects to provide clean drinking water to about 18 million people of over 1,500 villages in five districts

of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, viz., Anantapur, Medak, Mahabubnagar, East Godavari and West Godavari. Chennai Water Supply Project of the Trust provided water to ten million residents of the city of Chennai in Tamil Nadu. The Trust constructed 700 houses for rehabilitation of flood-affected families (during 2008) in Odisha State. The Trust has also been associated with disaster relief operations in Bhuj, Gujarat (earthquake, 2001) and Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu (tsunami, 2004).

New Initiatives of the Trust

After the Maha Samadhi of the Founder Trustee Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the year 2011, the Trust continued its public welfare works with the same spirit of service.

a) The Trust completed a project for supply of drinking water to a further number of



128 habitations / villages in Anantapur district.

- b) Drinking water supply to Puttaparthi Municipal area is augmented with an expenditure of ₹ 5 crores.
- c) The Trust constructed 300 more houses for flood affected people of Odisha.
- d) The Trust participated in the disaster relief operations of Hudhud Cyclone, 2014.
- e) About 100 Sri Sathya Sai Schools in the country are being provided with financial assistance to improve their infrastructure like buildings, furniture and computer facilities to enable education reach the grassroots.

Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations

Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation (SSSSO), India is the backbone for many

Seva activities undertaken by Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. There are Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations for all States in India. There are Sri Sathya Sai Trusts for almost all States. They all work in tandem with each other though they are financially independent and functionally autonomous. Similarly, there are Sri Sathya Sai Trusts / Foundations / Societies / Associations all over the world functioning according to the laws of the land where they work. There is "Prasanthi Council" (Sathya Sai International Organisation, SSIO) akin to SSSSO, India which forms the backbone for the Seva and spiritual activities in the name of Sri Sathya Sai Baba in about 120 countries.

– Sri G.S.R.C.V. Prasada Rao is the Secretary of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.

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private but there is one time that He asked me if I wanted to ask Him a question, and the only thing I could think of was to enquire what was the point of this thing called Life, and He looked at me and said five really important words, "Play the Game; Be Happy". His message is so simple and yet it is so often forgotten but in its simplicity is its depth. He showed me that to live by His code of conduct is the best way to get through this life of strife and now without Him, I cannot imagine a life worth living. I hear His voice in every note of music, in every teardrop of joy and most importantly, I feel His Presence in my heart and I see it in the hearts of others and my life can never be the same again.

The last time I sang in front of Him was in December, four months before He left His physical body and at the end of singing, I

went over to touch His Feet and He gave me an amazing big glass carved bird, coloured orange and pink, and as He gave it to me He said in a very loud and clear voice, "It's the phoenix bird", and He repeated this three times while looking me straight in the eyes. As the phoenix bird is known for its rising up after death from ash, then this is how we must be; ready to die for Love and ready to be reborn in Love.

Dearest Beloved Baba opened the door to myself and now I am forever in Love with His Love!

– Dana Gillespie, a singer, actress and song writer, has made over 65 albums. She was the first Mary Magdalene in the original stage show of 'Jesus Christ Superstar'.





THE ETERNAL CHARIOTEER OUR SAI

Dr. J. Geeta Reddy

FIVE YEARS AGO, WHEN OUR Beloved Lord left His physical form, it was the darkest day of life for each and every Sai devotee across the globe. We were plunged into an abyss of sorrow, into helplessness and loneliness. Who could we turn to in our need? The ever smiling visage, the enchanting smile, the kind and compassionate eyes were not to be seen again. To us Sai was our friend, guide and philosopher, in short, our everything, literally everything.

Swami is Indweller of our Heart

This was how we felt for days and weeks, after Swami took Maha Samadhi. Enveloped by total despair, our senses numbed, we could not think clearly or sensibly. But slowly as the haze cleared, we

started realising that our Beloved Lord could never leave us, for He is Eternal, Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent. Had He not said that He is the indweller of our hearts, our 'Hridayavasi'. So brothers and sisters of

the Sai kingdom, a wake and realise that our Sai never left us, will never, never leave us. Swami, time and again spoke to us of the impermanence of the body. The body is perishable but the Atma, the indweller, is eternal.

The Lord in the beautiful form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba came down on earth following prayers of many sages and Rishis to uplift mankind, from the mire of greed, selfishness, violence and hatred. He came to lead us on the path of



righteousness, on the path of love, on the path of truth, on the path of peace and on the path of non-violence. These were the main teachings of His Avatarhood. In His love for His creation, the Lord walked this earth for eighty-five long years, redeeming so many people who came to Him from all over the globe.

Not only by preaching but by practising what He preached, He made His life His Message, exhorting all of us to follow His teachings, reminding us many times to give up body consciousness, not to get attached to His form but to revere Him as the indweller. "Build me temples in your hearts, I don't live in buildings of cement and concrete, I am in you and around you and will never leave you," Swami said.

The Lord gave us many indications that He would return to His Formlessness, though He would remain with us always. "Just call Me, I will be there. You take one step and I will take ten steps towards you," He said. Therefore dear Sai family, the largest universal (Sai) family, let us not despair any more, our Sai is everywhere, always hearing our prayers and answering those prayers in some way or the other. I want to share some of my recent experiences to tell you how much Bhagavan is with us.

Eternal Saviour

On 22nd June of this year, I had a miraculous escape from a deadly accident. I went to the shower area in our house and tried to open the sliding glass door. As it would not move, I tugged at it to open it. Lo and behold, the eight feet high glass door was shattered into smithereens with a noise as loud as a bomb blast and suddenly I was covered with glass pieces all over. I was in a daze and stupefied. I could only silently pray

to Swami. When finally I was brought out of the bathroom, I was bleeding from a few cuts which needed suturing. But the good news was that it could have been much, much worse; I could have been slashed across my face and neck where important blood vessels course through. It could have been fatal if a major blood vessel got cut. But the ever-present, omniscient Lord protected me from a bigger disaster so that I got away with few cuts and bruises on my hand and leg. Such is His compassion for His devotees. The doctors and nurses and everyone present acclaimed that it was truly a miracle. I knew it was a Sai Miracle! To me this proves Swami is always with us.

There are a lot of simple things through which Swami shows us His omnipresence. I was invited to South Africa to speak at the Pre-World Conference organised by the Sathya Sai International Organisation in September this year. I put the invitation at Sai's Padukas in my altar in Hyderabad and asked Swami if I could go. Within a few seconds, the garland from Swami's picture and Shirdi Sai's picture dropped with a thud, giving me an answer 'Yes, you can go'. I got permission to go!

Miracle of Vibhuti

I happily went to South Africa, attended the conference and when we were at the airport on our return journey, a gentlemen came up to me and said, "I was at the conference and heard your talks about your experiences". He very much wanted me to visit his nine months old grandchild who was seriously ill and was in the ICU in a hospital in Durban. The baby had meningitis and doctors had said, the child was brain dead. As we were about to board the flight, I could only pray for the child, and then remembered that I



carried three packets of Vibhuti, following an inner command to take them with me. I took them out of my purse and gave them to the gentlemen to apply on the baby, for whom it was meant. The next day after my arrival in Hyderabad, I got an e-mail which conveyed that after applying the Vibhuti the baby began to cry! Doctors said that the brain infection was reducing and the child would recover fast. Now the baby is back home and playing like any other child. This is the Vibhuti Miracle of our Beloved Bhagavan, who heard the sincere and earnest prayers of the mother.

Ever Caring Lord

Another recent experience back home. I had to skip the election of my daughter Meghana who was contesting for an important Youth Congress post as I had already committed to attend the Pre-World Conference in South Africa. She was having a tough time due to internal sabotage. But with all my faith in Swami I assured her that Swami would take care of her. Soon after we got back from South Africa, we

The Lord in the beautiful form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba came down on earth following prayers of many sages and Rishis to uplift mankind, from the mire of greed, selfishness, violence and hatred. He came to lead us on the path of righteousness, on the path of love, on the path of truth, on the path of peace and on the path of non-violence.

got the news that she won with a good majority, despite a lot of hurdles!! This is how our Beloved Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba comes to the rescue of His devotees. He is always with us, around us and hears our prayers sincerely offered to Him.

These are only a few experiences I have shared. But

there is a constant flow of His loving care and compassion that we experience, only if we stop to observe. We are so caught up in the rat race that we have little time to realise how much Sai is with us. He is our constant companion, our Eternal Charioteer – guiding us on the path to salvation.

Rejoice Sai Sisters and Brothers, our Lord is with us, He has not left us, but has ensconced Himself in the little altar of our hearts – the Indweller, the Hridayavasi.

– Dr. J. Geeta Reddy, a former Minister of Andhra Pradesh, presently M.L.A., Zaheerabad, Medak District, Telangana State, is an ardent devotee of Bhagavan Baba.

Life is a battlefield, a Dharmakshetra, where duties and desires are always in conflict. Smother the fiery fumes of desire, of hatred and anger that rise up in your hearts; it is sheer cowardice to yield to these enemies that turn you into beasts.

When obstacles come, meet them with courage.

– Baba

Dr. Sethuraman Panchanathan

LIFE LESSONS LEARNED AT THE DIVINE LOTUS FEET

MY MOST HUMBLE AND reverential Pranams at the Divine Lotus Feet of our Dear Lord on the glorious occasion of His 90th Birthday. Bhagavan is the source and resource for all our thoughts, words and deeds. As I reflect on my life thus far, it is immensely clear that Swami has been the inspirer, motivator, and doer in all aspects of my life. When we surrender to our Lord, every situation and experience becomes a lesson to continue our journey towards realising our inner divinity. I would like to share a few of the divine lessons that Bhagavan has taught me over the years.

Test is the Taste of God

I was introduced to Bhagavan as a child by my maternal grandfather. However, I had drifted away because of a number of questions I had about the Avatar of the Age. I decided to bring this to a conclusion with my own test for Swami. As a student of science and engineering, I learned that truths, such as the law of gravity, can be tested and experienced. I therefore decided to do the same with Swami. I had a small picture of Swami that my grandfather had given me. I placed it in my bedroom and had the following conversation with Swami – “I do not know what or who God is. All I know is that God is good and hence I am going to be good starting this week”. Being good to me meant that I would refrain from uttering

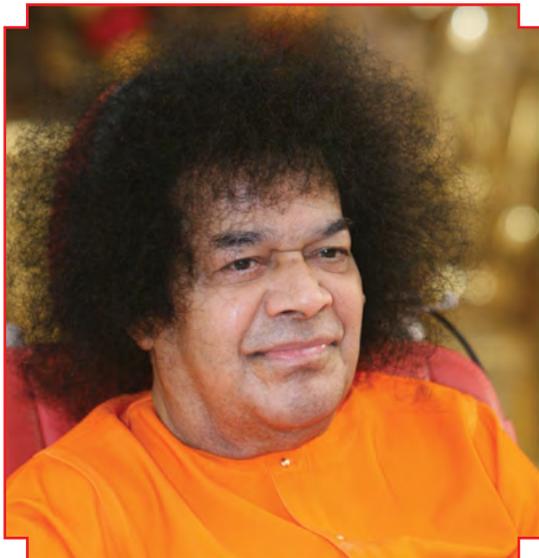
lies and help anyone who was in need of help - if a blind man needed help crossing the road, I would help the blind man. Every morning, I got up, and looked at the picture of Swami, and said “The contract is on, let me see what You do”. I did not ask for anything specific from Him. After a couple of days, I found Vibhuti flowing from His picture. I was amazed at how Swami revealed His omniscience. Soon afterwards through other experiences, the all-compassionate Lord manifested not only His omniscience, but also His omnipotence and omnipresence. Swami indeed demonstrated through these experiences that, if we take one step towards Him, He will take a hundred steps towards us.

Many years later, when I was praying to Him before giving a talk, he prompted me to not only share this set of experiences, but also add context through His Divine inspiration. He expounded that three times Om that we recite at the start and end of everything is essentially invoking God through His three attributes, namely, omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence.

Selfless Prayers are Answered Right Away

I have found that whenever I aspire to do my duty and express His love naturally, He manifests and helps in incredible ways. Once on a visit to India, I learned upon arrival that the husband of our maid, who was more like a family member to us, was suffering from stomach cancer. I was devastated and went to their home to visit him right away. Although he was writhing in pain, he was glad to see me and tried to hold me. I was deeply moved and really wanted to help alleviate his pain. All I could do was turn to Swami and seek His help. I knelt and prayed





fervently to Bhagavan. Having known them for a long time, I had always seen them as a very pious and selfless couple. They had gone through several hardships through their life. They had seven children, all of whom died at birth. Therefore, they named their eighth child “mannu”, meaning mud in Tamil so that even the name was not a form of attachment. Mannu grew up and got married but also died while giving birth to a daughter. All they had now was their granddaughter.

I pleaded with Swami, “Being such a humble soul, he should not suffer from this pain”. I took Vibhuti from my wallet, put it on his forehead and tongue, and assured him that all will be well, knowing that the Lord of the universe would take care of him. I came back home sobbing and asked my wife, who is a physician, if we could do anything to help mitigate the pain. She suggested a medicine, but with little hope due to severity of the cancer. Although I was travelling within India, I was checking on his health periodically. I came to know that his pain was totally gone in a few days. A couple of weeks later, he dressed up and travelled to his village to arrange the wedding of his

granddaughter. A few weeks later when I was back in North America, I learned that he had passed away peacefully. While I was very grateful to Swami for manifesting His love, I also had two questions: What did I pray for? Why would Swami listen to prayers from someone as imperfect as me? I then recalled that I had not prayed to Swami to extend his life, but to remove his pain which He did, so beautifully. I also realised that it was not about “my” prayer, but more about the nature of the prayer in that moment – an expression of love without expecting anything in return. Through this experience, Swami revealed to me that He would always answer selfless prayers. This has motivated me to be spontaneous in expressing love and reducing selfish desires.

Significance of Swami’s Words

Swami reaches us in many ways: discourses, dreams, our inner voice, through other people, and through personal interactions. It is very important to understand that no matter what the manner of His communication, Swami showers His loving grace on us by what He communicates. His every word and action is very powerful, and has enormous significance. Once in an interview, I asked Him while pointing to my body, “Swami, what would You like this body to do for You”? He looked at me intently and said, “Work is Worship, Duty is God. Do your Duty”. Previously, Swami had also remarked in a seemingly casual conversation that “Information is only in-formation; there is only transformation of Information, but no Real Transformation”. As a professor of computer science and engineering, these pearls of wisdom had a deep impact on me. I intensely prayed to Bhagavan to make me His instrument so that I would be able to use my professional work to serve humanity and transform myself. Soon afterwards, a

number of things started to unfold in very interesting ways. In a discussion exploring how to help humanity through our research, Swami spoke through one of my colleagues indicating that we should serve individuals who are blind and visually impaired. In order to further understand how we could use information technology and computing to serve these individuals, I called the local Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind to get more information. A few moments into my conversation with the Director, I mentioned the word “service” to communicate the underlying desire to embark on this project. The Director immediately responded by asking me if I was a Sai Baba devotee by connecting the word service to Swami. I was startled by this and knew right away that it was Bhagavan giving us the confirmation that this is His project. We wrote the proposal, submitted it to a national research agency and prayed for this to succeed.

On my next visit to Prasanthi Nilayam, Swami lovingly granted me an interview. When I asked the Divine Master to bless the project, He confirmed with the words, “I will help, I will help, I will help”. These words continue to ring in my ears as people, ideas and resources all pour into the project. This project has blossomed into many dimensions, most importantly through the participation of students who are blind and visually impaired. The devices and technologies designed by the students have won global competitions and received other accolades. Due to His grace, these students have been able to complete their degrees and become productive members of society. The project has also expanded into designing devices and technologies for

Swami reaches us in many ways: discourses, dreams, our inner voice, through other people, and through personal interactions. It is very important to understand that no matter what the manner of His communication, Swami showers His loving grace on us by what He communicates. His every word and action is very powerful, and has enormous significance.

assisting individuals with other disabilities. Swami’s every word and action is indeed extremely powerful and helps transform us in every way.

Bhagavan, in His infinite compassion, reveals His grandeur by granting us glimpses of His Divinity through our experiences. Only a very small fraction of His infinite wisdom and grace is understood even through the experiences of billions of beings. I surrender everything at the Divine Lotus Feet of my most beloved mother, father, teacher, friend and guide. I pray earnestly that He continues to inspire and guide us all to become worthy instruments in His Divine play. I also humbly pray to Him to open our hearts so that we may experience more of His infinite glory, learn His lessons, and transform ourselves.

– **The author, Dr. Sethuraman Panchanathan, Senior Vice President at Arizona State University, has recently been appointed to the U.S. National Science Board by President Barack Obama.**

The highest form of adoration is by means of Seva (service), done in love.

– Baba

Effulgence of Divine Glory

GOD IS ALWAYS WITH YOU

SOME YEARS AGO, BEFORE I knew of Baba, I was flying a small aeroplane one day over the Sierra Nevada mountains of northern California. Looking back on it, it was a senseless trip, without any purpose except a desire to get away for a few hours from my teaching job and experience the visual excitement of flying over this beautiful, rugged mountain range one hundred and fifty miles away. As it turned out, this flight transformed my life completely; it not only brought me close to death, it also gave me a new birth, for it brought me to the Lotus Feet of our dear Lord.

In Turbulent Fury of Nature

I live at an Institute on the California coastline in the countryside, away from any nearby cities or towns. It has a climatic zone all of its own. I woke up that morning to a crisp clear winter day ... a day I had off. I invited a friend to come along on a flying outing. By the time we got to the airport fifty miles away I noticed some dark clouds forming in the

East and considerable wind coming up, so I checked the weather forecast over the mountains. The report indicated marginal flight conditions with severe turbulence and a major storm expected the next day. It would have been wise to stay on the ground and go another day. But foolishly I figured we would just go up for a short little jaunt in the direction of the mountains and would quickly turn back to the safety of the calm, clear coastal weather when the air got too bumpy. With the approval of my friend we went ahead, unmindful of the enormity of the weather front that was then building up to become the worst storm of the season.

We weren't aloft very long, perhaps forty-five minutes, when it became obvious that soon we would have to turn back ... the weather ahead looked very threatening. We had been flying towards a wilderness area of jagged, white peaks and great canyons and chasms, dotted with emerald-coloured lakes, surrounded by giant trees and fed by rushing mountain streams originating out of large glacier fields above. It was an incredibly beautiful, magical landscape, but it was no place to



set down a small aeroplane to ride out a storm. We marvelled at the intensity of the scene, with huge anvil-headed clouds lit up by flashes of lightning, puffing themselves up as if in rugged competition with the dramatic terrain below, asserting their dominance over the visual scene unfolding before us.

I turned the aircraft around, back towards home ... but as we turned all we could see was a dark wall of billowy clouds all around us. We were surrounded ... the weather had already closed in. For a few remaining minutes we were in the last oasis of clear air in a sea of turbulent fury. Then we were thrown into the midst of it. The little plane was like a child's toy boat lost in a tumultuous surf at the seashore, going under and bobbing up again for a new lease of life. For almost two hours I fought to maintain control. There were a number of peaks above 12,000 feet in the area, so I tried to stay high, but we would be caught and sent crashing down by overpowering downdrafts, only to be sucked up and pulled high into rarefied air by even stronger updrafts. At one point, I looked over and saw my passenger slumped in the seat, unconscious from loss of oxygen. Out of desperation I called "Mayday! Mayday!" on the radio, hoping against hope that someone would hear the distress call and somehow rescue us out of this airy hell. But even if someone had heard and had replied, what could mere man do in the face of these angry elements. It was a futile hope and there was no reply.

I was lost, out of contact with the rest of the world. I didn't know if my friend was dead or alive; there was no visible breath and there was no response to my shakings and shoutings. By this point every ounce of my energy had gone into this long, unequal struggle, pitted against the awesome and

relentless power of Nature. Fuel was ebbing away and so was the life force. Steadily the elements were getting the upper hand. The little plane and I were both giving out about the same time. I could hear the metal fabric ripping and some strands of the steel support cables snapping. I was desperate. I called out to the Almighty. "Oh God, please help me. I can't fight any more ... I'm worn out. Please come and save me! I don't want to die". After that anguished cry some calm returned and I added "Do with me as You will. I am Yours". I pulled back on the throttle and put the aeroplane into a shallow dive. If I saw the ground before we hit I would use the last bit of fuel to manoeuvre the plane to a crash landing. Otherwise, it would all end very quickly. It was up to the Lord. I had no illusions of coming out of this cauldron in one piece on my own.

In God's Hands

Suddenly, a voice came on the radio loud and clear, booming through the cabin speakers which must have been left on from my last radio attempt almost an hour earlier, "Aircraft in distress, can you hear me"? the voice said. Although it was at once strong and firm, there was such a wonderful quality of gentleness and caring in the sound, I choked up with tears. It was as if an angel had been sent to guide us home. But then perhaps the combination of oxygen-deprivation and exhaustion was playing tricks with my mind. I fumbled for the microphone which had dropped to the floor. Before I could find it and switch it on, the voice came on again. "If you hear me, turn the aircraft 60 degrees to the right and then to the left so I can identify you. Don't worry, I will guide you down safely." It was good having something positive to do. I did as instructed. There was no conversation. I

was too wrought up, and besides he came on almost immediately with “I have you in sight. You need not reply. You are about seventy-five miles from Reno airport. Don’t worry, you’ll make it”.

Seventy-five miles meant at least 30 minutes more fuel at full throttle, assuming the wind was favourable. By my calculations and from the indications on the gauge we were almost bone dry, with less than 20 minutes and perhaps as little as 10 minutes worth of fuel left. But I could muster no will power at that moment to question the voice. In that maelstrom I had no idea of the net direction of the wind and if there might be extra fuel left even with the gauge reading empty. I just opened the throttle to full power and followed his instructions. In a calm, sure tone he kept up a constant stream of directions, vectoring me around the worst cells of the storm, giving me the heights of unseen landmarks below so I would keep enough altitude to clear them, and then gently reassuring me as he brought me towards the airport. Then came his final instructions, “If you stay on the present course, you will break out of the clouds in 12 minutes and see Reno airport straight ahead. Start your final descent for landing. I will be fading out with this transmission. Goodbye and good luck”. And he was gone, without ever having identified himself. At this point there was no longer any question in my mind that we were in God’s hands ... He had heard my cry and was bringing us down safely.

I stayed on the course given. Exactly 12 minutes later I saw an expanse of light ahead as we came out of the storm and into a snow-covered wintery scene, with everything around all white as far as the eyes could see. The aircraft was lined up

with the principal runway as predicted. I declared an emergency and got immediate permission to land straight in. Just before the wheels touched down, my friend woke up. A wave of tension rolled off my back. I knew everything would be all right. But the adventure was not over. Before we could taxi to a tie-down area the storm struck the ground in a swirl of snow. Shortly later the engine burned its last drop of petrol. A jeep came out and guided us in. The controllers at the tower could not understand where we had come from. A sudden clearing in the storm had permitted the airport to be open for only a short time before we arrived. They knew of no flight-service station with a radar in the direction from which we had come which could have brought us into the field during that momentary lull in the storm, “It’s a miracle you’re alive”, one of them said. I agreed. Silently I thanked God and blessed our good fortune.

Unfolding of the Mystery

The storm lasted for five days. It involved the whole north-western area of the U.S. There was no possibility of returning home. We did not have adequate clothing to remain in that cold wintery scene. At the first opportunity of a clearing in the weather we shovelled four feet of snow off the plane’s wings, made a few hurried repairs, and headed south for the Mexican border into a milder climate. My friend knew of a yoga academy across the border in Tecate, Mexico. As I was to find out later it was Mataji Indra Devi’s place. We went there in the evening to see about the possibility of remaining overnight.

When we got there we saw lights in several buildings; going inside there was evidence of a recently eaten meal by a number of people. There were dogs barking,

there were signs of habitation everywhere but no people responded to our calls and no one was to be seen anywhere. Then we heard some faint musical sounds coming from a basement area. Searching it out, we found a room in the corner of the yoga practice hall from where the sound emerged. I opened the door and came in on a group of people singing the Arati, with one person waving a flaming lamp in front of a Vibhuti-covered picture of Baba. At the time I did not know who the picture was of, but I felt an immediate, overwhelming flood of emotions. I knew there was some connection between the red-robed figure in the picture and that voice that had rescued us so dramatically from the storm.

I asked about the picture and was told it was of Sathya Sai Baba who lived in the South of India. And I was told many unusual stories that sounded similar to my own. But how could this 'man' in far-off India suddenly appear on the aircraft radio over the Nevada desert at that most critical moment and guide us to safety? And why did He pick us? Did God send Him? It was too strange to believe. The feeling inside of the connection was so strong that I knew I would have no rest until I went to see Him. I had to find out directly if His was the voice.

I journeyed to India. From the first day of that fateful pilgrimage to Bhagavan I felt immersed in a sea of grace. Somehow the opportunity never arose to ask Him the question about the voice on the radio. It always seemed inappropriate. But Swami arranged for the answer to come indirectly. At Prasanthi Nilayam they assigned me to a room with a little man from the north of India. He seemed to be a poor man, he had so few belongings. It did not appear that he spoke any English, and I was surprised that they

had assigned me, a westerner, to room with an Indian devotee. We nodded Sai Rams to each other the first day. The next day when I made some hand motions indicating that I was going off to Darshan he countered with "Excuse me, but there won't be any Darshan this afternoon. Swami has gone off to visit the college at Anantapur. But Bhajans will be at 6 p.m. as usual".

His English was a complete surprise to me. And from the fine sound of his diction I knew that this seemingly poor, unassumingly humble little yogi had a better command over the Queen's English than did this brash, self-assured American with all his baggage and self-importance. My curiosity was piqued. I asked him if he would kindly tell me where he came from and how he came to Baba. Very reluctantly, with many protestations and with much urging he agreed to talk a little about himself and in time unfolded a life story filled with service as a minister and high official in government, as a follower of Gandhiji living in Mahatma Gandhi's Ashram, as a student in England during the War and a freedom fighter after the War, as a propertied man who renounced his wealth to devote his later mature years in service to God. At the time that I met him he was a State President in the Sai Organisation. In the many years that have passed since then, we have met many times and become good friends. If he happens to read the above, I hope he will forgive my unflattering characterisation of him when I first met him, when my eyes had not yet been opened to perceiving with Sai vision. Here is the story of this great man as I remember him telling it to me so modestly that day in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Baba drew him into His fold as the result of an accident. It seems that he and his wife were driving on a narrow mountain road

when he had to swerve to avoid another vehicle. The car lost its footing and plunged head over heels down the mountainside. The last he remembered as they rolled around inside the tumbling car was his wife crying, "Rama, Rama, Rama". When he came back to consciousness he was lying on the ground next to his wife who was propped up against a boulder. She woke up about the same time. They were both unhurt. They were many hundreds of feet below the road. The car was a jumble of twisted steel and broken glass that could be seen at the end of a swath further down the mountain. It was a miracle that they were alive and unscratched. They had no explanation for their good fortune.

The Air Raid Warden of London

Months later this gentleman happened to be on government business in a city where Baba was making a rare visit. Almost despite himself he was drawn to the huge public field where Swami was giving Darshan and scheduled to deliver a Discourse. A Seva Dal volunteer approached him saying that he was sent by Baba to direct him to a seat in the front line. Apparently Swami had described this man perfectly, for the volunteer had no difficulty at all identifying him in the approaching multitude. When Baba came out He stopped to talk to our friend. Baba's first words were "Achchha, you have come. You must thank your wife for your life. If she hadn't called Me, you would now be dead. I pulled you both out of that car and set you down on the ground unharmed, even though you didn't think of Me even once. But I have saved your life many times before without you even knowing it. Do you remember the Air Raid Warden"?

At this, a long-forgotten memory returned of the time during the early days

of the Second World War when he was a young college student in London during the Blitz. Every night the air raid sirens went off warning of incoming German bombers. He was living at that time in an attic room up a long flight of stairs at the top storey of an old London apartment house. Exhausted from school and working at his job he would finish his homework studies every night and go off to bed. At that point invariably the sirens went off, and he would have to tumble down the stairs to the neighbourhood shelter filled with screaming children and complaining humanity. One day he decided he just couldn't go on this way forfeiting his rest every night. And since no bombs ever landed in that neighbourhood and no one except the landlord really knew off him anyway, he would risk breaking the law and just stay in his bed during the next air raid alarm.

That night the sirens went off and he pulled the covers over his head and dozed off to sleep. Within minutes, there was a heavy knock at the door. He held his breath and feigned not being home. The knock became more insistent and turned into a heavy pounding accompanied by a gruff voice bellowing through the door. "Open up! Open up in there! I know you're in there! It's the law!" He meekly unlocked the door which then flew open to reveal a big helmeted red-faced Englishman. looking very irritable and very intimidating, shining his torch on our friend's frail little pajama'd form. "You heard the siren. Quick! Get yourself downstairs into the shelter. There's no time to put your clothes on. Come with me now!" Down they raced the long dark flight of stairs with the warden ahead and our little friend following behind, skipping two steps at a time, anxiously trying to keep up. They hurried to the shelter which the warden promptly locked

from the outside. Our friend was hardly settled in a corner of the crowded enclosure trying to make himself comfortable and at the same time as inconspicuous as possible in his night clothes, when a tremendous explosion rocked the shelter and littered the inside with debris. When they were dug out and got outside they saw that only the bombed-out skeleton of the top storeys of the building remained. It had received a direct hit. Our friend thanked God for his life but at the same time felt a deep pang of remorse, knowing that the man who had saved him and for whom he had harboured some ill-feelings, was undoubtedly killed by the bomb blast.

Baba repeated, “Do you remember the Air Raid Warden? I was the Air Raid Warden, I came to save you from that bomb. I have protected you and saved you many times before in your life. Now you will come and be with me”.

Avatar Comes to Lead Man to God

At about the same time that this story took place in England in mid-1940s, the thirteen year-old Sathyanarayana threw away His school books in a remote village in Southern India and declared Himself to His few followers present to be Sai Baba, the Avatar of the Age. Even then, 40 years ago, He was already protecting His future devotees, who in time would number in the tens of millions. And even then He was already starting to gather them to Him. When I heard this story, I understood immediately why Swami had put us two together in that flat in West Prasanthi. I now had the answer to my query about the voice that ultimately brought me to Bhagavan.

At the end of the Summer Course at Ooty some years later (in 1976), Swami gave a historic talk highlighting His early life and mission. At that time He bid those of us

present to return to our native places with the assurance that wherever His devotees are He would be present. He said, “I have you and you have Me. In the years to come I will come in many manifestations of My form. Do not fear. Wherever you are, there I will be”. From the miraculous happenings recounted here, we know that He has been making good this promise to His devotees even before they come to Him.

I have learned to see in all of Baba’s ‘miracles’ the undercurrent and deeper message of His Mission. If we look behind His actions and words we see that everything that He does is in consonance with the announced purpose of His advent. The Avatar comes to lead a lost, suffering humanity back onto the high road to God ... teaching us the great truths of the Dharma, how to lead a sacred and noble life, filled with love, service and God-consciousness following the great yoga paths of Bhakti, Karma and Jnana. He works slowly as a seed planted deep in the spiritual core within our innermost being. Long before we even know of His existence in human form and know of His world mission, and long before we recognise His immense effect of our own lives, He is already guiding, shaping, protecting, preparing us for the day when we come into His presence and start our real work. That is the wonderful gift of grace that we have all inherited by our good Karma. How fortunate we all are! He is with us as the eternal charioteer, the guide, the protector, the mother, the father, the teacher, the lover, the friend. Our work is to lead exemplary lives conscious of His teachings and striving steadily to please Him by loving ourselves by loving all, and by loving Him in all.

– Excerpted from the article of **AI Drucker** in “Golden Age, 1980”.

COMMUNICATION WITH SAI BABA

Rita Bruce

Miracles happen everyday. Swami saved my life and extended it. We can only imagine Swami's love for us but we can never know in this body the enormous amount of our Karmas He is taking upon Himself. His love knows no boundaries nor limitations; only continuous expansion of His constant attention to all our needs. Gratitude is a very small word but when we glorify it with unconditional love to all melting His heart, we feel His Divine Presence.

WE ARE ACTUALLY A communication tower. We send and receive information all day long through our senses, words and actions. Once Swami said to a woman in an interview, "You are fighting with your husband". "No, Swami," she replied. Swami continued, "Yes, you are fighting with your husband". "No, Swami," said the lady again. Sai Baba then explained: "Do you remember last Saturday night when you were at your friends house and you wanted to go home and your husband kept talking and talking? You went up to him and gave him a bad look. You were fighting with your husband". Well this was certainly another view of what kind of communication the Lord expects from us. This also made me more aware of our gestures.

Swami's Mysterious Ways of Communication

Our Lord communicates to us in dreams, visions, inner voice, in person, through a book with a special message designed just for our question. Also when he speaks to others and we hear it, it could be meant for us. Sai Baba has taught me many things about communication with the Lord and it is entirely different from that with anyone else.

He gives us bits of information, sometimes for us to work out like a puzzle piece but the answer can come then or years later.

This story is about one of the communication experiences we had with Swami that include most of the varieties. It began in a dream in 2000. It was a short simple dream. Swami in His brilliant orange robe came to me with a large ledger type book. On the top of the page was written "The Book of Life". The entire page was blank. Nothing written but He apparently signed it. I could not understand what it meant except what was written I was not to know. It was a puzzle with missing pieces, but I never forgot it.

Swami woke me up one night in 1987 when we were leaving the following morning and told me on our way home through Bombay (now Mumbai) have a book of Brighu reading. I read about it in Phyllis Krystal's book many years before but never had any desire for a reading. So, when Swami told me to go tomorrow, I said, "If this is true, let Phyllis cross my path before we leave". As we were getting into the taxi, here comes Phyllis up the steps. I asked her if she had the Brighu Pundit's name. She



replied, “You know I did not bring it for the last three years but decided to bring his address this time”. So, it seems that my request for a sign was fulfilled.

One of the questions that the Pundit asked us towards the end of the reading was if we wanted to know the age of our death. We said, “Yes”. He told me I would die at 73 years. It was a long way off since I was still in my early 50’s. Robert would die two years later. We were supposed to die in Prasanthi Nilayam. This was the year 1987.



Mystery of Blank Page

Fast forward many years later, Swami asked me to write the book that He named “Love of Conscience: Four Aspects of Human Nature”. This was in January 2000. I finished writing the book and published it in 2003. Swami touched the book in the verandah and blessed it. The following year He called us for an interview. We had the book with us and asked Swami if He would please sign the book. This is where the story takes a strange twist.

Swami agreed and Robert handed Him a pen. Swami signs my books usually “With Love Baba”. He wrote “W” and said the pen did not have ink. It appeared to have ink but Robert did the strangest thing. Instead of using a piece of paper, he took

the pen and started making circles larger and larger writing on the palm of his left hand. His palm was covered in dark ink. The ink was there. Then Swami signed the book with another “W” With Love Baba.

Then Swami said to me as a directive, find me a blank page. I turned the page and one side was blank and the other had something in print. He stated again, “No, I want a blank page”. I then turned to the very front of the book, nothing written on either side. He then signed again, “With Love Baba”.

We were trying to understand why the insistence on the blank page. When Robert left the interview room, his left palm was full of ink drawn in circles. But when we arrived in our room I asked Robert, “Where is the ink on your hand”? He replied, “I don’t know”. I asked again, “Did you wash it off”? “No, it has simply disappeared”. What a mystery? Did Swami erase something in our life?

Ten Years Extension

When we arrived home, we were sitting in our study and talking about this incident. I then remembered the dream years before of the blank page in “The Book of Life” and Swami insisting on a blank page to sign His name again. Then we figured out that the ink on his left palm could have been crossing out our life and it suddenly disappeared.



We spoke of this that night in the study wondering if true. Did Swami change our life? We had a Monet copy of a painting where all the ladies in the painting were walking in a park in the rain and each had a dark dress on, green, wine, brown. All dark colours but the same colours repeated. In the morning we were sitting again at the same place and sipping our coffee. I looked up at the painting and one of the ladies dark dress was changed to white...like the blank page!! Was Swami giving us a sign that this was true; He had altered our life. How did one dress turn white? It was a miracle. It was under glass frame and had changed! Only God could make this statement. We now were beginning to believe that somehow Swami has changed what was written in the "The Book of Life". The dream was in 2000 and now it is 2004.

The next drama in this story of puzzle pieces came in September 2009. We came to spend six months in Prasanthi Nilayam when I was 73 years old. We decided to have our second reading by the Suka Nadi in Bengaluru. It had been a long time since our first one in 1987. He told us that Swami had extended our lives by 10 years. Now this story had an ending. The palm writing was crossing out our life and the blank page was the extended life He was giving to us.

We arrived in September, and the first week in October I became ill with severe pain in my colon area. I could hardly eat. The doctors had given me every possible test at the Super Speciality Hospital but nothing

showed up. There was no pain medication only something one would receive for a headache. I spent three months in bed; no Darshan but Swami would come to Robert and tell him not to worry that Swami was taking care of me.

Around the 1st of December, Swami said that it would be over soon. I was expecting relief by one week but it did not happen. With each passing day I thought this will be the day. Swami finally after Christmas told Robert to take me home to America. Eventually, I got better!

To this day, I don't really know what the problem was that He was helping me to get through. Except...I was supposed to die at 73 that year and whatever happened only He knows. I am now 78; so He did extend my life and Robert's.

Miracles happen everyday. Swami saved my life and extended it. We can only imagine Swami's love for us but we can never know in this body the enormous amount of our Karmas He is taking upon Himself. His love knows no boundaries nor limitations; only continuous expansion of His constant attention to all our needs. Gratitude is a very small word but when we glorify it with unconditional love to all melting His heart, we feel His Divine Presence. Thank You Lord for allowing me to offer this gift to You.

– Rita Bruce is the author of "Vision of Sai, I and II", "Sathya Sai Parenting", "Love of Conscience: Four Aspects of Human Nature".

Nothing is greater than the Divine power. Once you have the Anugraha (Divine grace), what harm can the Navagrahas (nine planets) do to you? Work only for God's grace and surrender completely to Him.

– Baba

Annihilation of Narakasura

EVERYBODY KNOWS THAT THE festival of Deepavali is celebrated on the day when the demon Narakasura was killed by Sathyabhama, the consort of Lord Krishna. Why didn't Krishna Himself kill this demon, and got him killed by Sathyabhama? Not only that, Krishna ran away from the battlefield many times when He was confronted by Narakasura. What is the meaning of all this? Didn't Krishna have the power to kill the demon? Doubts like this may arise. There is a deep inner meaning of all these Leelas of Krishna. Narakasura had imprisoned many women and committed acts of violence against them. Therefore,

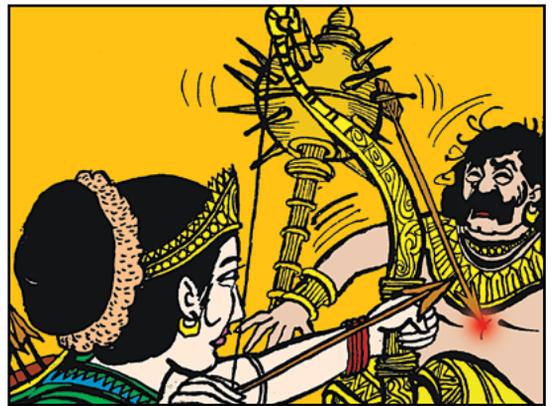
becomes weak and powerless. When a man flies into a rage, his body trembles, his nerves lose their strength and the temperature of his blood shoots up. Therefore, Krishna attacked Narakasura many times, but when Narakasura came to the battlefield in great anger, Krishna fled away from it. In this way, Krishna increased his anger more and more, and thereby aggravated his tension and excitement, exhausted his strength and made him totally powerless. Besides anger, Narakasura had jealousy towards Krishna. So, Krishna drained away his strength by enhancing his anger and jealousy. When he totally lost his power due to too much



Krishna devised a plan to get Narakasura killed by Sathyabhama.

Krishna devised a plan to get this tormentor of women killed by a woman alone. One who wields the sword is killed by the sword only. Isn't it?

Narakasura had too much anger in him. As the anger in a person increases, the energy of his organs decreases and he



Sathyabhama killed Narakasura when he became powerless because of his anger.

anger and jealousy, Krishna got him killed by Sathyabhama.

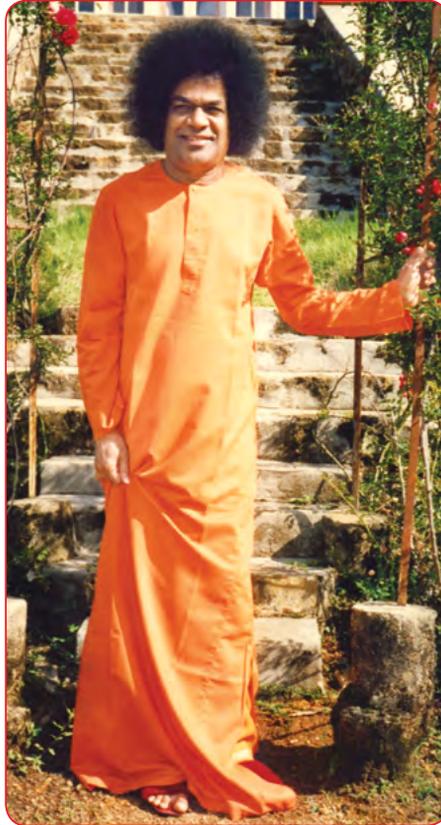
The saying 'your anger is your enemy' is not without meaning. Anger and jealousy cause man's downfall. This drama was enacted by the Cosmic Director Krishna to illustrate this truth.

SERVE GOD IN MAN

Ayesha Altaf

P RAYER IN ACTION is love. Love in action is service. But the terms in which prayer is actually taken today is saddening. Prayer is what pleases God, what brings an individual closer to the Almighty. Prayer directly and indirectly stresses on service to mankind and service to society. May it be a sudden occurrence or a weaker sector of society, our main aim should be service. Unfortunately, we the selfish beings, only consider prayer as a means of seeking the fulfilment of our own desires from God while some pray because they are forced to do so. Is this what prayer holds in our lives?

Every religion quotes service to be far more important than prayer. People in the world do not remember Gautama Buddha for attaining salvation; the actual reason he is worshipped is because of his kind and compassionate heart. The betterment of society does not really need frequent chanting of Mantras, but it surely is in quest of those who take a step forward towards being affectionate and service-minded. We worship God due to the belief that He is our Creator and He will look after



all our needs. But we need those who could contribute to eradicate poverty, help the poor and those who could add colours to one's life.

Remember always to "Serve God in Man", which clearly means that God resides in each one of us and that if we wish to serve God, we need not pray mechanically. Instead we need to serve the people around us. Kindness is sufficient enough to cure all those unbearable wounds that the world is prone to suffer. Kind words and deeds may seem short and easy to render but

their echoes are truly endless. Prayer on the other hand may be enormously deep, but it sometimes leads us nowhere.

Therefore, we need to be and live the change we wish to see, putting into practice true devotion to God in the form of service. Hence, "Hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray".

Salamalekhum. May Allah bless you. Khuda Hafeez. Sai Ram.

– From the prize winning essay in the Essay Writing Contest organised by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Karnataka in September 2015.

AN INSTRUMENT OF HIS DIVINE MISSION

Alida Parkes

My personal challenge in life is not to fail Swami – but live up to His expectations! In order not to fail Him, I ensure that He is always at the top of my priority list, before my family, my business and my personal life. Secondly, I dedicate all my thoughts, decisions and actions to Him by putting into practice His teachings, namely, the harmony of thought, word and deed. Finally, I do my very best to see Swami in every person I meet, and act as if He is watching me.

BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA has given us all a great opportunity in this lifetime. I am very happy to be a part of His Sathya Sai International Organisation and very grateful for this opportunity to express His love in action.

The first time I came to Prasanthi Nilayam, over 20 years ago, I was overwhelmed and deeply touched by the energy and vibration of love I felt when Swami walked into Sai Kulwant Hall – a feeling that has never left me. I stayed only for a couple of days, but it was enough for me to realise that I had found what I was looking for and also amply adequate to wish to be part of His Divine Mission.

The love that I felt, and still feel, whenever I think of Him, is so fulfilling, enveloping and reassuring that I have never felt the need to ask for anything else. Whenever I had the chance to speak to Him, I just felt the urge to express my gratitude for His love

and His blessings. I was always sure that this love would take care of me and remove all obstacles in my path.

Swami Takes Care of all our Wishes

The spiritual quest within me has been very active since I was a teenager, always looking for answers and explanations, but I practically knew nothing about Swami when I came first to Prasanthi Nilayam. So, I went to the Ashram bookshop and started reading a book that was

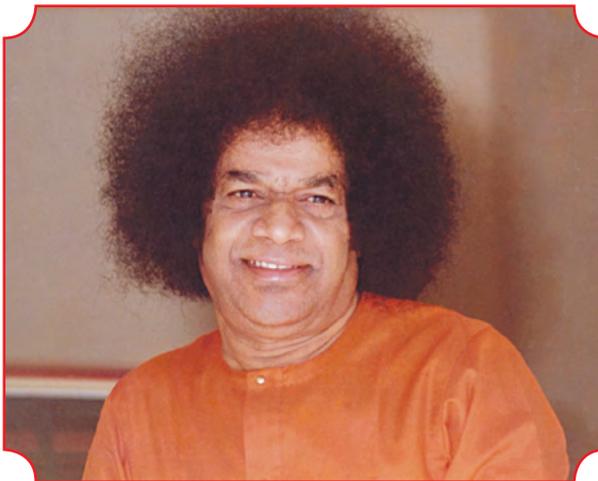
suggested to me: “A Catholic Priest Meets Sai Baba” by Mario Mazzoleni.

I soon realised that the author, Mario Mazzoleni and I were travelling along the same spiritual path. I was fascinated by his encounter with Swami and I wished I could meet the author to learn more. Of course, I did not know at that time that Swami takes care of all our wishes! Unknown to me, I was already part of His divine plan!

When I returned home, I visited a nearby Sai Centre and told the president that I had just visited Prasanthi Nilayam, and wanted to know more about their activities and offer my services. The president asked me if I could speak English and use the computer, which I confirmed. Then she immediately said: “Great! I had prayed to Swami for help, and here you are! I need a secretary and Mario Mazzoleni needs an assistant to translate Sai books. Are you interested”? I



was beyond being astonished! She offered me an opportunity to serve in the Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) and to meet the Catholic Priest Mazzoleni – two of my earnest wishes were being fulfilled even before I could tell anyone!



Challenges and blessings coexist here side by side, as if giving us a chance to learn to love and respect each other, and practise patience, tolerance and understanding. If we learn the lessons, we can heal our worldly wounds, fill

Mario Mazzoleni became my spiritual 'mentor'. By helping him to translate the books, Baba gave me an opportunity to deepen my understanding of His message and His teachings. Then, after a few weeks as the Sai Centre Secretary, I was introduced to Pietro Marena, the Central Coordinator, who offered me an opportunity to work with him as his Secretary. Under his guidance, I started becoming familiar with the administration of the Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO). Over the years, I have had the blessed opportunity to work with many Sathya Sai devotees and SSIO officers, as part of my offering to Swami, and as part of my own spiritual transformation.

ourselves with supreme peace, and return home recharged with love that is needed to change the world.

Swami could not have given me better support and more appropriate trainers, in response to my wishes. It was clear to me that Baba selects us, prepares us and encourages us to awaken to the call of universal divinity and to become instruments in His Divine Mission.

In this 'hospital', Swami puts each one of us face to face with our own defects, imperfections, flaws until we recognise them and overcome them. In this hospital, all patients suffer from the same illness – the ignorance of having forgotten their true Atmic Reality. Baba knows how to cure each one of us. He brought us together to become, at the same time, witnesses, beneficiaries and instruments of this amazing healing process – one that is transforming the world.

Super Speciality Hospital for Spiritual Seekers

For me, Prasanthi Nilayam is like a 'Super Speciality Hospital' for Spiritual Seekers.

Swami has given us all a great opportunity to be part of His Mission as members of the Organisation bearing His holy name. He tells us that when all people and objects are seen as reflections of God, peace and brotherhood will shine on earth. We can only call ourselves Sai followers when we put into action the principle of Sai, that is, the principle of love.

This is easy to say, but not easy to do. Personally, I focus my efforts on to "Love All, Serve All", "See God in All". Serving in the SSIO I have noticed that ego and



attachment are very similar and form the real obstacles towards unity. We are attached to our habits, traditions, cultures, ideas, and to our own likes and dislikes. Giving up the 'I' is what renunciation is all about. It means sublimating every thought, word and deed into an offering to God, saturating all acts with divine intent. Swami has been telling us over and over that the 'I' should be put aside. He is also giving us the means to do it.

In one of my very first interviews, Swami looked at me and said: "Remember three principles: Love God, Fear Sin and Practise Morality in Society". He repeated it twice, patting my head firmly as if He wanted to fix them in my brain! Then, to ensure I had understood and memorised His advice, like a school teacher, He said: "Repeat"! If we follow these three main principles, all-round progress is guaranteed.

On another occasion, Swami told me that to be able to recognise and listen to my inner voice, I just needed to repeat "Om Sai Ram, Om Sai Ram"; and to progress in my spiritual transformation, all I needed to do was "be peaceful all the time". With full trust and faith in Swami, I can say that if we are at peace with ourselves and the world, and if we dedicate ourselves to Swami constantly, offering Him all our actions, we cannot go wrong – all our actions will be sanctified.

What I Learnt from Swami

My personal challenge in life is not to fail Swami – but live up to His expectations! In order not to fail Him, I ensure that He is always at the top of my priority list, before my family, my business and my personal life. Secondly, I dedicate all my thoughts, decisions and actions to Him by putting into practice His teachings, namely, the harmony

of thought, word and deed. Finally, I do my very best to see Swami in every person I meet, and act as if He is watching me. These are small steps that keep me on the path to Him. I am sure that if we put Swami at the top of our list and if we focus on Him, He will take care of us and our families.

Of the many things that I learnt since I came to Swami, one in particular stands out – that we should grow in wisdom, and give up our ego. Today, people think that spirituality has no relation to our mundane life and vice versa. This is a big mistake. True divinity is a combination of spirituality and social obligations. We must realise that fame and greatness related to power, position or wealth are transient. They are lost when power, position and wealth leave us. But goodness is always respected. Hence comes the question: what is goodness? I believe it is living according to Dharma and justice, to love all and have faith in God.

We must accept the good in our daily lives and discard the bad. One must always be enquiring, 'Is it good?' or 'Is it bad?', 'Is it right or wrong'? Discrimination should not be limited to physical matters only. We must use discrimination in our vision – what we see; in our words – what we listen to; in our thoughts – what we think; and, of course, in our actions and behaviour. Only then will the word 'discrimination' acquire significance. I have learnt that fundamental instead of individual discrimination is a very essential requirement of life as a spiritual aspirant.

Detachment, faith and love – these are the pillars upon which peace rests. We must be involved but at the same time detached. This is another lesson I have learnt. We should be prepared to face every challenge of life with detachment. Detachment is



the key to success. Life offers all kinds of difficulties. We get easily depressed and confused when we encounter difficulties. We should strive to consider difficulties as challenges that test our spiritual strength.

Every thought, every word and every action has its reaction, reflection and resound. Therefore, we must listen to Swami and make our love pure. To purify ourselves, we must develop forbearance, which is serene patience and self-restraint under all circumstances, and being good to all, even those who may want to harm us.

Finally, I have experienced that to achieve anything in this world, discipline is indispensable. To become instruments in His Divine Mission, one needs to be an exemplar of His teachings. One must always be saturated with love and never use harsh words, for words are more fatal than arrows. One must always sympathise with those who suffer and those who are lost in ignorance.

In this world, there is no austerity greater than fortitude, no happiness greater than contentment, no virtue holier than mercy, no weapon more effective than patience. We cannot find peace outside. It is within our heart. The heart is always filled with peace, love and bliss. It is the source of all sacred qualities, such as compassion, love, tolerance, etc. This is what Swami keeps telling us: all that emanates from our heart is sacred; and all that comes from our head is full of ego and attachment.

Thus, if we want to be excellent examples of Swami's teachings, we must remember, in all our actions, to follow our heart and use our fundamental discrimination. For His Mission, Swami needs true followers— men and women of valour and courage; open-

Swami told me that to be able to recognise and listen to my inner voice, I just needed to repeat "Om Sai Ram, Om Sai Ram"; and to progress in my spiritual transformation, all I needed to do was "be peaceful all the time". With full trust and faith in Swami, I can say that if we are at peace with ourselves and the world, and if we dedicate ourselves to Swami constantly, offering Him all our actions, we cannot go wrong – all our actions will be sanctified.

mined and broad-minded people who can accept diverse viewpoints, yet possess the discrimination to judge right from wrong.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba simply says, "You cannot always oblige but you can speak always obligingly". He also says, "What the world needs today are men and women of good character". They must have the capacity to work and the humility to serve.

Swami has blessed us with His teachings and His guidance for many, many years. He has kept repeating the same concepts, the same universal truth to us, hoping that we will imbibe and practise them. By now, we should have them imprinted in our heads, hearts and hands. Still, unfortunately, sometimes we behave like we have not heard or understood a word from Him.

Sathya Sai International Organisation

If we trust Baba and recognise His Divinity, then we should be honoured to be part of His Divine Mission. We should be

grateful to have been given this opportunity to be His instrument, and to serve in His Organisation. We should be aware of the great fortune of having the Avatar's direct guidance at each step of our spiritual path, by being part of His Organisation.

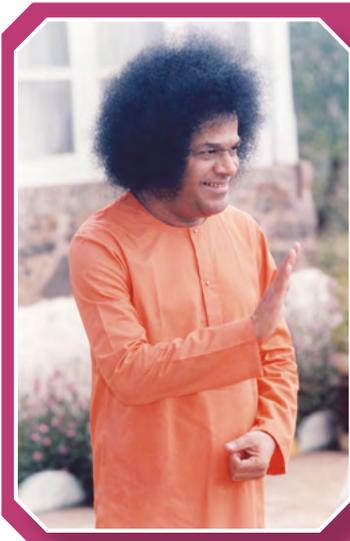
We are here because Swami has chosen us as instruments of His spiritual movement. Movement implies advancing, changing, transforming things for the better. Therefore, we should not be attached to the past or even the present, but accept change as a means of spiritual growth. We should move forward with unity – and Swami has said, “unity is divinity”. Unity is the ideal that we all should strive to attain. Any task can be accomplished through unity. The SSIO has immense potential to change the world, as it is present all over the world. All together, we can really change the world – if only we can visualise unity in diversity and thereby attain divinity.

Swami says that the very purpose of existence of the Organisation bearing His Name is to see Him in each and every person and serve all with a spirit of dedication and

reverence. This is a very important point. Very often, we do not pay attention to Swami's words, and since we do not fully understand the message behind it, we fail in achieving our goal. I have learnt in all these years serving in the SSIO that when I am asked to do something, I should respond as if the command came from Swami Himself. In this way, whatever I do, I do it for Swami and I do my very best, because nothing less can be offered to Him. You would also give the work in the Organisation the highest priority, if you knew that the assignment came from Swami Himself.

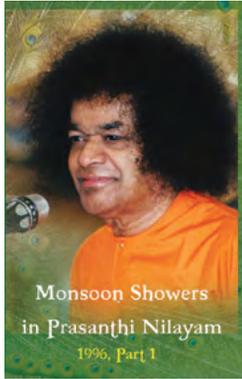
If we see Swami in each and every person, life will become much easier and we will not feel limited or overwhelmed by the challenges of our daily lives. Instead, we can simply feel that we are serving God, in a spirit of dedication and reverence, as Swami has said. We must always remember that Love is the Source, Path and Goal of the Sai Organisation.

– The author is the Chairperson, Zone 6 of Sathya Sai International Organisation.



Love alone can overcome obstacles, however many and mighty. There is no strength more effective than purity, no bliss more satisfying than love, no joy more restoring than Bhakti, no triumph more praiseworthy than surrender.

– Baba

*Book Review***Monsoon Showers in Prasanthi Nilayam, 1996**

**MONSOON SHOWERS
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"In order to become recipient of God's love, you should gradually reduce your worldly love. Do you really know what is good for you? When you surrender to Him totally, God will give you what is really good for you. Faith in Self and faith in God – this is the secret of greatness, Swami says. "You perform many spiritual practices like Japa, Tapa, Dhyana, Yoga, etc. But if the heart is not pure, everything becomes useless," He cautions.

Anger destroys your devotion, desires destroy your good deeds and greed destroys your knowledge... People in Dwapara Yuga could maintain their youthful vigour even after the age of 70. The reason was their proper food habits and ideal way of life. Today's Vidyarthi (students) are becoming Vishayarthi (seekers of pleasures) instead of seeking knowledge, says Baba.



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My Life is My Message

I am present everywhere, at all times; My Will must prevail over every obstacle; I am aware of the past, present and future, of your innermost thoughts and carefully guarded secrets. I am Sarvantaryami, Sarva Shakta and Sarvajna (omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient). Nevertheless, I do not manifest these powers in any capricious manner or merely for display. For, I am an example and an inspiration for whatever I do or omit to do. My life is a commentary on My Message.

– Baba

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