

Sanāthana Sarathi

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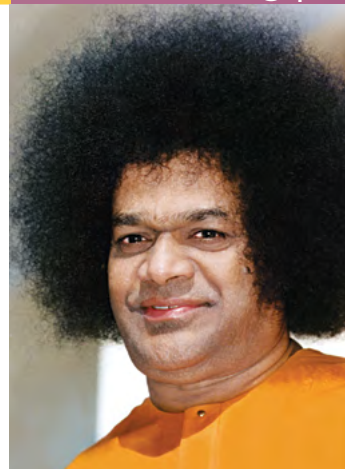
Free Quality Healthcare for All
Healthcare Mission of
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Special Issue



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A Report



“Evil thoughts cause ill-health. Anxiety, fear and tension also contribute their share. All these result from greed; greed of things, power and fame. Greed results in sorrow and despair. Contentment can come only from a spiritual outlook.”

THE DIVINE HEALER OF MANKIND

EDITORIAL

THE HEALTHCARE MISSION OF BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI Baba which started with the opening of a six-bedded Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital with bare minimum facilities at Prasanthi Nilayam in 1956 has reached all parts of the world and has been providing healthcare totally free of cost with love and compassion to millions of needy persons without any distinction of caste, creed, race and nationality. And this Healthcare Mission of Bhagavan is growing by leaps and bounds through hospitals, medical camps, clinics and mobile hospitals with the objective of providing healthcare to all. From all accounts, its magnitude is simply stupendous.

But it is not its magnitude which distinguishes the Healthcare Mission of Bhagavan. It is unique and unparalleled in the world because of the quality of healthcare provided to the patients. The doctors and medical experts who come from other countries to visit the hospitals set up by Bhagavan are wonderstruck that such temples of healing also exist in the world where poorest of the poor are provided state-of-the-art medical care with love, respect and dignity without any charge whatsoever. In fact, the healthcare institutions of Bhagavan are no less than medical marvels and His ways of healing are incredible and mind-boggling. In this regard, the observation of Dr. Varsha Ben Shah, Chief Cardiac Surgeon of Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital, Rajkot is most revealing. She says, "I have visited most international hospitals in the United States, Europe and Australia. But this kind of picture I have never seen in my whole life, where the patient literally walks down the stairs on the very next day after an open heart surgery".

But there is something more sublime than the miraculous cure of patients in Bhagavan's healthcare institutions, and that is the transformation of doctors and hospital staff on the one hand and the patients and their kith and kin on the other, who take to the path of service, sacrifice and spirituality after their astounding experience of His Divine power and share it with others. The same process of transformation is taking place through Bhagavan's educational, spiritual and social welfare institutions and projects which has touched the lives of millions of people in the world. This is the real miracle of Bhagavan who is bringing about a quantum change in the consciousness of man to usher in a golden era on earth.

This special issue of Sanathana Sarathi is offered at the Lotus Feet of this Divine Healer who cures the body, mind and soul of mankind all together with His Divine Healing Touch.

— Editor



AVATAR VANI

SIMPLE LIVING ENSURES GOOD HEALTH

EAT IN MODERATION AND LIVE LONG

HEALTH IS the essential prerequisite for success in all aspects of life, for realising the four ideals that should guide humans, namely, Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire) and Moksha (liberation). Everywhere man seeks to live happily and peacefully but happiness and peace are not won from worldly activities. The body that yearns to be happy and secure is subject to disease, decay and death. The Indweller, the Self, within the body, is however not born, nor does it die. It is the Atma, God. The body is the temple of God. Hence, it is the duty of man to keep the temple in good condition.

Sound Mind in Sound Body

Health is necessary for gaining this world and the next, for attaining worldly and other-worldly progress, to realise the very purpose for which the Self has embodied itself in this human form, namely, to become aware

of its source, the Paramatma. In order to attain this goal, the ideals of righteousness, wealth, desire and liberation from bondage have to be practised with the help of a sound mind in a sound body.

What are the main causes of ill-health? Millions of living beings dwell on the earth;



they sustain themselves by means of food secured from Nature, as provided by Nature. It is only man that is an exception. In order to cater to his palate and other senses, he changes the composition and characteristics of the things provided by Nature and prepares, through the process of boiling, frying and mixing, concoctions which have no vitality in them. Birds and beasts do not adopt such destructive methods. They eat things raw and consume the strength-giving vital essence. So, they do not fall victim to the many ills that man brings on himself.

Evil Thoughts Cause Ill-Health

Plant a boiled pulse in the soil; it won't sprout. How, then, can it contribute life to the living? The vitamins and proteins that are valuable ingredients are destroyed while it is cooked to please the palate! The billions of cells in the body are so interdependent that when one is weakened or damaged, all of them suffer. There is a limit and a balance which every limb and organ has to maintain. Insufficient or improper food will endanger this balance. An occasional cough helps to strengthen the lungs and to clear them of extraneous matter but fits of coughing are signs of positive illness.

"Eat in moderation and live long." This is the advice handed down through the ages by the seers of the past. This advice is seldom heeded. People fill themselves with such large quantities of food that they find it hard to rise after they finish eating. Ruining their digestive system by consuming heavy, rich foods, the affluent are proud when they host costly banquets. Those who know that physical health is the greatest treasure take great care to eat only Sattwic food.

Uncooked food, nuts and fruits, germinating pulses are the best. Use these at least at one meal, say, for the dinner at

night; this will ensure long life. And long life is to be striven for in order that the years may be utilised for serving one's fellow beings.

Evil thoughts cause ill-health. Anxiety, fear and tension also contribute their share. All these result from greed; greed of things, power and fame. Greed results in sorrow and despair. Contentment can come only from a spiritual outlook. The desire for worldly goods has to be given up. One should not distinguish between "my work" and "work for God". All work should be worship. Whatever the reward, it is the gift of God. It is for our lasting good. If this attitude is developed, suffering and pain can toughen us and help us to progress towards Divinity.

It is through pain that pleasure is gained. Darkness enables us to appreciate light. Death teaches us to love life. Diseases which torment man are many in number; of these, hatred, envy and egoism are the worst. Even doctors cannot cure them, for most of them suffer from these. One should develop equanimity and serenity if one desires to be free from these diseases. Do not listen to vile and vicious stories. This tendency reveals a diseased mind. What is heard is imprinted, like a carbon copy, through the ear, on the heart. One is injuring oneself through indulgence in this evil habit.

Be Vigilant about Food Habits

Anger is another enemy of health. It injects poison into the blood stream and brings about profound changes which damage it. Two women, who were neighbours turned into bitter enemies on account of a dispute over a very trivial incident. The cow belonging to one woman while going on the road dropped its dung in front of the other woman's house. The owner of the cow ran to collect the dung, while the other woman

claimed that it belonged to her since it lay on her doorstep. From words they very nearly came to blows. Just then the other woman's little baby wailed from the cradle. She rushed in to feed the baby and while the child was drinking her milk, she shouted most ferociously at her neighbour. Her anger poisoned her blood so much that the child died while drinking her milk! Another cause of ill-health is vice and vile conduct. People believe that a wicked person need not be a diseased person but most diseases are mental illnesses.

Doctors, too, have to deal with patients sweetly and softly and consider their profession as one calling for dedication to their fellowmen. It is best to preserve one's health by good thoughts and good deeds. It is best to be vigilant about food habits. Coconut kernel, coconut water, sprouting pulses, uncooked or half cooked vegetables and greens are good for health.

Try earnestly to live long, without falling into the hands of medical practitioners. When they give you one injection, they keep another ready to counteract its reactions!

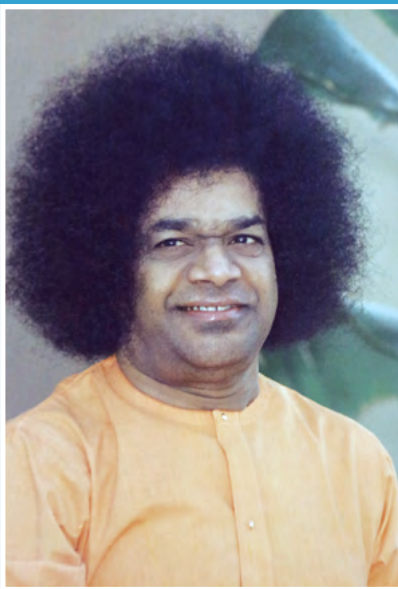
Diseases which torment man are many in number; of these, hatred, envy and egoism are the worst. Even doctors cannot cure them, for most of them suffer from these.

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While trying to cure one disease, they cause a dozen more. Moreover, the drugs they recommend are mostly spurious, since manufacturers want to amass a fortune by hook or by crook. Most illnesses can be cured by simple living, simple exercises and by intelligent control of the tongue. Live long so that you witness the career of the Avatar for years and years.

– Bhagavan's Discourse on 30th September 1981, Prasanthi Nilayam.



I must also point out to the doctors serving here that perhaps even more than the drugs they prescribe, the sweet, soft words they speak and the love and sympathy they evince can cure better and quicker the illness of their patients. Look upon them as your own kith and kin, as your special guests and as your closest friends and attend to them lovingly and with unflinching care. I call upon you to maintain this attitude in every situation.

– Baba

EXPERIENCES OF A HEART SURGEON WORKING AT SRI SATHYA SAI HEART HOSPITAL, RAJKOT

Dr. Varsha Ben Shah

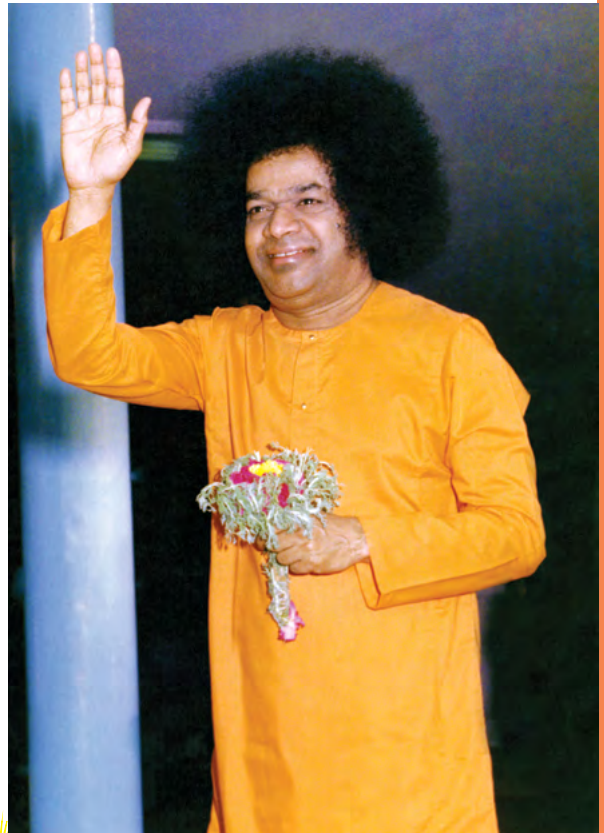


The patients who were operated on Saturday would get up from their bed soon after removing all the drainage tubes and arterial line. They would literally walk into the ward and even down the staircase. Some of them preferred to go to the canteen and sit in the dining room and have meals. I have never seen these kinds of things before.



MANY YEARS AGO, THAT IS almost 16 years ago, Kano Kaka called me and asked, “Tamey Rajkot Operation Karavaa Jasho”? (will you go to Rajkot to operate?) I immediately said, yes. I was always looking for an opportunity to do some good work because being a cardiac surgeon, just operating and earning money was not my goal. I wanted to do something for society. I was looking for a good opportunity to do some nice charitable work. This was the best opportunity. So, I immediately told ‘yes’ to Kano Kaka and started going to Rajkot as and when required. They had an in-house surgeon also.

In the beginning, sometimes I used to go on Saturday evening and by Monday evening I would complete about 27 surgeries, mostly open heart surgeries. This figure of 27 surgeries in a span of two-and-a-half days is unbelievable in any other hospital. I did



not know who Sai Baba of Puttaparthi was. I went to the hospital and I saw big pictures of Sathya Sai Baba and I used to think He is a very nice man as He is doing such good work. He has done so much for poor people, so He stands in a very big position as a Guru. And that was my feeling for Sathya Sai Baba at that time.

Bhagavan's Hospital is a Medical Marvel

Patients used to come in flocks and we used to have a full capacity in-house and they had to be adjusted in an Ashram nearby. The patients who were operated on Saturday would get up from their bed soon after removing all the drainage tubes and arterial line. They would literally walk into the ward and even down the staircase. Some of them preferred to go to the canteen and sit in the dining room and have meals. I have never seen these kinds of things before. I have visited most international hospitals in the United States, Europe and Australia. This kind of a picture I have never seen in my whole life, where the patient literally walks down the stairs on the very next day after an open heart surgery.

The religious attitude with which the staff works makes it happen. The staff would just stay with a very nice smile and continue their work till all the surgeries were over. Everybody removes footwear outside. I used to find this very strange. It is a temple where morning prayers are said before entering the hospital. The hospital is perfectly clean, every corridor is perfectly clean and you can easily walk without any footwear without dirtying your feet. Everybody smiling and working in harmony; there is no element of ego between the staff and the working personnel. The most important thing which as a surgeon I would like to tell you is that

in the operation theatre we get patients who are almost at the end stage of disease. The heart they have is like a football. They are operated and the same patients do well the very next day.

A surgeon who operates in this hospital hardly has any complications. We have surgeons who have just passed their degree or postgraduation or super speciality like the MCH degree. They come with good enthusiasm; they are very conscious about their work and are very sincere but they are in the learning curve. These surgeons also operate and if they get a complication on the table, a master guides them and shows them what to do next. An inner voice guides us, and we follow instructions coming from inside and the patient does well. This kind of experience or feeling can only be testified by a surgeon. It is not blind faith but it is a reality what we experience. We experience the same in the ICU. Sometimes, the patients are not doing well; blood pressure is not coming up with high inotropic support. We are anxious and get a little depressed. Something is going wrong with the patient. Miraculously, the next day inotropic support drops, and he is extubated.

A layman is not going to understand what is happening in this hospital but probably a doctor or a surgeon will appreciate that this is possible. After all these experiences, I formally believe that there is a master guide in this hospital of Rajkot, in the form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba who is guiding and taking care of everybody in the hospital. Baba is definitely there in this Rajkot Hospital. We hope that we will have the same experience in the new hospital which is coming up in Kashindra, and I pray for Manoj Dharmani and the entire team of Sai devotees who are working so hard for

the benefit of cardiac patients of the country under Bhagavan's guidance.

A Free Heart Hospital in Rajkot by Divine Grace

It all started in the early nineties when a group of Sai devotees from Rajkot, inspired by the news of the Super Speciality Hospital being set up in Puttaparthi, wanted to do something similar, even if the scale was much smaller. They came to Puttaparthi, had blissful Darshan of their Lord and were blessed with an interview.

They wanted to start a diagnostic centre and had come fully prepared, complete with the blueprints of their plan. Swami spoke to them, instructed and inspired them lovingly to go ahead with their selfless work. Their joy was tempered with sadness; happy for the blessings received, but sad because one of their wishes was still not fulfilled – Swami did not bless their draft proposal to construct a health centre for reasons which nobody could guess then. But they did not let this deter their enthusiasm. Once they returned, they set up a makeshift diagnostic health centre immediately which pre-screened patients and referred them for further medical care.

Recalling those days, Sri Kanubhai Patel, who has been associated with the hospital right from its inception, says, "We wanted a bigger space where we could handle patients in a better way. We approached the management of Khira Hostel which used to be a hostel for students. Their management was extremely skeptical to give the hostel on rental basis, more so, after they learnt that we were to offer our services completely free of cost. They thought it was fanciful and even if it happened, it would be short-lived".

Well, the hostel management's apprehensions were understandable in

It all happened in 1994 when Sri Kanubhai Patel on a visit to Puttaparthi, offered to Bhagavan three crore rupees in reverence and gratitude for the three sons that God had blessed him with. The merciful Bhagavan, who only knows to give, told Him that He did not need his money but suggested that the amount could be spent to build a hospital for the poor and the neglected in Gujarat itself.

this age when everything was measured only in terms of money. So, it was a difficult proposition for the devotees to convince the hostel officials. However, the idea fructified when the devotees gave them a local guarantor. And then within no time, they commenced the centre's services.

There was a deluge of patients as there was no hospital in the vicinity of that area. Initially, they had no machinery and were completely dependent on outside support. But they never lost hope. Swami's golden assertion: 'If anyone tries to do good to others with a selfless motive, take this assurance from Me, all his needs will be taken care of', always rang in their ears and they had rock-like faith. And what happened later might be an extraordinary coincidence for a casual observer, but they knew it was the Divine working as ever in His mysterious ways.

"One day in the morning when the hostel was being cleaned," Sri Kanubhai recalls, "a gentleman from Singapore came in and had a look at the centre. He was flabbergasted to know that all the medical services there were offered absolutely free, with good intentions

and no expectations. He was surprised, and at the same time sad because it did not have adequate equipment. He immediately offered to donate machinery worth 1.2 million, and in no time the centre saw itself in a completely new visage. The doctors could now treat more people with less trouble". Miracles in every sphere of work of this diagnostic centre were not unusual; they were there everyday for people to see.

The Divine Exceeds Expectations

Everyday experiences of such 'divine designs' raised the devotees' zeal to its zenith. They wanted to do more but what they had was still just that – a small diagnostic centre. They wanted a bigger and better equipped health centre for diagnosis. They waited for the opportunity to present their desire before Bhagavan. And the breakthrough did come shortly, in a manner and scale they had never anticipated.

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This was a memorable moment... the beginning of the amazing Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital of Rajkot, which has now become a 'fairy tale of a health centre' for the poor. Immediately after the Lord expressed this wish, a contingent of devotees started working 24/7 and within days, they were in Puttaparthi with blueprints of the proposed building. When they arrived, it was as if Swami was waiting for them, for He immediately asked a senior staff of the Puttaparthi

Hospital to give them a comprehensive tour of the hospital. Once they were done, He called them in for an interview and at length explained all about the human heart, its functions and features, types of cardiac surgeries and their procedures, what really constitutes treatment, what should be the approach towards healing and so on.

For nearly half an hour, Swami was the expert surgeon-cum-hospital administrator, spelling out nuances of ethical and moral medical care and curing. "I consider myself and others who were there extremely fortunate as we received directions direct from the Lord Himself," says Dr. Rajesh Teli who was present in that interview. It was a blissful session, no doubt, but towards the end of it the devotees started getting nervous. For some reason, in spite of all the guidance that Swami was giving, He did not bless the blueprints they had brought. The plans they had drawn were for a large diagnostic centre but Baba's goal for them was even grander.

Beckoning Kanubhai Patel near who was sitting at the back of the room, Swami asked, "Patel, Thune Suna... Hospital Banaiga"? (Patel, did you hear...will you make the hospital?) Kanubhai, a little taken aback, responded, "Karega, Swami, Baroda (now Vadodara) Mein" (Yes, Swami we will do in Vadodara), the city in Gujarat where Kanubhai lived. Swami wanted a full-fledged hospital, not just a big diagnostic centre. It was clear now. And Kanubhai had now suggested the location too: the city of Vadodara. But Swami had more surprises in store for them that day. He asked, "Saurashtra Achchha Nahin Hai? Kya Rajkot Hamara Nahin Hai"? (Is the region Saurashtra not good enough? Is Rajkot not ours?)

Incidentally, the region of Saurashtra is among the least developed regions in the State of Gujarat. With poor infrastructure and sparse availability of right manpower and other resources, it would be a challenge to run a hospital in this region. A little concerned Kanubhai asked, “Swami, how will we manage in Rajkot”? And then came the mighty Divine assurance: “Swami will manage”.

And that is how it exactly happened. He, in His incredible way, arranged everything. When the devotees asked Swami, “How would we get land for hospital in our meagre budget”? He replied, “Woh Patel Ko Jaake Poochho” (Go and ask Patel for that). (Patel here refers to Sri Keshubhai Patel who was then Chief Minister of Gujarat). And sure enough, when the Chief Minister heard their proposal, he called the collector and asked him to expedite the organisation’s request for land. After going through a few sites shown, the devotees zeroed down to a one lakh square feet plot near Virani Science College in Rajkot City, around four km from the railway station, as the spot for the future hospital.

But where is the money going to come from to buy the land? (Kanubhai’s generous donation was earmarked completely for construction). Government charges only 50% of the land cost if it were to be used for charitable purposes. Taking cognisance of the ‘completely free treatment plan’ of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, the government waived another 25%. Yet, the remaining 25% was no small amount. The trustees of the proposed hospital deliberated

on various avenues for good amount of time in Mumbai and then returned to their respective cities. They knew they had only one channel open now: beseeching their Lord through prayer.

Temple of Love and Healing

One of the trustees, Mansukhbhai Rindani, who was also a leading Chartered Accountant of Rajkot, was returning to his city in an Indian Airlines flight after this meeting. To his pleasant surprise, when he turned his



head, he found seated next to him an old acquaintance, Sri Babubhai, who was now settled in South Africa. Mansukhbhai learnt that this friend had recently lost his wife and was despondent. Babubhai’s mission now was to look out for a noble cause and donate some money in the memory of his late wife which would probably bring some solace to his soul. And as you have already guessed, Babubhai was the right man the yet-to-be-born hospital needed. So inspired he was about the cause that once he returned to South Africa he donated not only what he had originally intended but 5½ times more! Just as promised, Swami was indeed ‘managing’ the whole endeavour.



Operation theatre of the hospital.

Whenever teams from the hospital came to His physical presence during its construction phase, be it trustees, architects, contractors, doctors, administrators or volunteers, Swami always called them in and gave them much-needed guidance and enlivened their enthusiasm. And on 4th August 2000, the inauguration day of the hospital, He sent Dr. Safaya, the Director of His Super Speciality Hospital at Puttaparthi to do the honours. On this D-Day were also present the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Sri Keshubhai Patel, and along with him the whole cabinet.

After the unique edifice started functioning, Swami's involvement never diminished; in fact, it only increased. He constantly kept guiding the doctors and

administrators at every available opportunity. "The patient should always be seen as Narayana Swarupa (a likeness of God) and under no circumstance shall the treatment be compromised" – This was His constant message. Another important aspect that He always stressed was: "There should be no bill book". It is these two principles which like unequivocal guideposts have shaped the philosophy of Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital at Rajkot. The mission of the hallowed health centre says, "Our philosophy is to provide free access to exemplary standards of heart care supported by state-of-the-art equipment to patients primarily from the weaker sections of society irrespective of caste, creed, race and religion, who would, otherwise, be deprived of such expensive heart care owing to lack of financial resources".

It is Swami who gave this noble vision and it is again He who was making it materialise. How reputed cardiac surgeons from UK, who are not even devotees of Swami, fly down every year to serve at this hospital voluntarily for weeks is amazing. Dr. Chandrasekhar, a surgeon from St. George's Hospital, UK says, "The pace at which the patients recover here is something extraordinary. What would take 2-3 days elsewhere heals in 12 hours here! It is a joy and a privilege to work here". From a hospital, it has transformed itself into a 'Temple of Love and Healing'.

– The author is the Chief Cardiac Surgeon at Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital, Rajkot.





EXPANSION OF THE GLORY OF SAI AVATAR

R.J. Rathnakar



God resides in the heart of a person endowed with equanimity. Time and again, Bhagavan would say He was in search of such a true devotee. Swami's objective is to develop equanimity in us and we must endeavour to cultivate the same. It is only when we attain this sublime state of equanimity can we find fulfilment in life.

THE GLORY AND GRANDEUR of an Avatar can never diminish or decline with the passage of time. On the contrary, it grows, expands and shines with added brilliance as the years roll by. We are blessed with the great good fortune of witnessing the glory and basking in the divine effulgence of Sri Sathya Sai Avatar, as a result of merits accrued over many past lives. Is it not a fact that the sun neither rises nor sets, though we see the phenomenon of sunrise and sunset everyday? Likewise, though the dualities of birth and death, descent and ascent appear to be true from a physical perspective, the Divine Consciousness is beyond birth and death and has neither a beginning nor an end. That is why the glory of Sai Avatar is characterised by its continuous expansion.

More and More People Take to Sai Path

Today as the world keenly observes, the Sai Mission has gained momentum and is going forward at a rapid pace. The entire world is attracted by the twin principles of love and service as exemplified by Swami. His teachings have inspired humanity to take to the path of service with love and thus sanctify their lives. The Divine Principle of Sai is spreading unhindered to every nook and corner of the world. Today when we see thousands of new devotees taking to Sai Path, we are reminded of Swami's revelation, "I may be new to you but you are

not new to Me. I have known you over many past lives”.

Recently, an international Go Green Conference was held in Prasanthi Nilayam, in which representatives from 70 countries participated. It was heartening to note that a majority of the participants were young men and women. Five to six of them, belonging to various nations, came to meet me in my office. Only one among them had visited Prasanthi Nilayam earlier and the others were stepping into these holy precincts for the first time. None of them has had the opportunity to see the Lord in His physical form. Not merely that. It was only during the last three or four years that they heard about Swami and got associated with the Sai Organisation. Yet their devotion to Swami and dedication for His mission seemed exemplary and inspirational. My heart rejoiced with the feeling that it was possible only for our Beloved Lord to bring about such a wonderful transformation; it was impossible for anyone else.

The Conference on Human Values and the Legal World was another grand event held in Prasanthi Nilayam in the recent past, which was conducted by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation. Nearly 150 judges and over 500 eminent lawyers and advocates participated in this conference of far-reaching significance. Justice Dipak Misra, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of India, was the Chief Guest on that occasion. While delivering the inaugural address, he said, “I have the authority to issue summons to anyone in the country. But today, I have received the summons from Prasanthi Nilayam. These are the summons of love, summons of blessings and summons of divine command”. What a beautiful and profound statement! Whenever we have some legal issues, we approach the judicial

body to resolve them. But, if the judicial system itself is beset with problems, it is but natural that one seeks refuge in the Divine Presence to solve them. During the course of the conference, judicial experts, occupying positions of eminence, exhorted one and all to follow the teachings of Swami, describing them as the only panacea for all the ills afflicting society today. They were all praise for the spirit of service as exemplified by the Sai Organisation, and needless to say, our hearts were filled to the brim with joy.

After the conference came to a happy conclusion, as the participants were getting ready for their return journey in the afternoon, someone came and informed me that a judge from the Supreme Court wanted to speak to me before leaving. When I went to meet him, he narrated how he was inspired by the divine experience of visiting Prasanthi Nilayam. He expressed his utmost joy and satisfaction, saying, “I am grateful to Bhagavan in the sense that at least now in the late years of my life He has brought me to Prasanthi Nilayam to teach me the true meaning and purpose of life. I do not really care how long I am going to live; today my heart is filled with a sense of fulfilment”. His eyes were moist as he uttered these words and so too were my eyes listening to him.

During our student days, Swami used to spend a great deal of His invaluable time with us, talking to us and enquiring about our well-being. It was a rare divine opportunity granted only to His students. One day Swami said, “You boys are behaving like frogs in the well. Go and see the outside world; then you will understand what Sai really stands for. You can see for yourself how much the devotees pine for Me”. In fact, He would caution us in this manner once in



Today Swami's teachings are spreading to all corners of the globe. The entire world is getting inundated in the incessant showers of His love. This is very much evident to me whenever I visit various Sai Centres in India and abroad. Swami's teachings of love and service are verily the life-breath for the survival and sustenance of mankind. It is imperative for everyone to follow this divine path.

a while, so that we made the best use of our stay in His Presence.

Sai Love Pervades the Entire Nepal

This year, during the month of May, I happened to visit Nepal along with my family. When I interacted with the devotees there, I was touched by their deep yearning for Swami and sense of self-surrender to Him. It is impossible to describe how much they have made Swami an integral and inseparable part of their daily life. Most of us think Nepal is not an affluent nation. However, they are certainly affluent in the matter of their devotion to the Lord. They have the immeasurable wealth of love deposited in their heart. It is astonishing to note that in a small country like Nepal, which is like one of the States in India, there are as many as 225 Sai Centres across the nation. Approximately 115 of those buildings are owned by the Sai Organisation. These centres of selfless service, dedicated only to Sai activities, are verily the temples of love built by the devotees for Swami.

We toured across Nepal for almost a week and experienced Sai's love pervading the entire nation. Swami has installed Himself in the hearts of Nepalese to such an extent that wherever we go, we experience His presence every moment. One day, we were taken to a remote village by the office bearers of the Sai Organisation. It was a three-hour arduous journey. The Sai Organisation is making efforts to establish a school in that village. After showing me the site where the school would come up in due course, they stopped the car in front of a house, under construction. There were nearly thirty to forty people waiting for us. As I alighted from the car and greeted them, they invited me into the house for which doors and windows were not yet fixed. Even flooring was not done. It was dust and debris all around as the house was still under construction. Though they invited me to come inside, I remained outside thinking there was nothing much to see. But when they again persisted with their request, I reluctantly entered the house as I did not

want to hurt their feelings, having come all the way.

The house belonged to the village head. He took us into a room where Bhajan was being played softly. It was a beautifully decorated room, dedicated to Swami. It was like a meditation hall with beautiful portraits of Swami adorning the altar. All the other rooms meant for the owner and his family were only half finished, with bare minimum furniture and facilities. Only Swami's room was complete in every sense of the term.

While returning from that house, I asked the owner as to when he proposed to conduct the housewarming ceremony. He said the construction work was temporarily stalled due to financial constraints. However, he was happy and satisfied that he could complete Swami's room on a priority basis, with whatever funds available at his disposal. To me, he epitomised the very essence of faith and devotion. People, who are endowed with these twin virtues, will never get bogged down by problems. They experience divine love in all that happens to them. They accept even pain with pleasure! The following poem of Bhagavan reflects the same truth.

*If one remains undeterred and unshaken
When things do not go as planned in
ventures that one undertakes,
And welcomes everything with a smile
giving up all worry,
One can be said to have a ripened heart.*

(Telugu Poem)

Swami's Message of Equanimity

I understood the true meaning of a "ripened heart" after seeing this humble devotee, residing somewhere in a remote village located in the foothills of Himalayan mountains. Difficulties are a part and parcel of human life. We do not find anyone who

is free from sorrow and difficulties. "It may be possible to cross the seven seas without wetting the feet but it is impossible to cross this ocean of life without getting the eyes wet" is an old adage in Telugu. In His letter to His elder brother Sri Seshama Raju Garu in 1947, Bhagavan declared, "True devotion to Me lies in accepting good and bad with equanimity". God resides in the heart of a person endowed with equanimity. Time and again, Bhagavan would say He was in search of such a true devotee. Swami's objective is to develop equanimity in us and we must endeavour to cultivate the same. It is only when we attain this sublime state of equanimity can we find fulfilment in life. Bhagavan ensured this message penetrated deep into the inner recesses of my heart, through this devotee of Nepal.

Today Swami's teachings are spreading to all corners of the globe. The entire world is getting inundated in the incessant showers of His love. This is very much evident to me whenever I visit various Sai Centres in India and abroad. Swami's teachings of love and service are verily the life-breath for the survival and sustenance of mankind. It is imperative for everyone to follow this divine path.

If we fail to reach the railway station in time, we will not be able to board the train and reach our destination. Likewise, let us not lag behind and lose the golden opportunity bestowed on us. Let us climb up into the divine chariot of Sai's Avataric Mission without delay and reach the goal of life, following the sacred path Swami has laid out before us.

Samasta Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu! (May all the worlds be happy!)

– The author is a Trustee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.



GLOBAL HEALTHCARE MISSION OF BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA

Dr. Narendranath Reddy

"It is your good fortune that you have become doctors. Sacrifice is the hallmark of a true doctor...So, doctors should have the spirit of sacrifice. They should be compassionate and considerate towards the poor."

Sri Sathya Sai Baba, 19th January 2001

BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA is the incarnation of infinite love and compassion, showering His blessings on all mankind. Baba has uplifted all humanity through His teachings of "Love All, Serve All", by providing free education, free healthcare and free water supply.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba – Physician par Excellence

He has healed the body, mind and soul of millions of people around the world. He has cured people of physical and mental illnesses by His very look, touch, kind words and Vibhuti, as well as through dreams, medicines materialised by Him and by surgery. Mind-boggling and myriad are the ways He has healed the sick with love and compassion.

Swami can heal not only through dreams and in response to prayers but also by His touch. Once, in Prasanthi Nilayam, I was suffering from palpitations of the heart. Although I never mentioned this to Swami, He came and touched my chest – and lo and behold, my palpitations were gone forever! Such is the grace and compassion of Bhagavan.

He continues to perform these miracles even after His Mahasamadhi. In late April 2011, after the ceremony following



Mahasamadhi, I was present in the Ashram when I experienced a severe pain in the abdomen. The pain was so debilitating that I could not rest in any position – lying down, standing or sitting. I went to the Super Speciality Hospital in Prasanthigram, where I was diagnosed to have acute cholecystitis – a gall bladder attack, confirmed by X-rays showing stones in the gall bladder. My blood test also showed abnormal liver enzymes. The normal treatment for this ailment involved surgery, but I prayed to Swami



intensely for a cure, and the pain was soon gone. I then returned to the USA and follow-up tests showed there were no stones left in the gall bladder and my liver enzymes were normal. This was a mind-boggling miracle and shows that Swami is not only physician par excellence, but He can also perform surgery without a knife! I am forever grateful to Swami for this incredible cure. This also shows that Swami was not only with us while He was in physical form but that He is still with us and will continue to be with us, guiding and protecting us.

Medical Institutions – the Crest Jewels of Sathya Sai Global Health Mission

Sri Sathya Sai Baba inaugurated the first General Hospital in Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh in 1956, providing free medical services to all – and in subsequent decades His Health Mission in India has grown. Now, secondary and tertiary healthcare is offered through two super speciality hospitals, (Sri Sathya Sai Institutes of Higher Medical Sciences) – one in Prasanthigram, Andhra Pradesh, and the other in Whitefield, Karnataka, which were inaugurated in 1991 and 2001, respectively. In these hospitals, state-of-the-art healthcare is provided free of cost to patients in several specialities, including cardiac surgery, neurosurgery and orthopaedic surgery. Sri Sathya Sai hospitals in India are the heart and soul of the Sathya Sai Global Health Mission. Beyond the hospitals, the Sathya Sai Global Health Mission has taken modern healthcare to the doorsteps of the poor through mobile hospitals started in 2005 – providing healthcare to millions of people irrespective of financial means, faith, nationality, race or religion. As a result, Sri Sathya Sai hospitals have become role models in nations and communities across

the globe. They are considered temples of healing, where patients receive high quality healthcare along with Divine grace. This unique combination of Dava (medicine) and Duva (grace) accelerates the healing process, remarkably reducing the morbidity and mortality rates. The healthcare delivery system around the world under the aegis of the Sathya Sai Organisations has a common goal of providing free healthcare to the needy with love and compassion.

Bhagavan Baba has fundamentally redefined healthcare and issued a clarion call to all medical professionals to deliver ideal healthcare. His teachings provide the foundation of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare, which includes the following tenets:

- 1) State-of-the-art healthcare must be universally accessible to all.
- 2) Healthcare must be free of charge to the patient.
- 3) Healthcare must be delivered with love and compassion.
- 4) Healthcare must be comprehensive and treat body, mind and spirit.
- 5) Healthcare must include disease-prevention and provide education for patients and physicians alike.
- 6) Healthcare should be timely and prompt to alleviate the suffering of patients.

When I was a young boy, I considered joining the Indian Civil Service where I could serve the country and the community at large. However, my father guided me to study medicine, so that I could alleviate people's suffering. I am deeply grateful for his advice and guidance. After I came to Swami, I learnt the principles of ideal healthcare and incorporated these principles in my practice. I was fortunate to be involved in the planning stages of the Super Speciality Hospital in



The then Prime Minister of India inaugurated SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram in 1991.

Prasanthigram before it was inaugurated in 1991. I was amazed at the attention to detail given by Swami in choosing the equipment, personnel and design of the facility. It was also astounding that such a historic landmark – a major hospital providing tertiary medical services – could be completed from the ground up within only six months, and on the inauguration day itself, cardiac surgeries were performed at the hospital!

After the inauguration of the SSSIHMS at Prasanthigram, I had the blessed opportunity to accompany Swami on rounds to visit the patients. It was an inspiring experience to see how Swami blessed the patients and their families, giving them Prasadam and Vibhuti, and spoke to them sweetly – consoling and encouraging them and their families. On one occasion, a cardiologist was talking with a patient and his family before starting a procedure and focused on the various possible complications and the seriousness of the situation. Swami lovingly corrected the cardiologist, suggesting that he should always talk in a pleasing, positive manner, encouraging the patient. Swami said it was good to infuse the patient with enthusiasm and confidence, as the patient and his or her family place a lot of importance on the words, body language and attitude of the attending physician. While medicine is popularly

considered to be more of a science, with emphasis on cutting-edge technologies, Swami emphasises that medicine is not only a science but an art – the art of healing, which has become neglected and forgotten.

Ten years after the opening of this hospital, Swami opened another super speciality hospital in 2001 in Whitefield that provides neurology, neurosurgery, cardiology and cardiac surgery, free of charge. I was also blessed and fortunate to be present at the inauguration of this temple of healing. Even though Baba by His very Sankalpa (Divine Will) and touch can cure people of incurable diseases such as paralysis, cancer and severe mental illnesses, He established these temples of healing to show us how modern healthcare can provide solace to patients when delivered with love and compassion, as one's own kith and kin. Bhagavan emphasises that the spirit of sacrifice is the hallmark of a good doctor.

Medical Camps and Clinics all over the World

The Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) conducts numerous medical camps and has established permanent medical clinics worldwide that provide Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare. In many parts of the world, there are people who cannot access healthcare due to socio-economic or logistical difficulties. To address this need, Sathya Sai mobile clinics provide free diagnostic and treatment services to indigent patients in remote rural areas in countries such as India, Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Also, various preventive services such as immunisations, health counselling and advice on nutrition, exercise and general health are given for preventing illnesses and maintaining good health. Taking

advantage of newer technological advances in computers, internet and communication, telehealth projects were started, providing free consultation and treatment to patients who cannot come to the doctor's office or hospital for various reasons. This project is of particular importance for low-income patients who cannot afford treatment or travel expenses. It increases access to healthcare in remote areas. Telehealth is also used by the SSIO to educate medical professionals from around the globe, to bring their knowledge and skills up to date.

I was blessed to be part of the medical camps in the Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram from the time they started in 1984. These camps were held outside in open tents, with minimum resources and facilities. We could only screen for high blood pressure and blood sugar and provide basic first aid. It has been a beautiful experience to witness the significant growth of medical camps over the last three decades. Now, with the help of medical professionals volunteering from around the world, medical camps are held during both the Guru Purnima and Bhagavan's Birthday celebrations each year, serving tens of thousands of patients annually. The available resources and facilities have also improved significantly, for, in addition to basic treatment, doctors now can also provide respiratory therapy, basic cardiac tests and administer intravenous fluids, if needed, and patients can be moved to hospitals by ambulances, when necessary. There is a well-stocked pharmacy and the doctors also dispense eye glasses and walking canes, as needed. This is a great service by the SSIO for the local devotees and overseas visitors who attend the major festivals in Prasanthi Nilayam.

The SSIO has also been steadfastly conducting medical camps, holding

permanent medical clinics, blood donation drives and health-screening camps globally. Since 2005, over a million patients have been seen and treated by SSIO physicians and dentists. In 2017, a major blood donation drive in South Africa collected over 8,000 pints of blood from more than 10,000 donors. This was the highest collection of blood donations ever by a single organisation in that country. Similarly, in other countries such as Nepal, Malaysia and Mauritius, the SSIO has been recognised as the top blood donor organisation.

During the period April 2017 through March 2018, approximately 168,102 patients were served through 282 medical camps and 38 medical clinics conducted in 32 countries – 67,578 patients seen in medical and dental camps, and 100,524 patients seen in permanent medical clinics and mobile clinics, including special arrangements for specific surgeries in some countries. SSIO volunteers also organised 370 blood donation drives during this reporting period. In addition to organising medical camps, medical clinics and blood donation drives, other special services have included dentistry, ophthalmology (eye), specialised surgeries (cataract, fibroid and urological) in some countries, hospice care, bone marrow drives, and health education and awareness programmes.

During my visits to several countries to participate in the grand openings of various healthcare initiatives and facilities, I was struck by the indelible impact of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare upon the local population, who could not otherwise have afforded the superior healthcare, rendered with love and compassion. For example, on 20th January 2016, in Dulag, Philippines, the SSIO inaugurated a maternity clinic after

the town was hit hard by Typhoon Haiyan in the Tacloban area. This facility provides free pre-natal and post-natal maternity services to local indigent mothers, who previously delivered babies on the streets. This clinic dramatically improved healthcare for both the mother and the child. The local community, government and the Mayor were most appreciative of these services rendered by the SSIO. Most recently, in July 2018, the SSIO inaugurated a free clinic in Nairobi, Kenya, to provide medical and dental services to needy patients. Thus, the Sathya Sai Global Health Mission continues to expand in accordance with Bhagavan's teachings. As Baba says, love should expand, including more and more people into its fold.

Once, after we presented reports from medical camps to Swami, He asked, "What about animals"? Taking a lead from this remark, pet clinics and veterinarian camps have been conducted by the SSIO globally. Swami has said that divinity exists in animals also and we should include them when we practise "Love All, Serve All". Thus, dogs, cats and other animals have received loving medical care, grooming, immunisation and other services. In addition, SSIO members have initiated care projects for birds, donkeys, goats and other domestic animals.

The SSIO has also been active in providing timely healthcare following natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, fire, floods and hurricanes in several countries including Sri Lanka, Haiti, Philippines, USA, Ecuador, Fiji, Guatemala, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Italy, India and Nepal. The SSIO initiates medical services almost immediately following a natural disaster and continues to deliver loving, ideal healthcare for a long term. In Haiti, the SSIO began medical assistance within

a week following the devastating 2010 earthquake and continued services well into 2011. The distinctive quality of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare was that it was not limited only to medical care. SSIO volunteers also helped to prevent diseases through cleaning streets, ensuring proper nutrition through Narayana Seva and building infrastructure for supplying potable water. These additional services continued well into 2015.

Medical Education – The Universal Teacher

In addition to the healthcare services provided to patients, the SSIO has been engaged in spreading Bhagavan's message of Ideal Healthcare through publications and conferences. Swami has addressed healthcare professionals over the course of four decades through Discourses and private conversations and covered many topics such as hygiene, nutrition, preventive healthcare, taking care of mother and child both before and after childbirth, and developing a positive mental attitude. Of the many Discourses on healthcare given by Swami, 20 landmark Discourses on these topics were collected and published in 2009 with His blessings in a compendium titled "Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare", which can be downloaded from the SSIO website: www.sathyasai.org.

The SSIO has conducted several medical conferences. An international medical conference was held in 2005 in Prasanthi Nilayam on the theme of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare. The event was attended by world-renowned physicians and healthcare specialists from many countries, who gathered to share their knowledge and observe how ideal healthcare should be practised by physicians. Subsequently, many other medical conferences in the fields of orthopaedics, dentistry, cardiology,

cardiovascular surgery and critical care medicine were held to teach cutting-edge technology in these specialities and how to deliver healthcare with love and compassion.

Later, with the guidance and blessings of Swami, for the first time, an international medical conference was held outside India in Anaheim, California, USA, in 2009. Healthcare professionals from many countries converged to share about the work going on around the world in Sathya Sai ideal Healthcare, through medical camps, medical clinics, mobile clinics and healthcare screening programmes. Just before the conference started, a doctor not known to me was looking for a “Dr. Naren” to give him a message from Swami. Upon being introduced to me, he told me that Swami had come in his dream and said, “Tell Dr. Naren: Have no fear; have no doubts. Swami is here”, and “I told you that I will see you there”. Very few people knew that Swami called me Naren. Later, when I went to Prasanthi Nilayam and expressed gratitude to Swami for His blessings and guidance, He declared that He had been sitting in the centre of the conference venue, listening to all the deliberations, and was very pleased with the outcome!

The most recent international medical conference was held in 2017 in California, USA. It was heartening to see that a significant percentage of attendees were young physicians and women physicians committed to the practice of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare in their daily practices. Many delegates felt the divine presence of Swami during the conference and resolved to implement the conference resolutions in their daily medical practices.

After the international medical conferences in 2009 and 2017, additional

publications were released by the SSIO which provide an overview of the Sathya Sai Global Health Mission that brings ideal healthcare to millions of people in India and around the world. These publications are available on the SSIO website www.sathyasai.org

In addition to practising ideal healthcare in institutional settings, such as clinics, hospitals and surgical centres, I found that it was imperative for every healthcare professional to make compassionate, loving healthcare a central aspect of his/her medical practice. I can share how this has helped me personally in my practice, and in return, the patients are grateful and joyous. Once, the condition of one of my patients with thyroid disease became worse, as she was worrying about her mother, a terminal cancer patient. After diagnosis and consultation, I emphasised that she should take the medication regularly. Then I spoke with her about Swami’s teaching, “Don’t Worry, Be Happy”. After a few months she returned, happy, and brought me a hat embroidered with the line, *Don’t Worry, Be Happy*. She then related that when she relayed our conversation to her critically ill mother, her mother became happy with a positive attitude and started a project to knit hats with those words embroidered and distributed them to terminally ill patients in the hospice unit. Her mother requested her to continue the project after her death, to bring peace to her soul. The daughter, my patient, then brought me an embroidered hat, as a gift. I was amazed at how a few words spoken with love and compassion could touch so many hearts.

These incidents convey why it is important for healthcare professionals to

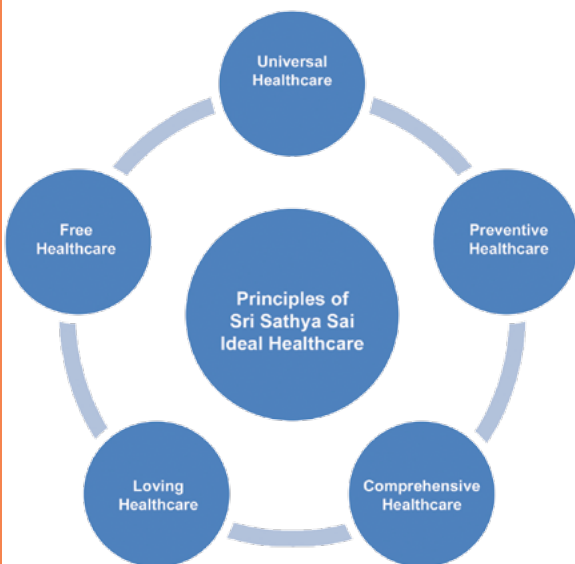
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THE GLORY OF SRI SATHYA SAI HEALTHCARE MISSION

Dr. V. Mohan

Without any exaggeration, I feel that a Healthcare Mission on this scale, which is entirely voluntary and 100% free, is unparalleled in the world and can thus serve as a model for many other organisations. If we all work together for the welfare of humanity, we can certainly improve the lives of millions of people and Bhagavan Baba's grace and blessings will definitely be there, in abundance, on all of us.

BHAGAVAN SATHYA SAI BABA SET up a unique model of healthcare which is undoubtedly unparalleled in the world. He taught us that healthcare was a fundamental right of all human beings and should be available to everyone irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion or one's socio-economic status. Based on these factors, Swami laid down principles of Sri Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare. This comprises five different domains as shown in the figure below:



Universal Healthcare

Bhagavan Baba repeatedly emphasised that the state-of-the-art healthcare should be available to all people, particularly to the poor and needy who have no access to high quality healthcare provided in private hospitals. To fulfil these objectives, Bhagavan Baba established two Super Speciality Hospitals and two General Hospitals, one each in Puttaparthi and Whitefield. These hospitals deliver the best of medical care to everyone without any distinction. Bhagavan Baba says, and I quote, *"The Sathya Sai hospitals have been set up to provide relief to villagers. No distinction is made, however, between villages and cities. Likewise, there will be no differentiation in providing relief. Our intention is to provide relief to all"*.

Free Healthcare

Bhagavan was very particular that healthcare provided by His institutions should be delivered free of cost to everyone so that nobody is denied the benefits of high quality healthcare because of their inability to pay. Therefore, not only Sri Sathya Sai hospitals but also the various clinics which bear Bhagavan's name, all provide medical care completely free of cost. To

quote Bhagavan Baba, *“Medical service should be free for all. Doctors should render free service to such persons. There are numerous people who cannot afford the cost of medical treatment”*.

Loving Healthcare

Bhagavan Baba taught us a very important principle that it is not enough if healthcare is provided free of cost. There must be an additional element, the element of love. He, therefore, laid down the very important principle of Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare that all healthcare provided by His organisations should be suffused with love. This is what is meant by loving healthcare. He also taught us that the doctor was not in a position of authority doling out his services to a patient. On the other hand, the doctor has been blessed with an opportunity to serve and hence healthcare should be rendered with love, as only then it becomes true Seva. Swami distinguishes Seva from routine service by teaching us that true Seva is rendered without expectation of any return and moreover should be done with all humility and love. To quote Bhagavan Baba, *“If the doctor is full of love and compassion, God works through him. Doctors, therefore, have to endeavour to become the receptacles of divine power during their healing process”*.

Comprehensive Healthcare

Very often people think that when free healthcare is provided, it is something just done as a mere ritual and the quality of service is therefore poor. Bhagavan Baba proved all such sceptics wrong when His institutions provided the most comprehensive care, free of cost. By this is meant that not only routine investigations and treatment are given free but the most sophisticated and the state-of-the-art equipment including CT Scans, MRI Scans, Auto Analysers and



other equipment which are present in the best of the corporate hospitals or in world renowned institutions, are all available at Bhagavan's institutions and thereby they provide the most comprehensive medical care. He also emphasised that ideal healthcare encompasses treatment of the body, mind and spirit and that medical care should be for the person, not merely the disease. Hence, it is not merely providing treatment but also having a compassionate nature that ensures the patient is healed as a whole. To quote Bhagavan Baba, *“Man suffers from two types of ills, physical and mental. Physical health is a prerequisite for mental health and mental health ensures physical health”*.

This type of holistic care is rarely provided by hospitals who just focus on a disease or a symptom and most often just provide symptomatic care.

Preventive Healthcare

Bhagavan always emphasised the fact that prevention was better than cure. He also

taught us that in a developing country like India, we should try to find the root cause of diseases and thus try to prevent them. I have been blessed to receive direct instructions from our Beloved Bhagavan before conducting diabetes camps at Kodaikanal and other places. Swami taught me, that apart from treating diabetes, I should lay more emphasis on prevention through diet, exercise and lifestyle modification. By this He meant that we should educate patients in healthy living and thus obviate the need for frequent visits to hospitals.

Having understood the basic principles of Bhagavan Baba's teaching with respect to healthcare, let me now try to give you a bird's eye view of Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare Mission. Most people are aware of the hospitals built by Bhagavan at Puttaparthi and Whitefield and these are verily called as "Temples of Healing" and not "hospitals" as they are more like a temple than a hospital. I would like to classify Sri Sathya Sai Medical Mission into two parts: first is 'Static Services' and the second is 'Outreach Services'. Static Services are done through hospitals, health centres and clinics; the hospitals can be general or speciality hospitals. The Outreach Services are done through Mobile Hospitals.

Sri Sathya Sai Global Medical Mission

Apart from India, the Sathya Sai Healthcare Mission is carried out in different parts of the world through Sathya Sai International Organisation and this is called Sathya Sai Global Medical Mission. Details of this are covered elsewhere in separate articles by the overseas physicians who participate in these services and hence these are not covered in detail in this article.

Sri Sathya Sai Medical Mission in India

Coming to the Sathya Sai Healthcare Mission in India, this can be classified under three headings. First at Puttaparthi, second at Whitefield and third through the Sathya Sai Organisations throughout the rest of the country. I will not talk much about the Super Speciality Hospitals and General Hospitals at Prasanthigram and Whitefield because much has been written in Sanathana Sarathi about these temples of healing on several occasions. Suffice to state that several lakh patients have been treated at both Puttaparthi and Whitefield through the General Hospitals as well as the Super Speciality Hospitals. The yeoman services rendered in the Departments of cardiology, neurology, orthopaedics, plastic surgery, gastroenterology, ophthalmology and urology, apart from all the general medical and general surgical treatments offered through the General Hospitals are now well known and recognised all over the world. I wish to salute the doctors, nurses, the paramedical staff as well as the administrators of these 'Temples of Healing' which Bhagavan repeatedly used to talk about in His Discourses. Apart from these two permanent hospitals, there is also a Mobile Hospital which has been silently offering Seva to several villages around Puttaparthi. This mobile hospital serves several lakh villagers who otherwise would not have had access to such quality healthcare. About 500 doctors from the State of Andhra Pradesh volunteer their services for this noble activity.

What many people do not know is that apart from the services rendered at Puttaparthi and Whitefield, there are numerous other Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare activities taking place in the rest of India (I dare say in hundreds of cities, towns

and villages in India) through the State Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations and Trusts. Thus, free medical care is done through various free Sri Sathya Sai Clinics called “Sai Krupas” in some parts of India, like Tamil Nadu. These clinics are normally run on all weekends, i.e., Saturdays and Sundays and hundreds of patients are treated in each of these clinics everyday and there are hundreds of such clinics operating all over the country. Apart from these, preventive healthcare and hygiene camps are regularly conducted in almost all States of India. Some of these activities are linked to Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme (SSSVIP).

A unique experiment which was tried in Chennai is the Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare Project, Chennai. During Bhagavan Baba’s visit to Chennai in January 2007, we approached some of the hospitals in Chennai and presented to them the activities of Sri Sathya Sai Medical Mission and asked them whether they could also join us in our Mission. Almost 75 hospitals spontaneously came forward to offer one bed in their hospitals for free treatment of poor patients referred by Sri Sathya Sai Organisation and Trust (Tamil Nadu). They offered to do all hospital procedures, diagnostic tests, consultations and surgeries, free of cost. Through this, a large number of patients were benefited. We were thus blessed that with Bhagavan Baba’s grace, the Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare Mission could also be extended to other medical institutions which are not part of our organisation. This is a superb model, which if replicated, can help to spread not only Bhagavan Baba’s message of love but also extend the services of His Divine Mission to millions of deserving people.

Another unique experiment which was tried by Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust was



The author with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

to see whether some of the activities which were done at Puttaparthi could be extended to other cities. As part of this, Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital, Chennai project was inaugurated on 21st August 2014 and it became a mega success. 12 villages are covered every month and a total of 144 mobile hospital camps are conducted every year. Several lakh patients have benefited through this project. We also have very active Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Medical Clinics in Maharashtra and Goa where over 50 mobile vans have been functioning across these two States in over 27 districts and several lakh patients have received free treatment. Sri Sathya Sai Organisations and Trusts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, Delhi NCR and Rajasthan also have very active and laudable mobile medical services.

One of the projects of the Odisha SSSSO and Trust is to have Sri Sathya Sai Rehabilitation Programme camps using telemedicine, at the Telemedicine Centre at Bhubaneswar. This has helped not only to improve the follow-up of the patients who have been operated at Whitefield and Prasanthigram Hospitals but also to screen patients through telemedicine and decide who are the ones to be referred to these centres for surgery. Kerala State has one of the best Sri Sathya Sai Rehabilitation programmes and virtually all cardiac patients operated at Prasanthigram and Whitefield belonging to Kerala State are regularly

followed up at their home towns to see that they take their anticoagulant medications without fail.

Apart from these, Sri Sathya Sai Medical activities are carried out in various other States of India which are too numerous to enumerate in this article. For example, Sri Sathya National Nutrition Programme was taken up by several States in India, whereby nutritious Sai Protein (a formulation provided by Bhagavan Himself) is provided to pregnant women. This has helped to improve the nutrition of not only the pregnant mothers but also their offspring. Sai Protein is also provided to children up to 5 years of age as it helps to improve the health of these children.

While most people are aware of the huge expenses incurred in running the hospitals at Whitefield and Puttaparthi, we did a rough calculation to see what would be the value in rupees of the free services provided in other places in India through the Sathya Sai Organisations and Trusts. In the year 2016 alone, we estimated that around 35 crores of rupees would have been the value of the free medical services rendered. These

figures are probably a gross underestimate as the data was not sent by all the States.

I have only tried to give a very brief overview of the massive healthcare activities carried out under Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare Mission both in India and abroad. It was only when I started writing this article that I realised the breadth and depth of the activities which come under Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare Mission. We should thank our Beloved Bhagavan for giving all the medical professionals including doctors like me, nurses and other paramedical staff an opportunity to play a small part in His Divine Mission and thus transform ourselves. Without any exaggeration, I feel that a Healthcare Mission on this scale, which is entirely voluntary and 100% free, is unparalleled in the world and can thus serve as a model for many other organisations. If we all work together for the welfare of humanity, we can certainly improve the lives of millions of people and Bhagavan Baba's grace and blessings will definitely be there, in abundance, on all of us.

– The author is a renowned diabetologist and a Trustee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.

...continued from page 23

take advantage of opportunities to serve fellow human beings with love, compassion and enthusiasm, which is the essence of the Sathya Sai Global Health Mission.

These are challenging times for the world as we see increasing concerns about escalating healthcare costs, declining quality of healthcare, decreasing trust between the patient and the doctor and lack of universal access to healthcare. In His infinite love and compassion, Bhagavan Baba has gifted Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare to humanity. This model of healthcare is already being

adopted by thousands of dedicated healthcare professionals around the world. Therefore, now is the time to intensify our efforts to integrate the principles of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare in our medical practices by providing excellent and free health services with selfless love, compassion and empathy for everyone as per the clarion call of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

– The author, Dr. Narendranath Reddy, is the Chairman, Prasanthi Council, Sathya Sai International Organisation.

MEDICAL MISSION OF BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA

S.S. Naganand

Bhagavan constantly reminded all healthcare professionals and workers that they had to treat patients with love and compassion. Many patients and visitors to the hospitals were overwhelmed by the magnificence of the structures. The reaction of the patients who underwent treatment was that they felt like entering a temple rather than a hospital, and more than half their problems were solved by merely entering the hospital.

IT IS ONLY HIS DIVINE GRACE THAT Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba took human birth and demonstrated by His example that simple living and high thinking could be achieved by man. While on the one hand, He spoke and wrote about Advaita Principle propounding the reality that there is only one truth and that is Divinity, on the other hand, He often reminded us that God is everywhere and in His characteristic way, He described that there is no place where there is no divinity. In many of His Discourses, Baba characterised that there was no need for human beings to undertake austere penance by punishing the body to see God as that could be achieved by service to humanity. He simplified the Mahavakyas (profound statements) in the Vedas such as *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman) *Tat Twam Asi* (That Thou Art)

and *Prajnanam Brahma* (Brahman is Supreme Consciousness) by simple Mantras like Help Ever Hurt Never, Love All Serve All and *Manava Seva is Madhava Seva* (service to man is service to God) to illustrate that God is everywhere.

The path towards God is the path of service or Seva. Bhagavan often emphasised that service to the poor and needy was the best form of devotion and worship. He exalted the simple act of charity of

giving food and clothes to a divine level by calling it Narayana Seva and recognising every human being as the very embodiment of Lord Narayana. The same principle was preached by Christianity. Jesus emphasised and asked his disciples to serve the poor and hungry for they alone shall lead them to the kingdom of heaven.

My Association with Bhagavan's Medical Mission

To practically demonstrate this principle, Swami formed many institutions. Starting with fulfilling Mother Easwaramma's wish to provide medical relief to poor villagers, Swami's medical mission commenced in the year 1956 with the inauguration of Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital at Puttaparthi for rendering service to the poor and needy. No one imagined, except Bhagavan Himself, that the mission started in such a humble way



would reach gigantic proportions which it has now assumed with two Super Speciality Hospitals at Prasanthigram, Puttaparthi in Andhra Pradesh and at Whitefield in Bengaluru, Karnataka State. The General Hospital at Puttaparthi and a Mobile Hospital which functions from Puttaparthi provide excellent healthcare completely free to the patients.

In the year 1999, when Bhagavan was planning the Super Speciality Hospital at Whitefield, I was blessed by Him with an interview at Brindavan. I did not realise what was in store for me. I was delighted

by the interview. The next few days also Bhagavan called me for an interview with my family. He suddenly mentioned to me that a hospital will be built by Him at Whitefield and I would have a role to play in it. Some months later, just after foundation work had begun, I was called by Bhagavan who then informed me that I should be a Trustee of Sri Sathya Sai Medical Trust. I was somewhat taken aback by this kind gesture of Bhagavan and pleaded that I had no competence to be in the Medical Trust and my professional responsibility would make it difficult for me to devote full time. In Bhagavan's own inimitable way with love and kindness, compassion and understanding, grace and blessing, He made me to accept the position assuring me that He alone would do all the work and I should just be a Trustee. When such was the command and grace of Swami, it was not possible for me to decline. I humbly accepted it as a blessing. True to His word, there was hardly any work which Bhagavan allotted to me in the building and running of the hospital. There were a few meetings to discuss some aspects. After some years, the

Hospital Co-ordination Committee was formed by Bhagavan at Prasanthi Nilayam to co-ordinate the work of both hospitals at Whitefield and Puttaparthi. This was one of the strategies which I had suggested to enable economies of scale and to avoid unnecessary duplication of facilities and resources. The said committee functioned well and later separate committees were formed for each hospital.

Many years later, due to operational reasons, it was decided by Bhagavan to merge the activities of Sri Sathya Sai Medical Trust into Sri Sathya Sai Central

Trust; all the documentation was completed successfully and the hospital came under the direct control of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.

Expansion of Bhagavan's Healthcare Mission

Apart from all these administrative developments, what was most important was that Bhagavan constantly reminded all healthcare professionals and workers that they had to treat patients with love and compassion. Many patients and visitors to the hospitals were overwhelmed by the magnificence of the structures. The reaction of the patients who underwent treatment was that they felt like entering a temple rather than a hospital, and more than half their problems were solved by merely entering the hospital.

Besides such loving care, Swami has provided magnificent accommodation, latest equipment with well-qualified professionals to make available medical relief. The cost to the patient is nil. Even after the treatment is concluded, the patients are cared by a good follow-up system where medicine is delivered at their doorstep anywhere in the country through Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation.

India being a large country, the reach of the hospital is not confined to Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka but extends to the far North Eastern part of the country by means of telemedicine facilities provided in close co-ordination with Indian Space Research Organisation. The patients in remote destinations like Odisha, Assam and West Bengal are getting the benefit of most modern diagnostic facility and qualified and specialised medical care by telemedicine consultations.

Bhagavan Baba's Healthcare Mission has reached out to the most vulnerable sections of society and has taken care of their health not only physically but mentally and spiritually also. Bhagavan often used to say that when a patient was burdened with diseases, his major problem was to find resources for treatment and when that was not forthcoming, the problem was greater than the disease itself. Therefore, Bhagavan Baba wanted the patients' mind to be freed from the burden of financial stress to enable the body to be treated.

The Mobile Hospital is a regular feature in several villages around Puttaparthi for 15 days in a month. It is astonishing to note that apart from skeletal staff, the doctors who work in various government hospitals throughout Andhra Pradesh man the Mobile Hospital voluntarily to render services. The objective of the Mobile Hospital is to improve the general health profile of the entire population by giving them preventive, primary and secondary healthcare at their doorstep and tertiary healthcare at Super Speciality Hospitals. The mobile healthcare facility was awarded with the most innovative health programme in the country a few years ago.

The International Sai Organisation plays its own role in the Medical Mission of Bhagavan. Highly specialised and much sought after medical professionals who earn millions of dollars in USA come on a regular basis, at their own cost, to the Super

Speciality Hospitals with their team to render free service. These doctors also contribute in the form of bringing consumables and the latest technology to the poorest sections of society in India. Such modern facility with the highest level of professional competence is difficult to get for the ordinary patients in the most modern hospitals in India. The leading healthcare and research institutions in the world are vying with one another to acquire cutting-edge technology and undertaking research in the emerging technologies. Bhagavan is providing all this completely free. The hospitals also provide specialised training and education in super specialities in the form of DNB Course with the highest number of successful candidates and gold medals secured by any institution in India. This speaks volumes of the high professional competence of the doctors and paramedical staff of the hospitals.

Healthcare without Financial Constraints

One can only experience the grace and the love of Bhagavan which flows to the patients through these healthcare professionals. Their whole objective is to serve selflessly with no other objective. The fact that seven years after Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi, the Healthcare Mission of Bhagavan Baba is growing from strength to strength makes it clear that the path of service shown by Baba is the force behind His Healthcare Mission.

The philosophy of the healthcare professionals in Swami's hospitals is: We treat, He cures. That is the reason why the mortality rates in the hospitals are the lowest that one can encounter in any modern hospital in the country and even abroad.

Bhagavan Baba's Healthcare Mission has reached out to the most vulnerable sections of society and has taken care of their health not only physically but mentally and spiritually also. Bhagavan often used to say that when a patient was burdened with diseases, his major problem was to find resources for treatment and when that was not forthcoming, the problem was greater than the disease itself. Therefore, Bhagavan Baba wanted the patients' mind to be freed from the burden of financial stress to enable the body to be treated. This is exactly what has been achieved by Bhagavan's Healthcare Mission. Statistics can be given to emphasise this point but it is unnecessary as the main emphasis is on the quality of care and not the numbers. With Bhagavan Baba's grace, His Healthcare Mission is bound to achieve phenomenal growth.

Sarve Janaha Sukhino Bhavantu! (May all be happy!)

– The author, Sri S.S. Naganand, is a Trustee of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.

What is the cause of heart ailments? Many doctors say that they are due to smoking, consumption of fatty foods, overeating and other habits. The relationship between food and habits should be properly understood. We should see that proper balance is maintained between the physical body and inner feelings (spirit). Modern man is continuously in a hurry. Hurry causes worry which affects the physical health. The main cause of heart troubles may be said to be hurry, worry and curry.

– Baba

AN OVERVIEW OF HEALTHCARE MISSION OF BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA IN INDIA

Nimish Pandya

In the year 2017 alone, over 20,000 medical camps, mobile medicare projects, free clinics and veterinary care camps were conducted across India by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, benefiting over 23 lakh patients. About 12,000 doctors, 16,000 paramedics and 96,000 volunteers offered services in these camps.

SRI SATHYA SAI SEVA Organisation, an international multicultural spiritual service organisation, has been performing multifarious Seva activities for five decades since its inception with the ideal: Love is the source, Love is the path and Love is the goal.

With the Divine inspiration of the Founder, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, over a million active workers in India and across 125 countries of the globe have been consistently rendering service to society while following the five tenets of Sri Sathya Sai Human Values, namely, Sathya (Truth), Dharma (Right Conduct), Santhi (Universal Peace), Prema (Universal Love) and Ahimsa (Non-violence). The offering of Seva across the country is pure and selfless with no coercion to do so. This is what makes the Sathya Sai Seva Volunteerism unique in the world. The Seva revolves around educare, medicare, sociocare, agricare and environcare. This is the story of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in India which is

doing extraordinary work in the healthcare Mission of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Towards the Goal of Disease-free Society

Headquartered at Prasanthi Nilayam in the Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh, Sri Sathya Sai Service Projects and Institutions have offered sustainable solutions to long-pending problems of our society in a time-bound manner. The uniqueness of the Sathya Sai Medical Projects is that they are free to the beneficiaries, run by kind-hearted selfless volunteers, offering world-class quality of medical service and enduring relief to large systemic problems and bringing in a preventive healthcare mechanism to have a disease-free society in the years to come. Let me give you some insights into how Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has inspired thousands of doctors, paramedics and Seva volunteers across the country to take up medicare at the doorstep of masses. These are examples for people and institutions to emulate to make our country grow healthier with healthcare offered at the doorstep free of charge.

Inspired by the medicare initiatives under the direct and physical guidance of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation extends Sri Sathya Sai Medical Mission in 20 States of India. These services are rendered on a weekly basis, and are guided by the following six Sai Healthcare Principles that are globally practised by the Sai Organisation: State-of-the-art healthcare, free healthcare, compassionate healthcare, comprehensive healthcare, preventive healthcare and timely delivery of healthcare. Today, when a villager has no resources to even travel to a town to get his ailment checked and treated, here is a beautiful working, time-tested model of taking healthcare at the doorstep of villagers which is a phenomenal activity worth emulating by institutions of profit under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives.



The Magnitude of Healthcare Services

The range of medical services include free medical centres established all over India, medical camps, speciality camps, integration of medical activities with Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme, individual doctor clinics, Sathya Sai mobile health services, and many more with the objective of reaching out to the most inaccessible parts of India and providing the finest quality of healthcare irrespective of caste, creed, religion or nationality. Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, also helps

the patients of remote parts of India, to whom medicare is not accessible, the services of telemedicine, wherein our doctors speak to the patients on phone, listen to their complaints and render treatment with an action plan for redressal of their ailment. Telemedicine has been very successful in the States of Odisha and West Bengal rendering support to the interior villages of Odisha and the North East part of India.

The post-operative care and support is another humble activity of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, where patients who have had surgeries in Sri Sathya Sai



super speciality hospitals, Puttaparthi and Whitefield, Bengaluru are followed up by a team of specialist doctors in each of the States under the name of Sai Rehabilitation Programme (SRP). The patients are guided and necessary help is rendered on a continual basis.

I am happy to state that Bhagavan Baba, in His infinite love and grace, has given a great opportunity of Seva to Seva Dal volunteers, both ladies and gents, to support the services being rendered by the two super speciality hospitals at Puttaparthi and Whitefield, Bengaluru. All through the year, hundreds of active workers of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Karnataka take up the task of rendering all types of Seva activities with a smile on their face and love in their heart. Similarly, it is phenomenal to witness thousands of active Seva Dal workers from across the 20 States of India, when they come travelling hours and days to be in Puttaparthi, serving the patients in Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital as well as Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital 24 x 7 – 365 days a year! The Love to Serve is unfathomable which is symbolic of the Pure Love of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for mankind. It is noteworthy that doctors from all parts of India render voluntary medical service and conduct free surgeries at the Sathya Sai Hospitals throughout the year. Besides the above, the Sai Organisation is also supporting Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital, Rajkot, Gujarat, a hospital which was started with the infinite blessings of Bhagavan Baba in late 90's wherein hundreds of children having heart ailment are supported by the hospital. Recently in the month of September, this hospital in close coordination with Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, West Bengal organised

a cardiac screening camp in Kolkata wherein more than 950 patients from all the districts of West Bengal were screened and those needing heart surgery were given appointment for surgery at Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital, Rajkot. Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, in association with the hospital, has organised scores of free medical camps over the years for early identification of the heart disease especially in rural areas. In addition to such activities, many doctors having their own private hospitals / diagnostic institutions in the various States of India have come forward to offer one bed totally free of cost for the benefit of the poor and needy patients all through the year.

In the year 2017 alone, over 20,000 medical camps, mobile medicare projects, free clinics and veterinary care camps were conducted across India by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, benefiting over 23 lakh patients. About 12,000 doctors, 16,000 paramedics and 96,000 volunteers offered services in these camps. In terms of present market value, a conservative estimate places the expenses at over ₹40 crores. This cost has been met without the support of any government funding or Corporate Social Responsibility contribution.

Another remarkable and inspiring activity of the Sai Organisation is blood donation camps – expressions of Liquid Love. Every State in India conducts blood donation camps for emergencies as well as support of Thalassemia patients. It is with great joy that I detail a little more of the blood donation camps in Ahmedabad City in Gujarat. In this city, blood donation activity started from 17th February 1985. From 1985 to 1992, every year till date Sri

Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Gujarat has not only entered into the Limca Book of Records but has bagged the Asha Parekh trophy instituted by the Indian Red Cross year after year till date for the highest blood donations. As on date, 1547 blood donation

camp have been held and a total of 61,385 units of blood have been collected which showcases the sincerity and commitment of Seva Dal volunteers towards their brethren in Gujarat. The table given below gives the medicare activities of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, India over the last year.

National Medical Activities Conducted by SSSSO India – 2017

S. No.	Activity	No. of Camps / Clinics	No. of Services	No. of Animals	No. of Beneficiaries	No. of Doctors UG	No. of Doctors PG	No. of Paramedics	No. of Seva Dal
1.	Medical Camps	2,328			33,00,22	1,736	3,159	4,391	13,736
2.	Mobile Medical Care Projects	8,018			8,62,438	1,468	1,269	4,053	56,865
3.	Free Clinics	8,289			9,75,506	1,451	1,366	7,792	25,428
4.	Institutional Care	1,441			41,567	855	778		
5.	Single Doctor Clinics		3,393		97,437	49	44		
6.	Veterinary Camps	21		657		2	0		63
Total		20,097	3,393	657	23,06,970	5,561	6,616	16,236	96,092

In Conclusion

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's splendorous example of service to mankind continues to inspire His devotees and admirers especially in the field of medicare. As the river that flows towards the ocean takes into its fold many rivulets, in its fulfilling journey of service to mankind, the Sai

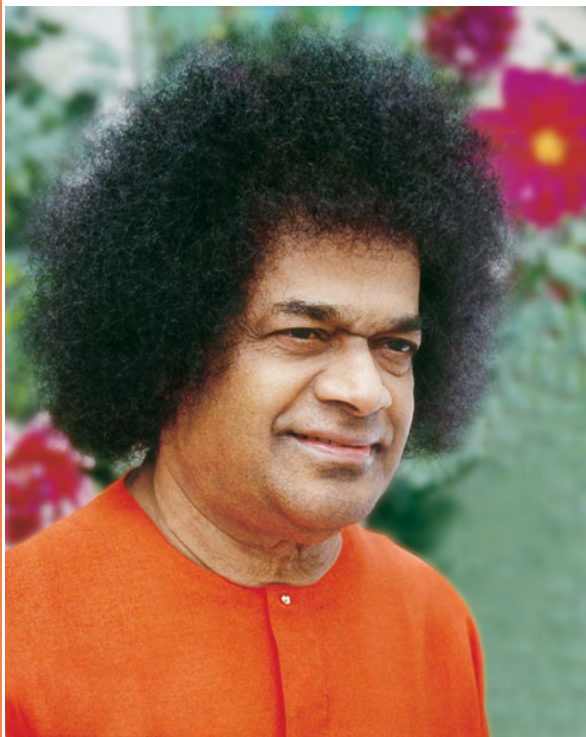
Organisation warmly welcomes devotees and others who share our commitment to nation building and human well-being. May the legacy of Baba's Universal Message of 'Love All Serve All' continue to be a beacon light of humanity!

—The author is the All India President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, India.

H.J. Dora

HEALTHCARE MISSION OF BHAGAVAN BABA

BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA is a unique Avatar in the history of mankind. At a very young age, He left home and family and declared that



He had incarnated to fulfil His Mission of uplifting and transforming mankind. Very soon, He translated His declaration into action. Education and healthcare were His top priorities. Education with human values in the true Gurukula style of ancient Bharat had faded away. Swami started educational institutions with emphasis on human

values and character building. Education in these institutions is free without any fees whatsoever. Swami once told us that in our country education and medical care (Vidya and Vaidya) were always provided free, but now, both fields had become commercial ventures devoid of all values and humanism.

Sri Sathya Sai Hospitals in Puttaparthi and Bengaluru

Another unique feature of Bhagavan's message was the total unity of all mankind. Swami always addressed the devotees as Atmaswarupularas or Premaswarupularas. He always mentioned that everybody had a divine spark and one should not differentiate one person from another. "Love All and Serve All" became the hallmark of Swami's teachings.

It was in this spirit that Swami started hospitals in Puttaparthi as well as other places. The first hospital in Puttaparthi was Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital which Bhagavan started way back in 1956. The hospital has been functioning in Puttaparthi for a long time. Patients from neighbouring villages come in large numbers and get their medical needs met totally free. Women visit this hospital in good number for their pre-natal and post-natal check-ups.

Swami spoke about the noble medical profession and reminded the doctors that they were equal to God. He asked them to uphold the noble tradition and serve the needy patients rich or poor. More than twenty-five years ago, Swami announced the establishment of a super speciality hospital in Puttaparthi where all major operations were to be free. It was a sensational announcement and everybody was apprehensive as to how such a hospital could function in a rural area. But an aesthetically beautiful building came

up in a record time and four bypass heart operations were performed on the first day itself as declared by Swami. I had the good fortune of visiting the hospital accompanying Swami several times. Swami used to meet the doctors and other staff and encourage them to continue the dedicated service. He would go to the wards and express happiness seeing the patients recover after the operations. They were poorest of the poor who got such quality medical care and they expressed their gratitude to Swami when He went round the wards. We would in turn see Swami very happy with the well-being of the patients. Swami ensured that every individual who came to the hospital got the best treatment.

Many doctors in Hyderabad told me that Swami would not be able to sustain the hospital in a rural area for long... They felt that no super speciality doctor would like to be there in a remote place like Puttaparthi. Obviously, they did not know Swami's divine power. It is more than 25 years since the super speciality hospital has been established, and it is bustling with patients and full of activity. Eminent doctors visit the hospital from various countries and impart latest skills and donate new instruments for facilitating the procedures. Now, the hospital has added Urology, Orthopaedics and Ophthalmology departments and expanded the facilities. Recently, NABH (National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers) members came to evaluate the facilities in the hospital. After stay of a couple of days, examining minutely the various parameters that were required, they were astonished at the compliance level. They told the Director of the hospital that they had nothing to comment since the hospital scored cent per cent in its

compliance. They further stated that the hospital was run in a rural area, treating the patients free and hence there was no need to have all the parameters for the hospital, prescribed in the rule book. There was no competition to this hospital, they said and it need not make any specific efforts to attract patients. They complimented the efforts of the hospital administration and processed the accreditation without any delay. That was the type of efficiency and medicare Swami wanted to provide to poor people. Swami later started another super speciality hospital in Whitefield, Bengaluru at the request of the Karnataka Government.

Aesthetics of Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospitals

I must mention here about the aesthetics of both the hospitals. As you enter the hospital in Puttaparthi, you are overawed by the huge dome and the big chandelier hanging in it. European devotees brought the chandelier in small packets after dismantling it. It was assembled here and took nearly a month to complete the job. It weighed about 10 tonnes when it was hoisted to the dome. So also in Whitefield. The ambience, the richness of the structures, the cleanliness and cheerful disposition of the doctors gives you a feeling that this hospital is something very unique. What great institutions Swami has left for the good of the mankind!

I vividly remember Swami telling Colonel Joga Rao, the engineer devotee who oversaw the building constructions, to acquire some land opposite to Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (Puttaparthi Super Speciality Hospital) to construct a big building to provide accommodation and food to the attendants of patients. Swami said that patients themselves were poor;

then how could their attendants afford food and accommodation? So, a big building was built just opposite to Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital to accommodate the attendants there. Accommodation and food is given free here.

Taking a cue from this, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has started similar services in government hospitals in most of the districts. The poorest people go to these government hospitals and are admitted for a couple of days. Attendants cannot afford to have food there. So, the Sai Organisation runs a kitchen in such hospitals premises and prepares food for them. Each day, they go to every bed and give a token to the attendant and request him to come and have food at a designated place. This service has become extremely popular in most of the districts. We already have covered 20 hospitals where 6,000 attendants are given food everyday.

Free Medical Clinics and Camps

Motivated by Swami's directions, many doctors across the length and breadth of our country have started free clinics where they see poor patients and provide free medicines. If any operations are required to such patients, those are done by liaising with the super speciality hospital. I must mention here that in the States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 45 such clinics are run on Saturdays and Sundays where about 2,48,000 patients are examined by the doctors every year. The medicines that are distributed free in these clinics cost ₹ 35 lakhs annually. Around 330 doctors and 3,400 Seva Dal volunteers of the Sai Organisation participate in this activity. In addition to this, the Sai Organisation has organised more than 500 major medical camps in villages where teams of specialist

doctors go and spend a whole day screening the patients gathered there, providing medicines and identifying cases for surgery. Such cases are brought to cities, operated and then sent back. Over all, 587 doctors, 288 paramedical staff and 3,800 Seva Dal volunteers, both ladies and gents, participate in this labour of love. Besides, we have 13 big mobile medical vans which carry various instruments for purposes of diagnosis. Doctors with medicines visit certain remote villages where medical care is taken to their doorstep. 158 clusters of villages have been identified in the twin States where the medical vans visit every Sunday and treat the villagers. 159 villages have been covered this way and 3,81,000 patients have been treated in this segment. Around 495 patients underwent surgical procedures as a follow-up to these camps and 637 cataract surgeries were conducted and spectacles were given to 1,683 patients. We are grateful to the doctors who sacrifice their precious weekends to serve the poor without any expectation. Swami has brought such transformation in one and all.

The above statistics are for one year. In addition, many doctors on their own do a great service to the needy inspired by Swami's vision. This is just to give the impact of Swami's vision in providing free medical care. Such service is happening all over India and even in other countries. Is this not a medical marvel in the history of mankind? Such is the Love of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for mankind!

Samasta Lokah Sukhino Bhavantu

(May all the worlds be happy!)

– **The author, an I.P.S. and former Vigilance Commissioner, Government of India, is presently serving as Convener of Sri Sathya Sai Trust of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.**

UNIQUENESS OF SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER MEDICAL SCIENCES, PRASANTHIGRAM

Dr. Gurumurthy

Here let me mention what a patient of our hospital told us. He said, "Doctor, when we poor people go to other hospitals, they quote exorbitant sums of money for treatment. They scare us. And gradually we start believing that poor people have no right to live in this world. But then we see Swami's hospital and the faith that we are also humans and we also deserve to live returns to us". This is the most beautiful aspect of Bhagavan; it is only He who can instil this kind of faith in a human who has lost all hope.

TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS AGO, Bhagavan Baba had declared, "There are countless people in the country who cannot afford huge costs of cardiac surgery in private establishments. We are going to establish a fully-equipped modern hospital at Puttaparthi at the cost of a hundred crore rupees, where all the complicated operations will be done totally free of cost. The hospital will be opened on 22nd November 1991". This is the love of Swami; this is the grace of Swami.

Loving Care and Homely Environment

A walk around the pristine environs of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Prasanthigram, makes one realise what a hospital should look and feel like. There is an all-pervading calm and warmth wherever one goes, and as one of our patients recently told me, just by entering the hospital, people feel like they are half cured. He is not alone with this sentiment, as almost all the patients who



visit the hospital share the same feeling. In fact, during ward rounds it is not uncommon for our doctors to hear patients telling them that they have been taken care of in the hospital better than their families have ever taken care of them. And when patients are told that they are fit and ready for discharge, many a time they request the doctors to extend their stay in the hospital, because they feel better at Swami's hospital than at their own homes.

The hospital till date has provided treatment to more than 35 lakh patients completely free of charge. We do not have a billing department in the hospital. It is a temple of healing, because here treatment is to the body, mind and soul, due to the compassionate care by the medical personnel and Swami's blessings in plenty. A majority of the patients who have received treatment at Bhagavan Baba's hospital belong to poor backgrounds. And their beaming faces tell the story of how Bhagavan Baba's love gave them a new life.

Word Took Form

As Bhagavan Baba had said, the hospital came into existence on 22nd November 1991. With a structural area of 3,20,000 square feet, it became the first super speciality hospital in India to offer world-class tertiary care through state-of-the-art medical technology, totally free of charge to all the patients, irrespective of caste, class, gender, race, religion or nationality. This 300-bedded tertiary care hospital is equipped with 14 operation theatres, one intensive care unit, two cardiac catheterisation laboratories, five inpatient wards and a 24-hour emergency unit. The hospital has specialists in cardiology, cardiothoracic and vascular



Patients being monitored at the Intensive Care Unit of SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram.

surgery, urology, ophthalmology, plastic surgery, orthopaedics, gastroenterology, anaesthesiology, laboratory services and medical imaging.

Moment of History

It is extremely important to understand the timing of the inauguration of the hospital, in the context of the economic history of India, and I do not think it was a coincidence that Bhagavan inaugurated it in 1991.

Something momentous had happened to India in the early 1990s. With the Indian economy in downturn, the government was forced to implement a Structural Adjustment Programme, which led to the opening of the doors of India to liberalisation and privatisation. So, the government was forced to loosen control on many sectors and allow private players to participate in sectors, which till then were within the exclusive domain of the government. Healthcare was one of them.

While the entry of private players made healthcare profit oriented and therefore out of reach of the poor, it also attracted the haves in the society to flock to these private hospitals. The government found itself in a



Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Prasanthigram.

tight spot. Moreover, many experts who till then were working with the government health sector started migrating to the private health sector in search of a better career graph and remuneration.

It was at this moment of the country's history that Bhagavan inaugurated Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Prasanthigram, an advanced state-of-the-art hospital completely free for all. Bhagavan then followed up, ten years later, with the SSSIHMS, Whitefield in 2001. These two hospitals have stood rock solid like beacons of ideal healthcare in an ocean of market-driven healthcare.

Most Advanced Equipment

Swami always wanted the best for His patients. Therefore, He made sure that the hospital was equipped with the best of the equipment available anywhere in the

world. We at our hospital, therefore, have most advanced equipment. And it is our policy to keep updating the equipment whenever the need arises.

Just to give an example, in the past one year, with the grace of Bhagavan, the hospital has received a new fully automated bio-chemistry analyser costing around 25 lakhs and also a microscope to aid in eye surgery costing around 50 lakhs. Also, the hospital has completely upgraded the Central Sterile Supplies Department and the Hospital Laundry.

These are the most recent examples. But one may go anywhere in the hospital, be it laboratories or the Imaging Department or the various operation theatres, one will find the most advanced and top-notch equipment available for the patients, because the patients of Swami's hospital deserve the best and nothing else.

Testimony by NABH

The testimony for the best care being provided at the hospital is the certification by the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH), India. NABH is a constituent board of Quality Council of India, set up to establish, train and certify accreditation programme for healthcare organisations in India. Moreover, NABH is an institutional member of ISQUA, the International Society for Quality in Healthcare, which emphasises the fact that the hospital has an international stamp of quality for its unmatched patient care. Moreover, the hospital is the only totally free hospital to receive this recognition.



Cardiology Cathlab of SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram.

Paperless and Filmless

Talking about technology, something pretty exceptional about the hospital is the hospital's Hospital Management Information System (HMIS). The hospital is one of the few in the country which is almost totally digital and therefore filmless and paperless. To give an example, if a patient requires a CT scan, the order for the same is placed not on paper; rather it is conveyed electronically to the Imaging Department. The patient has a card with his patient id and a bar code. When he visits the Imaging Department, his name would already be flashing on the Imaging Department's computer. The patient then undergoes the scan and the digital image of the scan is stored on the hospital's server, which can be accessed anywhere in the hospital by persons who have the requisite log in id. The whole process is far more efficient and a digital image kept in the servers securely would not be subject to wear and tear as an ordinary film may.

Telemedicine

One more evidence of the advanced technology being put to alleviate the suffering of patients is the use of telemedicine at SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram.



Telemedicine at SSSIHMS.

One of the basic ideas of telemedicine can be expressed by the saying: "Move the information, not the patient". Teleconsultation is provided for post-operative cardiac patients from the States of Odisha and West Bengal. Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation has set up centres in Bhubaneswar and Barrackpore with the help of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), where patients who have undergone cardiac surgery come and report for follow-up or with related complaints. Doctors in the centre screen the patients and collect essential details like complaints, medicines being currently taken, etc., and send them to SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram, electronically. At SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram, the consultant reviews the patient's past and current records and while speaking to the patient and the attending physician directly over video conferencing suggests suitable remedies and further investigations, if necessary.

The best part of this programme is that the patient and specialist see and talk to each other directly. Another advantage is that the local doctor conveys the specialist's advice clearly in the patient's local language. The patient also avoids the trouble and expenditure of travelling a long distance from Odisha to Puttaparthi, unless it is really necessary. Apart from Teleconsultation, the Telemedicine (TM) Centre at SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram, since its inception in August 2007, has been playing an active role in supporting the academic programme of the hospital by means of enabling participation in Continuing Medical Education (CME), lectures and discussions with institutions like Sankara Nethralaya (Chennai) and Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre (Chennai).

Human Resource

Apart from this, there is one more aspect about quality of healthcare at SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram, which is seldom talked about, and that is the human resource. It is pretty ordinary to find in Swami's hospital, people working from the inception of the hospital. That simply put is 27 years! In this age when industry is grappling with the ways and means to retain people by providing them various so-called incentives, I can proudly say that in Swami's hospital, we have doctors, nurses and people working in other allied fields, who have been quietly working at the hospital for more than a quarter of a century. Let me inform you that Bhagavan Baba pays very good salary to them, but for these people, pay is the last reason why they work at the hospital; they work because it is their Swami's hospital. Their greatest incentive is to work as a part of Bhagavan's Mission.

Hospital Dietary Services

The Hospital Dietary Services cater to the dietary needs of all the inpatients by providing a well-balanced diet. The role of diet as a therapeutic agent is well recognised as a key to the early recovery of the sick and the convalescent patients. Meeting patient's nutritional needs involves the coordination of medical, nursing and dietary teams. The department is linked online to the Hospital Management Information System and individual diet

orders are coordinated through this system. Further, the cultural background of the patients is also taken into consideration. Hence, the diet that patients receive is customised for them. The patients are regularly counselled on the importance of consumption of appropriate diet based on their diagnosis and health conditions both as a curative and preventive measure. On discharge, patients needing modification in their diet are educated and provided a detailed diet chart.

Going Green

With the blessings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, a one Megawatt Solar Power Plant started functioning at SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram campus on the Aradhana Mahotsava of Bhagavan Baba on 24th April 2018. Spread over an area of around five acres and established at a cost of around ₹ 4.1 crore rupees (approx. \$610,000) the solar plant will fulfil 1/3rd of the electricity requirement of the hospital. As solar power will ensure lesser dependence on the power grid, it would also help in reducing the carbon footprint of the hospital.

A Statistical Perspective

As already mentioned, the hospital has treated around 35 lakh patients till date and around 2.8 lakh operations have been performed by the hospital. The following is a broad overview of the statistics of the hospital:

Cardiology / Cardiac Surgery	Urology	Ophthalmology	Plastic Surgery	Orthopaedics	Endoscopic Procedures
Outpatient Consultations: 12,39,217	Outpatient Consultations: 10,84,164	Outpatient Consultations: 8,51,523	Outpatient Consultations: 34,854	Outpatient Consultations: 3,71,624	12,030
Total Surgeries: 28,050	Total Surgeries: 72,650	Total Surgeries: 76,065	Total Surgeries: 12,390	Total Surgeries: 19,431	
Total Cath Procedures: 48,377					

Love, Compassion and Dignity

The uniqueness of the hospital does not just stem from the fact that it provides treatment completely free of charge, but more importantly because it treats the patients with love, compassion and dignity. In today's world where healthcare has all but become a product to be sold by hospitals and bought by those who have the means, I think we as a society have failed the poor gravely. We forget that there are people in the world who work hard everyday rain or shine, fit or sick to make sure their children do not go to sleep hungry. After toiling the whole day, they earn just enough each day and save a few rupees. With a few hundred rupees savings earned over months and months of hard labour, when suddenly one gets to know that his son's heart has a hole and that a surgery is required costing lakhs, or he/she has developed a tumour on her urinary bladder and the treatment for the same will cost a million rupees, or that one day he/she meets with an accident while crossing the road and the surgery requires again a few lakhs, let us pause for a moment and think what would be going through his/her mind. Let us put ourselves in that situation and think.

Here let me mention what a patient of our hospital told us. He said, "Doctor, when we poor people go to other hospitals,

The hospital till date has provided treatment to more than 35 lakh patients completely free of charge. We do not have a billing department in the hospital. It is a temple of healing, because here treatment is to the body, mind and soul, due to the compassionate care by the medical personnel and Swami's blessings in plenty.

they quote exorbitant sums of money for treatment. They scare us. And gradually we start believing that poor people have no right to live in this world. But then we see Swami's hospital and the faith that we are also humans and we also deserve to live returns to us". This is the most beautiful aspect of Bhagavan; it is only He who can instil this kind of faith in a human who has lost all hope. While providing completely free care with love and dignity is one aspect of it, another unique aspect of Bhagavan's hospital is the state-of-the-art technology being used to provide that care.

– The author is Director, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Prasanthigram.

There are many who have no faith in anything except tablets and the needle. They come to the hospital and while there, they listen to the silence of the Prasanthi Nilayam, and feel the Ananda that is redolent in the atmosphere. They respond to the Bhajans and see how people who take part in Bhajans are happy: when they are in that Arogya Nilayam (house of health), they are drawn to this Ananda Nilayam (house of bliss), and gradually, they equip themselves with the armour of faith, which guards them against any illness.

– Baba

THE BEGINNING OF BHAGAVAN'S HEALTHCARE MISSION SRI SATHYA SAI GENERAL HOSPITAL

Air Vice Marshal (retd.) Dr. Vinod Kumar Varma

"We should give eternal bliss (Shashwatamaina Ananda) to the poor people...Here the treatment will be rendered totally free of cost to the rich and poor alike...Our aim is to send them home happy without any difficulties. This establishment will serve the poor forever. Some may have mistaken notion that it will only be a temporary one. All the institutions established by Sai are eternal."

– Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

WITH THE BLESSINGS AND grace of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai General



Bhagavan laying the foundation stone of Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital on 23rd November 1954.

mankind with love and compassion totally free of cost. Is it not a wonder in itself that Swami's free Healthcare Mission in rural India stands as a beacon of light for the whole world to imitate?

One of the biggest advantages of Swami's Healthcare Mission is free treatment to patients who visit Swami's hospitals. Patients are always free from their mental worries as they know well that they do not have to pay any medical bill. Hence, their recovery is quicker. There is no billing counter in any of the Swami's hospitals.

The Genesis and Expansion of the Hospital

At the outset, I would quote the words of Bhagavan Baba who recounted His Mother's wish in a Discourse on 6th May 1999. In His words, "She said, Swami, our Puttaparthi is a small village and our people are suffering from lack of medical facilities. There is nobody to take care of them when they are afflicted with fever, cough and cold, and the people of the village are suffering since they have to travel a long distance to seek medical treatment. Please start a small clinic or hospital to help the poor people of the

Hospital has completed its sixty-three years of glorious quality healthcare services to

village". Thereafter, Baba laid the foundation stone of Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital on 23rd November 1954, to coincide with His Birthday, on a hill to the South of Prasanthi Mandir. The hill was levelled into three terraces by a bulldozer and the hospital with five rooms was built on the topmost terrace. This six-bedded hospital was inaugurated on 4th October 1956, the day of holy and auspicious Vijaya Dasami. In His Inaugural Address, Bhagavan said, "There are no unbelievers or Nastikas; there are only some who did not know or have the opportunity to experience the Lord. But everyone, rich or poor, educated or illiterate, pious or not

hospital at all, here! Why should not Baba cure diseases by the exercise of His Will? That is the question. Well, for one thing, this hospital is not My only hospital. In fact, all hospitals everywhere are Mine. I visit them all. Why, all those who call out from their heart for succour, in whatever language from whatever clime, whether from hospitals or homes are Mine. Do not confine Me to these few acres around Prasanthi Nilayam. Wherever a person craving for Prasanthi (perfect peace) lives and prays, there a Prasanthi Nilayam exists. You should remember another point; the hospital serves to increase faith, to demonstrate Divinity and to remove doubt. That is also necessary. Besides, you have to mark time, in consonance with song, that is sung. There are many who are hungry for medical treatment and they are satisfied only if drugs are given and injections administered. Their faith in grace is not yet strong. So, a hospital is required for such".



Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam.

pious, is subject to disease. So, treat all with love and affection. And to set an example, Madhava Himself does Manava Seva, in order to make man do likewise, and thereby earn the grace of Madhava".

Bhagavan is the Doctor of doctors. He always insisted that peace of mind was the foundation of good health. He has clearly enunciated the purpose of the hospital and the universal nature of His task in His Healthcare Mission. In His Address on the Fourth Annual Day of SSSGH, Swami said, "Some of you may ask why there should be

On 29th February 1984, the southern part of the present SSSGH building was inaugurated. The hospital then had an operation theatre, a labour ward, an ante-natal and a post-natal ward along with a section for medical and surgical casualty, an inpatient facility of 50 beds. Hence, the obstetricians and gynaecologists were the need of the hour, as significant part of the patients' population comprised maternity cases. Swami blessed a lady anaesthetist and three lady obstetricians to join the hospital for Seva. Dental clinic was also started in 1984. In 1985, Swami blessed a surgeon to perform general surgical

procedures. During the first years of the hospital, Dr. Sitaramaiah was the only doctor who served as Medical Superintendent till 1975 and continued to see patients in the OPD till 1980. Dr. Alreja was the next Medical Superintendent from December 1975 onwards.

On 22nd November 1991, the northern part of the hospital was inaugurated. This took place at the time when Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital was also inaugurated. The General Hospital served as a base hospital from where referrals would take place to Super Speciality Hospital. Hence, the main building of the hospital having 36,000 sq. ft. of floor area was designed to cater to about 500 outpatients and 60 inpatients. Over the years, as the number of outpatients increased to 1,000 per day and more than 100 in wards, a

block was to ease the congestion in the main building and to provide better patient care and comfort. With this, the number of total beds in the hospital has increased from 100 to 125.

Treatment for a Wide Variety of Diseases

A 10-bedded paediatric ward was opened on Mother Easwaramma Day, 6th May 2017. Our paediatricians are providing counselling on newborn baby healthcare as well as for illness, child nutrition, hygiene, healthy life practice and common childhood illnesses. This is done through discussions with parents individually and in groups or by leaflets, posters and also through audio-visual clips. Zero dose of immunisation for OPV, BCG and Hepatitis B is given at birth to babies born in our hospital. The necessity of exclusive breast feeding up to

six months of age is explained to newly delivered mothers and their relatives. Exclusive breast feeding is the only way to safeguard the health of the newborn. This has given very encouraging results since the babies fed on exclusively mother's milk are very healthy and do not suffer from common ailments. Hence, our hospital has achieved the status of "baby friendly hospital".

The Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology conducts 150 to 200 deliveries including 60 to 70 caesarian sections and 20 to 25 gynaec surgeries per month. Regular counselling sessions for ante-natal expecting mothers and post-natal mothers are conducted by a dedicated team of doctors and nurses. All ante-natal ladies are given a healthy nutritive Ragi drink, while they are waiting for their turn in female OPD.



New Extension Block of Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam.

new extension block was established that provided an additional floor area of 36,000 sq. ft. for better patient care. This new block was inaugurated with Bhagavan's blessing by the Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi on 23rd October 2015. This indeed was Bhagavan's gift to humanity on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of SSSGH. The main objective of the extension

Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital is the major resource to primary and secondary healthcare in a rural set-up of Puttaparthi, catering to the Ashram residents of Prasanthi Nilayam, students of various institutions, villagers from about 50 surrounding villages and Sai devotees visiting Prasanthi Nilayam from all over India and the world across. As a result of large catchment area, a wide variety of cases ranging from endemic to exotic diseases, namely, tropical fevers, like malaria, dengue, typhoid, infections such as respiratory illnesses, diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera and various skin diseases are treated in the hospital. There are also a number of chronic ailments such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma, COPD, tuberculosis and so on. The acute emergencies such as snake bite and scorpion stings are very common in this rural area. All these are managed in the Department of General Medicine. The major cases of chronic diabetic ulcers, diabetic foot, acute traumatic injuries, hernia, hydrocele and surgical emergencies such as appendicitis and acute abdomen perforations are being managed by the Surgical Department. Thus, each of the various departments has a considerable load of all common and rare illnesses.

Emphasis on Holistic Healthcare

Holistic Healthcare is another important aspect of Swami's vision of healthcare. Swami often emphasises, "The hospital should provide preventive care also and try to educate the villagers in the method of avoiding illness, develop self-reliance, that is the best tonic". Swami also delineates, "When a doctor treats a person with love and compassion, it is called medicare and when he treats a patient with more drugs without love, it is called Medi-Sin, i.e., Mahapapam". Hence, our health professionals try to instil

the seeds of devotion and faith in the hearts of patients and their relatives. A yoga trained doctor conducts clinic for lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension and obesity. A diabetic clinic is conducted on 2nd, 3rd and 4th Saturday of every month. There are daily counselling sessions for medical inpatients and outpatients. CME's are held regularly. Doctors and nurses are well trained in basic life support (BLS) and ACLS training conducted at Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Prasanthigram, as well as at the General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam.

New Facilities

The hospital does not lack in latest equipment for early diagnostics in treatment. Some of the new facilities are as follows:

(i) Otto Acoustic Machine (OAE), which is useful in screening and detection of hearing impairment in newborn babies. (ii) Arterial Blood Gas Analyser (ABG) Machine. (iii) Ice Line Refrigerator (ILR) - to store vaccines at 2 to 8 degrees Celsius so that potency is maintained. (iv) Cardiotocography (CTG) Machine for foetal assessment. (v) Spiro Meter to better diagnose and classify patients of COPD and bronchial asthma. (vi) Digital X-ray and Integration with PACS. (vii) Philips Respironics V60 NIV Therapy Unit: This equipment is useful for treating the patients in General Medicine and paediatric with respiratory distress, namely, acute severe asthma, COPD, pneumonia, severe heart failure, shock and sepsis. (viii) High Flow Nasal Canola (HFNC): It is useful in management of respiratory distress in conditions like acute severe bronchiolitis, acute exacerbation of asthma and congenital heart disease with failure in paediatric population. Also used in management of respiratory distress syndrome, meconium

aspiration syndrome in preterm babies in NICU.

DNB Family Medicine Course

The hospital is accredited for the DNB Family Medicine PG Course with two candidates per year. Our doctors and six DNB students in family medicine attend various medical conferences / seminars at State and national levels to update their knowledge in recent research and development in medicine. Nine DNB Residents of DNB Family Medicine have passed in first attempt with 100% success rate.

Research Activities

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus has undertaken the research activities in collaboration with SSSGH in the following areas:

Monitoring and Management Perinatal Depression – by point of care device by Metabolonics (blood, urine and saliva).

Mobile Dengue Diagnostic Technology (M-DDT) – A smartphone-based point of care diagnostic and early warning system for epidemic predictions, preparedness and control.

Neo-natal Metabolic Screening – To detect error of metabolism in newborn babies on 3rd or 4th day of their birth.

Hand held Transcutaneous and Invasive Bilirubinometer – To detect jaundice in newborns.

Love is the Most Effective Drug

Once Bhagavan advised doctors, “Doctors get plentiful opportunity to do Seva. They can manifest divinity inherent in man to the best advantage. The doctor is extolled as Narayana Himself “Vaidyo Narayano Harihi”. He should have good

thoughts and good words. Love indeed is the most effective drug. It cures illness much quicker. Man should so live that he does not get disease. It is only when man blunders into wrong path in his food habits and in search of pleasures that he gets ill. Illness begins in slum areas and spreads all around. So, service alone to clean slums is of double benefit. The human body is unique gift; it is only with the human body that man can realise himself as Divine. So, until that goal is attained, the body has to be fostered and kept fit”.

Speaking about the objective of the hospital, Swami said, “We should give eternal bliss (Shashwatamaina Ananda) to the poor people...Here the treatment will be rendered totally free of cost to the rich and poor alike...Our aim is to send them home happy without any difficulties. This establishment will serve the poor forever. Some may have mistaken notion that it will only be a temporary one. All the institutions established by Sai are eternal”.

We are blessed to be a part of Bhagavan’s Divine Mission. We pray to Him to keep us at His Lotus Feet as His efficient instruments and realise the truth: He Treats, He Heals.

I conclude with the following prayer:

Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinaha

Sarve Santu Niraamayaha

Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu

Maa Kashchid Dukhabhaagbhavet.

(May all become happy,

May all be free from illness.

May all see what is auspicious,

May no one suffer.)

– **The author is the Medical Superintendent, Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam.**

Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital ...a 'Moving' Medical Model for Humanity

[Dr. K. Narasimhan](#)

The impact of the service is tremendous. On the curative front, it has given a sense of great security to people living in nearly 300 villages around Puttaparthi. People living in this belt feel they have a free high quality hospital either at their doorstep or quite near to them for at least half the month. It is a boon for patients with chronic ailments who can never dream of buying medicines on a continuous basis. The preventive services have created a huge wave of awareness on major health issues.

BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA is known the world over for His relentless commitment to gigantic projects in the fields of education, medicare and provision of safe drinking water to masses. All these services are provided absolutely free of cost to humanity at large, irrespective of religion, race or creed.

Three Phases of Bhagavan's Healthcare Mission

The genesis of Sri Sathya Sai Medical Service can be traced to three distinct phases. In the first phase, Bhagavan started the General Hospitals in Puttaparthi and Bengaluru to provide primary and secondary medical care.

Bhagavan's Healthcare Mission took a giant stride, so to say, when He decided that even tertiary medical care, like open heart surgeries, neurological procedures, etc., have to be provided *free of cost*, particularly to the poor and needy. A Super Speciality Hospital equipped with world class facilities was inaugurated exactly in a year in November 1991 which would otherwise take



years to complete. Another Super Speciality Hospital was set up at Bengaluru in 2001. These twin hospitals provide most advanced

medical care absolutely free of cost, in the specialities of Cardiology, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Urology, Orthopaedics, Ophthalmology, Plastic Surgery, etc.

Bhagavan's compassion knows no limits. True to this, He declared in 2005 that this high quality medicare should not just be provided, but it should be "delivered". This was the beginning of the concept of Rural Outreach services, in the form of mobile hospitals. This marked the third phase of His Healthcare Mission.

Innovative Functioning of the Mobile Hospital

Bhagavan was emphatic to start the Mobile Hospital to provide medical services to villages around Puttaparthi, notwithstanding the existence of General Hospital, for four reasons. Firstly, inability of villagers to come to Puttaparthi in spite of morbid health problems owing to their being engaged in daily-wages works. Secondly, He felt, there was often nobody in the house to bring elders or senior citizens to hospitals when they fell sick. Thirdly, many villagers did not have enough money to cover transportation charges. And, finally there was a huge lack of awareness on issues relating to health and disease.

Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital was thus started as a Free Rural Outreach holistic health service on 30th March 2006. The service operates from the 1st to 12th of every month at 12 nodal points or base villages, located in six Mandals around Puttaparthi. Each nodal village is a central point for 40-50 villages. A population of five lakhs spread over 400 villages of more than 12 Mandals gets the benefit of this service.

The hospital is unique in that it is managed more or less totally on a voluntary

basis. About 350 doctors of Andhra Pradesh belonging to 12 specialities dedicate their skills, and they come in rotation. 15-18 doctors are in service on any particular day helped by 40 support staff which includes technicians, pharmacists, nurses, managers and assistants, many of whom are villagers who have been trained for the different works.

The highlighting feature of the hospital is the diagnostic bus which has an Ultra Sonogram with Colour Doppler, ECG, EEG, Digitised X-ray with CR facility and a laboratory which can do most of the pathological and bio-chemical investigations. The presence of this diagnostic support gives quality and credibility to the work.

The whole service is innovatively done by basing the Mobile Hospital in the village school (the school remains closed on that date every month and instead works on second Saturday, which is otherwise a holiday) and creating literally a hospital, and at the end of the day winding it up and moving to the next nodal point.

The Mobile Hospital is sketched into five sections: Reception, Registration, Doctors Working Section, Diagnostics and Pharmacy. The Doctors Working Area is based in the school rooms and six Departments are created, viz., Medicine, Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Dentistry and Ophthalmology.

Each of these Departments has the full complement of all equipment required for effective functioning and it gets uninterrupted power supply, drawn from the diagnostic bus which has a 15 KV inbuilt generator.

The entire work of the Mobile Hospital is computerised. An Intranet facility is created everyday at each of the nodal points. It

allows for seamless integration between various departments of SSSMH, as it travels from one nodal point to another. The capturing of patients' demographics along with patient history, laboratory reports, and medication provides historical references, while allowing to plan for following months.

Since the programme was outreach, a larger agenda was visualised when the ideology or the driving theme for the service was framed. A triangular approach was conceived, consisting of curative drive, preventive focus and spiritual base, the aim being not just cure of diseases but promotion of health and happiness.

Effective curative care emerges owing to the presence of specialists belonging to 12 specialities, taking loving care of 500-600 patients at each of the nodal points. The approach in each of the Departments is absolutely proactive.

Examples of such a work are, the Department of Dentistry doing procedures like fillings, root canal treatment (RCT), removable partial dentures (RPD), full set dentures, helped by technological incorporations like an innovative dental chair and availability of required dental material.

The Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department does procedures like pap smears, cervical biopsies, cancer cervix screening followed by cryo surgery or loop electrical excision procedures. Around 15,000 women have so far been screened and also treated (in required cases).

In the Department of Medicine, special focus is laid on NCD's (non-communicable diseases) and chronic ailments, like diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, thyroid disease, asthma, etc. There is a special software for each of these ailments

in which the data is entered and stored. Honeywell Computers have made a portal for diabetes, in which the data is entered and uploaded into the server in Super Speciality Hospital. The data can be viewed and analysed post-programme.

As regards tuberculosis, leprosy and HIV, there is excellent cooperative work with governmental agencies. The clinically suspected patients undergo blood tests, X-rays, USG or procedures like FNAC, Biopsy and are sent with the reports to the government agencies like DOTS Centres for Tuberculosis and Leprosy and State Government designated hospitals for anti-retrovirus drugs. Follow-up work like drug compliance, review investigations is again done by the Mobile Hospital.

Patients with surgical problems are diagnosed and evaluated, and after the surgical profile is done, they are operated by the surgeons of the Mobile Hospital in Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Puttaparthi from 1st to 5th of every month. General, ENT, Gynaecology, Oncology, Paediatric are some of the surgeries done.

Again, patients with cancers are greatly benefited by the facilitatory work of the Mobile Hospital in the form of FNAC, wedge biopsy, excision biopsy, etc., followed by Histopathological study, since production of these reports to the concerned agency entitles them for immediate referral to the designated centres for tertiary care services. Post-procedure, again these patients are followed up in the Mobile Hospital. For example, after cardiac valve repairs by either Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital or government designated hospitals, patients undergo periodic pro-thrombin time test and are given anti-coag drugs on an uninterrupted basis. An excellent follow-up

mechanism contributes to the quality care that is rendered in each of the Departments. The dedicated referral module allows SSSMH to track patients referrals to various hospitals and do follow-ups.

Patients requiring diagnostic tests like USG, X-ray, Pathological and Biochemical Investigations are sent to the Diagnostic Bus which is placed a little away from the Doctors Working Area. An innovation is done for blood tests which cannot be done in the bus by collecting the respective samples and delivering it to the labs in Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital for testing and reporting, thus ensuring that the objective of providing a loving *doorstep service* is achieved. However, for higher imaging tests like CT Scan and MRI Scan, patients are sent to SSSIHMS with referral letters and followed up with the reports. Integration with Super Speciality Hospital helps in creating a centralised data hub while providing a platform for SSSMH to access lab tests more promptly.

The curative work is further strengthened by a strong pharmacy which ensures that patients with chronic ailments like epilepsy, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, asthma, etc., are all provided with continuous and uninterrupted supply of medicines (for one month till the next month's visit). This has very useful implication since effective treatment prevents serious complications like diabetic retinopathy, nephropathy, etc., which would have meant greater suffering for the patient and huge expenditure for the government.

Education on Prevention of Diseases

The preventive work of the Mobile Hospital consists of health education which is done both intensively and extensively. Six

major subjects of teaching are: cleanliness (environmental, home and individual), nutrition, healthy air and water, prevention of habits like smoking and alcoholism, proper physical exercise and mind relaxation. Great focus is laid on NCD's / lifestyle diseases. Education on these subjects is done at the individual, family and community levels using a variety of tools like audio-visual presentations, demonstrative sessions, interactive meets, photo exhibition, etc.

The education is administered at three different times. Firstly, it is done before the start of curative services at every nodal point. The presence of villagers from 30 to 40 villages helps in conveying the message, in effect to a large population. Secondly, during the curative service, different specialists go to the waiting areas of the patients now and then and educate them on issues relating to their speciality. The third time, the Health Education is imparted during evenings when villagers are back from their work. The whole village is addressed at a community level by arranging a village centre-point programme using audio-visual tools like LCD projector, 16 mm screen, documentaries, interspersed with formal and informal talks by doctors. Health Education work is done not only by doctors but also by volunteers who have been trained and designated as Health Educators.

As regards nutrition, the subset of patients like malnourished children, pregnant women are provided with nutritional supplements like Sai Protein which is an easily digestible, protein rich recipe. It can be made with ingredients available at home.

Another related preventive work is, screening services aimed at detecting asymptomatic ailments or premalignant

conditions. Cancer cervix (uterus) screening by World Health Organisation approved latest technique, viz., VIA method is done daily by the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. The method involves both diagnosis and treatment. Collaborative work with an International NGO called PINCC (Prevention International No Cancer Cervix) based in USA has resulted in this useful exercise.

The spiritual base of the service involves motivating the villagers on the importance of positive thinking, human values and age-old practices like prayer and meditation, all of which foster positive health. A variety of programmes in this direction are conducted.

Finally, the Mobile Hospital after being stabilised on all fronts, is now venturing into Research in association with Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. There are two ongoing projects. The first is “Retrospective Study of Mobile Hospital data from April 2012 to March 2018”. The second is “Association between the two Endemic Diseases, Fluorosis and Thyroid Problems”. The Mobile Hospital is rich in clinical material and thereby is an ideal place for academics.

Impact of Rural Outreach Service

With this holistic approach, 90% of health problems in the community are solved because the approach is professional, proactive and integrated and takes care of common ailments, chronic ailments, preventable ailments, asymptomatic diseases and endemic diseases. Only patients requiring surgical interventions are treated in the base hospitals.

The impact of the service is tremendous. On the curative front, it has given a sense of great security to people living in nearly 300 villages around Puttaparthi. People living in



Mobile medical service in a village.

this belt feel they have a free high quality hospital either at their doorstep or quite near to them for at least half the month. It is a boon for patients with chronic ailments who can never dream of buying medicines on a continuous basis. The preventive services have created a huge wave of awareness on major health issues, which is slowly getting translated into changed habits for the better. The spiritual component of the service has strengthened the community bonds and has reminded people that positive thinking and practice of human values leads to positive health and happiness. Community participation is also good with villagers helping in arrangement of the logistics at each of the points and many of them have become part of the service.

Doctors and paramedics take this service as a great opportunity to show their gratitude to society, which nourishes and nurtures them. They also take it as their way of showing love to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba who has inspired and motivated them by His own example, to take up this path of selflessly serving fellow human beings.

Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital is indeed not only a state-of-the-art rural outreach service but also a *state of the heart* caring and loving service.

– The author is the Director, Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital, Puttaparthi.

FROM I DEAL HEALTHCARE TO IDEAL HEALTHCARE A LETTER TO BHAGAVAN

Dearest Swami!

FOR OVER A MILLENNIUM, healthcare in the world has taken a turn to balance the opposing forces of good patient care and financial gains. The World Health Organisation reports that the per capita expenditure on healthcare in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries has been increasing over the last decade. In many places today, healthcare is about the art of making the perfect deal. In a 10-year study published in the British Medical Journal (*Friebel, Hauck, Aylin & Steventon, 2018*), the rate of readmission of patients had increased in such an environment. A study in the U.S. reported by the healthcare Utilisation Project showed similar results (<https://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports/statbriefs/sb199-Readmissions-Payer-Age.jsp>). When we consider these results, we can notice the glaring lack of correlation between how much we spend on healthcare on one hand and our health status on the other. Where did we go wrong?

Beloved Swami! You showed us a path out of this “I Deal” type of commercialised healthcare. You taught us “Ideal Healthcare”. You have gifted humanity with a way of practising healthcare that radically changes our view of healthcare delivery and management. You have provided a Divine answer to the healthcare paradox: why is

healthcare spending not correlated to health outcomes? You showed us a way to transform commercial healthcare to compassionate healthcare”.

The Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) distilled Your teachings on Ideal Healthcare from 204 Discourses You gave from 1960-2005 and published them for the world in a single compendium. There are many more of Your teachings including personal experiences that have created and enshrined Your principles of Ideal healthcare <http://www.sathyasai.org/about-us/service/healthcare/sai-ideal-healthcare>

Sathya Sai Ideal healthcare is not just about free healthcare or compassionate healthcare or comprehensive healthcare but is also about preventive healthcare, state-of-the-art healthcare and timely healthcare. As a result, the regressive trends in healthcare metrics we see in the world are not seen in Your hospitals and wherever Your Ideal healthcare is practised. What a beautiful gift You have given the world! You not only gave us life, but You also gave us the means to keep that life healthy.

I am ever grateful for Your grace to allow me to be part of this glorious mission. If I think about how it happened, I can now see how You orchestrated every step of this long journey. So, I sit today in front of Your altar and reminisce about what I have learnt along the way. Until a few years ago, I used to keep handing You letters and sometimes empty envelopes. Your Divine grace combined with my exhilaration when You took the envelopes and created indelible moments that I have always cherished.

Today, Your physical presence in our lives is replaced by a deep understanding and experience of your Divine Presence in the home you have always had in each of our hearts. Never more do I seek Bhagavan outside of me as I cannot seem to stop relishing Bhagavan inside me.

You have taught that individual transformations do not have to be grand quantum leaps in life's trajectory. Every little step in life is a transformation.

I often think about how from the podium of a scientist who was reluctant to come to You, I was smitten at the very first sight of You and could never stay away. How did this happen? To paraphrase Elizabeth Browning, let me count the ways.

I was wedded to the idea of becoming a physicist. My first research paper in physics was submitted to the National Science Talent Search Council in India and won an award when I was in high school. I was determined to be a physicist. Then suddenly, I was directed by my mother and father who were devotees of Devi and Siva respectively to pursue engineering instead. Their advice was based on a dream. To a scientist, a dream was the weakest excuse. I relented. I obeyed. I transformed. I became an engineer with physics in the back of my mind.

I spent five years as an undergraduate in electrical engineering in IIT Madras. During those years, I kept visiting the elderly Sankaracharya (Chandrasekharendra Saraswati) in Kanchipuram Kamakoti Peetham getting guidance and learning from him the beauty of solitude and silent meditation. Just as I was looking to launch a career in engineering, You presented me with poverty, sickness and suffering around

me and by Your grace You showed me a path to alleviate this inequity and suffering through sound economic policies. I wrote several papers in economics and caught the attention of Professor J.N. Bhagwati who was in MIT at that time. I did not know at that time about his family's connection to the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in India. By Your grace and the personal guidance of Sankaracharya, I began to consider a career in economics and eventually graduated from Caltech. I relented. I obeyed. I transformed. I became an economist with engineering and physics in the back of my mind.

When I first visited You, Dear Swami, I was a man of little faith in You. I went to accompany my mother and escort her during her trip from the US to Prasanthi Nilayam. Your first Darshan to me was simple: You made it irrefutably clear that You were Divine, that my true nature was Divine and that every step of my life was orchestrated by You. You even told me that my life was in your hands (and clenched Your fist). What a stunning beginning that was!

From that moment on, I drenched my mind with Your Discourses, Bhajans and immersed myself in You. I kept asking myself why I cannot experience Your divinity in me. What did I need to do to experience Your divine effulgence?

As a scientist, I was used to a clear hierarchy of inquiry: It starts with experience, then science tries to find an explanation using our senses and builds knowledge. Then we develop faith in the knowledge. So, the sequence I was used to was experience -> knowledge -> faith. You taught me in a personal conversation why faith should come first in my life. You told me to completely flip this sequence in my life: Start with faith in the Divine. Then comes knowledge of

the Divine. Then comes experience of the Divine and finally comes being Divine. You taught me the sequence faith -> knowledge -> experience -> being.

Thus, began my quiet education. So far, I had studied, but was not educated. I obeyed. I transformed. I left behind all that I thought I knew.

I thought I had a comfortable life with tenured professorial ranks in business administration, economics and game theory. Then one day, You called me and asked me to study medicine and become a stethoscope doctor. From having summers off and enjoying sabbaticals, I went back to school and started to learn biology, biochemistry and wrote exams to enter medical school. I obeyed. I transformed. I left behind what I thought was valuable then. But I realise that what I know now is invaluable.

When I was finishing medical school, I was also guiding some of my Ph.D. students in economics and game theory. I thought I would do a short residency and be done with medical studies. But You pulled me out one day in Darshan and in our private conversation, asked me to become a neurosurgeon. My first thought was that that was another six years! You asked me to come to see You two times every year. I did that during my residency. I became a neurosurgeon and thought that was it. I obeyed. I transformed.

During my last year of residency, You asked me to specialise in brain tumours, paediatric neurosurgery and fits. I obeyed. I transformed. I took two years to subspecialise in paediatric neurosurgery, epilepsy surgery and research in brain tumours.

You showed us a path out of this “I Deal” type of commercialised healthcare. You taught us “Ideal Healthcare”. You have gifted humanity with a way of practising healthcare that radically changes our view of healthcare delivery and management. You have provided a Divine answer to the healthcare paradox: why is healthcare spending not correlated to health outcomes? You showed us a way to transform commercial healthcare to compassionate healthcare.



Every visit to see You during this long trek, You talked to me in private or occasionally in public. In 1998, You told me that I should not deal in medicine but should provide ideal medicine. That is where I got the title of this article – Your words. From commercial medicine, my attention was redirected to compassionate medicine. I obeyed. I transformed.

I remember once how when I needed Your command to deliver a certain treatment for a patient, You called me in and directly told me to start Heparin on the patient. What was in my thought came out from your words. You have talked to me about cancer, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, dementia, marriage, Dharma, computer and food. You were a doctor when I thought of You as a doctor. You were a mother when I thought of You as a mother. You were a friend when I thought of You as a friend.

Most neurosurgeons know that our profession is so physically and emotionally taxing that it takes away our very breath.



But for me, it was a breathtaking experience when I worked at the SSSIHMS in Whitefield by Your grace. From the external beauty of the hospital architecture and infrastructure, I could only gasp at the internal architecture and infrastructure of the human brain and spinal cord that You have created. Your grace allowed me the Satsang of the patients of mine and their families. Bhagavan, Your patients were my teachers. Your faculty were my teachers. Your staff members were my teachers and every administrator in the hospital was my teacher. The Department of Neurosurgery at SSSIHMS is without doubt one of the topmost neurosurgical facilities in the world. And the only neurosurgical facility in the world that does not charge the patient any fees. One can feel the love that flows between the surgeon and the patients. It is that experience alone that makes Your

studies. My experience in Your hospital was an exemplary educational gift to me.

For the last 13 years, You have given me the blessing of Satsang, inspiration and education from association with one of Your own staunch and loving devotees who lives Your teachings. This led to Your blessing to direct the international medical camps in Prasanthi Nilayam. In the early years, our team of extremely dedicated professionals and volunteers would work for 12 hours with a brief lunch break. Every one of them was so dedicated to serving the patients and viewed every patient encounter as Your blessing, that they would not go for Darshans so that they could avail of Your Darshans embedded in patient encounters. At the end of the medical camp period of usually 5-7 days, the entire team would go for Darshan and every such time, You would talk to us about the medical camp, the patients seen and bless us all.

The most memorable blessing of the medical camp team was on 25th November 2010. This was the most precious gift for the group as this day was Your Thithi Birthday as per the Hindu calendar. The entire team was summoned to the Mandir where You paid individual attention and blessed each of us. You physically met every healthcare professional and volunteer and then to our heartfelt joy, You

returned for another round of interactions, blessing us all with Vibhuti, Sparshan and Sambhashan.

You taught me about the impermanence of knowledge and the permanence of education. Through several patients I looked after and who You subsequently referenced



The author receiving Swami's blessing.

hospitals and Your doctors all over the world stand out by living Your Message. Several years ago, we performed the first epilepsy surgery at Your hospital in a difficult case. By the never-ending beauty of Your grace, the patient is doing well till today without a single seizure, is an athlete and excelling in

in our conversations, You taught me the impotence of medical healthcare and the efficacy of Divine healthcare.

In the end, I realise that healthcare must evolve as does human life. But the evolution of healthcare cannot come through monetary incentives. Good healthcare arises from the goodness of humanity. It is a service from heart to heart. When you provide healthcare as a deal, you provide a set of services that is profit maximising for all stakeholders and the patient is one among many stakeholders. But when you provide ideal healthcare, the patient's welfare surpasses that of the bottom line.

Dearest Bhagavan, I specifically remember an eye-opening moment: You once asked me the question that many have been asked: "What do you want"? I first told You, "Nothing, Swami". You then said, "Not even Me"? to which I replied, "I already have You, Swami". Then, Your Divine words that followed are still etched in my mind. You said, "You already have Me, but you have not already realised Me". I then asked You if I could change my mind. You lovingly smiled and said "Yes". So, I said, "I want to experience and be aware of experiencing Your Divinity in me". You smiled, hugged me, lovingly slapped my cheek and materialised some Vibhuti.

You have taught me that everything I have (including life, health and peace) and everything I am is truly Your gift and each one of them is temporary. Whatever endowment this body enjoys is Your gift that will one day go away. My duty is to enjoy Your grace while I am able to.



Swami with Medical Camp Team, 25th November 2010.

In 2005, during the First International Medical Conference in Prasanthi Nilayam, I said to You "I place everything that I have and everything that I am at Your Divine Lotus Feet so that I can have a glimpse of everything that You are". When I said this, You immediately materialised a Sphatika Lingam and a chain and pointing at the Lingam, You asked me, "Do you know what is this"? I said I did not know. Then You said, "This is a Siva Lingam". Then You asked me, "Do you know who am I"? and I once again said I did not know. You replied, "I am Siva" and then proceeded to tell me how to use the Lingam and tied the chain with Lingam around my neck. I realise now that everything I have is from You and only by Your grace. Everything that I am is from You and only by Your grace. Who am I to offer and what can I offer You? But I continue to pray for a glimpse of everything that You are. I pray that before this body's life ends, it experiences and is aware of the experience of its Divine nature.

– The author, a Paediatric Neurosurgeon by profession, is a Member, Sathya Sai International Medical Committee.

EVER SINCE MY CHILDHOOD, THE world I knew, growing up with my parents, was always about helping others and considering everyone as equal. My parents, both being doctors, influenced me to become a doctor and helped shape the person I am today. Given a chance at home, I used to wear one of my father's long white coats that was twice my size and act like a real doctor. I was greatly influenced by my father to look for others' need and offer them help. He would bring people from the street into our house to take

cyclone hit Andhra Pradesh. It was there that I had the unique opportunity to meet Mother Teresa, who personified Swami's message of 'Love All Serve All' through her life. It was also the beginning of my own journey to look for others' need and follow my heart to serve those in need.

I first visited Puttaparthi when I was in medical school. Although Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was not physically present in Prasanthi Nilayam, I felt a sense of calm and peace in my heart. Soon after, the yearning to see the physical form of Swami

Dr. Hari Conjeevaram

BEING A DOCTOR IN SWAMI'S DIVINE FOLD: A LIFETIME BLESSING

care of them and he used to allow patients and their families to stay at our house when they could not afford accommodation. I would often come home from school to find strangers staying in the garage in our house, feeling comfortable and at ease. These strangers were, in fact, my father's patients and it took me a while to realise that all are God's children. And once I got to know Swami, I realised the truth that they were indeed my sisters and brothers.

Heart-to-Heart Communication with Swami through Seva

My yearning to go out and serve others started early in my teenage years. When I was in 11th grade, I felt compelled to go and help neighbouring villagers after a major

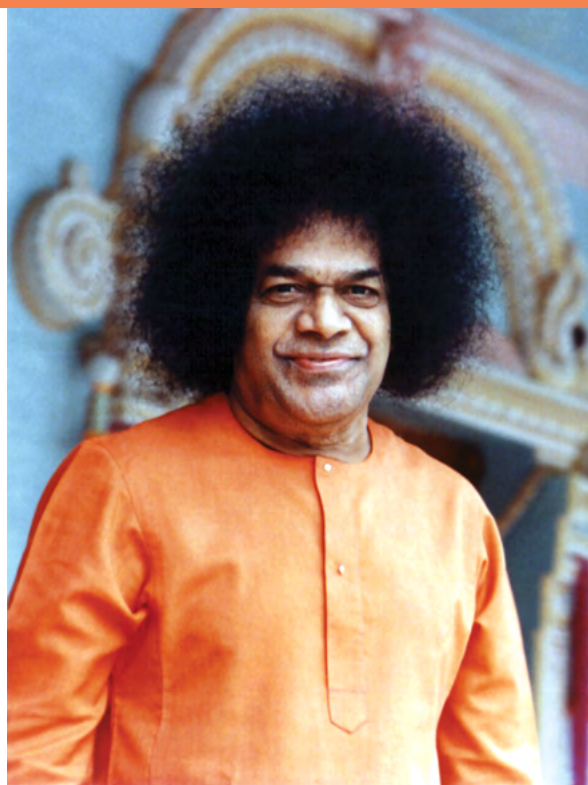
took me to Whitefield. My first glimpse of our Beloved Lord from a distance was the start of a new chapter in my life. His message about the universality of all religions and 'Love All Serve All' was all that I needed to follow Him and seek His guidance. I have been tremendously blessed by Swami with so many opportunities to serve Him in all our brothers and sisters across the globe. Through these opportunities, I have been a witness to my own spiritual transformation – which I consider to be the biggest miracle of Swami in my life. Being a doctor, I have been privileged to see Him, love Him and serve Him in others and be a constant witness of my own spiritual progress.

I have learnt over the years that as long as we desire to serve others, we not only

have to seize the obvious opportunities that are presented but we must also recognise the need in everyone we interact with, at every moment in our daily lives. Where I was and where I am now as a human being and as a doctor, I owe it all to Swami for guiding me to see goodness and God and feel His love in every patient I care for.

The first time I had the opportunity to volunteer as a doctor was in a medical camp in Puttaparthi, when I was doing my Postgraduate Fellowship training in gastroenterology in the United States. It was one of the most profound experiences in my life when I realised the truth that everything that we do to help others is through heart-to-heart communication with Swami. This heart-to-heart communication cannot be influenced by anyone, even those who may seem physically and spiritually close to Swami. Since that time, I have had the opportunity to serve in medical camps in Prasanthi Nilayam every year and also in other countries such as Guyana and Kazakhstan. The unconditional love, the caring and the empathy that Sathya Sai doctors and volunteers reflect, while doing service, is so profound that people who are being served not only recognise the love, but also the divine power influencing it.

I was honoured to care for an elderly woman while in a medical camp in Kazakhstan – I could sense that she was worried about her health and I spent some time with her enquiring about her medical issues and explaining everything in detail. She expressed how happy she was that I spent so much time to care for her, but it was what she told me directly that was most significant. She looked at me with soothing eyes and told me and my interpreter, “You have love in your heart and peace in your



eyes”. To me it was a reflection of Swami’s pure love and a heart-to-heart connection that she was experiencing. This made me realise that when we do our part, Swami’s love will always shine through and people who do not even know about Swami will recognise His love which prompts us to serve all. Incidents like these remind me how blessed we are to be part of His Mission and to have the opportunity to serve Him.

Through the years, I have also been a witness to several natural disasters across the globe and had the unique opportunity to serve the affected victims and the needy in several countries including the United States (Hurricane Katrina), Sri Lanka (Tsunami), Haiti (earthquake), Philippines (Typhoon Yolanda), and Ecuador (earthquake). Each and every time, Swami has guided me along with others. I have witnessed the impossible happen when we do our part to help others and have faith in Him. What an incredible blessing it is to be the conduit for such





Dr. Hari Conjeevaram serving patients in Haiti.

services, as He takes care of everyone while giving us the chance to transform ourselves spiritually.

Sermon in a Church

One particular experience in Haiti also taught me that when we serve unconditionally and with love and care, it is the divine in us that is recognised and is experienced. This breaks all external barriers and all one sees and feels is the 'universal divine'. While volunteering in a medical camp at one of the churches in Port-au-Prince after the Haiti earthquake, I was invited to attend the Sunday prayers at the church. I was very happy to go as I feel that God is the same in all faiths, with different names and forms. After some initial prayers and a few speeches by the head priest of the church and other visiting priests, one of the priests announced that I would be delivering the Sunday sermon.

After the initial shock and apprehension on hearing my name called out to give the sermon, my immediate thought was that I was not a Christian, leave alone the fact that I had never given a sermon before. But immediately I realised that Swami was uniting the divine in each one of us and it did not matter whether I was a Christian or not. The divine in me would communicate

with the divine in every one of the several hundred people gathered in the church that morning. This gave me confidence that I could indeed give the sermon. In my sermon, I shared what I learnt from being in Swami's fold. His universal teachings were applicable to all, including all the Christian brothers and sisters watching me and hearing me speak. I knew I had connected with them heart to heart when they loudly exclaimed 'Halleluiah' in unison throughout my sermon – as I was relaying Swami's teachings of love, empathy and service to all.

Gastroenterology Endoscopy Unit in Puttaparthi Hospital

In 2007, when I came to Puttaparthi to volunteer at the medical camp during Swami's Birthday celebrations, Swami instilled the thought in my mind how wonderful it would be to be able to provide much needed gastroenterology services in His hospital. Little did I know that He was placing these thoughts in the minds of others as well. After I returned to the US, I received a call from Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman, Prasanthi Council, asking me if I would put together a team of gastroenterologists to help set up gastroenterology services in Puttaparthi. I had not shared my thoughts with Dr. Reddy and I realised then that it was part of Swami's divine play and He was coordinating everything. When Dr. Reddy presented the initial list of nine gastroenterologists during Sivarathri celebrations, Swami blessed and approved each one of them and instructed Dr. Reddy to proceed. Swami even gave a date for the inauguration of the Gastroenterology Endoscopy Unit in the Super Speciality Hospital. And that was the beginning of an incredible, inspiring and transforming journey. I have witnessed

so many miracles that I am convinced that what the human mind cannot conceive of, can indeed happen if God wills it. However, we need to have faith in His Will and also do our part in His Mission. Swami blessed us, and everyone present at the Super Speciality Hospital by inaugurating the Gastroenterology Endoscopy Unit in July 2008. On 12th July 2018, we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Gastroenterology Department at SSSIHMS, and His blessings continue to be with everyone including the doctors, nurses and staff taking care of the patients, as well as the patients themselves.

As an academic physician and gastroenterologist, I have had the distinct opportunity to not only teach the residents and nurses at Swami's hospitals in Puttaparthi but also to bring trainees under my supervision from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA to His hospitals to experience selfless service. One of our nurses at the University, Sri John Whelan travelled to Puttaparthi in July 2008 to help set up the GI Endoscopy Unit at the Super Speciality Hospital and also train the nurses on endoscopy procedures and services. Witnessing the selfless love and caring that he experienced at the hospital, Sri Whelan wrote, "What is being accomplished in Puttaparthi at the Super Speciality Hospital, and through the Sai Organisation is health-care delivery that very practically and genuinely exemplifies the message: Service to man is service to God".

To me the very essence of being an ideal doctor is exemplifying humanness. According to Swami, humanness is 'unity in thought, word and deed' and I have strived to practise it at all times as a doctor and a human

I have been tremendously blessed by Swami with so many opportunities to serve Him in all our brothers and sisters across the globe. Through these opportunities, I have been a witness to my own spiritual transformation – which I consider to be the biggest miracle of Swami in my life. Being a doctor, I have been privileged to see Him, love Him and serve Him in others and be a constant witness of my own spiritual progress.



being. As a doctor, this has been made easy by practising mindfulness and giving full attention to every patient I encounter each and every time and reminding myself that what brings us together is the God in each one of us. How we conduct ourselves with our patients and everyone we come across and show compassion, empathy and love by connecting heart to heart in a selfless and unconditional manner, is the most important aspect of being an ideal doctor and an exemplary person. I feel very blessed to be a doctor in Swami's fold in this life, and I am most grateful to Him for the opportunities He has given and continues to give all of us and for always guiding me along His path.

– The author, Dr. Hari Conjeevaram, is Professor of Medicine, University of Michigan, USA. Presently, he is serving the Sathya Sai International Organisation as a Member of International Medical Committee.

BHAGAVAN'S BIRTHDAY MESSAGE

CULTIVATE LOVE FOR GOD

CONSTANTLY CONTEMPLATE ON THE ATMA

Embodiments of Love!

EVERY MAN DESIRES HAPPINESS and wants to avoid sorrow. But in this world, happiness and sorrow are not permanent; they pass and change with time. Everyday man experiences happiness and sorrow. He is caught up in attachment and hatred, and verily invites worry and misery. How can man be at peace under these conditions? He should be able to welcome sorrow in the same way as he welcomes happiness. One with the quality of equal-mindedness is a true human being. Man should therefore trust the Divine and experience His love in his heart.

Imbibe Steadfast Devotion and Faith

If you want to be respected by everyone, you should respect everyone. Everyone has the same self-respect whether he is rich or poor, high or low. You should try to maintain your self-respect. If you are conscious of your self-respect, then you will respect all.

Embodiments of Love!

There is nothing new to be taught to you today. Everyone should attain bliss. Everyone should overcome sorrow, develop true love and experience unity and divinity. This is My principal message to you today. Human life is most precious and noble. Man is endowed with a tender heart, sweet mind and eternal life principle. Everyone should recognise this truth. Man should experience



sweetness in heart and develop equal-mindedness. This is the main wealth he should acquire.

Develop Love for God

You should remain happy always under all circumstances. In this dualistic world, it is natural that gain and pain alternate. You cannot avoid it. You should not despair

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ORTHOPAEDIC DEPARTMENT, SSSIHMS, PRASANTHIGRAM GENESIS AND GROWTH

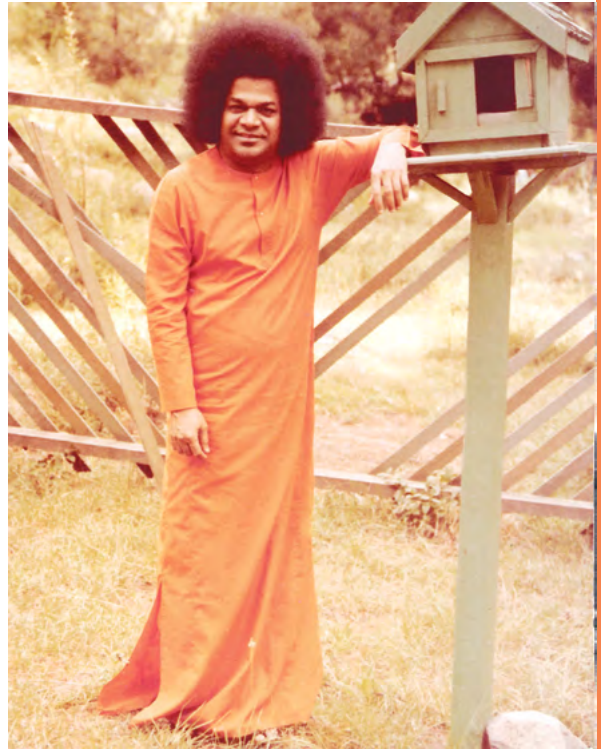
Dr. R. Varadachari

and myself were blessed to participate as volunteers in every medical camp at Puttaparthi during Guru Purnima and Bhagavan's Birthday celebrations. During these visits, I had had

I FIRST CAME TO PUTTAPARTHI IN November 1999 with a very close friend of mine and his wife who are ardent devotees of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. During the course of my stay there, I visited Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (SSSIHMS), Prasanthigram (PG), popularly known as Super Speciality Hospital. Having worked for decades as an orthopaedic surgeon, I was disappointed to note that there was no orthopaedic speciality and no orthopaedic services at the hospital.

Swami Gives me a New Lease of Life

Swami is quoted to have said that no one can come to Him unless He calls that person. I never thought for a moment that my life would change from that visit. Swami called me for an interview along with my friend's family before we left Puttaparthi. This was the experience of my lifetime. Swami materialised a beautiful Navaratna ring and put it on the finger of my right hand. In a personal interview, He asked about my health. I said, "I am fine". He said "No, you are not fine. You have a stomach problem". He then rubbed the front of my chest with His divine hands from my chin to just below my umbilicus three times and then said, "Now you are fine". I did not know its significance at that time. Following this, from the year 2000, my wife Dr. Chandra Varadachari



the wonderful opportunity to be blessed by Bhagavan with several interviews. During one such interview, I heard Him say, "Lots of chest pain. Nothing to worry. Swami will take care. Swami is with you, above you, below you, around you". I came to realise this a few months later in May 2002, when I suffered a massive heart attack – myocardial infarction which could be fatal. But I was saved only by the love and compassion of Swami. During a group interview a few months later

at Prasanthi Nilayam, I thanked Swami and expressed my gratitude for giving my life back to me. Swami blessed me by materialising a ring.

Opportunities to Serve in Puttaparthi

During the period of service on the occasion of Guru Purnima in 2005, I was asked by one of the senior doctors in Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital to see a 60-year-old patient who was admitted with severe pain in her leg. She was in extremely poor state of health, with multiple contractures of her extremity and multiple bed sores. Having severe cerebral palsy from her childhood, she never walked nor could speak coherently. She had sustained a severely displaced fracture of the shaft of the femur (thigh bone). This required surgery, but the condition of the patient was poor for any kind of surgery. I explained the situation, the pros and cons of surgery to the referring doctor and the patient's father.

The hospital staff wanted me to do the surgery in Puttaparthi. But as there was no Orthopaedic Department in Puttaparthi nor any facilities or instruments to do any type of orthopaedic surgery, I recommended that she be taken to Bengaluru. About 4 or 5 days later, the senior doctor at the General Hospital, who referred this patient to me, called me and said that she received a message informing them that Swami wanted the surgery to be done in Puttaparthi on this patient and that I had to do the surgery. I was not familiar with the super speciality hospital but knew that there were no facilities to do any major orthopaedic surgery. The same day which was a Thursday, the Joint Director of SSSIHMS came to see me and told me that they would provide me the Urology Theatre for doing the surgery and the urology staff would help me. I managed

to get some necessary instruments and the implants though not all sizes were available. I used the Urology Theatre the following Monday and prayed to Bhagavan to help me or 'do' the surgery Himself. The surgery went well by the grace of Swami and the patient never suffered any complications. Her fracture healed without any problems and to this date, 12 years after surgery, she is doing very well. This was possible only by the grace of Swami.

My wife, Chandra and I were present again in Puttaparthi for the medical camp during Swami's Birthday in 2005. During that visit, I was asked to see an old man who was admitted to the General Hospital with a broken hip. I recommended that this patient be transferred to Bengaluru as he needed surgery. The patient's grandson insisted that I should operate on his grandfather in Puttaparthi. He was not convinced when I told him that it was not possible for me to do surgery for him in Puttaparthi due to non-availability of fracture table. He was not happy. A few days later, before I left for USA after the conclusion of the medical camp, I informed Dr. Narendranath Reddy (Chairman, Prasanthi Council) about all these patients and the circumstances under which I did or did not do the surgery.

Establishment of the Orthopaedic Department

The First International Medical Conference on Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare was held on 3rd and 4th September 2005 in Prasanthi Nilayam. The conference brought awareness of the principles of Ideal Healthcare, including universal and comprehensive healthcare. It was recognised that there was a need for an Orthopaedic Department of highest professional excellence at SSSIHMS.

Dr. Reddy and Dr. Safaya prayed to Swami for the establishment of such a department at SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram.

Soon after Maha Sivarathri 2006, Dr. Narendranath Reddy returned from Puttaparthi and called me to say that he had prayed to Swami for starting an Orthopaedic Department in Puttaparthi and the ever compassionate loving Bhagavan agreed. People from the Ashram and neighbouring villages who could not afford to travel or find transportation to go elsewhere, could now receive advanced and definitive treatment at SSSIHMS. He also told me that he had requested Bhagavan to inaugurate the Orthopaedic Department on Guru Purnima Day in 2006. That gave us just about three months to organise the Department. Dr. Safaya who was then the Director of SSSIHMS at Whitefield called me in March 2006 and said that Swami had directed him to extend the necessary support for starting the Orthopaedic Department at SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram. He appointed me as Special Officer in charge of orthopaedics.

On 28th April 2006, Dr. Safaya, Dr. Narendranath Reddy and myself placed the Project Report at the Divine Lotus Feet at His abode, Trayee Brindavan, for His blessings and approval. Bhagavan blessed it and told us, "Whenever you purchase equipment, buy locally (Indian) made, where possible". Accordingly, all major appliances, furniture and equipment for the Department and Operation Theatre were located from reputable companies within India. Nurses and two senior orthopaedic surgeons were ready to work in the Department. Despite what seemed to be an impossible task to get everything ready for inauguration, so many miracles occurred with Swami's grace and all the work was completed by

10th July. Swami sent word that He was happy and the Orthopaedic Department should start functioning immediately. The first day witnessed about 150 patients being treated in the Department. Swami gave His blessings to start performing total joint replacement arthroplasties beginning from His Birthday in 2006, within four months of inauguration of the Department.

Progress of the Orthopaedic Department

As we marked the first year anniversary of the Department, the Orthopaedic Department had seen nearly 28,000 patients from many parts of India and the world and doctors had performed 1,800 surgeries in the very first year. We were grateful that the poor villagers now had a place to get treatment for their broken bones and similar ailments.

The Orthopaedic Department was given recognition and full accreditation by the National Board of Examiners for postgraduate residency training leading to the Diploma in National Boards (DNB) within one year of opening, which is a rare honour and recognition. The first batch of DNB students were admitted on 1st January 2008. Today, the percentage of successful candidates from this programme is more than 80%, compared to the national average of less than 20%. On an average, about 150 patients receive treatment daily in all branches of Orthopaedics. About 2,000 major operations have been performed every year with good results. Surgeries have included management of severe fractures, paediatric cases, arthroscopic repair and reconstruction, total joint replacement, spine surgeries, Ilizorov method for trauma and deformity correction (a limb-sparing technique to treat complex and / or open bone fractures), etc.

Swami's love and compassion had reached out to people from all over the country and beyond. There were so many persons in Puttaparthi with severe pain and crippling deformities who could not travel to bigger cities for relief due to lack of transportation and resources to afford the expensive treatments elsewhere. An elderly devotee who never stopped performing Seva at the Ashram had a crippling arthritis of both knees and had been suffering with pain for many years. After being blessed by Bhagavan, he underwent bilateral total knee replacement at SSSIHMS in 2006, one of the earliest persons to undergo this procedure and was extremely happy on being free from pain in his joints. There were several similar instances of people within the Ashram benefiting from the Orthopaedic Department due to the grace of Bhagavan.

One late evening in 2008, I was requested to see a young man in his home. This patient was Swami's student, then working as a faculty in Sri Sathya Sai University. He was running very high fever, looked toxic, and had evidence of chronic osteomyelitis (chronic bone infection) with acute flare up of infection, a condition which is very difficult to treat and eradicate. X-rays showed significant loss of bones and sequestrum (dead bone fragments) and a metal rod which had been placed by surgeons in his leg previously. In order to try to eradicate the infection, I told him that I have to remove the metal rod. He said that it was not possible, and Swami would not permit it. He had been using a wheelchair or crutches all these years for ambulation. A couple of years before I saw him, the surgeon wanted to remove the rod. According to the patient, Swami denied permission. I told him that the only way I know how to treat and control the



The author receives Swami's blessings.

infection was to remove the rod as part of the surgery. I wrote a detailed report about the patient's current condition and sought Swami's permission to do the surgery. That evening, the patient took my report to the Bhajan Mandir and placed it at the Divine Lotus Feet. Swami read the whole report, blessed him materialising a beautiful emerald ring, put it in his hands and told him "Go, have the surgery. Get the rod out and come back to me walking without any support". We did the surgery and as Swami ordained, he started walking without crutches or any support, running around everywhere, and became very active. When Swami Wills it, even impossible things become possible. Currently, this gentleman is a professor in Swami's college.

Resident teaching also involves participation in educational orthopaedic conferences held in different cities and centres. The Orthopaedic Department conducted several International Orthopaedic Conferences in SSSIHMS starting in May 2008. For the Second International Orthopaedic Conference, internationally and nationally renowned faculty were assembled including one from USA, two from England and at least six from India. The Conference also featured two live surgeries which were broadcast from the Operation Theatre. Our

happiness knew no bounds when Swami came to inaugurate the Conference.

To date, 34 DNB residents have been admitted for DNB training in the Orthopaedic Department and 24 have successfully completed their training. The remainder are currently in training. A Sports Medicine Fellowship has been established. The residents and staff of SSSIHMS Orthopaedics have published papers in peer reviewed journals and have also presented papers and case reports in various conferences and professional meetings. With the collaboration of Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, several research projects are currently underway. A full-fledged "Bone School" (hands-on

training in dry bone and stimulation lab) has been established for DNB students. The Department has already performed several thousand operations for major fractures, arthritis, deformities and other orthopaedic problems. Between July 2006 and March 2018, the Department has witnessed 3,59,880 outpatient visits, 29,137 inpatient hospital admissions, 18,905 major surgeries and 7,55,769 physical therapy (PT) visits.

I feel ever indebted to Bhagavan for providing me and my wife so many opportunities to serve Him through the years.

– The author, Dr. R. Varadachari, is former Chairman, Department of Orthopaedics, SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram.

...continued from page 65

when adversities confront you nor exult when success comes your way. Any adversity is a stepping stone to eternal bliss. Only when the Pandavas suffered many hardships during their exile could they secure the grace of Krishna and the Lord was always with them everywhere. The Pandavas had correct priorities in their lives. They accorded first place to God, second to the world, and kept 'I' last of all. But the Kauravas had their priorities other way round. They placed 'I' first, world next and God last. That is why they lost the battle. Bliss eluded them. One who has won the proximity to God is always blissful.

This morning devotees gathered in large numbers even at two o'clock seeking entry into Sai Kulwant Hall. Their enthusiasm was boundless. Many people queue up to enter a theatre or to get into a bus. But here, the love and devotion of the devotees for Swami is so much that they do not bother about any hardships and

inconveniences to have Swami's Darshan. It is difficult to earn God's love by years of penance. You have the good fortune today of enjoying bliss in the Divine Presence. You must have done penance in many previous lives, performed many sacrifices and undertaken varied spiritual austerities in order to secure this divine bliss. It is My love which attracts so much of love from others.

Do not hurt anyone by your harsh words and do not take to evil path. Recognise the truth that God pervades everything from microcosm to macrocosm. This truth dwells in you but you are not aware of it. That is a big mistake. You are the embodiment of Sraddha and Viswasa (steadfast devotion and faith). With self-confidence, you can achieve anything in the world.

– Excerpted from Bhagavan's Birthday Message on 23rd November 2001.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH SAI MEDICINE

Dr. Hector J. Castaneda

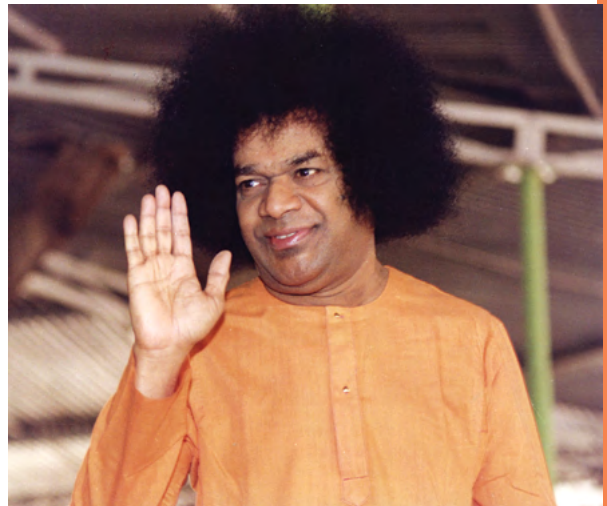
From 1984 to 2011, I travelled to Prasanthi Nilayam every year. I have had the privilege of serving God through Sathya Sai International Organisation. I have learnt patience to tolerate others and tolerate myself. My performance as a doctor has changed my vision and I believe that prayer enhances the healing effect of medicines.

me to enter politics so that I could help my fellow countrymen. As a physician with political experience, I learnt to convey ideals of righteousness and service to the public. Eventually, I found my way to the Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) where I used these skills to give speeches about Him and the importance of selfless service.

I AM A NEUROLOGIST FROM EL Salvador. I have had the blessing of knowing the Avatar of this era for 36 years. I now see how Swami was guiding me throughout my life to serve in His Medical Mission. I was seven years old when I decided to become a doctor. This decision was inspired by an elderly lady who was very sick. I could not do much except provide gentle compassion and love. She invoked in me a firm determination to become a physician to help such people in future. Later as I was growing up, Swami guided me to participate in Boy Scouts where I resolved to serve God, my parents, my country and to help every person I encountered.

Main Principles of Ideal Healthcare

I did my medical training in a General Hospital where I saw human suffering and was moved. This experience helped me embrace a way of thinking that led



It was in 1984 that I read the first book on Sathya Sai – titled “From Sai to Sai”. Through this book, I learnt about Swami’s compassion and unbounded love. I immediately identified with His teachings and this became my first experience of Him. I realised that His love transcended all barriers of nationality, religion, ethnicity and culture.

I resolved to follow His teachings, especially about the practice of medicine. In particular, the following principles became etched in my heart:

1. **Globalisation:** State-of-the-art healthcare should be made available to the sick anywhere in the world.
2. **Non-commercialisation:** Healthcare should be free for all human beings.
3. **Humanisation:** Healthcare should be delivered with compassion, love and adhering to Sathya Sai Human Values.
4. **Spiritualisation:** Those involved in patient-care must know the importance of spirituality in healing and try to incorporate it in their practice.

After reading this book, I was drawn to Bhagavan and decided to visit Him. I went to India for the first time and spent one month with Sri Sathya Sai Baba, learning His teachings. When I returned to El Salvador, I tried to introduce these teachings into the curriculum at the medical school including the concept of Sathya Sai Human Values and selfless service.

Opportunities of Seva to the Needy

In 1986, when our country was embroiled in internal conflict and revolution, we held a rural medical camp. During the camp, we were mistaken for one of the 'opposition guerrilla' groups. Military helicopters were sent to hover over us as a warning. Only by the grace of the Lord were we exonerated and although we provided healthcare for the first time, we had to stop our medical camps until the political strife ended.

In 1993, after the political situation in the country settled down, we resumed our free medical services with six doctors and a group of 16 Sathya Sai devotees visiting a

war-torn community. We collected US \$200 and purchased needed medicines. Then with Swami's grace, we began to serve that community once a month. We continued to conduct this free medical camp for the next 13 years. Bhagavan provided everything we needed for the medical camps without any need to solicit funds. We eventually stopped the service in this location because of safety concerns arising from the rise of criminal gangs.

However, our Beloved Swami gave us another opportunity. We started a permanent Medical Clinic in one of our Sathya Sai Centres with the help of a private hospital that provided furniture and medicines. With Bhagavan's blessings, this clinic continues to lovingly serve the patients till today. Bhagavan always takes care of those who serve Him selflessly. Today, the private hospital that is helping us is one of the most successful enterprises in the country.

I am also very grateful to Swami for opportunities to serve at Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital in Puttaparthi and at the medical camps in Prasanthi Nilayam during His Birthday celebrations. At these medical camps, I was blessed to serve together with my wife, daughter and son-in-law, who are also physicians.

In 1986 and 2001, El Salvador was shaken by devastating earthquakes. In response, the SSIO, at international and national levels, along with our local medical team provided much needed healthcare as well as food, supplies and construction material.

In 2010, we responded promptly to the devastating earthquake in Haiti. The Sathya Sai medical team arrived within a week after the earthquake and, together with other

experts and volunteers from the SSIO, provided medical services, food, water, sanitation and education for more than a year in Haiti, and even constructed houses for the destitute.

Swami has provided us with several opportunities to serve Him and, at the same time, He reminds us of His Divine Presence through His Leelas. On one occasion, I was asked to provide a medical consultation for an elderly gentleman who was a resident of Prasanthi Nilayam. My wife and I went to see the patient. After a thorough medical examination, it was a blessing for us to spend time with the patient listening to stories and experiences of Bhagavan's miracles. Listening to Swami's Bhagavatam was a joyful nectarine gift for the soul.

Experiencing the Power of Gayatri Mantra

Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare is a gentle combination of state-of-the-art medicine together with a dose of compassionate care steeped in faith and Bhagavan's infinite love. During the time I was on call at Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital in Puttaparthi, a Japanese lady was found having a seizure in her bedroom. She was brought to the casualty section of the hospital where I examined her. My diagnosis was cerebral haemorrhage (bleeding in the brain) probably from an intracranial vascular malformation (a blood vessel abnormality) and began treatment for swelling of the brain. While the medical prognosis was grim, Bhagavan's omnipresence and omniscience guided us to provide the best modern medical care, delivered with compassion, love, faith and a hefty dose of prayers. The patient recovered completely and went back to Japan and is doing well, showing sincere human efforts

supplemented by divine grace can work astounding miracles.

The practice of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare is a constant exercise in selfless service. Once Swami said to my wife "your work is service to God". I have tried to live with constant awareness of these divine words



Serving the needy with love.

since 1987. Swami always helps those who help others. I provide free medical service in a Catholic clinic in a poor area in San Salvador once a week. With Bhagavan's grace, the clinic has reciprocated every year with medicines and supplies for our rural medical camps and Sai clinic. I also serve on the Board of Directors of a private hospital which has helped our Sai clinic with medicines and given us hospital supplies for medical camps in Haiti. These are some examples of how Swami helps His servers.

In October of 1998, I had the opportunity to experience the strength of prayers. Swami has bestowed upon us the Gayatri Mantra and constantly reminded us of its power. It was a Saturday morning and I was getting ready to visit a reforestation project in the northern part of the country where we were also conducting medical camps. With Gayatri Mantra on my lips, I left my pet dogs

behind. Usually, they accompanied me on such visits but this time it was Swami's divine intervention that made me leave them at home. When I got into the car, I continued to chant the Gayatri and then stopped by to pick up a friend to accompany me on the trip.

The day was like any other rainy day, and we took a refreshing walk on the grounds undergoing reforestation. Suddenly out of nowhere, we were surrounded by five individuals in black uniforms and ski masks, who threatened us with guns and rifles. I immediately started chanting the Gayatri Mantra in my mind. The effect of this in me was almost immediate. A sense of peace and calmness came over me that I could perceive was slowly spreading to our captors. I managed to get my friend released and started negotiating with my armed kidnappers. This lasted three days during which they walked with me within the surrounding forest. I was chanting the Gayatri Mantra constantly and every time they stopped for rest, I would meditate. Soon, I began to feel Swami's presence. It was a challenge to see God in my captors even under such adverse conditions. The captors began to interact more with me.

Meanwhile back at home, my wife, close friends and devotees gathered to chant the Gayatri Mantra. All these prayers, chanting and good thoughts brought about a happy and quick conclusion to the ordeal. As planned, the ransom money demanded was handed over by a courier to the kidnappers. When the kidnappers received the money, they examined the package and found that the ransom was paid in full. When I went home after my release, to my pleasant surprise, my maid informed me that she discovered a suitcase in the car with half of the ransom money. Two years later, the

kidnappers were arrested by the police. During their arrest, they stated that they had kidnapped a doctor who they suspected was a sorcerer and had "bewitched" them into believing that the courier had given them the full ransom money, while in fact they had received only half the ransom money. This was an instance of an amazing Leela of our Lord Sai and the power of prayer.

Prayer Uproots Desires from the Mind

Being a prisoner made me reflect on the meaning of this event in my life. I could see a spiritual metaphor at play by Swami. The five armed captors represented my five senses that have captured my mind. The teak trees that I had planted were the desires that I planted in my mind; and my senses held me prisoner among my desires. When you cut a teak tree, it sprouts defiantly. It becomes necessary to cut and uproot them, so that they do not sprout again. In my life, prayer has been the only weapon to control my senses and allow only good thoughts that can uproot and destroy my desires. I continue to struggle with this and I hope to have better control over my desires by the end of this life.

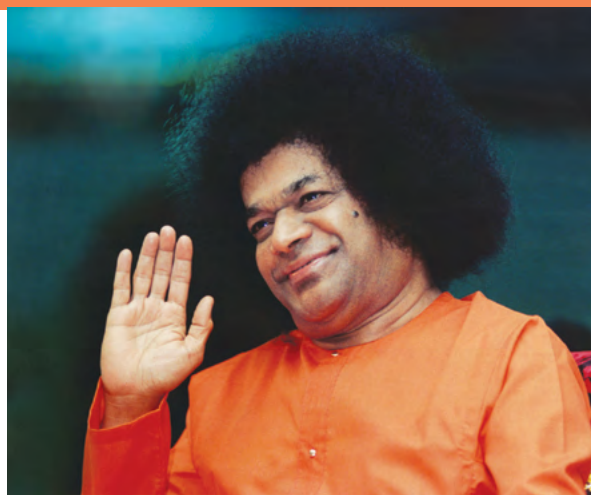
From 1984 to 2011, I travelled to Prasanthi Nilayam every year. I have had the privilege of serving God through Sathya Sai International Organisation. I have learnt patience to tolerate others and tolerate myself. My performance as a doctor has changed my vision and I believe that prayer enhances the healing effect of medicines. I feel that with Swami by my side, this life's journey, dedicated to God, will be more pleasant and all challenges will be surmounted.

– The author is Medical Director (Zone 2A) Central America, Sathya Sai International Organisation.

SWAMI HAS SAID THAT OUR mother is the first spiritual teacher – Guru, as she introduces the child first to the idea of a supreme being in a simplistic way and then hands the child over to the father, the next Guru. In my case, it was my mother who also brought Swami into my life as well as the lives of my six siblings. This led to my first visit to Prasanthi Nilayam in 1981, with my wife. In later years, Swami blessed my mother with a room in the Ashram where she stayed. Periodically, we would visit both our biological mother and our spiritual mother – Swami – in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Swami Enters My Life

We left the shores of Sri Lanka in 1972 for my postgraduate training in medicine in UK. After five years in UK, we settled down in Australia, where my mother came to live with us for two years. It was then that she



role in the Sai Centre in Canberra. My two children attended the Bal Vikas programme, where I was involved as a teacher.

In my early years in Australia, I could not get a position in the local hospitals as a neurosurgeon, a field in which I had spent more than six years in training. I took up temporary jobs as a general practitioner and emergency doctor. Meanwhile, I prayed

Dr. K. Nadanachandran

SERVING IN SATHYA SAI GLOBAL HEALTH MISSION: PERSPECTIVE OF A NEUROSURGEON

planted the seed of faith in Swami before she left to stay in Prasanthi Nilayam. We became involved in a small Sai Centre in the garage of a devotee's house with a handful of followers in 1981. As the numbers grew, the various wings of the centre emerged, and rudimentary service activities started to take root. Today, Canberra, Australia has a very dynamic Sai family. For more than 30 years, my family and I have played an active

to Swami to be given the opportunity to make the best use of my professional skills developed over many years through training in neurosurgery. He fulfilled my wish in 1980 when I was appointed a neurosurgeon in a hospital in Canberra where I had worked previously in 1978 for a year.

I had an intense desire to offer my services to help the people of northern Sri



Lanka where I was born and later worked for two years as a junior doctor, as a token of gratitude to my motherland. The civil war raging in the country, which was also the cause of our migration to Australia, made this very difficult. We participated in some of the medical camps in Prasanthi Nilayam and even took a medical team to northern Sri Lanka in 2005 for post-Tsunami relief work in healthcare.

In 1991, the Australian Sai Medical Unit was formed, and I was appointed as joint medical coordinator and a few years later as the Zone 3 Medical Coordinator of the Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO). Australia has a comprehensive, universal medical service programme. Therefore, opportunities to do active medical service within the country are very limited.

Swami says, "Show me your availability; I will give you the ability". Accordingly, the

serve in that capacity until 2012. The team included an anaesthetist and several nurses, who rendered excellent service, although none of them were SSIO members.

Establishment of Neurosurgical Unit in Fiji

In between these annual visits to Fiji, patients with life threatening conditions died if they could not access the limited government assistance available to travel overseas for treatment. Children with brain conditions needing urgent surgery suffered permanent brain damage. In view of these prevailing conditions, we were then able to arrange for a second team to visit Fiji. Fijian Airlines gave us three free air tickets to travel for six years and some local philanthropists provided different forms of support. Companies assisted us generously with equipment and medical supplies.

However, in the interest of self-sufficiency, our goal soon turned to setting up Fiji's own neurosurgical and neurological services. Everything happens by His Will in time, as ordained. We finally found a young trainee who was prepared to pursue this path of medicine. The then Minister for Health in Fiji was a visionary and paved the way for this professional to receive training at the neurosurgical unit in Canberra where I was the director of the neurosurgical unit and supervisor of training. My colleagues and the hospital also supported this effort strongly. The trainee received hands-on experience with us for two years, and a scholarship was arranged for him to gain experience at a children's hospital in Sydney for six months. Upon returning, he started the first neurosurgical unit of Fiji in 2013.

During this period, we arranged for a Fijian physician to train in neurology



Neurosurgical Services in Fiji.

opportunity came to me to offer my skills to serve another island nation in 2001. This was the country of Fiji with a population of 800,000, but with no neurosurgical services available. The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons sent annually a pro bono neurosurgical team for a fortnight to provide such services. I was asked to lead this project, and by His grace, I was able to

and a junior doctor to train in radiology in Canberra. We have continued to assist the unit by providing equipment and by regular meetings with the Minister for Health in Fiji to ensure their continued support. The particular neurosurgeon currently performs over 300 operations a year and is poised to train a second surgeon in this speciality.

Rural Sai Medical Camps in Fiji

During an interview in Kodaikanal, my wife asked Swami to allow me to work in His hospital. Swami responded, “any time”, thus giving me an opportunity to work at the neurosurgical unit in Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (SSIHMS), Whitefield. This gave me an insight into the tremendous work being performed under the leadership of Dr. Hegde, an excellent and renowned neurosurgeon, as well as the excellent facilities at the SSSIHMS provided by Swami, in His infinite compassion.

Though these opportunities were gratifying personally, I felt that we needed to widen our horizon. Dr. Dinesh Lal, a gastroenterologist in New Zealand, organised a Sai medical team to visit rural Fiji in 2016 to provide much-needed basic medical care. Dr. Gunu Naker, a senior general practitioner in Sydney and a long-standing Sai devotee and member of the medical unit, and myself both considered joining the medical team from New Zealand. He had previously organised two medical camps in an aboriginal community and also undertaken a few other projects. At that time, we did not have many doctors in the Sai family serving the needy, mainly due to lack of local opportunity for service.

Dr. Gunu Naker was appointed team leader of the healthcare team and organised our first entry into rural Fiji in 2007. From 2008, we organised an independent visit by

While the Fijian population has benefited from healthcare services rendered by the SSIO teams from Australia and New Zealand, we must remind ourselves that it is not just a professional exercise but something with far more significance. Seva is the highest Sadhana as emphasised by Swami.

the Australian team of medical volunteers and professionals. An opportunity also came to be associated with a local medical school where we could organise a teaching session over an entire day. To acquire practical knowledge, around 40 medical students would travel with us for the next five days and observe how Sai’s teachings were put into practice. In the meantime, the New Zealand Medical Team continued to visit rural Fiji. At present, they have 90 volunteers, and the local Sai family and Sai doctors also provide much needed assistance.

Swami has said, “Service should be provided where it is most needed”. He also says, “Service is the highest spiritual discipline. Prayer and meditation or knowledge of scriptures and Vedanta (holy scriptures of India), cannot help you reach the goal as quickly as service can. Service has a double effect; it extinguishes the ego and gives bliss”. Thus, we felt that we needed to move out of our comfort zone. We were aware of the poor health facilities in Vanua Levu, the second largest island of Fiji and the need for medical services. However, transport of volunteers and medical equipment and local accommodation posed a challenge. With Swami’s blessings, this project commenced in 2014 and

the association with the medical school continues till today. The healthcare team comprises about 60 volunteers, including family practitioners, specialist physicians, gynaecologists, ophthalmologists, optometrists, psychiatrists, psychologists, dentists, dental prosthetists, nurses, physiotherapists, IT support and general volunteers. All volunteers pay their own expenses, with support from the Sai community for pharmaceuticals and equipment. In 2016, a general surgeon and a urological surgeon joined the team and were able to provide much-needed services at the main local hospital. Several medical companies have provided equipment and consumables generously for this effort.

All this work involves logistics, planning and liaison with the Fijian Medical Board, the Ministry of Health and the Customs Departments in Fiji. The dedication and efficiency of the organising team, consisting of the team leader Dr. Gunu Naker, the logistics manager, Lawrence Kissun, and the IT and data manager Anurag Prasad, and the assistance of Dr. Saras Nandan, the SSIO medical director of Fiji are worthy of recognition for their selfless services.

While the government-run rural health clinics have improved substantially over the years, lack of health awareness, poor compliance by patients and socio-political issues have plagued the people of Fiji, impacting their health. Despite being a developing country, Fiji surpasses some of the developed nations in the incidence of non-communicable diseases. It has one of the highest incidences of limb amputation for diabetes in the world. The medical educators of our team are actively involved in patient education at the camps. To date,

we have organised three conferences for the local health workers and medical students on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), in response to this issue.

While the Fijian population has benefited from healthcare services rendered by the SSIO teams from Australia and New Zealand, we must remind ourselves that it is not just a professional exercise but something with far more significance. Seva is the highest Sadhana as emphasised by Swami. The volunteers, irrespective of their skills, see this as a spiritual exercise, giving them an exalted experience, particularly when receiving the words of gratitude from the patients. The loving and caring attitude shown by the volunteers, in itself, has immense therapeutic effect on the patients. It is a universal experience that love is the "currency of exchange". It is a heart-to-heart experience.

Medical students see love in action and a genuine example of compassion and altruism and take home the message of love in action, besides receiving medical knowledge and training. Many healthcare volunteers who participated in the selfless service have now qualified professionally. They related to me how they internalised the values learnt in the camps and put them into practice.

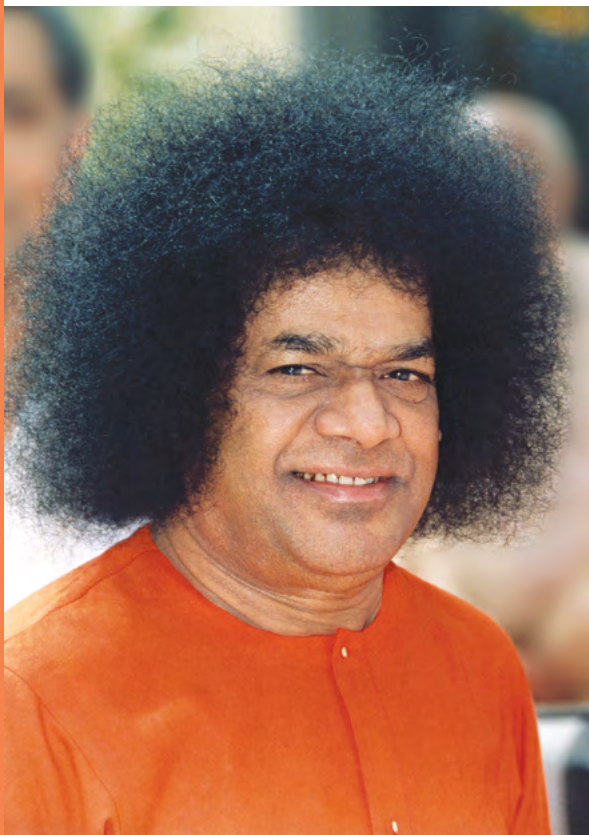
It has been a blessing and privilege to have been involved in Sai work and associated with the Sai volunteers over the years, for which I remain ever grateful to my parents and Swami. The encouragement and assistance provided by my wife for these activities is gratefully acknowledged.

– The author is a retired neurosurgeon from Australia and is a senior member of the Sathya Sai International Organisation.

Service in Sri Sathya Sai Medical Mission

Dr. Kalpalatha K. Guntupalli

AS A DEVOTEE WHO FOLLOWED Swami from a distance, a late-night call from Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman, Prasanthi Council in April 2011 was a life-changing event for me. I was requested to be part of the medical team



taking care of Swami for a week during that fateful month when He left His physical form. This was my first visit to Puttaparthi and have Baba's Darshan.

My Introduction to Swami and the Sai Mission

The events of the final few days of the Avatar in April 2011 are in the public domain and need no further elaboration. When I arrived in Puttaparthi for the first time, the mood was anything but upbeat. Nonetheless, it gave me an opportunity to experience the philosophy and culture of the Sai world – an alien world for me until then.

As I was approaching Puttaparthi, my initial impression of the place and the culture was, however, one of awe and disbelief at the impressive facilities of the Super Speciality Hospital that stares at you all of a sudden from the middle of nowhere, on a country road, like an oasis of hope in a sea of despair. More impressive than the massive building, neatly manicured grounds and the ethically appointed interiors, is the way the hospital worked. It was a seamless machine that functioned round the clock with respect and compassion for the patients, who came from all over the country.

It was not just about the financial sacrifices of the dedicated doctors who earn far less than their counterparts in the outside world. It was even more about the silent force of myriads of Seva Dal volunteers that kept the hospital spotlessly clean and navigated the patients across the depths of the hospital.

Why me? And Why Now?

I often wondered why I got introduced to Swami's Mission rather late in my life, although I had very close friends who had been in Sai fold for many years. I was aware of His teachings and His Medical Mission – but only as an uninvolved bystander.

My answer came when I came across this piece of information: in a message given to Charles Penn more than two decades ago, Swami conveyed, "Your mission has begun. Those are My words to you, My devotees. Each of you has a unique and valuable part to play in this lifetime. Only those whom I have called can serve Me". After much contemplation, I concluded that only He knows why; my duty is only to cherish the opportunity and act – at least for now.

On subsequent visits to the Ashram, I started my medical pilgrimage and completed an exploratory tour of the medical facilities both in Puttaparthi, Bengaluru and the Mobile Hospital. A small group of devotees in the USA started to develop plans to start both educational and service collaborative relationship with the medical facilities of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences. Unbeknownst to me, Dr. Kolli Chalam, Head of the Critical Care Department in the Whitefield hospital had been trying to collaborate with me for a few years – but without success. I met him during my first visit to Bengaluru and our ideas on medical education and service converged effortlessly.

My Life before April 2011

I have been visiting India, my motherland and contributing in a small way to medical education regularly for over three decades. Travelling back to India, conducting medical conferences, taking

care of patients, organising community outreach events is not new to me. I have been travelling to India every year, many times more than once a year since my migration to USA in 1974 – a small payback for the gift of education I received in India. In the USA, I have volunteered for extended periods and led teams to manage natural disasters in Houston during hurricanes and storms. Having been privileged to serve in leadership positions in US professional organisations, I have been able to organise teaching teams and develop tools for community outreach to stop tobacco epidemic in India.

Neither Puttaparthi nor Baba's Institutes were on my academic map during the three decades that elapsed after I left India. The opportunities for service seemed virtually unlimited, for those who see the divine in the underprivileged. However, I must confess that of all the activities I have undertaken and all the accolades I have received, my involvement in the Sathya Sai Medical Mission has been the most fulfilling and spiritually uplifting experience of my life. What made all the difference was the culture of the institutions built by Swami.

My Life after April 2011

After I started going to the Sathya Sai Centre in Houston, all I saw was loving, and caring people who did whatever they could for society. There was no unnecessary socialisation, gossip, solicitation or larger-than-life-egos normally seen in society. I decided to contribute whatever I could to the Medical Mission; and Swami made it possible by connecting me to the right people in the USA and in India.

In 2015, we started planning yearly Critical Care Medicine Updates for

physicians and healthcare professionals every January. The First Annual Critical Care Update held in January 2016 was a two-day course with participation from the leading Indian / US faculty. It consisted of a daylong series of didactic seminars on the first day and “hands-on” small group sessions on the second day. There were two separate parallel courses for the regional Critical Care physicians and nurses.

In 2017, besides the Second Annual Critical Care Update and Workshop in Whitefield hospital, we added another daylong CME conference at Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital (SSSGH) in Puttaparthi under the enthusiastic leadership of Dr. Vinod K. Varma, Medical Superintendent,

Puttaparthi General Hospital in the primary care update.

The January 2019 programmes to be held in Puttaparthi and Whitefield hospitals are well underway. There is no question that we learnt as much from the faculty and attendees as they did from us.

Medical Screening for Hospital Staff

Medical professionals are notorious in neglecting their health and their family's health. During our second yearly conference in January 2017, one of our Sai doctors, Dr. Sridevi Devaraj came up with an idea that perhaps we should screen the physicians, staff and their families of the Whitefield hospital. With strong encouragement from Dr. Sundaresh Dabir, Director of the

Whitefield hospital, we arranged screening blood tests a week before our arrival. The results were reviewed and those with abnormal results or needing further consultation were seen by our team of doctors. It was interesting to note that out of over 100 patients screened many had abnormalities, such as newly diagnosed diabetes, dyslipidaemias, thyroid dysfunction, anaemia and vitamin B12 deficiency. Several cases were identified for booster

Hepatitis vaccination due to low titers.

The Marvel on Wheels – the Mobile Hospital

In 2012, I had the privilege of visiting the Mobile Hospital, a unique gift of Swami. The idea was to take medical care to the doorstep of the needy – not the other way round, as is customarily done. This miracle



Delegates of Critical Care Update Conference, January 2017, SSSIHMS, Whitefield.

SSSGH. Now, the Primary care update in the General Hospital of Puttaparthi and Critical Care update in Whitefield are annual events, held every January.

In January 2018, the Third Annual Critical Care Update and Workshop in Whitefield hospital and a Second Annual Primary Care Update at the Puttaparthi General Hospital were organised. This time, we also added small hands-on group sessions to the

on wheels is so unique that I doubt that

such programme has existed elsewhere with the same fervour, for over a decade. The success of the Mobile Hospital can be attributed to more than 300 dedicated volunteer doctors, led by the innovative and dedicated efforts of the Director of the Mobile Hospital, Dr. Narasimhan. Recognising the uniqueness of this experience, we organised medical student rotations from the US medical schools, who considered this a most worthwhile experience.

Exploring Research Collaboration

The continuity of primary care delivered at the doorstep of the villagers for over a decade presents a great potential for academic scholars. In January 2017, under the leadership of Dr. Siva Sankar Sai, Director, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus and Dr. Narasimhan, Director of the Mobile Hospital, an exploratory meeting was conducted. Research leaders from India and the USA met via video conference and some exciting opportunities have been identified for further work.

In July 2017, Dr. Arun Sreekumar, Professor at Baylor College of Medicine followed up on the initiative and conducted a “Research Methodology” workshop and several other capacity building initiatives thereafter. Currently, many projects are underway after review and approval by the Ethics Committee.

Swami Blesses the Conferences!

For many of us who have not been fortunate enough to speak with and interact with Swami, He has showered us with His grace, blessings and approval through Vibhuti manifestation in the conference brochure every year!

Conclusion

The theme of these initiatives can be summarised as follows:

- Our philosophy is: “Build on each year’s success and introduce new synergistic programmes”.
- Provide what is needed: (a) Sponsor medical educational exchange for generalists, specialists, nurses; (b) Procure equipment; (c) Subscribe to journals / books; (d) Sponsor surgeries; and (e) Motivate doctors to volunteer services.
- Give what’s current through “Hands-on” workshops and interactive sessions.
- Foster Research – Network with USA and SSSIHMS researchers; set up mentoring schemes.
- Spread the word around about the best kept secret – by word of mouth, publications.
- Connect the resources, people and network with Sathya Sai Organisations.
- Continuous needs assessment – while evaluating the effectiveness of the current initiatives.
- Emphasise “Feel good vs Do good” initiatives – encourage sustainable projects and recruit volunteers to staff these projects.

What’s in the Future?

- We propose to pursue “His” work with His core philosophy firmly established in our minds.

“Where there is Faith, there is Love; Where there is Love, there is Peace; Where there is Peace, there is God; Where there is God, there is Bliss”.

– Sri Sathya Sai Baba

– The author is Professor and Programme Director, Critical Care Fellowship, Department of Medicine, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas, USA.

HEART-TO-HEART SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF A HEART DOCTOR

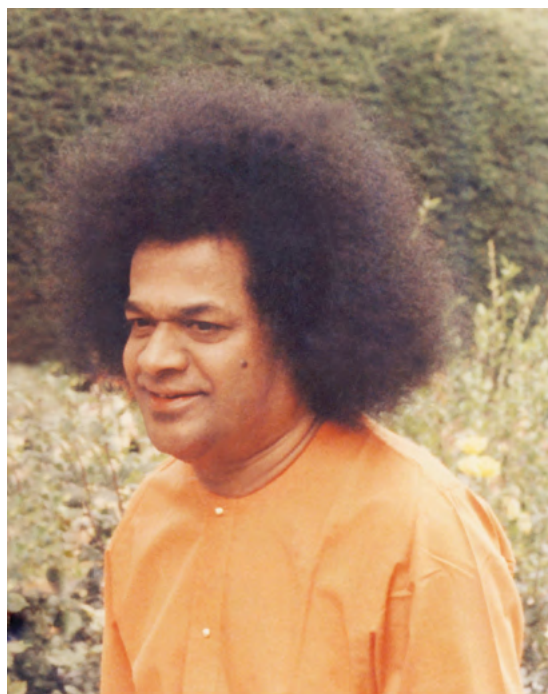
Dr. Juglans Alvarez

The first search result that appeared on the internet was this magnificent hospital in India, where cardiac surgery was offered free of charge to needy people according to the best clinical protocols, with love and compassion, in a sacred spiritual atmosphere. It was a tremendous discovery and I was excited beyond belief that something so perfect could exist on this planet!

SPEAKING OF PERSONAL experiences in a spiritual journey is a difficult task. Although I am an adult and a cardiothoracic surgeon, I am still a child, spiritually. It is a struggle for me to discuss the highlights of my profound personal experiences with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I will, however, try to share His love that I have experienced. My experiences are deeply transforming, beautiful and touching. I pray to Swami to allow me to be humble and be an instrument of His love.

I was born in south Brazil in the early 1970s, in a community strongly rooted in Christianity. Most of South America passionately follows the Christian faith. I was baptised as a Catholic, went to a Catholic school and was raised in a warm and loving family, sharing the compassionate and loving universal values prescribed by the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

Brazil is a multicultural society. Living in Brazil has allowed me to learn from many people of diverse cultures. During my childhood, the native American and African



spirituality and my Christian background opened doors for me to the universality of faiths and spirituality. This led me to the discovery of the brotherhood of man and the oneness of creation.

From this point, as a young adult, I started a spiritual journey, exploring various aspects of different religions and traditions,

and I was exposed to the many facets of the multicultural Brazilian spirituality. Simple, loving and warm-hearted are some of the words that aptly describe the characteristics of the South American people.

My First Exposure to Swami

I was happily walking along this joyous spiritual highway when I first heard of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I was 19 years old, a medical student at that time. A Brazilian devotee had returned from a visit to the Ashram and Prasanthi Nilayam and shared his impressions and miraculous experiences. India, at that time, was an imaginary place for me as this was the pre-internet era and there was no information available about Asia, especially India. What I knew about India was gleaned from books and the National Geographic magazine. I vividly remember my strong feelings from that initial introduction to Baba. I knew that saints existed and performed miracles. But, I felt that the miracles of Sathya Sai Baba were only a small part of something more sublime. It was a transformative experience, sparked by pure love and compassion. I was amazed to learn that millions of people were being exposed to ideal human values in education, healthcare and daily living for decades, in a country far away. I also marvelled that this spiritual transformation was happening in the midst of a world in turmoil, in the late 20th century. Lastly, a secret desire began to take root and grow in me to directly experience this astounding phenomenon. But India seemed to be as far away as another galaxy at that point of my life.

Many years passed, and I continued my spiritual, personal and professional journey, always eager to learn from many different

spiritual traditions. I finished medical school and pursued specialisation in the field of cardiovascular surgery. I met Alice, an endocrinologist, and we were married in 2003. My professional life was prospering, but I thought that something was missing. I felt that leading a spiritual life and practising medicine were not compatible, and I continued to search for the meaning of life.

It was late 2005 when Alice and I received wonderful news that we would soon become parents. Our daughter Isadora, after coming into our family, played a major role in bringing Baba back into our lives. After becoming a father, my desire to live a meaningful, spiritual life intensified and I began integrating spirituality into all aspects of my life, internal and external. So, as per common practice, my desire to learn led me to search the internet – I typed the words “Spirituality – Cardiac Surgery” and pressed Enter. The first search result that appeared on the internet was this magnificent hospital in India, where cardiac surgery was offered free of charge to needy people according to the best clinical protocols, with love and compassion, in a sacred spiritual atmosphere. It was a tremendous discovery and I was excited beyond belief that something so perfect could exist on this planet! As I scrolled down to get the details, there He was again – 15 years later – Sathya Sai Baba! This was one of His hospitals. I wondered if I could visit the hospital, but India was still a distant, far-away destination. Isadora was going to be born soon and I was busy with my career. I thought that maybe I could fulfil my wish to visit His hospital some day in the distant future.

Swami's ways are mysterious, and this was just the beginning. Shortly thereafter,

there were many interesting “coincidences” as people started to give me pictures, books and other media material related to Sri Sathya Sai Baba. As I was well-steeped in spiritual traditions since childhood, with an open mind and curiosity, I began trying to understand and experience Swami as the ultimate manifestation of God, a true Avatar – a Poorna Avatar. For the next three years, I read, watched and listened to everything that I came across related to Him. But, again, India was too far away for this young cardiac surgeon who had newly become a father.

In 2008, a friend visited us. A picture of Swami was in our house and she exclaimed, “I know Him! And I have some other friends here in town that went to visit Him”. I was thrilled to meet these people who then shared their beautiful experiences from nine previous visits to Swami’s Ashram. They shared glowingly their uplifting divine experiences from these visits.

Visit to Prasanthi Nilayam, 2009

Alice, my wife, was already a “candidate devotee” like me. It was early 2009, and there was a Guru Purnima trip to the Ashram being planned by the Brazilian delegation. Although I wanted to go to India, I was reluctant due to some recurring issues. It was very difficult to take 2-3 weeks off from my cardiac surgery practice and we felt that we could not take our three-year old daughter with us. But our loving Swami presented us with so many exciting, unimaginable Leelas that it became clear that we should go. Finally, as a wedding anniversary gift, Alice bought us tickets to visit the Ashram with the Brazilian delegation during Guru Purnima 2009.

During that incredible Guru Purnima trip, I was convinced that my spiritual yearning

and quest for divinity would be realised. Everything I was searching for, over so many years, was actually present in this world and right in front of me: Sri Sathya Sai Baba was God in physical form. As a group, we were blessed to sing to Swami the day before Guru Purnima. Finally, we also had the opportunity to visit Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (SSSIHMS), one of Swami’s Super Speciality Hospitals – a blessing to so many needy patients – which Swami had first revealed to me during my search on the internet.

Upon returning to Brazil, we progressively engaged in more spiritual and service activities with our Sai brothers and sisters, participating in many events. One of these events was the Pre-World Conference held in April 2010 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Just before that meeting, I had a dream where Swami talked to me about an interesting, upcoming opportunity. In October 2010, a World Conference in Cardiac Surgery would be held in Chennai. As cardiologists and cardiac surgeons from all over the world were expected to attend, I enquired with Him if it would be an excellent opportunity to showcase the impressive work being done in His Hospital in Puttaparthi. In my dream, Swami said, “You can propose that” and walked away. Upon waking up, I was unsure about next steps, but I was certain that things would happen exactly the way Swami wanted them to happen.

At the pre-World Conference meeting in April 2010 in Buenos Aires, I met Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman, Prasanthi Council. I introduced myself to him and, not citing the dream that I had with Swami, I told him that the international community of cardiologists and cardiac surgeons would be coming together at a conference in Chennai,

a few hundred miles from Puttaparthi, and it would be wonderful if they could spend a day or two in Puttaparthi and hold another conference. Dr. Reddy said that he would personally ask Swami.

Conference on Cardiovascular Diseases

Two and a half months passed, when I received an e-mail from Dr. Reddy informing me that Swami had advised that a conference on cardiovascular diseases should be organised in Puttaparthi after the Chennai conference. Swami also stressed that it should be organised quickly because time was short. We immediately began to plan and act, as we had only 15 weeks of lead time. By Swami's grace and with His blessings, the preparations went smoothly, and the conference was a resounding success. Hundreds of delegates from all continents came to Puttaparthi and Swami even personally attended some lectures at the SSSIHMS auditorium and blessed all the attendees.

On the last day of the medical conference, we went for a special Darshan with all the conference delegates, sitting right in front of Swami. In the end, just before Arati, Swami called me. I was so emotional and in bliss that I could not contain my tears. I cried in joy and gratitude for all the opportunities and blessings He had given me. As I was sobbing, He wiped my tears with His handkerchief and even gave me the handkerchief as a gift to cherish. I then cried more, with indescribable joy, emotion and energy. His divine energy was so intense that I felt physically infused with something similar to a strong electric current for many days thereafter.

After wiping my tears, Swami asked me the usual key question, "What do you



Tears of divine bliss.

want"? My answer came spontaneously from my heart. I had five requests. Although it might appear to be too many, they came straight from my heart as a continuous stream. I asked Him: 1) May I Love All, 2) May I Serve All, 3) May Swami always guide me, 4) May Swami protect me, and 5) May I be constantly aware of my Atmic essence.

Experiencing Swami's Cosmic Presence

Then Swami blessed me, and I took Padanamaskar. I cannot describe the blissful, divine experience in words, and I felt His cosmic presence as pure light (Jyoti), pure bliss (Ananda), and supreme peace (Prasanthi).

My experience of these events, beginning with the dream, the successful medical conference, and culminating with Swami's divine blessing were all clear demonstrations of His divinity. I will be forever grateful to Swami for such unique gifts and blessings.

I was fortunate to have this incredible experience in the last week of October 2010, barely six months before His Mahasamadhi. Since then, Swami has guided and blessed our family in our journey as I requested. Despite our human limitations, we are doing our very best to love all and serve all – as per His blessings.

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HEALTHCARE WITH COMPASSION AND FAITH

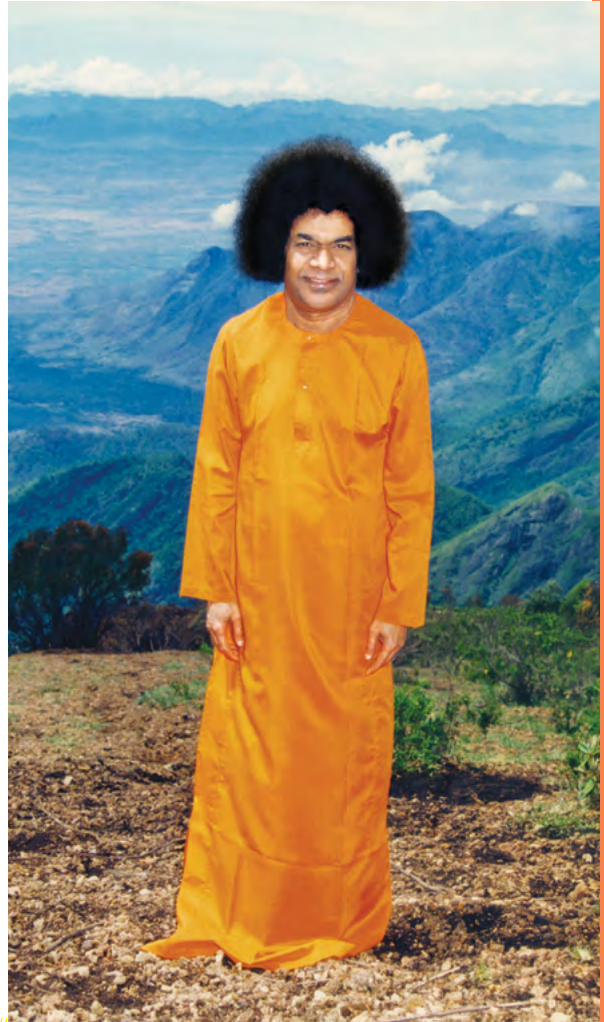
Dr. Harini Reddy

Knowing that Swami is always with me has given me courage and confidence to face the challenges I encounter. As an obstetrician-gynaecologist, I am often placed in situations where the life of the mother or baby is at grave risk. These are the times when faith in God becomes an integral part of my practice of medicine. When firm faith is associated with unselfish love, I believe that the prayers addressed to Bhagavan are bound to reach Him.

BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI Baba has been an integral part of my life since I was nine years old. I am blessed to be in a family with four generations of Sathya Sai Baba devotees, many of whom are physicians. From an early age, I learnt about Bhagavan and His teachings from my grandparents, parents and through Bal Vikas. Over the years, I not only studied many of Swami's Discourses but also became increasingly aware of His teachings on healthcare and the essential hallmarks of a good physician.

Heart-to-Heart Relationship with Swami

My introduction to Swami's teachings began early in my life during Sunday Bal Vikas classes. The transformation that Swami's teachings brought about in my parents left a deep impression on my young mind. From their personal lives to their careers as physicians, Swami guided them to walk the path of selfless service, rooted in deep-seated love for God. He became the focus of their lives as well as mine. Around this time, my grandparents decided to move to Prasanthi Nilayam. This was a blessing for my sister and me as it allowed us to spend



our grade school and college summers at the Ashram. We anxiously awaited these trips, often leaving for India on the same day our classes ended. I felt an immense peace and love in Swami's presence that drew me back to Prasanthi Nilayam every year.

It was during this time that I built my heart-to-heart relationship with Swami. At the same time, I had the good fortune of being a volunteer in the Sathya Sai General Hospital in Prasanthi Nilayam. It was then that I was first exposed to Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare in action. As with all of Swami's institutions, love is infused in every encounter with a patient and the hospitals are transformed into "temples of healing". Working in such a hospital brought about my own transformation.

During the third year of medical school, we do two-month rotations in various specialities including paediatrics, internal medicine, surgery and obstetrics/gynaecology. I enjoyed all my rotations except obstetrics/gynaecology. I showed very little interest and put minimal effort into the rotation. Meanwhile, my father was preparing to go to India, and I needed to pick a speciality in the next few months to apply for postgraduate training. If my father had the opportunity, I requested him to ask Swami what I should specialise in. My father enquired if I was sure I wanted him to ask, because I should then follow whatever Swami advised. I had faith that Swami would choose the speciality that was best for me and insisted that my father ask Him. Upon arriving at the Ashram, my father did ask Swami, and He advised me to do obstetrics/gynaecology! I was surprised but deep down I knew that this would be the best field for me since He recommended it. Swami, however, never forces us to do

anything. He has told me, "It should come from the source, not by force". A few weeks later, I received my obstetrics/gynaecology test results and I was placed number one in the class. I also received the obstetrics/gynaecology student of the year award. I was astonished. I knew these achievements were all the result of Swami's grace. Since then, after completing my residency in obstetrics/gynaecology, I have been happily working in private practice for several years. Not surprisingly, I enjoy the field and find it fulfilling to care for both mother and child and care for women throughout their lives into old age. The knowledge that Swami chose this field for me gives me extra confidence during a difficult surgery or when dealing with a challenging patient. I have begun to see that our interactions with patients are as important a component of patient health and welfare as medical treatment.

Compassion as Part of Medical Practice

With my exposure to the practice of medicine in Swami's 'Temples of Healing' and a medical speciality directed by Swami, I was prepared to bring those same ideals I witnessed at Swami's hospitals into my own practice. The patients' relationship with their physicians is an invaluable source of strength for them and their family. Compassion shown by doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals through small acts of kindness can make all the difference. However, providing compassionate care is not always easy during our hectic schedules. But where there is a will, Swami will provide a way. The Schwartz Centre for Compassionate Healthcare works to help ensure that all patients and families are treated with compassion and supports healthcare professionals in providing it. To help foster an environment that strives

to infuse compassion into every patient interaction, we recently brought Schwartz Rounds to the hospital I practise in. These rounds try to improve relationships and communications between staff and patients as well as amongst staff themselves. We are better able to make personal connections with patients and colleagues when we have greater insight into our own responses and feelings. By building and enhancing these connections we can achieve more compassionate healthcare.

We do not get many such opportunities to talk about our experiences as healthcare professionals. Schwartz Rounds gives us a regularly scheduled time to get away from the busy floors and offices to talk about the meaning and impact that caring for our patients, their families and working with staff and our colleagues, has on us. How does the work we do affect us, challenge us and impact us in the long term? How does it affect our compassion for patients and families? It is also a time to talk about factors that interfere with compassion to others and ourselves. By discussing the complexities of our relationships with our patients and staff, we can gain better insight into our feelings so that we can overcome these barriers and bring more compassion into these interactions. Since starting Schwartz Rounds, the healthcare providers report more compassion for patients and families and a better ability to cope with the emotional demands of clinical work. There is increased patient and family satisfaction and improved teamwork and communication. Undoubtedly, the compassion shown by staff can make all the difference to both the patient's experience and health as well as to the healthcare provider's welfare.



The author with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Faith and Unselfish Love Surmount all Challenges

Swami's principles of Ideal Healthcare have helped me in my interactions with patients, staff and colleagues. Swami advised me that work is worship and it should be done as an offering of love and gratitude to God. I try to go the extra step to allay the patients' fears and address their needs, remembering Swami's advice to treat our patients like family. When I start to feel stressed or annoyed, I try to remember that I am doing His work and therefore should ensure that I do it with love and dedication, leaving the results to Him.

Knowing that Swami is always with me has given me courage and confidence to face the challenges I encounter. As an obstetrician-gynaecologist, I am often placed in situations where the life of the mother or baby is at grave risk. These are the times when faith in God becomes an integral part of my practice of medicine. When firm faith is associated with unselfish love, I believe that the prayers addressed to Bhagavan are bound to reach Him. I pray to Swami as much as I can, especially during these difficult moments – and then, I am amazed

at how smoothly things go afterwards. As a result, I can address the situation in a calm manner, confident that He will help me.

If we have full faith in God, God will help us and make us fearless. Complete faith is essential if we want to experience divinity. Swami's principles of healthcare become "Ideal" when its practice is infused with faith.

On one occasion, I was both a witness and subject of the healing power of faith in the Divine. I had developed high fever with severe vomiting and diarrhoea after I returned from one of my trips to India. The doctors placed me on intravenous fluids to keep me hydrated. Various specialists saw me, and they sent blood samples to the laboratory for analysis. One morning, the doctor called to tell us that typhoid bacteria was growing in my blood sample. At that time, I did not know the full implications of this, but knew that it was not good from the look on my mother's face. What I did not know was that if I were diagnosed with typhoid fever, I would be placed in quarantine and would have to miss months of school. Right after the call, my sister and I went to the prayer room and prayed to Swami to cure my illness. We had faith in Him and faith in the power of prayers. Soon after we came out of the prayer room, my mother received another call from the laboratory. They looked at the

sample again and could not find any growth! We knew that this was Swami's blessing. I fully recovered a few days later. During our next trip to India, I thanked Swami for curing me. He acknowledged that He had helped me and reminded me that He had come to me in my dream during that time and healed me.

What I need to remember always is that every patient, every incident and every encounter in our lives happens by Divine Will. He puts us in a situation and gives us the strength and support to deal with it. We should have faith in Him – this strength will then give us the confidence to face any challenge in life. Then, we joyfully accept the work and its results with equanimity and share the resulting joy and peace with our peers and patients. This is ideal healthcare.

The manner and mien of the physician are more effective in drawing out the latent sources of strength in the patient than the most powerful drug. A prayerful atmosphere of humility and veneration will go a long way to help the cure.

– Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, September 1980

– **The author is Director of Education, South Bay Medical Centre, California, USA.**

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Our family has grown and now we have a son, Santiago who arrived in 2012. We emigrated to Canada in 2014, where I work at the Toronto General Hospital/University of Toronto as a cardiovascular surgeon, mostly performing cardiac surgery on patients with heart failure. Professionally and spiritually, I think that I have realised the dream of mindfully working, loving and

serving all patients, families and colleagues that I meet along the journey of my life.

I strongly feel the omnipresence and omniscience of Swami and I feel His Presence, as strong as ever, everywhere and inside each one of us. All are one.

– **The author is a Cardiovascular Surgeon from Toronto, Canada.**



SATHYA SAI IDEAL HEALTHCARE

A RADIOLOGIST'S PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Vijay Chundi

I have found that by practising Swami's teachings in the workplace, the workplace becomes sanctified. Our work then becomes worship – expanding divine love into our workplace and beyond is truly fulfilling.

I KNEW IN HIGH SCHOOL THAT I would become a doctor. Although my father was an engineer, it was medicine that attracted me. My role model was my aunt who lived with us in Miami, Florida, USA. She was a cancer specialist who truly loved her patients and their families. My aunt would even visit her patients at home if they were too sick to go to the hospital. I remember one such occasion when I was very young, about six or seven years of age, when she took my father and me with her to a patient's home. The patient's family welcomed us with love and I saw how much they loved and respected my aunt. It was as if my aunt was part of their family. I was touched that a physician and the medical profession itself could have such an impact on people's lives!

Mesmerising Atmosphere of Swami's Hospitals

It was in the summer of 1995 that I was introduced to Sri Sathya Sai Baba, His love and universal teachings. My family life, professional life, and most importantly,



my spiritual life have all been guided by Swami. In the years that followed, I read many spiritual books including those written



by Swami and His devotees. I was also most fortunate to have direct contact and instructions from Swami. Through this in-depth exploration of Swami's teachings and through His loving guidance, I gained a better understanding of myself and my role in this beautiful world.

I am currently a radiologist (specialised training in interventional neuroradiology) in private practice in Florida. I have also been fortunate to be able to participate in the care of patients and teach at Swami's Super Speciality Hospitals, guiding many residents during that time. I am also fortunate to serve in the Sathya Sai International Organisation and to have participated in the international medical conferences held in Anaheim, California in 2009 and in 2017. I am forever grateful to Swami for giving me a chance to serve in His Mission, doing what I love.

During my first visit to the SSSIHMS in Puttaparthi, I was mesmerised by the atmosphere of love. It did not feel like any hospital where I had training or where I worked; it felt much more like the prayer room in our home or like the Ashram. The doctors were so humble that it was hard to tell the doctors apart from the hospital staff. Although I knew that my family and professional life was going to be spent in the USA, I felt a strong urge to contribute to His Medical Mission and prayed to Swami for an opportunity to serve and use my skills to help the needy.

Swami's institutions are predicated on the practice of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare, which Swami lovingly instilled in all medical professionals who came into contact with Him. The guiding principle of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare is universal, free, compassionate and comprehensive healthcare with a focus

on prevention of disease. All of Sai teachings on Ideal Healthcare can be summed up as care delivered to the patient with love and compassion, as if that person is your mother, father, spouse, brother, sister or God Himself.

By Swami's grace, I have been fortunate to be able to participate in teaching at the SSSIHMS for nearly two decades. My experience with delivery of Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare with the SSSIHMS is an ongoing process since I participate in regular on-line teaching of the radiology residents and fellows by delivering lectures and case discussions in addition to rendering patient care with active clinical case review sessions. When I first began teaching, I would travel two or three times a year and meet the residents and staff. We would go over teaching cases and I would also give a few lectures. However, I also wished to do more including interventional neuroradiology procedures that would be of benefit, but the SSSIHMS in Puttaparthi did not have neurology or neurosurgery sub-specialities.

When SSSIHMS was opened in Whitefield, Bengaluru in 2001, both neurological and neurosurgical services were offered at the institution. These services were a great boon for the patients travelling from all over India seeking treatment for their neurological diseases. Most of these patients are poor and come long distances to the SSSIHMS seeking a cure as their local medical care is inadequate or unaffordable. Of course, they also get the most important benefit: Swami's blessings.

Opportunity to Teach at SSSIHMS

At the SSSIHMS, Whitefield, I thought my desire to offer interventional neuroradiology services was going to be realised. I met the

hospital administrators, the heads of the radiology and neurosurgery departments, and was given permission to treat a very difficult brain aneurysm case. Aneurysms are abnormal balloon-like protrusions of blood vessels due to weakening of their wall. They can rupture, and blood can spill out at a formidable rate resulting in severe brain injury or death. This young lady had multiple aneurysms in her brain and one of them ruptured causing a severe, near-fatal bleed. She survived the initial bleeding but was too sick for surgical treatment. The aneurysm still needed to be treated since she was at high risk of bleeding again; a resumption of bleeding would almost certainly have killed her. After review of the case, our team used state-of-the-art angiography equipment at SSSIHMS and successfully treated the ruptured aneurysm using a special medical device called 'GDC coils'. This type of procedure uses catheters and plugs the inside of the aneurysm with tiny platinum coils (GDC coils), thus preventing the aneurysm from bleeding again. This young lady, through Swami's grace, subsequently recovered and went back to her home. I was very happy for the opportunity to help this young lady and was hopeful that we could use this type of less invasive interventional treatment in future.

However, I still lived in the USA and could only visit India, at most, a few times a year. So, I was still unsure of how I would serve at the SSSIHMS. I wrote to Swami and also prayed for His guidance. It was in 2003 that Swami called us for an interview and I had the opportunity to ask Swami personally. In the interview room, the mystical and exciting, spiritually charged atmosphere was palpable. Swami adroitly responded to my question of how to serve by directing me



The author with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

to teach rather than perform procedures. This was a complete shift from the way I was thinking about service at that time. I thought that true medical service would be to do procedures and be directly involved in patient care; however, Swami made it clear to me that in my situation, I could best serve the SSSIHMS by teaching and training others.

I was still concerned how I could keep travelling long distances from the USA and be a useful teacher. But lo and behold, like with everything else spoken by Swami, it transpired at the appropriate time. Internet hardware and software development rapidly progressed and made it possible for me to teach online, on a regular basis. The SSSIHMS began a Radiology DNB programme in 2005 and subsequently, a regular online teaching schedule began. I am currently able to teach radiology residents and fellows (physicians in various stages of training) a couple of times a week even though I am half a world away physically. I truly feel as though I am present with the residents and faculty in Swami's institutions. The patients receive the best care that radiology has to offer, totally free of cost to them. I am grateful to be part of such a noble enterprise and I repeatedly

emphasise to the residents and fellows the importance of being available to help others in whatever way possible after training at Swami's institutions.

The residents and fellows that are trained in radiology also receive their training totally free of cost to them. In addition, they have a very high pass rate (much higher than the national rate) on their DNB examination which is given to all graduating radiology residents in India. This training would cost crores of rupees (hundreds of thousands of US dollars) in India. Most importantly, these radiologists are imbibing the ideal way to take care of patients and will practise this in their own lives, in their own way. Many residents who have graduated and are practising in other institutions have told me that they are extremely grateful for their training at the SSSIHMS and they miss the unique atmosphere of love which they experienced from their teachers, staff and patients at the SSSIHMS. These doctors are making a difference by practising Ideal Healthcare principles in their own communities. This method of disseminating the basic human values of truth, peace, love, non-violence and righteousness as they apply to medicine is how Swami spreads His message from one person to another, heart to heart, even if they are located worlds apart by sheer physical distance.

Telemedicine aids not only in teaching but also in caring for patients – there are working conferences in radiology and in most other departments at the SSSIHMS, given by specialists from all over the world. In addition, telemedicine capabilities are used to follow-up with patients and help primary care doctors from remote areas in India evaluate their local patients. This important

service helps to avoid unnecessary travel, saving the patient both time and expenses.

Practising Swami's Teachings in Workplace

One may wonder if it is possible to practise Ideal Healthcare in the so-called "real world" where corporate healthcare dominates. I try my best everyday to put into practice Swami's teachings and let my work and actions speak for themselves. Swami has said on many occasions that "Work is Worship". This should be the working Mantra for all of us. He has also said that He is always with us and if we ask Him sincerely through prayer, He will listen. I have personally experienced this power of prayer many times. Therefore, I also offer a prayer before I start my work and pray that He guide me to do my job to the best of my ability. I also try to personalise each case and avoid haste, no matter how busy the day seems. Not only must we view our work in the proper spiritual perspective, but we must also treat with love and respect all medical personnel, staff and those whom we come in contact with.

I have found that by practising Swami's teachings in the workplace, the workplace becomes sanctified. Our work then becomes worship – expanding divine love into our workplace and beyond is truly fulfilling.

"Doctors should infuse courage in the patients and speak soothingly, radiating compassion and love. While you are examining the patient, you should have smiling faces and talk to the patients sweetly."

– Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba,
6th February 1993

– The author is a Neuroradiologist in
Florida, U.S.A.



Service to Man is Service to God

Dr. Geetha Kamath

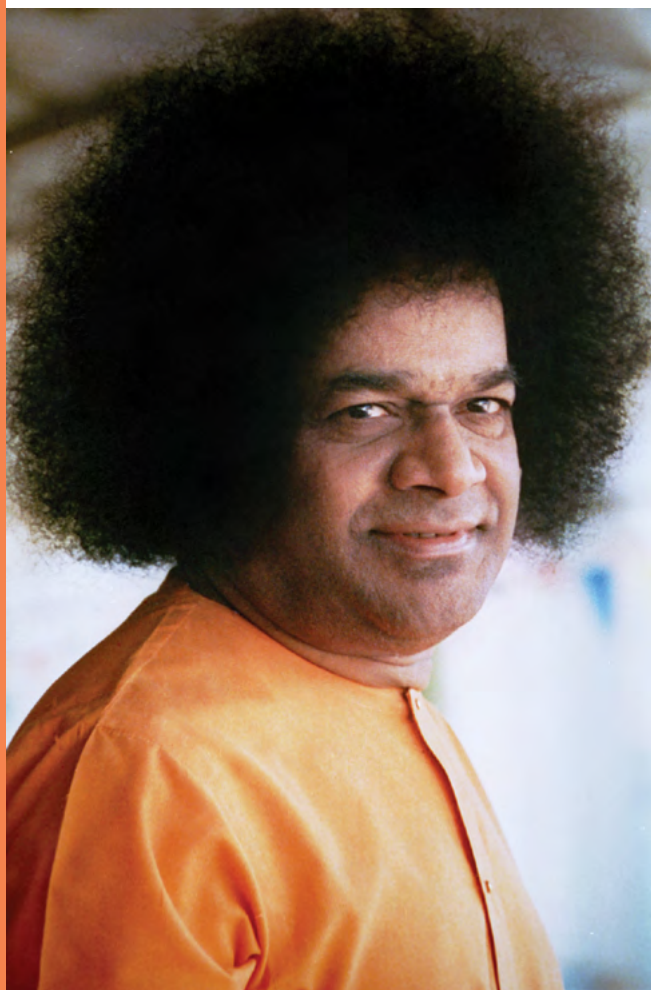
I FIRST CAME INTO Beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's fold in 1961 at the age of 10, when I visited Him with my parents and siblings. My father had already met Swami before our visit and Swami asked my father to return to Puttaparthi with his family. At the time of our visit, my father was undergoing financial hardships. I still remember vividly

Swami telling my father, "Your lifeboat is ready to sink. I will not let that happen. I will guide you across the ocean of life. Your children are my children and I will take care of them". Ever since that initial meeting, my family travelled from Mangalore (now Mangaluru) to Puttaparthi several times a year to visit our dear Lord. Swami would grace us with an interview each visit. During these interviews, Swami would give us spiritual advice and direction regarding life decisions.

After I finished high school, the time came for me to attend college. One of my uncles who is a physician encouraged me to apply to medical school. To my disbelief, I was accepted into Kasturba Medical College in Manipal. When my parents learned of my acceptance, they opposed the idea of my becoming a physician. I knew the only way to pursue my dream of becoming a doctor was to put my faith in Swami. My parents were staunch devotees of Bhagavan and so I pleaded with them to ask Swami before making a final decision. Upon our next visit to Puttaparthi, Swami answered my prayers and told my parents that I should become a physician. Swami in his infinite grace also answered my parents' prayers and was instrumental in arranging my marriage.

Witnessing the Power of Selfless Service in Medical Camps

After marriage, my husband and I came to the United States to complete



our residency training. In the late 1970s, I became involved with the International Medical Camps during Swami's Birthday celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam. These medical camps provided free medical care to thousands of patients from all over India. The opportunity to participate in these camps had a profound influence on me. It was in these camps that I witnessed the power of selfless service conducted as per our Beloved Bhagavan's teachings and guidance. These camps were later conducted twice a year during Guru Purnima and Swami's Birthday celebrations and I considered it a privilege to attend these camps in Prasanthi Nilayam annually.



Swami blessing volunteers of a Medical Camp.

in Prasanthi Nilayam. I remember trying to counsel a woman on the importance of engaging in diet and exercise to normalise her high blood pressure. It was only later that a colleague made me aware that her husband had recently passed away, resulting in significant grief and stress for the patient. Needless to say, it saddened me to know that I had not been able to provide her the counselling she so desperately needed and deserved. I prayed to Swami earnestly for His help. Not even a second passed when a nurse from Hyderabad hospital arrived who spoke fluent English and Telugu. She assisted me with translation for the remainder of the medical camp and subsequent camps. This experience and many others taught me to put my full faith in Swami and to remember that He would guide and provide for me every step of the way.



An International Medical Camp in Prasanthi Nilayam.

Despite my sincere desire to provide quality patient care, I initially struggled with the language barrier and would rely on my broken Telugu during many patient encounters at the medical camps.

After we finished our residency and fellowship training, my husband and I moved to St. Petersburg, Florida to start a medical practice in our respective specialities. Though we initially engaged in service at soup kitchens with other centre members, our dear Lord encouraged us

to incorporate our medical training into our service activities. I remember Swami telling me, "There are many people who can serve at soup kitchens, but there are only a few doctors who can ease the suffering of patients". Swami's advice during this interview prompted me to increase local service activities in the United States. With His words in my mind and heart, I became excited about the prospect of starting free medical camps in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Medical Camps in Florida

Swami's instruction resulted in the first medical screening camp for the homeless and uninsured population of St. Petersburg, Florida in 2004. With Swami's blessings and the help of the Salvation Army, the first camp took place at the St. Petersburg Salvation Army campus. From 2004 to 2008, we worked with several organisations in St. Petersburg, Florida to expand our reach to families in need. For the second camp, we worked with the Homeless Emergency Project (HEP), a non-profit organisation that provides support for homeless and low-income families. Our third medical screening camp was conducted at Harborview Centre in Clearwater, Florida. The next year, we conducted our fourth and final screening camp at the Colosseum in St. Petersburg, Florida – our largest screening camp to date. We had the honour of serving over 1,200 patients with the assistance of 352 volunteers in this regional medical camp. These camps provided services that ranged from medical check-ups to smoking cessation and anger management classes. To this day, I will never forget a young man that attended an anger management session. He returned at the completion of the camp and requested the doctor to

review the anger management session with him again, which the physician graciously obliged. As he was leaving, I asked him why he wanted to attend the session twice. The young man said that he had felt very angry and resentful towards his mother and had even considered harming her. He shared that the class had made him feel calmer and had provided him with the tools he needed to lessen his anger. He was very thankful for the camp and stated that he would not inflict any pain on his mother, hereafter.

During these early camps, we conducted exit interviews to survey the needs of our community. It became evident through these assessments that there were many unfulfilled needs in our community. Many visitors conveyed the urgent need for medical camps that offered treatment rather than medical screening. Indeed, several individuals stated that they were unable to afford treatment to decrease their suffering. It was then that I recalled Swami's prescient words, that service should relieve the suffering of the individual being served. After much introspection, I met with the medical director of the St. Petersburg Free Clinic to discuss how we could increase treatment services for our patients. With the conditional approval of the medical director, we started a monthly Saturday free clinic, with an initial three-month trial period. By Swami's grace, this clinic has continued from 2008 to the present day.

This partnership with the St. Petersburg Free Clinic has led to other opportunities to serve our community. A young woman in the local community had passed away from a dental infection that had affected her heart valves. Saddened by this fact, the medical director of the Free Clinic approached us

with the prospect of conducting dental treatment camps in the St. Petersburg community. Our Beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba provided His personal instructions and blessings to conduct these camps, the first of which was held in 2008. Through the tremendous efforts of our Sai volunteers and local dentists, we performed tooth extractions and cavity fillings for numerous patients. One such patient was a woman who had been suffering with dental pain for seven years but was unable to afford the dental insurance needed to have her tooth extracted. After receiving treatment at the camp, she expressed her gratitude and left for the local food bank so that she could give back to the community. Stories like this served as constant reminders that selfless service can inspire and motivate anyone!

In the year that followed, we conducted a dental hygiene camp and the feedback we received from our patients was overwhelmingly positive. We expanded the camp offerings to two dental hygiene and two dental treatment camps every year, thereafter. Since the inception of these speciality camps, we have been able to identify other areas of critical need in our

community, including eye and foot care. With the initiation of podiatry camps, we had the opportunity to wash the feet of our patients prior to their podiatry evaluation. Each visitor then received new socks and shoes. In collaboration with the Lion's Club, an international service organisation, we offered a range of eye care services, which included vision check, refraction, eye pressure and fundal examinations and free reading and prescription glasses. With Swami's continued blessings and the tireless efforts of countless Sai volunteers, the Sathya Sai Group of Clearwater now offers six free medical camps a year in St. Petersburg, Florida, co-sponsored by the St. Petersburg Free Clinic and the Pinellas County Health Department.

We feel Swami's love and guidance in all aspects of these camps and feel His presence in every patient we have the privilege to serve. As our dear Bhagavan says, "If you lift the hand to serve, to help, to console, to encourage another man, you are lifting it for God, for God is in every man".

– The author has won many awards for participating in a number of medical camps in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Food having too much salt or pepper is Rajasic (passion-arousing) and should be avoided; so also too much fat and starch, which are Tamasic (disposed to inactivity) in their effects on the body, should be avoided. An intake of too much food is also harmful. Simply because tasty food is available and is being offered, one is tempted to overeat. We have air all around us but we do not breathe in more than we need. The lake is full but we drink only as much as the thirst craves for. But overeating has become a social evil, fashionable habit.

– Baba

DEVOTION AND PIETY MARK DASARA CELEBRATIONS

THE SACRED festival of Dasara was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam with deep devotion and sacredness. Worship of the Divine Mother, which forms an important part of Dasara celebrations, began on 10th October 2018 with Kalasha Sthapana (placement of the sacred Kalasha) and its worship by the Mandir priest in the Bhajan Mandir. The worship of the Kalasha continued on 11th and 12th October 2018, wherein a large number of devotees came to participate.

Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna

On 13th October 2018, the Kalasha was taken to Poornachandra Auditorium in a grand procession led by Veda chanting Ritwiks and students. As the Ritwiks and students seated themselves on the Yajnasala, proceedings of the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna began in Poornachandra Auditorium. Soon two priests started the process of producing fire in the traditional manner by churning one piece of wood over the other. Meanwhile, the entire auditorium started reverberating with sacred Vedic chants by the priests and students. After receiving the blessings of the Veda Purusha, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the fire was placed in the Yajna Kunda, and four priests started offering oblations after preparatory rituals. Simultaneously,



Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna.

four priests started chanting the sacred verses of Krishna Yajur Veda, three elders started the Parayanam (study) of the sacred texts, one priest started Sahasra Lingarchana (worship of 1,000 Lingas) and another priest started performing Surya Namaskar. Worship of the sacred Kalasha, established on the right corner of the stage, was started by the priest couple. The entire auditorium was full to its seams with devotees and students who devotedly watched the proceedings of the Yajna and listened to the sacred Vedic Mantras. At 10.20 a.m. the priests and the students on the platform as also the students in the auditorium started collective Vedic chants which suffused the entire milieu with divine vibrations. Arati was offered to Bhagavan at 10.30 a.m. The performance of the Yajna continued in this sacred and sublime manner for seven days, in which a large number of devotees took part daily.

Poornahuti (final oblations) was offered in the Yajna on the holy day of Vijaya Dasami, 19th October 2018. Devotees in



Poornahuti of the Yajna in Poornachandra Auditorium.

large numbers thronged Poornachandra Auditorium from 7.00 a.m. onwards to witness the grand conclusion of the Yajna and participate in the proceedings of this sacred event which began early in the morning with sacred Vedic chants. Proceedings of Poornahuti commenced at 9.30 a.m. with the arrival of Ritwiks in Poornachandra Auditorium in a grand procession, carrying the precious Poornahuti material and Dharani (large spoon). Yajnashtala was already made ready for this solemn occasion where a silver chair was placed near the Yajna Kunda for the Veda Purusha, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to preside over this sacred event of far reaching spiritual significance. At 9.40 a.m., Poornahuti was offered in Yajna Kunda amidst loud Vedic chants and auspicious musical notes. Oblations thereafter were offered with Dharani. Collective Vedic chants by priests and students followed this. Thus concluded the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna for world peace and well-being of all. As the students started Bhajans, the priests and students went round the entire auditorium and sprinkled Tirtham (sacred Kalasha water) on all the devotees. The proceedings came to a close with Arati at 10.40 a.m.

Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha

While the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna commenced in Poornachandra Auditorium on the morning of 13th October 2018, the proceedings of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha were held in Sai Kulwant Hall in the evening.

The speaker of the first session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha was Sri Sai Shyam Sharma, a faculty member of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of the Institute, who deliberated on the topic “Daiva Preeti Papa Bheeti” (love for God, fear of sin) and observed that man could get rid of his evil tendencies only when he developed love for God and thus free himself from sin. Dr. Anand Kumar Krishnamoorthy, a faculty member of Brindavan Campus, was the speaker on 14th October 2018. Speaking on the topic “Compassion of the Divine Mother”, the speaker narrated his personal experiences with Bhagavan and stated that purity of heart was most essential to install the compassionate Lord in one’s heart.

The speaker on 15th October 2018 was an erudite Telugu scholar and Registrar of Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, Prof. G.S.R. Krishnamoorthy who spoke on the topic “Parallel between Ram Charita and Sai Charita”. Giving examples from the Ramayana and life story of Lord Sai, the learned speaker emphasised how both the Avatars protected Dharma and established it on firm footing in the world. In the 4th session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha held on 16th October 2018, a faculty member of Anantapur Campus,

Dr. Ms. Sharada Subramaniam was the speaker who observed that the worship of the Divine Mother in three forms of Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati in the nine days of Navaratri signified man's three powers, namely, Kriya Shakti (power of action), Ichchha Shakti (power of aspiration) and Jnana Shakti (power of knowledge) which should be used in the sacred way to attain spiritual advancement. Sri Sanjay Sahni, the Controller of Examinations of the Institute, was the speaker on 17th October 2018, who narrated revealing incidents from the lives of Shirdi Sai Baba and Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to showcase the divine glory of these two Avatars.

The seventh and final session of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha held on 19th October 2018 featured a scholarly talk by Prof. Siva Sankar Sai, Director, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus of the Institute who narrated some of his experiences with Bhagavan and emphasised that man should transform his work into worship and understand that spiritual life was not different from professional life as ordained by Bhagavan.

Divine Discourses

Devotees were blessed with Bhagavan's Divine Discourses during the course of the deliberations of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha. Aired on the public address system, these illuminating and inspiring Discourses formed the quintessence of Vedic wisdom and Indian culture. In His Discourses, Bhagavan emphasised that the Vedas impart the vision of divinity to those who understand the meaning and put their teachings into practice. Bhagavan exhorted the devotees to develop selflessness and self-sacrifice to

attain bliss. Deploing the selfishness of man, Bhagavan stated that people today were full of selfishness even when they prayed to God. Purity of heart, Bhagavan said, was the essence of the Vedas. Man, He said, should turn his mind inward and attain the inner precious gems of wisdom. He cautioned the devotees to shed their infatuation for the worldly power and wealth. Immortality could be attained by sacrifice, not by amassing worldly riches, Bhagavan said.

Music and Cultural Programmes

On the opening day of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, 13th October 2018,



Musical offering by the students of Muddenahalli Campus.

the students of Muddenahalli Campus of the Institute made a sublime and elevating musical offering which included a song dedicated to the Divine Mother, another song dedicated to Mother Earth and a musical ensemble. They concluded their presentation with lively rendition of "Mahishasura Mardini Stotra". On 14th October, the students of Brindavan Campus made a sterling musical offering. Beginning their programme with the invocatory chants dedicated to Mother Saraswati, they beautifully rendered "Parvati Vallabhashtakam Stotra" and followed it with a composition on the story



Brindavan Campus students offering a well-knit musical presentation.

of the Ramayana which was accompanied by beautiful illustrations on the screen. An equally enrapturing musical presentation was made by the students of Anantapur Campus on 16th October 2018. Beginning



An enrapturing musical presentation by the students of Anantapur Campus.

their presentation with a song dedicated to the Divine Mother, they enthralled the audience with absorbing songs which concluded with the famous song “Bhakta Jana Vatsale Yei Ho Vitthale” (Lord Vitthala loves his devotees). On 17th October 2018,



Prasanthi Dance Group portrayed the life of Shirdi Sai Baba in Burra Katha style.

Prasanthi Dance Group comprising students of Sai educational institutions presented an array of thrilling dances to portray the life story of Shirdi Sai Baba in Burra Katha style. The uniqueness of this programme entitled “Devudu Cheppina Katha” (His story as narrated by Him) was that songs, dialogues and narrations were all done live. On the penultimate day of Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, 18th October 2018, an engrossing programme of poets meet entitled “Kavana Vijayam” (poetic adoration)



Poets from Andhra Pradesh offered their adorations to Bhagavan in the form of ornately composed poems.

was organised in which ten renowned Telugu poets from Andhra Pradesh offered poetic adoration to Lord Sai in their powerful poetic compositions which were specially composed by them for this important event. The poets who took part in the poets meet were: Sri Gandluri Dattatreya Sarma, Sri Payasam Puli Ranga Reddy, Sri Eluru Yenganna, Sri Elamarthy Ramanaiah, Sri K.V. Mahidhara Rao, Sri Karanam Madhusudhan Rao, Sri M. Suryanarayana Moorthy, Sri G. Ankaiah, Dr. J. Shyama Sundara Shastri and Sri V.S.R. Moorthy, who moderated the event.

continued on cover page III...

CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

PILGRIMAGE OF DEVOTEES FROM UTTAR PRADESH AND UTTARAKHAND

SRI SATHYA SAI SEVA Organisation of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand organised a pilgrimage of its devotees to Prasanthi Nilayam from 21st to 23rd September 2018 and presented music and cultural programmes. On 22nd September 2018, the Sai Organisation organised a music programme, wherein a noted singer Ms. Anurita Rai offered a bouquet of devotional songs which included “Ghanashyama Muraliwala” (Krishna who plays on flute), “Sai Naam Bolo” (chant the Name of Sai), “Sri Krishna Govinda Hare Murare” (Sri Krishna, the annihilator of the demon Mura). On 23rd September 2018, the Sai Organisation of these States organised a “Sundarakanda Parayanam” (recitation of Sundarakanda from the Ramayana) in Poornachandra Auditorium in which a large number of devotees came to take part.

PEETAMBARADHARI MURARI: A SHORT PLAY

This short play was beautifully enacted by the students of Baba Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu as a part of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini programme on 1st October 2018. The drama showcased the divine glory of child Krishna when He humbled the pride of Lord Indra and lifted the Govardhan mountain to save the residents



*A scene from the play
“Peetambaradhari Murari”.*

of Gokul from Indra’s wrath. The Bhajans that followed were also led by these students.

SAI SANNIDHI DAY

On 2nd October 2018, Sai Sannidhi group, a forum of alumni employed in various Sai institutions, offered their love and gratitude to Bhagavan by presenting a programme of devotional songs interspersed with narration of inspiring incidents depicting divine memories of their



*Former students of Bhagavan working in
various institutions presenting a programme
of devotional songs.*

proximity with Bhagavan in the programme entitled “Enlightened Inner Views in Group Interviews”. Commencing the proceedings at 4.30 p.m. Sri Sanjay Sahni, Controller of

Examinations of the Institute captured the essence of the forum called Sai Sannidhi defining it as “God lives with them and they live with God”. Narrating some of his personal experiences with Bhagavan, Sri Sahni stated that the memories of these golden moments with Swami have to be cherished for life. This was followed by melodious songs interspersed with short speeches of alumni. The singers rendered three evergreen songs which included “Parthiswara Parameswara Prema Mandira” (Oh the Lord of Parthi, the personification of love), “Dandal Ayya Dandal Ayya Koti Dandalu” (millions of salutations to You, oh Lord) and “Shirdi Wale Sai Baba Aaya Hai Tere Dar Pe Sawali.” (Oh, Lord of Shirdi, we come to you to beseech your grace).

PILGRIMAGE OF DEVOTEES FROM CHITTOOR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

More than 3,000 devotees came on a pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam from Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh and presented a galaxy of music and cultural programmes on 6th and 7th October 2018. On the morning of 6th October 2018, a group of devotees from Kuppam made a devout musical offering, surcharging the entire milieu with devotional fervour. The beautiful songs rendered by the singers included “Sri Ganesha Sivuni Kumara” (Ganesh, the son of Lord Siva), “Choodavegaraaraiyya Puttaparthini” (come at once to see Puttaparthi), “Teliyaga Tarama Narulu Kanugona Vasama”? (Is it possible for mortals to understand and comprehend Bhagavan’s glory?). The morning programme in Sai

Kulwant Hall concluded with Bhajans by Sai Youth followed by Arati.

At 10.30 a.m. commenced “Srinivasa Kalyanam”, an event of far reaching



Srinivasa Kalyanam was conducted by TTD in Poornachandra Auditorium.

spiritual significance for the uplift of mankind. The programme was conducted in Poornachandra Auditorium with traditional sanctity by the priests from Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, and was witnessed by a huge concourse of devotees. After the Puja of idols amidst chanting of sacred Mantras, ceremonies of Raksha Bandhan, exchange of garlands, Mangal Sutra, etc., were conducted as per scriptural injunctions. In the evening, Sai Youth of Chittoor district presented Sangeeta Vibhavari (music programme) which included devotional songs: “Jaya



Devotional music presentation by Sai Youth of Chittoor district.

Jaya Shubhakara Vinayaka” (Oh Vinayaka, the bestower of all auspiciousness), “Siva Siva Sankara Bhaktava Sankara” (Siva the redeemer of devotees), “Govinda Srita Gokula Vrinda” followed by Bhajans led by Sai Youth of this district.

On 7th October 2018, Bal Vikas children and Sai Youth of this district



A dance sequence from the drama “Abhayadai Sathya Sai”.

presented a dance drama “Abhayadai Sathya Sai” (Sai who grants freedom from fear) which beautifully depicted the Leelas of Bhagavan and showcased His Divine glory.

After the drama, sewing machines, bicycles and other useful items were distributed to beneficiaries by the Sai Organisation of Chittoor district.

NAVA VIDHA BHAKTI

The students of Sri Sathya Sai Gurukulam, Rajamahendravaram presented a dance drama “Nava Vidha Bhakti” (nine paths of devotion) on 11th October 2018. Depicting the story of the drama through the innovative medium of mime, supported by brilliant dances of children, the students made a sublime impact on the audience by their superb acting. The drama featured the great devotees of God like Parikshit, Prahlada, Hanuman, etc., who attained exalted



A scene from the dance drama “Nava Vidha Bhakti” by the students of Sri Sathya Sai Gurukulam, Rajamahendravaram.

state through the nine paths of devotion namely, Sravanam (listening), Kirtanam (singing), Vishnusmaranam (contemplating on Vishnu), Padasevanam (serving His Lotus Feet), Vandanam (salutation), Archanam (worship), Dasyam (servitude), Sneham (friendship), Atmanivedanam (self-surrender).

PILGRIMAGE OF DEVOTEES FROM NAMAKKAL DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

A group of devotees came from Namakkal district of Tamil Nadu on a three-day pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam from 12th to 14th October 2018 to bask in the sacred ambience of this abode of peace. On 12th October 2018, they organised an instrumental music programme which was offered by a renowned saxophone artiste Sri Jaya Kumar and party who rendered devotional songs and Bhajans on saxophone which included “Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam” “Janani Janani Sathya Sai Shubha Janani”, “Govinda Krishna Jai Gopala Krishna Jai”, “Brahmamokkate Para Brahmamokkate” (God is one).

AVATAR DECLARATION DAY

Avatar Declaration Day was celebrated with piety and enthusiasm at Prasanthi Nilayam on 20th October 2018. On this

occasion, Daughters of Mother Sai, a forum of Anantapur Campus alumnae of the Institute, organised music and cultural programmes both in the morning and evening.

The programme in the morning began with auspicious notes of Nadaswaram, rendered by a group of alumnae. This was followed by recitation of Ashtottara Shata Namavali (108 Names of Bhagavan) by the entire group while relevant visuals were depicted on the screen which included young Sathya making the words “Sai Baba” by spreading jasmine flowers



A devotional music presentation by the former students of Anantapur Campus.

to declare who He was, as also the singing of first Bhajan by Bhagavan in the garden of Excise Inspector Anjaneyulu “Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam”. A devotional music presentation followed this, wherein the alumnae offered their love and gratitude to their Mother Sai. Some of the songs rendered were: “Pavana Shuba Charita” (Your story is most sacred and auspicious), “Naa Dehame Nee Devalam” (my body is Your temple), Sai Naamame Madhuram” (Sai’s Name is sweet). Bhajans followed next which were also led by the alumnae.

The programme in the evening began with an enrapturing presentation of band music. A well-planned cultural programme

followed this which portrayed the glory of Sai Avatar. This included visuals on the screen about Bhagavan’s immortal words of declaration of His Avatarhood, interviews of some old devotees and devotional songs which included “Tum Aasha Viswas Hamare” (You are our hope and faith), “Sainath Tere Hazaron Haath” (Lord Sai has thousands of hands), “Varade Varade Varade Veena Vadini Varade” (Oh goddess Saraswati, grant your grace).

The programme concluded with a video clip of Bhagavan’s Divine Discourse, in which He narrated the momentous events of His leaving school at Uravakonda, coming to Puttaparthi and development of Prasanthi Nilayam into a world centre. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan “Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin”.

PILGRIMAGE OF DEVOTEES FROM TIRUPUR DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

More than 700 devotees came to Prasanthi Nilayam from Tirupur district of Tamil Nadu on a pilgrimage and presented music and cultural programmes as part of their pilgrimage. On 21st October 2018, Bal Vikas children of Tirupur district



“Andal Vaibhavam”, a dance drama portraying the life story of Andal, a great devotee of the Lord.

presented a dance drama entitled “Andal Vaibhavam” (the glory of Andal), portraying the illustrious life story of this great devotee of Lord Ranganatha. Embellished with thrilling dances of the children, the drama depicted how this great devotee of the Lord used to adorn herself with the garland before it was offered to the Lord and how the Lord finally accepted her as His true devotee in marriage.

63RD ANNIVERSARY OF SRI SATHYA SAI GENERAL HOSPITAL

63rd Anniversary of Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital was celebrated on 21st October 2018. The programme began with an informative talk supported with statistics about the expansion of the services of the hospital by Air Vice Marshal (retd.) Dr.

V.K. Varma, Medical Superintendent of the hospital. He heals, He treats, concluded Dr. Varma referring to Bhagavan as the Divine doctor. This was followed by a musical presentation entitled “SAI: Service, Adoration, Illumination”, by the staff of the hospital who rendered melodious songs and Stotras (praise song) which included “Sayeeswara Nee Padumula Sannidhini” (Lord Sai, we want the proximity of Your Lotus Feet), “Vaidyanathashtakam” and “Niravanashatakam”. The musical offering was interspersed with beautiful commentary.

The concluding item of the programme was an illuminating Discourse of Bhagavan, in which He elucidated that all the limbs of human body functioned with Divine power and should be put to sacred use. He advised the doctors to treat the patient and not just the disease.

...continued from page 102

An instrumental music offering by noted violinist Sri Embar S. Kannan and his team of fellow musicians marked the conclusion of these enrapturing music and cultural programmes. The musicians enthralled the devotees with a number of instrumental pieces for nearly one and a half hours. The music pieces included “Bhasma Bhushitanga Sai” (Sai whose body is adorned with Vibhuti) and Mahishasura Mardini Stotra. The day’s proceedings concluded with Bhajans and Arati.

Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva: Sustainable Development of Villages

A new and innovative form of Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva was started by Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust in collaboration with Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning as part of Dasara celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam. To begin with, the students and staff of all the four campuses



Sustainable development of villages.

of the Institute at Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan, Muddenahalli and Anantapur adopted three surrounding villages each around their campuses with the objective of all-round development of the villages to make them self-sufficient and vibrant with spiritual atmosphere.

About Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust Publications Division (SSSSTPD)

On 1st January, 2009, Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust (SSSST) commenced operations with four divisions; the Bhakta Sahayak divisions (one in Prasanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi and another in Brindavan, Bangalore), the Publications division, and the Media division.

The Publications Division (SSSSTPD) caters to:

- 1) The publication and distribution of spiritual, religious, and educational Sai Literature and the production and distribution of audio and visual multimedia, photographs, calendars, and diaries for the benefit of visiting pilgrims and devotees all over the world. All the literature and publications are based on the teachings, philosophy, message, and values of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.
- 2) The publication and distribution of Bhagavan Baba's monthly spiritual journal - Sanathana Sarathi - in English and Telugu languages. Since 2011, e-version of the magazine is also released simultaneously and is available in the popular Interactive PDF format on www.sanathanasarathi.org.
- 3) Maintaining a reporting channel www.theprasanthireporter.org, which covers all the major activities taking place in Prasanthi Nilayam, and publishing an e-newsletter 'Sai Spiritual Showers' - for free distribution.
- 4) Providing library and Reading room for visiting devotees, with a very large collection of books written by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and books on Bhagavan besides various spiritual and religious books.

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*Instrumental music concert by
Sri Embar S. Kannan.*



*Presentation of band music by
former students of Anantapur
campus.*



*Instrumental music programme
by Sri Jaya Kumar and party.*

My Life is My Message

You are God yourself. God is the eternal resident of your heart. Therefore, there is nothing greater than your heart in this world. You should love everyone and hate none. Others may hate you but you should not hate anyone. That is what I demonstrate in My life. *My Life is My Message*. Some people may hate and criticise Me, but I will not hate or criticise anyone. When you practise this principle, you can also attain Divinity that Sai Baba is.

– Baba

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