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**Memories of
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**



Sanathana Sarathi

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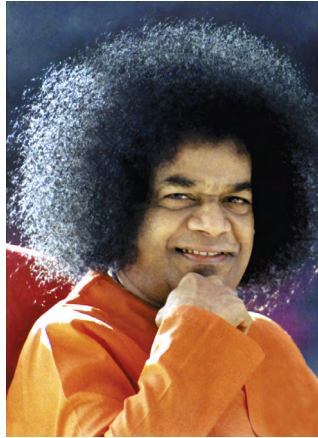
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"Whatever difficulties you may have to face, constantly think of God and remain unperturbed. Always be happy. All the difficulties are like passing clouds; they come and go. There are no permanent clouds in this world. Understand this truth and spend your time in the contemplation of God without giving room to worries. In fact, you should think of God more and more in times of difficulties."

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THE EMPIRE OF LOVE

ON HIS ARRIVAL AT THE DAIS IN SAI KULWANT HALL, SWAMI once saw a student sitting behind His chair with a camera in hand. Swami asked him, *"Idhar Kyon Baitha Hai?"* (Why are you sitting here?) *"Swami, Mein Apki Photo Kheenchuga."* (Swami, I will take Your photo). *"Camera Mein Reel Hai?"* (Is there a reel in the camera?), asked Swami. When the student said, yes, Swami said, *"Dekho, Camera Mein Kabhi Photo Aata Hai, Kabhi Nahin Aata. Dil Mein Photo Kheenchcho. Usmein Permanent Photo Aata Hai"* (Look here, in the camera, sometimes the photo comes and sometimes it does not. Take the photo in your heart. Then you will have a permanent photo). This is how Bhagavan taught profound truths to students and devotees in day-to-day conversations. He exhorted one and all to make their heart a temple and install God in it.

After declaring His Avatarhood in 1940, Bhagavan undertook extensive tours to impart these spiritual truths to the masses and gave them the direct experience of His Divinity. Many people constructed temples and invited Him to inaugurate them. On such occasions, Bhagavan mainly gave this message: You build temples with bricks and mortar, but the real temple is your heart where God resides permanently.

By such sublime teachings and His supreme Divine Love, Bhagavan transformed the hearts of millions of people into temples all over the world. These grand edifices enshrining unforgettable memories of His Divine Love are perhaps the richest treasure of mankind on earth. The Avatar of Love incarnated on earth to do away with artificial boundaries created by man on the basis of caste, colour, country, creed, community, race, religion or region and unite the world into one empire of love where every heart is the temple of God. The glory, grandeur and magnificence of this empire is bound to grow as it is erected on the strong pillars of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa.

Refreshing the memories of Bhagavan's Divine Love, let us make our heart a true temple of God by eradicating all differences and transform the world into an abode of love and peace by sharing our love with one and all. This will be our fittest tribute to Bhagavan.

— Editor



AMRITA DHARA

BHAGAVAN'S DISCOURSE:
25TH JULY 1996

EXPERIENCING UNITY OF MAN AND GOD

Neither by penance nor by pilgrimage nor by study of scriptures nor by Japa can one cross the ocean of life. One can achieve it only by serving the pious.

(Sanskrit Verse)

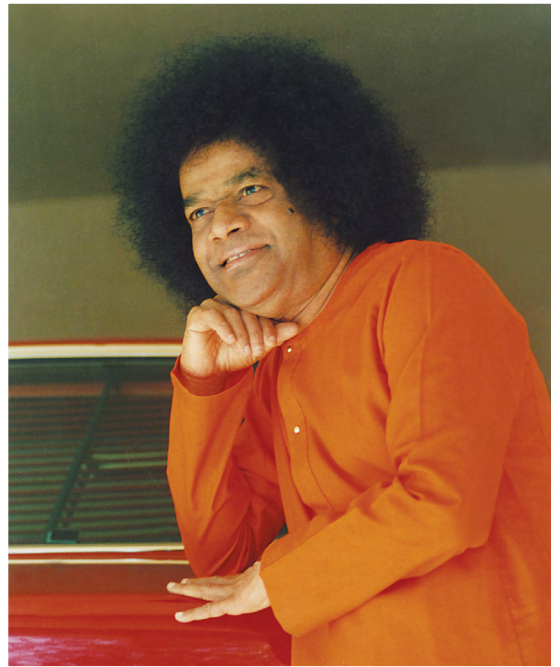
FORGET ALL DIFFERENCES AND HAVE FAITH IN UNITY

MAN CANNOT ATTAIN the goal of life merely by going to forest and performing penance, leaving family, friends and property. Even if one attains mastery over six Sastras and performs Japa from

morning till night, one cannot find fulfilment in life. One should serve the noble ones, serve society and recognise the principle of oneness in order to cross the ocean of worldliness which is the root cause of man's endless cycle of birth and death.

How can you give peace to others when you yourself do not have it? Therefore, first of all, you yourself should attain peace. Thereafter, spread it in your own house and your village. In this manner, you should gradually spread peace everywhere. Have peace within and without. This is the real spiritual practice. Moreover, do not become narrow-minded. Do not try to evaluate the good and bad of others. Develop your own goodness. Preserve your own purity. This should be your goal.

////////////////////



In this wide world, there are many intellectuals and scientists. But do they have peace even for a moment in their life? Do they understand what peace and happiness mean? When one is not able to experience peace and happiness in life, what is the use of anything else? Peace is the main goal of man's life. Without peace, man's life is worthless. That is why Thyagaraja sang, "There is no happiness without peace." Man can be happy only when he has peace. On the other hand, if he has no peace, his entire life will become a nightmare. Everything appears dark to a blind man. Similarly, howsoever great you may be, the world is nothing for you when you are asleep.

You should not be under the delusion that eyes are meant to see anything and everything in this world. Even birds, animals and insects have eyes. What is the use if one cannot see the divine effulgence with one's eyes? Ears are given to listen to the divine sound of Pranava, and mind is meant to experience peace. What is the reason that man is unable to experience peace? There are five types of Kleshas (roots of sorrow) which cause suffering to man. These are: Avidya, Asmita, Raga, Dwesha and Abhinivesha (ignorance, ego-sense, desire, hatred and fear of death).

What is meant by Avidya? 'Vid' means knowledge. Therefore, Avidya signifies lack of knowledge. What is that lack of knowledge? It is not the lack of worldly knowledge. It is the lack of knowledge of one's divine nature. Man considers himself to be an ignorant mortal due to Avidya. It is impossible for such a person to achieve

peace. One who is in the grip of Avidya leads a worldly life identifying himself with the body and mind. He lacks the wisdom to know that he is divine. Body attachment and attachment to the world cause him immense suffering. All this is the result of Avidya which causes untold suffering to man.

The second Klesha is Asmita. Man is unable to recognise the root cause of this worldly life and all the suffering associated with it. He forgets that his mind is the root cause of all the suffering. As a result of this, he becomes a victim of ignorance and delusion. He is subjected to various types of sufferings because he is unable to control his mind, which causes all sufferings, sorrows and difficulties. Asmita signifies the inability of man to understand the true nature of mind which is the root cause of all suffering.

Raga is another Klesha which causes suffering to man. What is meant by Raga? Here Raga does not mean the tune of a song. To desire this, that and everything signifies Raga. When these desires become unlimited, Raga becomes Roga (disease). Man undergoes suffering because he is unable to control his desires. Therefore, man should try to control his desires. That is why it is said, "Less luggage more comfort." It is because of his limitless desires that man loses the stability of mind, gets deluded and forgets the true and eternal principle of divinity, and consequently undergoes enormous suffering. Therefore, first of all, you should put a check on your desires. So long as



you have limitless desires, you cannot have peace. You may have desires, but they should be under a certain limit.

Develop Equal-mindedness

Then comes Dwesha Klesha. In times of difficulties, sufferings and losses, man expects help from someone close to him. But if that person declines to help him, his expectation turns into hatred. In this world, both good and bad cause suffering to man. All that is good does not necessarily give us happiness and similarly, all that is bad does not always cause misery. How does something good give us sorrow? Tulsidas gives an example of this. He said, "I offer my salutations to both good people and wicked ones." You may say, there is some meaning in offering salutations to a good person. But what is the purpose in offering salutations to a wicked one? A wicked person causes suffering to you when you meet him. Similarly, a good person makes you sad when he leaves you. Therefore, Tulsidas offered his salutations to wicked people so that they do not come near him. Likewise, he offered his salutations to noble ones so that they do not go away from him.

Association with an evil person and separation from a noble one, both cause suffering to man. Human life consists of Samyoga (union) and Viyoga (separation). It is described as an ocean with turbulent waves of Samyoga and Viyoga. Who can judge what is good and what is bad? Therefore, as the Gita teaches, *Sukhadukhe Samekruthwa Labhalabhau*

The essence and goal of all the religions is the same. God is one and the same for all. Then why should there be differences, conflicts, arguments and counter arguments? All these are the signs of ignorance. Only foolish people who do not understand the real meaning of divinity create such disturbances and conflicts. Therefore, do not observe any differences whatsoever. Do not criticise any religion or any spiritual practice.



Jayajayau (one should remain equal-minded in happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat). Treat both happiness and sorrow with equanimity. In order to attain peace, you should exercise equal-mindedness. Do not consider someone as good and some other as bad. See God in both. The same Atma is present in both. That is Ekatma Bhava and Divyatma Bhava (feeling of oneness and divinity). Bodies are different, tendencies of mind are different, but divinity is one and the same in all.

Identify yourself with the Self

Names and forms may vary, but divinity does not change. So long as one observes differences, one cannot attain peace. That is why Tulsidas propagated the principle of oneness. He considered God as the indweller of all beings and experienced oneness. I often tell you that you are not



one person but three: The one you think you are, the one others think you are and the one you really are, which signify Dehatma Bhava, Jivatma Bhava and Ekatma Bhava (identification with the body, identification with the individual soul, identification with God). All religions, be it Christianity, Islam, Jainism or Sikhism proclaim the same truth. Jesus first said, "I am the messenger of God." Then he said, "I am the son of God." In the third stage, he said, "I and my Father are one." The same truth is reflected in the statements, "I am in the light, the light is in me and I am the light." The essence and goal of all the religions is the same. God is one and the same for all. Then why should there be differences, conflicts, arguments and counter arguments? All these are the signs of ignorance. Only foolish people who do not understand the real meaning of divinity create such disturbances and conflicts. Therefore, do not observe any differences whatsoever. Do not criticise any religion or any spiritual practice. Everyone has a right to follow the path of his choice and experience happiness. When everyone is given the freedom to follow the religion of his choice in his own way, one can experience divinity.

Do not Think of others' Faults

How can you give peace to others when you yourself do not have it? Therefore, first of all, you yourself should attain peace. Thereafter, spread it in your own house and your village. In this manner, you should gradually spread peace everywhere. Have peace within and without. This is the real

Be happy with what you have. Why do you worry about something you do not have? Do not crave for things that you do not have. This is your real Sadhana. When you are not satisfied with what you have and constantly worry about what you do not have, how can you experience happiness? Therefore, be contented with what you have and share it with others.



spiritual practice. Moreover, do not become narrow-minded. Do not try to evaluate the good and bad of others. Develop your own goodness. Preserve your own purity. This should be your goal. On the other hand, if you look at the wickedness of others, their wickedness will enter you also. In this regard, here is a small example. You have a camera and you want to take a photo of someone in front of you. When you focus your lens on him and press the switch, you will capture his photo in your camera. Similarly, when you focus the lens of your vision on the wickedness of others and press the switch of Buddhi, their wickedness will enter you. Usually, people take the photo of those whom they like. Since you like good people, focus your mind on them only. Then your feelings will become one with theirs. So, do not think of the evil of others because if you keep on thinking about it, you yourself will become evil. *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati* (as are the feelings, so is the result).



Develop Unity and Experience Divinity

Once Gopikas came to Radha and said to her, "You are always thinking of Krishna. As a result of this incessant contemplation on Krishna, you may become Krishna yourself. When Radha becomes Krishna and there is no duality, what happiness will you derive?" Then Radha replied, "Oh Gopikas, by thinking of Krishna constantly, I may become Krishna. In the same way, as Krishna thinks of Radha continuously, He may become Radha. Then also there will be both Radha and Krishna." Therefore, when you think of God, God also thinks of you. In this manner, you create God. Who creates God? The devotee creates God and God creates the devotee. Then what is common between God and a devotee? It is the power to create. As God has the power to create, so also has man. The power of creation is the same in both. Try to experience divinity by understanding this principle of unity. Forget all differences and have faith in unity. *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati* (the knower of Brahman becomes verily Brahman).

Everyone knows that he has to die one day or the other. Yet everyone wants to cling to life and nobody wants to die. This is due to Abhinivesha Klesha which afflicts man. What is the main cause of man's sorrow? Worldly desires are the main cause of this. You become a victim of various Kleshas when you forget your real nature and focus your mind on the world. Be happy with what you have. Why do you worry about something you do not have? Do not crave for things that you do not

have. This is your real Sadhana. When you are not satisfied with what you have and constantly worry about what you do not have, how can you experience happiness? Therefore, be contented with what you have and share it with others. Develop such broad-mindedness. In this vast world, man too should have a broad mind. One bereft of broad-mindedness is not a human being at all. So, you should broaden your heart. How can you do it? You should fill it with love. When you fill your heart with love, you will not be troubled by any of the Kleshas. You will have the power to face all challenges and move forward.

Fill your Heart with Love

Many people pray to Me to give them a broad heart. Here, what does heart mean? It does not mean physical heart. When your physical heart is enlarged, you become a patient and have to undergo operation. So, there is a lot of difference between physical heart and spiritual heart. Physical heart is like the main switch for the mansion of human body. It is only the main switch, but not the 'current.' Then where is the current? *Neelatoyadamadhyasthad Vidyullekheva Bhasvara* (brilliant like a streak of lightning set in the midst of the blue rain-bearing clouds). Where is this Vidyullekha? This effulgent power is present in the spinal column. This is also called Sushumna (central nerve current). It is from this Sushumna that the current enters the main switch of the heart. If you do not know this, you may enquire about it yourself.



Doctors perform heart surgery. If you think, the life principle is present in the physical heart, then where does it go when heart surgery is performed? Since life is not present in the heart, heart-lung machine is used during the course of a heart surgery. Hridaya (spiritual heart) is not confined to the body; it is present everywhere. This spiritual heart is present in the body right from top to toe. When an ant crawls on your foot, you immediately become aware of it. So, where is your Hridaya? It is present in your foot also. Otherwise, how can you become aware of an ant crawling on your foot? Physical heart is located at one particular place in the body, whereas the spiritual heart pervades the entire body. Physical heart helps in blood circulation, but has no control over the life principle.

God's Name is the Panacea for all your Ills

Students!

Whatever difficulties you may have to face, constantly think of God and remain unperturbed. Always be happy. All the difficulties are like passing clouds; they come and go. There are no permanent

clouds in this world. Understand this truth and spend your time in the contemplation of God without giving room to worries. In fact, you should think of God more and more in times of difficulties. Many people criticise and abuse God when they are faced with difficulties, saying, "Does He have no eyes? Can't He see my difficulties? Does He have no ears? Can't He hear my cries?" In fact, you should pray to God more earnestly when you are enmeshed in difficulties. A Sadhaka should always remain steadfast in his Sadhana wherever he is. A patient has to necessarily take medicine whether he is in the hospital or at home. He cannot say, "I am already admitted in the hospital, why should I take any medicine?" Similarly, you should always contemplate on God in times of both happiness and sorrow. Only then will the Divine Name become the panacea for all your ills.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Sivaya Parameswaraya...*")

– From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 25th July 1996.

Prema is a two-letter word in Telugu. But in this short and small word, Akshaya Jagat (the entire universe) is contained. But, alas, today there is so little awareness of the power of this love. Wrapped up in their trivial attachments, people are ignoring the power of this infinite, sacred and all-encompassing Divine Love. Love is associated with immortality. It is nectar itself. There is nothing in the world comparable to it.

– Baba

CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

MASS UPANAYANAM FUNCTION

A GRAND FUNCTION WAS held at Prasanthi Nilayam on 27th September 2012 to perform mass Upanayanam (sacred thread investiture ceremony) of over 600 Vatus (young aspirants). The function organised by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Karnataka was held in Sai Kulwant Hall which was beautifully decked up for the festive occasion with colourful festoons, beautiful designs made of palm leaves, giant pictures of gods and goddesses and flowers of many hues. A giant cut-out of Mother Gayatri adorned the central area of the hall. The Upanayanam function was preceded by Sahasra Kalashabhishekam (ceremonial bathing of Bhagavan's Padukas with sacred water of one thousand Kalashas) which was performed for universal peace and prosperity.

Sahasra Kalashabhishekam

The programme of Sahasra Kalashabhishekam began at 6.00 a.m. on 26th September 2012 with Veda chanting followed by prayer to Lord Ganesh and worship of one thousand Kalashas (sacred vessels) amidst chanting of Vedic Mantras by the priests. After the worship of the Kalashas, Abhishekam of the sacred Padukas of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba placed on a makeshift altar in front

of Bhagavan's Samadhi was performed by over 1,000 devotees who came one by one and offered sacred Kalasha water on the Padukas of Bhagavan with great devotion. This was followed by Bhajans which were led by Karnataka devotees. The Bhajans were followed by recitation of Ashtottara Sata Namavali (108 Names of Bhagavan). The morning programme came to a close with Arati at 11.20 a.m. after distribution of Prasadam to the entire assembly of devotees in the hall.

The programme in the afternoon began at 4.30 p.m. with Veda chanting. This was followed by an illuminating talk on "The Importance and Inner Significance of Upanayanam and Gayatri Mantra" by erudite Sanskrit scholar Sri S. Ranganath, Director, R.V. Institute of Sanskrit Studies, Bengaluru. The learned speaker explained the significance of Upanayanam and Gayatri Mantra, quoting relevant Mantras from the Vedas and reminded the spiritual aspirants of the responsibilities of a Brahmachari (celibate). The final word on the significance of Gayatri chanting came from Bhagavan when an audio clip of Bhagavan's Discourse on this subject was played on the public address system. After this, there was a brief session of Bhajans which were led by Karnataka youth. The programme came to a close with Arati at 6.15 p.m.



Upanayanam Ceremony

The ceremony to perform mass Upanayanam began at 8.15 a.m. in Sai Kulwant Hall where over 600 spiritual aspirants with their parents were seated in rows with the necessary Puja material on 27th September 2012. As the chief priest gave instructions, the spiritual aspirants and their parents performed Puja with Puja material amidst chanting of relevant Vedic Mantras by a group of priests. The instructions of the chief priest were translated into English and Telugu for the convenience of those who did not understand Kannada. Seva Dal members also helped the Vatus and their parents in the performance of the rituals.

Preliminary rituals included Ganapati Puja (worship of Lord Ganesh), Swasti Vachanam (auspicious words), Navagraha Puja (worship of nine planets) and Puja of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Thereafter, the parents blessed the Vatus by pouring sacred Akshatas on their head and tying Kankan (wrist band) on their wrist. Meanwhile, sacred threads were distributed to the parents after seeking the blessings of Bhagavan. At the same time, priests offered Poornahuti in the Yajna fire amidst chanting of Vedic Mantras. After this, the Upanayanam (sacred thread investiture) ceremony was performed as the parents offered the sacred thread to the Vatus amidst chanting of Vedic Mantras



Mass Upanayanam ceremony in Sai Kulwant Hall.

and joyous notes of auspicious music. Brahmopadeshnam (teaching Gayatri Mantra to Vatu) followed the Upanayanam ceremony. Appropriately, Bhagavan Himself initiated the Vatus into recitation of Gayatri Mantra when a recording of Gayatri Mantra was played in Bhagavan's voice. The Vatus were thereafter garlanded by the parents and a head band was tied to them. After this, all the Vatus stood up and begged Bhiksha (alms) from their parents. The parents offered Bhiksha to them and showered blessings on them. The auspicious function of Upanayanam and Brahmopadeshnam came to a joyous conclusion with Arati. In the end, the Vatu along with their parents circumambulated the Mandir in a procession. A sumptuous feast was offered to the Vatus, their parents and all the devotees in South Indian Canteen on this happy occasion.

Devotional Music Concert

The evening programme comprised a devotional music concert by noted



classical singer R.K. Prasanna Kumar and party. Starting his presentation at 4.45 p.m., the singer enthralled the devotees with soulful rendition of five Karnataka music compositions which included a composition on Mother Gayatri and another dedicated to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and concluded his concert with a Bhajan. At the conclusion of this presentation, the singer was felicitated and clothes and gifts were presented to him as well as to the artistes who provided musical support to him. This was followed by a brief session of Bhajans and distribution of Prasadam. The Bhajan, "Subrahmanyam Subrahmanyam" in Bhagavan's voice was thereafter played which the devotees followed in chorus. The programme came to a close with Arati at 6.35 p.m. Thus concluded this grand function of mass Upanayanam.

PILGRIMAGE OF UTTAR PRADESH AND UTTARAKHAND DEVOTEES

More than 1,000 devotees came on a pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam from Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand for four days, from 9th to 12th October 2012. During this pilgrimage, Sai Youth from these two States presented a soul-stirring programme of Qawalis in true Sufi tradition in Sai Kulwant Hall on 9th October 2012. The programme began at 5.00 p.m. after Veda chanting. Beginning their presentation with a prayer song to Lord Ganesh, the singers kept the audience spellbound for nearly 45 minutes with melodious Qawalis dedicated to



A programme of Qawalis by Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand youth.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Rendered with devout feelings set to excellent music, all the compositions touched the hearts of the devotees. At the conclusion of the programme, clothes were presented to the participants. This was followed by Bhajans which were also led by Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand youth. The programme came to a close with Arati at 6.10 p.m. after distribution of Prasadam to all.

PILGRIMAGE OF U.K. DEVOTEES

A group of U.K. devotees came on a pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam in October 2012. The group presented two devotional music programmes in Sai Kulwant Hall on 11th and 12th October 2012. Imbued with the light of Bhagavan's love, these devotees, calling themselves Sai Jyoti pilgrims, paid their soulful musical tributes to Bhagavan through these presentations.

Sai Anandam: A Classical Music Presentation

The first presentation entitled, "Sai Anandam" (bliss of Sai) was made by renowned musician Ms. Roopa Panesar

and party on 11th October 2012. The instruments used were: sitar, tar shehnai, tabla and santoor. Surcharged with the love of Bhagavan, the artistes suffused the entire milieu with deep devotional fervour with their classical presentation which began at 5.00 p.m. with prayer to Guru and kept the audience spellbound for nearly one hour. Deep devotional mood of the artistes, in fact, created heavenly music. The presentation included the vocals, "Antar Jyoti Jalao Sai" (Oh Lord Sai, light the inner lamp), "Hum Sab Milkar Mangal Gayen" (Let us all sing auspicious songs), "Om Hari Hari Om" set to various Ragas (tunes) which included Rag Yaman Kalyan, Rag Megh and Rag Bahar. When they concluded their highly elevating musical presentation at 6.00 p.m., they were greeted with a loud prolonged applause of the listeners. They were then felicitated and clothes and gifts were presented to them. This was followed by Bhajans and distribution of Prasadam. The grand finale of this beautiful concert was the Bhajan, "Madhura Madhura Murali Ghanashyama" in Bhagavan's golden voice. The programme came to a close with Arati at 6.15 p.m.

A Devotional Songs Medley

The U.K. devotees presented their second programme of devotional music on 12th October 2012. It was preceded by



Devotional music presentation by U.K. devotees.

chanting of Vedic Mantras by a group of Vedic scholars from Bengaluru. Beginning their devotional music presentation at 5.15 p.m. with a classical instrumental composition, the musicians regaled the audience with five musical pieces while the singers sang Hindi, Punjabi and English songs which included a Gurbani (verses from the holy Guru Granth), English devotional songs like, "Why Fear When I am Here," "Every Moment of my Life Please Be with me...Baba, Sai Baba," etc. They concluded their presentation with the Bhajan, "Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma." At the end of their presentation, all the participants were presented gifts. This was followed by Bhajans which concluded at 6.30 p.m. with Arati.

AN EXCELLENT SITAR RECITAL

On the eve of sacred festival of Navaratri (nine-day worship of the Divine Mother), Prof. Indrani Chakraborty, Principal,

continued on page 384...



IT WAS IN 1968 THAT I FIRST heard about a young Swami who could materialise things out of thin air. My friends in Bengaluru, with whom I was spending my summer vacation, were keen to go to Whitefield to see Him. I was very excited about this trip but, alas, it never materialised. May be I was not ready or may be it was not 'time for me!' This clearly demonstrates that unless Swami Wills, no one can come to Him!

no avail. Our British Medical Consultants were advising us to go to this 'God Man' in India who could cure any illness. We were desperate and may be this illness was His 'Calling Card' to us! 'Our time had come!'

We flew back to India and reached Bengaluru. Swami was in Whitefield. With hope-filled hearts, we waited for His Darshan. He did not disappoint us. In Darshan, Swami came to Ram, touched him on his left side and assured him, "All

Dr. (Smt.) J. Geeta Reddy

LIFE'S JOURNEY WITH MY SAI

Years spent in the fold of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba have been the best part of my life. There have been many miracles and many interviews; life has been certainly enriched. The rest of my life, I shall live with those memories of the Compassionate One who descended in human form for our sake, for the sake of the whole of humanity.

His Calling Card

Years rolled on; I was married to Dr. Ramachandra Reddy in 1971. We moved to Australia, then to London for postgraduate studies in medicine in our respective fields. Our last stint was in Saudi Arabia for two years. We were on top of the world what with our prestigious postgraduate degrees! One day in 1980, suddenly our world came crashing when at the young age of 30 years, Ram (my husband) developed a left-sided paralysis. Everyone knows it is a crippling condition. We were shattered. All the best treatment in London was of

will be well." He then came to the ladies side straight to me! No one had told Him about me, yet the all-knowing Supreme Being spoke to me and said, "Do not lose heart, Bangaru, your husband will be all right soon." I could not believe that the world renowned 'God Man' was speaking to me! He blessed me and gave me packets of Vibhuti. After this miraculous day, Ram's recovery was very quick. No one today can believe Ram had gone through such a condition. This is how we came to Bhagavan's abode and into His fold.



Yes, He is God

As per His Will, I suppose, we went back abroad and assumed our duties. We finally came back to India in 1983. As we were busy setting up our own hospital, there was no contact with Swami till 1992. In the same year, we heard Swami was coming to Hyderabad. The then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Dr. M. Chenna Reddy and his family were great devotees of Baba. Therefore, Bhagavan was visiting them. In the meantime, I had joined politics and was a Minister in Dr. Chenna Reddy's Cabinet. I was filled with such great happiness at the prospect of seeing the Beautiful Lord once again! The night before His arrival, I had a wonderful vision...

‘...It was a clear blue sky and I was asking Swami, “Are you God?” Instantly, the whole sky was filled with our Beloved Lord's face in blue as Krishna, with a most enchanting smile and a peacock feather in His thick curly hair! It was Swami as Sai Krishna! The very next moment, I saw a huge golden Om spread across the sky, followed by a golden star filling up the sky again! When I woke up, it was 4 a.m...’ This vision was so vivid that it remains ever fresh in my memory even after 20 years. He answered me in His own way – Yes, He is God!

His Unconditional Love Transforms us

Since 1992, my visits to Puttaparthi grew more frequent, with countless interviews which transformed me into a better human being; my ambitious nature gave way to accepting the Lord's Will. He became my friend, guide and philosopher. **He was and is my strength.**

I cannot forget how in 1998 when I took the local leaders of Gajwel, my previous constituency in Medak district, for His Darshan to Puttaparthi, He asked us all to collectively ask for one boon. When all of us asked for drinking water to Gajwel, He happily granted our wish. Today not just Gajwel but the whole of Medak district has Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Scheme. Such is His benevolence! Ask and it shall be granted.

My first interview with Swami was very unique. I had the good fortune of having a tour of the newly-started Puttaparthi Super Speciality Hospital in 1992; we were in a golf cart with Swami, Dr. Safaya in the front and Sri Paramahansa and myself in the back seats. After the completion of the tour and before He left the hospital premises, the Divine Master gave me an interview in a consulting room! The previous week, my daughter Meghana was very ill. We were at Shirdi at that time; I took her to Shirdi Baba's temple and put her at Baba's feet and prayed for her speedy recovery. My prayer there was answered during the interview with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the Parthi hospital consulting room. Swami spoke about Meghana and assured me that she would be all right and He was taking care of her! So, in this way, He revealed that Shirdi Sai Baba and He were one and the same! I fell at His



divine feet in gratitude. He then lovingly materialised a white diamond ring which was large for my fingers. He mischievously smiled and blew on the ring thrice. Lo and behold, it turned into the correct size for my index finger. The compassionate Lord put the ring on my finger Himself! This was such a touching gesture. I cried with joy, love and gratitude. He is pure, undiluted and unconditional love, which He shows with such gestures. These small acts touch us and open our hearts to receive His divine love. It is Swami's love which transforms us. We are so fortunate to have been contemporaries of the Avatar.

It is the Creator's love for His creation that draws us to Him. The cures and healings are His blessings on the path of our devotion and love for the Lord. It is hard for us to understand and fathom the divine plans. But I am comforted in the knowledge that He is the Doer. He knows it all. "Why fear when I am here," says our Swami and I have left everything at His Divine Lotus Feet.

Benevolence Unbounded

Years spent in the fold of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba have been the best part of my life. There have been many miracles and many interviews; life has been certainly enriched. The rest of my life, I shall live with those memories of the Compassionate One who descended in human form for our sake, for the sake of the whole of humanity.

I can remember how He cured my hypothyroid problem with the Vibhuti He created for me in 1997 in Kodaikanal, how

He saved me in a car accident in 1995, how He materialised an unusual fruit for me to eat, when I was suffering from a stomach ailment.

I cannot forget how in 1998 when I took the local leaders of Gajwel, my previous constituency in Medak district, for His Darshan to Puttaparthi, He asked us all to collectively ask for one boon. When all of us asked for drinking water to Gajwel, He happily granted our wish. Today not just Gajwel but the whole of Medak district has Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Scheme. Such is His benevolence! Ask and it shall be granted.

In His later years, our Sai's body suffered for our sake. He took upon His body all our illnesses and our problems. Like Christ, He too underwent crucifixion so that we may be cleansed of our sins. He lives on in our hearts, where He belongs. He is now all over the universe and not confined only to Puttaparthi or to His body; He is in all the elements. He is limitless, boundless storehouse of power. He is the all-powerful Lord.

Let us take heart in the fact that He is with us, around us and in us. Where can He go, leaving multitudes of His devotees?

He is the Divine Master of the universe. We offer our Pranams at His Lotus Feet.

(The author, Dr. (Smt.) J. Geeta Reddy, is the Minister for Major Industries, Sugar, Commerce and Export Promotion, Government of Andhra Pradesh.)



GREAT SIGNIFICANCE OF DASARA CELEBRATIONS

THE CELEBRATION OF Dasara festival during Navaratri (nine days of Divine Mother's worship) has come to assume great social, cultural and spiritual significance at Prasanthi Nilayam. Worship of the Divine Mother, performance of Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna and spiritual talks of erudite speakers under the auspices of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha culminating in illuminating Discourses of Bhagavan mark the spiritual aspect of these celebrations. Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva highlights their social dimension, and cultural and musical events held during this period have great cultural value. This year, Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna was conducted from 18th to 24th October 2012 in Poornachandra Auditorium while Grama Seva was performed for nine days from 16th to 24th October 2012 covering over 150 villages of Puttaparthi, Kothacheruvu and Bukkapatnam Mandals of Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. At the same time, sessions of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha followed by cultural and music programmes were held in Sai Kulwant Hall for seven days from 18th to 24th October 2012.

VEDA PURUSHA SAPTAHA JNANA YAJNA

Kalasha Puja signifying the worship of the Divine Mother began in the Bhajan

Mandir on 16th October 2012, the first day of Navaratri. The Mandir priest who conducted the Puja continued it on 17th October 2012 also. On the morning of 18th October, this sacred Kalasha was carried by the Ritwiks (Vedic priests) in a grand procession to Poornachandra Auditorium. The procession was led by Nadaswaram musicians and followed by Veda chanting Ritwiks and students. After seeking the blessings of Bhagavan, the procession proceeded towards Poornachandra Auditorium at 9.00 a.m. The proceedings of the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna started after the arrival of the priests at Yajnashtala which was beautifully decorated. A beautiful photograph of Bhagavan and a grand silver chair for Him adorned the Yajnashtala.

The process of producing sacred fire for the Yajna in the traditional way by churning one piece of wood over the other was started by the priests amidst chanting of Vedic Mantras. The fire was produced in this way and placed in Yajna Kunda (sacrificial pit) after seeking the blessings of Bhagavan amidst chanting of sacred Vedic Mantras. Meanwhile, a priest and his spouse started performing Puja of the Kalasha brought from Bhajan Mandir, three elders started Parayana (ceremonial reading) of sacred texts and one priest started performing Surya Namaskar. Performance of the Yajna began with



offering of oblations in the Yajna Kunda by four priests while another group of priests started chanting the sacred Mantras of Krishna Yajur Veda. At 10.30 a.m., the Ritviks and students started combined Vedic chants in which thousands of students and devotees in the Poornachandra Auditorium also joined, presenting a grand spectacle of Veda chanting which reverberated in the entire auditorium and suffused the entire milieu with sacred vibrations. At 10.45 a.m., Arati was offered. Meanwhile, the students and staff participating in Grama Seva left on their sacred mission of offering Bhagavan's Prasadam to villagers. The performance of Yajna continued in this sacred manner amidst chanting of Vedic Mantras from 18th to 23rd October 2012, purifying the entire environment. It concluded on the sacred day of Vijaya Dasami on 24th October 2012.

Poornachandra Auditorium was full to its seams with devotees and students who had assembled in the auditorium to witness the sacred ceremony of Poornahuti (final oblations) on the auspicious day of Vijaya Dasami on 24th October 2012. Since early morning, the entire auditorium reverberated with Vedic chants of students and priests while four priests offered oblations in the sacrificial fire. Bhajans started at 9.00 a.m. which were led by Mandir Bhajan singers and followed in chorus by the



Poornahuti marked the completion of Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna.

entire assembly with deep devotion. The priests meanwhile went to Sai Kulwant Hall with sacred Kalasha and returned to the auditorium with precious material of Poornahuti and the Dharani (large silver spoon) for offering final oblations in the Yajna Kunda. While the Bhajans continued, a silver chair was placed near the Yajna Kunda for Bhagavan. Then began the final rituals of Poornahuti amidst chanting of Vedic Mantras. After seeking Bhagavan's blessings, the priests offered final oblations in the sacrificial fire at 9.25 a.m. amidst chanting of Vedic Mantras and joyous notes of Nadaswaram music. The priests then offered ghee (clarified butter) into the sacred fire through Dharani, marking the completion of the seven-day-long Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna. After offering Arati to the Kalasha full of sacred water, the Kalasha water was sprinkled on the priests. Thereafter, groups of priests and students went round the entire auditorium and sprinkled sacred Kalasha



water on the entire assembly of devotees and students while Bhajans continued in the auditorium. Thereafter, Prasadam was offered to all. The programme came to a happy conclusion with Arati at 10.10 a.m.

PRASANTHI VIDWAN MAHASABHA

The first session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha was held on 18th October 2012. It began at 4.30 p.m. with Veda chanting by the Mandir Veda group followed by the students of Sri Sathya Sai Primary School, Prasanthi Nilayam. At the outset, Prof. A. Anantaraman, a faculty member of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, gave an overview of evolution of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, narrating some of his personal experiences when Bhagavan Himself presided over its proceedings.

The first speaker of the session was Sri Ruchir Desai, Associate Professor, Brindavan Campus of the Institute. Quoting from a Discourse of Bhagavan, Sri Desai observed that Yajna meant sacrifice which Bhagavan exemplified in His life by devoting every moment of His life for others, thus living His teaching, "My Life is My Message." The second talk of the session was given by the guest speaker Dr. Nori Surya Narayana Murthy, a great Sanskrit and Telugu scholar. Speaking about the glory and significance of the Sundara Kanda in the Ramayana, the learned speaker expounded the supreme virtues of Hanuman which endeared him to Lord Rama. Interspersing his narration with

rendition of relevant poems and Bhajans, the learned speaker exhorted the youth to emulate Hanuman's devotion and attain the grace of Sai Rama, the reincarnation of Lord Rama in Kali Yuga. At the conclusion of his talk, Dr. Murthy was honoured with a shawl.

These two talks were followed by screening of a video of Bhagavan's Discourse, in which He referred to the teachings of the Upanishads about the omnipresence of God and exhorted the devotees to serve all, recognising the presence of God in all. Thereafter, the students of Brindavan Campus of the Institute presented a soul-stirring programme of devotional songs. This was followed by Bhajans and distribution of Prasadam. The session concluded with the Bhajan, "Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma" in Bhagavan's golden voice, after which there was Arati at 7.10 p.m.

The second session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha held on 19th October 2012 comprised a video clip of Bhagavan's Discourse and talks by two speakers. The session began at 4.30 p.m. with Vedic chants by the Mandir Veda group followed by students of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam. The first speaker of this session was Ms. D. Bharghavi, Assistant Professor, Anantapur Campus of the Institute. Narrating her experiences with Bhagavan during her student days, the speaker observed that man should make his life meaningful by accepting God with self-confidence and accepting His words and lessons with



total dedication. The second talk was delivered by the guest speaker, Dr. M. Brahmananda Sastry. Speaking in chaste Telugu, the learned speaker dwelt on the similarities of Treta Yuga Avatar, Lord Rama and Kali Yuga Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Quoting extensively from the Ramayana and reciting poems of Bhagavan, Dr. Sastry remarked that the Lord who incarnated as Rama and Krishna in earlier Yugas has now come as Bhagavan Baba to redeem mankind. The learned speaker was felicitated and honoured with a shawl after the conclusion of the programme.

The third session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha held on 20th October 2012 commenced at 4.30 p.m. with Vedic chants by the Mandir Veda group followed by the students of Easwaramma English Medium High School, Prasanthi Nilayam. The proceedings of the Mahasabha were preceded by an introductory speech of Prof. A. Anantaraman who observed that 20th October was an important milestone in the Avataric Mission of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as it was on this day 72 years ago that Bhagavan declared that He was Sathya Sai Baba who had incarnated on earth to redeem mankind. The first speaker of this session was Sri Bhabhani Shankar Padhy, a Research Scholar of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of the Institute. Describing the various forms in which the Divine Mother was being worshipped in different parts of India, the speaker observed that man must yearn for Divine proximity like goddess Kanyakumari, the eternal virgin who waits for her consort

Lord Siva. Interlacing his speech with beautiful poems and couplets, the speaker described how Sage Bharadwaja brought about the Avataric Advent of Bhagavan on earth by his penance for the redemption of man. The next speaker, Sri G.R. Sayee Prasanna, an M.B.A. student of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus described the potency and spiritual significance of reciting "Lalita Sahasranama," (1,008 Names of goddess Lalita). Referring to some incidents from the book, "Anyatha Saranam Nasti," the speaker described its efficacy narrating an incident when Bhagavan responded to the prayer of a student who recited "Lalita Sahasranama" and invoked the blessings of Bhagavan as goddess Lalita. The last speaker of this session was Ms. G. Shilpa, a student of Anantapur Campus of the Institute. Referring to the momentous event of 1940 when Bhagavan declared His Avatarhood to unfold His Divine Mission, the speaker observed that God is the indweller of all and quintessence of everything as the scriptures describe God, *Raso Vai Sah* (God is in the form of essence).

These talks were followed by screening of an excerpt from Bhagavan's Discourse, in which Bhagavan declared that the eternal truth of the universe is love and exhorted man to lead his life with love, considering love as God and God as love. Man, Bhagavan said, should try to know his true nature, for which man should follow the spiritual path.

The 4th session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha held on 21st October 2012



opened at 4.30 p.m. with Vedic chants by the Mandir Veda group and Anantapur Campus students. The first speaker of this session was Dr. N. Srividya, Assistant Professor, Anantapur Campus of the Institute. Paying her tributes to Mother Sai, the speaker dwelt on the mother principle and explained how every man was indebted to five mothers, namely, Deha Mata, Go Mata, Bhu Mata, Desha Mata and Veda Mata (physical mother, mother cow, mother earth, motherland and spiritual mother Veda). She emphasised that everyone should serve these five mothers to make his life sublime. The second speaker of the session was Sri Aditha Dileep Kurdekar who spoke on the topic, "Quest for Love." Quoting the saying of Bhagavan, "Love as thought is truth, love as action is righteousness, love as understanding is non-violence, love as feeling is peace," the speaker emphasised that man's quest for love must culminate in attaining the love for God. The last speaker of the session was Sri Aditya Shekhar, a student of Brindavan Campus of the Institute, who spoke on the topic, "Feeling His Presence." Narrating various incidents of Bhagavan's omnipresence, the speaker observed that Bhagavan was with us, He is within us and will be always with us. The devotees should observe no difference between then and now, he emphasised.

These talks were followed by video screening of Bhagavan's Discourse, in which Bhagavan exhorted the devotees to establish their relationship with God which was permanent and shed temporary worldly relations. To attain God's proximity,

man should make his heart sacred by cleansing it of evil and bestial qualities and by imbibing good qualities, Bhagavan said.

Vedic chants by the Mandir Veda group and students of Muddenahalli Campus of the Institute at 4.30 p.m. marked the beginning of the 5th session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha on 22nd October 2012. The first speaker of this session was Dr. Subhash Subramanian, Assistant Professor, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. Illustrating his speech with beautiful songs, couplets and anecdotes, the speaker emphasised the importance of controlling the mind, living in the present and looking within to achieve success in Sadhana. The guest speaker of this session was Sri Medasani Mohan, a noted Telugu and Sanskrit scholar. Explaining the profound truths contained in "Soundarya Lahiri" of Adi Sankara, the erudite speaker exhorted one and all to light the lamp of divine knowledge within during the sacred period of Navaratri and attain illumination. Self-realisation, he said, was the goal of man's life which could be achieved only by focusing on God.

Bhagavan's Divine Discourse was screened after these two speeches. Referring to the story of Adi Sankara who admonished a scholar that learning the rules of grammar would not protect him when his end approached, Bhagavan emphasised the importance of singing the glory of God and contemplating on Him to attain peace, bliss and redemption. At the conclusion of the programme, the guest speaker, Sri Medasani Mohan was honoured with a shawl.



Veda chanting by the Mandir Veda group and students of Brindavan Campus of the Institute marked the beginning of the penultimate session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha on 23rd October 2012. The first speaker of this session was Ms. C.U. Rajeswari, a Research Scholar of Anantapur Campus who observed that human life was a very great blessing which man should utilise to realise his divinity by controlling his worldly desires and focusing the mind on God. The guest speaker of this session was Sri Garikapati Narasimha Rao, a renowned Telugu scholar. Speaking on the topic, "Sai Jaganmatha" (Sai, the Divine Mother of the universe), the distinguished speaker observed that those who realised God were very few because majority of men got deluded by Maya and wasted their time in rituals. Embellishing his talk with beautiful poems and quotations from scriptures, he said that Jiva is Deva but man should develop Atma Jnana (knowledge of the Self) to realise this truth of his real identity.

Bhagavan's Divine Discourse followed this. Bhagavan said in His Discourse that God permeated every atom of the universe, but man should leave Dehabhimana (body attachment) and develop Atmabhimana (attachment to the Self) to realise God. At the end of the programme, the guest speaker Sri Narasimha Rao was felicitated and a shawl was offered to him.

The proceedings of the final session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha began at 4.30 p.m. on 24th October 2012 with Vedic chants by Mandir Veda group and

students of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of the Institute. The first speaker of this session was Dr. Deepak Anand, Assistant Professor, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, who narrated his experiences with Bhagavan during his student days and described how Bhagavan elucidated the real meaning of Pada Puja (worshipping Bhagavan's Lotus Feet) by explaining that it was to walk on the footprints of the Avatar and follow the path of love and service shown by Him. Narrating an incident how Bhagavan answered the prayer of some persons who prayed in Japan, the speaker remarked that wherever one might pray, to whichever form of God, the response to the prayer came from Prasanthi Nilayam. The second speaker was Sri Abhay Nagraj Kini, a student of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. Speaking on the subject of surrender, the speaker observed that both happiness and sorrow were common in man's life, and he should accept both with equanimity of mind, surrendering himself to the Will of God. It was complete self-surrender which could lead man to true peace, said the speaker. Speaking on the subject of Self-realisation, the last speaker of the final session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, Ms. A.B. Aishwarya from the Anantapur Campus of the Institute, observed that man should leave ego and desire and take to the path of love, service and sacrifice to attain the goal of Self-realisation.

The grand finale to the proceedings of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha was the Divine Discourse of Bhagavan, which laid down the ideals for man to follow



to attain God. In this regard, Bhagavan referred to the ideals set by Lord Rama who meticulously adhered to Sathya and Dharma in life and faced all ordeals to uphold them. Man should develop devotion, purity and selflessness to attain the goal of his life, said Bhagavan.

MUSIC AND CULTURAL PROGRAMMES

Veda Chanting by European Veda Union

The sacred festival of Navaratri (nine-day worship of the Divine Mother) began on an auspicious note when over 50 devotees, both men and women, from Eastern European countries, namely, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia displayed their perfection and

This was followed by an enlightening talk by Sri Ajit Popat, an ardent devotee of Bhagavan from U.K., who spoke on the topic, “ABC of Life” and narrated His interactions with Bhagavan, sharing with devotees valuable lessons learnt by him at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan. Stressing the significance of silence and quietude in spirituality, Sri Popat remarked that man should realise the Self by practising inner silence and self-analysis. Sri Popat concluded his talk by narrating his touching personal story and offering total surrender at Bhagavan’s Lotus Feet. This was followed by Bhajans which concluded at 6.15 p.m. with Arati.

Devotional Music by U.K. Devotees

The programme on 17th October 2012 began at 4.30 p.m. with Veda chanting,



Veda chanting by devotees from Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia.

excellence in Veda chanting by chanting Vedic Mantras in Sai Kulwant Hall on 16th October 2012 for nearly 45 minutes. The participants represented European Veda Union, a unique movement which aims at uniting the entire continent of Europe through the message of the Vedas.

in which students of Prasanthi Nilayam and devotees from U.K. took part. After Veda chanting, noted musician from U.K. Ms. Roopa Panesar made an excellent presentation of Sitar music consisting mainly of Bhajans which included, “Hara Siva Sankara,” “Sankara Siva Sankara,” “Bolo Bolo Sab Mil Bolo Om Namah



Sivaya.” It was no doubt a sterling performance which earned the artiste the loud applause of the devotees. This was followed by a Bhajan medley by U.K. devotees who showcased their devotional fervour to the delight of devotees in the hall. At the conclusion of these two devotional music presentations, Roopa Panesar was honoured and a Sari was presented to her. All other participants were also felicitated and clothes were presented to them. This was followed by Bhajans led by Mandir Bhajan singers and distribution of Prasadam. The programme came to a close with Arati at 6.15 p.m.

U.K. devotees presented another programme on 25th October 2012 in the form of a beautiful musical medley. Beginning their programme with Veda chanting, they presented instrumental compositions and group songs in Telugu and Hindi which included, “Tu Hi Bhagavan Paramatma,” “Humko Tumse Pyar Kitna,” etc. This was followed by Bhajans which were also led by U.K. devotees. The programme came to a close with Arati at 6.00 p.m. after distribution of Prasadam to all.



Musical medley by U.K. devotees.

Music and Cultural Programmes by Students

On 18th October 2012, the students of Brindavan Campus offered a bouquet of devotional songs at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan. The programme comprised five solo songs, each one of which was surcharged with deep devotion and love of the singers for Bhagavan and showcased their rich musical acumen, suffusing the entire milieu with deep devotional fervour. The programme which started at 6.30 p.m. came to a close at 7.00 p.m. Bhajans followed this, which concluded



Devotional songs by Brindavan Campus students.

with the Bhajan sung by Bhagavan, “Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma.” The programme came to an end with Arati at 7.10 p.m.

The students of Anantapur Campus of the Institute offered their soulful musical tributes to Bhagavan on 19th October 2012. Beginning with a song dedicated to Lord Ganesh, the students next sang a Hindi song, “Mangala Karini Mohana Murti Sai Ma” (Oh Mother Sai, You are the embodiment of beauty and



Devotional songs by Anantapur Campus students.

auspiciousness), followed by a song in Telugu. They concluded their presentation with a song in Hindi, “Sai Ma, Tumhin Ho Hamare Jivan Ka Adhar” (Oh Mother Sai, You are the only support of our life). The session concluded with video screening of an excerpt from Bhagavan’s Divine Discourse and Bhajans. In His Discourse, Bhagavan exhorted the devotees to shed body attachment, develop attachment to the Self, fill their heart with love and experience unity since the same Atma is present in all. This was followed by distribution of Prasadam and Bhajans which concluded with video screening of the Bhajan, “Bhaja Govindam Bhaja Govindam” (recite the Name of Govinda) sung by Bhagavan, which all the devotees in the hall followed in chorus with great devotion. The programme came to a close with Arati at 6.45 p.m.

On 22nd October 2012, the students and faculty members of Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music, Prasanthi Nilayam offered their musical tributes to Bhagavan. Beginning their programme at



Musical tributes to Bhagavan by the students and faculty members of Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music.

6.10 p.m. with prayer to Lord Ganesh, they enthralled the audience with absorbing instrumental and vocal compositions, each of which showed their musical acumen and talent. They brought their programme to a close with a scintillating Sitar recital at 6.40 p.m. This was followed by Bhajans which concluded with the Bhajan, “Om Sivaya Om Sivaya” in the golden voice of Bhagavan. The programme came to an end with Arati at 7.00 p.m.

A very impressive dance ballet was performed jointly by Prasanthi Dance Troupe and students of Brindavan Campus, Muddenahalli Campus and Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam on 23rd October 2012. While the dancers performed dances, the theme was explained in the commentary and thematic songs. Set in the backdrop of the story of creation, the dance ballet emphasised the importance of Namasmarana and selfless service, depicting the scenes of Grama Seva and Nagar Sankirtan. It concluded with a beautiful dance to the tune of the song, “Sai Namasmaranam, Sai Rupa





A dance ballet by Prasanthi Dance Troupe and students.

Dhyanam” (chanting the Name of Sai and meditating on His Form). This was followed by Bhajans and distribution of Prasadam. Melodious singing of the song, “Madhura Madhura Murali Ghanashyama” by Bhagavan marked the conclusion of the programme. Arati was performed in the end at 7.15 p.m.

Mee Challani Needalo Entha Haayi Sai: A Dance Drama

On 20th October 2012, the students from various Sri Sathya Sai Deenajanoddharana Pathakam (project to help destitute children) centres of Andhra Pradesh performed a touching drama, “Mee Challani Needalo Entha Hayi Sai” (How blissful is the shelter of Your Grace, Sai!) as part of their Parthi



Drama by destitute children from Andhra Pradesh.

Yatra (pilgrimage to Puttaparthi) from 19th to 24th October 2012. Over 300 destitute children from 16 centres run by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Andhra Pradesh came to participate in this pilgrimage. The dance drama based on the life story of a student of a Sai Centre for destitute children showcased how these children were being groomed in these centres appropriately called, “Temples of Love,” so that they would grow up to become ideal citizens with noble qualities and high character. Touching story, good direction, sweet music and thrilling dances of the children made the drama an excellent presentation. At the conclusion of the drama, clothes were presented to the cast of the drama. This was followed by distribution of Prasadam and Bhajans which concluded with the Bhajan sung by Bhagavan, “Prema Mudita Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram.” The programme came to an end at 7.15 p.m. with Arati.

Deho Devalaya: A Dance Drama

Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital staff presented a beautiful drama, “Deho Devalaya” (body is the temple) on its 57th anniversary on 21st October 2012. Based on the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the drama showcased holistic approach to health which included physical, mental and spiritual dimensions of man’s well-being, in which healthy food and vitamins were as essential as meditation and contemplation of God. The story of the drama was unfolded in an interesting way through various organs, viz., eyes, lungs, heart, stomach, assuming the form



A scene from the drama, "Deho Devalaya."

of characters of the drama, prescribing do's and don'ts for a healthy and noble living. The drama conveyed the message effectively in an interesting way that man should consider the body as the temple of God and should maintain its purity and health by avoiding unhealthy foods and tendencies like tobacco, alcohol, hurry, worry and curry, and by practising love, kindness, meditation and Namasmara. Elevating theme, superb direction, excellent acting, perfect choreography, sweet music and thrilling dances made the drama an excellent presentation. At the conclusion of the drama, the hospital staff presented three soul-stirring devotional songs in Telugu and Hindi to the delight of listeners. In the end, all the participants were felicitated and offered clothes. This was followed by Bhajans and distribution of Prasadam. The programme concluded with the Bhajan, "Govinda Krishna Ja" in Bhagavan's golden voice, after which Arati was performed at 7.00 p.m. to mark the end of the programme.

An Absorbing Musical Presentation

An absorbing musical presentation was made by the renowned musical duo Ganesh and Kumaresh on 24th October

2012, the auspicious day of Vijaya Dasami. Beginning their programme at 6.00 p.m., they presented some thrilling musical tunes and excellent devotional songs which included, "Sri Ganesha Sivunikumara," "Rama, Rama, Rama Sai," "Madhava Keshava," and kept the audience mesmerised for nearly 45 minutes. At the conclusion of the programme, the duo was felicitated and shawls were offered to both Ganesh and Kumaresh while clothes were presented to the artistes who provided musical support to them. This was followed by Bhajans which concluded with the Bhajan, "Subrahmanyam Subrahmanyam" sung by Bhagavan. The programme ended with Arati at 7.20 p.m.

SRI SATHYA SAI GRAMA SEVA 2012

More than three lakh villagers in about 150 villages received Bhagavan's Prasadam consisting of food packets and clothes during the Grama Seva organised by Sri Sathya Sai educational institutions from 16th to 23rd October 2012. This Seva Yajna started by Bhagavan more than a decade ago is meant to infuse the spirit of selfless service in the students as Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna aims at imparting spiritual knowledge to them. Students and staff members from all the educational institutions of Bhagavan took part in the momentous task of reaching out to villagers and giving them the message of Bhagavan's love in the form of Prasadam.

The students and staff members designated to carry out this stupendous



Seva activity circumambulated the Bhajan Mandir amidst chanting of Vedic Mantras and singing of Bhajans, offered salutations at the Samadhi of Bhagavan and proceeded to different villages in more than 50 vehicles loaded with food packets and clothes for distribution everyday. On reaching the villages, one group of students conducted Nagar Sankirtan in the villages in which the villagers also participated while another group went round, chanting Vedic hymns. Thereafter, Bhagavan's Prasadam was offered to the villagers with great humility and love at their doorstep. While the students and staff of Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan and Muddenahalli campuses of the Institute along with students of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam performed the task of distribution in villages from 16th to 23rd October 2012, the students and staff of Anantapur Campus performed this task in Prasanthi Nilayam on 24th October 2012. The work of preparing the food packets for



Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva 2012.

distribution was also done by the students of Anantapur Campus. They were helped in this task by the students of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam and students of Nursing College. A group of more than 20 youth specially came from U.K. to participate in Grama Seva and went to villages on all the days of Grama Seva to help in the distribution of Prasadam to villagers.

Prema Mahima 2013 Diaries and Calendars 2013 are available

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Destination	5 diaries	6 diaries	7 diaries	8 diaries	9 diaries	Additional unit
Overseas	Rs 2215	Rs 2550	Rs 3075	Rs 3490	Rs 3825	Rs 525
India	Rs 600	Rs 710	Rs 830	Rs 940		Rs 145

Calendars – size in inches	Destination within India	Destination Overseas Airmail BP
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UNBOUNDED DIVINE GRACE



S.S. Naganand



ADI SANKARA IN THE FIRST stanza of “Viveka Choodamani” names three essential things which are very difficult to get to realise God and attain salvation; one of those is the company of Maha Purushas or Great Beings. It is possible to get this by many generations of devotion and prayer coupled, most importantly, with Divine Grace. Therefore, the occasion and opportunity to come near Great Beings is itself an act of blessing. I am fortunate in having this blessing right from the time I was around 10 years of age.

Bhagavan Visits our House

My first memory of Bhagavan Baba’s Darshan was in the late 1960s when I had accompanied my parents to the residence of a devotee in Basavanagudi, Bengaluru. Baba was young, loving, compassionate and a great singer. I remember the sight of Bhagavan being offered Mangalarati by a group of women devotees in that house.

Since my late father Sri S.G. Sundaraswamy, a lawyer, was a devotee of Baba, I had many occasions to come close to Baba. A few years after the Brindavan College was started, Bhagavan Baba visited our house in 1976. He spent one evening and gave us immense joy of sitting with Him for dinner. He posed for photographs with all the dignitaries which included many lawyers and judges, apart from our close relatives. One of the photographs from that visit which I cherish is Bhagavan seated on a sofa with His right palm on His heart. That photograph now adorns the Puja room of our house in which we reside today at Bengaluru. Bhagavan Baba blessed us with a visit to this house on 2nd June 2000. As He entered the house, He walked straight into the Puja room and keenly observed everything including the photographs of deities. His attention fell upon the picture of the year 1976. His eyes lit up and He gave a broad smile. Before He could say anything, I mentioned that this photograph had been taken during Swami's earlier visit to our house. He immediately retorted with a smile, "Not this house, old house – father's house." He then recounted His visit in graphic detail, the time He spent there and the people who were present as though the visit was just a few days earlier.

Bountiful Grace on the Family

In between these two visits, we were drawn closer to Bhagavan in many ways. On His Birthday in 1978, we were at Prasanthi Nilayam and the whole family was invited to Poornachandra residence

It is indeed our great good fortune that His coming into our life gave us a sense of fulfilment. He will always be part and parcel of everything we do, all the time and during every breath that we take. He continues to be with us guiding us in a form which is imperceptible to the five senses. His promise is to be with us, and that is not dependant on whether Swami is in His physical form or not. He is always with us, touching our lives constantly and reminding us that He is always there.

of Bhagavan and showered with gifts. The gift to me was a silver ring. But the most valuable gift was a blessing with the words 'you are a Vidyarthi, do not become Vishayarthi,' meaning that your aim should be to pursue knowledge and not material objects and comforts. That blessing came at the time when I had just taken my Intermediate Chartered Accountancy examination. With those words ringing in my ears all the time, I completed three professional degrees before I completed my 22nd year.

In the year 1981 after I qualified both as Lawyer and Chartered Accountant, we sought Swami's blessings for my marriage to a girl of my choice from Mumbai. Swami allayed all apprehensions and blessed the marriage. He assured my father that He would look after our family and there was no cause for concern or worry. He assured



that the girl was ideal for our family. What more can one expect than such Divine Blessing?

Swami's loving grace flowed unceasingly. There was not a single occasion which missed His attention. Not once did Swami skip a major event in our life without being a part of it. At the time of birth of our first daughter Kamala in 1982, there was some complication and my wife was in great distress. Within 15 days, Baba invited us and blessed the mother and child, saying, "There is nothing to worry; I will take care of everything." My wife recovered and the girl is now grown into a mother of two children. In a similar manner, the birth of our second and third daughters was heralded by Swami's blessing. Thereafter, He invited us very often for interviews.

On one occasion, He told us in advance that He would call the whole family for an interview next week. It was very unusual that Bhagavan gave such advance intimation. There was great excitement and fervour in the family. The girls debated as to what they would do to show their devotion to Bhagavan and to make Him happy. Finally, they selected the programme. The day arrived. As Swami had promised, we were called for interview at Trayee Brindavan. Except our family, no one else was called for interview. The girls sought permission to sing a Devaranama (devotional song) for Bhagavan. He smiled, listened with closed eyes and sang along with the girls. The song was a Purandaradasa Kriti, "Sada Yenna Hridayadalli Vasa Mado Srihari"

(Oh Lord, please do reside in my heart all the time) selected by Kamala. The whole of Trayee Brindavan reverberated with the song. This song was followed by the singing of Narayaneeyam (story of Lord Narayana) by my wife, extolling the virtues of Narayana at the Lotus Feet of the Kali Yuga Avatar. Swami was immensely pleased and blessed the whole family with gifts.

Swami's gaze and attention never seemed to leave our family. When all of us were planning a holiday to Russia, Swami called us for a series of interviews and gifted three gold chains to my daughters. We realised later, on careful scrutiny that each chain was of a different length. Swami blessed us with fruits also. As we were leaving Brindavan, a Seva Dal volunteer informed us that a box was to be placed in my car. As I was not expecting any such gift from Brindavan, I opened the box and found Indian sweets weighing about 20 kg in it. I was perplexed as to what should be done with the sweets as we were flying the same evening to Russia. I was inspired to take these sweets with me. I packed them in another suitcase and carried them to Russia, not knowing what I would do with them in Russia. After some contact with the local devotees in Moscow, I finally contacted a lady devotee who invited us to her house for Bhajans. Again, I was inspired to carry the sweets to her house. When I informed them that I had brought sweets from Brindavan, they were thrilled and showed great delight. They informed me that they were expecting Bhagavan to



send sweets as they had prayed to Him a few days earlier to send Prasadam for the commencement of their Narayana Seva at an orphanage the following weekend. The Divine Player had demonstrated how He transcends countries, people and time to come to the aid of His devotees.

The unceasing love and concern of Baba is seen from a number of episodes spread over many years. One episode relates to our family visit to China. Bhagavan Baba was in residence at Brindavan. I mentioned to Him that we were planning a trip to China but my wife was hesitating to join us as my daughter had exams. Next day during Darshan, Baba stopped in front of my wife and told her not to worry about daughter's exams and that Bhagavan would take care of her during our trip to China. My wife then mentioned to Baba that my daughter's birthday fell during the trip. Baba immediately told her to ask my daughter to be at Brindavan on her birthday and that He would bless her. With this assurance, my wife agreed to join us on the trip. Baba also told us that He would be with us always on the trip. At the fag end of our visit when we were in Beijing, on the day of my daughter's birthday, we went to a Friendship Store to do some shopping. As we entered the store we were guided to the first floor. We walked around. What struck my eye from a distance was a beautiful stone plaque with Baba etched on it. I went to the counter, surprised to find Baba in that store, made enquiries if that item was for sale. The sales person was not sure. After making enquiries with

his supervisor, he asked me, if I knew who Baba was, while telling me that Baba lives in India. I paid the price and purchased the item and brought it to our hotel room and told my wife that Swami had sent a gift for us. She was overjoyed when I opened the parcel and showed her Baba's plaque. She could not believe her eyes. Baba had kept His words that "He would be with us all the time." On the same day, Baba called my daughter at Brindavan and blessed her, saying that her parents were having a nice time in China.

The Little Devotee of Baba

The birth of our grand-child in 2009 was similarly heralded by Bhagavan Baba's grace. During an interview, Swami asked my daughter, "Yenu Samachara?" meaning "what news?" This is a typical way in which elders would enquire if anyone was in the family way, especially a newly-married woman. My daughter blushed and denied any knowledge. A few days later, it was confirmed by the doctors that she was in the family way. Swami made loving enquiries about her condition all the time. A child (daughter) was born on Vijaya Dasami day. Swami continued His interest in the child and she became a great devotee in a short time. She would sit with rapt attention for hours for Swami's Darshan and would greet Him on His arrival. She always accompanied us when we visited Prasanthi Nilayam, so much so that Bhagavan once asked me if the child was living with us or her parents. I informed Baba that the child was so devoted to Him that she insisted on coming



with us every time we came to Puttaparthi and enjoyed Darshan every time. I also informed Baba that she always insisted on listening to Bhajans and Swami's Arati before going to bed. Baba too reciprocated to this tiny devotee of less than two years age, and many times spoke to her and greeted her with sparkling eyes, touching her cheek and giving her Padanamaskar. After Baba's Maha Samadhi, she insisted on coming for His Darshan. She went around the casket containing Baba's body, did a Sashtanga Namaskar and said, "Bye Baba" just as she used to greet Him after Darshan every time. A few days later, she told us that Baba had told her that He was tired, thirsty and was resting and that He would come back. This is how Baba relates and reciprocates to His little devotees who love Him.

Responsibilities in Swami's Trusts

In the midst of a hectic professional life, family responsibilities and participation in devotional activities in our family temple, Sri Channakeshavaswamy Temple at Sondekoppa near Bengaluru, I often wonder how Swami used to make it possible for me to find the time to discharge the responsibilities in Swami's Trusts. I recall that when the Super Speciality Hospital at Bengaluru was being built in the year 2000, Bhagavan directed me to visit the project site to see the progress of the work. After the visit, the following day, our whole family was called for an interview at Brindavan. Swami was extremely pleased with the progress of the work though I told Him that there were some approvals needed for the project. Suddenly, Swami

After some contact with the local devotees in Moscow, I finally contacted a lady devotee who invited us to her house for Bhajans. Again, I was inspired to carry the sweets to her house. When I informed them that I had brought sweets from Brindavan, they were thrilled and showed great delight. They informed me that they were expecting Bhagavan to send sweets as they had prayed to Him a few days earlier to send Prasadam for the commencement of their Narayana Seva at an orphanage the following weekend. The Divine Player had demonstrated how He transcends countries, people and time to come to the aid of His devotees.

mentioned to me that He wanted me to be a Trustee in Sri Sathya Sai Medical Trust. I was deeply moved. I could not contain my shock. I took Swami's hands into my hands and submitted that I was very young, inexperienced in medical field, with a lot of family and professional responsibilities as I lost my father a few years earlier. I prayed that I may be excused and some other elder devotee may be entrusted with the responsibility. Swami did not relent. He said that He would do everything and assured me that my presence would be enough. I then touched Swami's Lotus Feet and prayed to Him to bless me in that new position and surrendered to His Will, saying that Swami alone should give me the strength to discharge my duties.



True to His word, Swami always kept this in His mind whenever interacting with me. Those years, Swami used to give Darshan at Prasanthi Nilayam at 6.40 a.m. I used to leave my house at Bengaluru at 3.00 a.m. and reach in time for Darshan. My wife invariably accompanied me. When I had to report on any subject to Baba or take instructions or guidance on any issue, Swami would come near me and quietly whisper, "3.00 o'clock." The first person to be invited to the interview room was myself. Swami would attend to the official business in a few minutes and spend more than an hour talking about spirituality, family life, children, education and guidance to my wife in her spiritual pursuits. At the end of the interview, He would ask what my programme was and whenever I reported that I would leave with Baba's permission, He would bless us profusely and tell me to come back soon. There was never an occasion when I had to wait because Baba always knew my various responsibilities and made it possible to be a part of His Mission by going out of the way to accommodate me.

Our minds are suffused with the memories of Bhagavan Baba. We miss His physical form. We used to rush to Him at the drop of a hat and place all our problems before Him. He showered immeasurable love and affection on us. He gave us fortitude and strength in our difficult times, assured us joy and showered blessings on us. Each person in four generations of our family had a unique relationship with Bhagavan Baba. It is indeed our great good fortune that His coming into our life gave us a sense of fulfilment. He will always be part and parcel of everything we do, all the time and during every breath that we take. He continues to be with us guiding us in a form which is imperceptible to the five senses. His promise is to be with us, and that is not dependant on whether Swami is in His physical form or not. He is always with us, touching our lives constantly and reminding us that He is always there.

(An advocate by profession, the author, Sri S.S. Naganand, is a Trustee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.)

Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital

Prasanthi Nilayam -515134

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Apply to the Medical Superintendent, Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam, with full bio-data and a photograph immediately.

– Medical Superintendent

From our Archives

THE WAY TO SUPREME PEACE

TRUE BEAUTY LIES IN GOOD QUALITIES

IN THE CAVITY OF THE HEART of man, in that sublime Akasha (space), God resides associated with the Self principle, as sunshine exists associated with shadow. Light and shade are twin birds. Shade is caused by

Self) and the Brahman (universal Self) related to each other as One Inseparable Entity. The Jivi as the shadow exists in and through Brahman and partakes of the same divine splendour. Every individual has to become aware of this identity.



Modern education is confined to what promotes selfishness and self-interest. What ought to be learnt is how to be helpful to others and how to realise the Self. Education should make one realise the unity of all beings. I cannot find any truly educated person wherever I turn. All appear to be uneducated. Many read books, but mere bookish knowledge is not education. Degrees do not make an educated person. Without wisdom and good qualities, education has no meaning.

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light; shade includes light, for it declares the adjacence of light; it needs the presence of light. They are fundamentally inseparable. So too are the Jivi (individual

The Body is a Chariot and the Charioteer is Buddhi

The shadows are many and varied, though the light is One. When the One is



reflected in many, in the multitude of Jivis, it appears as the Self in each, which watches unaffected as the witness. The Atma is eternal; it is the source of bliss. However, since it is enclosed in flesh, bone and skin, man deludes himself into believing that the outer covering and not the inner core is the source of bliss. The foremost duty of man to himself is, therefore, to penetrate through these sheaths and imbibe the higher bliss which his Atmic core alone can confer. Everyone must, in his own best interest, strive to attain that unifying principle that is his inner treasure. Of all Sadhanas (spiritual exercises), this is the most pertinent – the process of achieving this closeness. For, Sadhana means the endeavour and the effort to gain the desired object.

The body is a chariot. The charioteer is the principle of Buddhi (intellect). The senses are the horses. The reins that regulate and restrain the horses are the Manas (mind). When the mind wavers and wanders, not having stability of purpose, the horses run helter-skelter, endangering even the charioteer, Buddhi.

Experience the Unity of Speech, Mind and Atma

Speech is an important function of the senses and it serves the whims of the mind. So, one has to control the mind and not pollute it with greed for sense pleasures. Nor should the mind be tossed about on the waves of 'yes' and 'no', of acceptance and rejection, of resolutions and hesitations. The mind has to act as the associate of Buddhi. Speech subserving the mind and

mind subserving the intellect – this is the way to bring about Prasanthi, the Supreme Peace. And, note this further point: slowly and steadily, instruct the intellect to turn towards the Atma. Speech with the mind, mind with intellect and intellect illumined by the Atma – this ensures the genuine goal of man.

If we try to find out what is at the root of all the troubles and worries men experience today, it will be seen that man's abuse of the five elements is the cause. Therefore, see good, hear what is good, and be good. When people behave in this manner, the five elements will shower their benefits on them. It is only when man secures the grace of the five elements will he experience the grace of the Divine. How can we get the grace of the elements, which nourish and sustain us, if we misuse them?

Travesty of Progress in Education

This is the kind of progress that the world has made.

*Biting the hand that feeds,
Reviling the preceptor who imparts
knowledge,
This is the 'progress' in education
today.
People seek a good life, position and
wealth.
But they do not seek good qualities,
Right knowledge and right conduct.
Wealth has become all-important
and righteousness has receded.
This is the 'progress' in education
today.
Character and morality are confined to
books.*



The mind is totally polluted.

All actions are based on selfishness.

This is the 'progress' in education today.

(Telugu Poem)

Can this be real 'progress' at all? Are these the things that should be learnt by anyone? All that is learnt today serves only to pollute the heart. Modern education is confined to what promotes selfishness and self-interest. What ought to be learnt is how to be helpful to others and how to realise the Self. Education should make one realise the unity of all beings. I cannot find any truly educated person wherever I turn. All appear to be uneducated. Many read books, but mere bookish knowledge is not education. Degrees do not make an educated person. Without wisdom and good qualities, education has no meaning.

How to Divinise Human Life

Education should be for leading a good life and not for earning a livelihood. To learn from a scientist the chemical composition of water is a kind

of knowledge, which may help a man to get a job. But how to make the right use of water so that all can share its benefits is knowledge of the spirit. This higher knowledge elevates life and makes it meaningful. When worldly knowledge and spiritual knowledge come together, human life is divinised.

There is a Kannada saying: "For water, lotus is the ornament. For a town, the home is the ornament. For the ocean, the waves are the ornament. For the sky, the moon is the ornament. For man's life, virtue is the ornament." Without good qualities, all other ornaments are worthless. The beauty created by the Divine cannot be excelled by any other ornament. It is that beauty which should be esteemed. Beauty is God. Why attempt to enhance it? When you have natural beauty, why go after artificial cosmetics? True beauty lies in good qualities.

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

...continued from page 360

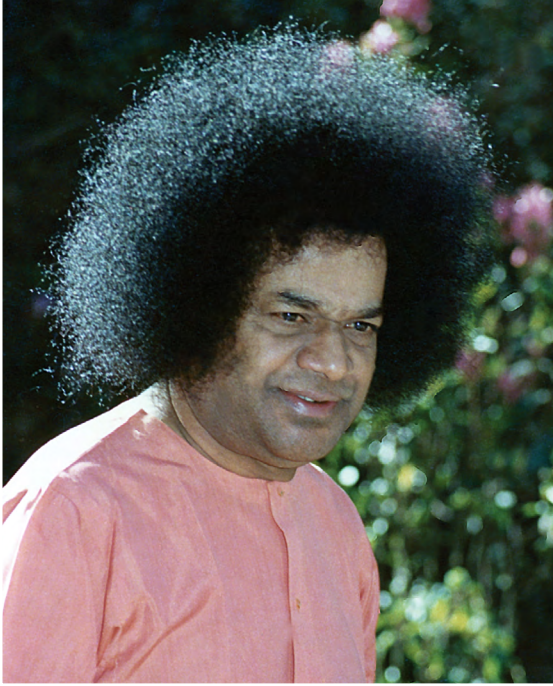
Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music, Prasanthi Nilayam gave a fine Sitar recital in Sai Kulwant Hall on 15th October 2012. Beginning her recital at 5.00 p.m., the noted musician displayed her musical acumen in two classical pieces and concluded her recital with the Bhajan, "Ram Naam Tarakam Sada Bhajore" (constantly

chant the liberating Name of Rama). At the conclusion of this enthralling Carnatic music recital, the artiste was honoured with a Sari and gifts. Clothes and gifts were also presented to the artistes who gave support to her on tabla and tanpura. This was followed by Bhajans. The programme came to a close with Arati at 6.00 p.m.



R.J. Rathnakar

BHAGAVAN IS ALWAYS WITH US



Swami's love is to be felt within oneself. We in ignorance search for happiness and peace in the outside world, forgetting that these are inseparable properties of God present within everybody. It is only when we turn inward that we find Bhagavan who is enshrined in us.

BHAGAVAN SHOWERS HIS grace of Divine Love equally on all His children, irrespective of their cast, creed, nation, religion or language. It is natural for the sun to radiate its light and warmth all around equally. When sun rises, some people go for earning their living, some involve in good works and some use the same light for carrying out evil deeds. Still, Bhagavan is so loving that He showers His grace equally on all, the good and the bad. No blemish could be rubbed on to the purity of Swami's Love.

Bhagavan's Love Attracts all

Bhagavan is full of Divine Nectar. When we experience the Love of Bhagavan, we are filled with unimaginable joy. It is for this joy that we all devotees throng Prasanthi Nilayam again and again from different parts of the world. As Bhagavan says, "The nectar of the flower does not invite the honey bee to come and partake of it, but it is the honey bee which goes searching for the nectar." Likewise, we all devotees were attracted to Bhagavan, and even now the same love is drawing devotees from all over the world.

What we require is unwavering faith and one-pointed devotion. Intense devotion has the ability to change any person and every person in this world.

As Bhagavan says, “A piece of cold black coal can be transformed into a glowing red hot fiery object by association with fire.” In the same way, by associating himself with God-thoughts and good thoughts, a devotee gets more and more energised and brighter.

We cannot detach the fragrance of the rose from the rose flower. Similarly, the form and formless are inseparable. We saw Bhagavan’s form and experienced His formless and all-pervasive divinity wherever we were; whenever we thought of Him, His beautiful form filled our minds and hearts. Just because we cannot see His form, it does not mean that He is not around. The formless Bhagavan is felt more and more in each devotee’s heart and that has been the experience of the millions of devotees across the globe.

Enlightening Experience in Hyde Park, London

For me, it has been a most wonderful and enlightening journey at His Lotus Feet. When we are tuned to Bhagavan, what we experience is unlimited love and divinity. Here I would like to share with the readers a beautiful experience that once Bhagavan blessed me with.

It so happened that I had to go to London in November 2000. A day prior to my departure, I came to Prasanthi Nilayam from Bengaluru to inform Swami and get His blessings. Due to some unavoidable circumstances, I could not get the opportunity to inform Swami that day. The same night, I had to take a flight from Bengaluru for London. It was a mistake

on my part that I came for Bhagavan’s blessings only after booking my ticket. As though to test me, Swami did not grant me the opportunity that day. Mentally, I sought Swami’s blessings and prayed to Him to be with me during my trip to London. As there was no other go, I left immediately.

When I alighted at London airport, I again prayed to Bhagavan to be with me during my trip. There, I completed my work in two days. As the next day happened to be a Sunday, I wanted to go on a tour of London. I went to see Hyde Park as I was informed that it was a beautiful garden and worth seeing.

There were other visitors like me in the Hyde Park. As I was having a stroll in the Park, I noticed someone at a distance. It so happened that as he looked at me, I also looked at him. In fact, I observed that he was looking at me continuously and coming towards me. That was my first visit to London and it was like a meeting between two strangers in the Hyde Park.

Slowly, he came closer to me. He was not a tall person and at the same time not short in stature either. He was a handsome man with curly hair. He came straight towards me and stood before me. I was stunned when he suddenly asked this question looking straight into my eyes, “Do you know Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba?” For a minute, I was dumbfounded. In Hyde Park, in the city of London, how could a stranger approach me and ask this question!

He did not stop at that. He took out Swami’s photograph from his pocket,



showed it to me and said, “He is Sathya Sai Baba.” That incident is still fresh in my mind as if it happened yesterday.

Regaining my composure, I also took out a photo of Swami from my wallet and showed it to him. His facial expression indicated that he was already aware of it. Giving the address of a nearby Sai Bhajan Mandir, he said, “There devotees conduct Bhajans very well. Go and see.” He walked a few steps with me putting his hand on my shoulder and went his way, saying, he had some work.

Who was he? Who would have told him about me? I was not known to anyone there. Nor did I inform anyone about my arrival. I did not say a word to anyone even casually either about Puttaparthi or about Bhagavan. This was a matter of great surprise to me.

Let us Treasure Bhagavan in our Hearts

After returning from London, I reached Prasanthi Nilayam to participate in Bhagavan’s Birthday celebrations. As I stood in front of Bhagavan in His residence, He said, “What? It seems you went to London. Your father told Me.” Immediately, I fell at His feet and sought His forgiveness. With a beautiful smile dancing on His lips, He asked, “**Did anyone in London ask you about Swami?**” His all-knowing smile and the meaningful question immediately reminded me of the stranger I met in the Hyde Park.

Who else can do this except our Swami! How can we repay our debt of gratitude to Bhagavan, the ocean of compassion! He

We saw Bhagavan’s form and experienced His formless and all-pervasive divinity wherever we were; whenever we thought of Him, His beautiful form filled our minds and hearts. Just because we cannot see His form, it does not mean that He is not around. The formless Bhagavan is felt more and more in each devotee’s heart and that has been the experience of the millions of devotees across the globe.

makes us aware that He is always with us and protects us just as the eyelids protect the eyes!

The essential qualities which make us dear to Bhagavan are a clean mind, a pure heart, the speech based only on truth and the body which is used in the service of humanity. Swami’s love is to be felt within oneself. We in ignorance search for happiness and peace in the outside world, forgetting that these are inseparable properties of God present within everybody. It is only when we turn inward that we find Bhagavan who is enshrined in us.

Let us all make His message our lives and lead a divine life. I pray Swami to bless us all so that we turn inward and find Him in our hearts.

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



HUMAN FACETS OF SWAMI

Prof. J. Shashidhara Prasad

Experiences of Swami's Divine Leelas are specific to individuals. These experiences have to be recorded and shared. But the devotees should pay attention to Leelas of the Avatar and the message of His life without being enamoured by the individual sharing the experiences. The person sharing the experiences is like a big zero. It will be given some value only when associated with Bhagavan.

AN AVATAR IS AN unfathomable source of spiritual energy. Making Himself as the centre, He creates a field of spiritual energy and draws everyone towards it just as a black hole draws every object that comes into its field. Anyone who is drawn into this field by the Divine Will experiences enlightenment and freedom from worldly and mundane desires and merges in the Divine Love.

An Avatar Sets Great Ideals

The impact and work of the Avatar will be unfolded in great magnitude and extensively when the Avatar leaves the physical frame. The purpose of the physical manifestation is to exhibit to humanity worshipful human form, to establish ideals

for the living beings and to give new message of hope in the contemporary context and requirements which are geared to the mindset of that Yuga (Age). If the Avatar possessed only non-human elements, then His life could not be an example for lesser mortals. This is exemplified by the oft-repeated statement of Bhagavan in His Discourses, "My Life

is My Message." The message of the Avatar turns away the people from their unfulfilled worldly desires and draws them to a particular spiritual centre. The real mission of the Avatar begins only when He starts drawing people into His fold. The Avatar is like a powerful beacon of light which illumines our intellect to enable us to perceive the truth in right perspective.

The Avatar will switch over from the divine to the human or the human to the divine at His Will just like the wave-particle duality of matter. It will be very difficult to discern His form. It will turn out to be a great blunder on the part of any devotee if he / she visualises the Avatar just by the day-to-day mundane life and activities without taking into cognisance His infinite dimension. It will be like considering the



house as just the door. In that case, the devotee will be engulfed by Yoga Maya (delusion Willed by the Divine). The human aspects of the Avatar will, however, reveal to us the examples to emulate at our level in the context of the Age.

Do not Get Deluded by the Human Aspect of the Avatar

Experiences of Swami's Divine Leelas are specific to individuals. These experiences have to be recorded and shared. But the devotees should pay attention to Leelas of the Avatar and the message of His life without being enamoured by the individual sharing the experiences. The person sharing the experiences is like a big zero. It will be given some value only when associated with Bhagavan. The magnitude of the number getting associated with zero may vary from person to person, depending upon the past good deeds and spiritual connection to Bhagavan. One should not, therefore, attribute any greatness to the individual sharing the experiences as he is just the medium for the Avatar. It is to be noted that the Avatar knows everything but remains silent as such, exhibiting childlike demeanour as if He knows nothing. This may sometimes delude a devotee to think that He is not Divine.

Practical Lessons from Bhagavan's Life

I would like to share a few experiences which clearly indicate human facets of our Beloved Bhagavan.

After I assumed charge as the Vice Chancellor of this hallowed Institution, I

was occupying Shanti Bhavan for a month. I wanted to move to the accommodation in which the earlier Vice Chancellors stayed. Once during dinner time, I requested Swami to permit me to shift. Immediately, He asked Sri Chakravarthi to take up construction of a bungalow for the Vice Chancellor and quarters for the faculty. I believe this reaction of Swami was geared to the fact that as Vice Chancellor of University of Mysore, I was staying in a palatial bungalow which Swami had visited on a few occasions. Perhaps He wanted to get my reaction. Quickly, I responded that I would like to move to W-1/A-7 as it was recently painted and fit for occupying. Swami looked into the Panchanga (almanac) and blessed me to occupy, specifying the date and time.

I used to put up a number of proposals to Swami for His blessings and approval. He would always caution me that I should strictly follow the rules and regulations of the government. Swami used to carefully listen and give proper guidance and approval. Once I had to explain the necessity of deputing our faculty for workshops and conferences so that they were exposed to the current trends in research and higher education. He blessed the idea and indicated that I was the right judge and should carefully decide on these matters. Once Swami was visibly upset when one of our faculty members had left the university and had joined some other organisation but who was permitted to come back after a few years. The message of Swami is that one should be loyal to the institution which has helped one to grow and that one



should not hop from place to place which is going to affect the academic activities / programmes of the institutions.

Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, had agreed to come as Chief Guest to the 29th Convocation at the Will of Swami. His office had earmarked only one hour time for the programme as the Parliament Session started on that day itself. This was known to Bhagavan. Swami did not start His Benedictory Discourse after one hour when some of us requested Him. He was conscious of the busy schedule of the Prime Minister. His intention was that the Prime Minister should leave the venue as per the programme sent by his office and then He would give His Benedictory Address. Beloved Swami blessed the Prime Minister and his family so that they could leave. But the Prime Minister decided to sit through Swami's Benedictory Address. The subtle message of Swami is that one should appreciate the responsibilities of persons and accommodate them to attend to the matters of importance.

The Deepavali festival of 2010 was organised in a grand manner in the Hill View Stadium. It was out of the world. Those of us who were sitting close to Swami and watching could experience the childlike expression whenever the sky was illuminated by fireworks, indicating that God is like a child with unbiased care and love for everything animate and inanimate in His creation.

It was decided to have the Sports Meet of 2011 on two days with Bhagavan's

It will turn out to be a great blunder on the part of any devotee if he / she visualises the Avatar just by the day-to-day mundane life and activities without taking into cognisance His infinite dimension. It will be like considering the house as just the door. In that case, the devotee will be engulfed by Yoga Maya (delusion Willed by the Divine). The human aspects of the Avatar will, however, reveal to us the examples to emulate at our level in the context of the Age.

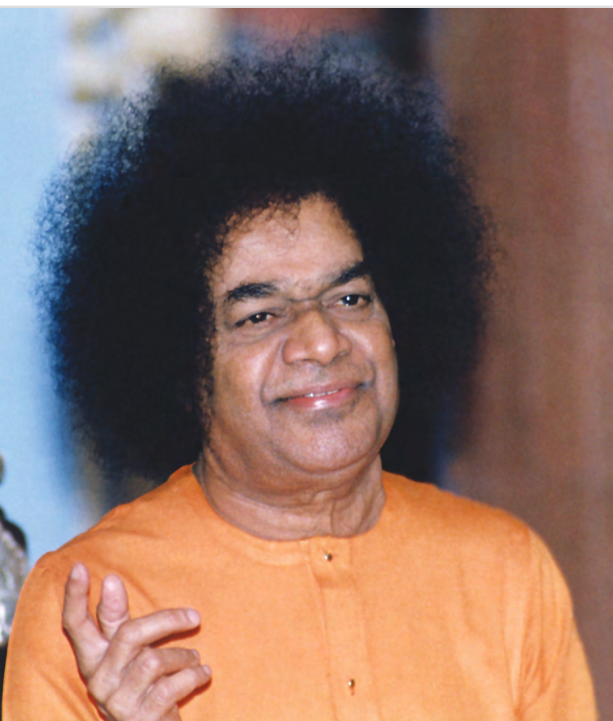
permission. The stadium was fully illuminated so as to accommodate the programme late in the evening also. When the timings of the events were put up before Swami, His thoughts were geared reflexively to devotees' convenience. During January, there will be scorching sun during forenoon and biting cold in the evening. Swami drew our attention to this situation and to the fact that there was no shade / protection for devotees who came to witness the events, either from hot sun or cold. We were moved by His anxiety and requested Him to bless the Meet at any time that will be good for the devotees, at His Divine Will. This indicates His perpetual love and care for His devotees.

(The author, Prof. J. Shashidhara Prasad, is the Vice Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.)

HAPPINESS IS UNION WITH GOD

Dr. Narendranath Reddy

- By constant repetition of His sweet Name, contemplation of His beautiful Divine Form, and most importantly by practising His universal and eternal message in our daily life, with steady faith and perseverance, we will reach the supreme goal that Sai and we are one.



OUR LOVING LORD SAI, WHO is our divine mother and father, is protecting us, guarding us and guiding us every moment of our life. We cannot express our gratitude in words for the infinite love, grace and blessings we have received from our Divine Mother Sai.

Four Steps on Man's Spiritual Journey

Once I asked Swami how I could express my gratitude for everything He has done for me and my family. Swami replied, "Can you do one thing for Me?" I said, "Yes" and expected Swami would ask me to do a major project in His divine mission. To my surprise, Swami said, "Be happy, be happy, be happy." At first, it looked very simple but after deep contemplation, I came to realise that happiness is in fact the ultimate goal of life. Swami says, "Happiness is Union with God," which is the purpose of human life. Swami sings beautifully, "Love is My Form; Bliss is My Food." How does one achieve this goal? The answer is in His name 'Sai Baba;' **SAI** - "**See Always Inside**," and then we experience **BABA**, "**Being, Awareness, Bliss and Atma**."

Swami gives a four-fold formula – Salokyam, Sameepyam, Sarupyam, and Sayujyam (perception, proximity, identity, merger) to take us to this goal. We need to go forward from the stage of Salokyam to the ultimate goal of Sayujyam, which is the realisation that Sai and we are one.

The journey of a spiritual seeker takes him forward from Dvaita to Advaita (duality to non-duality), from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, from death (identification with the body) to immortality (realising the Atmic nature), from diversity to unity, and from the unreality of the ephemeral world to the reality of changeless divinity.

Salokyam: The first stage is Salokyam (perception of the Divine), in which we come into the world of the Divine. In the beginning, we come into the Sai fold only by His Divine Grace. Then, as we trek along this spiritual path, which is like walking on a razor's edge, we need a good and perfect guide, such as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa or Sri Ramana Maharshi. Indeed we are blessed to have Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Lord Supreme, as our Guru, guide and God.

Another divine blessing is to be contemporaries of the Kali Yuga Poornavatar, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the embodiment of love. From Sathya Sai, we receive these three blessings: His Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan (vision, touch and conversation). *Darshanam Papa Nashanam* (vision of the Lord destroys all sins). Just by looking at Him, even at a picture of Him, our sins are washed away. *Sparshanam Karma Vimochanam* (His touch destroys the bondage of Karma). Once we touch Him, all our Karma is burnt away. *Sambhashanam Sankatanashanam* (When we converse with Him, all our troubles are gone).

Swami wants us to move forward from the stage of Salokyam to Sayujyam. Jesus said, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Also, Lord Krishna said, "Manusyanam Sahasresu Kascid Yatati Siddhaye, Yatatam Api Siddhanam Kascin Maam Vetti Tattvatah" (Of the millions of people who are in search of Me, only a handful realise Me). Swami gave a beautiful example. Out of thousands of flowers on a tree, only a few become fruits. Many fall off while still a flower and some as unripe fruit; only a few remain to become ripened fruit.

Swami says, "No one can come to Me or to Puttaparthi unless I have called him." So, we have come into His fold because we are fortunate to have been called by Him, and He knows when and how to call us.

Since early childhood, I prayed to Shirdi Sai Baba without knowing the truth that Sathya Sai and Shirdi Sai are the same. In my first interview, I asked Swami as to why I had to wait for so many years to be with Him. Swami immediately replied with three illuminating examples. He said, "As a doctor, you know that one does not operate on a cataract until it matures. When there is a wound, you wait until it heals and the scab falls off by itself; if instead you peel the scab off early, it will bleed and the healing process will be delayed. When



the fruit is fully ripe, it will fall from the tree by itself and will be sweet and tasty. But if you pluck it when it is unripe, it will not be sweet. So, for everything there is a proper time. Similarly, this is the right time for you to be with Me.” Thus, everything is ordained by His Divine Will, and all of us should be grateful for being drawn to His Divine Lotus Feet, as no one can come to Swami without His Will.

When Swami calls, we are drawn to Him like a needle to a magnet, despite our own wishes and plans. I met a young German man who related how he had come to Swami. He had accompanied his wife, a devotee of Swami, who was going to Puttaparthi. This gentleman worked as an executive in a big corporation and was not interested in visiting Swami or Puttaparthi. He told his wife, “I’m not going with you to Puttaparthi; go and see your Guru, and when you finish your visit, come and join me in Bengaluru.” The couple took an express train from Delhi to Bengaluru. By Sai incidence, unexpectedly the train stopped at Dharmavaram station, which is very close to Puttaparthi. A fellow passenger told his wife, “This place is close to Puttaparthi; why don’t you disembark here instead of going all the way to Bengaluru?” It was around 2.00 a.m., and the husband did not want his wife to travel alone to a remote village at such a late hour. So, against his own plan and wishes, he got off the train and went to Puttaparthi along with his wife. Then, after one Darshan of Swami, he forgot all about Bengaluru and became an ardent devotee.

This demonstrates how Swami can draw us into His fold even if we are thousands of miles away and despite our intentions.

When we come into the fold of Sai, we receive from Him the three divine gifts of Nama (the divine Name), Rupa (form) and Leela (sport). His beautiful form, sweet name and wonderful Leelas are the greatest gifts and treasures. We should count our blessings and make use of them by translating His message into our daily life.

Samee pyam: The next stage is Samee pyam (proximity to the Divine): Having seen Swami and come into His fold, we want to be near to Swami. Not only near, but we want to be both near and dear to Swami. Swami says God is like a lotus flower. The frogs may sit very near the lotus but don’t derive any benefit from doing so. In contrast, honey bees come from far away and enjoy the honey from the lotus. Though physical proximity to the Lord is desirable and enjoyable, it is more important to be dear to the Lord by loving Him and serving Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, from wherever we are.

At one time, the students were cleaning Swami’s room and storage area as per His instructions. During the cleanup, a student came across a tiger’s skin and was wondering what to do with it. Our all-knowing Lord said in jest, “Take it and go to the Himalayas and meditate.” The student, being a good devotee, said, “Yes, Swami. I will go.” Swami questioned, “Why do you want to go?” The boy replied,



"To meditate and have Darshan of God." Swami quipped, "You are having Darshan of God, here and now. Why do you want to go to the Himalayas?" This drives home the lesson that when God is physically close and accessible, we tend not to appreciate our good fortune and blessings.

Forty years ago, a devotee from a distant city used to bring a garland and basketful of fruits every month to offer to Swami, and Swami used to graciously accept it. This went on for several years, and the devotee was very happy. Then one day in his innocence, he asked, "Swami, if I have devotion like this, is this enough?" Swami said, "If you have devotion like this, it's a waste of your time and money. It is also a weight around My neck. If you really want to know what devotion is, go to Chapter 12, Bhakti Yoga, in the Bhagavadgita, and read the Slokas (verses) from 13 onwards." It starts with the verse, *Adveshta Sarva Bhutanam, Maitra Karuna Eva Cha* (one who bears no hatred against anyone and is friendly and compassionate towards all). The first quality for a devotee is *Adveshta Sarva Bhutanam* – hatred towards none, not only human beings but all living beings.

So, we cannot have in our vocabulary the word hatred. If we have the word hatred, we are disqualified as a devotee. We cannot even utter, "I hate snakes. I hate lizards." As we were doing morning prayers in our room in Puttaparthi, one day a lizard crawled across the altar. Our second daughter, Harini, is squeamish about anything that crawls. Suddenly, she saw this lizard and started screaming. I thought

some disaster had happened. Noticing the problem being the lizard, I asked the attendant to pick it up gently and release it outside in the garden. On the same morning, Swami, in His Divine Discourse on the occasion of Sri Rama Navami, sang Saint Thyagaraja's song, *Cheemalo Brahmallo Siva Kesavaadulalo...* (You indwell all beings from an ant to Brahma as also in Siva and Kesava...) saying that the same divinity exists in the ant as well as in the Divine Trinity. That very evening, Swami called us for an interview and I asked, "Swami, what should we do with the lizard that is coming daily at the altar and disturbing our prayers?" Swami answered, "You should think that the lizard is doing worship along with you in the Puja room." This is a lesson to see divinity in all and practise compassion towards all beings, and that is what brings us near and dear to God.

Sarupyam: The third stage is Sarupyam (identity with the Divine). In this stage, we behave like God and exhibit only divine attributes. It is said in the scriptures, *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati* (as are the feelings, so is the result). The best example is that of Lord Rama's brother Bharata in the Ramayana. When Lord Rama returned to Ayodhya after fourteen years of exile to the forest, the citizens of Ayodhya made grand preparations to receive and garland Him. To their astonishment, the citizens found the two brothers, Rama and Bharata, looking identical and were in a dilemma as to whom to garland. During those fourteen years of Rama's exile, Bharata lived every



moment thinking only about Sri Rama and thus looked and behaved very much like Sri Rama. Bharata, being astute, solved the citizens' predicament by falling at the feet of his elder brother Rama. Instantly, the citizens recognised Rama and garlanded Him. In this way, as we go on thinking about the Lord in every moment of our life, we start to behave like Him. Then our life becomes verily His message.

Sayujyam: The final stage is Sayujyam (union with the Divine). In this stage, we become one with Sai and realise that Sai and we are one. The greatest example is Sabari, another figure from the Ramayana. On her very first Darshan of Rama, Sabari merged with Him. We had the good fortune of Darshan of Lord Sai Rama many times and we asked Swami, "Sabari saw You only once and became one with You. How is it that we still have not achieved this goal even after Your many Darshans?" Swami responded, "Sabari was a great devotee who had prepared for the first meeting of Rama for many years, constantly thinking about Him and doing all her work to please Him. She used to collect fruits and flowers for Him and clean the path daily with the only objective of serving and pleasing her dear Lord Rama."

So too we need to prepare for realisation of God by constantly thinking about Him, loving Him and serving Him at all times and in every place. Satsang (holy company) helps us in this process. Once a devotee from the U.S.A. asked, "Swami, it is easy to think about You when we are here at Prasanthi Nilayam. But how is that when we go back to America, we find it difficult

to think about You all the time?" Swami explained, "Here is an example. You have a bowl full of water. When it is left outside in the sun, the water evaporates and the bowl becomes empty. But when the same bowl of water is kept submerged in a tank of water, the water will not evaporate and the bowl will remain full. You receive My grace and love when you are here. Having received My blessings and love, if you surround yourself with holy company by singing and listening to the glories of God, you will always remain in the thoughts of the Divine." Sabari was always in the company of the holy sages and had the one-pointed goal to love and serve the Lord. So, she became one with Rama.

See God Everywhere

We should realise our innate nature, which is divinity, and manifest this in our daily life. Once I was travelling with Swami in His car from the hospital to Prasanthi Nilayam. In their love for Swami, many people threw flowers and garlands at His car. As we watched, an elderly western woman was trying to throw flowers on Swami's car but she was very fragile and weak, so the flowers fell back on her. Swami said, "Narendra, did you see that? That lady wanted to throw flowers on My car as an offering, but because she is weak, the flowers fell on her." Swami continued, "Unknowingly, she did the right thing. She is worshipping herself with the flowers because she is verily God." What a profound teaching in simple words from the Divine Master? Swami says, "Don't seek God outside; see God everywhere, and realise that you are God."



Swami wants us to move forward from the stage of Salokyam to Sayujyam. Jesus said, "Many are called, but a few are chosen." Also, Lord Krishna said, "*Manusyanam Sahasresu Kascid Yatati Siddhaye, Yatatam Api Siddhanam Kascin Maam Vetti Tattvatah*" (Of the millions of people who are in search of Me, only a handful realise Me). Swami gave a beautiful example. Out of thousands of flowers on a tree, only a few become fruits. Many fall off while still a flower and some as unripe fruit; only a few remain to become ripened fruit.

By constant repetition of His sweet Name, contemplation of His beautiful Divine Form, and most importantly by practising His universal and eternal message in our daily life, with steady faith and perseverance, we will reach the supreme goal that Sai and we are one.

Let us pay heed to the divine clarion call to "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!"

(The author, Dr. Narendranath Reddy, is the Chairman of Prasanthi Council and Director of Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation.)

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A GOLD MINE OF DIVINE EXPERIENCES

UNTIL I “MET” SATHYA SAI Baba in 1984, my life had been confused – a situation I shared with many after the '68 rebellion against the established society. There had been no religious interest in my family. My paternal grandmother went to church, but at home we never talked about belief or faith. So, without being aware of it, I missed this dimension in my life. An elderly woman I knew arranged Sunday school. I sometimes went there and felt a whisper from another world, but everyday life quickly caught up with me again. I was confused, as were many others at that time.

A Revelation

In 1983, I was preparing to leave on a winter vacation to the Canary Islands that I had visited many times earlier. I went to my usual bookshop with spiritual books in Copenhagen and asked whether they could recommend some books for my vacation. I was shown a book about Sai Baba, but my reaction was, ‘No thanks!’ India and Gurus – that was not my cup of tea. I had once seen a Guru who visited Denmark and who

sat on a throne. People gave him money and I felt that it was all wrong. It did not appeal to me. I bought two other books and then on a sudden impulse, I said, ‘Give me that book as well.’ The book was, “Sai Baba Avatar” by Howard Murphet. I brought it with me on my vacation. The weather was wonderful and one day I lay on the beach in Las Palmas and read it from cover to cover. Every time I turned a page, it was as if there was something I recognised. I had come home!

I felt that everything that I had not so far been able to understand with my brain was now clear and I knew instinctively or somewhere in my subconscious mind or soul that what I read was true. I knew that Sai Baba was true. I knew that what He stood for was true. Of course, He could perform miracles; otherwise, He would not be who He said He was. But it was the words He spoke, the philosophy He represented and the spirituality of His Discourses reproduced in the book that caught me completely and embraced me with the realisation that Divinity had come



to earth and that this Divinity was Sathya Sai Baba.

It was as if I was realised in my mind and the knowledge came to me from another dimension. This had a strong impact on me, and the same evening I went to the beach and thought about this miracle I had just experienced, when suddenly Baba spoke to me telepathically. I did not see Him, but He spoke to me and I knew that it was Him. I asked Him questions and He answered me. The essence of what Baba said was that the earth, our earth, is one large organism that breathes – in and out – just like our lungs. He told me that the universe also breathes. It was not something I knew at the time, but I have read later that there is a scientific theory to the effect that the universe expands and contracts, that is to say, it breathes. Baba went on to say that the earth exhaled into the universe. They were one in that breath. Baba said that the breath of the earth was so polluted that it had a detrimental impact on the breath of the universe and this must be changed. I, Steen – like many others – would have a part to play in this work. This is the essence of what happened. I looked at the waves. I could keep them back. I experienced many other supernatural things. It was a vision, a revelation. It was a very strong experience for a most ordinary human being like me. But that was how it was. I did not doubt for a second that the experiences were real and that I had talked with Sai Baba.

Back in Denmark, I found the address of the Sai Baba Centre in Copenhagen.

The Russians have a special link with Swami. They feel His Love; they accept His majesty and Divinity. They do not follow the intellectual path of understanding – their hearts are wide open to His Prema. I shall never forget the time we visited Samarkand and were invited to the home of some friends of a devotee, whom they did not know was a Sai devotee. The old grandmother asked us what we were doing and I handed her a calendar picture of Swami. She looked at it for a long time. Then she started crying and said, "This is God, this is really God."

The first time I went there, I was too late for a meeting that had just ended – only two people were still there. I told them my story and asked them whether they wanted a ride home as I had my car outside. They declined my offer. One of them was a lady who later told me that a person like me who had had so many supernatural experiences was too far out. It was, in fact, so far out that she did not even want to accept my offer of a ride. She later became my wife! Since that day on the beach, Swami has quietly and with a loving hand directed my life.

My First Visit to Prasanthi Nilayam

I wanted so much to see Sathya Sai Baba in person and I went to see Him in



July 1984, six months after my experiences on the beach in Las Palmas. What I remember clearest was the energy in the Ashram. I recognised it immediately when I entered the Ashram through the gate – this love energy from another world, this omnipresent knowledge beyond this world that was everywhere and knew everything. Strangely, Swami's form and radiation was not what surprised me most – because I had already "met" Him on the beach in Las Palmas. He was the Avatar and I had no doubt about that; I felt that I already knew and recognised Him. I had come home.

This feeling lasted for two weeks. Then suddenly, it changed in a split second. It was like an arrow that turned around and I saw myself for the first time as I truly was, with all my faults and defects. I felt myself so imperfect and suddenly realised what had to be changed.

My First Interview with Swami

A year later in August 1985, I went again to Prasanthi Nilayam. By now, I had become a member of the Danish Sai Baba Centre and I had learned that spiritual growth did not just come from day to day – but from month to month and from year to year.

I was called for an interview and I remember clearly how Swami changed my life. He asked me, "Where is your wife?" I replied that I was not married. He looked straight at me and told me about my life, of which He knew every detail, and ended by saying, "Why not marry and have a family?" I knew then who was going to be my wife. She was Inge, whom I had met in Sai Baba Centre in Copenhagen. So, by the

next visit to Prasanthi Nilayam in August 1986, I was a married man and I brought my wife to Swami. We were about 20 Danes in the interview room and Thorbjörn Meyer was the leader of the group. Swami asked me how I was and Thorbjörn Meyer told Swami that I had just married. Swami pointed to my wife and said, "I know" and our marriage was blessed by the Divine hand.

Organisational Work in Eastern Europe and Russia

I was very interested in the work of the Sai Organisation and began travelling with Thorbjörn Meyer who was deputy to the Central Coordinator, Bernhard Gruber, the person in the Organisation I respected most. Tirelessly, Gruber travelled to Eastern European countries and laid the foundation of groups and centres in these countries what the Organisation is there today. The first Sai Baba Centre in Russia was inaugurated in 1992 in St. Petersburg.

Thorbjörn Meyer also made a tremendous contribution. He was the one who taught me most about organisational work. I travelled with both these men because I found the Eastern countries interesting and the spreading of Swami's teaching a gold mine. Afterwards, I became the deputy first to Thorbjörn Meyer and later to Bernhard Gruber. Actually, at a certain time, Poland, Hungary, the Baltic States, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Russia were my working areas as Deputy Central Coordinator and later as Zone Chairman for the 12 Russian-speaking countries.



The Russians have always been praised by Swami for their Seva and their love for Him. They conduct 8-9 medical camps every year, they feed the poor every week, they help elders with work in their home and have adopted several orphanages in the Zone. There are family and youth camps and also camps with the children from the orphanages. The ESSE Institute has visited the Zone tirelessly and until now has educated more than 200 teachers.

The Russians have a special link with Swami. They feel His Love; they accept His majesty and Divinity. They do not follow the intellectual path of understanding – their hearts are wide open to His Prema. I shall never forget the time we visited Samarkand and were invited to the home of some friends of a devotee, whom they did not know was a Sai devotee. The old grandmother asked us what we were doing and I handed her a calendar picture of Swami. She looked at it for a long time. Then she started crying and said, “This is God, this is really God.”

To tell about Swami is like opening a gold mine. I describe below some of my wonderful experiences with the Avatar.

Witnessing the Mysterious Divine Drama

One day in 1992, I prayed to Swami to show me His Glory. That day, when He passed by my side, He put His hand on my head, pressing His hand hard at my upper skull, while one of His fingers pressed at the position of the third eye. I still don't feel that I have “landed” since then. To watch

the Avatar at His task is overwhelming and mysterious. He gives Darshan, where each one gets the message and the energy that the person needs. Day in and day out, He showers His love on every one of us. Who am I to describe or understand? I can “only” be a witness to this unending divine play, and thank Him for being given a role in the divine drama, as all have been given as well.

At Darshan one day, I was thinking of my Dharma – what was wrong and what was right? I prayed to Swami to show me if a certain thing was right or wrong. It was personal and very, very important to me. I told Swami in my prayer: “If it is right (which my soul thought) please touch my hand – if it is wrong (as my intellectual mind tormented me with) then do nothing.” I was very tense and still very quiet when Swami came my way. I had put my hands together in front of my face. Swami took some letter from the man sitting next to me, then He gently touched my left hand and walked on ... In this way, He answered my prayer.

Flow of Divine Energy

The leaders of the Sai Organisation from various parts of the world, Central Coordinators, were summoned to a meeting in Poornachandra Auditorium during Swami's Birthday celebrations in 1995. We sat on the floor in front of the stage. At exactly 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Swami appeared on the scene and came down to us. Here He gave a talk for a few minutes. He then walked around among us, talked with someone here and signed a book



there. He commented on some building plans which one of the coordinators showed Him, and when He approached me, I was totally speechless.

The moment He was in front of me, Sri Indulal Shah said that I was the new Central Coordinator for Russia. Swami stopped and said loudly so that everyone could hear it: "I know, I know. Good work, very, very good work. Swami very, very happy." He stood right in front of me, when suddenly He began to rotate His hand. Spontaneously, I stretched my right hand out. It felt as if the universe opened up, the flow of energy was so overwhelming. Swami materialised Vibhuti for me which He sprinkled down in my right hand. He asked Sri Indulal Shah for a piece of paper for the Vibhuti, which he gave me, and explained that I should keep it. The relief and joy that filled me after He had said those words was indescribable. For me, He is God, father and mother and my best friend. At that moment, it was the Godhead who spoke and it was the One whose feet I was allowed to kiss.

One day, I saw Swami coming in His wheelchair towards me and the group I sat with. It was as if all the energy and glory of the sun emanated from Him in a vibration of the purest love. The feeling was transcendental and the energy was completely filled with love at a celestial level. I shall never forget that special day as long as I live in this body - and probably not in the next one either!

Today I know that an answer must be found to questions like: 'Who am I?',

Baba said that the breath of the earth was so polluted that it had a detrimental impact on the breath of the universe and this must be changed. I, Steen – like many others – would have a part to play in this work. This is the essence of what happened. I looked at the waves. I could keep them back. I experienced many other supernatural things. It was a vision, a revelation. It was a very strong experience for a most ordinary human being like me. But that was how it was. I did not doubt for a second that the experiences were real and that I had talked with Sai Baba.

'Where do I come from?' and 'Where am I going?' When we contemplate these questions, answers are given. The Bible says, "Seek and you shall find." Sai Baba says, "Dust if you think of, dust you are. God if you think of, God you are." We are what we think. Therefore, it is important that we use our mind to think good, act good, be in good company and care for the people around us.

(The author, Steen Picullel, is the Zone Chairman, Russian-speaking countries, Sri Sathya Sai International Organisation.)



Effulgence of Divine Glory

A MOST MIRACULOUS GIFT

WE PREPARED OURSELVES hastily for the upcoming interviews, then after breakfast stationed ourselves by the temple – and waited. Before long, we were directed into a small back room and we arranged ourselves again in a semicircle at the foot of Baba's chair. I was stationed just to the right of the chair and Sharon sat next to me. Baba came in beaming, setting His usual mood of love and openness.

He began by speaking a little with us and then briskly whirled His hand in the air to produce a huge mound of candy, rising four or five inches above His palm. He distributed a goodly portion to each of us. I felt transformed into a child, sitting at the feet of Santa Claus in some magnificent fairy tale. And I might add that I have seen the sternest, hardest, the most pompous people become children at Baba's feet.

He called my brother Donald over to Him and asked him to sit at His right, in front of me. His eyes twinkled as He asked Donald what he wanted. Then He moved His hand and materialised a beautiful ring made of a heavy metal with small gold figurines of His pet elephant, Sai Gita, on each side, and a gold figure of Baba on its face. He placed the ring on Donald's finger and it fit perfectly. Donald beamed, I felt choked, and Sharon began to cry.

I was so happy that Baba should present such a fine gift to my brother, showing him such love, demonstrating to all of us His great power, that I could hardly hold back my own tears. Baba told him that he would have a long, healthy and happy life and be a very good doctor. Then people began asking Baba questions. "How would we know when He is with us when we are so far away?" He turned to one woman in the group, someone He had not spoken to yet: "She knows when Baba is with her," and all of a sudden she became flushed with excitement and began to cry.

Later, she related the story of how she had first become aware of Baba's Presence back in the United States. Against the advice of her family, she had taken her mother out of a convalescent hospital to nurse at home. She did this out of love even though it was a trying and difficult task. Her mother was incontinent and in need of much attention, but the daughter looked after her with great devotion.

As time went on, she would enter her mother's room, and spontaneous and inexplicable waves of emotion would sweep through her. She had no idea what was causing this to happen, although she sensed the presence of someone unknown but close to her and identified the emotion as love. Then she heard of the Sai Baba

meetings held by Elsie Cowan and decided to attend one.

Going for the first time, she met Elsie, who happened to hand her a piece of material from one of Baba's robes. She touched it and was suddenly electrified, experiencing an almost convulsive state of ecstasy. Now, in the interview with Baba, she was certain that He was aware of her experience and was referring to it.

Baba began to materialise other objects and to talk knowingly to people about themselves and give advice. In response to a woman's complaint of problems with her eyes, He materialised a medallion, telling her to immerse it in water and to place a few drops of the water in her eyes everyday.

Baba then saw each of us separately. Lila requested something for which she had been praying for a number of months. He responded by stepping back playfully, His eyes twinkling, His face a broad loving smile, and answered her in the very words which she had been using in her prayers to Him. He simply had had no way of knowing what these words had been and she was overwhelmed.

To my wife's concerns and wishes for our children, Baba responded with a discussion which she felt reflected awareness of their individual personalities – and He materialised a medallion for one of them. He told me not to worry about money matters and talked to me about my spiritual development; aware that He knew my deepest yearnings and aspirations,

I was filled with bliss. In answer to my question about spending time with Him, He said, "First you have to attend to your duty back home; you will be freer after your children are grown."

When we were sitting together again, Baba moved His hand in the air and brought out eight little calling cards with His picture and address and handed one



to each of us. He was with us always, He said. After much encouragement and love, He gave out packets of Vibhuti.

As usual, although the materialisations during the interview were impressive, for me the major impact came from His uncanny awareness of each of us and His ability to show me that He is indeed literally with us even when absent physically. This concrete experience of the omnipresence of a loving being – an experience which continues right through one's life, filling it with a deep sense of security and safety – is a most miraculous gift!

– Excerpted from *"Sai Baba: The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist"* by Samuel H. Sandweiss.

SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

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ADMISSIONS NOTICE

Admissions for the Academic Year commencing from 1st June 2013

are open for the following Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Professional Programmes:

Programmes for Men: B.A., B.A.(Hons.) & B.Sc.(Hons.) in Economics; B.Sc.(Hons.) in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biosciences (leading to Postgraduate Programmes in respective subjects) and B.Com.(Hons.) (leading to Master of Finance); B.B.M. and B.C.A.; M.A.(Economics), M.Sc.(Nanoscience & Nanotechnology); M.B.A., M.B.A.(Finance), M.Tech.(Computer Science), M.Tech.(Optoelectronics and Communications) and M.Tech.(Analytical Methods and Chemical Instrumentation).

Programmes for Women: B.A., B.Com.(Hons.), B.B.M., B.Sc.(Home Science), B.Sc.(Hons.) in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biosciences; B.Ed., M.Ed., M.A.(English), M.Sc.(Food Science & Nutrition) and M.Sc.(Food Technology).

Eligibility for Admissions:

Undergraduate Programmes [BA / BA (Hons.) / B.Sc. / B.Sc.(Hons.) / B.Com.(Hons.) / BBM / BCA]: 10+2 pattern of study/Intermediate. Minimum marks required in X Std. examinations is 60% in aggregate and 55% in General English. Candidates should have taken their final +2 / Intermediate qualifying examination before the date of Admissions Test. In case of candidates who have appeared for +2 / Intermediate examinations and have not got their final marks, their marks in the previous years (X or XI Std.) should be a minimum of 60% in aggregate and 55% in General English.

For BBM: The admissions test will evaluate verbal skills, numerical skills and reasoning skills.

For BCA: Candidates should have Mathematics as one of the subjects of study in their XI/XII standards. Candidates should have studied Algebra, Geometry, Calculus and basics of Statistics in their formal education at +2 level. The admissions test will evaluate verbal skills and knowledge in Mathematics.

For Undergraduate programmes other than BBM & BCA: The admissions test will evaluate aptitude in General English and the three subject combination chosen for the test.

Note: Candidates who wish to apply for more than one programme, need to submit separate application forms for each programme.

Postgraduate Programmes [M.A.(Economics) / M.A. (English) / M.Sc.(Food Science & Nutrition) / M.Sc.(Food Technology)]: A First class (minimum of 60% marks in aggregate in all the three years of study) in respective degrees with 50% in General English.

For M.Sc.(Food Science & Nutrition) / M.Sc. (Food Technology) Programme: Candidates of B.Sc.(Biosciences) / B.Sc.(MPC) are eligible to apply.

For M.Sc.(Nanoscience and Nanotechnology) Programme: Candidates of B.Sc.(Physics) / B.Sc. (Biosciences) / B.Sc.(Chemistry) background are eligible to apply.

For M.A.(Economics) Programme: Candidates of B.A. / B.A.(Hons.) in Economics or B.Com./ B.Com.(Hons.) background are eligible to apply.

Professional Programmes [MBA / MBA(Finance) / M.Tech.(Computer Science) / M.Tech. (Optoelectronics and Communications) / M.Tech.(Analytical Methods and Chemical Instrumentation) / M.Tech.(Nuclear Medicine) / B.Ed. / M.Ed.]: A First class (minimum of 60% marks) in the qualifying degree with 50% marks in General English. In case of candidates who have not received the marks statements of the final year of the Qualifying degree examination, their marks in the previous years / semesters should not be less than 60% in aggregate with 50% in General English.

For M.B.A. / M.B.A.(Finance): Candidates with degrees such as B.E., B.Tech., B.Pharma., B.Sc. (Agri.) etc., are exempted from the minimum requirement of 50% marks in General English.

For M.Tech.(Computer Science): A first class M.Sc.(Mathematics) / M.Sc.(Physics) / M.Sc. (Computer Science) / M.C.A. or first class in B.E. / B.Tech. in Computer Science. Further, to be eligible, the candidates should have formally studied the following courses: Artificial Intelligence, Computer Networks, Computer Organisation & Architecture, and Database Systems.

For M.Tech.(Optoelectronics and Communications): A first class M.Sc.(Physics) or first class in B.E. / B.Tech. with a background in Optics and Electromagnetic Theory.

For M.Tech.(Analytical Methods and Chemical Instrumentation): A first class Postgraduate degree in Chemistry / Organic Chemistry / Applied Chemistry / Industrial Chemistry / Nanoscience & Nanotechnology / Biosciences or first class in B.E. or B.Tech. in Chemical Technology.

For M.Tech.(Nuclear Medicine): A first class Postgraduate degree in Physics or Chemistry or Biology or Nanoscience.

For B.Ed.: The admissions test will evaluate General English and knowledge in two subjects based on the subjects studied at the undergraduate / postgraduate programmes.

For M.Ed.: The admissions test will evaluate General English and subjects studied at the B.Ed. level.

Candidates applying for the above Postgraduate and Professional programmes should complete their final year/semester qualifying examination before 30th May 2013. The University follows the guidelines issued by the Government of India and the UGC with regard to Reservation of seats for SC / ST candidates. Further, SC / ST candidates are entitled to a relaxation of 5% marks, in the eligibility criterion.

Note: Eligible candidates will be short-listed by the University based on the marks in the qualifying examinations and will be called for the Admissions Test.

Admissions to all the above programmes will be on the basis of a Written Admission Test followed by an Interview which will be held in **3rd and 4th weeks of April 2013**, at **Prasanthi Nilayam, Andhra Pradesh**.

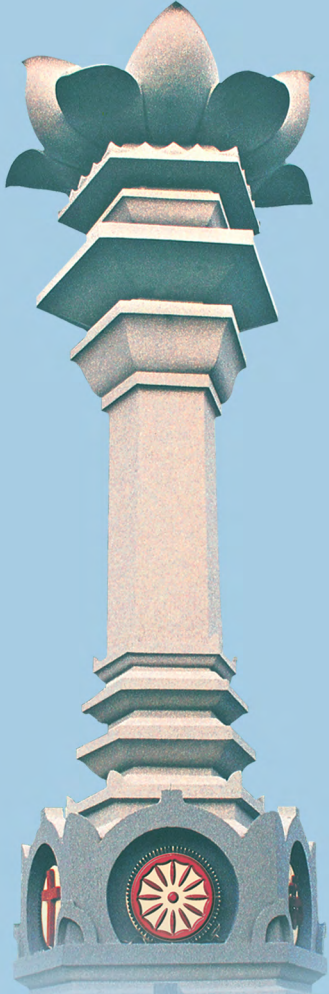
The application form along with Information Handbook will be available from **1st November 2012 to 15th February 2013**. The last date for receipt of duly filled-in application forms is **28th February 2013**.

Interested candidates may apply to the **Registrar, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Vidyagiri, Prasanthi Nilayam - 515134, Anantapur District, A.P.** along with I.P.O. or Bank Draft for Rs.100/-. The Bank draft should be drawn in favour of **Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning**, payable at **SBI, Prasanthi Nilayam/Puttaparthi**. Since the application forms are different for Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Professional programmes, candidates must indicate clearly the details of course/subject of study for which they seek admission in the requisition letter.

The name and complete postal address along with programmes for which application form is required should be clearly stated in Block letters on the reverse of the IPO/DD and also in the requisition letter.

Alternatively, candidates may visit the University website, www.sssihl.edu.in for applying through the **online application portal**.

– Registrar



Attain God's Love

Each person desires happiness and peace. Nobody wants misery. However, the mistake in them lies in the fact that they are not able to realise where true happiness and peace are to be found. Real happiness and peace can neither be found in wealth and possessions nor in academic, material or scientific vocations. These give only transitory peace and happiness. Real peace exists only in Love of God. Man's true endeavour in life should be to attain God's Love.

– Baba

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