

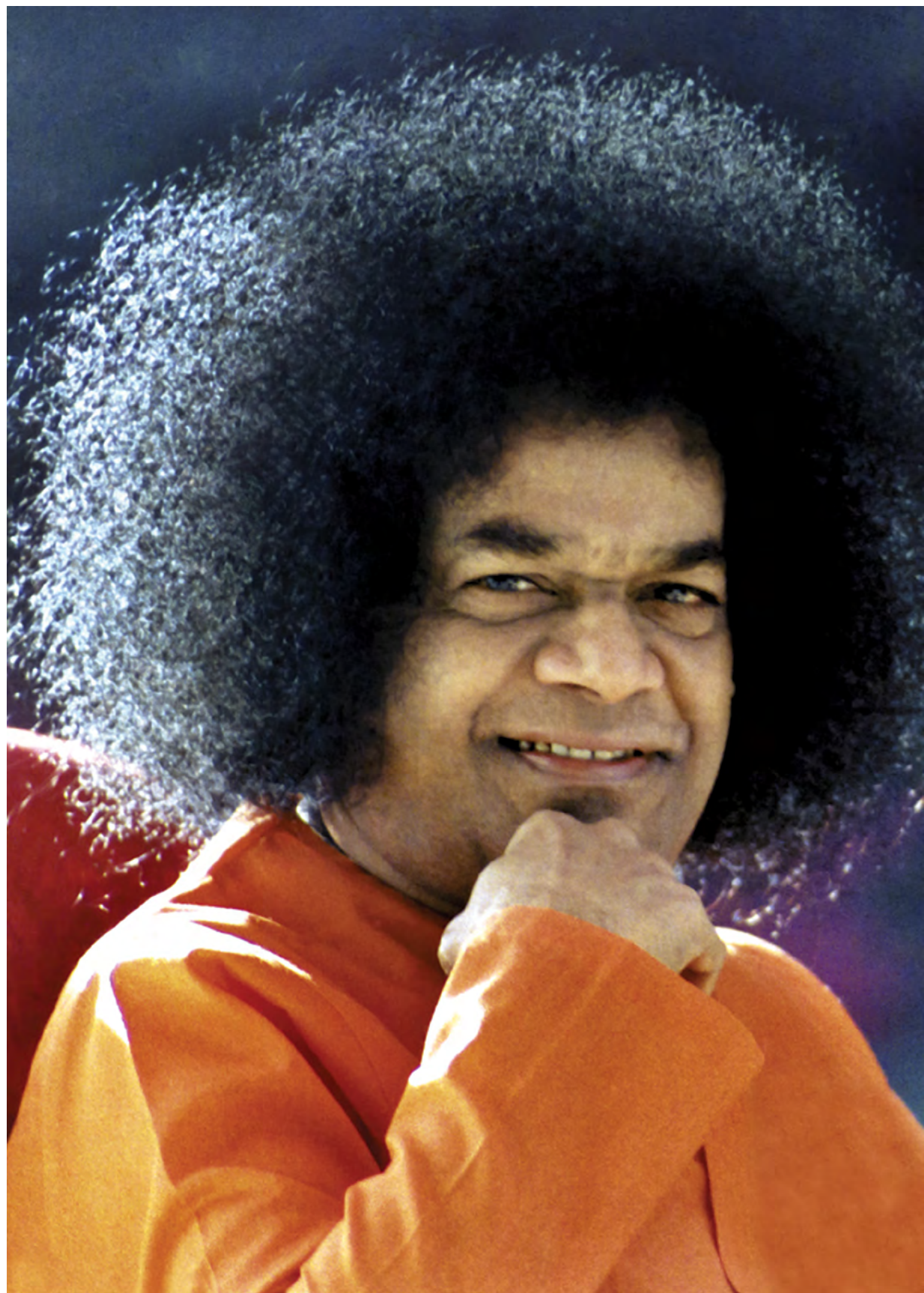


A portrait of a Swami with a large, dark afro and a bright orange robe, standing against a green background. The Swami has a serene expression and is looking directly at the camera. His hands are clasped in front of him. The image is framed by a decorative border on the left side, consisting of a vertical line with repeating floral and geometric patterns in green, purple, and red.

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DECEMBER 2016





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SATHYA • DHARMA • SANTHI • PREMA • AHIMSA

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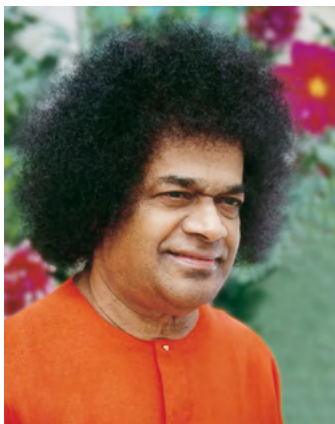
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*"Truth, righteousness and peace
are the very form of a human being.
You don't need to earn righteousness
separately. You don't need to go
to elders for righteousness. When
inner feelings are expressed outside,
that is truth. Truth expressed must
be practised by the body. That is
righteousness. The body confers peace
on the mind through righteousness."*

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AVATAR VANI

TOTAL AWARENESS IS WISDOM

*Hastasya Bhushanam Danam,
Sathyam Kanthasya Bhushanam,
Srotrasya Bhushanam Sastram,
Bhushanaih Kim Prayojanam?*

(Sanskrit Verse)

(Charity is the true ornament for the hand. Truth is the true necklace and listening to sacred texts is the true ornament for the ears. What is the use of other ornaments?)

INSTALL GOD IN YOUR HEART TO EXPERIENCE BLISS

FOR MAN, IT is only charity that is the true ornament for the hand. The ornament for the neck is truth, and for the ear it is righteousness. There are no ornaments superior to these. An individual wearing these ornaments will not only be the very form of beauty, he will also set high ideals in society. The body made of five elements emits foul smell every moment. Where, when and at what point will it perish, one cannot say. For this ephemeral, transient, temporary body, the physical ornaments are not the real ones. The real ornaments for the body are those which are sacred, permanent and ever true.



Make Human Values a Part of your Life

Since ancient times, man has been pursuing various ways to attain peace and security in life. But he has not been able to secure peace in spite of all his wealth, education, authority and high position. Peace cannot be found outside; it is present in the Pranamaya Kosha (life sheath) and Manomaya Kosha (mental sheath) of man. So, man can attain peace only when he develops inner vision.

The value of truth lies in our words. It means that we should express truth through our words. Righteousness comes out of the body. Therefore, we should perform righteous acts through our body. Similarly, peace comes out of the mind. Truth, righteousness and peace are the very form of a human being. You don't need to earn righteousness separately. You don't need to go to elders for righteousness. When inner feelings are expressed outside, that is truth. Truth expressed must be practised by the body. That is righteousness. The body confers peace on the mind through righteousness. This trinity of truth, righteousness and peace is very important. It is the main responsibility of man to purify himself by putting these three virtues into practice in his life.

Then what is love? Love comes out of the Manomaya Kosha (mental sheath) and Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath) of man. The principle of love that comes out of these sheaths purifies the Antahkarana (inner instrument). It flows as the undercurrent of truth, righteousness and peace. Then what is non-violence? Non-violence comes out of the sheath of bliss. Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa (truth,

Truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence cannot be imported or exported. They are within you. If you make sincere efforts, they can manifest in your life on their own. There is nothing in this world which is not present in a human being. Everything is within him. Divinity also is within him. But man should develop the awareness that divinity is present in him in many forms.

righteousness, peace, love and non-violence) are the five life principles, five life sheaths and five elements. But these values are absent in human beings today. Man's words that come out of his mouth are contradictory to his thoughts and his actions are contradictory to his words. That is why humanness is missing in man today. *Manasyanyath Vachasyanyath, Karmanyanyath Duratmanam* (Those whose thoughts, words and deeds lack harmony are wicked). He has the form of a human being, but has no human values. That is why the world is in such a sad state today. Modern man tries to hide his thoughts and feelings. What is this hiding? It is actually obstructing truth. Not only does he obstruct truth, he also does not put it into practice. He follows untruth in life. He is habituated to see cheap movies, to indulge in mean gossip and to perform belittling actions. Because of these bad habits, man loses faith in truth. Even if he develops faith, he is not able to practise.

What are human values? Human values are those which help you to travel from Vyashti (individual) to Samashti (society)

and ultimately reach the state of Soham (That I am). Enquire thoroughly how much sanctity there is in the word Sathya (truth). Sath + e + ya = Sathya. Sath means life. E means Annam (food). Ya means Surya (sun). Food is derived from the sun. So far as man has life, he needs food. Food is the creation of the sun. Because of the sunrays, there is greenery in the world and man grows crops. The sun is the main cause of all that we grow. Man uses the food created by the sun to sustain life.

If we analyse the word 'Sathya', it is the combination of three letters: Sa, Tha, Ya. When we reverse the order of the letters, we get Ya, Tha, Sa. Here 'Ya' signifies Yamas (Ahimsa, Sathya, Asteya, Brahmacharya, Aparigraha) which form the basis of inner discipline of man. 'Tha' means Tapas (penance) and 'Sa' means Sathya Swarupa (embodiment of truth), that is God. So, the word Sathya connotes that man can have the vision of God by inner discipline and penance.

The first of the five Yamas (restraints) is Ahimsa. What is Ahimsa? It means not to hurt or harm anyone by thoughts, words and deeds. So, non-violence means Trikarana Shuddhi (purity of thoughts, words and deeds). Hence, do not use words that hurt anyone, do not use this body to harm anybody and do not entertain bad thoughts like hatred and jealousy against anyone in your mind. This total purity of thoughts, words and actions is non-violence. Not merely purity, the harmony of all the three. That is true non-violence.

God is Pure, Peaceful and Changeless

Then, what is truth? *Trikalabadhyam Sathyam* (Truth remains unchanged in the three periods of time - past, present and

future). Similarly, God remains changeless in all the three periods of time. So, we call God as the very form of Sath, Chit and Ananda. Sath means being, Chit means awareness. The combination of Sath and Chit is Ananda (bliss). Sath is the changeless form of God. God is attributeless; He has no attributes whatsoever; He has no aberrations whatsoever. His nature is changeless. There may be change in words and actions, but not in the heart. Sometimes, Swami may pretend as if He is scolding boys, but there is no anger in His heart.

Basing on your feelings you interpret. To the one with steady mind, the Self (Atma) appears pure. How? When water is still and there is no wind, you see the reflection of the sun in water very clearly. When there is movement in the water due to the wind, the reflection of the sun in it also appears to be moving. Similarly, to those whose minds are wavering, God also appears to be moving or changing. Know that God does not move or change. It is only the reflection that has movement, not the sun. Does the sun move? No, it appears to be moving by the effect of the wind. It is the wavering mind of man which sees change in the changeless God. Moreover, if the water is dirty and full of mud, the sun also appears to be dirty in it. Is there dirt in the sun? No! There is total purity in God. The dirt lies in your heart. As your heart is filled with bad thoughts and wicked feelings, you see impurity in God. God is always pure. God is always steady. God is always peaceful. You see impurity or unsteadiness in God because of your own impure and unsteady mind. The one who does not change in all the three periods of time is God.



Then Chit. Chit means total awareness. You say, "I have read many sacred texts; so, I am a great scholar. I am a man of wisdom". What is this knowledge? What is it that you call wisdom? You consider that wisdom lies in knowing the essence of all sacred texts. But sacred texts give only minimal knowledge. So, man cannot say he has acquired total wisdom by reading the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. Out of the infinite wisdom, you get just a little bit. This is not full wisdom. This is not full awareness. When you know what is awareness, you will understand that it is total knowledge, total wisdom.

(Swami holding a handkerchief and showing just a little tip of it). When I hold the handkerchief like this and ask you, "What is this"? you will say, "It is a piece of cloth". You become egoistic just because you have come to know that it is a piece of cloth. That is not awareness. What is this? This is handkerchief. When I unfold it and ask, "What is this"? you will say, "It is a handkerchief"! Out of that big handkerchief, if you know just a small bit, can that be called full knowledge? No, try to acquire total wisdom.

Only God has total wisdom, none else. It is something like infinite space or sky. What is the sign of infinite ocean and infinite sky? Sky is infinite, ocean is fathomless. What is their colour? Their colour is blue. One is infinite, the other is fathomless. That is why they appear to be blue in colour. So, God is described as having blue colour complexion. What do you mean by blue? If He had blue colour at the time of birth, He would be kept in exhibition. That is not what is meant by blue colour. None can understand God's capacities

and potentialities, none can fathom His depth. *Yatho Vacho Nivarthanthe Aprapya Manasa Saha* (whence the words along with the mind rebound in futility without comprehending Him). So, God is beyond the word for description, beyond the mind for comprehension.

Combination of Sath and Chit is Ananda

God is eternal and endowed with total wisdom. When we combine these two divine qualities of eternity and wisdom, we get permanent bliss. What do you mean by eternal bliss? It remains as it is; it never declines. To have such bliss, we should install God in our heart who is the very form of Sath (truth). Then we will have blissful thoughts. Awareness of the divine form of God is Chit. When we combine these two, bliss will emerge quite naturally. How? Sath is like sugar. The quality of sugar is sweetness. Whosoever may taste it, he will find it sweet. A person suffering from malaria may not be able to relish its sweetness. But every healthy person will testify to its sweetness. You mix sugar with anything, that preparation will taste sweet. If you mix it with rice flour or any other flour, it will impart its sweetness to it. The rice flour is not sweet but its association with sugar will make it sweet. The love present in everyone is sweet like sugar. Wherefrom do you get love? It comes from God. It is the reaction, reflection and resound of God in everyone. The nature of love is sweetness. This is Sath. Whatever you may do, it will never change. Its sweetness remains as it is. That is Sath.

Next is Chit. What do you mean by Chit? Though it has no taste of its own, it will have the taste of that with which it



is mixed. It is like water. If you mix salt in water, the water will become saline. If you mix sugar in water, it will be sweet. If you add anything bitter, it is bound to be bitter. Water has no quality of its own. Water always remains as water. Because of the substance with which it is mixed, its taste changes. If you associate Chit with worldly feelings, you are bound to lose peace, face troubles and difficulties and suffer losses. No, no. Never associate Chit with worldliness. Associate Chit with Sath. Then only will you experience Ananda (bliss). Here is sugar and here is water. Sugar is sugar, water is water. But when you mix both, it is neither sugar nor water. It becomes syrup. Similarly, when Sath and Chit are combined, it becomes Ananda (bliss). That is the divine quality of Sath-Chit-Ananda. How do you get this bliss? You get by the combination of Sath and Chit. It is not worldly happiness. It is divine bliss. Then everything in your life will have divine bliss. So, God has these three qualities which are permanent: Sath, Chit, Ananda.

Man is the Repository of all Virtues

These divine qualities are changeless, eternal. Only name and form are subject to change. Who gave you the form? Your parents gave you. Who gave you your name? Your parents named you. It is not your name at birth; it is given to you after birth. God created clay and water. The potter mixed clay with water and made pots of various names and forms. Similarly, parents create your form. But the form gets Chit Shakti (consciousness) from God. That consciousness in you is divine. The pots may break, names and forms may change; they are not permanent. The body may perish. But the

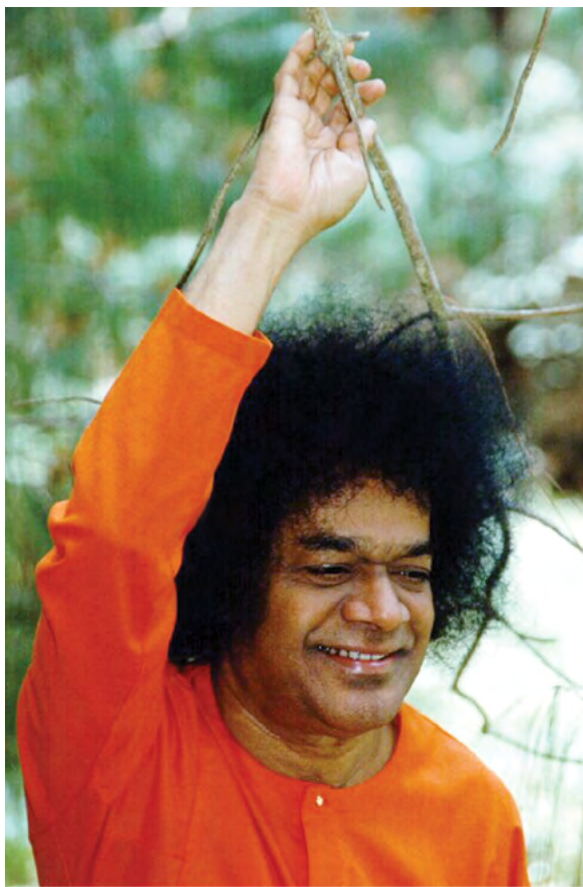
divine consciousness in it is imperishable. Names and forms are not permanent. God is permanent. His name is Satchidananda. Then how can you attain Satchidananda? You can attain it only when you know your value and follow the right path. Your speech should express your inner feelings honestly. Do not hide or cover them to deceive anyone. When you hide your inner feelings, they rot inside you. So, feelings must be expressed by speech. And that which is expressed must be practised. That is truth, righteousness and peace.

Peace relates to the mind, righteousness relates to the body, and truth relates to the speech. Truth is the very breath of man. This truth is the source of light. It should illumine your heart like brightness of the sun. Sometimes, there may be clouds in between. But do not change your vision because of these clouds of delusion. The sun is shining brightly. Because of thick clouds in between, you do not see the sun. Can you deny the existence of the sun if you cannot see it? These are passing clouds, not permanent clouds. Once the clouds move away, you can see the sun again.

Your heart is the sky. The Atma is the sun which is shining. Your feelings and thoughts are clouds. Sometimes, the clouds are very thick. Because of thick clouds, you do not see the sun. Then you think that there is no sun. Wait for some time. Do not be in a hurry. If you make haste, your entire future will be filled with darkness. So be patient. Do not be hasty. *Haste makes waste. Waste makes worry. So, do not be in a hurry.* Never make haste. Wait patiently and peacefully. Do not change your objective; keep your focus on it and concentrate. Develop Prana Shakti



(life force) and Dhyana Shakti (power of meditation). Then you will have unwavering vision. Concentrate on the Atma. As the clouds of delusion move away, you can see the sun of the Atma. Just because clouds have appeared, do not look down and lose concentration. Without changing



Santhi comes out of Pranamaya and Manomaya Koshas. Sathya comes out of Vijnanamaya Kosha and Dharma comes out of Annamaya Kosha. Love is experienced through Manomaya and Anandamaya Koshas and Ahimsa comes out of Anandamaya Kosha. Man has three types of bodies: Sthula, Sukshma

If you mix salt in water, the water will become saline. If you mix sugar in water, it will be sweet. If you add anything bitter, it is bound to be bitter. Water has no quality of its own. Water always remains as water. Because of the substance with which it is mixed, its taste changes. If you associate Chit with worldly feelings, you are bound to lose peace, face troubles and difficulties, and suffer losses and sorrows. No, no. Never associate Chit with worldliness. Associate Chit with Sath. Then only will you experience Ananda (bliss).

the vision, experience everything in creation with divine feelings. Then only will you have peace and security. The values of truth, righteousness, love and peace are not to be acquired from somewhere else. They are all present in Annamaya Kosha (food sheath), Pranamaya Kosha (life sheath), Manomaya Kosha (mental sheath), Vijnanamaya Kosha (wisdom sheath) and Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath) within you.

and Karana (gross, subtle and causal). The physical body is gross. It is formed of Annamaya Kosha. Body is like a lorry tyre. If you pump it, it will be inflated. If you eat a lot, your weight will increase. If you reduce your food, it loses weight. But you may have doubt as to how this inert body grows. You may say that it is not inert

continued on page 18...



BHAGAVAN'S 91ST BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

A MAMMOTH GATHERING OF devotees came to Prasanthi Nilayam from all parts of the world to offer their homage to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the auspicious occasion of His 91st Birthday. The weeklong celebrations started on 18th November 2016 with Rathotsavam and Sita Rama Kalyanam and concluded on 23rd November 2016 with Jhoola Mahotsava. A large number of dignitaries also came to participate in the celebrations. They included Sri Jagat Prakash Nadda, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Sri Palle Raghunatha Reddy, Minister for Information and Public Relations, Information Technology and Communications, Andhra Pradesh, Sri Raghava Rao Sidda, Minister for Transport, Roads and Buildings, Andhra Pradesh, Sri Augusto Montiel, Ambassador of Venezuela to India, Sri K.N. Rai, Speaker, Sikkim Legislative Assembly, and two ministers of Sikkim, Sri G.M. Gurung, Minister for Roads, Bridges, Cultural Affairs and Heritage Departments and Sri A.K. Ghatani, Minister for Healthcare, Human Service and Family Welfare and Information and Public Relations Departments.

SITA RAMA KALYANAM AND RATHOTSAVAM

Sita Rama Kalyanam (the celestial marriage of the divine couple Sita and Rama) on the morning of 18th November 2016 marked the auspicious commencement of 91st Birthday celebrations of Bhagavan at Prasanthi Nilayam. Held in beautifully decorated Sai



Sita Rama Kalyanam.

Kulwant Hall for the peace and welfare of the world, this celestial wedding comprised worship of the idols and rituals of exchange of garlands and tying of Mangala Sutra around the neck of Sita amidst chanting of Veda Mantras and auspicious notes of Nadaswaram. A Yajna was also performed representing the sacred fire ritual of the marriage which concluded with Poornahuti at 9.30 a.m.

After the conclusion of the celestial wedding, the idols of Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman as also the idol of Lord Krishna were carried to the Gopuram Gate where the idol of Lord Krishna was mounted on a decorated chariot. The idols were then taken to Pedda Venkama Raju Kalyana Mandapam in a grand procession led by musicians and Veda chanting students. As the procession moved slowly forward, a large number of villagers of Puttaparthi witnessed the procession, broke coconuts before the chariot and offered Arati to the idols. After completing



Chariot procession in Puttaparthi.

this journey, the procession returned to Sai Kulwant Hall. Meanwhile, Bhajans continued in the hall and concluded with Arati at 10.00 a.m.

An Instrumental Music Concert

A carnatic instrumental music offering was made to Bhagavan by two accomplished musicians, Sri G.D. Phani Kumar on flute and Sri D.V.K. Vasudevan on violin, in the evening. Beginning with the recital of “Vatapi Ganapatim” (salutations to Ganapati), they presented an array of carnatic classical compositions which included “Endaro Mahanubhavulu” (there are many great souls; I prostrate before all of them), “Raghuvamsa Sudhambudhi Chandra” (O moon to the nectar-ocean of the Raghu lineage!), “Nagumomu Ganaleni” (knowing that bereft of Your smiling face, distraught is my state), followed by a brilliant Thillana. They concluded their absorbing concert with the Bhajan “Manasa Bhajare Gurucharanam”.

LADIES DAY

Ladies Day was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam on 19th November 2016, which called for greater role of ladies in service and spiritual fields. On this day, all the programmes at Prasanthi Nilayam were conducted by ladies.

Talks by Eminent Speakers

The programme in the morning began at 8.00 a.m. with Veda chanting by the girls students of Anantapur Campus. A procession of ladies thereafter came from Yajur Mandir to Sai Kulwant Hall led by the Anantapur Campus band. This was followed by lighting of lamp before the portrait of Mother Easwaramma which adorned the dais amidst beautiful floral decorations. As the Anantapur Campus band played soulful tunes, senior ladies who came in the procession offered their salutations to Bhagavan and Mother Easwaramma.

Three speakers then addressed the gathering after invocatory Vedic chants by the girls students of Anantapur Campus. The first speaker was Smt. Chethana Raju, Managing Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Easwaramma Women’s Welfare Trust. Referring to the invaluable contribution made by ladies in society, she exhorted the ladies to lead their life with integrity and humility, adhering to human values of love and compassion, and play a greater role in serving humanity and planet earth, which was the need of present turbulent times. The second speaker was Ms. Suniti Khastagir. Referring to the important role of ladies in shaping society, she stressed the importance of selfless service which, she said, was the best weapon for individual transformation that led to societal transformation. The last speaker of the session was Ms. Dana Gillespie who recalled the teachings she received from Bhagavan and exhorted the ladies to play the game of life and be happy. In conclusion, she sang the song “Start the Day with Love”. Bhajans continued after this and ended with Arati at 10.00 a.m.



Another inspiring talk was given in the evening by Ms. Aswathi Thirunal Gowri Lakshmi Bayi, a princess of royal family of Travancore, reputed for their absolute servitude to Lord Padmanabha of Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple, Thiruvananthapuram. Illustrating her inspiring talk with Sanskrit verses from sacred texts, the learned speaker observed that the path of Bhakti was the simplest and easiest to achieve the goal of God-realisation. She also narrated a couple of Pauranic stories about the power of Bhakti and concluded her scholarly talk with the Kirtan “Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare” which devotees followed in chorus.

Devotional Music Concert

This inspiring talk was followed by a divinely-inspired carnatic music concert by renowned vocalists, Shanmukhapriya and Haripriya, well-known as Priya Sisters. Beginning their presentation with a composition dedicated to the Divine Mother “Jai Jai Durga”, the talented and experienced duo took the audience to a heavenward trip by their fine rendition of Bhajans, Kirtans and devotional numbers which included “Manasa Bhajare Gurucharanam” (I offer salutations at the Lotus Feet of Sai), “Jai Maa Jai Maa Jagadeeshwari Sai Maa” (hail Sai, the Mother of the universe). They concluded their enrapturing presentation with the famous number “Brahmamokkate” (God is one).

A Dance Medley Par Excellence

The grand finale of the Ladies Day celebrations was a multimedia based dance medley presented by the students



A beautiful dance by Primary School students.

of Sri Sathya Sai Primary School. It was a 40-minute mesmerising experience for viewers when the children in glittering costumes presented scintillating dances, which brought Bhagavan’s main teachings to the fore. Bhajan followed next and concluded with Arati at 7.30 p.m.

TALKS ON BHAGAVAN’S TEACHINGS

As part of Bhagavan’s 91st Birthday celebrations, many eminent speakers spoke on the Divine Mission of Bhagavan and His teachings. In this regard, there were two talks on 20th November 2016. The first talk was given by Ms. Petra Van Kalinowski, Chairperson, Zone 7 of Sathya Sai International Organisation. Speaking about her experiences of Bhagavan’s omnipresence, she stated that Bhagavan’s Divine Love could be experienced everywhere as it pervaded the entire universe. She exhorted one and all to experience Bhagavan’s omnipresence by surrendering to Him unconditionally and be ever ready to work for His Mission as His instruments. The second speaker was Sri Alex Granya, National Service Coordinator for U.S.A., who reminded the devotees that Bhagavan’s central message was love and exhorted them to live His message by serving mankind as service is love in action.

Another inspiring talk was given by Sri Anil Kumar Kamaraju on the morning of 21st November 2016. Sharing invaluable teachings and lessons learnt by him at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan, the learned speaker exhorted one and all to adhere to Dharma in life and practise the teachings of Bhagavan, who came down on earth in human form to restore Dharma. He reminded the devotees that harmony of thoughts, words and actions was most important in life, which made a man noble.

Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana commissioned two mobile medical vans in addition to the already existing ten vans to cater to the medical needs of villagers in far-flung areas. They were inaugurated by the Trustees of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust during the morning Bhajan.

SILVER JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS OF SSSIHMS

Silver jubilee of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Prasanthigram was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam on 20th and 21st November 2016. The proceedings of the celebrations began on the afternoon of 20th November 2016 with the welcome address of Sri S.S. Naganand, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. Extending warm welcome to the Chief Guest, Sri Jagat Prakash Nadda, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare and other dignitaries and devotees, Sri Naganand gave details of the phenomenal growth of the hospital in the last 25 years. The distinguished speaker added that this Institute was a shining example of how best medical services could be provided totally free of cost to needy patients without any discrimination of high and low, rich and poor. Speaking

next, Dr. (Ms.) Neelam Desai stated how the Institute was providing free ultra modern medical facilities to all as per the command of Bhagavan in contrast to the prevailing commercialisation of the medical profession elsewhere. Referring to the Medical Mission of Bhagavan, Dr. Desai observed that the path shown by Bhagavan was the best solution for the problems in the medical field.

After these talks, the Director of National Accreditation Board for Healthcare and Hospitals (NABH), Dr. B.K. Rana handed over the prestigious certificate of



Director of NABH presenting the certificate of accreditation to the Director, SSSIHMS.

accreditation to Dr. Gurumurthy, Director of SSSIHMS. Five senior doctors were thereafter felicitated for their outstanding services in the Medical Mission of Bhagavan. They were: Dr. Neelam Desai, Dr. Ramnath Iyer, Dr. P.K. Dash, Dr. C.K. Reddy and Dr. Venkata Raghava Reddy.

The Address of the Chief Guest, Sri Jagat Prakash Nadda followed this. Appreciating the great progress made by the Institute in providing medical services to the needy patients in the last 25 years, the eminent speaker observed that high standard maintained by the Institute showed how best one could



Union Health and Family Welfare Minister, Sri Jagat Prakash Nadda addressing the gathering.

serve humanity. Sri Nadda also spoke about the commendable effort made by Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust in taking the Divine Mission of Bhagavan forward with sustainable pace even in the physical absence of Bhagavan.

Drama by the Institute Staff

As part of silver jubilee celebrations of the Institute, the staff of the Institute presented a drama entitled “SSSIHMS – Sri Sathya Sai is the Heart of Medical Science” on 21st November 2016. The



A scene from the drama by the staff of SSSIHMS.

drama was a multimedia presentation which depicted the monumental growth of the Institute since its inception in 1991. Traversing through stories galore, the drama showed the functioning of its

various departments and showcased the high standards maintained by them. The drama which began with a beautiful dance presented by the children of the Institute staff came to a close with Arati at 7.00 p.m. after a brief session of Bhajans.

BHAGAVAN'S 91st BIRTHDAY FUNCTION

Bhagavan's 91st Birthday function was held in brilliantly lit and beautifully bedecked Sai Kulwant Hall on 23rd November 2016. The programme began at 8.00 a.m. with sacred Vedic chants followed by auspicious musical notes by the Nadaswaram and Panchavadyam groups of students.

Guru Vandana: A Devotional Music Offering

What followed next was a devotional music presentation “Guru Vandana” (adoration of Guru), by the students of Bhagavan's educational institutions who



Guru Vandana by students.

poured out their hearts to express their love and gratitude to their Beloved Sadguru, Bhagavan Baba. Beginning with an invocatory prayer “Sainathaya Namostute” to offer their reverential Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan, they saturated the entire milieu with devotional fervour by soulful rendition of an array of touching

compositions which included a specially composed Hindi song “Pyari Maa, Is Dilke Har Kana Mein Tera Naam” (Oh! Divine Mother, Your Name reverberates in every corner of my heart), the evergreen number “Why Fear When I am Here” and a Qawali which Bhagavan often loved to hear “Sai Ke Darbar Mein”.

Release of Annual Report of Central Trust

A welcome address by Sri V. Srinivasan, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust followed this soul-stirring devotional music programme. Referring to Puttaparthi as the home and destination of all devotees of Bhagavan, the distinguished speaker extended hearty welcome to all and the



Release of Annual Report of Central Trust.

Speaker of Sikkim Assembly and the ministers of the Sikkim Government who graced the occasion by their presence. Trustees of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust thereafter released the Annual Report (2015-16) of the Trust. Giving an overview of the Annual Report, Sri S.S. Naganand, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust gave statistics of income and expenditure of the Trust and outlined its significant activities during the last year. He also gave the names of three new Trustees of the Trust. They are: Sri G.S.R.C.V. Prasada Rao, the present Secretary of the Trust,

Dr. V. Mohan, an eminent diabetologist from Chennai and Sri Vijaya Bhaskar, former Executive Director of Reserve Bank of India.

Talks by Eminent Speakers

Talks by two eminent speakers followed next. Speaking first, Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman, Prasanthi Council of Sathya Sai International Organisation gave a brief account of the service activities being conducted by the Sai Organisation in various countries of the world. Speaking about the Message and Mission of Bhagavan, he observed that the best way to love God is to love mankind. Prema Yoga (yoga of love), he said, is the best yoga. The next speaker was Sri Nimish Pandya, All India President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, India who exhorted all devotees to be happy and make others happy. The real report of achievements was the number of hearts one touched by one's love during the course of the year, he observed. Referring to the role of youth in the Sai Organisation, the distinguished speaker stated that it was the youth who would take the Divine Mission of Bhagavan forward as they were the repositories of unimaginable power.

Divine Discourse of Bhagavan

In the Divine Discourse of Bhagavan, which was played on the public address system, Bhagavan said that if man realised the sacredness of human life, he would know his divinity. The aim of man's life, Bhagavan said, was to know this truth. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan “Prema Mudita Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram”. Bhajans followed thereafter and the programme ended with Arati at 11.00 a.m. After the morning

programme, Bhagavan's Prasadam in the form of a sumptuous lunch was served to all the devotees on this auspicious day.

Golden Chariot Procession

The evening programme comprised chariot procession and Jhoola Mahotsava. The Golden Chariot, which Bhagavan



Golden chariot procession.

ascended for the first time in 1997, was taken in a grand procession which started at Ganesh Gate at 5.00 p.m., circumambulated the Prasanthi Mandir and entered Sai Kulwant Hall at 5.30 p.m. Led by Veda chanting and Bhajan singing groups of students, the procession was witnessed by a large number of devotees who lined up its entire route.

Jhoola Mahotsava

Jhoola Mahotsava started thereafter to a accompaniment of flute recital by two accomplished flautists, Sri Shashank Subramanyam and Sri Rakesh Chaurasia. The talented flautists, enthralled the audience for nearly one hour by their sublimely rendered recital, which not only made the fete reach elated heights,



Jhoola Mahotsava and flute recital.

but also provided a splendid finale to the glorious Birthday celebrations of Bhagavan. Bhajans followed next and concluded with Arati at 6.30 p.m.

Many people call themselves devotees without understanding the meaning and significance of the term devotion. Devotion does not mean performing rites and rituals. True devotion lies in obeying the command of the Lord and spreading His message. In spite of innumerable difficulties, King Harishchandra never swerved from the path of truth. One has to worship God both in times of pain and pleasure. Unfortunately, due to the effect of Kali Age, people worship Him when everything goes well, but criticise Him in times of difficulties.

– Baba

WORSHIP JESUS BY FOLLOWING HIS IDEALS

THERE IS NO GREATER WEALTH THAN LOVE

WHAT IS HAPPINESS? IS IT sitting in an air-conditioned room or partaking of delicious food? These confer happiness only at the physical and mental level; not at the level of the Atma. True happiness is that which is related to the Atma. You should not be afraid of difficulties; they are passing clouds. Do not waver. Follow the heart, which is steady and unwavering.

Share Love with Everybody

Unity of head, heart and hand is essential for man. This is the true significance of Christmas. Install God in your heart. Contemplate on Him and undertake good deeds. Consider every activity as God's work and act accordingly. Merely feeding the poor and distributing clothes to the needy do not constitute Seva. Along with this, one has to cultivate love which is eternal. Right from dawn to dusk, all our actions should be suffused with love.

You have to spread the message of God. Fortunate are those who pay heed to His words. Whether people listen or not, discharge your duty of spreading His message. The true message is the message of love. Accept both pleasure and pain with equal-mindedness. Share love with everybody. There is no greater wealth than love.

Three Stages of Man's Evolution

Initially, Paul hated Jesus. One day, Jesus appeared in his dream and asked him

lovingly, "Paul, what harm have I done to you, why do you criticise me? All your travails are consequences of your own actions; I am not responsible for your suffering". Then Paul was transformed and attained sainthood. Thus, Jesus transformed many sinners into saints. Worship Jesus by following His ideals. Jesus pointed to three stages. The first one is, "I am the Messenger of God". He wanted to propagate the message of God. The second one is, "I am the Son of God". The son has a claim to father's property. What is the property of God? Truth, Love, Forbearance, Peace and Righteousness are the properties of God. So, man has to strive to attain these qualities. He has to practise, experience and propagate these



virtues. Only then can man deserve to be called son of God. The third one is "I and My Father are One". This stage is attained when the principle of unity is realised. When Jesus reached this stage, He had no suffering at all. He was always blissful and was prepared for anything. Even at the time of crucifixion, Jesus was smiling, because he realised that he was not the body. Body is bound to perish, but the indweller has no birth and death. Truly speaking, the indweller is God Himself. Jesus understood that body was merely vesture, and He was the indweller.

Embodiments of Divine Love!

Wherever you may be, in whatever country, do not give room to religious

differences. Do not give up your religion. Get rid of differences based on religion. Adhere to your faith and your traditions. When differences between religions are given up, love will develop in you. When love grows, you can have the direct vision of God. Without love, verbal prayers are of no avail. Realise that the love that is present in everyone is common to all. It is love that has brought you all together. It is the cord of love that has bound all of you. It is the unifier, the motivator and the giver of joy to all. Therefore, develop love.

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

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because it has got the power to enlarge. That is not correct. Here is a small example. You sweep your house daily. If you go on accumulating the dust in a pit, after a month, this dust would collect into a mound. It has increased because you are putting the dust there daily. So, body is also like a pit. You fill it with Idli, Sambar and all types of food. If it increases in weight due to too much eating, it is not because of Chaitanya Shakti (power of consciousness). So, Sthula Deha is formed by Annamaya Kosha. The next is Sukshma Deha (subtle body). It is formed by Pranamaya, Manomaya and Vijnanamaya Koshas. What is Karana Deha (causal body)? That is formed by Anandamaya Kosha (sheath of bliss). It is the witness of everything.

So, truth, righteousness, peace, love, and non-violence cannot be imported or

exported. They are within you. If you make sincere efforts, they can manifest in your life on their own. There is nothing in this world which is not present in a human being. Everything is within him. Divinity also is within him. But man should develop the awareness that divinity is present in him in many forms. It is present in gross body, subtle body and causal body. This is Constant Integrated Awareness which is changeless. That awareness is Chit. This awareness is there in our words, in our actions, in our feelings and every part of our body. Without awareness, you cannot live even for a moment. That awareness is the very form of God. If you understand and investigate these spiritual principles and put them into practice, you will have divine bliss.

– **Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 12th April 1993.**



HEALING IN A DREAM

SWAMI CAN HEAL US WITH A word, a look or a Divine touch. He also heals in dreams with all three. Robert received such an extraordinary and permanent healing from Swami through a dream.

For over two years, Robert suffered from severe neck pain due to a bulging disc that was the result of a serious automobile accident. The accident happened when a truck travelling in the opposite direction had not secured an engine block loaded on the back. Just as the truck approached Robert's car on a curve, the engine block fell off and slid across the road, crashing into the front of his car.

It is interesting that a few days prior to the accident, I had a very vivid dream in which Swami told me that the dishes in the kitchen were stacked too high and were in danger of falling. This is a good example of a meaningful dream that is difficult, if not impossible, to interpret until after the fact. The kitchen could symbolise home life and the evolving health of family that was in jeopardy.

Robert's painful condition had made his life insufferable and reduced him to practically a recluse. He tried every available medical option short of surgery to no avail. The pain remained unremitting and acute. He felt the same way that I did about praying for personal favours, so asking Swami for help was not considered. One night, Robert dreamt of Swami. In the dream, as in his waking life, he was suffering from neck



pain. Swami pushed very hard on his outer thigh causing acute pain and said, "I know, auto accident. From now on, no more pain, complete healing".

Robert awoke immediately from the dream. He lay motionless, fearing he might experience the dreaded familiar pain when he moved. Slowly, he turned his head in every direction, got up and moved around. When he realised he was pain free for the first time in two years, he joyfully told me his dream.

Robert received a most intriguing and unusual confirmation of this healing a few

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A UNIQUE GLIMPSE OF SWAMI'S BOUNDLESS LOVE

T.G. Krishnamurthy

Here was a young girl born in a foreign land and brought up in a seemingly alien culture, who heard the call of the Lord amidst the deafening noise of worldliness that surrounded her. She gave up everything she had in visible world to follow the divine call that emanated from the depth of her heart.

BHAGAVAN HAS OFTEN SAID that the frogs in the pond miss out the opportunity to see the splendour of the lotus. On the other hand, the bees come from afar to savour the nectar hidden in the flower. Let me now narrate to you the tale of one such 'bee' which came from a far off land, attracted by the fragrance of Bhagavan's Divine Love.

It was the 14th day of April in the year 1976. On that auspicious day, Bhagavan inaugurated a Lingam-shaped Mandir at about noon that day in the very premises where the remodelled Sundaram temple stands today in Chennai. Bhagavan called five of us into His chamber on the first floor of the Mandir. The group consisted of Sri Damodar Rao (Member of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust), Sri Rayanangar (first State President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Tamil Nadu), Sri Manickavasagam and Sri P.G. Achuthanandam (Members, Sri Sathya Sai Trust, Tamil Nadu) and

myself. Bhagavan had graciously designated me as the District President of Madras (Chennai) on that day.

Fascinating Story of Sphatika Japamala

Bhagavan permitted us to take Padanamaskar. As we stood in Bhagavan's room, we noticed that He was holding a Japamala in His right hand. This Japamala was different from the Rudraksha (commonly used by followers of Advaita), and even different from the Tulasi type of Japamala (commonly used by followers of Visishtadvaita) that we are familiar with. The Japamala consisted of shining beads which

looked like crystals.

Bhagavan proceeded to ask us 'Emi Idi?' (What is this?). Some members of the group suggested that it was a Rudraksha Mala, while others suggested that it was probably a Tulasi Mala. Bhagavan told them that it was neither of these. He then looked at me, the youngest member of the group, and asked, 'Neeku Telusa'? (Do you know?) I had seen similar Japamala's used in churches. They consisted of shining beads strung together using a rose-coloured thread. I gathered courage to mention to Bhagavan that it was a rosary. Bhagavan confirmed it to be right. It was neither a Rudraksha Mala nor a Tulasi Mala. It was a Sphatika (quartz) Mala.

Our minds were filled with wonder, how and why this Sphatika Mala came into His hand? We were curious to know, to whom He would give this Japamala, since none of us belonged to the Christian faith. We were however hesitant to ask Him these



questions. Finally, I mustered courage to ask Him why He had materialised this Japamala. In response, Bhagavan said that He did not materialise it like He usually does. He revealed that it had come to His hand from where it was. We were unable to grasp the difference between materialising and coming to His hand. We then requested Bhagavan to enlighten us on this.

In response to this question, Bhagavan revealed to us a fascinating glimpse from the life of a devotee. Bhagavan told us that there was a lady named Michelle, who hailed from a place called Lyon in France. She graduated in philosophy from the University of Paris and specialised in the study of Indian Philosophy. This kindled her hunger for a deeper understanding of Indian Philosophy in general and the Advaitic Philosophy in particular. She however had to succumb to parental pressure and got married at the age of

twenty six. The couple had major theological differences which eventually led to the parting of ways. Michelle refused to accept any alimony and eventually sold off all her properties. She then moved to Pondicherry

(now Puducherry) in India, which was at that time a French colony. She settled down at Puducherry for a while to pursue her study of Advaitic Philosophy.

Splendourous Vision of Lord Siva

Michelle eventually heard about a coastal town, Nagapattinam (Tamil Nadu) noted for the temple of Lord Siva. The Purohit (priest) of the temple was also an authority on Siva Purana (epic narrating glories of Lord Siva). He regularly gave discourses in the local language Tamil. Michelle took great pains to gain familiarity with the local language so as to follow the priest's discourses. She voluntarily offered her services and financial support to the temple. She



totally embraced the Indian way of living, learnt to dress herself in a traditional Sari and adopted a complete vegetarian diet. She learnt to cook food in the traditional Indian way and also to offer Naivedyam (sacramental food offering) to Lord Siva; distributing the same amongst the poor as holy Prasadam (sanctified food).

Before his demise in the year 1935, the Purohit foretold Michelle that she would in due course be able to see Lord Siva come in human form. Michelle bore all expenses of the Purohit's funeral.

Then she returned to Puducherry and spent her days chanting Om Namah Sivaya. A couple of years later, somebody suggested to her to visit Varanasi (also known as Kasi). She was told that it was the divine abode of Lord Siva. Michelle proceeded to Varanasi with the fond hope of coming face to face with Lord Siva come in human form. Her search took her to many Sadhus and saints. Her quest however remained unfulfilled. One day, she came across a Sadhu who advised her to return to Puducherry. The Sadhu foretold that she would receive there the call from the one who is Lord Siva incarnate.

Michelle took the Sadhu's advice to heart. She returned to Puducherry and continued the pursuit of chanting Lord Siva's Name with increased vigour. She stayed away from all who were immersed in the world and associated only with those who spoke about Lord Siva. Imagine the will power of this lady of thirty-eight, who gave up all the pleasures of the world and devoted her mind entirely to the contemplation of the Lord! People around even considered her a mad woman. In fact, while narrating this episode, Bhagavan Himself mentioned that she had indeed acquired the most blessed madness

of all, Siva Picchi (madness of divine love for Lord Siva)!

The call came eventually in the year 1969. Someone told Michelle that Lord Siva had come in human form and that He lived in a hamlet called Puttaparthi in the State of Andhra Pradesh. Prasanthi Nilayam did not have even the basic facilities in those days and life in the Ashram could be very hard for somebody used to the comforts of the western world. But Michelle resolutely stayed on at Puttaparthi for three years awaiting the vision of her Beloved Lord Siva.

It was around 1972 when Michelle was filled with a sense of disappointment that she had not yet been blessed with the divine vision that she was craving for. The pain was now almost unbearable. She could no longer put up with loneliness and 'dark night of the soul' that a Sadhaka invariably goes through during the spiritual journey. Just when it began to look like her life's quest gone in vain, the merciful Lord decided to remove the curtain of delusion.

Bhagavan blessed Michelle with an interview. "See...", He said showing Himself, "Here is Lord Siva". As Michelle looked on, she was blessed with the splendorous vision of Lord Siva. The form that was revealed to her that day was exactly as she had always visualised Him in her heart. It may be appropriate to recollect at this point that Bhagavan had revealed through a poem He had written in His childhood wherein He declared that He was none other than Siva come in human form! "Naalgava Garbhamuna Sivudu Avatarinchaga (Lord Siva was born to Mother Easwaramma as her fourth child). The full text of this poem is available in the book titled 'Vandana',



published by the Publications Division of Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust.

The Return of Japamala to Bhagavan

Michelle was bathed in the Ganga of tears that seemed to flow non-stop. Bhagavan materialised for her use a Japamala with Sphatika beads. He commanded her to go back to her place and continue to chant Om Namah Sivaya as advised by the Purohit of the Siva temple at Nagapattinam. He assured her that He would grant her a permanent place in His heart at the end of her life's journey!

In abidance to Bhagavan's command, Michelle returned to Puducherry and resumed her Sadhana. She attained the Lotus Feet of the Lord on 12th April 1976. As per her desire, her body was cremated according to Vedic rites. Bhagavan then went on to remind us that the present day was 14th April 1976, precisely three days after Michelle left her body. He revealed to us that as promised, Michelle had reached Him. At that moment Bhagavan declared to us that along with Michelle, the Sphatika Mala had reached Him. And this was the Japamala that Swami was holding in His right hand. I will leave it to the readers to

imagine the sheer thrill that the five of us experienced at that moment!

Let us take a moment to ponder on this wonderful Leela of the Lord and His devotee, as told by Bhagavan Himself. Here was a young girl born in a foreign land and brought up in a seemingly alien culture, who heard the call of the Lord amidst the deafening noise of worldliness that surrounded her. She gave up everything she had in visible world to follow the divine call that emanated from the depth of her heart. Michelle came to India in the year 1928 in response to the inner call. Bhagavan Baba may have been just two years old when Michelle heard His divine call. Like Lord Krishna, Bhagavan Baba had started drawing His devotees to Himself even as a small child.

The frogs in the pond that are close to the lotus, at times fail to see its splendour. But the bees unfailingly come from afar to savour the nectar. May Bhagavan bless us with the wisdom and determination to seek only Him and become bees that enjoy nothing but Divine Love!

– The author, Sri T.G. Krishnamurthy, is a former President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Tamil Nadu.

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months later when he had another dream of Swami. In this dream, Robert was seated in the verandah in Prasanthi Nilayam when Swami approached and asked what his Sadhana was. Robert replied, "Meditation, Japa and reading spiritual books". Then Swami said that reading had been difficult since Robert had the accident injuring his neck and eyes. He added, "But Swami cured you". Robert replied that he knew and

fell at Swami's feet, expressing his love and gratitude.

This second dream not only confirmed the healing, but revealed Swami's detailed awareness. As a result of a concussion from the accident, Robert had been experiencing sensitivity to bright light.

– Excerpted from "Divine Lessons from Sathya Sai Baba" by Diana Baskin.



35TH CONVOCATION OF SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF Higher Learning (Deemed to be University) held its 35th Annual Convocation at Prasanthi Nilayam on 22nd

The format, planning and execution of the SSSIHL Convocation ceremony is second to none. At 10.30 a.m., the ceremonial procession led by the university brass band and followed by two students carrying the University Standards on either side of the Registrar (who carried the Ceremonial Mace) came to Sai Kulwant Hall from Yajur Mandir. The procession included the Chief Guest, the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Deans and the Heads of Departments along with members of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and the Board of Management.



Ceremonial procession in Sai Kulwant Hall.

November 2016. As the university turns thirty-five, the event is a testimony of how the education model based on human values at the university level has stood the test of time and continues to thrive.

The Chief Guest of the 35th Annual Convocation was Dr. R Chidambaram, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India and Homi Bhabha Professor, Department of Atomic Energy. Dr. Chidambaram is a highly decorated physicist who has served in the best interests of the country for several decades. He is best known for playing an integral role in India's nuclear weapons programme. He coordinated the test preparation for the Pokhran-I (1974) and Pokhran-II (1998).

Following the invocatory Veda chanting, the Vice Chancellor, Prof. K.B.R. Varma prayed to the Revered Founder Chancellor to declare the Convocation open. The Convocation was then declared open in the Divine voice of Bhagavan Baba.

Vice Chancellor's Address

In his speech to the students, the Vice Chancellor highlighted that Sri Sathya Sai model of education was of great importance in a fast-moving world driven by materialistic concerns. He recalled the milestones that the university made in the past thirty-five years. This included the growth of the university campuses (now totalling four), the pursuit of academic excellence and the focus on need-based research. He highlighted key research achievements across various disciplines in the past academic year such as low-cost



multi-modal microscope, and microbial fuel cells for waste water treatment.

Following this, 498 candidates for the various programmes of study were admitted to their various degrees (undergraduate, postgraduate and professional programmes as well as 28 gold medallists, and ten Ph.D. awardees) by the Chancellor, Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah, former Chief Justice of India.

The Convocation oath was then administered by the Vice Chancellor, after which the gold medallists of the university were honoured. These fine women and men students excelled in the Faculties of Sciences, Management and Commerce and Economics and Humanities during the academic year 2015-16.

Chief Guest's Address

Dr. R. Chidambaram then delivered his Convocation Address. He said that for any



The Chief Guest, Dr. R. Chidambaram, delivering his Convocation Address.

profound work to be achieved, an ecosystem was critically important. He then narrated the ongoing progress of the Government of India to equip the country with an ecosystem that would enable it to become a developed nation in time to come, especially in the areas of higher education, scientific research and technological development.

He remarked that great scientific progress must not come at the cost of the loss of character. Character, he said, means integrity; it means the pursuit of excellence within an individual's limitations, the commitment of national and social causes and also a commitment to justice and social equity.

India is now well on its way to become a 'developed country', he said. However, we must strive to make it a knowledge-driven economy. If, at the same time, we retain our spiritual and cultural heritage, then India will become a 'great country' in the fullest sense of the term, or more correctly, restore to itself the greatness that was its in the past. What better place than this Institute for learning the spiritual and cultural heritage of India, as you gain the knowledge in your own areas of specialisation, he concluded.

Bhagavan's Benedictory Address

Finally, the graduands were blessed with the Divine Benedictory Address by the Revered Founder Chancellor, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Bhagavan pointed to the pitiful situation of modern students, who were bereft of direction in a society starved of goodness. He said the proper study of mankind is man. He exhorted the students to imbibe Indian culture, become good citizens and live a life that was acceptable to all. He concluded by telling His students to not only be good themselves, but encourage others to tread the sacred path. The event ended at 12.45 p.m. following the national anthem and Arati.

Evening Programme

The evening programme commenced with the ceremony of Sai Krishna Award for Excellence in Teaching. The award,

which alternates between teaching and research each year, celebrates individual performance in teaching and research in the system of values-based integral education.

The Sai Krishna Award consists of a certificate, a memento and a cash award of ₹ 25,000. For teaching, the experts assess the teaching, mentoring and participation in the co-curricular activities that contribute to Sri Sathya Sai System of Integral Education. Criteria include the number of subjects taught, the number of years of teaching experience, the integration of values in teaching methodology and student feedback on teaching quality and effectiveness.

The Chancellor of the University, Justice M.N. Venkatachaliah felicitated the following four teachers for the award this year, one from each campus of the university:

Anantapur Campus: Ms. Meera Manikkavachakan, Assistant Professor (Hon.), Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences.

Prasanthi Nilayam Campus: Sri Siddhartha. R, Faculty Member, Department of English Language and Literature.

Brindavan Campus: Sri Darshan Gera, Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics and Computer Science.

Muddenahalli Campus: Dr. B. Chandrasekhar, Assistant Professor, Department of Management and Commerce.

Rang-e-Mohabbat (the Colour of Love): Convocation Drama

The drama has always been an important part of the Annual Convocation at Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Our Revered Founder Chancellor would Himself write the script and take keen interest in these dramas. The uniqueness



*A scene from the drama
"Rang-e-Mohabbat".*

of the dramas is that they are conceived and produced by students of the university. All the aspects of the drama such as sets, costumes, make-up, music, etc., are entirely produced by the students.

The notion that faith comes first and then experience was beautifully highlighted in this year's Convocation Drama. The story focused on the journey of perseverance of Vijay, a smart, brilliant and ambitious student who dreams big.

When Vijay tops the State in his secondary school exam, he is already set one step in the future of his lifelong dream to pursue engineering, for which he requests his father to fulfil his desire. But his father naïvely gets caught in the ways of the world and loses the funding he had saved for his son's education.

Thus begins Vijay's quest to fulfil his ambition. The story highlights the different colours of love that life throws at Vijay and how – eventually – all the dots connect. The drama unfolds the unique transformation of Vijay from an arrogant and ambitious graduate to a devoted and humble young man, a transformation that only the Love of Sai can bring about. Excellent direction, superb acting of the students and meaningful dialogues made the drama an impressive presentation.





DR. KARANAM
BALASUBRAMANYAM

SAI IS OMNIPRESENT

Sai is all-pervasive.

*He is always available to His devotees
anywhere.*

*He is the Lord who bestows devotion on
all and always protects them.*

(Telugu Poem)

THIS BEAUTIFUL POEM COMPOSED by Swami citing His Omnipresence still lingers in my mind even after leaving Parthi way back in 1992. I heard many Divine Discourses but never stopped wondering about the Omnipresence of God. I guess, I could not understand this fact due to my close proximity to Him then. I left



India five years later to attend a Research Conference at Mendoza, a picturesque city in Argentina. I was truly excited as it was going to be my first ever trip abroad. Once I reached London, I lost all my enthusiasm and felt very lonely. I had to stay at the Gatwick Airport to board another flight in order to resume my journey.

I was thinking of Swami and felt so bad that I had to leave India at the time of His Birthday. I felt like flying back home immediately. While these thoughts were still lingering in my mind, I closed my eyes for a short nap. When I woke up, I found a person nearby reading a book, the cover page of which bore a beautiful picture of our Beloved Swami. Life suddenly sprung back into me and all my energy returned.

I approached the person who was reading the book and asked him if he was from India. "No," he replied and went on to tell me that he had however been to India to see Sai Baba. He in turn asked me how I knew about Sai Baba. I gladly told him about my years as a student at Puttaparthi. I also spoke to him about my current trip to Argentina. To my surprise, he said that he too was attending the same Research Conference.

After landing at Mendoza, I enjoyed the beautiful view of the city at the foothill of the great mountain range. As was the procedure, I was reconfirming my return tickets over the phone, and as soon as I told my name, the person on the other side of the line asked me if my final destination was Bangalore (Bengaluru), India, to which I replied, "Yes".

The next question the person asked me was whether I knew Sai Baba. I was puzzled a bit but then I said, "Yes", and immediately the person on the other side of the line asked me if he could meet me.

Samartha Ramdas

SAMARTHA RAMDAS WAS born in a hamlet in the State of Maharashtra. Narayana was the name given to him by his parents. He lost his father at the age of eight. Narayana was very mischievous in his boyhood, posing great many problems to his mother Ranubai. As soon as he reached the age of 13, all his relatives advised his mother to perform his marriage with an intelligent girl. Hence, his mother selected one girl for him. As per the custom, a curtain was held between the bride and the bridegroom before the main ritual of tying the Mangala Sutra around the bride's neck by the bridegroom. But when the curtain was removed in order to perform this ritual, Narayana was found missing. People searched in the entire village, but could not find him. After running away from the marriage Pandal, Narayana reached the Pachavati area.

Narayana was thrilled to have reached there because it was the place where Sri Rama lived for some time during His exile in the forest. Having chosen that place for his Sadhana, Narayana started reciting the name of Rama incessantly.

How could a mischievous boy like Narayana become an ardent seeker. It must be due to his meritorious deeds in past lives. Not only that, after leaving home, he had been to a Hanuman temple on the way. Hanuman was Narayana's chosen deity right from his childhood. Standing in front of the idol of Hanuman, he prayed, saying, "Hanumantha! Bestow your power and qualities on me". As an indication of acceptance of his prayer, brilliant streams



A divine light emerged from the idol of Hanuman and entered Narayana's body.

of light emanated from Hanuman's idol and entered Narayana's body. It is only due to God's grace that ordinary people can turn into sincere seekers, and seekers attain Self-realisation. He performed Sadhana at Panchavati for twelve years. As a result, he could realise the three-fold principle of surrender like Hanuman who said, "Rama! In terms of bodily perception, You are the Lord and I am Your servant. In terms of mental perception, you are the Object and I am Your reflection. And in the Atmic perception, You are I and I am You". Accordingly, Narayana decided to become Ramdas (servant of Rama) just like Hanuman.

He left Panchavati and set out on a tour of Bharat. At that time, the country was under foreign rule, and the Sanathana Dharma was in a state of decline. In view of the sad state of the country, Ramdas went about teaching the necessity of patriotism, devotion to God and adherence to Dharma to people as well as rulers. He made the Name of Rama resonate in all villages, and gave the message: Grama Seva is

Rama Seva (service to villages is service to Rama). In course of time, when he reached the State of Maharashtra, he was happy to note that Shivaji was striving to establish an independent kingdom there.

On an auspicious day, Ramdas stood in front of Shivaji's palace and said aloud, *Bhavati Bhiksham Dehi* (oh revered one, give alms). Shivaji recollected what Tukaram had told him earlier: Ramdas will be your Guru. So, he placed a slip of paper into the begging bowl of Ramdas and said, "Swami! I hereby bequeath the whole



Shivaji offered his kingdom to Ramdas as alms, but Ramdas asked him to rule as a representative of God for the protection of Dharma.

of my kingdom to you". Ramdas then said to him, "My dear! I am a recluse who has renounced everything. I have no interest in any possession whatsoever. But do as I say. Considering the kingdom as a benediction of God, serve the people as a representative of God and act as a protector of Dharma".

One day, Ramdas sent three articles to Shivaji as gifts – two bricks, one coconut and a sachet of mud. What was their significance and what was the idea behind these queer presents? Why do we seek a coconut? It is to enjoy the sweetness of the white and tender coconut. It is a symbol of Sattwic quality (gentleness). The kingdom which was under his reign had to be nurtured on



Ramdas imparted pious teachings to Shivaji by offering him three gifts.

Sattwic principles, leading people on to the Sattwic path of life. Next, the bricks are used to build a house. Just as a house protects its dwellers, the king must protect his subjects vigilantly. And the mud always reminds of the mother earth. In this manner, Ramdas made Shivaji aware of his duty towards his kingdom and its subjects.

How did Ramdas come to acquire the name "Samartha Ramdas"? With a resolve to protect Dharma wherever he went, Ramdas used to carry a staff in one hand and a bow in the other, along with a quiver of arrows on the shoulder. One day, while he was walking on the bank of the Godavari, a group of scholars happened to meet him. They sought to know, "Gentleman! You appear to be a Sannyasin, yet you carry these weapons with you, why? Are you a tribesman, a hunter or a recluse"? In reply, Ramdas said, "I am Ramdas. I am prepared to use weapons if necessary so as to protect Dharma". Then the scholars wanted to test him. They challenged, "Are you really capable of shooting an arrow? If so, then look at that flying bird and shoot it with your arrow". Ramdas took a good aim at the bird and shot it. The bird fell dead on the ground. The scholars sneered at him in contempt and spoke disparagingly, "Shame, Shame! You are supposed to be a Sadhu (pious man). How can you resort to killing"?

Ramdas said, “Revered ones! It was you who asked me to shoot at the bird”. The scholars made fun of him, “Is it so? Suppose we ask you to eat grass, would you follow blindly? Don’t you apply your own mind? You must atone for this sin”. Ramdas then asked them, “Will the sin go if I atone”? They said, yes. “Then what about this bird? After atonement, should not the bird get back its life?” asked Ramdas. They asked by way of reply, “How is it possible? That was its Karma”. Ramdas was not satisfied with their reply. With tears in eyes, he prayed to Lord Rama, “Oh Rama! If it is true that all my spiritual practices were sincere, let this bird receive its life back. I seek Thy pardon for my sinful and ignorant act”. Immediately, the bird became alive and flew away. Those scholars who made fun of him were struck with wonder. They said, “Oh the great one! We repent about what we spoke to you; we are sorry for those belittling words. We request you to please excuse us. We are direct witness to your capability. You could hit a flying bird, and could bring it back to life. You are capable of anything. So, we give you the name Samartha Ramdas”.

...continued from page 27

I gladly said “Yes” and gave him my address, still not knowing the reason why he chose to meet me personally. The man who spoke to me found the place where I was staying in less than an hour and he took me to a shop where there were ten more people to receive me, not to talk about science but just to hear about God, who is none other than our Swami. As I started talking about the Lord, one of them slowly opened a photo album and they showed me various pictures of Swami and Puttaparthi. The next day, they took me to the Sai Centre where I saw a huge picture of our Beloved Swami.

Samartha Ramdas was not elated at praise nor wailed at derision. He proceeded with his mission of protection of Dharma in right earnest. He reached the sacred place Pandharpur and had the Darshan of Lord Panduranga. He extolled the way Panduranga showered His grace on Pundarika. Suddenly, his mind was overwhelmed with thoughts about his own mother. He reached his native place, where his mother was most eagerly waiting for her son in her old age. Her joy was beyond description when he returned. Having realised that it was indeed Narayana who was being extolled by masses as Samartha Ramdas, she was beside herself with joy. Ramdas served his mother during her last days. After she died, he performed her last rites and resumed his mission of Dharma protection.

Due to the teachings of Samartha Ramdas and the rule of Shivaji, Dharmic life rejuvenated in Bharat. Samartha Ramdas thus became an ideal icon to the entire Bharat by his promotion of devotion towards the country, towards God and the principles of Dharma.

Tears rolled down my cheeks as I realised that Swami had reached even this place, tens of thousands of miles away from Puttaparthi. I understood that there is no place where He is not present. This clearly explained to me the Omnipresence of our Beloved Swami. I realised that He is everywhere – at all places and at all times.

– The author is a former student (M.Sc. Chemistry - 1992) of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. He is serving as President of Sri Sathya Sai Centre of Greater Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

PILGRIMAGE OF GUJARAT DEVOTEES

MORE THAN 1,000 DEVOTEES came to Prasanthi Nilayam on a two-day pilgrimage organised by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Gujarat on 30th and 31st October 2016. On 30th October 2016, the joyous day of Deepavali, the youth of Vadodara district of Gujarat made a percussion



Instrumental music "Tala Vadya Vrinda".

presentation entitled "Tala Vadya Vrinda" (melody of instrumental music) which kept the audience mesmerised for nearly 30 minutes with its melody and rhythm. The theme of the music performance was "Be United, Stay United and Feel Divinity". This was followed by a dance entitled "Dashavatar" which depicted the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. This beautiful dance was presented by the Bal Vikas children of Gandhi Nagar.

On the auspicious day of Gujarati New Year, 31st October 2016, the programme began with a devotional song dedicated to the Divine Mother entitled "Sai Shruti"

which was presented by the youth girls from Gujarat. What followed next was a beautiful dance "Saraswati Vandana", a prayer to the goddess of learning, offered by Bal Vikas girls from Gandhi Nagar. This was followed by a display of scintillating folk dances of Gujarat which were performed by the students of Sri Sathya Sai Vidyaniketan, Navsari. The final item of the programme was a dance number



Dance offering "Mahishasura Mardini" by the students of Sri Sathya Sai School, Surat.

"Mahishasura Mardini" dedicated to the Divine Mother which also displayed various yogic postures. This excellent offering was made by the students of Sri Sathya Sai School, Surat. Bhajans followed next and concluded with Arati.

PILGRIMAGE OF TAMIL NADU DEVOTEES

A two-day pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam was organised by the Sai Organisation of Tamil Nadu on 5th and 6th November 2016, in which about 1,000 devotees from Tamil Nadu came



Instrumental music by Bal Vikas alumni.

to take part. During the course of this pilgrimage, the devotees of Tamil Nadu performed Veda chanting and led Bhajans in Sai Kulwant Hall. Besides, Bal Vikas alumni of this State made an engrossing instrumental music presentation on 5th November 2016. Beginning their musical offering with Ganesh Vandana, they enthralled the devotees with an array of devotional compositions and brought their programme to a close with the Bhajan "Prema Mudita Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram".

GLOBAL AKHANDA BHAJAN

Global Akhanda Bhajan is a unique annual event of worldwide Sathya Sai Organisation which is held in all parts of the world simultaneously for peace and harmony of the world. Started by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Himself about four decades ago, the Akhanda



Akhanda Bhajan at Prasanthi Nilayam.

Bhajan comprises singing of the glories of God continuously without any break for 24 hours, in which a large number of devotees belonging to all faiths and nations take part, thus reverberating the entire world with the Divine Name.

Akhanda Bhajan at Prasanthi Nilayam has a special significance because here Bhagavan used to sanctify it by His Divine Presence. This year, the Akhanda Bhajan at Prasanthi Nilayam started at 6.00 p.m. on 12th November. Held in beautifully decorated Sai Kulwant Hall, the Bhajan was mainly led by students, both boys and girls. But Ashram staff, hospital staff and devotees' groups also took turns to lead Bhajans in between. The Bhajan came to a happy conclusion at 6.00 p.m. on 13th November 2016 with the Bhajan "Hey Giridhara Gopala" in the golden voice of Bhagavan. At the conclusion of the Bhajan, Prasadam of tamarind rice and sweet rice was distributed to all.

Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital

Prasanthi Nilayam - 515134, Puttaparthi, Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh

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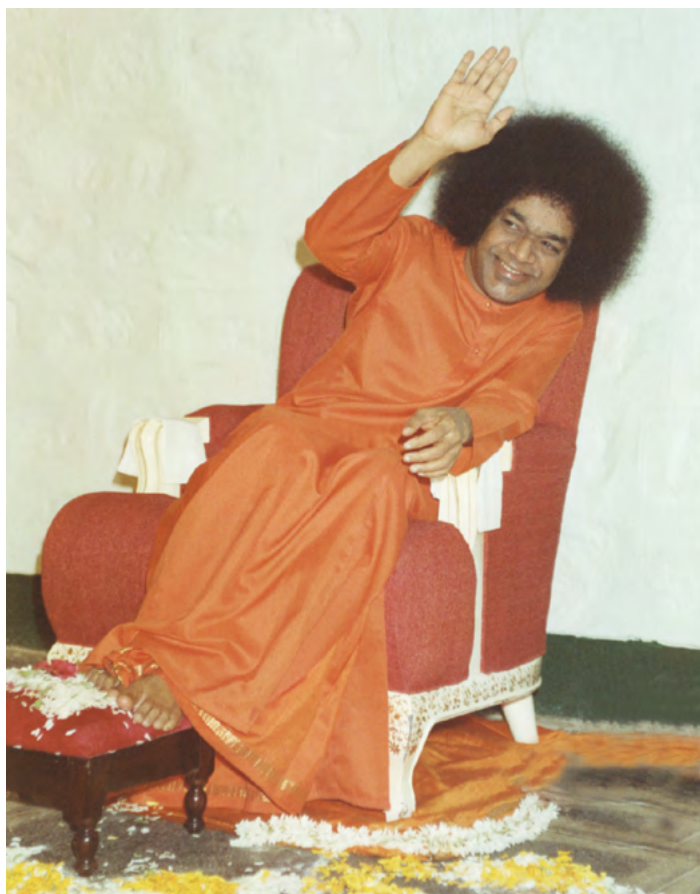
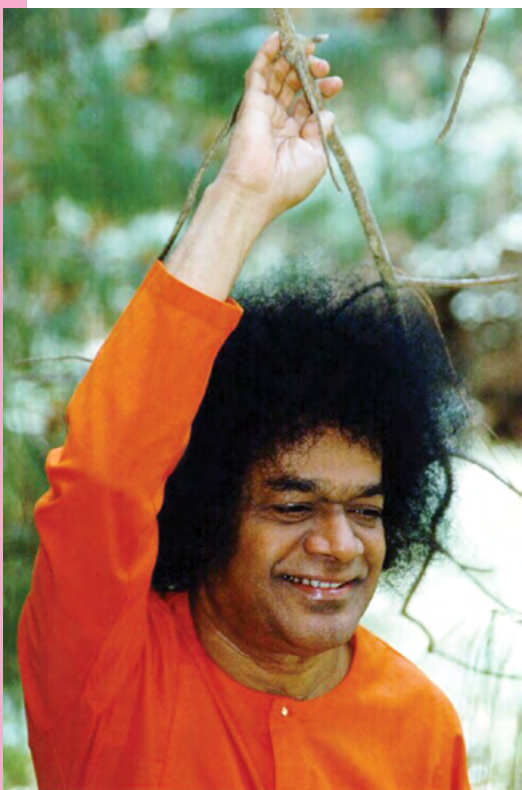
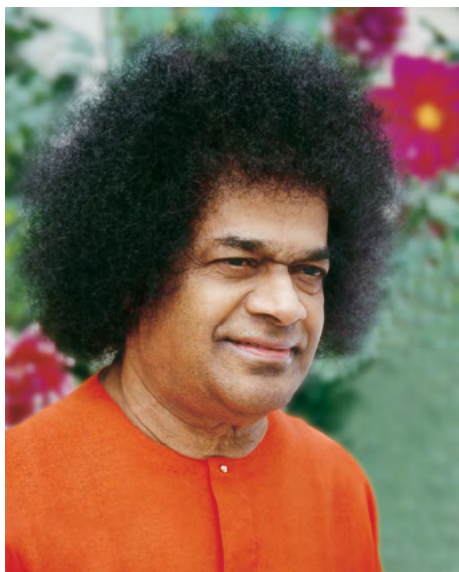
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– Principal

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- 1) The publication and distribution of spiritual, religious, and educational Sai Literature and the production and distribution of audio and visual multimedia, photographs, calendars, and diaries, educational software etc for the benefit of visiting pilgrims and devotees all over the world. All the literature and publications are based on the teachings, philosophy, message, and values of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.
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Carnatic classic vocal concert by Priya Sisters on Ladies Day.



Inauguration of mobile medical vans.

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– Baba

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