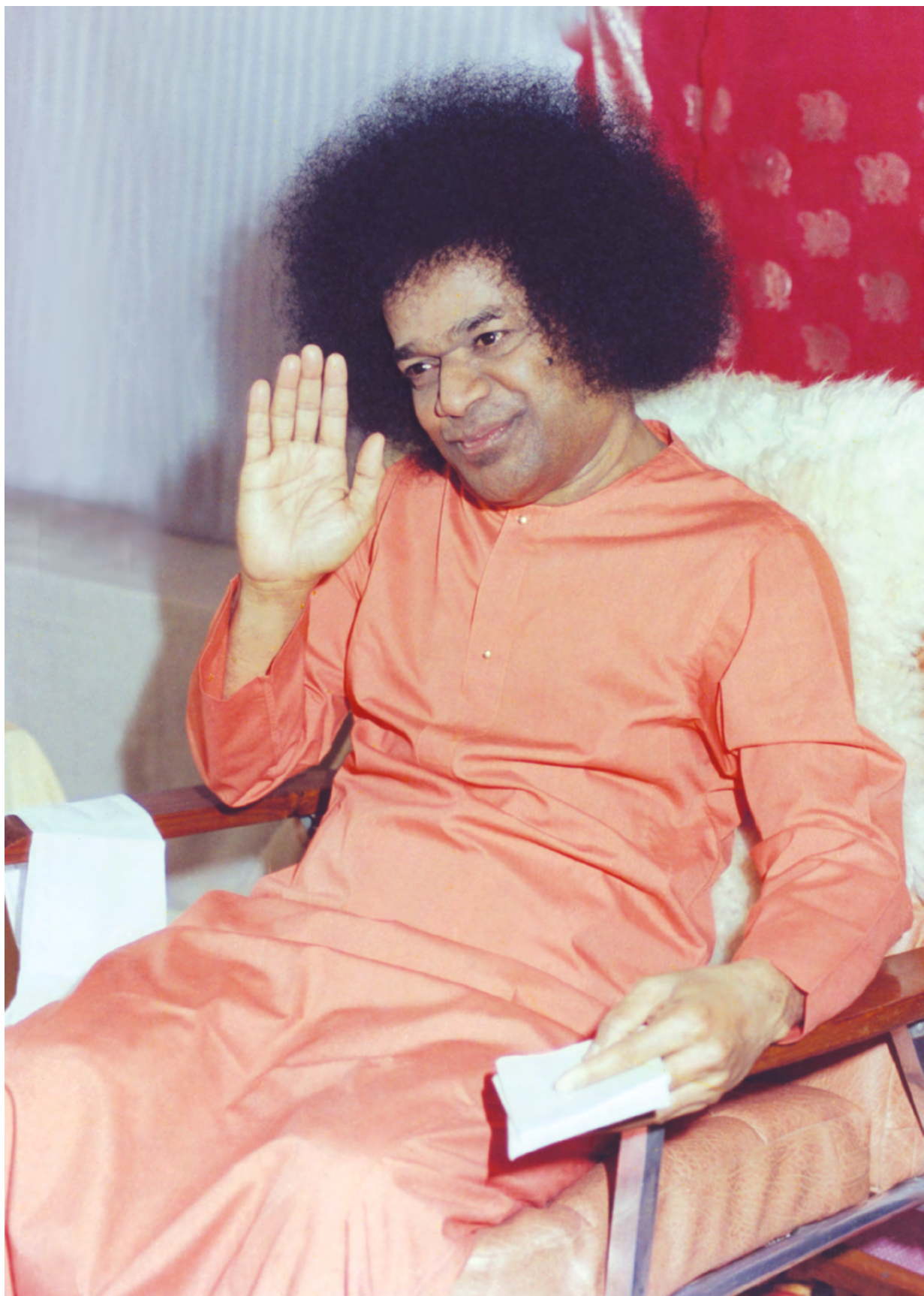


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*"Today we see people fighting for rights
without caring for responsibilities. Right
and responsibility are like two wings,
two wheels, two hands or two legs, which
are complementary to each other in all
activities. Truly speaking, man has no
rights. There are only responsibilities.
Do your duty sincerely. You have right
only to perform actions, but no right on
the fruits thereof; they do come naturally."*



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AVATAR VANI

ACQUIRE THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF

All names and forms are the manifestations of the Supreme Being who is the embodiment of peace and auspiciousness. He is Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute and non-dual. He is Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram (Truth, Goodness, Beauty).

(Sanskrit Verse)

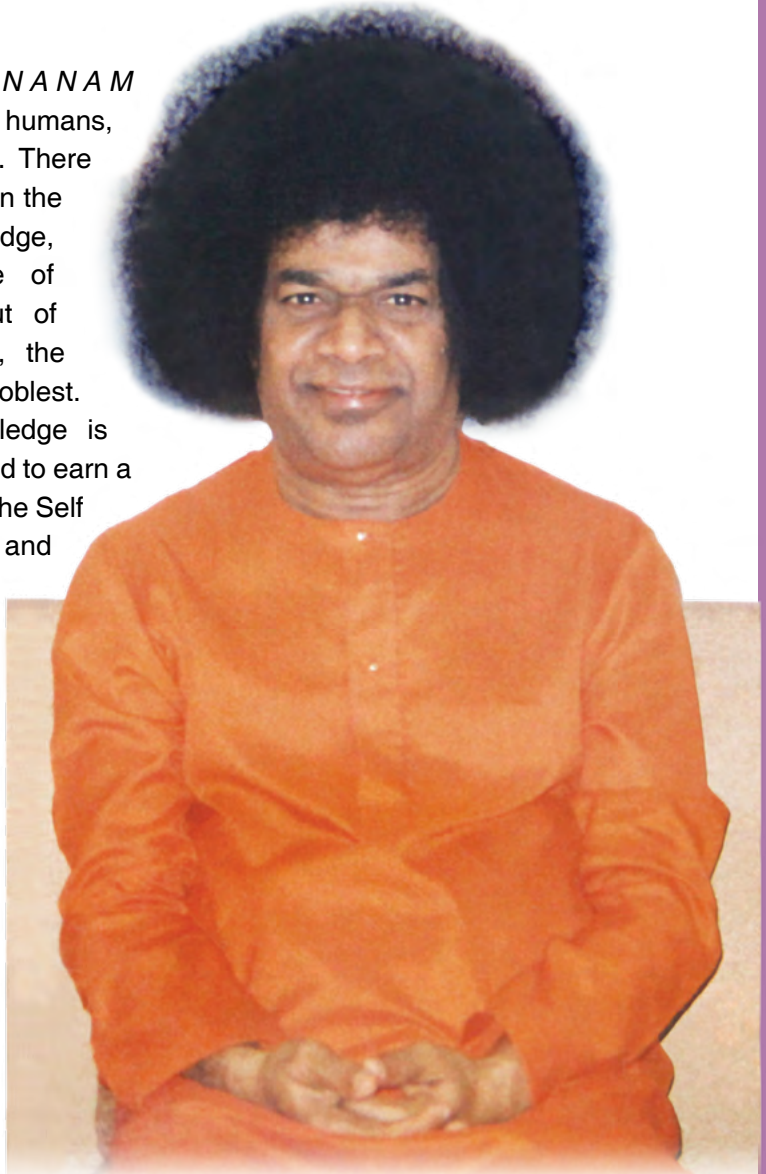
BEAR ALL TROUBLES WITH EQUANIMITY

Embodiments of Love!

MANAVANAAM JNANAM
Utthamam (for humans,
knowledge is supreme). There
are various forms of knowledge in the
world such as worldly knowledge,
literary knowledge, knowledge of
dance, music and so on. But of
all those forms of knowledge, the
knowledge of the Self is the noblest.
The worldly or physical knowledge is
useful in getting along with life and to earn a
name. But it is the knowledge of the Self
that gives you self-satisfaction and
mental peace.

Fill the Body with Sweetness of Humanness

Everybody struggles for
livelihood from dawn to dusk.
Man cannot live without
livelihood. However, livelihood
is based on worldly knowledge,
which is just the reaction,
reflection and resound of the
reality. But the knowledge of
the Self is eternal and pertains
to truth and other permanent
values. Worldly type of vision



cannot bestow Self-knowledge. Disciples of Adi Sankara carried out extensive studies on worldly knowledge. When Sankara saw a person repeating the rules of Panini grammar, he admonished him and said, *Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrun Karane* (the rules of grammar will not come to your rescue when the end approaches). Everyone should follow the path of truth and attain Divinity. Man should make constant efforts to acquire Atma Jnana (knowledge of the Self).

You find in the world many people who are rich, charitable, powerful, educated and intelligent but rarely you come across people striving to acquire Self-knowledge. People constantly struggle hard for worldly pleasures. Atmananda (bliss of the Self) and Atma Santhi (peace of the Self) cannot be derived from worldly pursuits. It is not based on physical world. Happiness and peace derived from individuals, sensual pleasures or objects is temporary. We must seek to experience permanent happiness and peace. Everything is present within man. Knowledge of the Self, knowledge of non-duality and knowledge of Brahman all are present within every individual. Constant effort is needed to bring out this hidden treasure. That which is manifested has to be refined so as to know its value. Upon mining, you get a diamond in rock form, which has little value as such. When it is cut into faces and polished, it acquires great value. This kind of refinement is called Samskar. Similarly, man has to undergo the process of refinement so that human values in him become manifest, promoting peace and happiness in society.

You get paddy by harvesting it. But you cannot consume it in its raw form. You can eat it only when it is cooked after its husk is removed. A bag of paddy weighing a quintal

The vision has to be broadened to such a level that you realise everything as God. That is true wisdom. God's eyes, ears, hands and feet are present everywhere. You cannot find any place that is devoid of Divinity. The Upanishads and the Gita are not meant for mere reading. They are meant for practice. Taste their essence, but do not waste their purport. This is true spiritual practice.

may cost 300 rupees, while a quintal of rice, that is after processing in a mill, may cost more than 800 rupees. You cannot wear cotton as it is. The cotton is to be converted into yarn and yarn woven into cloth. Then only can you make it into a shirt to wear it. This is the value of Samskar or refinement. It is refinement which gives value to a material. A human being comprising the five senses and the mind, along with its thought currents and agitations demonstrates merely human form. But he acquires immense value when he develops awareness and discrimination. You have a bamboo stick and a sugarcane stalk. The bamboo's value is limited to its strength, whereas sugarcane is given a higher value due to its sweetness. Similarly, human body becomes more valuable when sweetness of humanness is filled in it. When sugarcane is crushed, you get its sweet juice. When the juice is put on fire and made into sugar, its value increases substantially.

Similarly, man should bear all troubles and tribulations of life with equanimity. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. You find rocks and boulders everywhere. But

a sculptor chistles a boulder into a beautiful statue of a deity. Neither the original boulder nor the chipped off pieces have any value. Only the statue is revered. This is the effect of refinement. Our body is akin to a rock, and spiritual practice is like a sculptor. That Thou Art, say the Vedas. Man gets refined through Bhakti (devotion), Sraddha (steadfastness) and Viswasa (faith). First of all, one should have faith in one's own self, that is self-confidence; and then faith in God. This is the secret of accomplishment. He, who has no faith in himself, cannot repose faith in anybody. Faith develops when one starts enquiring, "Who am I? Am I the body? Am I the mind, intellect or the senses"? These are mere instruments. Thus, it is possible to arrive at the truth by making a deep enquiry through the instrument of intellect. When you wish to paint a wall, it is not enough if you have the paint and a brush. You should also have the skill to paint well. Knife is an instrument for cutting vegetables, and you are not supposed to kill people with it. You will attract punishment when you misuse the instrument. A doctor has the authority to use a knife for cutting a limb. Others are not authorised.

There were two neighbouring shops located in a narrow lane; one was a pan (betel) shop and the other, a coffee shop. One day the owners of these shops got into a fight, during which the pan shop owner brandished a knife at the coffee shop owner, resulting in a small cut on the hand of the opponent. He was arrested by the police, because he had no authority to use the knife as a weapon. But a surgeon openly announces the date of an operation involving a deep cut in the abdomen. Most of these operations are normally successful. But sometimes, an operation may fail, for

which the surgeon cannot be taken to task. By this example, we may realise that a person obtains a right basing on his merits only. Today we see people fighting for rights without caring for responsibilities. Right and responsibility are like two wings, two wheels, two hands or two legs, which are complementary to each other in all activities. Truly speaking, man has no rights. There are only responsibilities. Do your duty sincerely. You have right only to perform actions, but no right on the fruits thereof; they do come naturally. When a duty is discharged well, it gives you authority. Without discharging duty, how can you expect a reward?

Non-duality is Real Wisdom

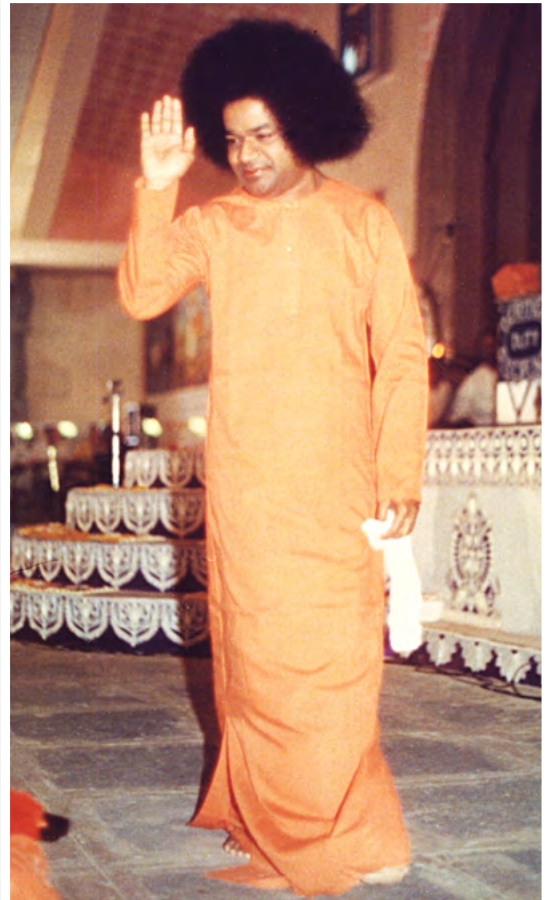
There are three paths to attain the goal of life – the path of Karma (action), the path of Bhakti (devotion) and the path of Jnana (wisdom). Each of them can take you to the goal or destination. Suppose, three people are travelling in a train – one in a third class, the second in second class and the third in first class. Even though all the three are travelling in the same train, the one in the third class will have to undergo stress and strain due to the crowded compartment. The second class passenger will be more comfortable, while the first class passenger will enjoy a very comfortable journey. Let us consider another example, in which one passenger is required to change trains at two or three places; the second passenger is sitting in a through compartment which automatically gets connected to the next train on the route; and the third passenger is sitting in a compartment that takes him directly to his destination. The first passenger's travel is like the path of Karma involving many difficulties. The second passenger's travel is like the path of Bhakti (devotion) which is like a through carriage;



the carriage does not change but it will be attached to another train. The third is the path of Jnana (wisdom) which is capable of taking you directly to the goal of life without any difficulty. It is like run through train, no need to change. What is Jnana? *Ekatma Darshanam Jnanam* (visualising one Atma in all is true wisdom). *Anekatma Darshanam Ajnanam* (seeing diversity is ignorance). You must consider all people as equal. You and I are one. All are one. Be alike to

a cloth of two metres length; and you gave it to the tailor for making into a shirt. The tailor first cuts it into several pieces, and then stitches into a proper shape. While the scissor is that which fragments, sewing is the unifying process. Mind fragments or looks at diversity, but the intellect unifies. Just as the unified form of shirt is fit to be worn, unified vision is required for a spiritual life. Many boys and girls carry a comb and a

Real intelligence lies in checking one's own mistakes. Man should always be watchful of his words, thoughts and actions. This is real spiritual practice. Without achieving control over these, any amount of Dhyana is of no use. The process of meditation, the meditator and the object of meditation should merge into a state of blissful experience. This should be the case with devotion as well. Unity of these three is true devotion, true meditation.



everyone. God is present in everyone. He is within you, around you, above you, below you. You can see God wherever you look at. Non-duality is real wisdom. It is unity in diversity. We should realise that this vision of oneness confers immortality.

The Upanishad says, *Advaita Darshanam Jnanam* (experience of non-dualism is wisdom). The attitude of fragmentation has to be curbed. Assume that you purchased

small mirror in their pocket. But an aspirant should carry with him the mirror of intellect and the comb of discrimination. If you carry these two with you, you will never look ugly and you will have true decoration and grace. Real decoration lies in proper use of the mind and intellect.

Control of Senses is Yoga

How can you cook a good meal without the use of a clean vessel? How can any tradition be noble when there is no purity of heart?
(Telugu Poem)

Purity of heart is yoga. Control of senses is yoga. Using the intellect, one must keep a constant watch on the senses and the mind. Intellect should act like a master over the senses. Most of the people are always beset with doubts. Everyone is a doubting Thomas. As intelligence is increasing, so are the doubts also. Real intelligence lies in checking one's own mistakes. Man should always be watchful of his words, thoughts and actions. This is real spiritual practice. Without achieving control over these, any amount of Dhyana is of no use. The process of meditation, the meditator and the object of meditation should merge into a state of blissful experience. This should be the case with devotion as well. Unity of these three is true devotion, true meditation. You say, "I am meditating on God". You sit with closed eyes. But the mind is running hither and

thither. Are you meditating? No! Who are you meditating on? You are meditating on the world. You should meditate on the Lord. You can meditate on the world also when you consider the world as divine. *Viswam Vishnumayam* (Lord Vishnu pervades the entire universe). Always meditate with this feeling. This towel is God, this mike is God, this table is God, everything must be considered as God. You may worship a picture as God, but you should not worship God as a picture.

The vision has to be broadened to such a level that you realise everything as God. That is true wisdom. God's eyes, ears, hands and feet are present everywhere. You cannot find any place that is devoid of Divinity. The Upanishads and the Gita are not meant for mere reading. They are meant for practice. Taste their essence, but do not waste their purport. This is true spiritual practice.

– Bhagavan's Discourse at Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 16th April 1993.

Just as there is oil in the sesame seed, butter in the milk, fragrance in the flower, tasty juice in the fruit, fire in wood, there is Divinity in this vast universe. The Divine is all-pervasive and is present in every being. It is the Divine Power inside that makes it possible for the eyes to see and ears to hear. The entire creation is the expression of the Will Power of God. Prakriti (Nature) is a manifestation of the Paramatma (Supreme Divine). Man is born to manifest and reflect Divinity. All constituents of Nature reflect their inherent qualities. Man also has to do so but is not reflecting his innate human quality.

CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

EASWARAMMA DAY

EASWARAMMA DAY WAS observed at Prasanthi Nilayam on 6th May 2017 to commemorate the sacred memory of the Divine Mother Easwaramma.

The morning programme was held at the Samadhi of the Divine Parents, Sri Pedda Venkama Raju and Smt. Easwaramma,



Devotees participating in the Easwaramma Day programme.

wherein floral and other offerings were made by the family members and dignitaries to the Divine Parents with great reverence and devotion. Elegantly engraved stone

tablets depicting the life history of the Divine Parents were unveiled on this occasion by Sri R.J. Rathnakar, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. A Bhajan session was held in a beautiful pandal after this, in which a large number of devotees took part. This was followed by Narayana Seva in which Prasadam of tamarind rice and sweet rice was served to all.

Reverential tributes were paid to Mother Easwaramma in a programme held in the evening in Sai Kulwant Hall. The programme comprised moving songs interspersed with insightful commentary, depicting the matchless virtues and ideal womanhood of Mother Easwaramma. Bhagavan's Divine Discourse followed this, in which He narrated the story of His birth and described the greatness of Mother Easwaramma. Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin".



Stone tablets depicting the life story of the Divine Parents, Sri Pedda Venkama Raju and Mother Easwaramma.

BUDDHA PURNIMA

More than 400 devotees including Bal Vikas children came from nine overseas countries, viz; Nepal, Lao PDR, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei to take part in Buddha Purnima celebrations organised by Sathya Sai International Organisation (Zones 4 and 5) at Prasanthi Nilayam on 10th and 11th May 2017. The theme of this year's celebrations was "Ahimsa Paramo Dharma".

The programme on 10th May 2017 began at 5.30 p.m. with lighting of the sacred lamp followed by traditional Chinese offerings at



Recitation of traditional Buddhist Slokas in Sai Kulwant Hall.

the Samadhi of Bhagavan. Recitation of traditional Buddhist Slokas by monks and devotees followed next. Thereafter, Dr. V.K. Ravindran, Chairman, Zone 4 addressed the gathering. Underlining the importance of putting the teachings of Buddha into practice in life, the distinguished speaker exhorted the devotees to develop love and compassion in heart. After the opening address of Dr. Ravindran, Sri Amar Karki, Central Coordinator, Zone 4 introduced the two guest speakers of the day. The first speaker was Ven Bhikshu Kondanya from Nepal who observed that the teachings

of Buddha were universal and practical, which were as relevant today as they were 2,500 years ago. The second speaker was Ven Phra Achan Khamhoung Touvlavanh from Lao PDR who reminded the devotees that Buddha Purnima was the important day to remember and follow the teachings of Buddha. Referring to the teachings of Bhagavan Baba, the learned speaker observed that the teachings of Bhagavan verily summed up the teachings of all the religions of the world.

These speeches were followed by colourful dances by Bal Vikas children of Nepal and Thailand which showcased the



A colourful dance by the children of Thailand.

rich cultural heritage of these countries. International Bhajans led by overseas devotees followed next and concluded with Arati.

The programme on 11th May 2017 began at 5.20 p.m. with an introductory speech of Ms. Bhavani Balani, Deputy Central Coordinator, Zone 5 of Sathya Sai International Organisation. Dwelling on the teachings of Buddha, the distinguished speaker observed that the desires of man were the cause of his sufferings which could be removed only by limiting desires and following the eight-fold path taught by Buddha. She then introduced the guest speaker of the day. The guest speaker was Prof. Lakshman Watawala from Sri Lanka

continued on page 20...



From our Archives

THE ESSENCE OF BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

THERE ARE MANY NON-believers in God who were ruined in life, but there are none who believed and failed in life.

Embodiments of Love!

In ancient times, many spiritual aspirants went out in search of knowledge of the Self, studied scriptures and visited holy places to acquire the experience of the Divine. But they could not get the wisdom they sought. Even though they recognised the distinction between the animate and the inanimate, they could not get spiritual illumination. True enlightenment is attained by the awareness of the identity of the Vyashti and Samashti (one and many). In spite of the passage of time, man has not been able to recognise his reality. Knowledge of the Self cannot be got by the study of scriptures or from preceptors or by the grace of great men. Brahman cannot be seen in the external world. It should be experienced only in one's heart. It is a mark of ignorance to seek the Self in the outside world.

Seek the Self Within

For 26 years, Buddha sought the realisation of the Self by studying scriptures, meeting sages and saints and listening to their teachings. He found that by these means he could not experience reality. He realised that the knowledge of the Self had to be gained through an inward search. He stopped the outward quest and gradually experienced knowledge of the Self from within. He then declared: *Buddham*



*Saranam Gachchhami, Dhammam
Saranam Gachchhami, Sangham
Saranam Gachchhami* (I take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and society). Through his enlightenment, he discovered the importance of Dharma and wanted to make it the basis of society. Buddha realised that self-realisation cannot be attained through penance or prayers or austerities. At the outset, Buddha emphasised the importance of developing Samyak Drishti (good vision). Good vision leads to good thoughts, good speech and good action.

Next he laid stress on Satsang (good company). Good company leads to good deeds. The four rules to be observed are:

*Tyaja Durjana Samsargam,
Bhaja Sadhu Samagamam,
Kuru Punyam Ahorathram,
Smara Nityamanityatam.*

(Sanskrit Sloka)

(Give up bad company; join good company, perform meritorious deeds day and night and remember what is transient and what is eternal).



Satsang does not mean merely association with good people. 'Sat' refers to the Divine. What is required is to seek the company of God who is the source of all bliss. When one's thoughts are centred on God, one's feelings, speech and actions get sanctified (Samyak Bhavam, Samyak Vak and Samyak Kriya). This leads to the purity of the inner sense organs. Purity in thought, word and deed is the requisite for experiencing the Divine. This triple purity is considered as the essence of humanness.

Buddha recognised this truth and experienced bliss. His mother Mayadevi had passed away nine days after his birth. After the death of his mother, Buddha was looked after by his stepmother Gautami. She fostered Buddha with boundless love. To perpetuate the name of his foster mother for the love she bestowed on him, he was called Gautama.

Buddha relied entirely on his own inner quest to experience his reality as he found that scriptural texts and preceptors were of no use.

Conquest of Sorrow

There are many in the world who preach spirituality but none of them has any experience. What is the use of studying books without personal experience or practice. Each one should make his conscience his preceptor. When the time of Nirvana was approaching, Buddha noticed that his step-brother Ananda was shedding tears. He beckoned Ananda and told him "Even till today, the world is not recognising the reality. There are thousands who experience sorrow at the sight of dying persons. But they make no effort to find out what experience is in store for the dead. I know the Truth about it. I am merging in that Truth. To shed tears at this prospect is not

justified. It seems to me that you are grieving over the exalted state that is impending for me. No human being should shed tears over the moment of death of any person. Tears are associated with the Divine and should be shed only for the sake of the Divine and not for trivial matters. You should shed tears of joy. Grief is not a proper state for man. Hence, no tears of sorrow should be shed".

Here is an illustration from our daily experience – while going in a bazaar, if a person sees someone crying he asks him, "Why are you crying"? Other passersby also question him. If in the same bazaar, another person is going about in a jolly mood, no one goes to him to enquire the cause of his happiness. Happiness is considered to be the natural condition of man. He seeks it all the time. Sorrow is repugnant to man. It is a weakness of man to give room to grief. By falling prey to grief in many lives, man is perpetually plunged in sorrow. For a person who has firm faith in God, there will be no cause for sorrow. Those who give way to sorrow are persons who have not understood the Divine Principle. God is one. He appears to people in different names and forms. Failing to recognise that God is one, people suffer from many difficulties. They worship God as Buddha, Rama, Krishna, Jesus, etc. These names have been given after their advent in the world; these are not inherent in them. The names are of passing significance.

All that is connected with body is temporary and transient. What men should seek is enduring bliss. "Happiness is union with God".

Man's Guiding Stars

Buddha prescribed five duties: good vision, good thoughts, listening to good



things, good speech, good actions. These five-fold duties constitute true Sadhana (spiritual practice). Man is misusing the talents given to him by the Divine. He is giving free vent to the six cardinal vices like lust, anger and greed. They are not the gifts of the Divine. They have been fostered by the food people eat. They are animal qualities which have to be got rid of. People should speak the truth and avoid speaking what is unpleasant even if it is truth. The entire gamut of human life should be based on truth.

Bharatiya culture has placed the foremost emphasis on "Speak truth; act righteously". Speaking truth is a supreme virtue for all people, anywhere. In any circumstance, one should adhere to truth. Truth is God incarnate. Righteousness should accompany one like a shadow. When you have truth and righteousness as your guiding stars, you can achieve anything in life. All powers are inherent in these two virtues. Man can realise bliss only when he turns his vision inward. Only proximity to God can confer happiness. It cannot be had elsewhere, from anyone else.

It is a mark of ignorance to expect that some other person will give you happiness. Buddha felt sad that people should be subject to such ignorance. He practised many spiritual exercises and came to a certain decision. He decided to go to Gaya and experience bliss by his own ways. He found the source of bliss within himself. He realised it could not be got from outside. Every man's heart is the dwelling place of God. Hence, everyone should take good care of it and cultivate it as the source of divine bliss.

Buddha did not attach any importance to Yajnas and Yagas and other religious

rituals. The reason was that he felt that it was more important to ensure that the five sense organs were pure to begin with. Buddha sought to find out why the mind felt disturbed. He could not bear to see anyone suffering. He was deeply grieved at the sight of persons afflicted with old age. He was intrigued at the sight of a dead body. None of these natural happenings gave him peace of mind. Buddha considered the movements of the planets and the sun and the stars as natural phenomena. He undertook many spiritual exercises to find out what transcended these natural phenomena. Failing to find the answers by these exercises, he approached many great elders to find the answers. None could give him satisfactory answers. Ultimately, he reached Gaya and sat under a banyan tree to meditate and realise truth.

Because Buddha did not interest himself in the study of the Vedas or in the performance of Yagas and Yajnas, he was dubbed an atheist. This is utterly wrong. Buddha was a pure-hearted person. He could not bear the sight of anyone in pain. He realised that it was wrong for anyone to cause harm to others. Hence, he declared: *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma* (non-violence is the supreme Dharma). No one should cause hurt to others by speech, action or in any other way. Buddha taught that people should adhere to truth and uphold it.

Among Buddha's teachings the foremost were Sathya (truth) and Dharma (righteousness). These two are the teachings of the Vedas: Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara (speak truth, practise righteousness).

– Excerpted from **Bhagavan's Buddha Purnima Discourses.**



DIVINE LOVE OF BHAGAVAN

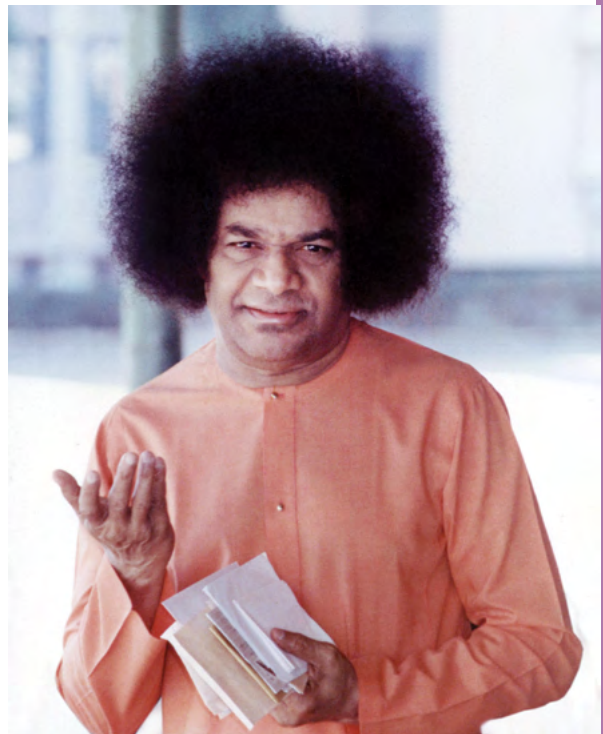
Kuppam Vijayamma

When you make holes in a pot of nectar, the liquid spilling from every hole is the same nectar, the taste is the same, the fragrance is the same. The Divine One who is conferring this boon is also the same. Today, tomorrow, always, He is the same. No change.

“LOVE IS NOT ONE-WAY TRAFFIC. It is give and take policy,” said Swami. Love is the inborn nature of every being in the world. The more you give, the more you receive. Love is limitless. It is to be experienced only as a reciprocal relation. Love is always a mental reflection that radiates the inner feelings and fills both God and His devotee with joy.

I was fortunate enough to enjoy and experience close proximity of my Beloved Swami, the Personification of Love. Before coming to Bhagavan, what Love meant to me was to speak softly, to behave nicely, to share and serve affectionately, to work sincerely, to help the needy selflessly, and always move about happily, merrily, like a butterfly.

But after coming to Bhagavan, I began to understand the prime value of love, the profound meaning of love, the depth of love and the selfless attitude of love since our Master of Love taught us and trained us personally. So fortunate were we, to come to Bhagavan at an early age. I was only thirteen years old at that time. But the lessons learned about truly loving God were revealed to each one of us over time: you are the Beloved of God and God is



your Beloved. That is the Divine love, the only true, pure love. That is the reciprocal relation that is the highest goal for a human being. Then “He and I” become “We”, which dissolves into “We and We” are One.

Living in Love

In the Old Mandir days of our young Bala Sai, during 1945, when we first had His Darshan, there were only a few people



in the Mandir. They were a mixed lot of young, middle aged, old, having their own traditions, cultures, beliefs, etc. Our Bala Sai played multiple roles as the CEO without Directors; the Chief Manager without any deputies; the Purchase Manager without any helpers; the Medical Doctor, sans ICU, nurses, equipment, etc. In spite of all the diversities, there was so much coordination that everything from big to small passed off smoothly. Now I understand how His love for us became our love for Him. It was His love that made everything run smoothly. His Will became our will. It was, to my current perspective, an unspoken mutual understanding that God wants to love us directly, not through another person or anything else.

At first, I presumed that everything running smoothly was due to the miraculous planning and implementation of our Divine Master. But this conclusion was wrong. It was Swami's love that penetrated the hearts of the residents that made wonders. When Swami showered all His love, the residents also equally reciprocated. But this was not the whole of it, as all those under the umbrella of His love synchronised with each other with total understanding. All of us lived like one family, though our thoughts were diversified. Only after many years we understood that this bond of love was not only between Swami and each individual resident, but it was like a web where all were interconnected. The flow of this connection between all of us worked wonders to make all the residents happy at all times. This wonderful selfless love as taught and sowed by Swami made everyone happy at the Old Mandir and this loving attitude spread with equal supremacy wherever we went. These precious opportunities to experience living in

love on a daily basis, once given by Swami, stay strongly with one for ever and ever.

During these blissful times, there were many misunderstandings and clashes among the residents, but it was all due to our mischievous Bala Sai's handiwork to show how we tend to take ourselves too seriously. This was free entertainment on a daily basis and provided a good dose of humour for all to relax and have a good laugh. Whenever Swami intervened and resolved the issues besides the dose of humour it was a great eye-opener to all those who witnessed such of His Leelas, because the interventions and resolutions were always based on His love for each of us.

A Loving Heart is the Abode of God

While the Lord of Love graciously walked so gently among us, talking and receiving letters from the devotees, He looked like a moon surrounded by stars. His face glowed with divine splendour and effulgence of surpassing beauty. His soft eyes and deep looks mesmerised one and all, penetrating their hearts. The Supreme Love of Swami freely swept through the hall. Wow! My eyes were glued to His exuberant form. My heart was in rapture. I was totally immersed in joy.

Our Beloved Lord taught everyone to work selflessly. He said, "Actions are louder than words". He proved to me and many others that there was no greater power or wealth, no experience superior to that of unfathomable, deep love, unconditionally given to each of us at birth – God's cherishable gift to humanity. We learn as we grow, the many facets of divine love, so much deeper than what the world thinks is love – gifted to each one, to discover the true depths of divine love and to achieve the goal of life – which is to live every moment in



expansion love for everything and towards all beings.

The Lord showers His love wherever you are. Your heart is His true abode. No need to run from pillar to post, door to door in search of love. No season or reason for it. Following in the footsteps of our Lord of unconditional love, sow the seeds of love, sing the song of love, dive into the ocean of love by offering sincere prayer to Him:

Oh! Lord! Take my love and let it flow in fullness of devotion to Thee!

Oh! Lord! Take my mind and thoughts; let them be in tune with Thee!

Oh! Lord! Take my hands and let them work incessantly for Thee!

Oh! Lord! Take my everything and let me be an instrument to serve Thee!

What a wonderful, soul-filling reward to have heard our Loving Lord with His sterling voice as He sang this song of loving devotion!

When the mind is turned towards things of the world, it is called Anuraga (attachment) and if it is turned towards God, it is called Prema (love). Love is the fruit of love. Love is comparable only with love. Love can offer only love itself. Love cannot be described by poetry. It cannot be proved by the mind or the spoken word. Hence, the Vedas declare that it transcends the mind and speech. Love is priceless and indescribably precious. Its sweetness is unexcelled. The scriptures have described Amrita (nectar) as indescribably sweet. But love is far sweeter than nectar.

Divine love is the final goal to eternal happiness for devotees of God. I was fortunate to experience what is called 'Live to Love. Love to Live' – from my young age to my old age, as 80 years passed in the flood of joy. I enjoyed the pure love of Bala Sai, with His divine childhood pranks, and grew into understanding the many-faceted diamond of the unconditional love of Bhagavan Sai. Now I am enjoying the Divine Love of Sai Satchakravarthy (Lord of the universe), the Sarvadevateeta (one beyond all gods and goddesses) Sai. Though the form and formless stages are different, there is no change in His serene love. When you make holes in a pot of nectar, the liquid spilling from every hole is the same nectar, the taste is the same, the fragrance is the same. The Divine One who is conferring this boon is also the same. Today, tomorrow, always, He is the same. No change.

Living in Swami's proximity, singing His glory day in and day out, filling every niche and corner of the mind with pure thoughts, suffused us with everlasting bliss, all the time. Sipping His nectarine love always, our bodies, minds and souls danced in Divine romance. Such an experience remains forever between you and Bhagavan, for, as you lose yourself in God, God loses Himself in you.

– **Smt. Kuppam Vijayamma is the author of the famous book "Anyatha Saranam Nasti" and many other books on Bhagavan Baba.**

When you do not know, confess that you do not know; if you pretend to know and try to cover up ignorance, it is very dangerous, especially to the spiritual aspirant.

– Baba



SHEKHAR SRINIVAS

EXPERIENCES WITH BHAGAVAN BABA

MY ELDER BROTHER SRIDHAR tried for admission in Baba's college but could not get it. He came back home and cried till his tears ran dry. He did not eat food for the next three days. My mother and I finally succeeded in persuading him to start eating. It was my turn the next year. I completed my board exams for the Higher Secondary School. Since my parents and brother insisted that I try my hand in Swami's college, I meekly agreed. I was in fact least interested in moving away from home.

The requisite application was sent to Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. The time for the written test came. I went to Parthi accompanied by my brother. I wrote the entrance test with the intent of not getting selected. I went through the interview in a daze, praying silently, "Baba, Mujhko Jaane Do" (Baba, let me go).

In Swami's Fold as Student

But it happened – the final list of selected candidates was displayed on the notice board. I was confident of not being selected. Imagine my shock when my name appeared in the list! My brother cried in joy that I got selected. He accompanied me to the hostel and handed me over to the then Warden of the Prasanthi Nilayam hostel.

Time rolled by and I gradually got acclimatised to the College-Hostel-Mandir

routine. However, my stomach could not adjust itself to the hostel food. Very soon, I had a bout of dysentery. I went to the General Hospital where Dr. Alreja prescribed some tablets for me.

For many days, I dilly-dallied on taking the antibiotics. Days passed by but there was no improvement in my condition. Then one day, unable to bear the distress I threw all the tablets in the waste paper basket and rushed to the Mandir straight from the Institute without waiting for the Darshan line. I went and sat in the first line, just opposite the interview room.

Swami finished his regular Darshan and then came to me. I was trembling, fumbling and stumbling. I finally mustered enough courage and told Bhagavan "Pet Mein Dukhta Hai" (my stomach is paining). There was complete silence for the next few seconds. Then Swami looked at me and enquired, "How many months pregnant"? I thought Swami was asking someone else, but no, it was me. Swami continued His enquiry on the same lines; everyone burst out into laughter. Swami further asked me, "Boy or girl or twins"? I was enjoying the scene. After a few minutes of this fun-filled Divine drama, Swami materialised Vibhuti and put it directly in my mouth. My stomach pain vanished within three minutes.

When I was at Parthi, a friend of mine presented me a copy of "Bhagavad Gita As It Is" by Swami Prabhupada. I took the copy to Swami for His autograph. Swami asked me, "Do you read Gita"? I answered, "No". Swami further asked, "Will you read this"? I answered, "No, I am not going to read the Gita. I am going to unlearn and then re-learn". Swami patted me, appreciating me for my honesty. He signed the copy of the



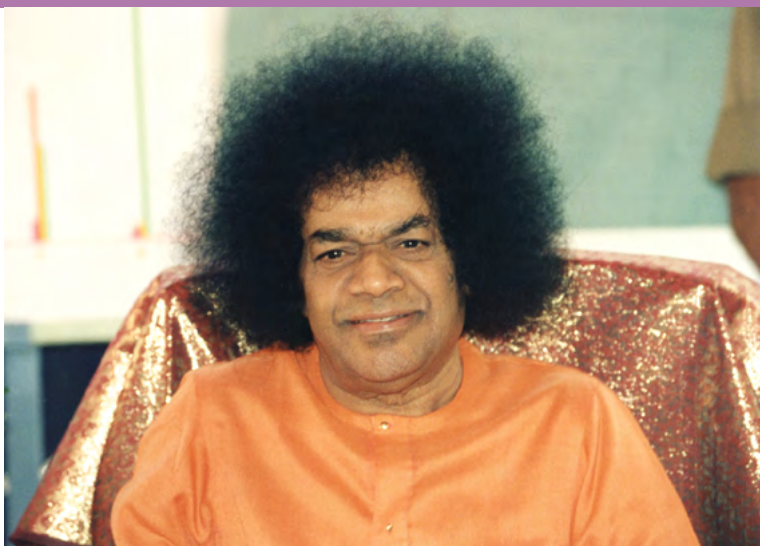
Gita which is one of my most precious treasures. Out of His infinite grace, Bhagavan gave me Padanamaskar as well.

Awakening of Kundalini

In the hostel, my room was next to that of the Warden. I used to wake up at 2 a.m. every morning, take a cold water bath and then proceed to the hostel terrace to attempt meditation. I never knew how to meditate. But I always used to sit cross-legged with a firm resolution and a humble prayer to Bhagavan to teach me the techniques of Dhyana. And then it happened – my inner energies opened up and I felt awakened by the Kundalini Shakti. What normally takes decades for yogis was granted to me by Bhagavan in just two months!

My Kundalini rose from the Mooladhara Chakra and proceeded till the Sahasrara Chakra. I also took permission from the Warden and the Registrar for taking the vow of Mounam (silence) for 10 days. Both of them agreed and I successfully completed my vow of silence. On the last day of my Mounam, Baba granted me the much-coveted Samadhi experience of torrential, unending bliss. This experience lasted for nine clear days. It took me six months further to return to the normal level of consciousness after this Divine experience. During this period of Sadhana, my intuition was enhanced and I even started composing poems spontaneously by Baba's grace.

After I came back from Parthi, I joined a finance company at Mumbai. My brother by this time was pursuing his Medicine at Belgaum. It was his final year. He was a gold



medallist. He was a versatile singer and an eloquent speaker having won many State awards. My brother was a staunch devotee of Bhagavan. He participated in a drama on Shirdi Sai Baba in Bhagavan's Divine Presence at Dharmakshetra (Mumbai). He also composed some Bhajans on Swami.

Then one day news came that my brother passed away at Belgaum. He had saved three girls from drowning. He had gone in for a second jump to rescue a physically challenged boy but both of them got stuck in a whirlpool and died. I went with my parents to Belgaum. Since my parents were in a state of shock, they had to be hospitalised. I had to go and perform the final rites of my brother.

I began to wonder whether to leave Bhagavan after all that had happened or continue following Him? My parents started attending the Samithi activities regularly. They taught me a big lesson that day, never to link one's devotion to Bhagavan with anything that happens on the Karmic plane. I went through many troubled nights. I started attending Bhajans but would run away the moment someone sang a Bhajan that my late brother used to sing.



Blissful Experience at the Bank of Ganga

My search continued for the highest purpose of life. I spent many days at Sivananda Ashram, Gayatri Ashram and Neem Karoli Baba Ashram. I sat at the feet of many holy masters and adepts for months on end. I also attended the Maha Kumbha Mela at Allahabad, Nashik and Haridwar.

One of my early experiences was on the bank of the Ganga. I had tried various Sadhanas and was exhausted. As I was watching the Ganga flow by me, I was thinking of mundane affairs as to whether I had enough money to survive for the next few days. Suddenly, my mind started spontaneously going inwards. I felt the earth was slipping under me and the sky was expanding and receding simultaneously. A moment later, I felt some terrible force springing from the base of my spine like an atomic explosion. I felt that my body was vibrating very fast and saw many currents of light through my third eye.

This was the third time that I experienced supreme bliss (the first two times being in the presence of Bhagavan Baba at Parthi, when I was studying). This continued for a very long time. I felt that my body had started contracting until this feeling of bliss became unbearable. I lost complete awareness of my body. When I regained consciousness, I saw a Naga Sadhu sitting next to me. He gave me water to drink. I offered my Pranams to him. After this experience, my Kundalini started going up and down continuously. I became listless and inactive, and so the abated bliss continued. I saw everything in nothing and nothing in everything.

At around 3 a.m. in the morning one day, I could clearly hear divine music. Initially,

I thought that it was coming from outside. Only later did I realise that it was from inside. I started understanding the intuitive language and the vibrational frequency. During many nights, I used to see my body made of particles of light. After 8 to 10 days, I returned to normal consciousness by constant practice of Hatha Yoga.

Premonition of Father's Death

It was on 28th January 1992 at 7 o' clock in the evening that Bhagavan visited Thane (Mumbai). All the devotees of Thane Samithi were overjoyed. Swami blessed my father and me and all other devotees. My father was a coordinator in Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Thane district.

It was 18th February 1998. I told my father, "Next year, the same date is not auspicious for you. You will have some major health problem related to your heart". My father reasoned out, "Baba is there. Why should I worry? Nothing will happen to me". I somehow got hold of a priest and got Mahamrityunjaya Homam done in my father's name. The next year, on 18th February 1999, in the evening my father succumbed to a heart attack. As he was nearing his end he asked me, "Who will look after you once I am gone"? I promptly replied pointing to Bhagavan's photo, "Swami will look after us, you don't worry". I then chanted Sai Ram in his ears and he closed his eyes peacefully.

Experiences at Mount Kailash

Mount Kailash is at a height of 24,000 feet in the Himalayas in Tibet. Four prominent rivers originate from Kailash, namely, Brahmaputra, Indus, Sutlej and Karnali. It was in June 2006 that Swami granted me the opportunity to visit Kailash Mansarovar.



Having reached Pasupatinath Temple, Kathmandu, Nepal, we went to a particular shop to keep our bags and there in the shop I saw a huge life-size photo of Bhagavan. Again, when we were in China, while having dinner one night, I saw clearly that one of the gas cylinders bore Swami's emblem.

I also dreamt one night while resting at Mansarovar that Rahu and Nandi were blessing me at Kailash. While doing Parikrama (circumambulation) of Mount Kailash, we reached a height of 20,000 feet. I was completely exhausted. All of a sudden, I saw a lady in a green Sari, who caught hold of my hand and escorted me to a safer zone on the other side. She then disappeared right in front of my eyes.

My visit to Kailash Mansarovar was covered by the Aastha channel on the TV

which was telecast later. I was the first person in our group to take the holy bath at Mansarovar. The temperatures were freezing cold. When I went in for a second dip in the name of my mother, something like a stone hit my leg. I just picked it up and found that it was an idol of Ganesh which I still treasure with love. When I slept at night at Kailash, I saw the picture of Baba and my mother all throughout night. Swami literally ferried me through the Kailash trip.

In our hopelessness Baba is the only hope, in our desirelessness Baba is our only fulfilment and in our tremendous helplessness, suddenly Bhagavan starts helping us.

– The author, Sri Shekhar Srinivas from Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning in 1988.

...continued from page 10

who spoke about the code of discipline for a layman and exhorted one and all to follow the path of goodness and lead a noble life.

After this, an audio clip of a Buddha Purnima Discourse of Bhagavan was aired on the public address system, in which Bhagavan explained the main teachings of Buddha emphasising that the use of five senses in a sacred way could lead man to the path of liberation. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan "Vahe Guru Vahe Guru Vahe Guru ji Bolo". A beautiful dance number by the children of Lao PDR followed this. The children delighted one and all by their synchronised movements and expressive gestures.

A musical skit on the ideal friendship between Lord Krishna and His childhood friend Sudama was thereafter performed by the Bal Vikas children of Nepal. The children enacted the story so well that it touched the



A folk dance by the children of Nepal.

heart of all spectators. Two more joyous folk dances by the children of Nepal followed this, after which they performed Pancha Buddha Dance in which they showed Buddha in his five forms, each donning a distinctive colour dress and depicting a specific Mudra (posture). International Bhajans by overseas devotees followed this and the programme came to a close with Arati at 7.15 p.m.



Effulgence of Divine Glory

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH DIVINE LOVE

AFTER MOST OF MY FAMILY settled in London, I visited them quite often during my vacations from my teaching assignments in the U.S.A. During one of the visits in the early 1980s, Papaji found out that I believed in Sathya Sai Baba as my God, the Kali Yuga Avatar. He was shocked and said to me, "I don't know where I went wrong that you are calling a human being God. He may be a great man, but God is the Supreme Power – the Great Energy that makes us all alive"! Therefore, he thought that I was calling a Pundit, a Sannyasi or a Swami as God. In his mind, those kinds of people were all after money.

I would try to explain to him that Baba was different and that He was only teaching us to live a life following the principles of Truth, Love, Righteousness, Non-violence and Peace. I would explain that Sai Baba was not after money, saying that He was teaching us to share our money with the truly needy by doing selfless service for them. At the time my father and I had these initial conversations, I had already visited Puttaparthi and witnessed Baba's charitable works. I had seen with my own eyes how He had transformed the village with free education, healthcare and food for the poor (and later, clean water). Every year, during my visit, I saw that these good works had grown like mushrooms compared to even the previous year. Indeed, Baba very much reminded me of my father and what he had always taught us, by word and deed.



Eventually, I was able to convince my father to visit Puttaparthi with my mother and me, to see Sai Baba and His work. I came from Boston and my parents from London. We were supposed to arrive and meet in Puttaparthi on the same day, but instead I had three worrisome days without news (due to the communication limitations of the time) before they arrived and told me that their plane had mechanical difficulties



and they had to wait in the Middle East for a new plane to arrive.

The night of their arrival, my father was sent to the men's shed – a housing hall with an adjacent outdoor bathroom; and my mother to the women's shed. My father experienced one of his frequent and severe leg cramps, this time a particularly severe one. As unpleasant as this experience was, it enabled him to witness the love and compassion of many of the followers and volunteers, some of them doctors. There were fifty or sixty people in the shed, and when my father expressed his pain, they all gathered around him and cared for him. They gave him a glass of salt water to calm his cramp, and then massaged his leg. This was the first time my father was confronted with such love and compassion from his fellow human beings. It began to change his perspective about Baba and His followers.

One day, Mama and I were seated in the Poornachandra Hall where Baba was going to give His Darshan. To our left, most of the men were sitting on the floor (in the traditional Indian way), and I saw Papaji sitting on a chair in the rows reserved for the physically challenged (elders unable to sit on the floor, and others with health problems; this type of seating is also available on the women's side).

When Swami entered, I saw Him stand in front of Papaji's chair for what seemed like a long time. However, I could not hear if any conversation was taking place. After Darshan was over, I asked Papaji if he was able to ask Baba all those questions he had, to clear his doubts, but he simply said, "I do not know what happened, but I just could not speak!"

During my father's stay, he visited Puttaparthi and saw the bazaar (market).

There he encountered people that he perceived as needy. They were not poor, but they lacked sophisticated things. For instance, when he went to the hairdresser, he noticed that their tools were antiquated. As usual, Papaji began to make a list of all the things he would buy and send to these people when he returned to England!

One day, while he was shopping in Puttaparthi, Papaji bought a metal calendar, which had a full-length picture of Swami on it; Baba's picture went from His crown of hair down to His feet. The calendar was composed of metal plates, similar to playing cards, which listed the months, days and years; attached to the main plate were pockets to hold the unused plates, positioned just above Swami's feet. Papaji liked the calendar very much and he bought six, one for each of his five children and one for his house. He placed his calendar above the fireplace in the dining room. Upon awakening in the morning, before even making a cup of tea, it became his ritual to go and change the day plate of the calendar and, at the end of each month, the plate.

I visited my parents in England as often as I could for Christmas. During one of those visits, early in the morning, while having my tea with him, he asked me to look at the calendar – especially at Swami's eyes. I looked and found Swami's eyes wide open, and I told him that. He then explained that whenever he looked at Swami's face, Swami would wink at him! Sometimes Swami would do this with His right eye, sometimes His left, Papaji insisted. I chuckled, as I knew Swami was letting Papaji know that He was not just a picture or a person, but God; and that He was therefore very much present in the house in His Super Consciousness Energy Form, His Omnipresent Reality.

Then I realised that every day when Papaji changed the plates he was automatically touching Baba's Divine Feet!

"But, the full Avatar (God does not get subtracted when He projects a Human Habitation for Himself), has two characteristics which announce that He is One without a second. The first is: He is present wherever His form (picture or image) is. The second, He is inseparably attached with His Name (and all Names which the human race knows God by, are His!)."

"Loving God", N. Kasturi, pg. 360

Papaji was a stroke survivor who had recovered enough to resume enjoying, with the help of good medical care, his life with his children and grandchildren. However, living so far from him, I would often worry about Papaji, in spite of the fact that I knew Swami was taking care of him. But Swami really did not want me to worry at all on this account. In October of 1986, Swami came to me in a dream and said, "Do not worry about your father; I have given him two more years!"

My father passed away two years after the date of that dream, on 22nd July 1988. It was time for him to assume his next mission. A few days prior to his departure from his earthly sojourn, his only request to me was to continue to live my life guided by Nishkama Karma, selfless service. I assured him that I would.

During this same visit – it would turn out to be his last hospital stay – he told me something very profound. He told me that every time he closed his eyes, he felt complete peace and joy. He added that he saw himself surrounded by all of the Divine characters of Ramayana (my mother's favourite scripture, which she had shared with us during our childhood and enjoyed throughout her life). They not only danced for Papaji but talked with him. I thanked Swami for elevating my father's consciousness to understand that his formless God could and did come in human forms as well. My father had believed that the characters of Ramayana were just that – historical characters. Now he realised that they were forms of God, as they visited him near the end of his earthly life.

Swami says that we all come to this world crying while others laugh. However, we should at least live a life that will allow us to depart with a smile while others cry! Papaji did just that. At the end of his life, he was in a hospital in Bromley, Kent (England). One Sunday, after his early morning bath by his nurses, the matron brought him his tray of breakfast and medicine. He gave her a big smile and took his last breath. The matron informed my brother Subodh that in her 50-odd years of work she had never witnessed such a passing as the one my father experienced – leaving with that beaming smile on his face!

– Excerpted from "Experiencing Sathya Sai Baba" by Dr. Indra Mohindra.

God is omnipresent; He is immanent in every being in equal measure. So, man must visualise Him equally in himself and in others.

– Baba

G. Geethanath

A BLISSFUL EXPERIENCE AND A MIRACULOUS CURE

I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE A wonderful experience which miraculously cured me of a life-threatening heart condition called dilated cardiomyopathy. I was “introduced” to Swami (or rather He drew me to Him) at the young age of just six years. This was in the year 1962. A photo of Swami sitting on a chair with only some shrubs in the background was given to us by my uncle when my father was ill and was on slightly extended leave from office.

Let me fast forward to November 2003. After returning from our annual visit to Prasanthi Nilayam, I got a severe cold and was given antibiotics for upper respiratory tract infection. After the cold and the infection were cured, I had breathing problem. I had to stop to regain breath after walking a distance of about 10 to 15 feet. Medical opinion was that this was due to reaction of the antibiotics which I had taken. “Continue normal routine”, I was advised. I carried on for one full month.

At the end of December 2003, an echocardiogram test was taken. The diagnosis was dilated cardiomyopathy. Ejection factor was 22% (ejection factor of a healthy heart should be about 60%). Dilated cardiomyopathy is a condition wherein the heart muscle bulges and pumping of blood becomes difficult. It makes movement difficult due to gasping for breath and mostly leads to death. In my case, it happened due

to a viral infection of the heart. Recently, I read in newspapers that many patients with this condition survived by heart transplant.

Somehow, by Swami's grace, I decided that an optimistic and positive attitude would cure me. I felt and told everybody that I was going to recover. I was feeling very happy. In fact, a doctor friend of mine commented that I seemed to be unusually happy.



Tests indicated that my kidney function had also deteriorated. Creatinine level was around 3.5 mg/dL.

I was admitted in the Medical College Hospital at Trivandrum (presently Thiruvananthapuram) on 5th January 2004. I was given ecospirin tablets to dilute the blood and put on renal diet. I always concentrated on the Atma. While I was very



confident of my recovery, I also decided that if Swami wanted me to die, that also I should take calmly.

On the night of 14th January 2004, I had a wonderful experience. I started feeling cold. First I reduced the speed of the fan. Then I closed the window. But I felt colder. I thought, may be I was going to die. But I did not feel like calling doctors since, according to me, there were no symptoms to tell them. Then suddenly something happened. I went into a state of extreme happiness (bliss). Time was 12 midnight. This state continued for exactly 12 hours. I thought that life was going to be “heaven”. But exactly at 12 noon on 15th January (which was also a Thursday), I came back to normalcy much to my disappointment. The blissful state abruptly vanished – as abruptly as it had started. According to Swami, Atma is Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath) and constant meditation on the Atma probably took me to that state.

Now coming to the cure part. In the morning (when I was still in the blissful state), blood test indicated that the creatinine level had come down from 3.5 mg/dL to 2.5 mg/dL and the echocardiogram showed an ejection factor of 58% (that of a healthy heart). It was unbelievable. But my happiness did not increase on hearing these improvements. My happiness level was so high that these things looked trivial. Also, since I had always felt that I was going to get well, the sudden recovery seemed natural to me. I was discharged from the hospital on 17th January 2004.

I went about my activities cautiously but without worry. My motto was “take all care, but do not worry”. On Sivarathri night (in February or March), I was able to

participate in the nightlong Bhajan at the Thiruvananthapuram City Samithi. Also, in November 2004, I visited the famed Sabarimala temple in Kerala which requires a two-hour climb by walk.

Some time after that, my wife Sudha and I went to Prasanthi Nilayam. Swami had gone to Brindavan for a day. We were going up the slope from the Meditation Tree towards the road leading to the university office. A man and his child were sitting on the side of the path. He said they had come for heart surgery at Swami’s hospital. While the surgery was free, he needed money for incidental expenses. I gave him a 50 rupee (or 100 rupee) note and moved forward. He then asked my wife to give something more. He told her, “Ask your husband; he will give”. We moved forward without giving further amount. Time was around 11 a.m.

In the evening, at about 8 p.m., the same man approached us in front of the entrance to the canteen. We were walking towards the deity of Gayatri Devi. I felt a little irritated thinking that the person had come again to ask for money. Instead he said, “We have prayed for your health in front of the Ganesh idol. You will not have any more health problem”. We moved on. On casually turning back, we found that the man had disappeared. Hardly anybody was there at that time (because Swami was not there in Prasanthi Nilayam that day) for him to disappear into the crowd. We were wonderstruck and looked left and right in a puzzled way. A Seva Dal volunteer came running towards us to enquire who we were looking for. We did not tell him and moved forward. Today, I feel that we could have told him the fact.

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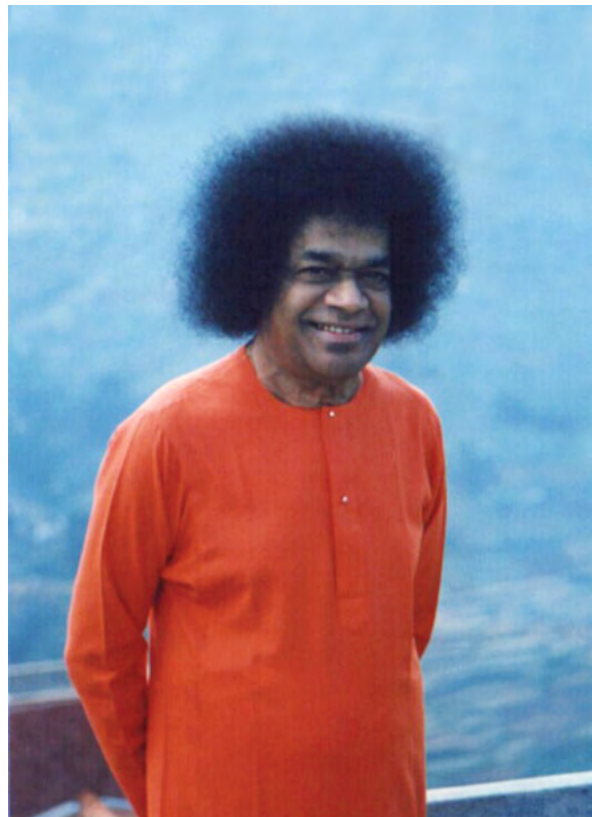
Students Corner

THE MIDAS TOUCH

Meera Amit Trivedi

SRI SATHYA SAI BAL VIKAS – THE name itself implies the blossoming of the child. It is the moulding of wet mud into wondrous sculptures of righteousness and beauty. In the very early impressionable years of a child, Bal Vikas helps young minds foster and cultivate right values of life, acquire the habits of discipline and honesty that are non-existent in this modern world of Kali Yuga. With our Beloved Bhagavan's blessings, our Gurus strive to imbibe in us a flame of knowledge and awareness that only promises to burn brighter as it guides us into being ideal men and women, striving for an ethical, purposeful and peaceful society. It aims at harmonising the mind and spirit, and removing, as my Guru calls it, the rind of the six bad qualities of anger, lust, greed, attachment, pride and jealousy to unveil the pure heart, ever ready to render service to its fellow beings.

Seven years into my journey towards the Path Divine, and I can actually feel the transformation it has brought in me. I can feel the difference between what I am and what I could have been. I never thought attending a class once a week would impact me so much. We started off with the little stories with simple morals that we all looked forward to, and the value games we waited all weeklong for. Through games, such as role play we enacted good and bad characters, learning not only the literal teachings, but also the importance of teamwork. I found my overall concentration and alertness shoot up through memory



games and quizzes. The discussions on mythological stories and afterthoughts were always the most thought-provoking sessions ever. I always consider myself so fortunate to be allowed to learn Bhaja Govindam and be exposed to the idealogy of the Gita. It is always as if Bhagavan was penetrating my deepest fears and teaching me to vanquish them, whether it be academics or Sloka recitation competitions. There is not even one sphere of my life that Bal Vikas has failed to offer its Midas touch. Our daily prayers, weekly Bhajans left me with so much positive energy that I could not help feeling blessed. Sports events



and Christmas carols were just the ultimate fun!

What impacted me the most was the Tata Hospital Seva, where we went to distribute food to the cancer patients and their forlorn families that had made the footpath their home and bore the pangs of hunger and the wrath of weather day in and day out, for the sake of a loved one. It shook me from within, and made me regret every time I had cribbed and complained for not getting something I wanted. I felt an unfounded sadness and a newfound happiness. I could only pray to the Lord to shower His compassion on these needy people in this unconcerned world. I felt deeply but at the very time, Baba played His card and I was introduced to the concept of Karma. It only made me feel a sense of equanimity with the ways of this universe.

I felt deeply grateful for all that I had, and I strived harder to be the perfect Bal Vikas student. "Don't pray to get the things you like, but pray to like the things that you get."

Last but not the least, it is impossible to pen down the gratitude I feel towards my Gurus, who have enriched our lives and changed our aimless courses to the Path Divine... the only way to repay these angels of God who came to illuminate our souls in this chaotic dark world is to pass on the flame of knowledge and love to every being or as Swami says, Divyatmaswarupularas... so that, the day when we will be standing at the altar of the Lord, He will be proud of us for transforming the world into an epitome of love and righteousness.

– From “Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas: The Path Divine”.

Valuable Maxims

Given below is an important maxim of Bhagavan. Contemplate on it and search the following words in the given word maze:

External, attempt, temple, image, pray, feel, wisdom, reveal, crave, material, trivial, rewarded, because, closed.

Do not attempt to know Me through your external eyes. When you go to the temple and stand before the image of God, you pray with your closed eyes. Don't you? Why? Because you feel that the inner eye of wisdom alone can reveal Him to you. Therefore, do not crave for trivial material objects from Me; instead crave for Me and you will be rewarded.

I	C	T	R	I	V	I	A	L	R	C	U	M	S	T	A
N	R	C	P	R	A	Y	E	S	F	N	A	R	R	A	R
C	A	E	A	R	T	N	E	S	E	L	Y	R	T	O	E
L	V	B	E	C	T	O	M	I	E	N	G	E	S	O	V
O	E	E	X	T	E	R	N	A	L	P	E	W	R	N	E
S	M	E	S	I	M	A	G	E	A	G	E	A	A	L	A
E	C	T	E	M	P	L	E	M	E	N	T	R	E	F	L
D	E	T	I	O	T	N	R	I	W	I	S	D	O	M	N
M	A	T	E	R	I	A	L	G	E	R	D	E	V	E	L
T	E	A	C	H	P	O	W	U	I	F	L	D	G	E	O
I	N	G	B	E	C	A	U	S	E	U	C	A	R	S	P



Swami's Tips to Students

Make Nature your teacher, instead of relying too much on books. The vast universe has many lessons to teach. Make your heart your preceptor. Esteem God as your best friend. He will never fail you, unlike most fair-weather friends in the world. I prefer to hear that you have earned a good name for your behaviour than praise for your scholarship. Do not calculate what money you can earn from your degrees. You must ask yourselves: "What good can I do to my family? What help can I render to my fellow men"? Education is not for securing a job. It is for acquiring knowledge and wisdom. It is unfortunate that education has been linked to jobs and earning money. You must move among people in a friendly and comradely spirit. Do not hate anyone. Follow the principle: "Help Ever, Hurt Never".

...continued from page 25

My heart condition has remained stable and healthy ever since. I have other health issues like impaired kidney function (mentioned earlier), neurological and psychological disorders. These are under reasonable control with medicine and diet control. There are many evidences that all these have been put under control by Swami without allowing them from escalating.

Knowledge of Swami is the ultimate "inheritance" I received from my parents. My father, late Sri Gopala Shenoi, used to actively participate in the activities of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi at

Thiruvananthapuram and also served as its President for one year in 1970's.

Today, Swami's physical presence cannot be experienced. I visited Prasanthi Nilayam only once after Swami's Maha Samadhi. I try to feel His presence wherever I am and try to follow His teachings more and more. Swami also appears in my dreams often.

Samasta Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu (May all the beings of all the worlds be happy!)

– **The author is former Deputy Project Director, Indian Space Research Organisation, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.**

NEWS FROM SAI CENTRES

FRANCE

THE UNITED NATIONS estimates that hundreds of thousands of Eritreans have fled injustice and oppression in their northern African homeland in recent years, seeking shelter in Europe. Touched by their plight,



Serving refugees, France.

Belgian and Dutch SSIO volunteers collected materials to help refugees living in camps in northern France. Working with members of the Veurne Sathya Sai Group in southern Belgium and the Zebrapad Veurne organisation, which manages a warehouse for serving refugees, the volunteers collected and transported various goods to the warehouse in February 2017. SSIO members subsequently moved fresh vegetables and essential foods by road to Steenvoorde, France, to serve Eritrean refugees at a day shelter. The volunteers then transported the remaining food to a

refugee camp in Norrent-Fontes, serving hundreds of refugees. The SSIO has served thousands at the latter camp during the last eight years. Sathya Sai volunteers conversed lovingly with the refugees and were grateful for the opportunity to help.

INDONESIA

On 1st March 2017, six volunteers from the Sathya Sai Study Group of Medan began replacing a bridge at Dalan Naman village, Kuala district, Langkat, North Sumatra, helped by four villagers and five labourers. The heavily-used bridge is essential for movement between the villages of Dalan Naman and Sei Penjara. This is the second bridge the team has replaced. The bridge was in total disrepair, jeopardising the safety of the villagers; a high school student had been seriously injured after falling 15 metres from this bridge. The volunteers constructed the new bridge with high quality



The old and new bridge, Indonesia.

steel to ensure its strength. The 73-metre-long and 2-metre-wide bridge, intended for both pedestrian and motorcyclist use, was named “Love All Serve All”. It was completed on 11th March and inaugurated on 16th March 2017, amidst celebrations attended by local village authorities and members of the Sathya Sai Study Group.

HONG KONG

“Cage homes” are partitioned cubicles within small flats that are rented to low-income or unemployed residents of Hong Kong or underprivileged immigrants from China. The cubicles are minimal living areas partitioned by wooden boards, or



Serving the needy in Hong Kong.

beds separated by wire mesh. They are often located in old, dilapidated, multi-storey buildings, not serviced by elevators. The cage homes offer poor living conditions that can be dangerous and unhygienic. Since 2004, the SSIO of Hong Kong has served occupants of these cage homes every six weeks, providing rice and necessities, along with loving company. Due to the hard work of SSIO volunteers, the number of people served has grown from 30 in 2004 to 120 in 2017. These service activities, now conducted bi-monthly, attract people who want to serve the needy, alongside the SSIO members. On 22nd January 2017, in addition to rice and other staples, the

group gifted traditional Chinese biscuits and colourful scarves to the needy to welcome the Chinese Year of the Rooster.

PUERTO RICO

The Sathya Sai Institute of Human Values introduced a new book containing stories on human values at an event in Caguas, Casa del Ajedrez, on 21st January 2017. The Spanish book, *Reflexiones Contadas: Cuentos de Valores Humanos*, includes 35 stories on human values themes, 20 of which were written by students, six by parents, and nine by school teachers from



A musical presentation on the release of a new book of human values stories.

Puerto Rico. Among the 70 participants was the Director of Human Development from the City of Caguas. Dr. Miguel Virella Espinosa, a professor from Universidad Interamerica de Puerto Rico, introduced the book. A band from a private school, the North Point Military Academy of Manatí, rendered a beautiful musical presentation, enjoyed thoroughly by the audience. The participants were impressed when a student afflicted with selective mutism, appeared on stage and read aloud the story she had written, encouraged by the loving support of her parents and representative of the



Sathya Sai Institute of Human Values. The event was described in a local newspaper.

RUSSIA

From 24th-26th February 2017, 35 senior leaders from SSIO Zone 8 held their annual council meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia. Representatives from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine discussed work being done throughout the



Annual council meeting of Zone 8 representatives, Sathya Sai International Organisation, Russia.

Zone. This year, as part of the 2016 global SSIO Serve the Planet project, volunteers found shelters for stray cats and dogs and helped to walk dogs, provide animal feed, and repair and improve animal shelter facilities. In St. Petersburg, Sathya Sai volunteers assisted in renovating and upgrading stables and pens for horses, donkeys, rabbits, goats, cats, and dogs. The horses participate in hippotherapy for children.

Plans were then made for the next Serve the Planet project, with the theme "Protect the Planet". Senior SSIO leaders invited volunteers to plant at least two trees to protect and nurture Mother Earth. They also discussed posting announcements urging residents to participate in public meetings

on environmental themes. Internet and social media networking were being used extensively to reach the public.

–Sathya Sai International Organisation

BHARAT

Andhra Pradesh: The temple of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala in the State of Andhra Pradesh is one of the most famous Vaishnavite shrines in India. This world renowned temple is visited by more than three crore devotees every year. The Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanams (TTD) established in 1932, looks after the administration and manifold activities of the temple and other shrines. Elaborate arrangements have been made for the welfare of the pilgrims and the smooth functioning of various rituals and festivals. TTD has thousands of employees and several departments engaged in providing the best ever services to the devotees.

In December 2015, TTD formed Sri Vaari Seva Cell to expand Seva activities with the involvement of committed professionals from other reputed voluntary organisations. In this context, Sri Chadalawada Krishnamurthy, Chairman of TTD, visited Puttaparthi and had discussions with the Trustees of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. Consequently, it was decided that Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Andhra Pradesh would extend necessary assistance in training Sri Vaari Sevaks on a systematic basis. A team constituted by Sri S.G. Chalam, State President, SSSSO, visited Tirumala to get acquainted with the various aspects of the existing system, scope for improvement, training methodology, expectations as well as limitations. Based on the inputs from TTD, a guidance manual was prepared by SSSSO and a long-term training programme commenced from 4th May 2016.



In December 2016, Sri Nimish Pandya, All India President of SSSSO and Sri Vijaya Bhaskar, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and others paid a visit to Tirumala and were warmly welcomed by the EO and other officials. A booklet containing relevant suggestions by SSSSO regarding the expansion of Sri Vaari Seva, establishment of training centres, measures for improvement in quality of service, etc. was presented by the AIP on the occasion. Two CDs containing Bhajans specially prepared for Tirumala were also presented.

The daily programme of Bhajans and Satsang has been continued by SSSSO from May to December 2016. The Sevaks got trained in aspects like importance of love and service, efficacy of constant remembrance of the Lord's names as well as the need for daily Sadhana, cleanliness, short and sweet speech, vegetarianism, etc.



Sri Vaari Seva – inaugural training session.

A study of the feedback from 430 teams have shown that these sessions have been a source of blissful experience. Noticeable difference was observed and expressed by the officials of various departments regarding the attitude, behaviour and commitment of the Sevaks. About 54,000 Sevaks have undergone the training till the end of February 2017.

Gujarat: On 30th March 1967, Bhagavan visited Navsari, a town of south Gujarat. A

public meeting was held at a place known as Lunsikui ground where lakhs of people from various parts of Gujarat had Divine Darshan of Bhagavan on this auspicious day.

Marking the completion of 50 years of this event on 30th March 2017, Navsari



A section of participants in golden jubilee celebrations of Bhagavan's visit to Navsari, Gujarat.

Samithi celebrated the golden jubilee year of Bhagavan's visit with full enthusiasm. A grand function was organised to commemorate Bhagavan's visit at the same place, Lunsikui ground. Swami's Palkhi (palanquin) was decorated and devotees brought it from Navsari Centre to Lunsikui ground in a procession. Over 5,000 people of this area participated in these celebrations. At sharp 5.45 p.m., Swami's chariot entered the Lunsikui ground with devotional music. The programme started at 6.00 p.m. with Omkar and Veda chanting by Bal Vikas students. In his inaugural speech, Sri Manohar Trikannad, State President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation (SSSSO), Gujarat welcomed the devotees present on the occasion and briefly described the activities being carried out by SSSSO, Gujarat. A small presentation which included photographs of Bhagavan's visit to Navsari



and various activities of Sai Organisation all over the world and Navsari was shown to the gathering.

In her mellifluous voice, a very well known singer, Smt. Anita Pandit (Sajda) presented a devotional music programme. The soul-stirring devotional music was supported by a team of 19 musicians which included two Swami's former music college students.

Karnataka: Over the last 18 months, devotees across 19 districts of Karnataka State have collectively participated in chanting Sri Sai Gayatri Mantra (Om Saiswaraya Vidmahe, Sathya Devaya Dheemahi, Thannah Sarvah Prachodayat) in 48 centres comprising Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithis and Sri Sathya Sai Schools in Karnataka. About 6,000 members have cumulatively chanted Sai Gayatri Mantra more than two crore thirty lakh (2,30,00,000) times. This has been made possible only with the blessings of Bhagavan Baba and the collective spiritual resolve of Sai devotees.

To mark the conclusion of this great event, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Karnataka organised Sri Sai Gayatri Maha Yaga at Brindavan Ashram, Bengaluru on 6th and 7th May 2017. The programme began at 4.15 p.m. on 6th May 2017 with a grand procession of devotees followed

by Kalasha Sthapana, Rudrabhishekam and other rituals amidst chanting of sacred Vedic Mantras. The programme on 7th May 2017 began at 7.30 a.m. with Bhajans followed by Sri Gayatri Homa, speeches of dignitaries and chanting of Vedic Mantras. A sumptuous lunch was served to all devotees at the conclusion of the programme.

Manipur: The Service Wing of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Manipur organised a State-level blood donation camp on Sunday, 9th April 2017 at the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Lamphelpat, Imphal. The programme started at 10.00



Blood donation camp, Manipur.



Sri Sai Gayatri Maha Yaga, Brindavan Ashram, Bengaluru.

a.m. with lighting of lamp by the State President, SSSSO, Manipur, Sri H. Manihar Singh followed by a speech of Dr. A Barindra Sharma from RIMS who gave the awareness of blood donation to the devotees present. In all, 115 Sai devotees donated 64 units of blood. The RIMS authorities thanked the Sai Organisation of Manipur for this selfless service.

continued on cover page III...



NOTICE

BHAGAVAN HAS MADE IT CLEAR any number of times in unambiguous and unequivocal terms that His relationship with devotees is not at a physical level but is at the Atmic level, i.e., Heart-to-heart and Love-to-love. How can there be any agents, media or intermediaries between Him and His devotees when He resides in our hearts?

While delivering His Divine Discourse on 25th May 1975, during the Seva Dal Conference, Bhagavan emphasised this truth. *"When someone does a few funny tricks saying he is possessed by Swami or is receiving instructions from Him, our own Seva Dal members are going to such individuals and encouraging them. When you have got a direct access to Bhagavan Himself, where is the need for you to go to these 'duplicate' swamis?"* He questioned.

He also said on 25th March 1965: *"Many persons have also started using My name for the purpose of collecting money for various purposes or material. If such men come to you, send them back with the admonition that they are doing wrong. I ask for Bhakti, Sraddha, Sadhana (devotion, faith and spiritual discipline) – purification of hearts – that is all. Only beggars ask for money; I will never associate Myself with the temporary, the tarnished, the tawdry and the mean. Then, there are some who proclaim that I am "coming upon someone" and speaking through him! They pretend to be My mouthpieces and communicate to others My advice and My suggestions,*

as if I have 'authorised' them or as if I am Myself telling so through them. Now hear this. I never speak through another; I never possess another or use another as a vehicle of expression. I come direct, I come straight, I come as I am, to confer peace and joy".

Showing utter disregard to Bhagavan's message in this regard, some selfish individuals are committing the most heinous sacrilege of betraying Bhagavan Himself. They have made Muddenahalli as the centre of their nefarious activities and are going to various parts of the country as also to several overseas countries with the ulterior motive of luring innocent devotees with their cheap tricks and collecting funds. In the process, they are making a mockery of spirituality itself by declaring that Swami speaks through so and so while misinterpreting and distorting His message to suit their own selfish ends. How foolish is it to say that so and so is possessed by our Swami, who is the Antaryami (indweller) of all! Instead of making efforts to follow His teachings and ideals, they are even indulging in the most atrocious and deplorable act of imitating His movements and gestures. What is even more appalling is that those committing this sacrilege are causing untold confusion in the minds of innocent devotees all over the world. These are some of the so-called close devotees who enjoyed Swami's Divine Love in abundance while He was in His physical form. Needless to say, getting carried away by their fraudulent activities amounts to belittling the All-Pervasive and All-Pervading principle of Bhagavan's Cosmic Reality.



Bhagavan established Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust in the year 1972, keeping the welfare of society in view and with the sole objective of offering loving and selfless service to humanity at large. Devotees are well aware of the promise Bhagavan made to Divine Mother Easwaramma that He would always remain in Puttaparthi and make this sacred land the centre of His Avatatic Mission forever. Accordingly, He Himself established a number of Educational Institutions and Hospitals apart from undertaking various social welfare projects, under the auspices of Central Trust, providing relief and succour to millions.

However, after Bhagavan's Maha Samadhi, some individuals, due to their limitless thirst for money and power, have

stooped so low as to say that Bhagavan is roaming in Muddenahalli in His subtle form and is asking them to build schools, colleges and hospitals. By enacting a cleverly orchestrated 'drama', they are taking innocent and gullible devotees for a ride, collecting money from them in the name of Swami, and in the process, flouting the principles and dicta Bhagavan exemplified.

We, on behalf of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, hereby declare that the Central Trust has nothing to do with those individuals and the institutions run by them. Devotees are hereby informed to follow this cautionary note as a guideline from the Trust and refrain from associating themselves with such individuals and institutions.

– Trustees, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust

...continued from page 33

West Bengal: The National Highway 55, an arterial road that connects the plains to the hills from Siliguri to Darjeeling, becomes unnavigable after rains due to landslides, overflowing of rain water. To prevent landslides, overflowing of rain water and blockage of drains. A massive highway drain cleaning operation has been jointly undertaken by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of the districts of Darjeeling South and Darjeeling North each year on 1st May since 2007.

This year saw active participation of more than 3,500 members that included Bal Vikas students, parents and Seva Dal members who worked tirelessly from early morning to late afternoon. As a special mark of distinction this year, the Seva Dal members were joined at distinct locations by the All India President, the National

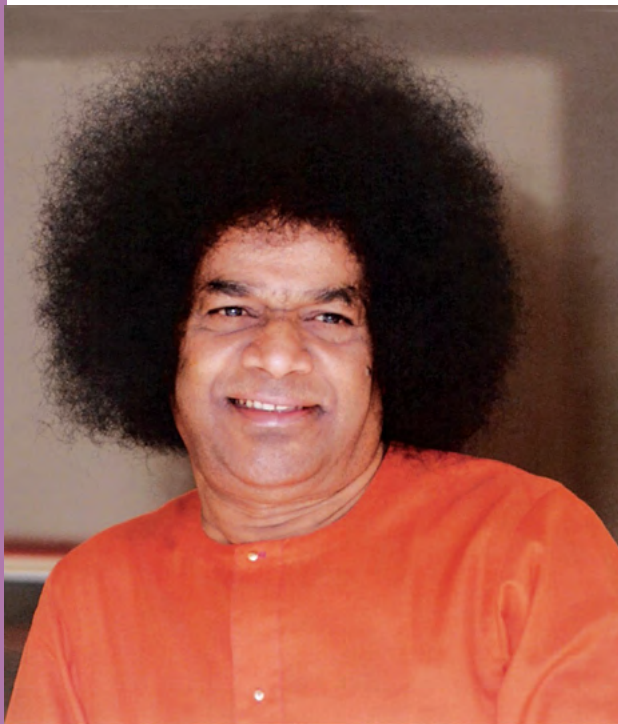
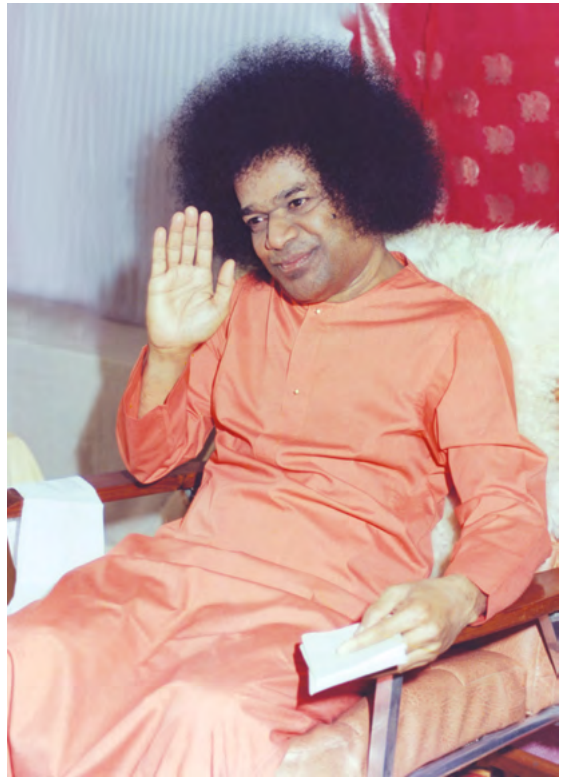


Cleaning of National Highway in West Bengal.

Vice President, the National Coordinators and the State Team of West Bengal which included the State President, State Vice Presidents and the State Coordinators. The entourage was en route to Bagdogra Airport from Darjeeling as a part of the visit of the All India President to West Bengal.



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

The Publications Division (SSSSTPD) caters to:

- 1) The publication and distribution of spiritual, religious, and educational Sai Literature and the production and distribution of audio and visual multimedia, photographs, calendars, and diaries for the benefit of visiting pilgrims and devotees all over the world. All the literature and publications are based on the teachings, philosophy, message, and values of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.
- 2) The publication and distribution of Bhagawan Baba's monthly spiritual journal - Sanathana Sarathi - in English and Telugu languages. Since 2011, e-version of the magazine is also released simultaneously and is available in the popular Interactive PDF format on www.sanathanasarathi.org.
- 3) Maintaining a reporting channel www.theprasanthireporter.org, which covers all the major activities taking place in Prasanthi Nilayam, and publishing an e-newsletter 'Sai Spiritual Showers' - for free distribution.
- 4) Providing library and Reading room for visiting devotees, with a very large collection of books written by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and books on Bhagawan besides various spiritual and religious books.

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2. Summer Showers In Brindavan, 1972
3. Satyopanisad I
4. Satyopanisad II
5. Gurudev
6. Namasmarana
7. Bhakthi And Health
8. Life Is Love, Enjoy It!
9. Life Is A Challenge, Meet It!
10. Life Is A Dream, Realize It!
11. Bhagawan And Bhakta
12. Body And Mind
13. My Dear Ones
14. Sevalal
15. Silence
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17. Surrender
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Musical tributes to Mother Easwaramma in Sai Kulwant Hall.



A colourful dance by the children of Nepal.



A beautiful dance by the children of Lao PDR.

Date of Publication: 1st June 2017

Elation is Heaven

Drop the delusion that you have become old or diseased or that you have become weak and debilitated. Some people count the years, grieve over advancing age and shudder like cowards afraid of death. But remember elation is heaven, despondency is hell. Have always some work to do and do it so well that you get joy.

– Baba

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