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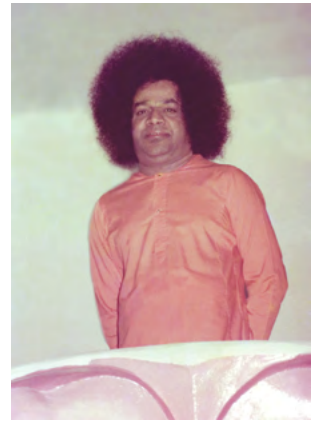
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*"All the pursuits of man such as
education, job, business, etc., are for
the sake of happiness only. At each
and every moment of life, man craves
for happiness. Even when the doctor is
giving you an injection, you feel that it
should be done painlessly. It is due to his
ignorance that man does not recognise
the source of happiness in his life."*



CONTENTS

- 4 **Union with God is the Aim of Human Life**
Bhagavan's Discourse: 27th April 1992
- 10 **Never Cause Harm to your Mother and Motherland**
Bhagavan's Easwaramma Day Message
- 12 **Sri Sathya Sai Aradhana Mahotsava**
A Report
- 15 **Test is the Taste of God**
Kuppam Vijayamma
- 18 **The Old Mandir**
Symbols of Divinity
- 21 **My Journey to the Abode of Peace**
Lindawaty Roesli
- 24 **Blessings in Brindavan**
Nanduri Somayajulu
- 26 **Our Ancient Heritage**
N.A. Palkhiwala
- 29 **Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam**
A Report
- 32 **Sai - The Indweller**
Balaramchandran T.S.
- 35 **Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava**

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AVATAR VANI

UNION WITH GOD IS THE AIM OF HUMAN LIFE

GOD IS THE ABODE OF BLISS

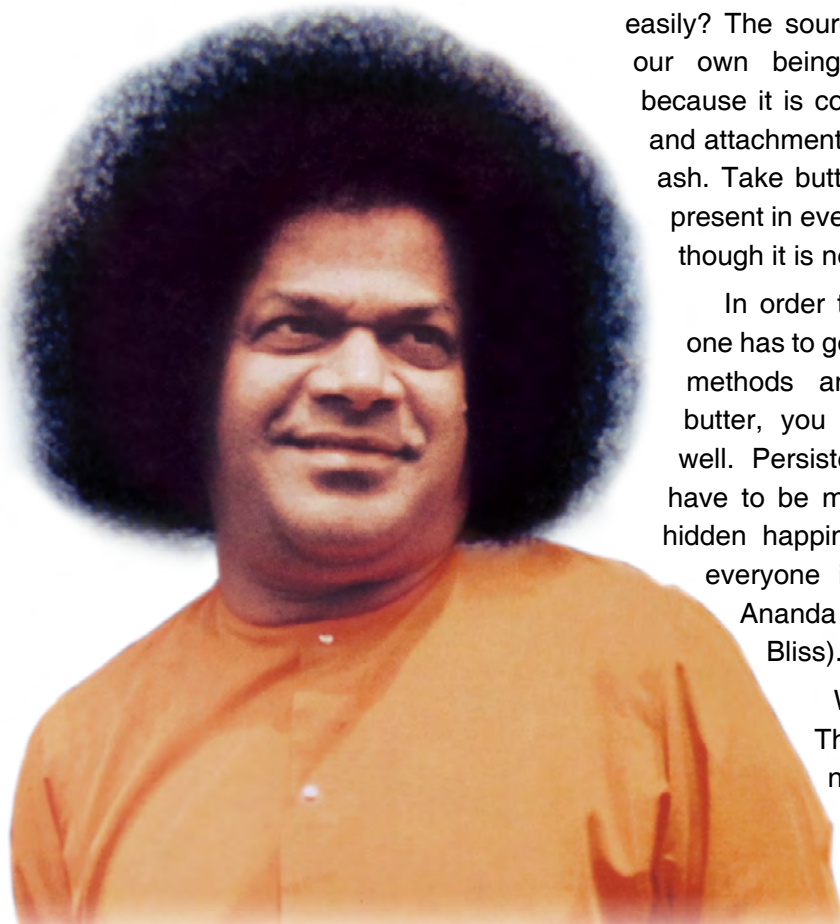
EVERY PERSON ASPIRES FOR happiness in life. Young and old, rich and poor, all are in pursuit of happiness. But, where is this happiness located? What is the pivotal point or abode of happiness? For fish, water is the natural abode. A fish cannot survive in the absence of water. You may try to keep a fish in a

dish of gold. It does not care for the value of gold or diamond. It seeks nothing but water. Similarly, even though man is surrounded by various types of comforts, he is not able to derive happiness, because real happiness cannot be derived from external sources.

Happiness does not lie in power, wealth, position or tasty food. So then, where is real happiness found? Why is it not available easily? The source of happiness is within our own being. It is not perceivable because it is covered by passion, hatred and attachment, just as fire is covered by ash. Take butter, for example. Butter is present in every speck and drop of milk, though it is not visible.

In order to realise real happiness, one has to go through certain standard methods and procedures. To get butter, you have to churn the curd well. Persistent and pertinent efforts have to be made so as to realise the hidden happiness which is present in everyone in the form of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence, Knowledge, Bliss).

What is meant by 'Sat'? That which is eternal and not affected or changed in all periods of time – past, present and future is Sat



or Truth. *Trikalabadyam Sathyam* (truth remains unchanged in the three periods of time – past, present and future). Where is the need to search for Truth when it is present all over and at all times? Chit connotes Paripurna Jnana (wholesome knowledge). Ananda (bliss) is the result when Sat and Chit combine. Satchidananda is the attribute of God. God is the embodiment of bliss. God can be found only in bliss.

The Narayana Sukta describes that Lord Narayana is present in the most minute space within the region of man's Hridaya (spiritual heart). It says, *Jvaalamaalaakulam Bhaati Visvasayatanam Mahat...* (the supreme principle shines like the lightning in the narrow space of man's spiritual heart). *Antarbahischa Tatsarvam Vyapya Narayana Sthita* (That all-pervasive God is present within and without). Lord Narayana can be realised as a flash of brilliance in the minute tip of the flame of the spiritual heart. He is also described as *Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan* (subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest). In order to realise this most subtle aspect of God, we have to expand our vision.

We often consider certain things or aspects to be blocking our path to happiness. You put on glasses for ease of reading. Sometimes, you feel it burdensome. Nevertheless, they are necessary, as they help in getting good vision. All the Sadhanas (spiritual practices) we undertake are like these glasses, helpful to the pursuit of happiness and bliss.

The Power of Divine Name

One day, sage Narada approached Lord Vishnu and prayed, "O Lord Narayana! You are the ocean of bliss. You are the cause of all causes. You are the abode of all gods, humans and all other beings. Other than

Every person and every being is but a spark of the same Divinity. When an iron ball is put in fire, heat of fire spreads all through the iron ball. You may touch anywhere and feel the same heat. Similarly, there is bliss wherever you go. You have a slab of jaggery in your hand. You may lick any of its sides, you will get the same sweet taste. If there is no happiness in the world, how can anybody live even for a moment?

You, there is no refuge for any being. It is said that Your name carries great power. That is why I always keep chanting Your Name. You being the object of my worship, I wish to know the power of Your Name directly from You". Narayana then said, "Narada! You are a great scholar and a highly accomplished Rishi; your question looks naive".

Now, look at the bird perched on that tree. I suggest that you go to the bird and seek the answer to your question. Narada felt a bit humiliated; for he thought it strange that a bird should teach him a lesson. However, it being a command from the Lord, Narada went and asked the bird, "Bird, can you tell me about the power of the name Narayana"! The moment it heard the name Narayana, the bird fell dead. Narada was shocked at the unexpected happening, and he became very sad that Narayana's name should cause a death. However, Narada was determined to get his doubt cleared. He went back to Vishnu and reported the incident. Instead of sympathising, Narayana gave another command, "Just now, a male calf is born to a cow in the house that is right

opposite. Go and seek the answer from the calf". Narada could not understand how an animal, a calf could be more knowledgeable than himself. With a renewed determination, he went and put the question to the calf. The calf too fell dead upon hearing the name Narayana. Narada rushed to Narayana and complained, "Lord, why did You make me a sinner? You know that I am a Sadhu (pious man). How can I be a cause to so many deaths"? Narayana laughed and said, "It is unbecoming of you to wean yourself away from your determination to know the truth. Listen to Me. A male child is just now born to the king of the land. Go and seek the answer from the child". Narada shuddered at the prospect of causing one more death. But he could not ignore his Lord's command! Bracing himself for the worst, Narada went to the king's palace. The king was very much pleased that the great Sage Narada had come to see the newborn child. He placed the child in Narada's hand and urged him to bless. Narada was in a great fix. He took the child to a corner and asked him in a whisper, "Child! Can you tell about the power of Narayana's name"?

The child narrated to Narada, "While sitting on a branch of a tree as a bird, I heard you uttering the name Narayana, and so I was relieved of that body and got birth in the sacred species of cows. Again, when I heard from you the name of Narayana, I ceased to be an animal and took birth as a human being. Now that I have heard the sacred name again, I am totally relieved of body consciousness, and I am attaining liberation". Narada then understood the value and power of chanting Narayana's name.

One should not evaluate any being basing on the external form. The value of

devotion should not be underestimated. Vishnu Purana clearly says that a sincere devotee is most venerable of all beings. Once Narada sought to know from Lord Narayana who among all creation is the greatest. Narayana said, "Narada, you are not an ordinary being. You possess abundant knowledge. I wish to hear your opinion on this aspect".

Narada replied, "Earth is the greatest". Then Vishnu remarked, "Three-fourth of the earth is enveloped with water. In such a case, which among the two is greater"? Narada agreed that water was greater. Vishnu said, "But Sage Agastya drank up the ocean in a single gulp. So, is Agastya greater or water"? Narada replied, "You are right, my Lord, Agastya is greater than water". Vishnu asked again, "But, this Agastya is a tiny star in the sky (Akasa). Now, is this star greater or the sky"? Narada replied, "It is the sky that is greater". The Lord agreed and said, "Your understanding is correct. The sky indeed is greater. In His incarnation as Vamana, the Lord asked for three steps from King Bali. And in the course of taking the gift of three steps, Vamana assumed the form of Trivikrama, covered the entire earth in one step, sky in the second, and there was no room for the third step. King Bali had to offer his head for the third step. So, now, is God greater or the sky"? Narada replied, "Swami, when the mere foot of the Lord covers the entire sky, how much greater His full form would be? God indeed is greater". "God, who envelops the entire cosmos dwells in the heart of His Bhakta (devotee). So, now, is the heart of the devotee greater or God?" asked Vishnu. Narada replied, "Indeed, the devotee is greater than God".

Heart is like Ksheera Sagara (ocean of milk) on which Lord Narayana is said to



recline. But in this age of Kali, the ocean of milk is changed into a salty ocean, making way for sharks and crocodiles. These beasts can be driven away by means of Namasmarana (chanting of God's name). God is described as Nityanandam, Parama Sukhadam (ever blissful). Where can the bliss be found? In fact, all beings are residing in the ocean of bliss. Nevertheless, people are unable to experience bliss. Outward vision of people is the reason behind this irony. *Pashyannapicha Na Pashyati Moodho* (he is a fool who sees, yet does not

You have such a vast body of water. But you seem to have no tolerance at all. Why are you throwing out this small amount of scum and dirt"? The ocean replied, "If I start accepting trash and muck, one day I will have to lose my own identity".

Bliss is hidden in the body. The Vedas describe that the Kosha (sheath) of Ananda (bliss) is covered by four concentric Koshas within the body of a being. The outermost sheath is the grossest of them and is known as Annamaya Kosha, the symbolic sheath which entirely depends on food. The next

Dhritarashtra had 100 sons and he ruled over a vast kingdom. But what was his fate in the end? Real glory is obtained only through sacrifice. Removal of immorality is the only way to attain immortality. The moment you leave ego and anger, you derive bliss. It is in this sense that bliss is said to be Divine. You cannot understand Divinity with an outlook of diversity. Union with Divinity should be the goal of your life.



recognise the reality). When your vision is changed, you will know that everything is filled with bliss. Your own heart is the abode of bliss.

Ignorance is the Cause of Man's Unhappiness

One day Dakshinamurthi was looking at the ocean, when he noticed that the waves were throwing on the shore all scum and dirt. He then asked the ocean, "Ocean!

sheath is called Pranamaya Kosha (life sheath), the sheath of life force. Under this is the sheath known as Manomaya Kosha (mental sheath), under which is the Vijñanamaya Kosha (wisdom sheath) by which the Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath) is surrounded. You get white rice only when you remove husk from the paddy. You get clean water only after removing the moss that covers it. Removal of cataract from the eyes restores good vision. Sunshine



is enjoyed in full when clouds disappear. Similarly, happiness is experienced in full only when outer sheaths are discarded. As the weather at this place, Kodaikanal, is chilly, you have to wear a vest, a shirt and a sweater over it. To see your own chest, you will have to remove the sweater first, then the shirt and lastly the vest. Man is not able to realise bliss as it is covered by three Gunas (attributes), namely Sattwa (serenity), Rajas (passion) and Tamas (sloth). Take the example of a Kasturi Mrga (musk deer). This animal perceives a fragrant waft, becomes curious and searches all over the forest to find its source. After a long trek of search, the deer gets tired and lies down on the ground with its snout touching the belly. Only then it realises that the sweet smell comes from its own belly, and from nowhere else. Similarly, man is searching all around the world for the source of happiness which is within him.

A person was walking through a thick forest. It became dark at night. This man was carrying only a small torch light with him. He became worried that this tiny torch could at best lead him to a distance of 10 feet, and how to trek 10 miles with it. Then his inner voice told him, "Oh the foolish one! You must realise that this small torch will suffice to cross over the entire dark forest". Wherever you go, you must remember that you are carrying this light with you. Similarly, when happiness is available within your own self, where is the need to search elsewhere? The light of bliss is available right in your heart.

You recite this prayer often: *Asatoma Sadgamaya Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya* (lead me from unreality to reality, from darkness to light). There is no darkness where light is. There is no sorrow where there is joy. Bliss is present all over. Viswa (world) is

the effect, and Vishnu (God) is the cause. In fact, human life is filled with bliss. Just as water is for fish, a tree for a bird, the mother for a child, bliss is for man. All the pursuits of man such as education, job, business, etc., are for the sake of happiness only. At each and every moment of life, man craves for happiness. Even when the doctor is giving you an injection, you feel that it should be done painlessly. It is due to his ignorance that man does not recognise the source of happiness in his life.

A poor man was living in a hut, and he lived on begging all through his life, without knowing that a big treasure was lying under the floor of his own hut. Such is the plight of worldly man. Man's ego clouds his vision and he cannot see this treasure. He has to kill his ego in order to obtain the treasure of Ananda (bliss).

God's Permanent Address

Lord Krishna said in the Bhagavadgita, *Paritranaaya Sadhunam Vinasaya Cha Duskritam* (I incarnate for the protection of the good and the annihilation of the evil-doers). God comes on the mission of protecting good and destroying evil. Man has to leave ego, anger, jealousy and other bad qualities to experience happiness and peace. During the autumn season, you find trees shedding their leaves. The Upanishad says, *Anandadhyeva Khalvimaani Bhutaani Jaayante. Anandene Jaataani Jeevanti. Anandam Prayantyabhisamvishanteeti* (all beings here are, indeed, born from bliss; having been born, they remain alive by bliss; and on departing, they enter into bliss.) All beings are born out of bliss, they live in bliss and merge in bliss.

One day, Sage Narada approached Lord Narayana and urged, "Lord! Tell me



Your permanent address". The Lord replied, *Mad Bhakta Yatra Gayanti Tatra Tishthami Narada* (I reside where My devotees sing My glory, Narada). That is God's permanent abode.

Happiness is fame, happiness is glory and happiness is ornament. For the sake of happiness, you should be prepared to sacrifice something. When you go to a shop to get a new handkerchief, you should be prepared to pay some money. If this is the case with worldly objects, imagine what an amount of sacrifice is needed to obtain the most precious treasure of divine bliss. *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikē Amrutattwamanasu* (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth; it is attained only by sacrifice), says the Upanishad. Dhritarashtra had 100 sons and he ruled over a vast kingdom. But what was his fate in the end? Real glory is obtained only through sacrifice. *Removal of immorality is the only way to attain immortality*. The moment you leave ego and anger, you derive bliss. It is in this sense that bliss is said to be Divine. You cannot understand Divinity with an outlook of diversity. Union with Divinity should be the goal of your life.

Turn your Vision inward to Realise your Divinity

Every person and every being is but a spark of the same Divinity. When an iron ball is put in fire, heat of fire spreads all through the iron ball. You may touch anywhere and feel the same heat. Similarly, there is bliss wherever you go. You have a slab of jaggery

in your hand. You may lick any of its sides, you will get the same sweet taste. If there is no happiness in the world, how can anybody live even for a moment?

You should not waver at each and every happening. When there is a storm of calamity, remain steady like an iron ball; do not fly away like a leaf. It is rightly said, slow and steady wins the race.

After long penance and pious pursuits, the ancient Rishis proclaimed: *Vedahametam Purusham Mahantam Adityavarnam Tamasa Parastat* (I have visualised the Supreme Being who shines with the effulgence of a billion suns and who is beyond Tamas – the darkness of ignorance). They said, they had realised the Almighty God who is most brilliant and is beyond the darkness of ignorance and sorrow. They exhorted one and all to follow their path and realise the Embodiment of Bliss. But people do not care to realise bliss.

A person entered a big mall. He was looking at the razzle and dazzle of the mall, forgetting about the real effulgence that was present within his own self. Body is like a worthless iron safe, in which the precious jewel of bliss is treasured. Bliss can be experienced when vision is diverted inward. The story about a bird's evolution to a cow, a prince and its final liberation is but your own story. Our story lies in this story. His story is History.

– **Bhagavan's Divine Discourse in Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 27th April 1992.**

You should realise that this is not your first birth; you had many previous births. The very term Manava signifies that you are not new. 'Ma' means not. 'Nava' means new. Similarly, God is not new to you, He is your old friend.

– Baba



BHAGAVAN'S EASWARAMMA DAY MESSAGE

NEVER CAUSE HARM TO YOUR MOTHER AND MOTHERLAND

"Though God is always ready to answer the prayers of His devotees, He does not do so when their prayers are not wholehearted. When the prayers are sincere and intense, God will certainly answer them. He does not have any desires except the welfare of His devotees. To be a recipient of His grace, one has to develop sacred thoughts," said Bhagavan in His Easwaramma Day Discourse on 6th May 2000.

THERE IS NO WEALTH GREATER THAN LOVE

Embodiments of Love!

MAN'S LIFE IS A MIXTURE OF happiness and sorrow. He can find fulfilment in life only if he can trace the origin of happiness and sorrow. In fact, man attains wisdom from sorrow and not out



of happiness. The sages and seers of yore had to face great hardships and troubles before they could set great ideals to the rest of the world. That is why their teachings have left an indelible impression on the hearts of the Bharatiyas. Both the individual and society can achieve progress and prosperity only after undergoing many trials and tribulations. Man has to face not only difficulties, but censure and criticism also. But noble souls will never care for difficulties or criticism. Welfare of society is their main objective in life.

Adhere to Truth and Righteousness

Embodiments of Love!

You should welcome sorrow just as you welcome happiness. You will attain equanimity of mind only when you treat happiness and sorrow alike. In the human body, head is considered sacred whereas feet are not considered sacred. When somebody comes to your house, is it possible to welcome only the head and ask the feet to get out? When you welcome the head, you welcome the feet also. Likewise, when you welcome happiness, you welcome sorrow too.

The boys and girls of today are the future citizens of the country. They have to uphold the glory and good name of Bharat by their ideal conduct. They should cultivate humility and reverence towards parents and elders. Consider the whole world as one family and love everyone. If you want to buy anything, you have to pay its price. Likewise, you can attain the human values of truth, righteousness, peace and non-violence only when you possess the wealth of love. There is no wealth greater than love. One can conquer the entire world if one has love. Today human values are on the decline because man lacks the wealth of love. One can be called a human being only when one possesses human values.

Truth and righteousness are like the two eyes of man. One who does not adhere to truth and righteousness is verily blind. All the sacred scriptures, the Upanishads and the Vedas are based on these twin principles. The creation itself cannot exist without these two. Love is the undercurrent of both truth and righteousness. Love is the true wealth of man, be he a pauper or a millionaire. Just as a mother does not make any distinction and showers her love on all her children equally irrespective of their social status, so also God showers His love equally on all. God is the embodiment of love and is present in everyone in the form of love. You can attain Him only through love.

God Does Respond to Sincere Prayers

The Vedas refer to this principle of love as the Atma. Truth, love and righteousness are all synonyms of the Atma. The Vedas call man Atmavan as he is endowed with the principle of the Atma. The Atma is also referred to as Brahma. Who is Brahma? The scriptures describe him as one who emerged from the lotus that originated

from Vishnu's navel. That Brahma is the 'I' (Aham) in everyone. So, this principle of Brahma is present in one and all, be he a theist or an atheist. Soham ('I am Brahma') Mantra clearly demonstrates this truth. This process of inhalation and exhalation has its origin in the navel of man. It repeats itself 21,600 times a day reminding man of his divinity. Without paying heed to the teaching of the inner voice, man goes through various scriptures and the Vedas in search of divinity. First and foremost, listen to the inner voice, which is your true preceptor and God. The Vedas describe God as Amogha, as He is changeless, eternal and beyond description. God is also called Siddha as He is ever ready to fulfil the wishes of His devotees. Though God is always ready to answer the prayers of His devotees, He does not do so when their prayers are not wholehearted. When the prayers are sincere and intense, God will certainly answer them. He does not have any desires except the welfare of His devotees. To be a recipient of His grace, one has to develop sacred thoughts.

Love and Serve your Parents

It is impossible to describe the love of a mother. The love of the mother is much more than that of the father. Once Mother Parvati and Easwara saw a person sitting on the branch of a tree, which was about to break. Then Mother Parvati pleaded with Easwara to save him. Easwara teasingly remarked, "Why should I protect him? You have seen him first. It is your duty to save him". She said, "How can I protect him without your grace? Unless you shower your grace on him, he cannot be saved. Please do not delay any further". Then Easwara replied,

continued on page 14...



Narayana Seva in Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium.

SRI SATHYA SAI ARADHANA MAHOTSAVA

DEEP DEVOTION AND solemnity marked the observance of Sri Sathya Sai Aradhana Mahotsava at Prasanthi Nilayam.

The first programme of the sacred event was a devotional music offering made by the Prasanthi Bhajan Group on the eve of Aradhana Mahotsava, 23rd April 2018. With

were: “Guru Brahma Neeve” (You are our Guru and God), “O Sai Maa, O Sai Maa”, “Madhura Mohana Ghanashyama Sundara Sai” (Beloved Sai who is most beautiful), “Humko Tumse Pyar Kitna” (You only know how much we love You). They concluded their spellbinding presentation with the Qawali “Tere Darbar Mein Hum Aaye Hain Aaj” (today we have come to Your abode).

Many programmes of far reaching significance were conducted on Sri Sathya Sai Aradhana Mahotsava day, 24th April 2018, which included inauguration of a 2,100 kWp Solar Power Plant in the campus of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Narayana Seva in the form of distribution of food and clothes to thousands of people in Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium, free food to all devotees in the Ashram premises and musical presentations in beautifully bedecked Sai Kulwant Hall.



Devotional music presentation by Prasanthi Bhajan Group.

their hearts full of deep devotion and gratitude for their Divine Master Bhagavan Baba, this group of former students now working in the Ashram and other Sai institutions touched the heart of one and all when they rendered some evergreen numbers which were dear to Bhagavan. Some of the songs they sang

The Aradhana of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba began in Sai Kulwant Hall on the morning of 24th April 2018 with the soul-stirring rendition of Sai Pancharatna Kritis by more than 200 carnatic classical singers from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana,





Soulful rendition of Sai Pancharatna Kritis.

Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra. A stream of devotion inundated the entire hall when these singers rendered these five beautiful gems of Telugu compositions offered to Bhagavan with virtuosity and flawless harmony. The compositions rendered were: “Pranamami Sayeesha”, “Sada Bhavayami”, “Charana Sevanam”, “Kali Yuga Avatari” and “Sathya Sai Avatara Vaibhavam”.

This was followed by release of a CD on “Sai Pancharatna Kritis”. Two speakers addressed the gathering after this. The first speaker was Sri S.S. Naganand, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust who referred to the teachings and service projects of Bhagavan and exhorted the devotees to lead their life dedicated to Bhagavan and His teachings. He also spoke about the solar power plant that was going to be inaugurated that day. Soon after his talk, a video film about the solar plant was screened which gave various features of this project. The next speaker was Sri Ajit Popat who, in his unique style, stressed the fact that Swami was not merely a physical form and He was very much present even now.

The devotees were thereafter blessed with a Divine Discourse of Bhagavan, a video clip of which was screened which the devotees listened with rapt attention. In His Discourse, Bhagavan cautioned the devotees that they should keep away from some misguided devotees who were doing

business in the name of devotion, Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan “Prema Mudita Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram”. Bhajans followed next and concluded with Arati.

After the conclusion of the proceedings in Sai Kulwant Hall, Narayana Seva was performed in Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium where food and clothes were distributed to thousands of villagers from the adjoining villages.

Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust added another dimension to its initiatives of development when its Trustees inaugurated by unveiling a plaque, Sri Sathya Sai Mitra, a 2,100 kWp Solar Power Plant on 24th April 2018 at Prasanthi Nilayam, which is likely to produce 3.5 million units of power annually, thereby substantially reducing carbon dioxide emission and



Inauguration of solar energy power plant on 24th April 2018.

providing clean energy to meet the energy requirements of Sri Sathya Sai institutions at Prasanthi Nilayam. The inauguration ceremony of Solar Power Plant was held near Central Research Instruments Facility in the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Built





Sri Sathya Sai Mitra solar energy power plant at Prasanthi Nilayam.

at a cost of 9 crore rupees and completed in a record time of three months, it is one of the largest solar power plants in India by a charitable organisation.

A captivating violin recital by renowned violin artiste from Tamil Nadu, Sri Lalgudi

Krishnan was the concluding programme of the day. Beginning his presentation at 5.30 p.m., the distinguished artiste enthralled the devotees with his excellent rendition of Thyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar compositions and Bhajans which included “Mokshamu Galadhaa Bhuvilo?” (is salvation attainable by anyone in this world?), “Rangapura Vihara, Jaya Kodanda Ramavatara Raghuvara” (victory to the Lord who stays in city of Sriranga), “Theeradha Vilaiyatu Pillai – Kannan” (Kannan is the eternal prankster), “Prema Mudita Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram”, “Sathya Sai Padambujam Bhajare Manasa Nirantaram”. A brief Bhajan session followed next and concluded with Arati.

...continued from page 11

“Is it not his duty to call me for help? How can I go to his rescue without being called”? As the proverb goes, one should not attend a function without being invited. Parvati, out of her motherly compassion, wanted to protect that person at any cost. So, she said to Easwara, “If that person, when he falls down, cries out Amma (mother), I will go to his rescue and if he cries out Appa (father), you should protect him”. Easwara agreed to her proposal. Both of them eagerly waited, but the person fell down crying Ayyo! (alas). The words Amma or Appa did not come to his lips as he never respected and revered his parents in his lifetime. Such was his fate. How can God come to the rescue of a person who has totally forgotten his parents? Mother is God; father is God. With such feelings, offer gratitude to your parents.

Today we are celebrating Easwaramma Day to propagate the glory of motherhood. The world is sustained by the prayers of mothers. A woman’s prayer is more powerful than a thousand prayers of man because women are pure and tender-hearted. Never cause displeasure to your mother. Never hurt her feelings. Then God will help you in all your endeavours. One calls one’s country motherland and not fatherland. Thus, mother is given an exalted position in the world. Consider your country as your own mother and work for its progress. Under any circumstances, do not cause harm to your mother and motherland. This is the significance and main teaching of today’s celebration.

– Excerpted from **Bhagavan’s Easwaramma Day Discourses.**



TEST IS THE TASTE OF GOD

Kuppam Vijayamma

GOD IS THE DOER, AND WITHOUT His Will, not even a blade of grass can move. But His ways are always mysterious. Blessed are those who are tested by God, said Swami once. When Swami spoke in this regard, the topic seemed strange to me, and my tiny intellect swiftly drifted into waves of thoughts. Soon the ardent quest and the sense of inquiry plunged into action.

How is it possible to consider a person as 'blessed' when he is wriggling and struggling with arduous problems? When the person is fully drowned in the flood of calamities, this holistic statement uttered by Bhagavan is really interesting.

Consider Difficulties as Blessings

I am not writing this without first-hand proof. Way back in the Old Mandir days, the crowd was very less, and we were close to Swami for nearly twenty-four hours. Despite this closeness, it was not at all easy to talk to Him without being asked for. So, a group of ladies once prayed to goddess Mahakali for courage to face our majestic Sai Narasimha. Bestowed with courage and feeling like tigresses, the aged ladies marched forward towards Swami, when He was in a good mood, and asked, "Swami, why do You give us so much grief that is unbearable"? Swami just looked at the group seriously, and all the tigresses became helpless cubs, unable to say anything more. After a brief



silence, Swami said, "Am I giving you people all the unbearable grief"? The terrified cubs, unable to run away, went blank and remained silent. The compassionate Lord, with a serious expression said, "When you people are in misery, it is but natural to find fault with Me! When I am standing like a rock to protect you people all the time, still you all crib; this attitude affects Me also. If the misery 'knocks you out of shape', then what



is the use of such a hard test? Only what you can bear, that much is given to you! Make the best use of it, and learn as much as you can, without unnecessary cribbing". I just cannot recount this wonderful incident in any number of words, because the way our compassionate Lord explained it, can never be described by me or forgotten.

After the atmosphere cooled down, Swami stared at one old lady in the group and said, "Are you a 'Pedda Puli' (a big tigress)? That lady was caught unawares; hiding her head in her Sari, she muttered shyly, "No Swami, 'Chinna Pilli' (I am a small cat)"! Everybody started laughing loudly. Now Swami caught them in their own trap, "A few minutes ago, you people were burning in misery, and melting like candles. Now, all of you are laughing with mouths wide open from one end to the other. What happened"? Well, who can answer Swami? After many years, when I contemplate on such incidents, it becomes evident that He sows the thoughts, inculcates the courage to come forward, and then with a prick flattens you. It is very difficult to break the rules laid down by our strict Master, but sometimes He kindly allowed this, so that it is enjoyed, and the same is passed on to others to enjoy and learn.

Swami's question was meant to be a lesson. Who was causing all this 'unbearable grief'? From where did grief arise? Swami says, "A true human being is one who maintains harmony between his thoughts, words and deeds. Try to become such a person. The proper study of mankind is man. But today people do not pay attention to this noble principle. They do not try to understand the feelings of others". He adds, "There may be difference in their feelings.

but God is one. People create differences in order to satisfy their petty minds". The petty minds of people cause differences and clashes, resulting in grief to all.

"Even if man does not attain the level of divinity, he should at least remain at the level of a human being and should not degenerate to the level of an animal. It is very important for students to learn this. Both good and bad are prevalent in the world. You should see to it that you take to good path without bothering about what others are doing. Consider even your small defects as big, and at the same time, do not magnify the small defects of others. First of all, you should get rid of your own defects and cultivate virtues. Only then will humanness blossom in you."

- Baba

During the time of the test, the person goes through a harsh, terrible period. As he is disgusted and depressed, he curses himself as a sinful person, and also his past Karma to be the cause. He even goes to the extent of blaming God. Swami says that such reactions are quite normal for such people. But in the end, when the good period descends, the results are highly rewarding. After a devastating typhoon, calmness is sure to follow. Thus, after a hard test, peace is assured. So, this Lesson, which could be perceived as a Test (if learned and understood), is the crest jewel for happy union with God. Thus, the 'testee', becomes the 'blessed' person, a golden feather in the grand crown of the Lord. This journey enables the person to plunge into the deep ocean of joy!

When a person who needs to learn a lesson is confronted with the situation that



will allow him to rectify his error, it can be clearly understood that the compassionate Lord (who is the person's own internal guide) is directly observing how that person is handling the lesson to be learned. He focuses all His attention on how that person overcomes that particular spiritual obstacle. Thus, to obtain Lord's attention and joy when the lesson is learned, it is the miracle of His grace. Therefore, this person, though unaware of what is happening, is surely 'blessed'.

This Divine Lesson is the suitable method through which one can be shaped into a Perfect Person. God is the only redeemer and rectifier of impurities; so, the person undergoing test, treads the rugged path towards purification. In this process, he is sure to be hammered, pounded and scraped with intense heat added, to make him malleable and ready to take the right shape. Though there may be much hardship and pain, yet, the end result is highly beneficial, because the person will dazzle like a diamond necklace that can be donned by the Lord. This process is not easily available to each and every person. Only the individual who puts himself into the need for the lesson can consider himself as most fortunate and 'blessed' – because God, as Guru, pays attention to his need. This divine method of self-correction is the best way to move forward spiritually and is most effective. Thus, the 'blessed' one is really fortunate for having been chiselled and designed by the Divine Hands of God – his own true Self!

God's Tests are His Boons

In this most crucial period of what the person perceives as a 'Test', one must

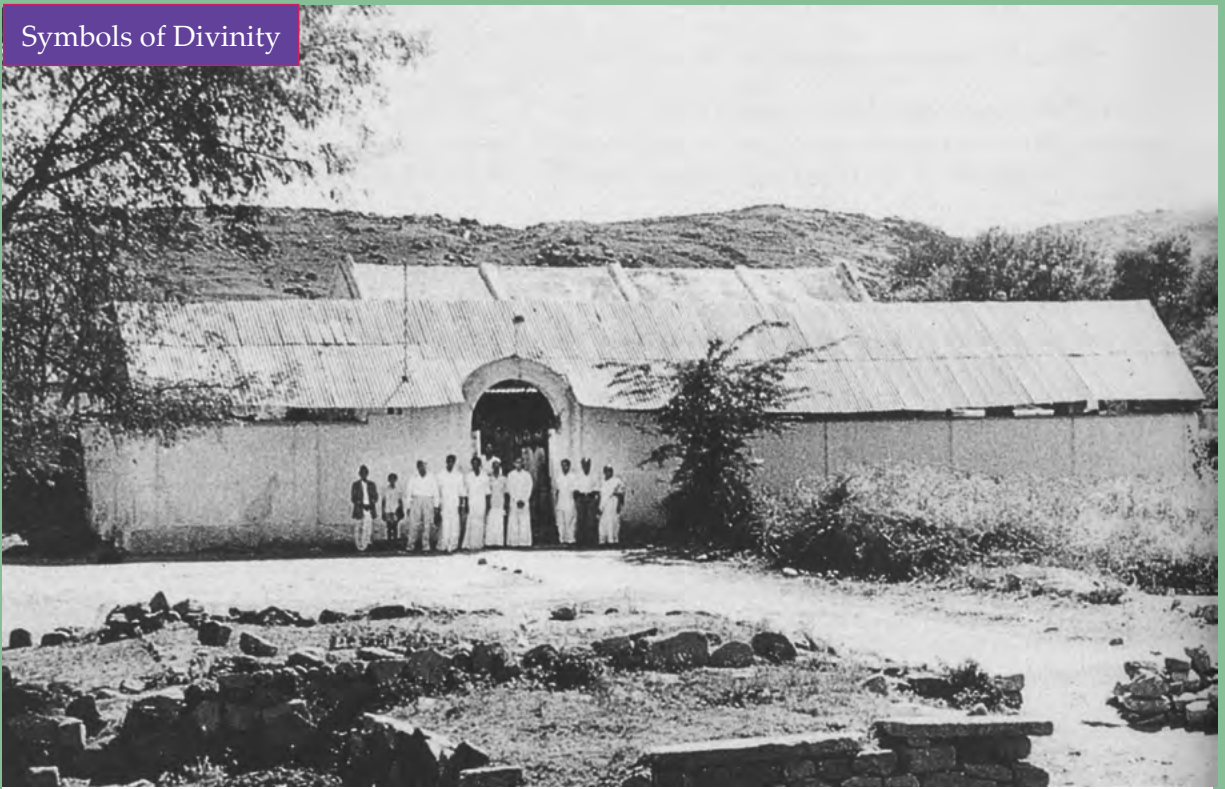
be well aware and alert that God's entire protection and attention is focused on him. He is engulfed by God's special care, and enveloped in His loving arms. Is this not the most unique opportunity that is beyond description? Is this not beyond all expectations that Swami is addressing that specific problem for that person? This is verily a stupendous, supreme gift of God for those who accept His attention and grow from it.

Now let us peep into the benefits and bonuses after this crucial period. It teaches the prime values of life. It unfolds the secret of divine happiness and value of divinity. It leads you to equanimity and gives you courage to face any eventuality. It pinpoints the power of spirituality. Most of all, it is during this critical period one feels the close presence of the most Beloved Lord, the embodiment of love; and this closeness is unique, as it was never felt before. The soothing peace that follows, rocks one in bliss.

So, the lessons (perceived as tests) are the most precious gifts of God. Thus, you become the 'blessed' one, for the most merciful God bestows His choicest grace on you. This is the opportunity to get engulfed in the loving fold of gracious God! Your faith in God and your belief that your 'unbearable grief' will work for your good, will make it happen. This is the most incredible, invincible cosmic game played by God, and this truly is a great boon for the whole of mankind.

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





THE OLD MANDIR

THE OLD MANDIR HAS THE RARE distinction of being the first Leela Bhumi (land of divine play) of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The Divine saga of the revelation of His Avatarhood began on 20th October 1940 when young Sathya, after leaving His school in Uravakonda and breaking His family ties, declared at the age of 14 years, “I am no longer your Sathya, I am Sai Baba. My devotees are calling Me. I have My work”. From Uravakonda, He came to Puttaparthi and stayed for some time in His parents home and later in the house of His maternal uncle in Karnatanagepalli. Soon afterwards, He shifted to the house of Subbamma, wife of the Karanam (head of the village) since her house was more spacious where ever-increasing number of devotees could be accommodated

and receive Subbamma’s hospitality. As young Baba started revealing His Divinity by miraculous cure of physical and mental ailments of people and manifesting various objects from thin air, His fame spread not only to surrounding villages, but also to cities like Bangalore (Bengaluru), Mysore (Mysuru) and Madras (Chennai).

As the number of devotees increased and the house of Subbamma also could not accommodate all of them, the need for a spacious place was felt for the residence of Baba. This is how the Old Mandir was planned in 1945. For this, Subbamma donated 33 cents of land by the side of Venugopala Swami temple, the sale deed for which was registered in the name of Baba on 20th July 1945 at the Sub-registrar’s office at Bukkapatnam. Soon





Swami in the shrine of the Old Mandir after its inauguration on 14th December 1945.

after the sale deed was registered, a room measuring 20 x 10 feet with roof thatched with straw was constructed on this piece of land. Immediately after that, Swami started residing in the room, engaging the devotees in Bhajan. One night when Swami was sleeping inside the room, some jealous people of the village set it on fire. Some boys who were sleeping outside the room became panicky and started shouting. People of the village including Easwaramma and Subbamma also came running. But Swami was absolutely calm and composed. People then witnessed Swami's Divinity when suddenly there was rain only on the thatched room and nowhere else. This is how Swami miraculously doused the fire.

To ward off any such eventuality in future, Subbamma decided to have Swami's residence made of stone, which later came to be called Patha Mandir (Old Mandir). Swami laid the foundation of the Old Mandir

on 30th August 1945 and it was inaugurated by Him on 14th December 1945. On the day of the inauguration of the Mandir, devotees brought Swami in a grand procession in a decorated palanquin from the house of Subbamma with musicians leading the procession. On reaching the Mandir, Swami installed the stone idols of Shirdi Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba on the altar and gave Arati to the idols. Besides Subbamma and Kamalamma, the devotees who helped in the construction of the Old Mandir included Thirumala Rao, Sakamma and Narasimha Rao Naidu. Though Subbamma worked hard to build the Mandir, she was not destined to see its grand inauguration as she merged with Swami before it.

The Old Mandir had a big hall for Bhajans which could accommodate about 50 persons. Behind the hall, there was a rectangular open ground, on the western end of which was a small room with an adjoining bathroom for Swami's use. Besides, there was one room which was used as store and two other rooms which were meant for the stay of devotees. There was an open kitchen and a well on the eastern end of the open ground.



The hall of the Old Mandir where Bhajans were held. The marble slab inscribed with Om, on which Swami would sit to lead Bhajans, is on the right side.

In the Bhajan sessions held in the hall, Swami would sit on a marble slab inscribed



The open kitchen was on the right side of the open ground where food could be cooked for a large number of devotees.

with Om and lead Bhajans. After Bhajans, Swami Himself gave Arati to the idols and distributed Prasadam to devotees. Interviews were granted to all devotees during those days behind a curtain in front of the altar. Fortunate devotees who came to Old Mandir in those days had direct access to Swami and witnessed His Divine Leelas day in and day out.

Besides experiencing the close proximity of Swami in the Old Mandir, devotees in those early days witnessed Swami's numerous Leelas on the sands of Chitravathi, particularly from 1946 to 1949. Invariably, Swami would lead all devotees to Chitravathi every evening and perform countless miracles and materialisations, besides holding Bhajans and giving talks explaining profound spiritual truths.

When the number of devotees increased further, a big shed was erected in front of the Old Mandir, but this also did not solve the problem. Then Sakamma, an ardent devotee of Swami from Bengaluru, pleaded with Him for constructing a bigger Mandir. After getting the consent of Swami, she purchased 3.86 acres of land on the

southern part of Puttaparthi village and registered it in the name of Swami on 24th



The well in the Old Mandir.

July 1947. The foundation for the New Mandir named by Swami as Prasanthi Nilayam was laid by Him on 14th January 1948 and it was inaugurated by Him on 23rd November 1950 on the auspicious occasion of His 25th Birthday.



Old Mandir after it was converted into Pedda Venkama Raju Kalyana Mandapam.

Swami started a school in 1972 in the Old Mandir in memory of Smt. Easwaramma. After the school was shifted to its present place, the Old Mandir was converted into a Kalyana Mandapam (marriage hall) named after Sri Pedda Venkama Raju. Later on, the Old Mandir was renovated, but the Bhajan Hall along with the altar having idols of Shirdi Sai and Parthi Sai remained intact.



MY JOURNEY TO THE ABODE OF PEACE

Lindawaty Roesli

FIRST OF ALL, I WOULD LIKE to convey my gratitude for the blessed opportunity to share my journey to becoming a Sai devotee. It all started during my teenage years when at the age of 14, I joined a Buddhist Youth organisation under the Borobudur Temple Trust Foundation in Medan. One of the founders was the Venerable Maha Bhikshu Ashin Jinarakkhita, who revived Buddhism in Indonesia 500 years after the fall of the Majapahit Kingdom, the last Hindu-Buddhist empire in Indonesia. The chairman of the Foundation at the time was Romo Maha Upasaka Phoa Krishnaputra, who currently serves as an Advisor to the Sai Council of Indonesia.

In the Divine Proximity of Sai

In 1989, Romo Phoa Krishnaputra founded a Sai Centre in this Vihara compound in Medan. The inauguration was attended by Maha Bhikshu Ashin Jinarakkhita himself, who was also a Sai Bhakta; and with this began my spiritual journey following in his footsteps which led me into the sacred and beautiful world of Swami.

Swami has continued to fill my life with love and blessings ever since those years. When I got married in 1987, we were living in a rented house; but with the grace of Swami, we had the opportunity to buy a house with a loan from the bank in 1991.



As an Indonesian with a Chinese background, I believe, a good house to live in has to be aligned with the Feng Shui principle (a spatial arrangement and orientation in relation to the flow of energy). I prayed to Swami that this first house we purchased would be a blessed one, as we worked to renovate it for the changing needs of our little family.

In those days, I longed to meet a Feng Shui expert but did not know where to find one. One day, I received word that there was a Sai Bhakta from Hong Kong who had just arrived from Puttapparthi and was



making a stopover in Medan. He visited our Sai Centre, and during my conversation with him I learned that this “Guest” was actually a Feng Shui master.

So, I invited him to our new house where he gave us much advice regarding the layout of different rooms, the stairs and so forth. Six months later, when I wanted to contact him again, the phone number that he gave me earlier no longer worked! I have lost contact with him to this day. I feel that Swami heard my sincere prayer and am convinced that this little visitation from the Feng Shui master was His Leela to help us build our first house – and, more importantly, was his way to pull me closer to Him.

In July 1993, I had the opportunity to visit Puttaparthi for the first time with a group of people from the Sai Centre of Medan. I experienced great peace when I was in Prasanthi Nilayam, and enjoyed sharing and being together with over 100 Sai devotees in a dormitory. In those days, the accommodation was not quite as beautiful as we see now. Also, at that time, we were still sitting on sand while waiting for Swami’s Darshan.

In each Darshan, I would pray to Swami that one day I could invite my husband and children to join me in His Darshan in Sai Kulwant Hall. Lo and behold, two years later in December 1995 my prayers were answered and my wish was finally granted to have a Darshan together with my husband.

Seva Opportunities at Prasanthi Nilayam

In 1997, my husband and I had the opportunity to return to Puttaparthi, and this time we were also able to bring our two children who were 9 years old and 6 years old with us. From then on, until the children

had graduated from high school, every time we had an annual holiday, my husband only wanted to visit Prasanthi Nilayam.

The year 2007 was also a special year for me as I had the opportunity to bring my parents, all of my sisters and brothers-in-law, nephews and nieces to Puttaparthi and share the joy of being in this sacred abode of the highest peace in the world.

A year later, in December 2008, I attended Seva where the Indonesian contingent of more than 200 people were given the opportunity to coordinate the provision of food in the Western Canteen. Again, I hoped that one day my family could also participate in such Seva.

Four years later in December 2012, I was contacted by brother Danesh, the Chairman of Sai Council, Indonesia, whether I would like another opportunity to coordinate the Seva in the Western Canteen. I immediately agreed, and contacted my older son who was still studying in America and my younger daughter who was studying in Australia so they could both arrange their schedules and join my husband and me. All together, 17 people from Medan including families and friends participated in this special Seva in God’s kitchen.

I was again given the opportunity to coordinate Seva the following year in December 2013, and my husband and two children were also able to participate. However, one day before our departure, my father’s health became critical and he needed to be hospitalised. I was faced with difficult dilemma: do I remain with my father who was very ill and may pass away, or do I travel to Puttaparthi since I have already agreed and committed to brother Danesh to carry out the Seva, and it would not be easy to find my replacement with such short



notice. I surrendered to Swami, and decided to go ahead with the original plan and depart for Puttaparthi. However, I gave my brothers and sisters the assurance that should our father pass away, then I, my husband and two children would fly home immediately.

Before leaving for the airport, I said goodbye to my father in the hospital. I whispered to him that I would be home as soon as the Seva was over, and that I wished for him to recover quickly. On the 25th of December, I received the news that my father had asked to be brought home from the hospital. I prayed and prayed to Swami to let the best plan happen.

We arrived back Medan as planned on the 29th of December. My father's condition had further worsened. On the 2nd of January 2014, while I was continuously sitting next to my father and reciting Mantras for four hours, he passed away peacefully in front of all the family. This experience, greatly strengthened my faith in Swami. How wonderfully He had planned and orchestrated the whole event, so that I could still be with my father until the very end of his physical life!

In Swami's Mission of Education in Human Values

With regard to my career, I have also been blessed greatly to be Swami's instrument to preserve His teachings through education.

In the year 2000, I decided to leave my career in banking, an industry which I had been working in for 14 years, and had worked my way to become Branch Manager.

Three years later, in 2003, I undertook Swami's mission to develop a school, with the children's education based on character building following the principles of Education

in Human Values (EHV) that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba outlined Himself.

While attendance has slowly but steadily increased, during its first year the school had only 27 students in our care. In its 4th year (2006), I managed to bring a number of my students to perform in Brindavan during a Buddha Purnima event. The school is currently entering its 15th year and has a student population of approximately 550, ranging from kindergarten through high school.

This year, we have come as a group of 60 people, including my husband and my daughter who became a Bal Vikas student when she was six years old, and now assists me in teaching Human Values in the school and has remained a Sai devotee. Our group also includes a Buddhist Monk (a member of the Indonesian Buddhist Supreme Sangha), 8 teachers and staff, 6 parents, and 18 students.

The theme for this year's celebration is H.O.P.E., which stands for Honour Our Parents Everyday. One of the Chinese cultural traditions during the New Year celebration is to return to our parents' home, to thank them and pay respect to them.

So, today we thank Swami for the opportunity to return "home" to Prasanthi Nilayam, to be together with all of you, our global "family", and to pay respect and gratitude to our Beloved Divine Swami, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, our universal mother and father.

May Swami shower His blessings on all of us on this beautiful Chinese New Year!

– From the talk of Ms. Lindawaty Roesli from Indonesia on 21st February 2018 on the occasion of Chinese New Year celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam.



BLESSINGS IN BRINDAVAN

Nanduri Somayajulu

IN THE YEARS 1973 TO 1978, I WAS posted in New Delhi, in the Department of Posts. I was then dealing with international postal matters, including coordination with the International Bureau (I.B.) of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), a specialised agency of the United Nations (U.N.) situated in Bern, Switzerland.

In the year 1978, I was offered an appointment in the I.B. Though a foreign assignment those days was considered a coveted proposition, I was hesitant to accept the offer for various reasons. Firstly, there was no Indian community in Bern, barring a few officials in the Indian Embassy and their families. Secondly, the cold weather of Switzerland would not suit my second son suffering from chronic bronchitis. More importantly, the continuity of education of my school-going children would suffer a setback, the medium of instruction in the local schools being German. We were therefore in a dilemma whether to accept the offer or not.

In the circumstances, my wife came up with an innocent suggestion that we should seek Baba's blessings and approval personally. I explained to her that it was just not possible to get an interview with Swami as thousands and thousands of devotees go to Him for Darshan daily. Sometimes, one might even miss His Darshan as one would go to a place hoping that Baba would be present there, but He would have left the place just before. I, therefore, suggested to her that we should satisfy ourselves with His Darshan as an indication of His approval.



Accordingly, we went to our native place, left our children with my brother and proceeded to Bangalore (Bengaluru) along with my parents. As soon as we reached Bengaluru, we rushed to the Ashram and gathered from the devotees that Baba was present in Brindavan. We attended the evening Bhajan in the Sai Ram Shed and had a wonderful Darshan of Swami, which meant to us as His indirect approval of our shift to Switzerland. But human mind being what it is, every desire fulfilled leads to a desire to be fulfilled. Having had a wonderful Darshan of Swami, a new desire cropped up in my mind that I should make an effort for a personal audience with Swami. As soon as the thought entered my mind, I saw from a distance Sri Kasturi and rushed to him, explained my situation, and sought his help for an interview with Baba. He laughed heartily and said, "There are no intermediaries or agents for Baba. Nobody on earth can



recommend to Baba anyone or anything. It is His Will and His Will alone that prevails". As if to pacify me, Sri Kasturi added gently, "If you are destined and if Baba so Wills, He may bless you here in this very spot. Pray and try your luck". I thanked him for his kind words.

The next day morning, a big meeting took place in the Auditorium of the Brindavan College near the Ashram. Many prominent people including ministers attended the meeting on the subject of education in human values. My father and I sat outside the hall for want of space inside and heard the speeches through loudspeaker. As the meeting was nearing the end, my father told me that he would go to the Ashram to get, if possible, another Darshan of Baba before we left the place. He, however, asked me to stay back till the meeting was over. A little later, I realised my folly of leaving my old father alone, who was having fever. So, I too rushed to the Ashram and found my father standing near the Sai Ram Shed.

As soon as I walked up to my father, Baba's car entered the Brindavan gate. My father, myself and a lone Seva Dal volunteer

stood in all reverence and attention. My father held in his folded hands a copy of a newly-printed book, a translation into Telugu of interviews Swami granted to Sri R.K. Karanjia, editor of Blitz weekly, published from Bombay (Mumbai). The translation was done by my father. As we stood on the road, Baba's car slowed down and stopped in front of us and the glass window of the car was opened. My father quickly gave the book to Baba and prayed for His blessings for my assignment to Switzerland. Baba blessed me by putting His right hand on my head and said, "Be happy". I was overwhelmed with bliss and shed tears of joy.

As Baba's car left, and I regained my composure, it dawned upon me that I met Sri Kasturi the previous day at exactly the same spot where Baba stopped His car and gave His blessings. The words of Sri Kasturi kept on ringing in my ears: "There are no intermediaries or agents for Baba. If He Wills, He may bless you in this very spot". Baba is Omniscient. His Will is Divine Law, His Words are Eternal Truth.

– The author is a retired officer of the Indian Postal Service and the U.N. Service.

All the religions of the world teach the same fundamental truths and prompt man to follow Dharma. All of them teach man to respect his mother, father and preceptor. Man should develop broad-mindedness, respect his elders and earn a good name. You find fault with other religions only due to defects in your own mind. Therefore, make proper use of your mind. What is the real meaning of religion? To realise is religion. Follow the religion of love. This is the sacred principle that all the religions of the world teach. Even if man is not able to rise to the level of God, he should at least lead his life like a true human being.

– Baba



Effulgence of Divine Glory

OUR ANCIENT HERITAGE

N. A. Palkhiwala

I HAVE SEEN MANY EDUCATIONAL institutions in our country, but there is none which is of a higher standard than the Sri Sathya Sai Colleges; for greater attention is paid there to the development of character, and a sense of devotion and dedication. I am sure these great institutions will be a 'huge moral force' in India for many generations to come. Under the guidance of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, these colleges are striving to provide the nation with a fine body of young men and women.

This country has more than a hundred universities and about three thousand colleges and institutions of Higher Training, with more than two and a half million students entering their portals every year. But, I consider the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Colleges as the greatest asset in the field of education. They are the young men and women who can build together the India of our dreams. The impact of Bhagavan Baba has endowed them with all the virtues of true education.

Education is an unending process. Formal education in schools and colleges provides the student only the urge to equip himself with more and more knowledge. Knowledge is essential. Everyone must acquire knowledge. In order to govern and be governed well, the citizens must be well-equipped with knowledge. They should nourish in them a creative dissatisfaction and eagerness to possess a well-furnished mind, and on that foundation, build a fund of satisfying knowledge.



Education has been called the technique of transmitting civilisation. In order that it may transmit civilisation, it has to perform two major functions: it must enlighten the understanding and enrich the character.

In the hoary history of our land, there is one fact which deserves to be brought to the surface of our minds. In ancient India, kings and emperors thought it a privilege to sit at the feet of a man of learning and bowed their heads to sages, seers and men who had dedicated their lives to the promotion of public good. King Janaka, himself a philosopher, journeyed on foot to the forest hermitage of Sage Yajnavalkya to discuss high matters of the State and to be instructed in spiritualism. Emperor Asoka would not pass a monastery without bowing low to the monks residing inside. Sankaracharya travelled on foot from Kerala to Kashmir and from Dwaraka in the West to Puri in the East. He could not have changed men's minds and established

centres of learning in the far-flung corners of India but for the great esteem and reverence he enjoyed for his intellectual integrity and impeccability of character. Thus, in ages past, intellectuals and men of character were given the highest honour in society.

Unfortunately, in our times we have downgraded the intellectual and have, in fact, devalued the very word. Today, an 'intellectual' means a man who is intelligent enough to know on which side his bread is buttered.

In India today, there are shortages of many commodities, but nothing is as scarce as intellectual integrity. And, the treason of the intellectual consists in the individual not speaking out loud and clear for the values that he, by his vision and the very nature of his personality, holds sacred. What is needed is the resolute courage to stand up and be counted in support of a view which is not popular.

As Sir James Barrie said, "Courage goes all the way". We are surrounded today, by many persons who are willing to compromise, and temporise. We have in our midst far too many 'boneless wonders'. With such men, expediency is all. A man who has the courage never submits or yields, like a rock in the wilderness of shifting sand.

The Gita too teaches us to do our duty, with courage, undaunted by failure or opposition. "Give up feebleness of mind"; that was the lesson Krishna taught to the hesitant Arjuna. No one, however great, should be allowed to make cowards of us. He is the great man, in whose presence everyone feels great. In India, it will not be difficult for us to develop courage, for all our scriptures and sages have harped on this quality as basic for progress here and hereafter.

Our education will be complete only when we have a clear appreciation of our cultural

heritage. 3,000 years ago, students from all over Asia came to this country to imbibe our culture and learned the secrets of its excellence at the universities of Nalanda and Takshashila. They learned here the secrets of happy and purposeful living.

India had in the past and has even today peerless exponents of the life of the spirit. Great thinkers of other cultures and countries have declared that they have found the secret of peace in Indian texts of the past. Schopenhauer, the great German philosopher, said that he was very thankful for having been born in the 19th century and not earlier, for he could read the priceless treasures of Indian culture in their German translations; he said he had found solace and strength in the Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavadgita. Emerson, the American philosopher and writer, said that if he had to take with him into loneliness, only one single book, he would choose a Hindu religious book and naught else.

We have no need to go after strange gods, and spend our days swallowing drugs and consulting psychiatrists. Our heritage of spiritual culture has all the remedies for the ills of this age. Jung, the famous psychiatrist, after practising the healing art for over 60 years declared, "No one has come to me for treatment all these years who had faith in God". Faith in the Supreme has such a serene and calming effect on the agitated mind of man.

The scriptures also teach us that the senses are not the only means we have to acquire knowledge. Bhagavan Baba has himself been telling us that the Rishis had mastered the process of intuition and that they had the capacity to penetrate into the mysteries of the consciousness and Nature. Einstein, the greatest scientist of all time, visualised the Unified Theory that can explain

Gravitation, Electricity, Light, Energy, etc. But the Rishis knew and declared that there is fundamentally no distinction between the human body and say, a wooden table. The distinction between inanimate and animate matter is being fast obliterated. The time has come when physics is being transformed into metaphysics. Jagdish Chandra Bose, delivering his Dedicatory Address when he placed his laboratory at the disposal of the Nation said that it was not a laboratory, but a temple. He probed the border region between the living and the non-living and found that it is difficult to pronounce everything as inert.

Similarly, there is no dichotomy or contradiction between science and spiritual values. A man who really and truly works in science will never believe that science can give the last answer to every problem either of men or of the universe. This is accepted by some of the greatest scientists themselves. Sir Isaac Newton did believe that there were great spiritual forces, which played their role in determining the destiny of men of which man himself knew nothing.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir James Jeans – they were all great believers in spiritual values. It did not lower their status as scientists, but on the contrary gave them a certain fulfilment to what they did in the scientific field. Sir James Jeans came to the conclusion, after devoting decades to the study of science, that perhaps this world may have to be looked upon not as a great machine, but as a great Thought, the thought of God, and it is just the thought that has been translated into the material sphere. And a thought – we can analyse it, we can probe it, but ultimately, there will be some elusive thing about it which will escape us.

Bhagavan Baba's great perception enables Him to look at the Spirit, the universe

and the spiritual values which alone can regenerate this nation. The whole nation should be grateful to such a great moral and spiritual Force who has dedicated His whole life to the service of mankind. And that is why He is sought after by millions. Enormous gatherings offer homage to Him, wherever He goes; and the strength of our country lies in this spontaneous realisation of the supremacy of the spirit over mere material prosperity.

I am deeply touched by Bhagavan's great love for all of us and by the momentous work that He is doing for the regeneration of the Indian nation. By His efforts, India will become what Sri Aurobindo predicted, 'the great Moral Leader of the World'.

The unity of all creation is His and India's message to the world. We must struggle to bring about this transformation in the attitude of man. We must cultivate a sense of values. A sense of values is even more important than knowledge. It enables us to find happiness within ourselves and joy in the most ordinary of things. The strength of this country lies in its adherence to the higher values of life and due to the impact of Bhagavan, and his colleges, these values are the student's daily inspiration. Alongside the development of a sense of values, dedication to work, the habit of clear thinking, tolerance and moderation are the other virtues the students in these institutions imbibe.

Truth alone can triumph ultimately. God is ever keeping watch over His own. Let us remember that patriotism is not a vain word, that the Spirit is not an obscure joke, nor dedication to one's duty an idealistic folly.

– Excerpted from "Golden Age" 1979. The author, a renowned jurist and economist, was an Ambassador of India in the U.S.A.

CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

TAMIL NEW YEAR AND VISHU

A LARGE NUMBER OF DEVOTEES came from Tamil Nadu and Kerala to celebrate the joyous festivals of Tamil New Year and Kerala New Year (Vishu) in the sacred precincts of Prasanthi Nilayam. Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations of these two States organised an array of devotional music programmes from 13th to 15th April 2018 to celebrate this important event. More than 1,000 youth also came from Kerala on their three-day Parthi Yatra (pilgrimage to Puttaparthi) on this occasion.

On the morning of 13th April 2018, Sai Kulwant Hall reverberated with sacred vibrations when Sai Youth of Kerala offered with deep devotion Vedic chants from 8.00

of Kerala. An erudite talk was thereafter delivered by Sri K.T. Jaleel, Minister for Local Self Government and Welfare of Minorities, Government of Kerala, who dwelt on the free healthcare mission of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and stressed the need for more such hospitals to serve the needy patients. Bhajans followed this which were led by Kerala Bhajan Group.

The programme of Tamil New Year celebrations began at 8.00 a.m. on 14th April 2018 with sacred Vedic chants by Tamil Nadu Veda Group which was followed by Bhajans from 8.30 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. by the Tamil Nadu Bhajan Group. At 10.30 a.m., Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Tamil Nadu organised Savita Gayatri Homam in Poornachandra Auditorium,



Kerala Sai Youth leading Bhajans.

to 9.00 a.m. and led Bhajans from 9.00 to 9.30 a.m. Arati at 9.30 a.m. marked the conclusion of the morning programme. The evening programme began at 5.00 p.m. with Veda chanting offered again by Sai Youth of Kerala. This was followed by the release of the quarterly magazine "Heart Beats" which contains the Seva activities being performed by the Sai Organisation



Savita Gayatri Homam in Poornachandra Auditorium.

in which a large number of devotees took part. The programme in the evening started at 4.30 p.m. with Veda chanting offered by the Tamil Nadu Veda Group. A captivating violin recital programme by the renowned violin exponent A. Kanyakumari from Chennai and her fellow musicians followed



this which kept the audience mesmerised for nearly one hour. The compositions rendered by the talented musician included an array of carnatic music compositions: “Mahaganapatim”, “Rama Nannu Brovara” (Rama, kindly protect me), “Enna Tavam Seithanai Yashoda” (what penance did you do Yashoda) and a couple of Bhajans, namely, “Bhasma Bhushitanga Sai” (Sai whose body is adorned with Vibhuti), “Govinda Krishna Jai Gopala Krishna Jai”. This soul-stirring musical presentation was followed by inauguration ceremony of 9 Bhajan Mandalis in 9 districts of Tamil Nadu under Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme. Bhajans led by Tamil Nadu Bhajan Group followed this and concluded with Arati.

The joyous festival of Vishu, the Kerala New Year, was celebrated on 15th April 2018. Sai Kulwant Hall, the venue of the celebrations, was beautifully bedecked with traditional Kerala decorations and the sacred Vishukkani was set up in Sai Kulwant Hall. The morning programme of Veda chanting and Bhajans was conducted by Kerala devotees which concluded with Arati. The evening programme began with Veda chanting offered again by Kerala youth. The devotees were thereafter blessed with a nectarine Discourse of Bhagavan. In His Discourse, Bhagavan explained the nine types of devotion and lauded Emperor Bali who followed the path of Atma Nivedanam (self-surrender) and attained the Divine grace of Vamana, who was none other than Lord Vishnu. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan “Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin”.

A devotional music presentation by the renowned musician Sri T.S. Radhakrishnan followed next. Commencing his programme with a prayer song dedicated to Lord Ganesh “Ganapati Gananath”, the singer saturated the entire milieu with deep devotion by his divinely inspired compositions which included “Ananda Rupa Ananda Nama”, “Hey Daya Sindhu Krishna”, “Jai Sai Maa Jai Sai Maa”, “Bhakta Jana Vatsale Yei Ho Vitthale”. The last Bhajan session, which followed this music concert, was also offered by the devotees of Kerala.

PILGRIMAGE OF SAI YOUTH FROM ANDHRA PRADESH AND TELANGANA

Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana organised Sri Sathya Sai Yuva Chaitanya Parthi Yatra on 22nd and 23rd April 2018, wherein more than 6,000 Sai Youth from these two States came to Prasanthi Nilayam and presented a number of devotional, music and cultural programmes on both the days.

The programme on 22nd April 2018 began at 8.00 a.m. with Veda chanting by the Sai Youth followed by brief speeches of the youth who elucidated on various spiritual, educational and service activities



*Devotional music presentation by Sai Youth of
Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.*

being performed by them in various parts of these two States. They specially mentioned their Seva activities and new initiatives with regard to Narayana Seva, blood donation, free tuition to students, water distribution at public places, Seva in old age homes, orphanages and hospitals, etc. Bhajans led by the Sai Youth of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana followed this and concluded with Arati. The evening programme began at 5.00 p.m. with chanting of sacred Vedic hymns by the Sai Youth. This was followed by a very elevating musical presentation by the singers of these States. Beginning with the song "Namo Sathya Sai Baba, Namo Sathya Sai" the singers offered an array of devotional songs which captivated one and all with their music and melody. Some of these songs were: "Sai Ke Darbar Mein", "Brahmamokkate Para Brahmamokkate" (God is one), "Sai Matha Biddalam Andaram" (all are the children of Mother Sai). Bhajans that followed after this were also led by Sai Youth.

On the morning of 23rd April 2018, the programme began after Veda chanting with speeches of Sai Youth who described with great clarity the Seva activities being undertaken by Sai Youth specially in villages considering this work as the gift of grace

of Bhagavan. After these speeches of Sai Youth, Dr. V. Mohan, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust addressed the gathering. Describing Puttaparthi as the perennial source of energy, Dr. Mohan underlined that pilgrimage to Puttaparthi was a great blessing and a means of great spiritual advancement.

A book release function was held after this, wherein the book "Prastuta Bhavishyat Karyacharana Pranalika", which described the present and future Seva activities of the



Book release function.

Sai Youth of the States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, was released. Bhajans led by Sai Youth followed this and concluded with Arati.

The mother's lap is the school for every man. It is his first temple. The mother is every man's primary wealth. To recognise this truth about one's mother is the duty of every person. There is no higher god than the mother. The father is one's treasure; the mother is one's god. Instead of valuing such precious wealth and divinity, men engage themselves in all kinds of activities to acquire riches and positions. The father and the mother are inseparable like the word and its meaning. Everyone should cherish one's parents as embodiments of the Divine. The mother and father may be physically separate, but spiritually they are one.

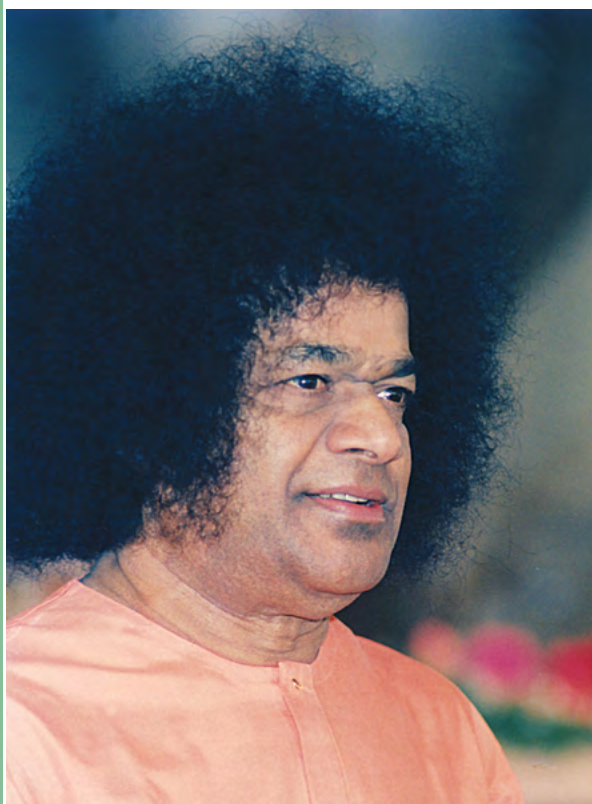
– Baba



BALARAMCHANDRAN T.S.

SAI – THE INDWELLER

“**A**NTHARANGA SAI” (SAI, THE indweller) are the opening words of a Bhajan that has always been so close to my heart...Thinking about it, my mind goes back to the days when I joined



the Brindavan Campus of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning for the B.Com programme.

To give you a snapshot of what I was then... a boy from a small town in Kerala, born in a joint family amidst loving grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts and

friends. I grew up within the four walls of a local school – a haven of safety – where I did my entire schooling right from my kindergarten to twelfth grade. And from this protected world where I was a little prince in my own right, I moved to the new world of ‘Brindavan’, the Lord’s playground or should I say the training ground; where He imparted the highest of lessons in the simplest of ways which He alone can.

Seek Swami within

When I left my home behind for the new world that Brindavan was, my loving mother who knew I would miss her dearly told me, “Dear child, I know you will miss me while you are in the hostel. But remember that you are going to Swami who is the epitome of love. He will bathe you in the love of a thousand mothers!” Thus, I landed in Brindavan with a heart pining to receive from the Mother of mothers all the love and warmth that I had left back at home and even more. Those were the days when to me, the meaning of the word love was restricted to its physical expressions: like a smile, a pat, a loving glance, a few good words... I had even believed that Swami being the Embodiment of Love would talk individually to all students and that too everyday! But soon I realised that physical attention from Swami and that too on a daily basis was too much to ask for! I felt lost, to say the least. On one side, I had come away from home and all the people who loved me so dearly, and on the other, the source of love in search of whom I had come, seemed so near yet so far.

With the passage of days, I grew wiser and realised that it was unreasonable to demand Swami’s constant physical attention when there were millions flocking



to Him hoping to receive a glance from Him. But while the head was convinced, the heart was not. Day and night I would hope against all hopes that some day I would receive His undivided attention, that He would speak to me, smile at me...the wish list was endless. On many an evening, I would sit alone in the open terrace of the hostel, shedding profuse tears for I missed my parents dearly and the Lord too 'seemed' to be in no mood to take notice of my misery.

I was bent upon having some physical interaction with Bhagavan and a chance came by pretty soon. I had to seek Swami's permission to lead the Bhajans in the Mandir. I was sitting one evening in the Darshan line awaiting His arrival, hoping with a heart which went pit a pat that He would give ear to my prayer. As He walked towards me that day, I rose nervously and managed to utter my prayer to Him when He was within hearing distance. "Swami, can I lead the Bhajans in the Mandir?" His response was a smile... I was thrilled... but my joy was short-lived. He pretended that He had not heard me clearly and asked, "You want an interview"? Then addressing the boy seated next to me, He said, "This boy wants an interview, give him one"! The entire row of boys seated around me broke into laughter as He walked away, the smile still lingering on His face. I was disappointed, even angry for a fleeting moment. How could He have ignored my desperate prayer? I had failed to recognise the invaluable gift that He had silently bestowed on me. The Lord who has come for the rejuvenation of the cosmos had taken time out of His all-important Avataric career to speak to me – however insignificant the message might have 'appeared' to be. And I had failed to recognise the great significance of the

moment. It took me quite a while before I started relishing the sweetness of such gifts that He bestowed on me.

One evening we were sitting in Trayee Brindavan, the abode of the Lord, listening to His words of wisdom. "Oh mind, do not ask." He said through a sweet Telugu poem, "if you ask, it will be ignored and if you cease asking, it will be granted. So, oh mind, do not ask". The message was clear and I knew as clear as daylight that it was meant for me. I told myself, "Let me stop asking Swami for physical attention, for a chance to sing in His Presence and then let me see whether the unasked prayers would be answered".

Barely a day or two had passed when Swami told the Warden of the hostel that He wanted to listen to the singers from amongst the 'new boys'. Very soon I was given an opportunity to sing in His Presence in Trayee Brindavan as He sat on the Jhoola listening with rapt attention. His smile greeted me when I completed my Bhajan. "Where do you come from?" He asked, "From Trichur, Swami," I said. He smiled again and I was in a daze of delight. This was really working!

It dawned on me that very silently the Lord was guiding me to the path which was to take me to Him. The physical Swami was not for me, for my attempts to approach Him at a physical level were all 'dodged' by Him. On the other hand, He was responding even before I completed the slightest hint of a prayer addressed to the Sai within me... Antharanga Sai. The Bhajan which began with the words 'Antharanga Sai', became even more meaningful to me now. It was selfish, I learnt, to ask for the constant undivided attention of the 'physical' Swami, since there were millions flocking to Him for solace. But I could always demand the



attention of the 'Antharanga Sai' who has installed Himself in every single heart!

How Swami Responded to my Earnest Prayer

Slowly but surely, the Lord helped me to seek Him within me. I stopped praying for His attention in the physical realm and tried to increasingly turn within to make contact with Him. It was all fine till that momentous day... It was the Vijaya Dasami day and the Lord was seated amidst us, listening to a musical performance in Sai Ramesh Hall. My mind was very disturbed that day for a long-suppressed desire had raised its head in my mind. It was a long-cherished desire that the Lord should bless me by placing His Abhayahastha (Divine Hand) on my head. The prayer had so far been unanswered and on that day I was once again reminded of this, I know not how... I tried telling myself that the path the Lord had shown me was to seek Him within myself and I was not to ask for His attention externally. But all my efforts were in vain and the sorrow caused by the unanswered prayer was gnawing at me. I was soon submerged in the deluge of my tears.

The musical programme ended and Swami got up from His chair to walk towards the stage where the artistes stood now, awaiting His blessings. Instead of taking the path set apart for Him, He surprised us by cutting for Himself a path across the row of boys seated around Him. As His Will would have it, I was seated near the 'ad-hoc' path that He had paved for Himself... in fact, I found that I was in the inner periphery of the path He chose. My heart beat wildly as He came close to where I sat. I raised my head to look at Him when He was next to me and our eyes met. I saw in those eyes the Love

of a thousand mothers that my mother had referred to, the Divine Love that He had so far kept so very expertly concealed from my view. It was very evident to me that He knew my innermost prayers. He knew how much I had pined for His Divine Sparshan (touch). His countenance donned a smile that I would treasure for the rest of my life. Under the pretext of supporting Himself while walking, He placed his Abhayahastha on my head! He, the Indweller, had heard the cry of my heart and had responded like only He can!

My path still remains the same and Swami for me remains the 'Antharanga Sai', the Sai in my heart. But the days are plenty where in spite of the awareness that He resides within, the childlike desire to be fondled by Mother Sai, the pangs of hunger for a word, a smile, or a loving glance from the corner of Her eyes, fills my being. But I just keep adding these to a list of prayers. Although not answered in the physical realm, they are definitely answered in the subtler realms of the heart where my 'Antharanga Sai' resides. Maybe this is what Divine Romance is all about. So far, yet so near!

I know that my Lord has His watchful eyes always set on each little step that I take. I know His heart thrills at the slightest goodness that I evince in my actions and the smallest of my triumphs and I know that even as I write these words, my Beloved Mother Sai, my Antharanga Sai is, as always, thinking about me!!!

– The author joined B.Com course in Brindavan Campus and was a student of 1997-1999 batch of the Department of Management Studies, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus.





MATRU DEVO BHAVA, PITRU DEVO BHAVA

EASWARAMMA DAY IS OBSERVED in memory of Mother Easwaramma as she left for her heavenly abode on 6th May 1972. At that time, Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality was being held at Brindavan. Smt. Easwaramma had finished morning bath and worship when she suddenly called out Swami, Swami. Swami said, “Coming, coming”. And she merged with Swami. It was Swami’s Name that was on her lips when she breathed her last. The father of Swami’s physical body Sri Pedda Venkama Raju breathed his last on 4th November 1963 at Prasanthi Nilayam. He went to the Mandir in the morning and gave five hundred rupees to Swami, saying, “I should not die with any kind of burden of debt. Unknowingly, I might be indebted to someone or the other. I have kept three bags of rice and jaggery which I bought

from my own earnings. Arrange a feast with this after I die”. After requesting Swami in this way, he went home and passed away peacefully. In this way, Swami granted the boon of peaceful death to His parents. Swami always showed great respect for His parents and fulfilled their wishes.

The Samadhi of the Divine Parents was built near Prasanthi Nilayam on the road which is now named Samadhi Road. On His Birthday and on Smt. Easwaramma’s death anniversary, Swami used to go to the Samadhi of His parents and pay His respects to them, giving the message to the world that everyone should respect and revere his parents. He always quoted the declaration of the Upanishads, *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava* (revere your mother and father as God) and exhorted one and all to revere their parents as God.

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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.
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Devotional music concert by A. Kanyakumari.



Devotional music programme by Sri T.S. Radhakrishnan.

Date of Publication: 1st May 2018

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Man alone has the chance to liberate himself from the wheel of birth and death through the most pleasant means, that of serving God. But, as a result of ignorance or what is worse, perversity, he lets the opportunity slip from his hands, and suffers grief and pain, fear and anxiety, *ad infinitum*. By escaping from clutches of the fascination exercised by material objects, man can succeed in his efforts to liberate himself.

– Baba

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