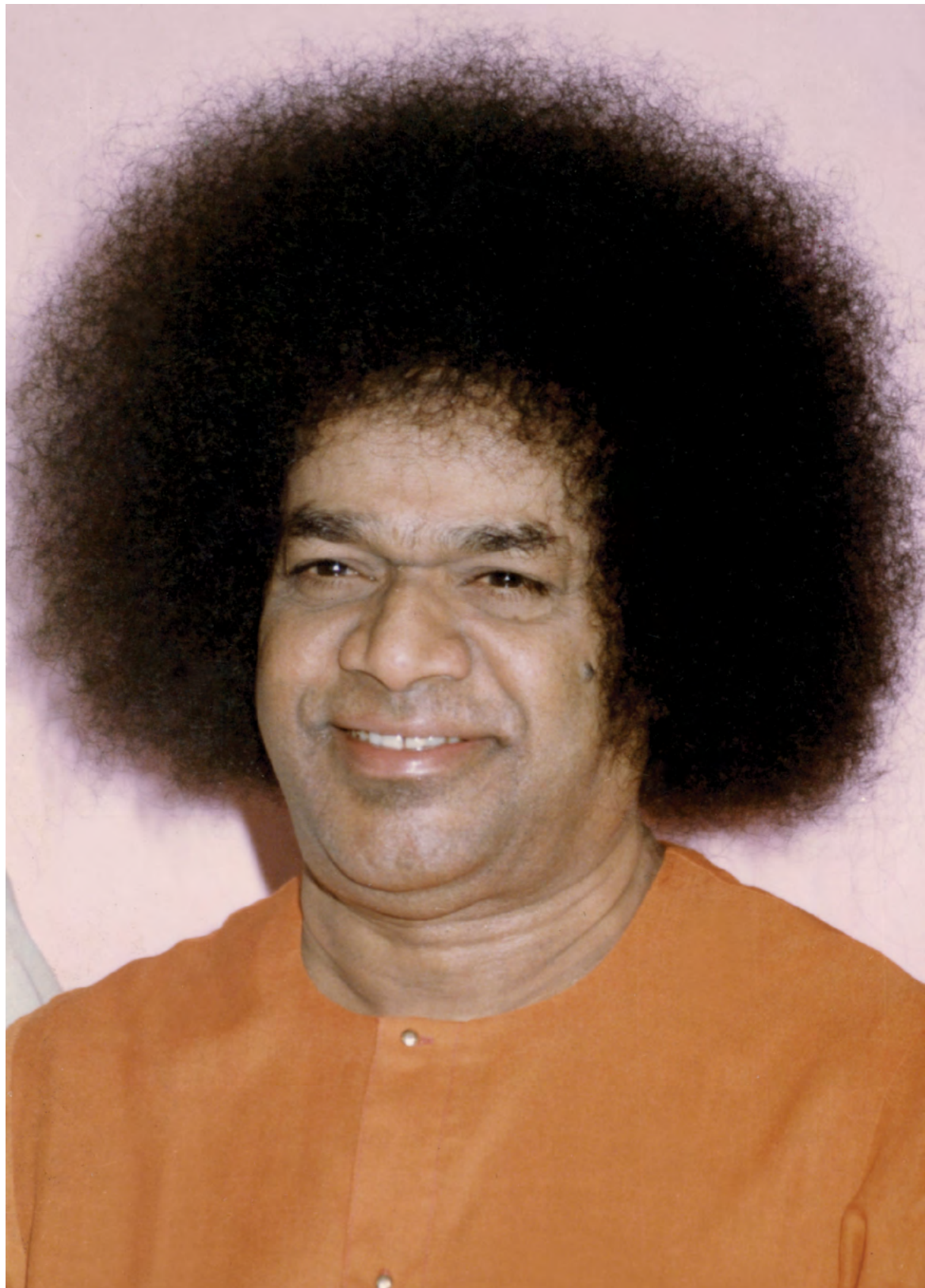




Sanathana Sarathi

AUGUST 2019



Sanathana Sarathi

Devoted to the Moral and Spiritual Uplift of Humanity through

SATHYA • DHARMA • SANTHI • PREMA • AHIMSA

Vol.: 62 Issue No. 8 Date of Publication: 1st August

August 2019

© Sri Sathya Sai
Sadhana Trust, Publications Division
Prasanthi Nilayam

Printed by **K.S. RAJAN**
Published by **K.S. RAJAN**

On behalf of the owner, Sri Sathya Sai
Sadhana Trust, Publications Division, Prasanthi
Nilayam 515134, Anantapur District (A.P.)
And Printed at M/s Rajhans Enterprises, 136,
4th Main Road, Industrial Town, Rajaji Nagar,
Bengaluru 560044, Karnataka
And Published at Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust,
Publications Division, Prasanthi Nilayam
515134, Anantapur Dist., Andhra Pradesh.

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ISD Code : 0091
STD Code : 08555

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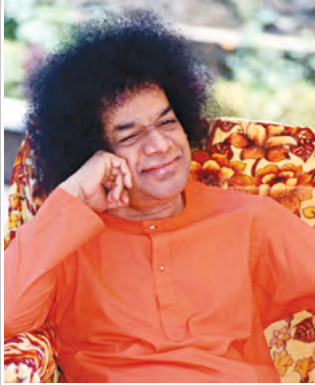
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Bhutan and Sri Lanka ₹ 600

Other Countries: ₹ 850
or US \$19 or UK £13 or €13 or
CAN \$22, AUS \$26

Telugu India: ₹ 60 (12 issues)
Other Countries: ₹ 550 or £9 or US \$13
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Nilayam – 515 134, Anantapur district,
Andhra Pradesh, India.



"We perform Sahasranama Archana (worship of 1008 Names of God). But not only these, all names like Christ, Allah, Zoroastra are His only! All forms and names address only Him! There is no name or form which does not belong to Him. That being so, where is the room for differences? Where is the need to search for Him? What is to be searched in worldly things is Sathyam only."

CONTENTS

- 4 **Never Forget God**
Bhagavan's Discourse: 14th April 1996
- 7 **Guru Purnima Celebrations**
A Report
- 10 **Deepening our Faith in Swami's Sankalpa**
Dr. Ramesh M. Wadhvani
- 15 **My Experiences in Bhagavan' Divine Proximity**
Srivilas Suri
- 19 **A Film Director's Encounters with Baba**
Jeff Grant
- 23 **Develop Unwavering Faith in God**
Bhagavan's Sri Krishna Janmashtami Message
- 25 **Indelible Impressions with the Divine**
Ghandikota V. Sanjay
- 29 **Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam**
A Report

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Bhagavan's Photographs Online: www.saireflections.org

Reporting Website from Prasanthi Nilayam: www.theprasanthireporter.org

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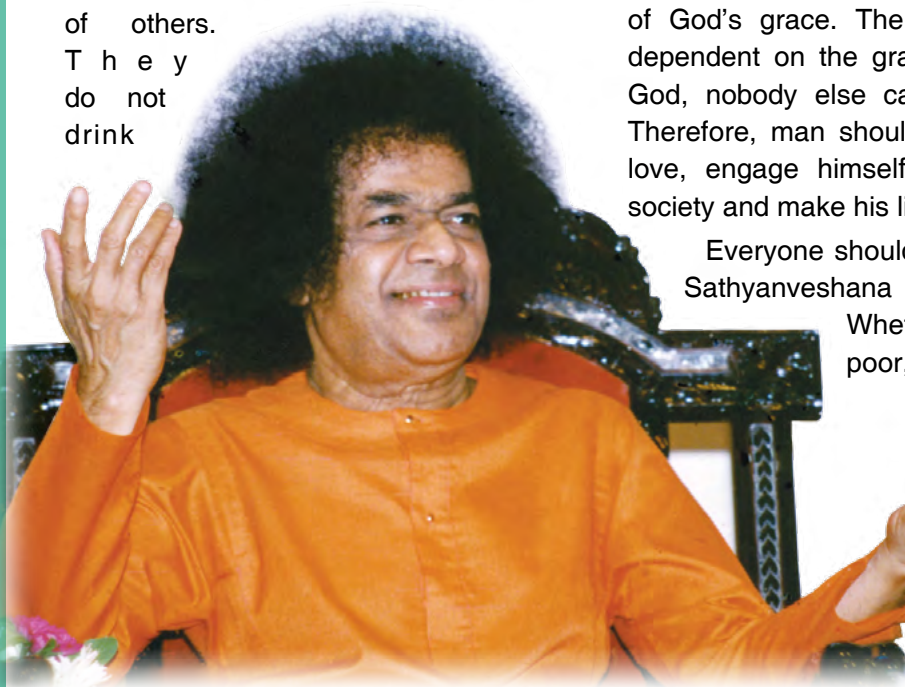
AVATAR VANI

NEVER FORGET GOD

WHEREVER THERE IS TRUTH, THERE IS GOD

Embodiments of Love!

TREES GIVE FRUITS FOR THE well-being of others; they do not eat their fruits. Similarly, rivers flow for the welfare of others. They do not drink



their water. They quench the thirst of others. Cows do not drink their own milk; they give it for the health of others. In the same way, man should understand that the body has been given to him to serve others. He should use his body to help the poor, the downtrodden and the needy.

Man should Search for Truth

In the world today, you find restlessness, misery and unhappiness wherever you

see. No government or weapons have been able to solve these problems. First and foremost, man should install God in the altar of his heart. He should develop self-confidence and make himself deserving of God's grace. The entire mankind is dependent on the grace of God. Except God, nobody else can save the world. Therefore, man should fill his heart with love, engage himself in the service of society and make his life worthwhile.

Everyone should engage himself in Sathyanveshana (search for truth).

Whether one is rich or poor, an ordinary person

or a sage, one should search

for truth in one's thoughts, words and actions. Even

though all are the sparks of one Divine Truth, which is changeless in all the three periods of time, it is necessary for everyone to search for truth. However, it is necessary to speak truth without hurting or making anybody sad. The true words we speak should be sweet. All are possessors of truth. Everyone is a small fraction of the truth. All are the sparks of the divine truth without any difference of caste, religion or

creed. The eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being, says Lord Krishna in the Bhagavadgita.

How to search for truth? There are three parts in the spoken word. They are Sathyam, Asathyam and Nijam (truth, untruth and fact). All that we see in the world is Nijam. That which is the basis of it is Sathyam. A small example: Right from a scientist to a common man, everyone will say, "The sun rises in the east and sets in the west". This is not Sathyam. This is Nijam. The sun does not go anywhere; it stays where it is. It appears in the east and west because of the rotation of the earth. So, the sun neither rises nor sets. This is Sathyam. All the same, when we say that the sun rises and sets is Nijam. To say that the stationary sun moves is Asathyam.

Put your Senses to Proper Use

Next is vision. The same pair of eyes see the mother, the wife, the daughter, the daughter-in-law and everyone else. But the feelings you get when you see each of them are different. Though the vision is the same, the feelings are different. To understand the truth as to how to see is also Sathyanveshana. You see your mother with reverence, you see your daughter with affection and you see your wife with endearment. Your relationship determines your feelings when you see others.

Truth is only one! To understand whom to see with what feelings is Sathyanveshana. But today, the vision of people has become impure and the feelings are distorted. Man is in a quandary how to understand the feelings of others. Evil thoughts arise in man due to bad vision. All the good and bad that are happening in the world are the result of Drishti (vision). There is no defect in the Srishti (creation) of God. We cannot

All creation is born out of Sathyam and merges into Sathyam. Everything is truth only! All that we have to know is what truth is. Truth is the form of God. Where is God? Wherever there is truth, there is God. Therefore, truth is the proven God. Love is the patent God. Love and truth emanate from the heart which is full of compassion.

change the creation of God. We should try to change our vision to experience truth.

We hear with our ears. We hear so many things. We hear sweet music, harsh words and the slander of others. Our ears also hear what we speak. When we do Sathyanveshana here, it will be clear that we should speak sweet words and hear all that is good. To misuse our ears for hearing bad things is wrong.

Similarly, we misuse the power of our tongue. We should speak sweet and soft words. Oh tongue! Do you understand how sacred you are? Everybody respects you because you are the epitome of sacrifice. You do not keep the food given to you with yourself. You immediately send it to other parts of the body. It is not proper for you to scold and slander.

Everything in this world is God's creation! If you see any defect, it is only due to the defect in your vision and not creation. Everything will look red to you if you put on red colour glasses. Similarly, everything will look blue if you see through blue glasses. This is Maya! If you remove

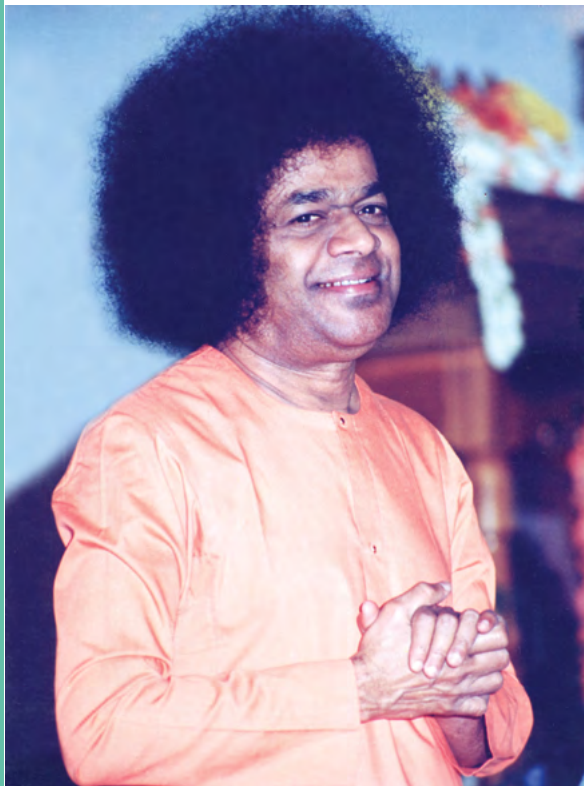
the glasses, everything will appear to you in natural colours! Therefore, we should practise Sathyanveshana in everything.

One God has Many Names

We need not search for God anywhere because God is present everywhere in everyone. The Upanishads say, *Isavasyam Idam Sarvam* (the entire universe is permeated by God). There is only one God but He is called by different names such as Allah, Buddha, Zoroastra, Krishna, and so on. *Ek Prabhu Ke Anek Naam* (one

Zoroastra are His only! All forms and names address only Him! There is no name or form which does not belong to Him. That being so, where is the room for differences? Where is the need to search for Him? What is to be searched in worldly things is Sathyam (truth) only.

All creation is born out of Sathyam and merges into Sathyam. Everything is truth only! All that we have to know is what truth is. Truth is the form of God. Where is God? Wherever there is truth, there is God.



God has many names). *Sahasra Seersha Purusha Sahasraksha Sahasra Pad* (the Cosmic Being has thousands of heads, eyes and feet).

We perform Sahasranama Archana (worship of 1008 Names of God). But not only these, all names like Christ, Allah,

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Therefore, truth is the proven God. Love is the patent God. Love and truth emanate from the heart which is full of compassion.

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

– **Bhagavan's Divine Discourse in Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 14th April 1996.**



GURU PURNIMA CELEBRATIONS

A NUMBER OF MUSIC AND cultural programmes were organised as part of Guru Purnima celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam in which a large number of devotees from India and many overseas countries came to take part.

THYAGARAJA VAIBHAVAM

The first programme in this regard was a drama “Thyagaraja Vaibhavam” (the glory of Thyagaraja) which was presented by Bal Vikas children from the



Thyagaraja Vaibhavam.

State of Tamil Nadu on 13th July 2019. Portraying the illustrious life story of this legendary saint musician of India through various incidents of his life, the drama showcased how he earned the grace of Lord Rama and had His Darshan by his exemplary devotion to Him. The episodes of the drama were interspersed with his choicest compositions, which added to the richness of the presentation.

RUSSIAN-SPEAKING COUNTRIES CHOIR

On 14th July 2019, Russian-speaking countries choir presented a medley of



Procession of the representatives of Russian-speaking countries in Sai Kulwant Hall.

devotional songs on the theme “Love and Unity are Oneness with Sai”. The programme began with a procession of the representatives of Russian-speaking countries carrying flags of their countries, entering Sai Kulwant Hall and offering their salutations at the Samadhi of Bhagavan. The countries who joined in this grand procession included Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. After this, over 150 singers and musicians from these countries poured out their heart in their love and devotion to Lord Sai



Hymns to God by Russian-speaking Countries Choir.

and sang Hymns to God, some of which were: “Alive, our Mother is Alive”, “I See God Every Day”, “Awakened Love”, “Into Your Divine World”, “Oh, Sai”!, “Praise Be to the Lord”. Suffused with deep devotion

and love, the entire presentation kept the audience spellbound for nearly one hour. Bhajans followed next and concluded with the Bhajan “Love is My Form” in the golden voice of Bhagavan Baba.

GURU PURNIMA

Devotional exuberance and deep piety marked the celebration of Guru Purnima at Prasanthi Nilayam, wherein a large number of devotees came from all parts of the world to offer homage to their Sadguru Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The programme on the Guru Purnima day, 16th July 2019, began with instrumental music offering by the Percussion Band and Nadaswaram Troupe of the students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute

Guru Gobind” and “Swami Kripa Kabhi Karna” (Oh Lord, shower Your grace).

Three eminent speakers addressed the gathering after this. Speaking first, Dr. V. Mohan, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust elucidated on the significance of Guru Purnima and highlighted the necessity of unity, purity, divinity for the sake of executing Swami’s work. Dr. Mohan said, all the wings, the Central Trust, SSIO and SSSSO were working in tandem to further the Mission of Bhagavan. In conclusion, the distinguished speaker exhorted one and all to work together for the ultimate goal to make Prasanthi Nilayam as the global spiritual capital.

Speaking on the great good fortune of Swami’s devotees who had God and Guru in one form of Bhagavan Baba, Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman, SSIO, reminded the audience that Bhagavan gave them the rare boon of Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan (vision, touch and conversation). He also explained the four modes of Chamatkar, Samskar, Paropakar and Sakshatkar, reminding the devotees of the highest duty to know their own truth and thus attain Sakshatkar.

Sri Nimish Pandya, All India President, SSSSO, speaking last identified the day as the day to thank the Guru by offering Him the traditional Guru Dakshina. Two things to be offered to Him, he said, were our willingness to be available for His work and implicit obedience to the Divine Guru.

Winners of National Essay Writing Competition held under Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Jyothi Programme of SSSSO were then presented certificates and medals.



*Devotional music presentation by
Institute students.*

of Higher Learning. This was followed by a vocal music offering “Guru Vandana” (worship of the Guru) by the Institute students who began their presentation with Guru Paduka Stotra “Ananta Samsara Samudra Thara” (Crossing of the endless ocean of worldliness) and followed it with a semi-classical composition “Deva Deva Dayanidhe” (Oh Lord of compassion). Some of the other compositions rendered by the students were: “Guru Meri Puja

Bhagavan's exhilarating Divine discourse next turned out to be the best treat for the morning. Human life is the highest, said Bhagavan discoursing on its supreme significance and reminding man of utilising the same for recognising the purpose of human birth. Bhagavan said that worldly happiness was of temporal nature. God's proximity was real happiness, reminded Bhagavan, quoting Saint Thyagaraja. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin". Bhajans followed next and ended with Arati.

The programme in the evening comprised a sterling instrumental music presentation by a renowned musician from Tamil Nadu, Sri K. Sathyanarayanan and his talented team of musicians. Beginning his absorbing concert with prayer to Lord Ganesh "Vatapi Ganapatim", Sri Sathyanarayanan presented a sumptuous feast of classical numbers and Bhajans and kept the audience mesmerised for more than one hour. Some of the instrumental numbers rendered by him were: "Krishna Nee Begane Baro" (Oh Krishna, come soon), "Mhare Ghar Aao Ji" (come to my home), "Vanamali Radha Ramana Giridhari Govinda" (Govinda, Giridhari is dear to Radha)

OFFERING TO THE DIVINE GURU

A group of award-winning musicians from Russian-speaking countries presented a unique instrumental music concert entitled "Offering to the Divine Guru" on 17th July 2019. The musicians were Leonid Ostrovskiy (bayan), Asya Sorshneva (violin) and Juan Ramin (viola) who offered to their Sadguru Bhagavan Baba Russian, Indian and western classical instrumental pieces and Bhajans, which



Instrumental music concert – "Offering to the Divine Guru".

cast a mesmerising effect on the listeners. Some of the compositions rendered by the musicians were: "Chitta Chora Yashoda Ke Baal" (the son of Yashoda steals the hearts of devotees), "Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam" (Oh mind! Worship the Feet of the Guru), "Hara Hara Hara Hara Mahadeva".

GURU SAI MAHESWARA

On 18th July 2019, the students and staff members of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Department of Music offered their musical tributes to their Sadguru Bhagavan Baba through a music programme entitled "Guru Sai Maheswara" as part of Guru Purnima celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam. Beginning their presentation with the title song "Om Sai Maheswara" at 5.00 p.m., the singers enthralled the devotees for nearly one hour with their excellent rendition of musical compositions which included Thyagaraja compositions, a Mira Bhajan "Mohe Laagi Lagan Guru Charanan Ki" (I am attached to the Lotus Feet of the Guru) and instrumental music pieces on Sitar and Veena. Bhajans followed next and concluded with the Bhajan "Bada Chittachora Brindavana Sanchara" sung by Bhagavan. Arati at 6.30 p.m. marked the end of the programme.

DEEPENING OUR FAITH IN SWAMI'S SANKALPA

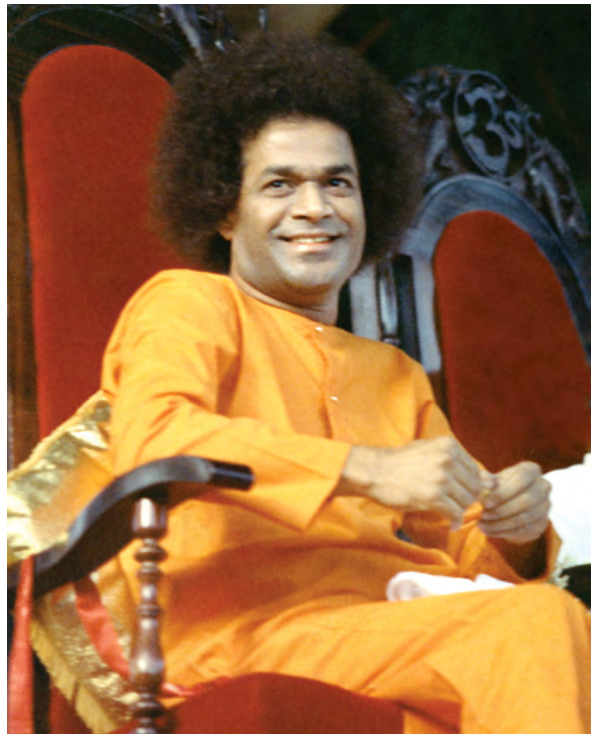
Dr. Ramesh M. Wadhvani

WE DEVOTEES ARE INDEED VERY fortunate for the opportunity to breathe the same air as our Divine Master, Poornavatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba breathed. In a population of over 6 billion people, only a small minority has had the privilege to know, hear and see Him. With love and humility, I share a few of my family's experiences with Swami, during which times He lovingly taught us the purpose of life.

Swami's Will is Immutable

In June of 1991, I suffered severe chest pains, which later got diagnosed as serious coronary heart disease, requiring surgery. Despite the warnings of cardiologist Dr. Siva who had scrutinised all the clinical tests and had them further verified by another cardiac surgeon, my wife Sunita refused to give her consent for surgical intervention without first seeking the permission and blessings from Bhagavan Baba. Dr. Siva told my wife clearly, "Ramesh is a walking time bomb". Doctors insisted that she should not delay her decision. However, because her faith in Swami was so robust, she opted to hold onto her decision until our next scheduled trip at the Divine Lotus Feet in November 1991 for Baba's 66th Birthday celebrations.

Upon hearing from my wife a firm no to the operation, Dr. Siva prescribed several oral medications including a daily patch on my left arm to control the angina pain. My lifestyle also changed considerably. My



diet was restricted and I needed someone by my side at all times. Even as chest pains persisted daily, Sunita and I continued our daily prayers to Swami and trusted Him completely. Our focus was always on Him, reminding ourselves, "He knows what is best for us".

As I suffered frequent angina pains for five months, I focused intently on my upcoming visit to my Beloved Bhagavan for His 66th Birthday. That day finally arrived. When we reached Puttaparthi on 14th November, the Ashram was buzzing with excitement. Not only were Birthday

preparations in full swing, the construction work of first Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital was also in progress at the same time.

Upon my arrival, I visited the hospital construction site seeking Seva opportunities. With thousands of L&T (Larsen and Toubro) workers and volunteers, the construction seemed extremely hectic. Completing the construction of the hospital and making it operational in one week might seem an impossible task to a common bystander. However, a devotee knows that Bhagavan's Divine Sankalpa (Will) always prevails. Bhagavan Baba visited the site on a daily basis, and because He cast His Divine Drishti (sight) on the project, an unusually rapid progress was under way.

On 18th November, a container loaded with 100+ computers, servers, printers, networks, routers and a host of accessories for the new hospital arrived. Hoping to "computerise" the entire hospital from inception, Sai Systems Int Inc, offered this equipment at the Lotus Feet of Baba. With my background in IT, I was fortunate to receive the Seva task of installing, initiating and checking all the IT systems for the hospital. Unfortunately, due to the frenzied construction site, it was impossible to unload the equipment, let alone install so many computers in just a few days. Because projects of this magnitude generally take months to implement, I began to worry on how to get this done on time.

The next morning (19th November), I sat in the first row for morning Darshan and so had the opportunity to inform Bhagavan Baba of the shipment's arrival. I also asked Him to indicate where it should be

unloaded. Swami told me to unload all the equipment at the college computer centre. After Darshan, I approached the then Vice Chancellor Prof. Sampath who granted me permission to follow through with my task. The shipment was finally unloaded and ready for proper initialising and testing.

During Darshan the following morning (20th November), two days away from the hospital's scheduled inauguration, I informed Swami that the unloading was complete. He then instructed me to carry on with the installation and testing. He also informed me that He would come for inspection the following day. I was very excited. I notified the university and college campus senior officials of the assigned task and of the visit of our Divine Lord to the computer centre. Most seniors, except Prof. Sampath, were doubtful of Swami visiting because He was extremely busy with the hospital. They thought computer technology would not be His priority.

But Prof. Sampath suggested that we should stand on the main road outside the gate and pray when Swami would drive past the college. With folded hands in silent prayer, we fervently called upon Baba to visit the computer centre. Baba's car swiftly passed by. I thought, "It looked like it was not going to happen. But that is okay too, as He knows all". Just as that very thought flashed through my mind, His car slowed down and turned into the college campus through the next gate. We quickly rushed back to welcome Swami to the computer centre.

As He entered the computer centre, Swami had a radiant smile on His face. We greeted Him with the Arati flame and He sprinkled Akshata (auspicious rice) on all of us. Prof. Sampath was incharge of walking Bhagavan Baba around the



workstations. He explained the importance of computers and their ability to gather information, perform analytics, as well as carry out research. To these explanations, Bhagavan patiently replied, “Yes, I know, I know...” All-knowing Lord was so attentive, so loving and so compassionate.

At the end of His visit, Swami blessed everyone and conveyed His happiness. He gave us Padanamaskar and personally distributed Prasadam to each one before leaving. Many in the college and university had missed the event because no one had expected that the Lord would come. Once again, Baba proved the principle of “Love My Uncertainty”.

I believe, Baba provides us with many teachable moments, when our work is dedicated to Him. Through His own actions, Baba quietly taught a very important lesson that day. He honoured His Word by coming to the computer centre despite an extremely hectic schedule. In doing so, He reminded His devotees the importance of honouring our given word. His action demonstrated that the given word is a binding commitment, no matter how busy we are. The importance of the computer system set-up for the hospital paled in comparison to the time-crunch the hospital construction had been facing to meet its deadline. To the Lord, all are equally important. What matters to Him is sincerity and purity of heart.

It is My Duty to Take Care of him

Let me get back to the severe chest pains I had been experiencing during all the previous months. Curiously, in the midst of all the hectic hospital Seva activity, and in spite of the increased physical demands and stress, I had experienced no chest pains since my arrival at the Divine Abode.

In the hustle and bustle, I even missed taking some of my medications. I am convinced that His Love must have acted as a 24/7 anaesthesia because I had not felt any significant angina symptoms, nor was I even aware of them during those last seven days. Just as Bhagavan says, “You do My work, and I will do yours”!

The next day, on 22nd November 1991, the Super Speciality Hospital opened on time, as Swami had promised the year before. It was a beautiful, state-of-the-art facility – operational! We celebrated Swami’s 66th Birthday with uplifting joy and much love.

Three days later, on 25th November during evening Darshan, Baba called us for an interview. Brother Jim Sinclair from USA, brother Hira and his small group from Japan joined us as well. After some light conversation with a few people, Baba looked at me and asked, “What do you want”? I responded, “Nothing Baba, I just want You”. Baba immediately got up from His chair and with a gentle, circular motion of His Divine Hand, He materialised a heavy, pure gold bracelet. He immediately pointed to the large Om on the bracelet – for all of us to see. Pointing to the Om (ॐ) symbol, He said, “This is who I am, take it, I am coming with you” and placed it in my hand. I was in utter shock and disbelief. In deep gratitude, I immediately bent down to kiss His Lotus Feet. The Divine Lord then invited Sunita, Jatin (who had accompanied us), and myself into the private interview room.

As the Lord settled down on His chair, we touched His Divine Lotus Feet and sat around Him. He took the bracelet back from me and attempted to tie it around my wrist. For a few minutes, He kept fiddling with the

bracelet as He was not able to untangle its links, murmuring at the same time, “I never had such difficulty any time before, why is this so difficult...” As He pursued His task, my right arm was resting on His lap. This small “drama” continued a little while, and He kept pressing various parts of my arm as if eliminating an imbalance in my body... possibly related to my heart problem.

After He had secured the bracelet around my wrist, I thanked Him profusely and again kissed His Divine Lotus Feet. Baba then looked at Sunita and asked her how she was doing. She immediately told Him, “Swami, Ramesh’s health is not good...” Baba immediately looked at me and gently tapped my chest three times. He then told my wife very reassuringly, “No heart problem”. Baba further emphasised, “You don’t worry about his health. His health is My problem; it is My duty to take care of him. I am in him, around him, above him; no harm will come to him...” Despite this clear and commanding assurance, Sunita further asked Baba, “What about doctors, medicines and operation...”, to which Baba replied, “No medicines, no doctors, no operation”! Finally, pointing to the bracelet, Baba said, “This is my Raksha (Divine protection) and no harm will come to him”. There was such Divine and commanding assurance resonating through His Divine Sankalpa!!! Tears started welling up in our eyes and we could find no words to thank our Divine Mother who is always so loving, caring and giving. We took our final Padanamaskar and proceeded out of the interview room. All I can say is that His love and care far exceeds that of a million mothers put together. He is all-knowing and He is all-pervasive.

I have been healthy ever since that time, much to my doctor’s surprise, of course. I go for my periodic health check-ups and, for the past 27+ years, I received a clean bill of health. Baba is true to His Divine words of protection (“It is My duty to take care of him...”). Over successive visits to His Lotus Feet, Baba often tapped on my chest. On other occasions, He rubbed Vibhuti on my chest. He does this without a word – just always protecting in His most loving way and doing His part of the promised duty!

Over the years, Swami has taught my family some critically important lessons: We need to be very conscious of our assigned duty in life, and must fulfil it as He fulfils His duty, without any reminders or promptings. Once we ask Him for blessings and / or any advice – His uttered word in response should get etched in our heart, and we must follow His Instructions. We must have full faith in His Sankalpa, because whatever He says, will happen in its own time, without our worrying about it or even reminding Him.

A Glimpse of Swami’s Omnipotence

Now let me recount another health-related story in my family. Prior to 1993, my mother, who was then 80+ years old, had suffered several small heart strokes, overcoming them each time by Baba’s grace. However, the heart attack in May of 1993 was the most devastating. It put her into a coma and she was hooked on a respirator in order to survive. At the doctor’s request, all five of her then living sons from across the world were summoned to her bedside to make an important decision. We were to decide how long to keep her on the respirator. How can we take the responsibility of deciding to



keep her alive or die – especially one's own mother! Doctors had given up all hope, as no remedy including daily imported drugs improved her condition. My brothers and I were not ready to lose our mother. We collectively decided that I would go and seek blessings and advice from Baba.

I arrived at Brindavan, Whitefield on a Thursday, just in time for evening Darshan. I was fortunate to attend Trayee (His Abode) session where Swami gave informal Discourses to His students and staff. During that session, Swami spoke to me, and asked me to go to Puttaparthi the following day, to speak to the students in the hostel about the appropriate and inappropriate uses of computers. I learned from faculty members that Baba was not happy with students' daily handling, and too much dependence on computers. With His grace and blessings, I completed the task and arrived back on Friday for evening Darshan and Trayee session. However, Friday went by without any opportunity to convey to Baba my family's message relating to my mother's unfortunate condition. I was very worried as the next morning would be my last Darshan before returning to Pune, my hometown.

Concurrently, there was another pressing matter. My wife was on a "Baba Mission" to bring a group of 12 girls from America to Brindavan to attend the Summer Course. Upon my return to Pune, I was to proceed directly on to Mumbai to receive her. My wife was torn in a difficult dilemma between family duty and the Sai duty commitment of leading 12 girls on a trip to Baba. Should she directly go to Baba without first coming to visit her mother-in-law in Pune hospital? She was in a dilemma over mother's dire condition on the one hand, and her duty towards a group of 12 young adult girls

who were under her care on the other. At that point, she knew in her heart that her Swadharma (self-duty) to Baba was more important than the family pressure she experienced. She prayed intensely to Mother Sai to take care of my mother while she was on her Sai Duty with the students. She prayed that nothing adverse should happen to my mother while she was on duty for two weeks, or else His Divine reputation could be 'at stake' in the eyes of her family.

Given the urgency of the situation, I earnestly prayed and then shared the nature of my problem with the Seva official that Saturday morning. I humbly requested a special seating in the pathway of Baba's Darshan so that I could give Him my letter regarding mother's coma. I was thus able to stand at the gate of Trayee Brindavan. As Baba passed me, He took the letter from my hand with a long, loving, assuring look, and then, kept on walking towards devotees seated for Darshan under the tree. Finally, the problem was handed over to Bhagavan Baba. However, I immediately started worrying about what to tell my family. As Baba was approaching again on His way back from Darshan, my own "devil" mind started nagging at me in Hindi, "Swami Dhekhega yaa Nahi Dhekhega, Bolega, yaa Nahi Bolega..." (will Swami see or not? Will Swami speak or not?). Swami returned, went past me and headed towards the interview room. My heart sank as I thought, Swami has gone and I will have to fly out in three hours without a specific direction from Him... whatever shall I tell my brothers? As soon as this thought passed my mind, Baba,

continued on page 18...



MY EXPERIENCES IN BHAGAVAN'S DIVINE PROXIMITY*

Srivilas Suri

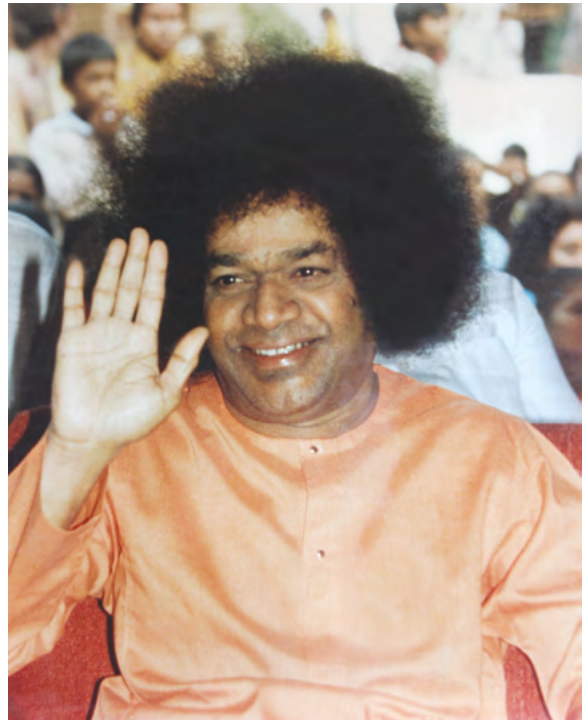
THE FIRST GOBAR GAS PLANT was being established by a Gujarati devotee and we were asked to dig a deep pit. There were no JCB's those days. Swami would visit every evening to inspect the work. I used to slip in Swami's sandals into my Pyjama pockets and He would wear them as soon as He came down. The feet of Swami were very small indeed! In one hand, I used to clutch His Tambulam (betel) box and handkerchiefs and follow Him. The Gobar Gas plant was to be inaugurated during Dasara.

Dasara Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam

I was relieved from the doorkeeper's duties during Dasara and along with my friend, Sambasiva Rao, we were asked to decorate the shed, covering the girders with white cloth. This was a very risky job, as one had to balance on the girders, holding the weighty white cloth and pull it up and tie it with a small stone to one of the angles. Any slip, one will fall flat from about 20 feet to the ground.

The weighty silver idol of Shirdi Sai Baba which was in the Mandir had to be brought everyday for the next nine days where Swami would perform Puja. After the Puja, the idol had to be placed back in the Mandir. I was very fortunate to have been allotted this task of carrying the idol of Shirdi Sai Baba.

For one Dasara, Swami commanded me to go to Anantapur and bring provisions



for making Prasadam. My relative, E. Satyamurthy, a staunch devotee of Swami gave his car. Single-handedly, I went to Anantapur. The grain merchant loaded two rice bags, one bag of Toor Dhal, a small bag of tamarind, jaggery and red chillies. With this load, I reached Prasanthi Nilayam at night.

For the Prasadam next day, two huge vessels were kept on firewood at night. In one vessel, rice was poured and was allowed to cook. In the other vessel, rice was cooked with jaggery for Chakkera Pongal (sweet rice). The ladies were making tamarind pulp for the Pulihora

(tamarind rice). Only a measure of chilli powder was added to the rice being cooked. I was wondering how such a small quantity could suffice for all Bhaktas. Around 4 a.m., Pulihora and Chakker Pongal was taken to Swami for taste. It is said, Swami would Himself come to the kitchen to inspect the cooking! This had happened during His Birthday celebrations which I had witnessed. Next day, the Pulihora and Chakker Pongal was distributed to all the devotees and it was like a Akshaya Patra! If this is not a miracle, what else?

One day, I decided to visit my sister at Bengaluru and without taking permission from Swami, I set out in the morning bus to reach Penukonda. I missed the train at Penukonda Railway Station and decided to proceed to Dharmavaram to take the bus to Bengaluru. The bus was cancelled due to some mechanical fault and I reached Penukonda in the evening by the same morning bus, by which I left in the morning and reached Nilayam!

All through this fruitless journey, I had not eaten anything and arrived by 7.30 p.m. Crestfallen, I stood pathetically in the portico to catch a glimpse of Swami. He came out of His room upstairs and asked me, "Yemiti, Prayanam Baga Zariginada? Bangalore Velli Vatchava" (how was your journey? Have you gone to Bangalore and come back)? I did not know what to answer and sought silently His pardon for leaving the place without His permission.

Swami decided to start Yajna during Dasara in the year 1964. A Yajna Kunda was built with bricks in the gents shed and the Vedic scholar Sri Kamaavadhani was made incharge. I was asked to look after the needs of the Vedic scholars. Sri

Kamaavadhani wanted to test if I was Brahmin and asked for my Gothra. He was satisfied that I was a Brahmin. The Vedic Pundits were housed in the Veda Pathashala. Swami, on the concluding day, materialised Tulsi beads, gold and Navaratnas to be offered into the Homa Kunda. It was an unforgettable experience!

Acquire the Degree of Swami's Grace

Swami would leave Prasanthi Nilayam all of a sudden and everyone knew that He would stay in Whitefield, Brindavan, before proceeding elsewhere. He would leave through the opposite door to His room on the other wing of the corridor. We used to lock the door from outside after Swami entered His car and would run to the road to hand over the keys to Him. His arrival was also kept a secret. He used to visit Chennai and stay in the house of Venkatamuni. I had visited Swami at this house, while I was going to Jamshedpur or waiting to write my exams. One day, in the house of Venkatamuni, Raja Reddy, some other people and I were discussing and commenting about Swami visiting the houses of film stars. He had gone to the house of Anjali Devi.

Swami came in the night and said, "Film stars are also human beings. They have been disrespected by the society. They need Me more than you". Saying thus, He put an end to our speculation.

In later years, Anjali Devi not only introduced fellow film stars to Swami, but also donated the plot to construct "Sundaram", the present place of worship for Sai devotees in Chennai. I had gone along with the party of Swami to Anjali Devi's house, but, not after it has been constructed. There is a reason for this, which I will relate later.



I could not complete my degree and would tell Swami how frustrated I was. Swami would encourage me by saying, “Nuvvu Naa Daggira Degree Sampadinchu, Vere Ye Degree Vaddu” (you earn a degree from Me, no other degree is required). On this assurance, I stopped writing any more for my degree.

I used to go to Brindavan to take instructions from Swami. Somehow Swami was very, very angry with the residents of Nilayam and vowed not to come till they mended their behaviour. I was shocked to have received a lengthy letter written by Swami from Mumbai, expressing His displeasure at the attitude of Nilayam residents, especially ladies. I was surprised and told Kasturi about the letter.

Kasturi said, “You are too young to read this letter and the residents will not believe. Instead, I will read the letter”. Just before the evening Bhajan, Kasturi read the letter in his inimitable dramatic style. The letter stayed with Kasturi and I lost the most valuable possession due to my ignorance. Moreover, I did not even take a copy of the letter.

Due to intense heat, some of us had gathered near a well outside the Nilayam to have a dip. I was pushed into the well by someone and I did not know swimming. Suddenly, a water snake encircled my feet and started dragging me down. I shouted for help and was rescued.

After much persuasion by Kasturi, Surayya and other senior devotees, Swami returned to Nilayam just before Dasara celebrations. It was nearly two months since He left Nilayam and in a way, I was relieved of the responsibilities.

Swami Deflates my Ego

As soon as Swami came, He enquired about the incident of the well and sent me away to Jamshedpur. I had not gone home for nearly three months.

From Jamshedpur, one K.K. Rao, a highly evolved Sadhaka, would come to Prasanthi Nilayam. Addressing K.K. Rao, Swami told him not to come for Darshan. Instead, He would Himself give Darshan at the place where he was staying! What a rare privilege for this person! Then onwards, whoever came from Jamshedpur, Swami would ask them to give Vibhuti Prasadam to him. K.K. Rao was a retired draughtsman with Tatas and was staying close to where my father was residing and I would visit K.K. Rao every evening for Satkalakshepam (spiritual conversation). He would tell me so many anecdotes of his spiritual experiences. One evening, I found him meditating, full six inches above his bench! This was the first time I had seen levitation! The Sathya Sai Sasangam was formed in Jamshedpur by one Murthy, who was the boss of K.K. Rao. As usual, when this Murthy came for the Darshan of Swami, He asked him to give Vibhuti packets to K.K. Rao. Murthy felt it was below his dignity to visit K.K. Rao and did not give the Vibhuti. When Murthy came next time, he was ignored by Swami for disobeying His order and only after a long time, Murthy was called by Swami. Since I was also from Jamshedpur, Murthy confessed his lapse to me.

When I came to Jamshedpur after Swami sent me back after the incident of the well, the devotees in Jamshedpur invited me to conduct Bhajans in their homes, as I was in the Bhajan group in the Nilayam along with Raja Reddy and Mysore Raghu. Ego took over me and I



started teaching Bhajans to some groups and also to ladies.

I missed the Dasara at the Nilayam, which my parents had gone to attend. After the interview, Swami asked my father, “Yemiti Vaadu Akkada Yemi Chesttunnadu, Andariki Bhajanalu Nerputhunnada? Dasara Ki Raaledu” (what is he doing there? Is he teaching Bhajans to others? He has not come here for Dasara).

No sooner did my father tell me about this, I rushed to the Nilayam, only to be completely ignored by Swami. All my silent prayers and pleadings with Kasturi and Surayya were of no avail. They said, “Swami is very angry with you”. Pathetically, I prayed that Swami would accept my pardon. I had no work, because Swami had literally banished me! Birthday in November was approaching and yet, Swami had not relented. Suddenly, with a day left for the celebrations to begin, He called me and admonished me in strong words, like was I a brand ambassador for Him and who authorised me to participate in Bhajans and teach them especially to ladies? I sobbed and fell at His Feet for pardon.

Having been assigned the work to decorate the shed, I plunged along with Sambasiva Rao and got ready the shed for the celebrations to begin. As usual,

I was allotted to carry the weighty Shirdi Sai idol from the Mandir to the shed. In addition to decorating the shed, I was also given the task of taking care of the sound system, which was totally unknown to me! Graciously, Swami told me what to do and I became the sound incharge for the Discourses of Swami! Tube lights used to be fixed in the decorated shed, and connections were given by me although, I was not an electrician! There was short circuit in one of the tube lights, which was giving shock to the people. This was on the ladies side of the shed. Swami, immediately directed me to rectify. In a fit of inspiration, I jumped on to the girder from the stage where Swami was Discoursing and disconnected the wire, which was giving shock!

“Vorayi, Neeku Emanna Jnanam Unda? Current shock Kodutundani Telise, Pyiki Enduku Ekkavu” (knowing fully well that you will get electric shock, why did you climb the girder? Don’t you have any sense)? This thought did not occur to me and my only duty was to obey the order of Swami!

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

–The author Sri Srivilas Suri is an old-time devotee of Bhagavan, having spent many years of his life in Bhagavan’s proximity.

...continued from page 14

who stood just about 15 feet away, turned around and asked me to come in. My heart started pounding rapidly and I ran behind other South American devotees who were following Him for the coveted interview.

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

– The author, Dr. Ramesh Wadhwani, has been an ardent devotee of Bhagavan for more than four decades. His residence “Sai Nivas” in Shelton, CT, USA has become a full-fledged Sai Centre.



Effulgence of Divine Glory

A FILM DIRECTOR'S ENCOUNTERS WITH BABA

Jeff Grant

I AM NOT A SAI BABA devotee in the accepted sense of the word. I don't attend meetings, don't wear His ring on my finger, don't have His picture around my house. So, why am I talking? There are two reasons. The first is that twenty years ago, I left for India to make a documentary film on Hinduism, and the last part of that production was about Sai Baba.

The second is that about a month ago, as I was walking through a small town in Sussex, England, I came up a shop with books; in the window was a book on Sai Baba. Something made me go in and buy it. When I got home and thumbed through it, I had the very strong feeling that soon, in some way, Sai Baba was going to come back into my life.

When I was commissioned to direct the documentary in 1975, it was decided that the core unit, four of us, would go to India with the producer to check shooting locations and meet various people, including Sai Baba. I knew very little about Him then and went there as a hopeful sceptic. I had always felt that there was something else, something beyond all this. If this man, Sai Baba, could add any weight to that feeling, that would be very welcome. If He couldn't, then I would have lost nothing.



What it came to was that I saw and felt things in His presence that have remained with me ever since.

The first time I saw Baba was on the initial exploratory trip. The five of us – the producer, my assistant, the cameraman and his assistant, and myself – assembled in a tiny, bare room in the Ashram in Puttaparthi. When we were seated at a wooden table and left on our own, we looked rather nervously at each other. We had heard the most extraordinary stories of Sai Baba. What on earth was going to come into the room?

The producer, a long-time Baba devotee, had obtained His permission to make this film. That's how we came so close to Him. I didn't realise at the time that there were many thousands of people around the world who would have given



their right arm to be where we were that day.

Baba came in – short, saffron robe, black South Indian skin, and an enormous shock of jet black hair. He bounced in, smiling. There was no pomposity, no formality. There was no sign of the portentous look that has become the norm in theatrical portrayals of those whom the producers conceive of being profoundly spiritual. He was on His own, with no henchman, no aides, no hangers-on. And He was terribly friendly.

At the same time – and I don't know if I can express this – He carried about Him something that was, I can only describe it as, other. This overwhelming sense grew on me the more I was with Him. I was in the presence of something else. It wasn't male or female, for that would have limited something that I felt was not limitable.

He sat down amidst us at the table and looked around expectantly. Well, what do we say to somebody who, to a large portion of the world's population, is God? And to us, even within the first few seconds of our meeting, He is clearly a completely unique and overwhelmingly powerful being of some sort. Any thought that comes into your head seems quite pointless, particularly as I knew (how I don't know). He knew precisely what was going on in mine.

My brain was spinning. I said nothing nor if I remember correctly, did anybody except my producer, who talked about the filming. Then Sai Baba looked at me across the table and made a sort of whirling gesture and said words to the effect of: Many, many problems; like a merry-go-round. This was absolutely right. My head was in complete confusion. "Remember,"

He said, "slow and steady wins the race".

At that time, my own life was spiralling downward into a fairly profound crisis. For some years, I'd been very successful at my job. I'd earned lots of money, won lots of awards, and I was very well known in my own business. But something was pulling me apart. I was psychologically falling to pieces, and I could do nothing about it. This confrontation with Sai Baba seemed, in some way I could not then understand, to be part of that same process.

Anyway, my brain, as He looked at me across that table, was a complete jumble. And then He suddenly said to me, "Would you like some ash"? I hadn't the least idea what He was talking about. But instead of saying, "What do you mean? What ash"? I simply said, "Yes".

"Hold out your hand," He said. I did. He reached across the table – we were perhaps four feet apart – and made that motion with His fingers that is so familiar to many. And then, a foot or so from my eyes, grey ash appeared to fall from the ends of His fingers to form a small mound in my palm. "Now you eat it," He said. I did precisely what I was told. And I had no idea why. Our group was at the Ashram for only a few hours before we flew back to Bombay (now Mumbai).

When we returned to do filming at Sai Baba's Fiftieth Birthday a few weeks later, two hundred thousand people or so had crammed themselves into the Ashram. In those days, Puttaparthi was a tiny community in the middle of nowhere. We got to it along dirt roads that the rains washed away at regular intervals. Drivers from Bangalore (now Bengaluru) never guaranteed that they would get there. So,

actually arriving in Puttaparthi was a feat on the part of the crowds. I can still see so clearly the sight outside the Ashram; busload after busload of people stretching into the distance, lights shining through the dust. People had travelled on roofs of the buses and were hanging out of the windows. Hundreds were arriving on foot. One group had walked from the State of Rajasthan, one thousand miles away.

What impressed me most about Baba was not the fact that He appeared to have some sort of control over material reality; I can believe that easily enough. To me, the most impressive thing about Him, and I have come across it in no other human being, was this sense of a universal, totally unselfish, compassionate power. As He has said so many times, "There is only one religion – the religion of love".

Baba had given us complete freedom to film Him. There were no restrictions on where we could go. I believe it was the first time He had allowed that. On His Birthday, the Ashram was so packed with people that it was almost impossible to get from one place to another. Even in those days, the Ashram covered a pretty large area. There was a scheduled programme of events, but anybody who knows anything about Sai Baba probably knows that any schedule is likely to be more a thing of hope than much else. He was due to appear at about 2 p.m. to give a talk in the massive Poornachandra Hall. I really wanted to get a shot of Him appearing on the stage and the audience's reaction to Him.

Knowing that He might well change His mind and appear somewhere completely different, I decided to put one camera in the hall where He was supposed to be and the other somewhere else – but

where? I decided to position it along with the cameraman outside the building where Baba lived in the centre of the Ashram. It was possible, I thought, that wherever He went, He might go from there. On the other hand, it was just as likely that He wouldn't be there. I had no idea.

I left the cameraman with instructions that if Sai Baba appeared there, he was to contact me on his walkie-talkie and I would rush back to Him. I would take the other camera to the hall and get him to rush back to me if Baba appeared where I was. By the time we'd struggled through the appalling rush to the hall, it was clear that if Baba appeared at either place, given the crowds, there was not the slightest chance that one of us would make it to the other in time. I got the producer on my walkie-talkie and she said she had no more information and couldn't get any because she was completely struck in the crowds and couldn't move at all. In other words, on the basis of no information, I had to make a decision on whether to stay where I was and call the cameraman back to me now or to go from here and join him outside. Either way, all my eggs had to go into one basket for this very important shot.

I stood there, in the middle of the hall, looking down at the floor, and I cleared my head of everything. Then I heard myself suddenly saying to the cameraman, "Let's get out of here"! I grabbed a steward and told him to get us to the building where Baba lived as quickly as he could. He pushed and elbowed his way through the melee with the pair of us hanging on for dear life and lugging a very heavy camera and tripod.

We got where we were going and within fifteen to thirty seconds, Baba emerged from

the building, right in front of me. I couldn't believe it. I grabbed Don's shoulder and told him to follow Baba. He didn't go into the hall at all. He walked out into the centre of the Ashram, to an open area the size of football pitch. Now remember, there were two hundred thousand people there, on the roofs, on the ground, occupying every square centimetre of space. Baba walked out into their midst with us following. There was nothing from Him bar the one gesture of raising His hands in front of Him from time to time. He said nothing. All I could hear was the sound of His bare feet on the ground and of crows. Two hundred thousand people watched this small, black-haired figure in saffron robe.

We went behind Him, filming Him. After thirty seconds or so of that shot, I thought, "Right, that's enough from the back. Now I really need to go round the front of Him and get a close shot of His face". But something held me back. It was still going through my head, "Who the hell is this man? Is He God? And if He is, can I really spin around in front of Him and stick a film camera right in front of His face"? Just as this was going through my mind, He suddenly turned around to us, looked at me, gestured and said, "Go (to the) front. Go (to the) front". And I got my shot.

The fact that He is reputed to be able to materialise physical objects obsesses many people. Well, there was the ash, which as far as I could judge, He materialised in my hand on that first visit. Then there was an evening when I sat on the floor right in front of Him in a small hall as He stood and addressed some young people. Then He materialised a number of silver necklaces

and "St. Christophers" and threw them into the audience. When we talk of these things, it sounds utterly improbable. Have we been duped by a master magician? And yet, when we see such miracles, if we are interested in our perceptions rather than in our prejudices, we are forced into the position of saying that at the very least we have not the slightest idea how they could be possible. Yet there they are.

In the film, our group made, was one shot that showed Him materialising a silver necklace. He did that typical whirling motion with His hands and out from His palm appeared a necklace. When we were editing the film, we examined this shot frame by frame. In one frame, nothing showed but His palm. In the next, a 25th of a second later, two or three links of a chain were there, more in the next, and so on.

However, as I said earlier, for me the most impressive thing about Baba is not His apparent ability to manipulate matter. He Himself has described this power as the "mosquito on the back of the elephant". And about those things He materialises for people He has said, "I give you what you want in order that you may want what I have come to give". The things He has said have impressed me much. Anyone can say anything, but they don't have to mean it. I was in no doubt that He meant what He said. To the hundreds seated on the grounds of the Ashram, hoping to get a glimpse of Him, He once suddenly said, "What have you come here for? To see God? Why do you look at Me? If you want to see God, look at yourselves".

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

– Excerpted from the article of Jeff Grant, a British film director, in "Encounters with Divinity".

DEVELOP UNWAVERING FAITH IN GOD

Sweeter than sugar, tastier than curd, sweeter indeed than honey is the Name of Krishna. Constant repetition of this sweet Name gives one the taste of divine nectar itself. Therefore, one should contemplate on the Name of Krishna incessantly.

(Telugu Poem)

OBEY THE DIVINE COMMAND IMPLICITLY

Embodiments of Love!

SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, THE nectarine principle of Krishna has fascinated young and old alike. Right from His advent, Krishna made people forget themselves in ecstasy with His Divine pranks, enchanting music and

cows for grazing to the banks of the river Yamuna and immerse themselves in fun and frolic.

Cowherds have a Glimpse of Krishna's Divinity

One day, the cowherd boys were lost in bliss as they were watching the divine pranks of Krishna. Consequently, they forgot the surroundings and their cows. As they were resting, all of a sudden they felt hot wind blowing from all directions. They realised that they were being surrounded by wild fire. The raging conflagration was so intense that they were even unable to open their eyes and see. The cows started running helter-skelter, unable to bear the scorching heat. Nobody could control them. The intensity of heat became more and more every moment. Then the cowherd boys prayed to Krishna to come to their rescue. "Oh Krishna! You alone can extinguish this fire and save us." Seeing their plight, Krishna laughed and said, "Oh cowherd boys! You have been moving with Me, playing with Me and enjoying bliss. It is rather strange that you are fear-stricken even after experiencing My Divinity. Many times in the past, you were a witness to My slaying the demons sent by Kamsa. Then why are you afraid when I am with you?"



inexpressible bliss. Krishna and Balarama, along with other cowherd boys, would take

Krishna told them to close their eyes and contemplate on Him for a while. The cowherds implicitly obeyed His command. They closed their eyes and started chanting His name. The next moment, Krishna commanded them to open their eyes. Lo and behold! The wild fire had totally disappeared and all their cows were grazing as if nothing had happened. Their joy knew no bounds. They wanted to return to their respective homes at once and narrate the wonderful miracle that Krishna had performed. The cowherd boys had experienced many such miracles which proved the Divinity of Krishna.

A Feast for Sages

One day, Krishna and Balarama along with the cowherd boys were playing on the banks of river Yamuna. They were jumping from one branch to the other on trees. Some of them were tired. At that time, sages Vamana and Bharadwaja came to the banks of Yamuna. They asked the cowherd boys to show them a suitable and safe location where the waters were shallow so that they could have a bath. Krishna and Balarama jumped down from the trees. Bharadwaja at once recognised that Krishna was Paramatma and Balarama represented Jivatma. He folded his hands in reverence and requested Krishna to show them a suitable location for having a bath. Krishna jumped into the water and showed them a safe place. He told them that He would keep sumptuous food ready for them. The cowherd boys were wondering as to how Krishna would provide food for the sages as He had not brought any food with Him. In those days, there were no tiffin carriers. After the sages had completed their bath, Krishna opened a bag which appeared from nowhere. As He opened the bag, the entire place was

filled with sweet aroma of rice boiled in milk. He served the food in a plate and requested them to eat. The cowherd boys were as mischievous as monkeys. They would not keep quiet. They repeatedly asked Krishna, "Where did You get the food from"? Krishna silenced them saying, it was not proper to indulge in excessive talk in the presence of sages. The sages performed the Sandhya worship and started partaking of food. They asked, "Krishna, who prepared this food"? Krishna replied, "My mother Yashoda". They said they had not eaten anything more delicious and expressed their gratitude to Him.

At this juncture, I would like to narrate an incident which happened with this Avatar. I have not revealed this to anyone so far. After this Prasanthi Mandir was constructed, I used to have My food in the room upstairs. Whenever I took food, the Griham Ammayi (mother of this physical body) would be by My side urging Me to eat more. She would often express her concern that I was losing weight. I would tell her, "Why should I eat more? Do I need to fight with somebody? I don't like to become fat".

Follow the Divine Command with Faith

One day a village family invited Me to their house for food. Actually, their intention was to poison Me. They were feeling jealous of My growing popularity and prosperity. In those days, I used to relish Vadas made of Alasanda grains. Hence, they mixed poison in Vadas and offered them to Me. Before going there, I had told Easwaramma and Subbamma not to be afraid if any untoward incident was to happen. When I returned from there, My entire body turned blue and My mouth

continued on page 28...





GHANDIKOTA V. SANJAY

INDELIBLE IMPRESSIONS WITH THE DIVINE

BHAGAVAN'S LOVE IS UNIQUE IN that it is multi-faceted and can be experienced in a variety of different ways: for a devotee, He is God; for a daughter or son, He is mother and father; for the disciple, He is Guru; and for the lonely, He is the best friend. Each one has his own relationship with God and all can connect with His love at the individual level. When Bhagavan gives Darshan, everyone feels His unbounded grace personally and all enjoy His munificent love equally. Bhagavan's love and grace are freely given to all, and in my case, I received Bhagavan's love very early in life, an experience narrated to me by my mother.

Divine Intervention at my Birth

It was in New York, in the year 1967, that I was born, a baby premature by more than two months. Needless to say, during the 1960s, the premature delivery of a child was infinitely more precarious than it is today. During the sixth month of pregnancy, my mother was hospitalised due to a severe haemorrhage and it was at this critical juncture that Bhagavan's Divine intervention came into play. Severe haemorrhage at such a stage of pregnancy could easily be fatal for the mother and child. Due to this fact, the doctors kept

my mother in the intensive care unit of the hospital. Numerous complications arose and due to the complexity of the case, a team of doctors, some of the most renowned, arrived on the scene. Tersely put, their prognosis was unanimous; the birth would most likely be fatal to both mother and child. The future, indeed, looked grim. The doctors were aware of the fact that the baby would not stay its whole



nine-month term but expected it to stay in place for a little while longer. But again, the case took an unexpected turn and at the end of the sixth month / beginning of the seventh month itself, labour began. My father was called and informed of the grave situation. He, along with my four elder brothers, were asked to say their goodbye in case the inevitable happened.

My mother was wheeled into the delivery room on a stretcher and was in the process



of being put under anaesthesia by the anaesthetist when lo! she saw a gleaming light followed by Bhagavan's brilliant form, His hand raised in blessing posture. The doctors did not perceive anything and one of them asked my mother, "Would you like us to call anyone or do something for you"? My mother replied, "Baba!" The doctor then asked, "Who is Baba? Give us his address and we will contact him". My mother replied, "He is here"! The doctors, no doubt, saw this as hallucination on the part of my mother and anaesthetised her completely. The situation went from bad to worse in the delivery room and finally, the doctors declared, as we later found out, that "only a miracle can save her and the baby now"!

And that is exactly what happened. All of a sudden, the situation changed dramatically for the better with signs showing a normal delivery. I was born safely, and healthy due to Bhagavan's grace. Two years later, my father and mother brought me and my brothers to Prasanthi Nilayam where Bhagavan affirmed that it was His Divine intervention that saved me and my mother. He declared, "It is for the sake of the child and the remaining children that I gave a second life to the mother also". Undoubtedly, it was solely due to the Lord's love and grace that both of us survived. Bhagavan lovingly materialised a photograph of Himself, encased in a type of acrylic, for my mother and instructed her to wear it around her neck as a 'Raksha' and I, as a child, always enjoyed touching and looking at it. Since then, I confess that I have had a strong and immediate affinity for Bhagavan and His photographs, which perhaps was the cause of my wanting to take videos of Swami when I later became a Sai student (which He very graciously

permitted)! Indeed, my mother and father would often relate to me later that when they showed me pictures of the various forms of God when I was very young, I always chose Bhagavan Baba's photo. My brothers, while growing up, also had the same feeling. It is only due to Bhagavan's enveloping Divinity, infinite grace and His prompting that enabled children to have such sentiments, by leaving an indelible impact upon young minds. I am ever grateful to Bhagavan for implanting such yearning in me, for "pulling" me towards Him and for verily giving me life. What makes this experience most unique is the fact that it is not unique at all. Bhagavan has similarly left indelible impressions of His Divinity on children the world over and I have had the good fortune, over the years, to listen to some of their experiences. As mentioned earlier, Bhagavan's love is multi-faceted and can be experienced in a multitude of different ways simultaneously. In addition, every act which He undertakes is replete with meaning on a variety of planes. An experience embodies these particular thoughts.

Swami Gives me Gayatri Mantra Upadesh

It was in the year 1981 that my grandfather and parents thought it would be the correct time for my Upanayanam (thread ceremony). It was also during this time that Swami very graciously gave admission in His college to one of my elder brothers, Ravishankar. As is customary with devotees of Bhagavan, my grandparents and parents beseeched Swami to perform the Upanayanam ceremony, praying but not really expecting Him to oblige, as we felt it such a trivial thing for Him. When requested, Bhagavan immediately consented without even a trace of hesitation, reminding us once again



of His munificent love and benevolence.

The date of the Upanayanam ceremony was fixed and it began punctually at Prasanthi Nilayam at the allotted hour in a flat graciously assigned to us by Swami. The ceremony was proceeding when Bhagavan arrived in all His splendour. Immediately upon His arrival, He glanced at me and enquired about my health in a very concerned manner. I had been ill for a few days and Bhagavan, being omniscient and omnipresent, was acutely aware of it. I replied that I was better, whereupon He suddenly began to chide me for not having had my head shaved leaving five tufts of hair, as is traditionally done. Unsurprisingly, this idea did not appeal to me very much! A wave of worry swept my mind that I had disappointed Bhagavan, but He then laughed merrily and compassionately added that it was not really essential as long as the spirit of the action was felt.

Suddenly, Bhagavan waved His hand in His inimitable fashion and materialised the Yagnopaveeth (sacred thread). The emergence of the sacred thread was immediately followed by a delightful fragrance that seemed to permeate and waft across the entire room. The sacred thread was still wet and fragrant with sandalwood paste, vermilion, and turmeric – a sight to behold. Bhagavan then told my parents to place it around me, but my parents prayed to Bhagavan for Him to do so with His Divine Hands. Bhagavan graciously consented but added that all three should place it around me together as the role of the parents is important. Immediately after this, Bhagavan Himself performed the ‘Gayatri Mantra Upadesha’ or the ‘Initiation into the Gayatri Mantra’ by cupping His hands around my ear and

whispering the sacred Gayatri. A cloth shielded us both as it is traditional that this aspect of the ceremony is done privately by the Guru and disciple in order to maintain the efficacy of the Mantra for the disciple. Immediately upon being shielded by the cloth from those in the room, with Bhagavan right next to me, I perceived a sudden “hush” when, in fact, the whole room was vibrant with sound. It was at this juncture that I experienced something very difficult to translate into words. Everything seemed to turn “golden” and I experienced a blissful silence followed by the sound of ‘Om’ and the Gayatri Mantra being chanted by the very Lord Himself. Once the cloth was removed, the whole phenomenon vanished, thereby ‘bringing me back’. Bhagavan then blessed me and allowed me to have Padanamaskar.

Looking at these events more closely, it took a while for me to see that every action of Bhagavan is pregnant with meaning.

Swami as Mother, Father, Guru and God

Replaying these events briefly, Bhagavan first entered the room and enquired about my health, just as a mother does. He then proceeded to lovingly discipline me, just as a father does. Bhagavan then placed the sacred thread around me and initiated me into the Gayatri Mantra, as a Guru does. Finally, Bhagavan blessed me and allowed me to have His Padanamaskar as Our Beloved Lord. Bhagavan showed the love emanating from all these relationships concurrently, namely, ‘Mother, Father, Guru and God’. Hitherto, I would come to Prasanthi Nilayam with my parents, brothers and sisters-in-law and would witness Bhagavan’s Love and Divinity as a child. This experience,



however, left me speechless and shook me to the core in a positive way. It was the start of a one-to-one relationship with Mother Sai, while previously most of my interaction with Swami was through my parents.

The preceding experiences left an indelible impact upon me, culminating in the realisation of my fondest wish: Swami very graciously granting me admission in Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning in 1985, an event that I always feel was my greatest good fortune. I am ever grateful to Bhagavan for drawing me into His Divine Fold. I am also grateful to Swami and to my mother and father for giving me life and for placing me at His Divine Lotus Feet.

By being immersed in His infinite grace and experiencing His teachings of practical

spirituality through service and love, Sai students are initiated into the importance of right conduct, education in human values and character development, all with Swami showering on us the bountiful love of a million mothers. Living with Swami is the Highest Education. Between the golden opportunities and the very cherished moments experienced, we as Sai Students have much to be grateful to Bhagavan and can only express our gratitude to Him by following His teachings, exemplifying the ideals of good conduct and character, and by positively contributing to the well-being of society, as He exhorts us to do.

– The author was a student of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning from the year 1985 to 1990. He is currently an investment professional in New Jersey, USA.

...continued from page 24

started frothing. I told Easwaramma to wave her hand in a circle. She did accordingly, and to her utter amazement, there appeared Vibhuti in her hand. She mixed it in water and gave Me. Instantly, I became normal. She wondered, “Swami can create Vibhuti with a wave of His hand. But how is it that Vibhuti appeared in My hand”? In fact, I had given her that power for that moment.

Before I conclude, I would like to narrate a small Leela performed by Krishna in Dwapara Yuga. So long as Kamsa was alive, he used to send demons to fight with Krishna. Kamsa had two wives whose father was a mighty king. Once Kamsa was killed, his father-in-law tried to wage a war against Krishna. The Gopikas were worried, “How long are we to suffer these ordeals”? they asked Krishna. He told them not to panic and pacified them saying, “Try to understand My powers and potentialities.

Tonight, you sleep in Repalle and tomorrow morning see for yourself where you will be”. When they woke up next morning, they found themselves in Dwaraka. Where was Repalle and where was Dwaraka? A distance of over 1,000 km separated them. In this manner, Krishna could change one village into another.

God can do anything. He can go anywhere. He can change anything. Do not give room to doubts. One who doubts Divinity will certainly be doomed. Develop unwavering faith and follow the Divine command. True Dharma lies in following the Divine command. When you follow God, you will be blessed with all goodness and auspiciousness.

– From Bhagavan’s Sri Krishna Janmashtami Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 31st August 2002.



CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

PILGRIMAGE OF DEVOTEES FROM PRAKASAM DISTRICT

TWO PROGRAMMES WERE offered at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan by the devotees of Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh as part of their two-day Parthi Yatra (pilgrimage to Puttaparthi) on 29th and 30th June 2019, in which over 2,000 devotees came to participate.

The first programme was a devotional music presentation entitled “Sri Sathya Sai Gana Prakasam” (illuminating



A devotional music presentation by devotees from Prakasam district.

devotional songs dedicated to Sai) by the devotees of this district on 29th June 2019. Beginning their presentation with a song to propitiate Lord Ganesh, the singers offered melodious and enrapturing devotional songs which filled the entire milieu with devotional fervour. Some of the songs rendered by them were: “Ma Sai Padaalu Sathya Dharma Santhi Sandeshalu” (the words of Sai give the message of Sathya Dharma and

Santhi), “Sathya Sai Janani Premamrita Dayini” (Mother Sai give the nectar of love) and “Sai Ram Sai Ram Sai Ram Sai Ram”.

On 30th June 2019, Bal Vikas children and Sai Youth of this district presented a dance drama entitled “Sai Janani” (Mother Sai) which addressed some



A scene from the drama “Sai Janani”.

of the intricate problems of the student fraternity, providing the remedy for them through the potency of Gayatri Mantra recitation, Namasmarana, and the spirit of Seva as exemplified by the great devotee Hanuman. Above all, the drama inspired the youth to follow the path shown by Bhagavan Baba and redeem their life. Bhajans led by Parthi Yatra contingent followed next and concluded with Arati.

PILGRIMAGE OF DEVOTEES FROM KERALA

Two important initiatives of Sri Sathya Seva Organisation, Kerala were highlighted in a presentation as part of the pilgrimage of Kerala devotees

on 6th July 2019. These were: Sri Sathya Sai Rehabilitation Programme and Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme. Two speakers addressed the gathering on this occasion. The first speaker was a beneficiary of Sri Sathya Sai Rehabilitation Programme who stated how the volunteers of the Sai Organisation of Kerala helped her regain her health by providing much needed healthcare and medicines after her heart operations in Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences. More than 300 such beneficiaries had come to Prasanthi Nilayam to express their gratitude to Bhagavan. The second speaker was Sri Suresh Kumar, the coordinator of Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme who elucidated how this programme was changing the shape of the villages and bringing about transformation in the life of the villagers.

These talks were followed by an enrapturing devotional music concert by Smt. V.S. Ramya, a noted musician from Kozhikode and her fellow musicians. Starting her presentation with a prayer song “Gaayiye Ganapati Jagavandan” (sing the glory of Lord Ganesh, worshipped by the whole world), the singer enthralled the devotees with her melodious songs which included “Sai Teri Kripa Ho Jaaye” (Oh Lord Sai! Shower Your grace), Jai Jai Maruti Veera Jai (victory to valorous Maruti)

PILGRIMAGE OF DEVOTEES FROM VIZIANAGARAM DISTRICT

A beautiful dance drama was presented by the Bal Vikas children and Sai Youth of Vizianagaram district of

Andhra Pradesh on 7th July 2019 as part of the two-day pilgrimage of the devotees from this district from 6th to 7th July 2019. More than 3,000 devotees participated in this pilgrimage and basked in the divine ambience of Prasanthi Nilayam. The dance drama entitled “Ila Paina Eswarudu” (God on earth) depicted how the universal teachings and Divine glory of Bhagavan was reaching all corners of the world and transforming millions of people belonging to all castes, faiths and nations. The drama was embellished with four thrilling dances by Bal Vikas children of this district, which added to the richness of the presentation.

ASHADI EKADASI

The festival of Ashadi Ekadasi was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam with great devotion and piety on 12th July 2019. More than 2,500 devotees came from Mumbai Metro, Maharashtra and Goa to take part in the celebrations.

On the eve of Ashadi Ekadasi, on 11th July 2019, Bal Vikas children and Sai Youth from Maharashtra and Goa performed a beautiful drama “Samarth Ramdas” which portrayed the illustrious life story of this great saint of Maharashtra



A scene from the drama “Samarth Ramdas”.

who was also the Guru of the renowned king Shivaji. The story of this well-directed and well-rehearsed drama was narrated through the superb acting of the Bal Vikas children and Sai Youth aided by visuals on the LED screen and excellent commentary, with the result that the entire presentation turned out to be lively and realistic. Beautiful dances of the children made the presentation all the more enriching.

The programme on 12th July 2019 began with the sacred Dindi procession. As the Dindi procession carrying the idol



Dindi procession in Sai Kulwant Hall.

of Lord Vitthal entered Sai Kulwant Hall at 8.15 a.m., the sacred chants of 'Vitthal Vitthal' reverberated in the hall while the devotees in the hall waved ochre flags, creating a grand spectacle. Bal Vikas children thereafter performed traditional Dindi dance to the tune of chants "Jai Jai Rama Krishna Hari".

After this beautiful dance of Bal Vikas children, the State President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Maharashtra, Sri Shriram Satpute addressed the gathering. Dwelling on the significance of Ashadi Ekadasi, the distinguished speaker stated how devotees in groups came to Pandharpur, the abode of Lord

Vitthal, from all corners of Maharashtra making it as one of the biggest festivals of Maharashtra. What followed next was a banquet of devotional songs which was offered by the Bal Vikas children and Sai Youth of Nashik district of Maharashtra. Beginning with a prayer to Lord Ganesh "Vakra Tunda Mahakaya", the singers surcharged the entire milieu with deep devotion by their soulful rendition of devotional songs and Marathi Abhangs which included "Ghanashyama Sundara", "Vasudeva Aala Vasudeva Aala" (come come, Vasudeva) "Parthi Wale Tera Shukriya" (thanks to You, oh Lord of Parthi). They concluded their presentation with the famous Marathi composition "Yei Oh Vitthale". Bhajans followed next and concluded with Arati.

The evening programme began at 4.40 p.m. with a devout offering of love and gratitude by the Bal Vikas Gurus to their Sadguru Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the form of Stotras and prayer songs. This was followed by a talk by Sri Anoop Saxena, State President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Mumbai Metro who dwelt on the significance of the Ashadi Ekadasi festival and reminisced how Bhagavan Baba used to lovingly enquire about this festival and used to shower His blessings on the devotees of Maharashtra.

The concluding programme of Ashadi Ekadasi was a brilliantly scripted and meticulously directed dance drama "AI to SAI" which depicted how new scientific inventions like artificial intelligence were making man a slave of gadgets, who was forgetting the voice of his conscience and the power of his innate divinity. Presented by Bal Vikas alumni and Sai Youth from



The drama “AI to SAI” prompted man to realise his divinity instead of becoming a slave of gadgets.

Mumbai district and embellished with beautiful dances of Bal Vikas children, the innovative drama reminded man to take to the path of spirituality and divinity as taught by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba because this was the path which transformed lives.

SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

The graduation ceremony of the 7th batch of Sathya Sai International Leadership Programme was held on 15th July 2019, in which 220 Young Adults were awarded certificates on their completion of the Leadership Programme.

The programme began with talks of two Young Adults who referred to the Leadership Programme as a journey of transformation. Narrating their personal experiences of self-transformation, the speakers stated that it was by putting Bhagavan’s teachings into practice and developing faith in Him with utmost surrender that brought about transformation in them.

These talks were followed by a video presentation, depicting various Seva activities performed by Young Adults

in the fields of education, medical and humanitarian relief, spiritual and human values programmes, etc., in many countries of the world which included U.S.A., Indonesia, Mexico, Argentina, Greece, Australia, Canada and U.K.

The final presentation of the Young Adults was a soulful devotional music



A devotional music offering by Young Adults.

programme entitled “Offering of Pure Love to Sai within”. Beginning their offering of love with a prayer song propitiating Lord Ganesh, they rendered a number of melodious songs which included “Kali Yuga Avatara Sathya Sai Avatara”, “Radhe Govinda Nanda Ke Chanda”, “Sathya Dharmamu Santhi Premalato Nee Nitya Jivana Yatra Saginchu” (lead



Presentation of certificate to the graduating Young Adults.



your life with Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema). Bhajans followed next, during the course of which certificates were presented to graduating Young Adults by the Trustees of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and senior members of SSIO.

DEVOTIONAL MUSIC CONCERT BY DEVOTEES FROM AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND MAURITIUS

A group of over 200 devotees came to Prasanthi Nilayam from African countries and Mauritius on a four-day spiritual pilgrimage from 18th to 21st July 2019, and presented a soul-stirring devotional music programme entitled “Divided by Borders, Connected by Sai” on 20th July 2019. Beginning with a prayer song dedicated to Lord Ganesh “Ganapati



Devotional music offering by devotees from African countries and Mauritius.

Deva, Ganapati Deva”, they next sang “Jai Jai Jai Hey Sai Janani” (hail Mother Sai) and went on to sing a song dedicated to goddess Saraswati. After presenting another couple of songs, they concluded their presentation with a Bhajan medley. As the singers sang songs suffused with love and devotion emerging straight from their hearts, the entire presentation turned out to be highly elevating.

PILGRIMAGE OF DEVOTEES FROM ERODE

More than 1,100 devotees came from Erode district of Tamil Nadu on a pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam for two days, 19th and 20th July 2019, and presented music and cultural programmes on both the days.

On 19th July 2019, Bal Vikas children from rural areas of the district performed a drama entitled “Pay Rent”. Based on the teachings of Bhagavan on the subject of reverence for parents, the drama presented the life stories of ideal sons like Adi Sankara, Pundarika, Shivaji, Shravan Kumar, et.al. to highlight that one should



“Pay Rent” a dance drama by Bal Vikas children of rural areas of Erode district.

always be grateful to one’s parents and should serve them with care and kindness. Beautiful dances of the children added value to the drama. Besides this thematic drama, the devotees from Erode district presented group songs on 20th July 2019 and led Bhajans both on 19th and 20th July 2019.

SARVA DHARMA CHOIR

Sarva Dharma Choir of Sathya Sai International Organisation offered a medley of multifaith devotional songs and hymns at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Baba with deep devotion on 21st July 2019.

Beginning their programme at 5.00 p.m. with prayer to Lord Ganesh “Sri Ganesh Paahi Maam, Jai Ganesh Raksha Maam” (May Lord Ganesh protect me!), they next sang the evergreen saying of Bhagavan “Start the Day with Love” and followed it with a hymn “Om Shakti Om Shakti Om Shakti Siva Shakti Om” (oh Divine Power

of Siva and Shakti!). They then sang the Bhajan “Allah Hu Akbar” (God is great) and recited Sai Gayatri. Sublime feelings of the singers, melodious rendition of songs and excellent instrumental music support made the entire presentation engrossing and lively.

NOTICE

Sanathana Sarathi is a spiritual magazine, devoted to the moral and spiritual uplift of humanity. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba launched it in the month of February 1958, saying that it would act as the **Varadhi (bridge) between Him and the devotee**. In its very first issue, Baba gave the message, “From this day, our Sanathana Sarathi is on the march, at the head of its spiritual cohorts – the Vedas, the Sastras and the Upanishads, to subdue the forces of the ego such as injustice, falsehood, immorality and viciousness. May this charioteer fight for world prosperity and spread joy among all mankind, beating the drums of victory”! It continues to bring divine messages and blessings of our dear Lord to the doorstep of devotees all over the world.

During the past several years, we had retained the subscription rates for Telugu and English magazines without any upward revision. However, the increase in cost of paper, printing and overseas postage over the years, have compelled us to revise the subscription rates for the English and Telugu magazines as per details given below:

Period and No of issues	Telugu	Telugu	English	English
	India	Overseas	India	Overseas
1 year – 12 issues	₹90	₹900 (US \$18 or UK £13 or €14)	₹120	₹1200 (US\$ 22 or UK £17 or €19, CAN \$29 or AUS \$31)
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3 years – 36 issues	₹270	₹2700 (US \$54 or UK £39 or €42)	₹360	₹3600 (US \$66 or UK £51 or €57, CAN \$87 or AUS \$93)

These new subscription rates are effective from **1st October 2019**. The last date for receipt of subscriptions at the current rates is: (a) **15th September 2019** by M.O., cheque, or bank draft; and (b) **30th September 2019** by cash or through website www.sanathanasarathi.org. Subscriptions already paid are valid for the relevant period for which payment is made.

– K.S. Rajan
Publisher



Poornaavatar Diary 2020

Bhagavan's diary Poornaavatar 2020 is available for sale. The diary has a main article on Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and write-ups on service and Sadhana, as well as a divine message for the youth. There are more than 300 specially selected sayings of Baba on two-colour diary pages.

Specifications: Total pages 376. Size: 14.7x20.6 cm, shrink-wrapped, multi-colour matte laminated cover with gold foiling, art work, spot lamination, knurling and curved stitch-binding; 22 multi-colour pages in art paper including six beautiful photographs of Bhagavan, and centre spreads



Minimum order 5 diaries for addresses within India. Rates given below include packing and postal charges. Each additional diary ₹160/- (unit Price ₹125 + packing + postage).

Diary 2020 code 16325	5 units	6 units	7 units	8 units	9 units - 2 packs	10 units - 2 packs
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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 Bhagavan besides various spiritual and religious books.

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REGD. WITH REGISTRAR OF NEWSPAPERS R.NO.10774/1958 REGN.NO. HDP/002/2018-2020

LICENCED TO POST WITHOUT PREPAYMENT No.PMGK/RNP/WPP-01/2018-2020

Date of Publication: 1st August 2019



Instrumental music concert by Sri K. Sathyanarayanan and party.



A medley of devotional songs and hymns by Sarva Dharma Choir.



A dance number in the dance drama "Ila Paina Eswarudu".

Annual Subscription English (12 issues)

India ₹75. Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka ₹600.

Other Countries ₹850 or US \$19 or UK £13 or €13,

CAN \$22, AUS \$26. Acceptable for 1, 2 or 3 years.

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Seek Happiness Within

The most valuable, subtle and significant treasure is latent in the human body. But no one is trying to know this secret. All the powers and potentialities, which you find in the world, are within you. You cannot find anything in the world other than what already exists in the human body. It is foolishness to search for happiness in the external world. What you are seeking is within you; unfortunately, you are unable to trace that treasure.

– Baba