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# Sanathana Sarathi

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SATHYA • DHARMA • SANTHI • PREMA • AHIMSA

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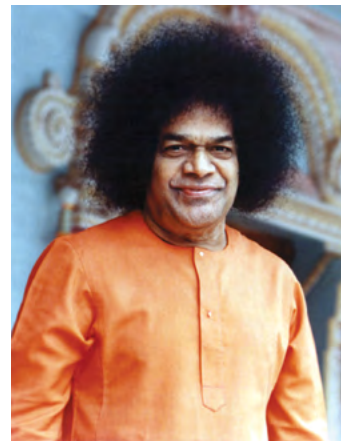
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"At birth, the baby cries, 'Koham  
Koham'? (who am I, who am I)?  
After passing through several stages of life  
and well before the time of death, one must  
be able to find the answer to this question  
'who am I'? The enquiry which begins  
with Koham should end with Soham.  
Only then human life has real significance  
and fulfilment. If we spend the entire life  
asking the question 'who am I', then what  
is the use?"



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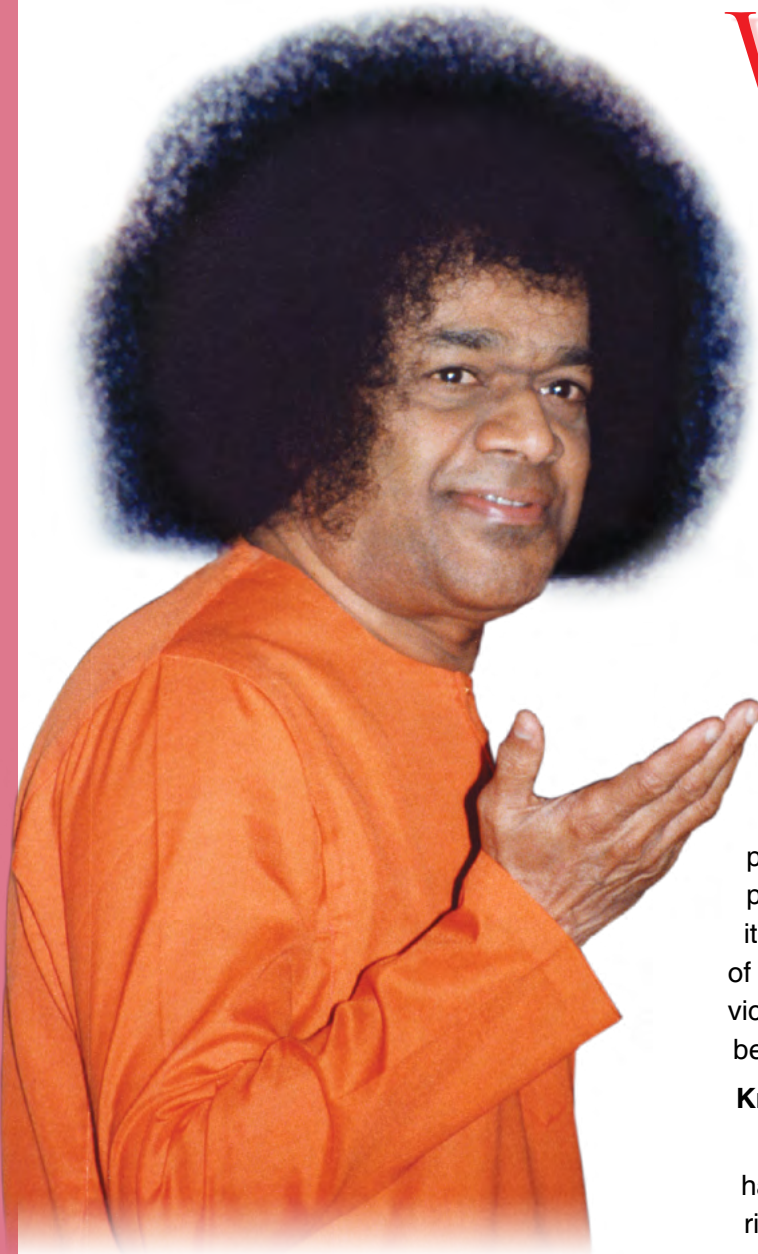
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AVATAR VANI

# UNIFY WORLDLY LIFE WITH SPIRITUAL LIFE

SADHANA SIGNIFIES DIVINE WEALTH



**W**E MUST PONDER why wickedness is prevalent in the world today, and why selfless love is on the decline. What is the reason for all abnormalities and aberrations?

*Embodiments of Divine Love!*

God and Nature are not different from each other. It is not proper to segregate worldly life from spiritual life. In fact, spiritual path implies integration of the two. Purity and Divinity are derived from this unity. To consider the worldly life as fraught with pain and sorrow, and the spiritual life as filled with security and safety is a wrong notion. Pleasure and pain are inseparable. Whenever there is pleasure, it is invariably followed by pain, and as pain cannot last long it is followed by pleasure. Absence of pain is viewed as pleasure and vice-versa. Pleasure is an interval between two pains.

## **Know Thyself**

Here is an orange fruit. This fruit has sweet juice inside. But its outer rind or skin is bitter and unpalatable.

There can be no protection for the sweet juice without the outer bitter rind. Both sweetness and bitterness are there in the fruit. Fruit is a combination of these two aspects. Similarly, human life is a combination of worldly life and spiritual life. To escape from worldly life in order to pursue spiritual life is a sign of weakness. When peace and happiness prevail in worldly life, spiritual pursuit can be joyful too. Worldly life is a worthy means that should culminate in spiritual life.

Human life progresses through a sequence of mother, father, teacher and God. What is the inner significance of this sequence? The first person a newborn baby comes in contact is the mother. The baby does not know the father. As the baby grows, the mother shows him the father. The father takes care of the upbringing of the child and leads him to a teacher at an appropriate time. After imparting secular, ethical and spiritual education to the child, the teacher leads the student towards God. Thus, the life which starts with mother must end with God.

At birth, the baby cries, "Koham Koham"? (who am I, who am I)? After passing through several stages of life and well before the time of death, one must be able to find the answer to this question 'who am I'? The enquiry which begins with Koham should end with Soham (That I am). Only then human life has real significance and fulfilment. If we spend the entire life asking the question 'who am I', then what is the use?

Ignoring this vital aspect, man goes on enquiring about all that happens in the world. He reads newspapers to know what is happening all around the world. He listens to the news of all countries, but he is never interested in knowing about his own Self.

***Never segregate worldly life from spiritual life. This is a cloth. The cloth represents spirituality. But it is a combination of threads. Threads denote worldly life. Only threads make the cloth. So, life is an integrated form of worldliness and spirituality. Without threads, there can be no cloth. When the threads are together, the cloth is strong. When threads are segregated, it loses strength. You should not be weak. Unify and become strong.***

Without knowing the Self, what is the use of knowing everything in the world? One must endeavour to know his own Self. Instead of questioning himself as to who he is, man goes on asking others, 'who are you'?

Socrates was a great Greek philosopher. Most of the time, he was engaged in enquiring as to how the body came into being, and who he really was. One day, he was deeply absorbed in thinking even while walking on a road; and inadvertently dashed against an officer who was coming from the opposite direction. The stranger asked him in anger, 'who are you'? Socrates first offered his apology for his offence and then replied, 'I have been all along asking myself the same question, 'who am I'? Can you please let me know who I am?

**Spiritual Evolution Begins with Devotion**

No outsider will be able to tell you who you really are. Neither the scriptures nor the teachers will be able to vouch for your reality. Any amount of external search or investigation cannot be of any help. One



has to find this truth through observation and self-enquiry. You say this is my body, my mind, my intellect, my senses and my conscience. This consideration of 'my my' itself is an acceptance of the fact that you are different from your body, limbs, senses, mind, etc. You are not the body nor the senses nor the mind. When you enquire like this, you can know the truth. In fact, everything is present within man. Man is endowed with mighty power. Basically, there is sacredness and divinity in man.

Similar to the sequence of mother, father, teacher and God, there is also a sequence of devotion, wisdom, spirituality and liberation as propounded in the Bhagavata. Spiritual evolution begins with devotion. Devotion will gradually transform into wisdom and wisdom leads to renunciation. Renunciation leads to spirituality, and spirituality is the key to the realm of liberation. In the very name 'Bhagavatamu', the five letters (Bha-ga-va-ta-mu) indicate this truth. These denote the five Indriyas (senses), the five elements and five Koshas (sheaths) pertaining to a human being. What is the significance of the five letters contained in the word 'Bhagavatamu'? 'Bha' stands for Bhakti (devotion) and 'Ga' signifies Gnana (wisdom). As devotion is fostered, it will lead to Gnana (wisdom). 'Va' stands for Vairagya (renunciation). Vairagya will lead to realisation of truth (Tattwamasi – That thou Art) denoted by the letter 'Ta'. The last letter 'Mu' indicates Mukti (liberation). When you know who you are, you get liberated.

### Take to the Path of Spirituality

Since ancient times, spiritual truths have been taught in Bharat along with secular and worldly education. People of this land have recognised the futility of this life

without recourse to spiritual path. A good intellect is that which seeks to know the path of truth. It is not a path to any place like America or Benaras. Then what is this path? It is a twelve-lettered Mantra, *Trova Veduku Konutake Jivitam* (life is meant to search for the path). It is the same path through which you came. To travel back through the same path is the Mantra of Sadhana. Any other path will not take you to the goal of truth. You have emerged from the Atma (Self). To know your own Self is the path. There is no need for you to buy any ticket for this journey. If you know your Self, you will know everything.

### Know the Relationship Between Body and the Self

Everything in this world is temporary like passing clouds. Nothing whatsoever is eternal or permanent. The same person grows through several stages as child, boy, man and grandfather. These changes of forms are the effect of time, but the individual is the same. To forget the path of oneness is Goddu Buddhi (bad intellect). That is the animal quality. To know the path of oneness is Dodda Buddhi (good intellect). Animals know the path or route from which they come. A bird relies on self-confidence. The bird which is perching on a branch is not afraid when the branch is moved by wind because it relies on its own wings and not the branch.

But man today is fear-stricken when he faces difficulties and problems because he lacks self-confidence. He has not even that much self-confidence as a bird has. What is the reason? The reason is that man takes this worldly life as truth. Body is a water bubble, mind is a mad monkey. Don't follow the body, don't follow the mind. Follow the conscience.



Man's true identity is the Atma, the Self. Body decays and is buried or consigned to flames at the end. Health, wealth or fame will not come to one's rescue at the time of death. A Kannada poet said in this regard, "Oh Lord! I have assumed this body of flesh because I have forgotten You. Had I remembered You, I would not have been born in this body, for I am the one of awareness, not of dust".

Human body is rust and dust. Never consider it as permanent or true. Only you

and the Kauravas are the children of two brothers. Why do You take the side of the Pandavas and not the Kauravas? God should observe equality". Krishna smiled and said, "Oh Dhritarashtra! You are not only blind physically; you are mentally blind too. Don't you know, the Pandavas surrendered everything to Me? They implicitly follow My commands and listen to Me. They have intimate relationship with Me. All the five of them are like five organs of My body. Dharmaraja is My very head,



*As humans, you must display unity. There is butter in every drop of milk but is not seen on an outer examination. You will get butter from milk only after making it into curd and churning it. Body is the pot. Divinity is the milk. Intellect is the churning instrument. The rope for churning is devotion. As you do spiritual practice, the butter of divinity starts forming. The butter is Sakshatkara. That is Self-realisation. Knowing your Self is Sakshatkara, and its result is Atmananda (blissful state).*

are real and eternal. This is what you must strive to realise. Ideal life and divine feelings are pre-requisites to this pursuit and fulfilment. Man is born in society, grows in society, lives in society and dies in society. Even then he does not try to know that he is a limb of society. What is the meaning of Manava (man)? Manava is one who strives to understand the intimate relationship between the body and the Self.

At one time, King Dhritarashtra, questioned Krishna, "Krishna, the Pandavas

Arjuna, the shoulder, Bhima is My stomach and Nakula and Sahadeva are the feet". Krishna is the very heart of the body of the Pandavas. When there is no heart, limbs will not function. Without limbs, there is no need for the heart. God is the heart, Dharma (righteousness) is the head, fortitude is the shoulders and that which nourishes the limbs is the stomach. The Gita says, *Aham Vaishvanaro Bhutva Praninam Dehamasrita* (I am present in all beings in the form of digestive fire).





God is present in the form of Vaishvanara in our stomach and enables digestion, supplying essence of the food to all the limbs. So, God is present everywhere. He is in you, with you, above you, below you and around you. In fact, you are not different from God. You should recognise this truth. It is not possible to survive even for a moment in the absence of God. What is the nature of God? It is Soham (I am God). Our inhalation and exhalation expresses this 21,600 times everyday.

### **You should be the Master of Mind and Senses**

You identify yourself with the body and say, I am so and so. Just as the body is an instrument, the senses and the mind are also instruments. This body, senses and mind complex is known as mister. But in reality you are master. You can be a master only when you are able to control your senses. And you remain a mister when you yield to senses. This is the gist of Vedanta or Vedic philosophy.

In mother, father, teacher and God, the divinity present is the same. Therefore, it is necessary to know the divinity in human life. Mere talking about divinity is of no use. There are any number of teachers who go on talking about divinity without practising in the least. They are all heroes in talking and zeros in practice. Food is available on the table. But you must use your hands to take it to the stomach. There is no use if you go on repeating 'bread, butter, jam' a hundred times. Only when you eat food will you have health, strength and happiness.

### **Worry is Imaginary Fear**

This is true Sadhana. Sadhana is a combination of two words, 'Sa' and

'Dhana'. 'Sa' means Divinity. 'Dhana' means wealth. So, Sadhana signifies divine wealth. Vedanta refers to four stages of attaining the Divine: Salokya (perception), Sameepya (proximity), Sarupya (identity), Sayujya (merger). In all the four, 'Sa' is very important. There is God in all that you see in the world. This kind of understanding is known as Salokya. To live in that thought is Sameepya. To identify oneself with that Divinity is known as Sarupya. And to merge in that very Divinity is Sayujya. *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati* (the knower of Brahman becomes verily Brahman).

### *Embodiments of Love!*

Make an effort to practise at least a fraction of what you read and listen. Then only can you experience bliss in daily life. Do not waste your precious time in worries. Has worry any shape? It is nothing but fear created by mind. Worry is a creation of the mind. You are inviting worries by yourselves. Instead of worrying upon failures, it is necessary to analyse the causes of failures. For this, proper discrimination has to be applied. Worry is a product of your imagination. Instead of involving yourself in imagination, you should think of God. That is the purpose of life.

What is the use of knowing all about the world without knowing about your Self? A mere waste indeed. Enquire yourself and say, I am not the body, I am not the senses, I am not the mind, I am I. It is also not right to say, I am Atma (Self). When you say, I am Atma, it means you are considering the Atma as separate from I. This is an indication of a dual mind. *A man with a dual mind is half blind*. You should not have dual mind; observe oneness.





You express oneness when you offer Namaskar (salutation). While offering Namaskar you bring your palms together in front of your face. What is its significance? In all, ten fingers are involved representing five Karmendriyas (senses of action) and five Jnanendriyas (senses of perception). You are indeed unifying these ten senses. Diversification leads to worry. Unification brings bliss. Human life must display unity. Constant feelings of unity will result in Divinity. As humans, you must display unity. There is butter in every drop of milk but is not seen on an outer examination. You will get butter from milk only after making it into curd and churning it. Body is the pot. Divinity is the milk. Intellect is the churning instrument. The rope for churning is devotion. As you do spiritual practice, the butter of divinity starts forming. The butter is Sakshatkara. That is Self-realisation. Knowing your Self is Sakshatkara, and its result is Atmananda (blissful state).

Never segregate worldly life from spiritual life. This is a cloth. The cloth represents spirituality. But it is a combination of threads. Threads denote worldly life. Only threads make the cloth. So, life is an integrated form of worldliness and spirituality. Without

threads, there can be no cloth. When the threads are together, the cloth is strong. When threads are segregated, it loses strength. You should not be weak. Unify and become strong.

Consider that God is everything for you. Always say:

*Twameva Matacha Pita Twameva,  
Twameva Bandhuscha Sakha Twameva,  
Twameva Vidya Dravinam Twameva,  
Twameva Sarvam Mama Devadeva.*

(Sanskrit Verse)

(Oh Lord! You alone are my father and mother, friend and relation, wisdom and wealth. You are my everything).

God is mother, father, friend, wealth and everything. This can be experienced through the spirit of unity. By indulging in sense objects, we waste our precious energy. Waste of energy results in allergy. So, the energy of the body, mind and intellect has to be unified in order to experience Divinity.

In the path of devotion, one should not consider one God greater than the other. *All are one, be alike to everyone.* This should be the attitude of a true devotee.

– **Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 11th April 1993.**

*Do not serve for the sake of reward, attracting attention or earning gratitude or from a sense of pride at your own superiority in skill, wealth, status or authority. Serve because you are urged by love. When you succeed, ascribe the success to the grace of God, who urged you on, as Love within you. When you fail, ascribe the failure to your own inadequacy, insincerity or ignorance. Examine the springs of action; disinfect them from all trace of ego. Do not throw the blame on the recipients of the Seva or on your collaborators and co-workers or on God.*

– Baba

# GRANDEUR AND PIETY MARK SIVARATHRI FESTIVAL



ESTHETICALLY DECORATED Sai Kulwant Hall reverberated with Divine Name when a large gathering of devotees and students sang Bhajans for 12 hours and observed nightlong vigil on the night of 24th February 2017 to celebrate the holy festival of Sivarathri at Prasanthi Nilayam.

Sivarathri celebrations began on 23rd February 2017 with chanting of Vedic hymns in the form of Ghana Patha (intensive chanting) by students. This was followed by a scintillating dance performance entitled “Jagatah Pitarau Vande” (salutations to

On the sacred day of Sivarathri, 24th February 2017, the programme began at 8.00 am with Veda chanting. While the recitation of Vedic hymns continued, Panchavadyam and Nadaswaram groups of students heralded the auspicious Sivarathri morning with soulful devotional music notes one after the other. The students of Bhagavan’s educational institutions thereafter offered an elevating devotional music programme comprising Stotras and group songs which included “Lingashtakam”, “Bilvashtakam”, “Namah Sivaya Namah Sivaya Om Namah Sivaya” and “Sai Mahadeva” suffusing the entire milieu with devotional fervour.

A book release function was then held, in which a book entitled “The Divine Puppeteer” containing 65 talks of Sri Ajit Popat given by him in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan was released. Addressing the devotees on this occasion, Sri Popat narrated some of his unique and intimate interactions with Bhagavan and described the priceless lessons received by him directly from Him. Bhajans followed next and concluded with Arati.

The programme in the afternoon began at 4.25 p.m. with the ceremonial procession of Sayeeswara Linga which was brought from Bhajan Mandir to Sai Kulwant Hall amidst auspicious musical notes and sacred Vedic chants. After the Linga was set up on a decorated platform in front of the Samadhi of Bhagavan, its worship and Abhishekam started. When the priests performed the Abhishekam



*“Jagatah Pitarau Vande,” dance performance by Prasanthi Dance Group.*

Divine Parents Parvati and Parameswara) which kept the viewers mesmerised for nearly half an hour with dance numbers about mythological stories related to Siva and Parvati, Ganesh and Subrahmanya, Markandeya and Yama. The dances were performed by the Prasanthi Dance Group consisting of students from Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School and Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus.





*Worship of Sayeeswara Linga.*

with 18 items which included milk, curd, ghee, sugar, honey, etc., the significance of these offerings were explained in a commentary in English and Telugu for the benefit of the viewers. As the decoration of the Linga started after its Abhishekam, the students chanted Rudram followed by Sri Sathya Sai Ashtottaram. The Abhishekam ceremony concluded with offer of worship and Arati to the Linga.

The ceremony of Linga Abhishekam was followed by the Divine Discourse of Bhagavan, an audio clip of which was played on the public address system. In His Discourse, Bhagavan exhorted the devotees to practise “Help Ever Hurt Never” which was the essence of

all the 18 Puranas authored by Sage Veda Vyasa. He advised the students to observe the three P’s of Purity, Patience and Perseverance to make their life ideal and blissful. Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with two Bhajans “Siva Siva Siva Shambho” and “Hey Giridhara Gopala”, which the devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall followed with deep devotion. With these Bhajans of Bhagavan, Sivarathri Akhanda Bhajan started at 6.00 p.m. and continued



*Sivarathri Akhanda Bhajan at Prasanthi Nilayam.*

throughout the whole night. Many groups of devotees, Ashram staff and students took turns to lead Bhajans in the night. The Bhajan concluded on the morning of 25th February 2017 at 6.00 a.m., after which Prasadam of tamarind rice and sweet rice was served to the entire assembly of devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall.

*In truth, the subjective world and the objective world are not two; they are only aspects of the One. The joy one derives from the senses — to whom does it belong, from whom did it originate? The body or the Atma? The senses are but tools. They are operated, put to use by the mind. The mind is named Indra, since it manipulates the Indriyas (senses). The mind has to act according to the orders decided by the Buddhi and not according to its own whims. The Buddhi is illumined when it turns to the Atma within.*

– Baba



*From our Archives*

## BASE ALL YOUR ACTIONS ON MORALITY

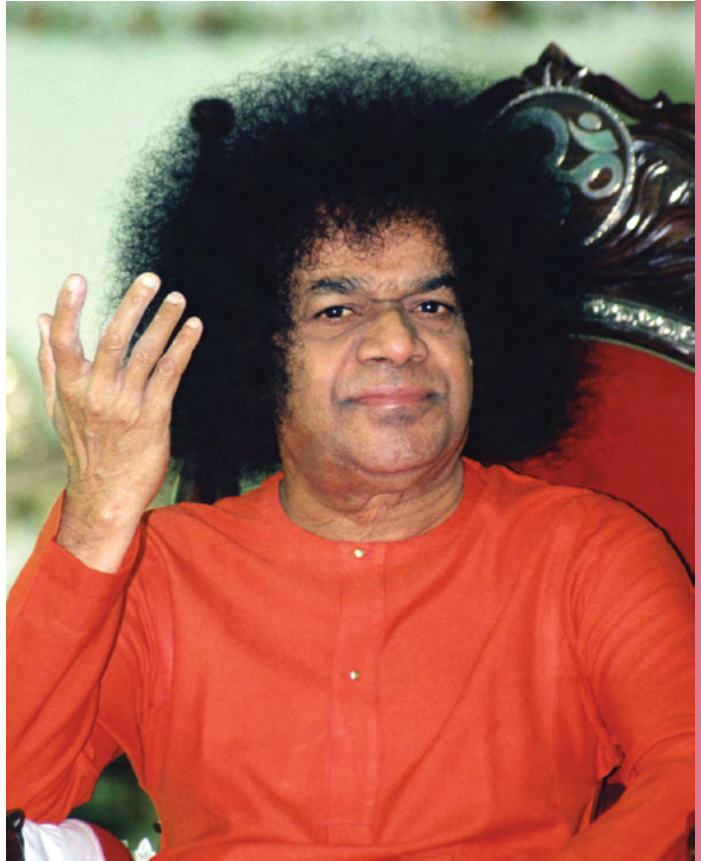
WHERE THERE IS NO LOVE, THERE IS NO LIFE

**G**OOD AND BAD CONDUCT ARE present in many people but will not be apparent to others. The results of each one's good and bad deeds, however, will be reflected in each one's future life. Man's waking life begins everyday with sunrise and closes when he goes to sleep. This is the pattern for all beings and in the process man attempts to discover the purpose of life. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west and on this basis the other directions, north and south, are determined. Similarly, on the basis of sun's appearance and absence, day and night are experienced. The different seasons are also based on the apparent movement of the sun.

### **Do not Get Deluded by External Appearances**

This is the ordinary experience of man in daily life. When this matter is seen from a different viewpoint, on the recognition of the fact that the earth is a globe revolving round the sun, neither sunrise nor sunset nor east and west have any reality. The real truth is one thing and what is apparent from experience is another. When you are going in a bus, you are moving with the bus though you seem to be in the same place. Likewise, although the earth is revolving at the rate of several

hundred miles per minute, people are not conscious of its movement. They feel that the earth is stationary and they are making all movements. Even scientists, who know the truth, behave on the basis of their daily experience and not on the basis of the deeper reality. They know that neither sunrise nor sunset nor east and west have any basis in reality. But they regard them as facts of life. Likewise, our daily life is



based on the apparent facts of day-to-day experience. Days and nights, weeks and months, changing seasons and yearly rounds are all based on these recurring experiences. The science of astrology is based on these recurring phenomena relating to the movements of the sun, the moon, the planets, etc.

We should not go by what is apparent and external. Where, in reality, there is one, it appears to us as two. One is Jiva and the other is Deva. Jiva is preoccupied with all that is external. This is the sign of forgetfulness. To turn the vision inward is real awareness. It reveals Divinity. Divinity can be realised only by Thyaga (sacrifice). Thyaga is a supreme virtue in man. One who has no spirit of sacrifice will be sick in body and mind. What Thyaga does to a man is to eradicate his selfishness. As long as self-interest is dominant, one cannot understand Reality. The self-centered man cannot attain the Supreme. Hence, we must cultivate a broad mind and seek to serve our fellow-beings who need help. Even in the pursuit of Mukti (liberation), there is no place for concern with one's self. To be concerned about Naa Mukti (my salvation) will lead only to Na Mukti (no salvation). Those who are concerned only about their own liberation will not achieve it.

### **Prema is the Basis for everything**

To understand the true meaning of Paratattwa (Self-realisation), the first step is to grasp the significance of Prematattwa (love principle). For everything, Prema (love) is the basis, the cause and the consummation. If there is no love, there is no life. When love is developed, anger automatically ceases. When you feel angry, sit down with a hearty laugh. Limit your speech. Too much talk leads to heated exchange of words.

The lesson to be learnt in the New Year is the cultivation of peace by keeping anger under check and developing love for all. The values a man must cherish as his life-breath are: Sathya (truth), Dharma (righteousness), Santhi (peace), Prema (love) and Ahimsa (non-violence). Of these five vital principles, Prema is the foremost. It is Prema that flows as the undercurrent of the other four values. How does it flow this way? When Prema is associated with feelings, it produces Santhi. When Prema animates actions, it results in Dharma. When Prema is combined with understanding, it becomes Ahimsa. Therefore, whenever you feel angry, think of Prema (love), develop thoughts of love in your heart. You will have peace.

If our clothes get dirty, we change them because we are ashamed to appear in dirty garments. If our house is dirty, we try to clean it so that visitors may not get a bad impression. But when our minds and hearts are polluted, we do not feel ashamed. Is it not strange that we should be so much concerned about the cleanliness of our clothes or our homes, but are not concerned about the purity of our hearts and minds which affect our entire life?

To purify our hearts and minds, the first thing we have to do is to lead a righteous life. Our actions must be based on morality. Indulging in abuse of others or inflicting pain on them is not a sign of human nature. The evil that we do to others ultimately recoils on us. Auspicious days like Ugadi should be used for making resolutions to change our ways of life and to purify our behaviour by giving up all bad qualities.

– Excerpted from Bhagavan's Ugadi Discourses.



# CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

## 16TH ANNIVERSARY OF SSSIHMS, WHITEFIELD

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 16TH Anniversary of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (SSSIHMS), Whitefield (Bengaluru), the doctors and paramedical staff of the hospital presented a very beautiful cultural programme entitled “Arogya Nilayam to Ananda Nilayam – Ek Antar Yatra” (from the temple of healing to the temple of bliss – an inward journey) at Prasanthi Nilayam on 29th January 2017.

The programme included talks by the Director of SSSIHMS, Dr. D.C. Sundaresh and the Medical Superintendent of the General Hospital, Dr. Upendra Acharya, a PowerPoint presentation by Dr. P.K. Dash, short speeches by three speakers and an illuminating Discourse of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Dr. Sundaresh in his talk spoke about more facilities for patients and new initiatives for better functioning of the hospital. Dr. Acharya referred to the smooth relocation of the General Hospital in the premises of SSSIHMS and underlined the importance of selfless service and unconditional love in the working of the hospital. Dr. Dash in his presentation showcased how complicated cardiac cases were being successfully handled by use of latest techniques in cardiology.

Other speakers who spoke on this occasion were: Dr. Kamakshi Kannan, Sri Srinivas and Dr. Akkamma Devi who narrated their experiences of Bhagavan's



*Passengers in a train journey signifying the inner journey of man.*

Divinity and described how Bhagavan's unseen hand was seen in all the activities and functions of the hospital. Innovative multimedia depiction of a train journey signifying the inner journey of man to the abode of peace, Prasanthi Nilayam, and conversation of the passengers on the unique Healthcare Mission of Bhagavan made the programme lively and enriching. Besides, melodious songs and thrilling dances of the staff made the presentation all the more absorbing. The programme came to a close with the Divine Message of Bhagavan, in which He exhorted one and all to see unity in diversity and experience divinity, which is the main objective of man's life. Bhajans followed next and concluded with Arati.

## CHINESE NEW YEAR

Deep devotion and piety marked the celebration of Chinese New Year 2017 at Prasanthi Nilayam, wherein devotees from China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore came to participate. The theme of this



year's celebrations held on 3rd and 4th February 2017 was "Develop Kindness and Compassion". The venue of the celebrations was Sai Kulwant Hall, which was beautifully decorated for the festive occasion.

The programme on 3rd February 2017 began with the lighting of the ceremonial

every visit. Sai Kulwant Hall, she stated, was the source of powerful spiritual vibrations.

Overseas devotees then presented a medley of Chinese New Year songs in Chinese, Hindi and English suffusing the entire milieu with deep devotional fervour. Some of the songs were: "Happy



### *Chinese New Year songs by overseas devotees.*

lamp followed by traditional Chinese offerings made by overseas devotees. Chanting of sacred Buddhist Mantras by the Medan Group, Indonesia followed next. Sri Billy Fong, the Coordinator of Chinese New Year celebrations, thereafter addressed the gathering. Referring to the hospitals, educational institutions and water supply projects of Bhagavan as the visible manifestations of His kindness and compassion, the distinguished speaker observed that the basic teachings of Bhagavan like "Help Ever Hurt Never", "Love All Serve All" conveyed the message of kindness and compassion to mankind.

After the talk of Sri Billy Fong, a group of devotees from Malaysia made a devotional music offering on harmonica. An illuminating talk by Ms Isabella Chu, a judge from Hong Kong, followed next. Referring to more than 80 visits made by her to Prasanthi Nilayam, the learned speaker said that she felt re-energised by

New Year, Everyone Here", "Om Sri Sai Ram, Sai Baba Tera Naam". Chinese New Year songs were followed by International Bhajans which were also led by overseas devotees, both ladies and gents. Arati was then offered to Bhagavan which marked the conclusion of the programme.

The programme on 4th February 2017 began with group chanting of the sacred Buddhist Mantra "Da Bei Zhou" by the devotees of Jakarta, Indonesia. After this, Sri Usli, a senior officer bearer of Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO), Indonesia addressed the gathering. Narrating his personal experiences of Bhagavan's Divinity, the distinguished speaker said that he developed better understanding of life and got answers to all his spiritual questions through the teachings of Bhagavan. His talk was followed by another performance of harmonica by two youth, a boy and a girl, who earlier performed with Malaysian





*International Bhajans led by overseas devotees.*

Group on 3rd February 2017. A Chinese New Year song was thereafter presented by a group of ladies from Indonesia. The last item of the programme was International Bhajans led by overseas devotees, both ladies and gents.

#### FOURTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF VIDYA VAHINI SCHOOLS

The Fourth Annual Convention of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini Schools was organised at Prasanthi Nilayam from 10th to 12th February 2017. The theme of this year's convention was: "Growth Mindset – Steps towards Becoming a Lighthouse School".

#### **Talks by Eminent Speakers**

On the opening day, 10th February 2017, a Partnership Conclave was held in Sai Kulwant Hall, in which the major partners in Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini, who are working together in the mission of achieving excellence in education based on Bhagavan's teachings in 100 schools under this partnership participated. The proceedings began with lighting of the lamp followed by an introductory speech of Sri Satyajit Salian, National Coordinator, Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini. Sri K. Chakravarthi, Member Secretary,

Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust in his keynote address explained the importance of integral system of education given by Bhagavan Baba and observed that it was not limited only to secular education; it was wholesome education for the body, mind and soul. He emphasised the need for giving a practical shape to this system of education in the schools associated with Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini programme.

After the keynote address of Sri K. Chakravarthi, active partners in this programme, who have been giving technical support to achieve the larger goal that this programme is envisioned with, were felicitated. They were: Sri Kalyana Sundaram from Digital Deloitte, Sri Vijay Kumar from Tata Consultancy Services and Smt. Archana Raghuram from Cognizant Technologies.

Three speakers addressed the gathering after this. The first speaker was Smt. Archana Raghuram, who commended the work being done by volunteers in Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini programme and stated that it was a unique platform to transform education for the benefit of society. The next speaker, Sri Kalyana Sundaram, spoke about the voluntary initiatives undertaken by Deloitte touching the lives of lakhs of students and remarked that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's teaching "Manava Seva is Madhava Seva" (service to man is service to God) is the easiest way to make an impact on the lives of people.

The Chief Guest of the convention, Prof. Yoginder Verma, Pro Vice Chancellor, Central University of Himachal Pradesh was the last speaker of the programme. Prof. Verma observed that Bhagavan Baba was the unique Avatar who gave





*The Chief Guest Prof. Yoginder Verma addressing the gathering.*

to the world a system of education embedded in spirituality to make man understand his divinity. Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini, he said, was following this system of education to transform the lives of students. Bhagavan's educational institutions, hospitals and water projects, he added, were the source of inspiration for all to join His Mission of transformation of mankind. Bhajan followed next and concluded with Arati. The proceedings of the convention on 11th and 12th February 2017 were conducted in Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.

### **Sarva Gnanamayi Vidyate: A Dance Drama**

As part of the convention of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini Schools, five schools of Tamil Nadu presented a beautiful drama entitled "Sarva Gnanamayi Vidyate" (all knowledge comes from within) in Sai



*A vibrant folk dance in the drama "Sarvam Gnanamayi Vidyate".*

Kulwant Hall on 11th February 2017. Beginning with a vibrant folk dance of the students, the drama depicted how secular education could be supplemented with spiritual education to make it the medium of transformation of the students, inculcate virtues in them and develop their character. Excellent script, elevating theme and perfect choreography made the drama a very impressive presentation on the theme of values-based education.

An audio clip of Bhagavan's Divine Discourse on this theme was thereafter played on the public address system. In His Discourse, Bhagavan said that education which made the students selfish was no education. True education, He said, was based on spirituality which brought about transformation in students.

### **SRI RAMA HRIDAYAM: A DRAMA**

The students of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning enacted a touching drama "Sri Rama Hridayam" (heart of Rama) on 12th February 2017. Presenting a few episodes from the immortal epic Ramayana, the



*Bharata praying to Rama to return to Ayodhya in the drama "Sri Rama Hridayam".*



drama showed the supreme love between Rama and His brothers and depicted the virtues of Rama as an ideal brother, ideal son, ideal king and the embodiment of Sathya and Dharma.

### PILGRIMAGE OF TIRUVALLUR DEVOTEES

Devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall had a taste of divine music when two noted musicians offered bouquets of devotional songs at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan on 17th and 18th February 2017. The occasion was the two-day pilgrimage of the devotees from the Tiruvallur district of Tamil Nadu to Prasanthi Nilayam. The first presentation was made by classical vocalist and playback singer Sri Sriram Parthasarathy on 17th February 2017. Beginning with a Carnatic classical song in Tamil “Charana Kamalam Adainthen” (I have reached the Lotus Feet), the talented singer enthralled the devotees for nearly one hour with Carnatic classical songs and Bhajans which included “Rama Nannu Brovara”, “Arja Suno Mere Parama Kripalu Partheeswara Sai Deva”, “Antaranga Sai Anatha Natha Sai” and “Muralidhara Gopala”. The devotional music presentation made by famous Nama Sankirtan exponent Kovai Sri Jayaraman on 18th February 2017 was a cascade of Nama Sankirtan which suffused the entire milieu with Divine Names of God. Starting with the famous Kirtan “Jai Jai Rama Krishna Hari”, he next sang “Prabho Ganapate” and followed it with one Kirtan after another which included “Bhagavan Bhagavan Patita Pavana Ram”, “Rangamma Paahi Rangamma” and “Devasenapate Skanda Subrahmanya

Paahi Maam”. Besides these two excellent concerts, devotees from Tiruvallur district led Bhajans and performed Veda chanting both in the morning and evening on these two days in Sai Kulwant Hall.

### PILGRIMAGE OF ADILABAD DEVOTEES

More than 2,000 devotees came on a two-day pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam from Adilabad district of Telangana State from 19th to 20th February 2017. As part of this pilgrimage, Bal Vikas children and youth of this district performed a dance



*The drama “Sai Patham” showed the Sai path of love and service.*

drama entitled “Sai Patham” on 19th February 2017. Opening with a beautiful dance of Bal Vikas children (girls), the drama depicted how the simple and easy path of love and selfless service shown by Bhagavan could lead man to liberation even without the study of scriptures and observance of rituals prescribed in various religions. This supreme path of love and service was showcased through the story of an innocent person who was found deserving to attain a place in heaven as he followed the Sai Path.



VIKAS BAGRI

## LOOKING FOR SWAMI? COME LET US FIND HIM!

IT WAS 1ST JUNE 2006, MY FIRST DAY as a Sai Student. I was in Puttaparthi and we were told that Baba might come back from Brindavan after 5th June. I was a bit excited, not so much to have His Darshan, but because birthday boys would get the opportunity to get special blessings from Baba. We waited and waited and it was only on 18th June that I got the opportunity to 'sit in the front' with other birthday boys for Swami to come and bless us!

We were all seated and waiting for Baba to come. It was a special day for me. I was seated with a tray with several things in it. I was a bit nervous, not knowing how I should present the tray to Baba, what should I ask from Him, what should I tell Him, knowing that this may be a rare opportunity of going to Him. I had spoken to my father and he had told me, "Whenever you get a chance, ask Baba for Padanamaskar". Baba came, went up on the stage and signalled for the birthday boys to come. Someone ahead of me went up and I followed. I went up to Baba, presented a rose, at which He gave me the sweetest smile I have ever seen! He blessed everything in my tray and then I quickly asked for Padanamaskar. This was my first Padanamaskar. I was blessed.

### From Baba to Swami

I thought this was my best day ever, not knowing that there was more to come! Baba

went inside the Bhajan hall and I got up to drink water. Suddenly, there was some noise, some whispers and I figured that it must be Baba coming out. I immediately rushed back but could not reach my seat. He had planned another place for me. I sat on the slope and to my surprise Baba was coming down my way. He looked at me and asked me in Hindi, "Kya Karta"? (what do you do?) to which I responded, "Baba, I am Your student. I am doing my MBA". He nodded and then without losing another second I asked Him, "Baba, can I take Padanamaskar" and He immediately approved.

This was the day when Baba became Swami for me. The idea of Sri Sathya Sai

*"Bhakti means getting rid of the vices of attachment, hatred and envy and manifesting pure love. Anyone who loves pomp, who is filled with pride and is consumed by envy cannot be a devotee by any test. Devotion will go nowhere near that person. The devotee has to overcome hatred, envy and attachment and experience the peace and bliss of love. That devotee will then acquire the attributes of the Divine".*

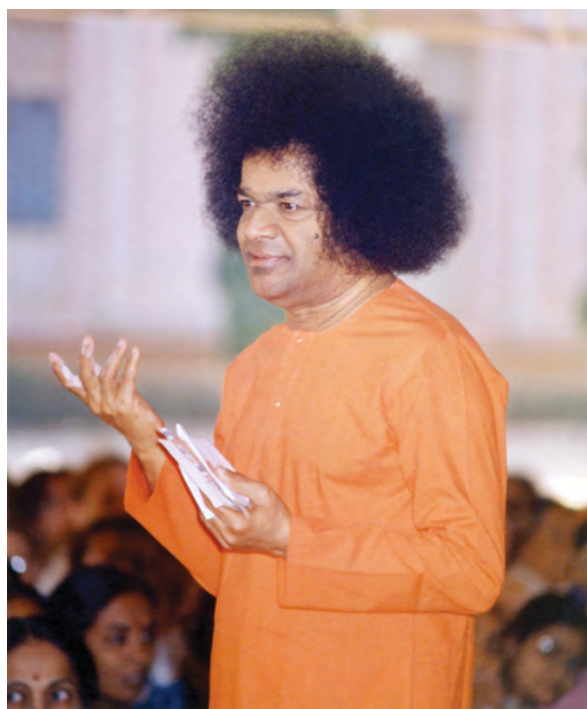
Baba - whom I had revered all my life like I revered Rama, Krishna, Jesus and others – had started to change. From being the Almighty God – someone all-powerful, all-knowing, all-pervading, someone up there somewhere – to being a Loving God, a Loving Being, someone right here, someone who comes to you; from being someone

who is in photographs all around me but is not accessible to being someone who talks, laughs and asks you all kinds of mundane questions. I guess, it is just yearning for Him which makes it all happen.

### **Significance of Understanding our Real Nature**

It was 26th December 2007 and Swami was giving His Christmas Discourse. I was blessed to be sitting right opposite Swami, in the first row, that day. The Discourse started and I was listening to Swami with rapt attention. Suddenly, I noticed water flowing down from an area around Swami's feet. While I was trying to locate the source of this water, Swami looked at me – and while giving the Discourse – asked me, "What is your name"? Everyone was looking at me, since Swami was looking at me but I was looking at His feet and the water around it. The boy behind me immediately pushed me and said Swami is asking your name. I went half way up to Swami and said, "Swami, Vikas". He continued the Discourse and said, "In fact, that is not his real name. Similarly, you enquire from each one and they give different names. However, if God were to mention His name, He will say Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman). In fact, all of us should repeat the same name since we are all Embodiments of Divine Self. All our names are given to us by our parents. We are not born with any particular name. Those who cannot realise this truth cannot lead a happy life".

His message was clear. To live a happy and fulfilling life, we need to know and understand our real nature. When we know and understand our real nature, only then can we act accordingly. If we don't know the nature of salt and mix it with milk - then our life (like the milk with the salt) will



be miserable. Similarly, most of us are all living a life where we don't understand our real nature and hence we experience the everyday as a mix of joys and sorrows, ups and downs, good and bad, and life goes on like that. It is in understanding our real nature we will understand Swami. Once we have known our Self, we have found Swami. This is how Swami conveys this truth: "You may think that you are separate from Swami. But, in fact, I and you are not separate. I am yours, you are Mine, you and I are one. Understand this truth and act accordingly".

And then what might happen when we act according to our real nature? There will be no fights, there will be no conflicts and wars. Do we fight when we look at our reflection in the mirror? Would we physically fight with Swami or even in front of Him? If we can see His reflection in everyone and see Him everywhere – we will not trouble anybody else; we will respect women, we will respect Nature and love everything around us.





## Life Journey Focused on Swami

What can we do to understand our real nature? How do we use the 24 hours given to us everyday to realise our real nature? We need to take our work, our family, our colleagues, our immediate surroundings, our circumstances, our strengths and weaknesses as an opportunity to realise our true nature. From the time we get up to the time we go to bed, we must WATCH: Watch our words, actions, thoughts, character and heart. We must watch what happens in our mind when we talk, hear, see, read, write, eat, drink and work. We must develop the capability to watch anger or hatred or any other feelings emerging in us in different circumstances through the day. It is only when we watch them emerging can we control them. It is at work, at home, with family, with colleagues that we need to practise WATCH.

While the six enemies of lust, hatred, delusion, greed, envy and pride will stop us throughout the day to realise our real nature, there are several qualities which Swami says will help us work towards this goal. In a Discourse, Swami said, "Where the six noble qualities of Utsaha (enthusiasm), Sahasa (determination), Dhairya (courage), Buddhi (intelligence), Shakti (energy) and Parakrama (valour) are evident, God's protection and grace prevail there". Throughout the day, we need to keep the six noble qualities with us to fight the six enemies. We need to WATCH and see for ourselves if we are progressing. The more we experience the peace and bliss of Love, the more we are closer to understanding our true nature, and therefore to finding Swami! This is what Swami said in this regard in His Discourse on 14th January 1995:

"Bhakti means getting rid of the vices of attachment, hatred and envy and manifesting pure love. Anyone who loves pomp, who is filled with pride and is consumed by envy cannot be a devotee by any test. Devotion will go nowhere near that person. The devotee has to overcome hatred, envy and attachment and experience the peace and bliss of love. That devotee will then acquire the attributes of the Divine".

Swami, through the university, gave all His students and teachers a brilliant way to keep their spiritual journey focused on Swami. He would always tell us, whatever you do - offer it to Me. And, without too much effort, He made us practise it. Whether it was the Sports Meet or the numerous programmes in the Mandir; from the morning prayers to the night prayer; whether it be exams, sports or cultural programmes – everything we did, was for Swami! "Love is the very nature of life, as burning is the nature of fire, or wetness of water or sweetness of sugar", said Swami.

It may take a long time for us to realise our real nature, but we need to start somewhere if we are earnestly looking for Swami. What does Swami mean? Swami stands for Love, Happiness, Joy, Devotion, Sathya Sai Baba, Rama, Krishna, Allah, Christ, and anything and everything that represents Oneness, Unity and Pure Love. Once we all, as a society, start earnestly looking for Love through the lens of oneness, we will create a more happy life for ourself and a more peaceful world for everyone.

**– The author Sri Vikas Bagri did his MBA from Swami's university in 2006-2008. He was part of the office of the Adviser to the Prime Minister. More recently, he has been an Adviser to the Government of Chhattisgarh.**



## *Effulgence of Divine Glory*

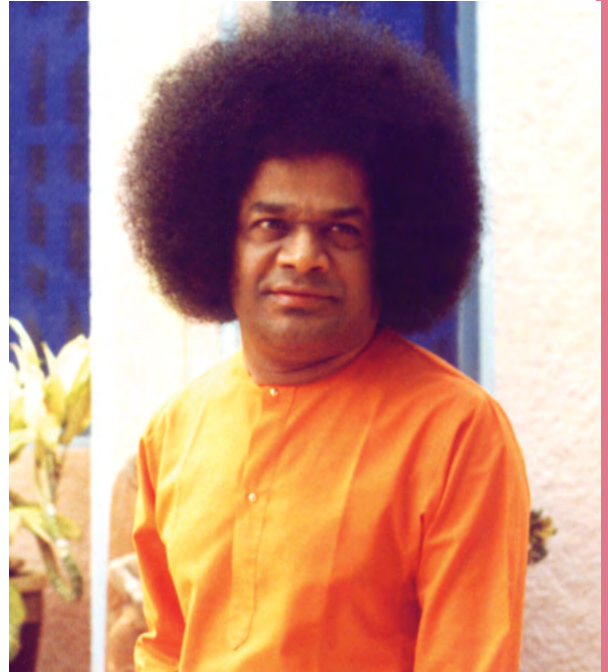
# STORY OF THE MISSING TALISMAN

**A**FTER SWAMI HAD LEFT FOR Mysore (Mysuru), I found to my great dismay the talisman given to me by Swami suddenly missing. I had carefully fixed it on my chain with two protective rings on either side of it, and could not understand how it could have ever fallen down. Sad at heart, I told a friend of mine, who was also a devotee of Swami, about it and she advised me to do Arati to Swami's photograph entreating Him to give the talisman back to me. I did so with no luck, and the talisman did not come back as I had vainly hoped. I decided to tell Swami about the loss as soon as He came back from Mysuru.

Swami returned from Mysuru three days later. As soon as He reached Bengaluru, He Himself telephoned me and told me not to worry about the talisman because it had gone back safely to Him.

The reader can well imagine my surprise on hearing this from Swami! I hurried to have His Darshan and pleaded with Him to give the talisman back to me. He said, "You dared to go alone in a taxi at night just because you had the talisman with you. So, I have taken it back from you". I assured Him that I would never take such risks again, but He did not give the talisman back to me. I had to remain silent, feeling extremely sad at what had happened.

It was only when Swami came to Bengaluru on another occasion that He decided to give the talisman back to me.



This I pinned to my chain with the prayer that I should never lose it again. I prostrated at His Lotus Feet, and with tears in my eyes, I told Him that even parents could not be so kind as He was. God's mercy is beyond human understanding!

A Rani (princess) from Hyderabad, who was a great devotee of Swami, had arranged to take Swami to her palace. Swami asked me also to accompany Him. We, the devotees of Bhagavan Baba, are well aware that it is a rare privilege given only to a chosen few to accompany Him on His trips when He Wills it. So, with gratitude, I readily agreed to go with Him, saying, "Swami, with Your blessing, I shall certainly come with You".

I hastened home as happy as a lark to take permission from my husband. I held my talisman in hand and prayed earnestly to Sai Baba before I talked to my husband. "We are going to be the guests of a Rani," I said. My husband was quiet for a little while, which made me nervous. But then he said I could go, and I was delighted.

Swami asked me and two other lady devotees to come by train, while He and the Rani's family would travel by air. The day that we were to leave, some of Swami's Bhaktas (devotees) were to stage a play and insisted on my attending it. As the time of departure of the train was 9 p.m., I agreed to be present at the play for a little while. But the play was so interesting that I forgot to keep track of the time. All of a sudden, when I looked at my watch, I found that I had only a few minutes more to reach the railway station. In my excitement, I had even forgotten the name of the railway station I was to buy the ticket for. There was hardly any time to waste, so I took a chance, and holding my talisman tightly in my hand and praying to Swami to enlighten me, I asked the man at the ticket counter to issue a ticket to the place where fighting was going on. He was much amused and asked me, "You want a ticket to Kashmir"? I said no. He then asked me, "Is it to China"? I again said no. He again asked, "Is it to Hyderabad"? "Yes! Yes! That is it," I said. He gave me my ticket and told me that the train to Hyderabad was about to start. I rushed to the platform, and found that the train had just started moving. The porter threw all the luggage into the guard's van, and helped me also to get into it. The guard was a good and understanding man and made me comfortable in his cabin. I located my companions at the next station,

took my luggage to their compartment and sat with them. I thanked the Lord for not leaving me stranded at the railway station in Bengaluru, but guiding me somehow at the last minute to reach Hyderabad along with the other devotees.

When we reached the Rani's house at Hyderabad, Swami had not yet arrived. The next morning at 6 o'clock we saw Swami's aeroplane flying up in the sky over the Rani's house. We had a very happy and peaceful time as we usually have whenever Swami resides with us.

One day, the same talisman's rings fell off and I gave the talisman to Swami to mend it. Swami took it in His hand and asked me, "Amma, do you want the gold rim (frame) of the talisman or the Mantra of Mine inside it"? Quick as lightning came my reply, "I want the Mantra of our Swami and not the golden frame". Then He said, "I will throw this talisman away. Whoever finds it first thing in the morning can have it". So saying, He threw the talisman out into the garden. We could see the gold in it shining in the sunlight after it was thrown out.

Next day, early in the morning, all of us went into the garden to search for the talisman, but we could not find it anywhere. We continued our search in vain till it was time for breakfast. Food was brought for Swami along with water in a tumbler. Swami looked at the water and said, "This water is not clean". The hostess was naturally much perturbed and she took it back, filtered it and brought it back again. Once more, He looked at it and said, "It is still not clean. There is a fish in it"! All of us peeped into the water with curiosity, and saw that what was inside

*continued on page 28...*



Jagadeesh Babu

## MY JOURNEY WITH HIM TO WITHIN

**F**IRSTLY, I THANK BHAGAVAN FOR this opportunity to share my thoughts with everyone. One way, it is a blessing in disguise, as writing my thoughts will somewhere bring me closer to Bhagavan than before! Writing brings clarity in thoughts and fills in the void created over time due to our own preoccupation with worldly things. Swami, thanks for this opportunity.

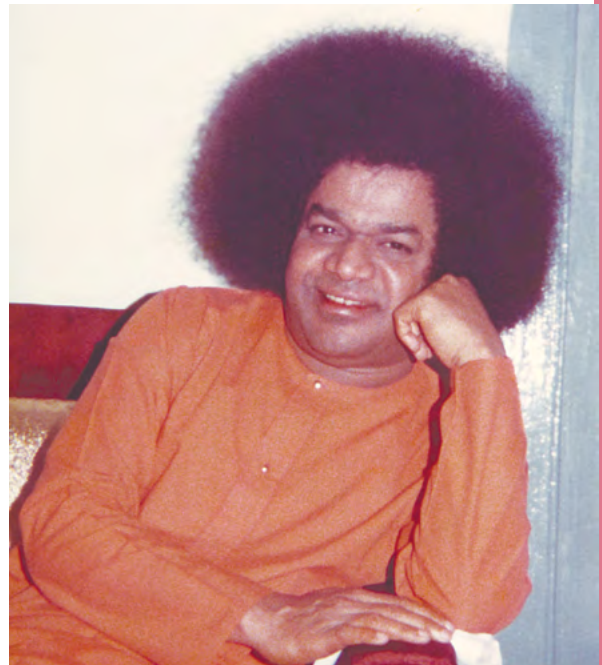
My realisation about Bhagavan started in 1990 when I was 23 years old. Like many, I started my journey to Sai as a non-believer. I was appearing for my final CA exam and we had a photo of Bhagavan in our house, kept by my sister-in-law. During my long study hours of days and nights, when I used to be alone at home, I started conversing with Bhagavan's photo in a casual manner. At one point of time, He became my companion during those tough gruelling hours even without my realising it. Once I finished my exam, I decided to meet Him in person. I took a train from Mumbai (where I live) to Puttaparthi.

### Journey to Puttaparthi

In those days, there was no direct train to Puttaparthi. So, I got down at Guntakal station at around 11 a.m. and enquired from the people around the route to reach Puttaparthi. I was advised to take a bus from Guntakal bus station. On reaching there, I was told, there would be no bus service till late night or next day morning due to State-level strike. I had the whole day left and had no clue of where to stay and what to do next. There were a few strangers like me

at the bus station but there were no shops, no restaurants, no food and no water. My interaction with Bhagavan continued in silence. Within next 30 minutes, an empty bus came inside the bus station and the conductor announced that the bus was heading towards Anantapur. I was assured that Anantapur was closer to Puttaparthi and it was en route. I somehow reached Anantapur without any problem. Around 4.30 p.m., the bus services were resumed from Anantapur and I reached Puttaparthi by late evening.

I would not want to call this a miracle or something. That would amount to judging Bhagavan and we certainly do not have the qualification, abilities or right to do so. I see such instances as His nature. When it comes to all-pervasive Bhagavan, He ensures everyone is taken care of, all the time. In the initial days, I too would get surprised by His waving of hand and producing Vibhuti, chains, etc. Over a period, I realised that the whole Nature or Srishti is within Him. He



controls two very important aspects of life called time and space. When these two are not applicable to Him, He can do any act, produce anything and be at any place at any time, in the blink of an eye. I, over a period of time, learned to follow the Creator than the creation.

Coming back to my story, the trip was fruitful and I enjoyed His physical Darshan and got immersed in everything that was His. Be it His looks, His Darshan, His compassionate conversation with devotees, Ashram discipline, His teachings, the Bhajans, etc., I felt like Bhagavan was moving with me wherever I went. The impact was great and it softened me a lot in my attitude and behaviour. I felt as if it was my new birth. I vowed not to do any wrong thing in life, be compassionate to everyone, be careful about my speech, behaviour, etc. I was in a hurry to bring in so many changes in my life as if there was no tomorrow. I had a strong feeling that I had wasted my youthful days not knowing Him; so I should hurry up now. I wanted to rush up and move very fast in the spiritual ladder.

When I contemplate on those early days, I wonder how all that happened, how I moved from the negative to the positive scale, why there was a sudden urge to go to Puttaparthi, what was drawing me towards Him despite my not having spoken to Him in person? One would say, such things happen when stars are in one's favour. Some would say, good deeds bring great results. My realisation on this account is very different. I believe every person, who has taken birth, is His devotee. Some are made aware of it quickly in life and some are unaware till they die. Without our knowledge and without our asking Him, He takes charge of our life from day one. Our communication with Him may

***Swami chose to make us aware of His Divinity and granted us the nectar of His Darshan. The question is why we? This time, we need to ask this question and seek an answer too. We cannot be selfish only to enjoy every bit of His association and also conclude by saying He chose to grant us. We owe Him a lot. Probably, He wanted to grant us an opportunity to serve in His mission. We owe every bit of our life to Him. So, how do we do this?***

be in different forms and manners based on our religion and faith. He alone chooses the right time to reveal His identity to us. It is His play and He alone knows when and where to make us realise.

### **Trust God Wholeheartedly**

Over the next couple of years, I made frequent trips to Puttaparthi. I was financially independent by then. My faith in Him turned slowly into love for Him. I started connecting with Him closely. I was drawn towards Bhajans. Over the period, slowly I got into the Sai Organisation, which gave me the opportunity to serve. After next couple of years, my life changed completely. I stopped visiting my old friends; free hours and holidays were spent in Bhajans and service activities. There was a sense of satisfaction in life. As I was not married then, I had all the free time to myself, which I would spend in Sai activities. During those years, there were many celebrations in Puttaparthi. There was Paduka Puja, golden chariot celebrations, Bhagavan's daily Discourses, etc. By being a Seva Dal, I enjoyed every bit

of it. I used to be a regular Prasanthi Seva participant. All these could happen due to His Sankalpa for me.

I always consider these 5-7 years as the golden period of my life. I paid many visits to Prasanthi Nilayam, had very close Darshans, Padanamaskars, etc. Bhagavan showered His grace in abundance. Some time I used to wonder, do I deserve all of this? What an extreme swing from one end to the other? If this is what was destined to happen, why did He delay the process so much in my life? Many questions; but no answers then. Now I know that Bhagavan does everything with a purpose. He never does anything just like that. If we do not understand the purpose, it is our inability or immaturity. It is not necessary that we need to know His purpose all the time. He had planned everything for us much before even we knew Him. The problem with us is we have trained our mind to ask questions and know the reason, all the time. The learning for me was to trust Him wholeheartedly and not to bother about why, what, when, etc. What we need is complete surrender. Everything happens for a reason and season. He is the master and He knows the best.

### **Complete Surrender is True Devotion**

Then came a phase in my life when I was getting married. I had a great desire that I should get married at Puttaparthi. I prayed to Him profusely. He fulfilled my desire by making available certain resources through some unknown people. He even blessed us in Darshan line on the day of our marriage. He has unique ways of fulfilling the wishes of His devotees. Since then, there were many situations in life, where I thought I was taking the right decisions and prayed for the decisions to materialise. There were many challenges in life and everything did

not go well as “planned by me”. There were problems in the marriage, job front, etc.

Every time I would decide and pray to Him for the decision to materialise. I was a fool to decide for myself and pray for the decision to materialise. Some of the prayers materialised; some did not. In some, I was taken to the brink of devastation but saved in time. Perhaps, I lost the track and became overconfident over the period.

This is a phase I always regret about. Now when I sum up all the events, I see a logic in He granting certain wishes and not fulfilling some. He had a plan, clear plan. He knew what was best for me and He exactly did that. It is our ignorance and lack of faith that we start taking decisions. I should have prayed for His guidance in every situation. The learning for me was two-fold. First, never decide and ask Him to grant the wish. We need to trust that He is the master of our life and He knows the best. We should only pray for His guidance and grace and that He should grant what is good for us. Second, He is very compassionate despite our repeated mistakes. We may fail in our duty towards Him but He never fails in His grace towards us. He is full of compassion and love. If we imbibe this, we will never ever feel sad in life. Complete surrender is true devotion. I learned this by paying the fine of drifting away for a while. He managed to bring me back to track well in time. He made sure, all the problems in my life dissolved in thin air and everything was brought back to normalcy. Everything happens for a reason; He knows the best. Probably He wanted to teach some important lessons in life. The sad part is that I lost a few years in the process in worldly matters.

Bhagavan's trip to Hadshi and Mumbai in 2009 was the best event in my life. I had





the opportunity to enjoy His Darshan and Discourses from close quarters. I have some great memories to cherish. He blessed many of us with gifts and Padanamaskars. We were all overwhelmed with abundant love and grace from Him. His Maha Samadhi was the most painful event to follow. Many said He left the physical body. Can Bhagavan be confined to the physical frame alone? The truth is He has moved from physical body into subtle form within our heart. So in that sense, He has not departed but has come to reside within all of us. He is closer to us now than before.

There was learning for us in everything He did. The only true offering to Him can be how we live our life. He declared, "Your Life is My Message". Look at the amount of trust and faith He had in all of us. It is our foremost duty to follow the principles taught by Him and inspire everyone around us. How fortunate are we to take birth as contemporaries of an Avatar and have the awareness of the same! I was told, there were very few people, who knew Rama and Krishna were Avatars when they were with them. It happened with Shirdi Sai Avatar as well. But Swami chose to make us aware of His Divinity and granted us the nectar of His Darshan. The question is why we? This time, we need to ask this question and seek an answer too. We cannot be selfish only to enjoy every bit of His association and also conclude by saying He chose to grant us. We owe Him a lot. Probably, He wanted to grant us an opportunity to serve in His mission. We owe every bit of our life to Him. So, how do we do this?

### **Swami's Teachings are the Essence of the Vedas**

Firstly, we continue to believe in His omnipresence and surrender to Him

completely. Give the control of your life to Him. This does not mean that we sit quietly hoping He will do everything. It is about doing our duty and leaving the rest to Him. Believe that everything happens with His Will. Have the faith that He will only do the best for us. Never ever have doubt based on situations and events that happen in our life. We don't need to seek an answer to what, why and how. He is closest to us now. He resides in our hearts. He is directly watching each one of us. Never ever let the shadow of doubt enter your mind. Life might throw many challenges and setbacks. He puts the problems and challenges for us and He will only solve all of them. We are mere actors on the stage. The script is written by Him. When confused, look up to Him for guidance. He may have many styles of providing the direction. Trust in His omnipresence. Follow His teachings. They are the true essence of all the Vedas and representation of Dharma. His teachings have solutions for all problems and challenging situations in life. We need to slowly move from the belief that He is within us to the aspiration that He and I have become one now.

Second, be a true devotee by following His teachings such that people get to know Bhagavan through your behaviour. It is His Sankalpa. He has declared, Your Life is My Message. With this, He has entrusted a big responsibility to all of us. Truly, He doesn't need any one of us for His mission. It is His compassion and love for us that He wants to grant us an opportunity. We are like those lucky monkeys who built the bridge for Rama. He has taken a great step by announcing to the world: Know about Me by seeing My devotees. We should all be the true reflection of His teachings. Our behaviour and faith should inspire people



who are not aware of Him. By this not only our lives become better, hundreds of people who come in contact with us get to know Bhagavan. This itself is a great service to humanity.

Finally, create awareness about His Mission and help many more to enjoy His grace and love. We don't need to get into a membership drive. But it is about creating awareness; not by speech but by our thoughts, words and deeds. We all need to involve ourselves in many more Seva activities. We all have been blessed to witness His physical presence and His Leelas. In the next few decades, there will be many new devotees who shall get inspired and join the organisation. They may not have been fortunate to have enjoyed His Darshan in physical form. We have

the responsibility to share our experience with everyone without any ego. We should make efforts to create awareness about His Mission at every small opportunity. We need to motivate and inspire people to take part in the selfless service of society and love for all beings.

Time has come for the world to know His Mission and His omnipresence. He resides in everyone's heart. Time has come for everyone to realise.

Pray to Bhagavan to bestow peace and love on all human beings.

Samasta Lokah Sukino Bhavantu! Om Santhi Santhi Santhi!

**– The author, a Chartered Accountant by profession, is currently coordinating Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Jyothi Programme.**

*...continued from page 23*

the water was not a fish but the talisman that He had thrown away into the garden the previous evening. The talisman was swimming in water like a fish, round and round, till Swami took it out of water. The next morning, He took the gold frame and gave it to a peon. He gave me the small piece of yellow paper that had been inside with the Mantra written in it. After I returned to Bengaluru, I made a gold cover for it and wore it around my neck again.

The Rani's husband, who was no more, had been a great devotee of Shirdi Baba. Shirdi Baba's robe and a Hukka (hubble-bubble) which he used to smoke from were among the possessions of the palace. The robe was said to have been stitched with a needle used for stitching gunny bags. Swami told us to go to a certain house and, before we went inside, he gave us a

complete description of whatever was inside that house. Sure enough, everything in that house was just as Swami had told us. We came to know then that Swami, in His previous birth as Shirdi Sai Baba, used to visit that house often.

In Rani's house, there was a Tonga (horse carriage) which Shirdi Baba had used during his visits. Rani's house was surrounded by roads where the Razakars (bandits) were fighting with pistols and machine guns. Houses were being looted and there was great damage to lives and property. Rani's house in which Swami was staying was unaffected by all mayhem, and we were all quite safe under Swami's care.

**– Excerpted from "The Divine Leelas of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba" by Nagamani Purnaiya.**



# Beauty and Happiness

**F**AR AWAY FROM HER husband Rama, Sita stayed alone in Ashoka garden in Lanka. Ravana had provided many beautiful and attractive things in this garden. It was said that such beautiful things were not available anywhere else in the world. Though these things were, in fact, very beautiful yet Sita did not get happiness to see them.

As usual, when one day she was engaged in chanting the Name of Rama, she suddenly heard a song coming from the branches of the tree under which she was sitting. When she looked up to find where the song was coming from, she was surprised



*Sita saw a monkey singing the glories of Rama.*

to see a monkey sitting above. Soon after this, she heard the song again. What was this song? It was a song which described the life story and divine glory of Lord Rama. Sita again saw the monkey who was singing this song and thought, "Ah! How beautiful is this monkey"! Does a monkey appear to be beautiful to anyone? Does anyone think a monkey to be beautiful? Then how did this monkey appear to be beautiful to Sita? It

appeared to be beautiful as it gave her great joy by narrating the life story of Lord Rama in a song. A doubt however entered her mind if it was a demon who had assumed the form of a monkey. But when Hanuman told her who he was, how he had become a servant of Rama and why he had come there, Sita was convinced that he was the faithful servant of Rama.

What, in essence, is the main theme of this story? Where does the beauty lie? How can we experience happiness? Beauty and happiness do not lie in the objects of



*Hanuman convinced Mother Sita that he was the servant of Lord Rama.*

the world. There is no happiness in the world outside. Happiness lies within man himself. Even a monkey appeared to be beautiful to Sita, when she heard the song on Rama who was dear to her heart. Man derives happiness from what is dear to him. It is said, "That which is beautiful gives happiness. Happiness is the quintessence of life". Man should develop inner vision to experience happiness that is within him. Then everything would appear beautiful to him. All that is beautiful gives happiness.



# NEWS FROM SAI CENTRES

## U. S. A.

**S**AI VOLUNTEERS ORGANISED a Sathya Sai Free Health Fair on 1st October 2016 at the Holy Trinity Church Parish Centre in Missouri. A multicultural, multi-ethnic group of 40 healthcare professionals, 56 bilingual interpreters and 59 general volunteers rendered selfless service to 212 underprivileged, immigrant community members. The first visitor at the event was an 83-year-old pastor of the Holy Trinity Church, who inaugurated the health fair by lighting a candle and offering a prayer.



*Sathya Sai Free Health Fair, Missouri, U.S.A.*

Comprehensive health screening and preventive check-ups were conducted, including tests of blood sugar, glycohaemoglobin, and lipid levels, blood pressure, vital measurements, asthma tests, and ankle scans for osteoporosis. In addition, patients received hearing, dental, vision and behavioural health check-ups. Nutritional and dietary advice was offered and patients were registered for free mammograms. A bone marrow donor registration drive successfully registered 12 prospective donors in the match registry.

The importance of physical exercise, fitness and regular routines were explained to the visitors. The volunteers also gifted sports balls to children and jump ropes to adults to encourage regular physical exercise.

An exhibition displayed posters explaining how human values promote physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Visitors were asked to choose a human value that captivated them most, write it on a label and wear it proudly. The volunteers also offered educational information on stroke prevention, diabetes, poison control and on local social resources, including crisis management centres and temporary shelters for children facing difficult family situations. Free reading glasses, children's school supplies and dental hygiene kits were distributed. Volunteers from local hospitals and consumer stores inspected 31 cars for defective children's car seats and replaced 22 of them. Bicycle helmets were given to 63 children. Before leaving, every camp visitor received a lunch box containing a hot crunchy bean wrap, an apple and water.

## BELARUS

The theme of the Serve the Planet project in 2016 was Love for Animals. Sathya Sai members in Belarus organised projects to serve homeless animals at rescue shelters. On 1st August 2016, a group of volunteers visited an animal shelter in the Sevryuki bowery and distributed 25 kg of animal feed and vaccines. The facility owner briefed the visitors about the needs of the shelter, which housed 87 dogs and 30 cats. The volunteers played with the animals and posted their pictures in various places, for adoption in the future.

## THE NETHERLANDS

The SSIO of the Netherlands organised a Walk for Peace on 21st September 2016 in Arnhem, a city in eastern Netherlands, to commemorate the United Nations'



*Walk for Peace on International Day of Peace, the Netherlands.*

International Day of Peace. Before the walk, 25 Sathya Sai members from different parts of the country gathered around a grand piano available to the public at the Central Station of Arnhem, and rendered John Lennon's well-known song, "Imagine", on piano, accompanied by flute. Earlier, a SSEHV teacher had discussed the significance and value of peace with adolescent children at a special school for immigrant children hailing from various war-torn countries. On the morning of 21st September, these youngsters came to the Central Station with two banners, displaying the word Peace in different languages, and joined in the singing, before returning to school. From the station, the group walked to Arnhem's main church, carrying the banners advocating peace. This church was chosen as the venue because it had been damaged during World War II and was being restored. The banners, decorated with symbols of peace

by the children and quotes by Sathya Sai Baba and Mother Teresa, attracted attention from the public.

On the same day, 15 Sathya Sai followers celebrated the International Day of Peace in Amsterdam-Buitenveldert, at a temporary shelter for 20 migrant families. The SSIO volunteers, together with migrant families and children, sang songs to commemorate the initiative to promote worldwide peace. Songs about peace, truth, friendship and happiness inspired everyone present, touching hearts and giving joy. The children helped set up the tables and chairs for the event. Moved by the warmth and love evidenced by the Sathya Sai group, the manager of the shelter, who joined the festivities, commented, "Such a fountain of love you created! Where do such nice people like you come from"?

## ISRAEL

On 23rd and 24th September 2016, SSIO members hosted a values education seminar in Ein Hod, a quiet and scenic village in northern Israel, near Haifa. Forty people from the Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Druze and Hindu faiths attended the



*Values education seminar, Israel.*

seminar. Sri George Bebedelis, director of the ISSE-South Europe, and Ms. Marianne Meyer, Co-chair of the SSIO Education Committee and Director of the European ISSE, presented talks covering many issues, including the environment and cultivation of love, the teacher as an exemplar of human values, the integral relationship of human personality and human values, the pedagogy of Sathya Sai Education, integral education, and an overview of the five techniques of education. The participants also engaged in lively workshops on these topics.

## RUSSIA

A Second Regional Volunteer Camp of the Ural Region took place in the Sverdlovsk area from 9th to 11th September 2016. Twenty-three volunteers, including youth, completed repairs that had been initiated in June 2016 to a three-room Youth Centre that provides cultural activities for children, teenagers and young adults. The volunteers also repaired damaged flooring in parts of the building. Sathya Sai educators held classes on “The Culture of Communication” and conducted creative workshops for the children and staff of the Youth Centre. The Centre director expressed gratitude for the assistance and acknowledged the importance of the service activities.

## ESTONIA

More than 60 Sathya Sai members from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Finland attended the First Estonian Sathya Sai Conference, under the motto, “Love is the Source, Love is the Path, Love is the Goal” from 5th to 7th August 2016. The keynote speaker was Sri Leonardo Gutter of Argentina, member of the Prasanthi Council, who gave a wonderful overview



*Participants in the First Estonian Sathya Sai Conference, Estonia.*

of the role of the Avatar of our age, Sathya Sai Baba. Later, he discussed the role of inner transformation and the journey from duality to non-duality. Ms. Maria Quoos, Central Coordinator of Region 73 in Zone 7, spoke about personal transformation and conducted a workshop on women’s role and right conduct in society. The audience enjoyed a concert and beautiful songs rendered by professional musicians. A film on Sathya Sai Baba by Australian film maker Peter Rae was screened on the second day of the conference.

## GERMANY

The annual summer camp for children was held during the first week of August 2016 at a youth hostel in Linsengericht, a beautiful village in the Spessart Mountains



*The annual summer camp for children, Germany.*



of central Germany. More than 60 Sathya Sai followers attended the camp, under the motto, "One World, One Heart". This year, workshops were conducted for adults and children on the book of Genesis from the Bible, exploring its various teachings, including truth, beauty, goodness, compassion, patience, sacrifice and other noble virtues. The children were given opportunities for creative activities, sports and musical training. In addition, the children performed a musical concert to entertain the elderly residents of a home in the village and went for an excursion into the woods under the forest warden's guidance.

## LITHUANIA

Seventy choir members from Poland, Lithuania and Latvia attended the First International Workshop of the Sarva Dharma Choir, led by conductors Maria Quoos and



*First International Workshop of Sarva Dharma Choir.*

Ewa Zarów, in Palanga, Lithuania, from 19th to 28th September 2016. The programme commenced with a three-day national meeting of the SSIO of Lithuania, where Ms. Marianne Meyer, Director of the ESSE, delivered an uplifting speech. On the second day of the national meeting, the choir gave a

beautiful performance. The choir workshop started in earnest on 22nd September 2016 and included music classes, vocal exercises, and singing, as well as rejuvenating walks to the seaside. Each morning was filled with devotional singing, followed by classes on music theory. The choir also presented two moving performances to the public. The first was at the Vilius Gaigalaitis Care Home, touching many hearts, and the second was at the Church of Saint Francis of Assisi, where the choir sang Christian songs and songs from other faiths, including Islam. Franciscan monks at the Roman Catholic Church participated joyfully in the singing and dancing.

–Sathya Sai International Organisation

## BHARAT

**Himachal Pradesh:** A weeklong programme from 13th December to 18th December 2016 was held at Solan for Bal Vikas children to help them learn excellence in each activity of life, both spiritual and secular as per the curriculum of Bal Vikas and its practical application in life.

A teacher's training programme on Sri Sathya Sai Educare was held at Anand Vilas, Shimla for school teachers from 25th to 30th December 2016, in which the staff members of Sri Sathya Sai School and teachers from some other schools of Himachal Pradesh participated. The participants learnt many new ideas and techniques to take it to their classrooms and felt deeply indebted to Bhagavan Baba for this unique chance.

At the onset of winter season, 100 blankets were distributed to needy people on the outskirts of Shimla city on 1st January 2017, whereas sweaters, mufflers,

woollen caps were distributed to 200 labourers working in different construction sites around Shimla on 22nd January 2017. Girl students of Anath Ashram (orphanage) at Garli and Anath Ashram at Patti Saliana in Kangra district and children living in nearby area of the Ashrams were given woollen sweaters and woollen socks. The total number of the recipients was 360.

**Rajasthan:** A two-day Annual State Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Rajasthan was held on 17th and 18th December 2016 at Udaipur, wherein nearly 250 devotees from various districts of Rajasthan participated. In his welcome address, State President spoke on the theme of the conference “Always Remain Centred upon Me” and called upon all members to remain focused on Bhagavan by following His teachings in their lives. The proceedings included presentations on Veda Recitation, Bal Vikas, Sri Sathya Sai Adarsh Gram Yojna Project, Disaster

Practical Class on Jyoti Meditation. After the breakfast, the various State Incharges of Youth, Medical Service, Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini, Study Circle, e-Techno Group, etc., and District Presidents of various districts presented their reports.

**West Bengal:** The Jaidev Mela (fair) is held for three days on the bank of river Ajay every year during Makara Sankranti, with a mystic and cultural extravaganza, witnessing a convergence of lakhs of devotees who come to take a holy dip in the river. Owing to the massive congregation, there is enormous task of ensuring sanitation which has been joyfully undertaken over the past few years by the Seva Dal volunteers of Burdwan and Birbhum districts of West Bengal. This year also, around 65 Seva Dal volunteers (including 15 ladies) set up camps on the bank of Ajay river for



*Annual State Conference, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Rajasthan.*

Management, Media, IT Wing, Mahila Wing, Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Jyothi, Prasanthi Seva, etc. On 17th evening, Special Bhajan Sandhya was organised. The next day's session began early morning with Omkaram and Suprabhatam. This was followed by a



*Seva Dal volunteers undertaking cleanliness work on the river bank.*

four days from 13th to 16th January 2017 to ensure total cleanliness. In addition to cleaning the river bank, the Seva Dal volunteers ensured that the 700 temporary toilets set up by the Mela Administration were kept clean for continuous use by the common public. Besides this, other waste and garbage were also cleaned to keep

the bank and surrounding area uncluttered. After three rounds of work each day, all Seva Dal volunteers would gather in the camp for evening Satsang which included Bhajans and operational discussions. The camp came to close on the fourth day with

offering of Mangala Arati to Bhagavan. Besides being a noteworthy step towards self-transformation and inspiration, this significant activity has been applauded by not only the authorities but also the general pilgrims thronging this annual event.

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– *Convener*

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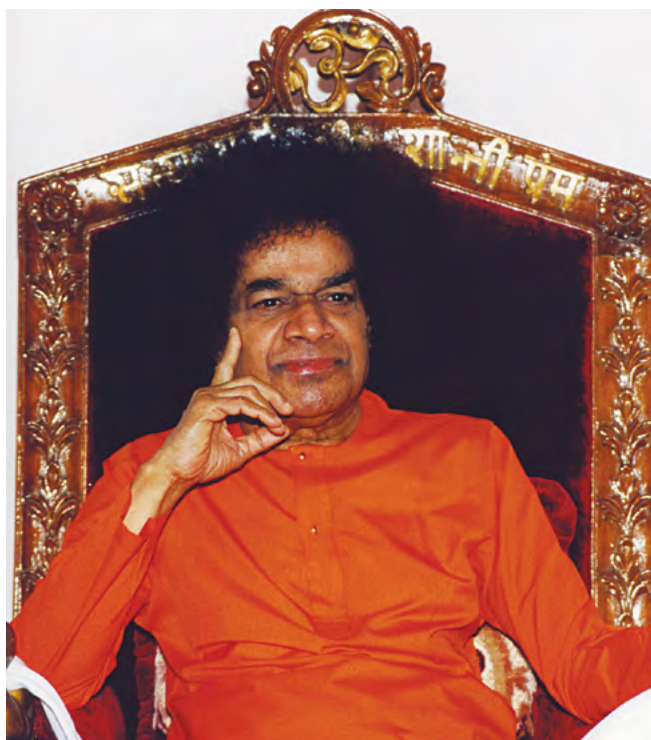
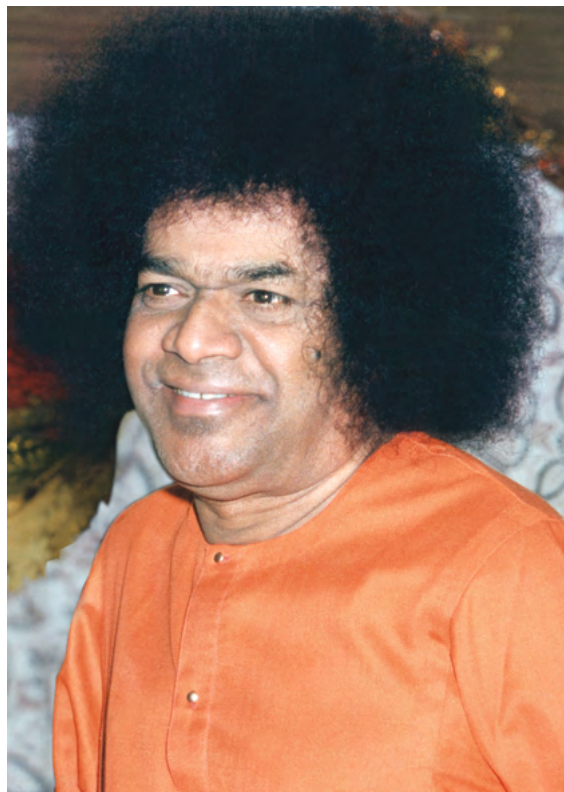
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On 1st January, 2009, Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust (SSSST) commenced operations with four divisions; the Bhakta Sahayak divisions (one in Prasanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi and another in Brindavan, Bangalore), the Publications division, and the Media 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, educational software etc 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](http://www.sanathanasarathi.org).
- 3) Maintaining a reporting channel, which covers all the major activities taking place in Prasanthi Nilayam, and publishing an e-newsletter 'Sai Spiritual Showers' - for free distribution.
- 4) Organising and conducting seminars and conferences on spirituality, religion, education, and human values.
- 5) Providing library and Reading room for visiting devotees, with a very large collection of various spiritual and religious books.

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3. Sai Reflections – [www.saireflections.org](http://www.saireflections.org)
4. The Prasanthi Reporter – [www.theprasanthireporter.org](http://www.theprasanthireporter.org)



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*A dance number by the children of SSSIHMS staff.*



*Devotees from Malaysia making a devotional music offering on harmonica.*



*Carnatic classical offering by Sriram Parthasarathy.*

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## *Seva Leads to Liberation*

The body is not primary. What is important is the Indwelling Spirit. Keeping the goal of Self-realisation in view, you must engage yourselves in service till the destination is reached. Selfless, dedicated, pure-hearted service is the means. When the entire life is devoted to this purpose, direct experience of the Divine can take place. Eschew as far as possible attachments and aversions. Every effort must be made to keep the mind and body unpolluted.

*– Baba*

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