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*"Some people are harsh by their nature.
Even when they sit for Bhajan, they
do not leave their anger. They keep on
clapping, uttering peace, peace even
while thinking angrily about someone.
What is the use of chanting peace,
peace with anger? How can they
expect to get peace?"*



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Forthcoming Festivals at Prasanthi Nilayam



- 24th - 30th September Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna**
11th November 6 p.m.
to 12th November 6 p.m ... Global Akhanda Bhajan
18th November Rathotsavam
19th November Ladies Day
20th - 21st November First International Veda Conference
22nd November 36th Convocation of
Sri Sathya Sai Institute
of Higher Learning
23rd November 92nd Birthday of
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
25th December Christmas

AVATAR VANI

TREAD THE PATH OF LOVE TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE

Forbearance is truth, forbearance is righteousness, forbearance is the teaching of the Vedas, forbearance is non-violence, forbearance is sacrifice, forbearance confers happiness and heavenly bliss. In fact, it is everything in all the worlds.

(Telugu Poem)

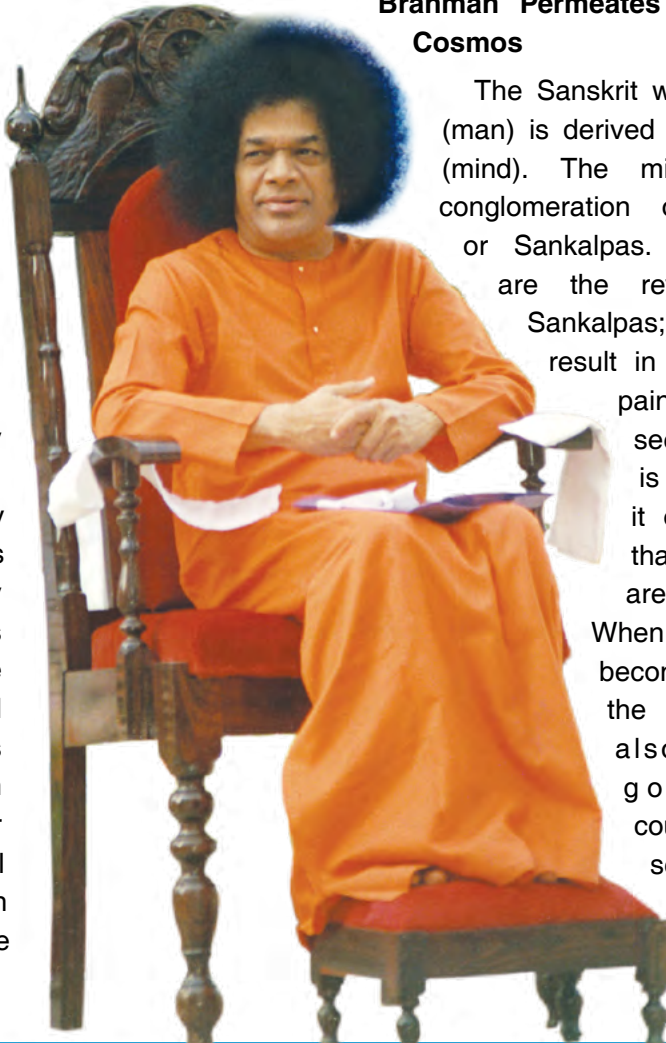
Like fire in the firewood, oil in a til seed, Atma is all-pervading. It is the word of Sai that stands for truth.

(Telugu Poem)

DO YOUR DUTY WITH DIVINE FEELINGS

Embodiments of Love

HUMAN LIFE is very noble and exalted; it is filled with the fragrance of virtues. A country does not signify a piece of land. It is the people who constitute a country. When people get transformed, the country will be transformed. Progress of the country involves the progress of its people. Worldly and scientific progress does not constitute real progress. Real progress also does not depend upon economic progress or social changes. Real progress depends on the transformation of the mind of man.



Brahman Permeates the Entire Cosmos

The Sanskrit word Manishi (man) is derived from Manas (mind). The mind is the conglomeration of thoughts or Sankalpas. All actions are the reflections of Sankalpas; and they result in pleasure or pain. When we see the country is not good, it only reflects that its people are not good. When its people become good, the country will also become good. The country is not separate from its people. But one individual

does not connote society; one tree cannot be reckoned as forest; a single house does not constitute a village. Only a group of trees make a forest, a group of houses make a village and a group of people make society.

Since ancient times, the Bharatiyas have been denoting the universe by the name Brahmanda.

Brahma is the all-pervasive Divinity, Anda means a sphere similar to an iron ball. When the iron ball is heated on fire, the heat does not remain in some corner of the ball; it spreads all over the ball. Similarly, Brahman is immanent in the entire cosmos, which is conceived in the shape of an egg. This is the meaning of Brahmanda. And Brahman is present within and without everything, right from a speck of dust to a gigantic star.

This truth can be realised only by a human being. Therefore, human life has special significance. It is said, *Karmanubandheeni Manushya Loke* (man in the world is bound by action). Also it is said, *Nara Janmam Uttamam* (human birth is the noblest of all). Its validity can be established only when man realises the fact *Ekatma Sarva Bhutantaratma* (one Atma dwells in all beings).

The five faculties known as Sabda, Sparsha, Rupa, Rasa, Gandha (hearing, touch, sight, taste, smell) are common to all beings, including man. Also the concentric

Man is attempting to reach moon even while harbouring hatred towards others. This type of attempt can never bring peace to the world. First man should have peace in his mind. Then only will there be peace in the world. How can there be peace in the world when people shout peace peace, keeping atom bomb in their hand? Peace can prevail only when there is mental transformation in human beings.

sheaths of the body, which are known as Annamaya Kosha (food sheath), Pranamaya Kosha (life sheath), Manomaya Kosha (mental sheath) and Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath) are common to all beings. But the sheath known as Vijnanamaya Kosha (wisdom sheath) is special to man alone. Because of this Buddhi or

intellect, human life is considered very sacred.

Divinity as Bhur Bhuvah Suvah is Present in Man

The Gayatri Mantra conveys the truth that all the three worlds – Bhur (materialisation - body), Bhuvah, (vibration, Prana - life principle), Suvah, (Prajnanam, radiation - Atma) are present in man. So, God is present in man in three forms. Bhur is the material form or the body which by itself is Jada or inert. Bhuvah is the life-force or vibration that causes the body to move. Suvah is the radiation or inner power of the Atma which causes vibration. So, divinity in the form of materialisation, vibration and radiation is present in man.

Vibration is caused by the intake of food; and so food is regarded as God – Annam Brahma. But without the impact of radiation from the Atma, there can be no vibration. Radiation is present in man as awareness or Prajnana. *Prajnanam Brahma* (Brahman is Supreme Consciousness). In Vedanta,

Brahman is also called conscience. So, God as conscience is present in all. Vibration and materialisation are His derivative forms which sustain the body. Human body is made up of matter, materialisation. It is akin to a machine. Howsoever costly the machine may be, it cannot work without electric current. Vibration is like the main switch. The divine power of radiation is the electric current which makes the inert machine move. A piece of iron is inert. It has no legs to move and no wings to fly. But when a magnet is placed in its vicinity, the iron piece moves towards the magnet. What is that which makes the iron piece move? It is the power of radiation. The radiation spreads vibration. Thus, all the three forms of Divinity – Bhur, Bhuvah and Suvah are present within man.

The next aspect of Gayatri, “Tat Savitur Varenyam” is an invocation to radiant Divinity. ‘Tat’ means ‘That’, the very form of Truth; Savitur mean radiant Divinity. ‘Varenyam’ means most auspicious and venerable. The aspirants then express their resolve to meditate on that effulgent form of Divinity in the words “Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi”. Dheemahi means meditate.

The Vedas Propound the Unity of Mankind

The Gayatri Mantra concludes with the prayer, “Dhiyo Yo Na Prachodayat” – May that Divine radiation drive our intellects in the right direction! Dhi means intellect. Divinity is always invoked in the sense of ‘Nah’ which means ‘we’. Unfortunately, in present times, people are not displaying this sense of unity or oneness. This type of collective concept has been conveyed by all the Vedas, Sastras, epics and Puranas, which is being ignored by the present generation. There has never been a sense of I in any

of these texts of prayer. Selfishness is on the rise. It is the selfishness of man that is creating differences in society. A fish is better than a selfish man. People should realise that individual cannot survive by ignoring society.

In a house there lived a cat, a rat and a hen. One day, the cat killed the rat. Seeing this, the owner of the house felt happy because the menace of the rat was eliminated. The next day, the same cat killed the hen. This time, the owner became very furious. What was the reason for this divergent attitude? The master of the house nurtured a feeling of attachment towards the hen and animosity towards the rat.

Once there was a train accident. A person watched this on the TV. He was immersed in great worry because one of his close relatives was supposed to be travelling in that train. In panic, he rushed to the spot of the accident. When he found his relative safe, he was relieved of the worry and he started collecting statistics pertaining to train accident. See, the person who was greatly worried a moment ago was now engaged in collecting information about the accident. One is worried when one’s own people are involved, but one’s attitude changes altogether when others are involved. This reflects the narrow feelings of man. A person who walks on the path of Dharma will not observe such differences. The Vedas say, *Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah* (if you protect Dharma, you will be protected by Dharma).

Good or Bad Depends on Man’s Feelings

Everything depends on our feelings. It is said, *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati* (as are the feelings, so is the result). The mirror has the quality of reflecting everything that is placed



in front of it. When you make a salute, the mirror also salutes. When you make an angry face in front of it, the mirror reflects the angry face. Similarly, Nature has the quality of reaction, reflection and resound.

Once a young cowherd took his herd of cattle for grazing to a mountainous region. To pass his time, he started singing a song there. He heard the resound of his song which

find anyone anywhere. Thinking that there was someone who was his enemy and was teasing him without being seen, he came back home with his herd of cattle.

On reaching home, he told his mother, "Ammal! There is someone who is teasing me and making me angry. He insults me by mimicking my voice and by singing the song sung by me. When I searched for him, I did not find anybody". The next day,

The moon shines brilliantly. If you want to see the shining moon, you do not need a torchlight, a hurricane lamp or a petromax lamp. In the moonlight itself, you can see the moon. You do not need other lights to see it. To see the form of love, you do not need anything else except love. The light of love will help you to see the form of love. You can see God who is the embodiment of love with the light of love.



came from somewhere. The young man had no knowledge of the echo. Therefore, he felt perturbed and said to himself, "Who is that who is mimicking my voice and singing the song sung by me"! He shouted loudly, "Who is there? Hey! Who are you"? He heard his own words again coming from somewhere, "Who is there? Hey! Who are you"? Then the young man said, "Tell your name". And he heard the same words. At this, he became angry and shouted, "Shut up". But again he heard back, "Shut up". The young man then said, "I will catch hold of you and beat you". But the same words came back to him once again. The cowherd searched for the person who was mimicking his words but could not

the cowherd's mother went with him to the mountainous region and understood the entire situation. She was a wise woman and made his son understand the reality. She said to him, "Dear son! There is nobody else who is abusing or insulting you. It is the echo of your own voice that you are hearing".

In whatever way you speak and conduct yourself, you experience the same in your life. Therefore, do not hate or harm anybody. Both happiness and sorrow, good and bad exist in this world. You yourself are the cause of what you experience. Understand this truth. People should develop good thoughts, speak good words and do good deeds. Then they will get everything good in life.



*See no evil, see what is good;
Hear no evil, hear what is good;
Speak no evil, speak what is good;
Think no evil, think what is good;
Do no evil, do what is good;
This is the way to God.*

You Can See God with the Light of Love

God is in everyone. Serve all. The best way to love God is to love all, serve all. Get away from bad qualities. You say, "I want Moksha (liberation), I want Sakshatkara (divine vision)" without understanding their meaning. What do you mean by liberation? Without knowing the meaning of liberation, you say, "I want liberation". First know clearly what you want. When you say, "I want Moksha", what do you mean by it? Understand it. What is this Moksha? Moha Kshaya is Moksha (removal of attachment is liberation). It is not something that you can find in an air-conditioned room. Eradication of attachment is liberation.

You say, "I want peace". Where is peace? It is within you. Where do you search for it? Where do you get it? Nowhere! Keeping the handkerchief in your hand, if you search for it hither and thither, you cannot get it. You look at your hand, then you can get it. So, all that you desire is within you.

Whatever you do will come back to you as reaction, reflection and resound. Out of narrow mind you begin to say, "God is testing me. Someone is harming me. Someone is punishing me". God will never punish. You are punishing yourself. Your thoughts come to you as reflection. Your worries also come to you as reflection. What is the shape of worry? It is mentally created fear. You have created it yourself. God does not give. God is eternal truth, embodiment

of love. To experience the love of God, you should tread the path of love.

The moon shines brilliantly. If you want to see the shining moon, you do not need a torchlight, a hurricane lamp or a petromax lamp. In the moonlight itself, you can see the moon. You do not need other lights to see it. To see the form of love, you do not need anything else except love. The light of love will help you to see the form of love. You can see God who is the embodiment of love with the light of love. A diamond is cut by diamond only, nothing else. The natural quality in everyone is love. Whether one is a theist, atheist, atheistic-theist, theistic-atheist, a pauper, a millionaire or a beggar, love is common in all. A recluse may renounce everything, but he cannot renounce love. What is the reason? The reason is that love is God. Live in love. The Gopikas pleaded with Krishna:

*Oh Krishna, play Your sweet flute and
sow the seeds of love in the desert of
loveless hearts.*

*Let the rain of love fall on earth and
make the rivers of love flow.*

(Telugu Song)

Our body is like a flute, which has nine holes. A devotee should turn himself totally humble or hollow so as to gain the proximity of Krishna. The Lord then turns this hollow body into a holy instrument, filling it with His breath of love. A Gopika sought to know from the flute, "Oh the most blessed flute, won't you tell me the secret behind your proximity with Krishna? He never keeps you away from Him. He takes you closer to His lips and blows His breath. Even when busy, He tucks you in His waistband. Oh flute, please tell me the secret so that I can emulate you to gain Krishna's closeness". Krishna decided to reveal the truth to the Gopikas. One day, when the Gopika was



approaching, Krishna pretended to be sleeping. The Gopika repeated her plea asking the flute to reveal the secret. Then the flute replied, "Oh Gopika! I did no penance, I do not know any Mantra nor have I any special knowledge. The only thing is that I keep myself hollow. I have left everything to His Will. The Gopika understood then that it was sensual pleasure that was the real obstacle in the way to attain Krishna.

Develop Fundamental Discrimination

Undue or excessive desires are not good. *Less luggage, more comfort, makes travel a pleasure.* What is this luggage? Desires are the luggage. Relieving of mundane burdens is what is known as Vairagya (renunciation). It is easy to carry a 100-rupee note, rather than carrying all that money in the form of 10,000 paise coins. Quality is important rather than quantity. Swami wants quality. A cup of cow's milk is preferable to a barrel of donkey's milk. What is immortality? *Removal of immorality is the only way to immortality.* Always keep on doing your duty with divine feelings, without giving any scope to distractions. God is one. Jesus, Allah, Rama, Krishna, Zoroaster and Buddha are His different names; but God is one. One should not hate or criticise any religion. *Help Ever, Hurt Never.* When this kind of feeling is developed, there is no need to search for God. This is known as fundamental discrimination. Individual discrimination tries to cover up one's own mistakes while magnifying the mistakes of others. A thief commits theft; he has no compunction about thieving. He thinks that he is doing the right thing because he is poor. But if he develops broader thinking, his attitude will change. By snatching a purse from someone, he is subjecting the victim to great agony, just as he was undergoing agony of poverty.

When Ravana abducted Sita and imprisoned her, his chaste wife advised him to return her to Rama. She said, "You have abducted someone's wife. How do you feel if someone abducts me who am your obedient wife"? Ravana's chief minister also echoed this counsel. Give respect and receive respect. Give love and receive love. *You cannot always oblige but you can speak always obligingly.* But this is not possible for everyone. Some people have too much anger and they always use harsh words. Such persons have to be corrected by the use of strong words. A slab of butter can easily be cut with a finger. But you cannot cut iron with the finger. It needs a sharp instrument to cut it. So, we have to act appropriate to the time and circumstances.

Some people are harsh by their nature. Even when they sit for Bhajan, they do not leave their anger. They keep on clapping, uttering peace, peace even while thinking angrily about someone. What is the use of chanting peace, peace with anger? How can they expect to get peace? Such clapping may help in killing mosquitoes; it has no other use. Man is attempting to reach moon even while harbouring hatred towards others. This type of attempt can never bring peace to the world. First man should have peace in his mind. Then only will there be peace in the world. How can there be peace in the world when people shout peace, peace, keeping atom bomb in their hand? Peace can prevail only when there is mental transformation in human beings. You can achieve anything when you have purity, patience and perseverance. Chant the Name of God with peace in your heart.

– Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Sruthi, Kodaikanal on 21st April 1993.





Sri Sathya Sai ALL INDIA MEDICAL CONFERENCE 2017

A TWO-DAY SRI SATHYA SAI All India Medical Conference on the theme of “Reaching Holistic Healthcare at Doorstep” was held on 19th and 20th August 2017 at Prasanthi Nilayam, wherein about 1,500 doctors and paramedics came to participate. Many dignitaries including the Health Ministers of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh graced the occasion by their presence.

The programme on 19th August 2017 started with the welcome address by Dr. S. Gurumurthy, Director, SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram who spoke on the relevance of the holistic healthcare at every doorstep. Referring to the Healthcare Mission of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Dr. Gurumurthy observed that anything done with love, sacrifice and commitment was bound to be ideal and eternal.

A musical note vide a video presentation on the theme of the conference followed next depicting beautiful glimpses of Sai Medicare

Mission. A newly-started quarterly magazine “Sri Sathya Sai Arogya Premanjali” was thereafter released by the Health Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and other dignitaries. In his opening remarks, Sri Nimish Pandya, All India President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation gave an overview of the conference and stated its aims and objectives. Bhagavan, he said, opened the door of a new healthcare system in which money was not important; what was important instead was love and sacrifice.

Sri Sathya Sai Dhanvantari Awards were then presented to selected doctors for their dedicated service to the Healthcare Mission of Bhagavan. Speaking on this occasion, Dr. V. Mohan, Trustee, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust observed that the unique feature of Bhagavan's Healthcare Mission was that the doctors performed Seva with love and not for money or even recognition. Some



Release of the quarterly magazine “Sri Sathya Sai Arogya Premanjali”.



Presentation of Sri Sathya Sai Dhanvantari Awards.

prominent doctors were then presented Sri Sathya Sai Dhanvantari Awards by the Health Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and other dignitaries.

Dr. V. Somaraju, Managing Director of CARE group of hospitals, Hyderabad, who spoke after this commended the free Healthcare Mission of Bhagavan and remarked that serving others selflessly was real spirituality.

Health Ministers of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh then addressed the gathering. Speaking first, the Health Minister of Karnataka, Sri Ramesh Kumar acclaimed the selfless service done by the doctors under the aegis of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation and remarked that Sri Sathya Sai Dhanvantari Awards were a standing testimony of their selfless service to mankind. Free hospitals started by Bhagavan, he said, were shining models of service for the world to emulate. The values of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa propounded by Bhagavan were much needed in medical profession today, he said in conclusion.

The last speaker of the session was Dr. Kamineni Srinivas, Health Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Referring to the path of selfless service shown by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the distinguished speaker commended the Seva activities undertaken by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation and Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. Congratulating Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust for instituting Sri Sathya Sai Dhanvantari Awards, he stated that those who were blessed to get the opportunity of performing selfless service in the Divine Mission of Bhagavan were very fortunate.

After this, an audio clip of Bhagavan's Discourse was played on the public address system, in which Bhagavan exhorted the doctors to have a compassionate heart and

talk to the patients with love and kindness. Service to the poor, Bhagavan said, was most important for man's redemption. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan "Bada Chittachora Vrindavana Sanchara" (Krishna is the stealer of hearts). Bhajan followed next and concluded with Arati at 11.00 a.m.

The next session of the National Medical Conference was held in Poornachandra



A session of the conference in Poornachandra Auditorium.

Auditorium where panel discussions were held and guidelines for conducting medical camps and other Seva activities were provided to the participants.

The second day's proceedings of the Conference began at 8.20 a.m. on 20th August 2017 with a book release ceremony, in which the book entitled "Avatar's Prescription" published by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation was released. The second part of Sri Sathya Sai Dhanvantari Awards ceremony, the first part having been held on 19th August 2017, was then conducted, in which awards were presented to doctors who made an outstanding contribution to the Healthcare Mission of Bhagavan.

Sri Nimish Pandya, All India President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation then

continued on page 16...

From our Archives

PERFORM INTERNAL YAJNA

OFFER EVIL QUALITIES AT THE ALTAR OF MIND

MERGENCE IN THE BRAHMAN (cosmic consciousness), of which each one is an expression, is not a novel achievement gained by effort. It is only the awareness, in a flash, of an existing fact. One is Brahman already, inherently, inseparably so.

Man is Inherently Divine

Salt, which is an expression of the nature of the ocean, might be noticed in many lands, on many occasions, in many forms and many compounds. But, it retains

its truth which is cognisable in its taste. Originating from the sea, salt lends the quality of the sea to every article with which it is associated, whether it be curd or syrup or clear tasteless water. So, too, though the individualised spark of consciousness has woven a cocoon around itself and assumed a form and a name, it – that is to say, man – can never give up its Atmic nature.

We are now watching a Vedic ritual, a Yajna, being performed by these Pandits well versed in the science of invoking Divine grace through Mantras. They have to prepare the sacrificial altar according to the rules laid down thousands of years ago. The ceremonial fire which has to be lit and fed in the duly constructed altar has to be produced by churning to the accompaniment of Vedic hymns in praise of the all-pervasive fire principle. Fire so sanctified becomes divine and can act as a messenger between man and God. The altar becomes a post-box, authorised by the highest, to receive prayers (letters) correctly stamped (with sincerity) addressed to the various facets of the Omnipresent Almighty.

Karma Kanda (part which deals with rituals) of the Vedas must purify the mind so that it may succeed in Upasana (worship, adoration of God) and achieve the Jnana which releases one from bondage. This Vedic Karma or ritual is called Yajna.



Yajna means “giving up”, “renunciation”, Thyaga. What exactly has to be given up? Riches? That is easy enough. One’s home? That too is not hard. Does it mean retiring into a forest, breaking away from kith and kin? Many have done so and become proud of it. The Thyaga that the Yajna demands is the casting off of pomp, pride, envy, greed; in short, the ego itself. Every rite laid down in the Vedas has this aim only – to promote selflessness and universal love. Sensual gratification, anger, fury, hatred are bestial characteristics. Man must be ashamed to have even a trace of such traits. The characteristics of human nature are, and ought to be, love, forbearance, detachment, renunciation and truth.

Do not Ask God for Trivial Glittering Trash

Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you”. Of course you are asking, calling and knocking. But, what are you asking for? Trivial glittering trash is what you prefer; not everlasting delight. When what you ask for is not given, do not condemn the mother as cruel. She does not feed a sick child the delicacies it demands. Her affection dictates that apparent cruelty. So, too, God’s mercy is patent in His refusal to give what you ask for. You are calling out but you are not answered often. Why? You address someone other than God. The call does not arise from your heart. The yearning is not total. The motive is selfish and impure. You are knocking at the door and complaining that it is not opened. God is residing in your own heart but you have locked that heart so that love cannot enter. So, He is silent and unresponsive. The door need not be opened, for you to become

aware of the God within. It is ever open for love; knocking is unnecessary. Love will automatically make the heart bright with light and delight. When the One is known, there is no more asking. The consummation of this Vedic Yajna lies in the giving up of desire, in the awareness of the One without a second.

One may study all the scriptures, perform all types of sacrifices, go on extensive pilgrimages, master the eight types of knowledge, but it is not easy to control the senses and the mind, direct one’s vision inward and maintain equanimity of temper. In ancient times, the sages and seers maintained purity in thought, truth in words and righteousness in deeds. But in this Kali Age today, people have forgotten human values and exhibit animal qualities such as lust, anger, greed and hatred.

Mind is the Altar of the Yajna

In Treta Yuga, Viswamitra took the help of Rama to ensure the conduct of the Yajna without hindrance from the demonic forces. His Ashram was called Siddhashrama. Actually, the heart of every human being is a Siddhashrama. The moment evil thoughts or bad feelings arise in man, that is the beginning of all sins. When the heart is polluted with such sinful thoughts, one should seek the help of Atma Rama, just as Viswamitra sought the help of Rama to put an end to the ogress Thataka. If you think of God and pray to Him with sincere devotion, every deed done by you will be a Yajna. The mind is the altar of this Yajna. You must offer all the evil qualities at the altar of the mind. That is the ideal internal Yajna to be performed by every person as distinct from the external Yajna done ritualistically.

– Excerpted from Bhagavan’s Dasara Discourses.



Sathya Sai Baba: A Divine Legend

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Former President of India

I admire Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for His selfless work and contributions to the welfare of the people by providing drinking water for the rural population, free healthcare facilities for the rural poor and free higher education.

THE MAJOR FACTORS IN human resource development are value-based education and quality healthcare. In addition, the infrastructural requirement like availability of potable water is an essential need of the human resource. While the government is actively engaged in providing these resources to the citizens, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has been sensitive to these essential needs of the Indian population, particularly of the people living in Andhra Pradesh.

Keeping this in mind, He has created vast infrastructure for providing value-based quality education to children from primary to university level, established super speciality hospitals in rural areas – as early as 1991 when there were no corporate hospitals in such interior regions – and worked on a project to provide potable safe drinking water for people of Andhra Pradesh. I would like to discuss the unique characteristics of these institutions.

Value-based Education

The best part of a young person is his or her childhood in school and the best time

spent is 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day in the school. This is applicable for all children in



Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam with Bhagavan.

the age-group of 5 to 20 living in both urban and rural areas. Baba has realised the problems of the rural poor and has made it a point that education is absolutely free in all the schools and colleges established by the Sathya Sai Trust.

Interestingly, the Sathya Sai Educational Institutions cater equally to the development of the mind, the heart and the body. This



is achieved through integrated education, which lays equal emphasis on keeping the body healthy, the mind active and sharp and the heart pure. Baba, being the Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, spends substantial amount of time with the students to groom them into ideal citizens.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba says, “Students are the foundation of the nation, the only wealth that I cherish. Students are My all; My entire property consists of students. I have offered Myself to them”. He also says, “The end of education is character and the end of knowledge is love”. This is the reason why Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning emphasises character building as an important component of education apart from acquiring academic excellence.

Nobility in character comes out of humility, generosity, compassion, helpfulness and respect for moral values. The single thread that runs through all the activities of the Institute, curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular is that education is for life and not for a mere living. Experience has shown that leading organisations and companies in the country absorb Sai students. It is claimed that the students so recruited bring about a quiet change in work ethics and inject team spirit as well as a value-based approach to all aspects of organisational activity.

Water Mission

In 1994, Baba made a moving reference to the difficulties experienced by the people of Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh in getting safe drinking water and suggested that the centuries-old problem needed urgent attention. In 1995, He added a new dimension to his societal mission by undertaking work to provide good and safe drinking water to as many people of Anantapur district as possible in the shortest

possible time, irrespective of the difficulties experienced and the cost.

Tapping ground water was considered as an option, but was ruled out because of the fluoride problem. It was decided to use rain water by drawing water during the monsoon and storing in special reservoirs.

Most of the water sources were in the northern part of Anantapur district and the terrain to the south sloped upwards. Hence, bringing water to the southern region needed creation of a large number of pumping stations to pump water against gravity. This called for extensive civil and engineering work. In spite of all the difficulties, the water was made available to Anantapur district in 18 months. After a year of regular operation, the entire water works was handed over to the people of the State as a gift. The scheme covers 750 villages and provides water to over one million people.

India needs a thousand such organisations to provide cost effective potable drinking water to the billion people spread in different parts of the country.

Healthcare

During the 1980s, a substantial number of super speciality corporate hospitals came into being in our urban areas. However, due to commercialisation, they could cater only to the needs of urban rich people. There was wide gap in the availability of medicare for the rich and poor and between rural and urban population. Keeping this in mind, Baba declared on 23rd November 1990, there would be a world-class hospital in Puttaparthi area within a year and it would offer free treatment to everyone, especially the poor.

This hospital was inaugurated on 22nd November 1991. After its inauguration,



the super speciality hospital has conducted many major heart surgeries and catheterisation procedures. Specialist surgeons from reputed hospitals, both from India and abroad, voluntarily take leave from their regular work, come to Puttaparthi and perform operations free of cost. Same is the case with nursing services.

I understand the convalescing patients provide voluntary help to the new patients who come to the hospitals for operation. Also the hospital premises are maintained in a clean, calm, serene and divine atmosphere. We can see the power of service consciousness flowing in the entire hospital environment.

Project Management

Whether it be a super speciality hospital at Puttaparthi or provision of safe drinking

water for Anantapur or provision of drinking water to Chennai by solving the problems associated with Kandaleru reservoir, all projects have been completed to meet the specified objective within the prescribed time and cost. How has this been possible? I was thinking about it. The major reason appears to be that the projects have been entrusted to socially committed project managers, contractors and sub-contractors. They have executed the project with a spirit of co-operation, the spirit of sacrifice and dedication. The programme chiefs have followed the five core human values – truth, right conduct, non-violence, love and peace – while executing the projects. Can there be a better role model than this for promoting a nationwide selfless, societal transformation mission?

(Source: *Hindustan Times*, April 2011.)

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*Valedictory Address of the conference
by Sri Nimish Pandya.*

addressed the gathering. Dwelling on the importance of bringing holistic healthcare to the doorstep of the patients, Sri Nimish Pandya stressed the need for setting up a platform at national level to achieve this goal. Sri Nimish Pandya's talk was followed by a video presentation which showed an overview of medical services being rendered by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in all parts of India.

The participants and devotees were then blessed by a Divine Discourse of Bhagavan, in which He advised the doctors not to treat merely the disease but focus on treating the patient taking into consideration the state of his mind also because the mind was responsible for many diseases. Explaining the importance of educating the people on healthy way of living, Bhagavan said that prevention of diseases was very important. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin". Bhajans followed next and concluded with Arati.

After the conclusion of the proceedings of the conference in Sai Kulwant Hall, the final session of the Conference was held in Poornachandra Auditorium, where ways and means of providing holistic healthcare at the doorstep of needy patients were discussed and future plans charted out.



DR. ERODE N. PRABHAKARAN

SWAMI IS SWAMI!

ONE DAY IN APRIL 1993, WE WERE seated on the lawns in Trayee Brindavan eagerly awaiting Swami for His morning Darshan. It was a special day in our lives – we were going to get our 3rd year group photos with Swami! In spite of this excitement, there was palpable grief in our hearts, as this event also signalled our last few days of physical proximity with Swami at Brindavan. I was in tears the whole morning. Though I knew that I would continue to get His Darshan at Parthi during my M.Sc., the proximity to Bhagavan that one gets at Brindavan is once in a lifetime opportunity!

The Bliss of Swami's Close Proximity

Swami came out in all His splendour and radiance, beaming with a smile that dissolved all our thoughts. He blessed us and went for Darshan. After Darshan, the photo session lasted for one hour. All the while, I was praying, "Sada Saath Raho Hey Bhagavan" (always stay close to me). Memories of Swami's Leelas over the past three years were running across my mind. As this brought happiness to me, a strange thought occurred in my mind, "Swami, give me a simple one-line message for life". After the photo session, we gathered around Swami and prayed for His Divine Discourse. After a few minutes, He granted us one!

"Premaswarupulara!" Swami began, seated on His chair. "I am and will always be with you. Be good and do good, you

can achieve anything", He reassured us. Towards the end of the Discourse, He gave us the most important message, "As Swami's children, your life should reflect My message".

He reminded us of our responsibilities as His children. I was overjoyed to receive His message and assurance and thanked Swami in my heart. After Arati, Swami was ascending the Trayee Brindavan stairs, with all of us around Him, when He leaned over my head and said, lovingly pointing a finger at me – "Be good, I am always with you"! His mercy knows no bounds; even I had forgotten about my prayer for that simple one-line message, but He had not. The next year, Swami blessed me with His Divine proximity at Kodaikanal.

Swami helps each of us to grow and communicate with Him through the language of the heart! As we grow, we also realise that our part in the growth process is the simplest and easiest – to simply watch Him, patiently and miraculously instil the growth in us! Our efforts to understand Him or His methods, as Swami Himself repeatedly reminds us, equals an ant's effort to decipher rocket science. It is beyond us! Swami reminded us of this simple, yet profound message once again.

Defining the Indefinable!

In May 1994, we all arrived with Swami at the Kodaikanal guest house to bask in His physical proximity. After dinner, we sat our tired selves (we had travelled for over 8 hours), around our ever energetic Bhagavan, who had also travelled along with us. Swami made us feel comfortable by making small talk and enquiring whether we were comfortable at the guest house. Then the Divine Master became the Quiz





Master. “Whoever answers My question will get a prize from Me”, He said. Immediately, I started running through all the Mahavakyas, the epics, the Chinna Kathas, etc., in my mind, while Swami stated the question – “Who am I”?

Swami started with the person seated to His right. Luckily, I was in the middle and was happy that I had some more time to think. But the more I thought of the answers, the more they confounded me. Both the ‘Neti’ answers – boundless, limitless, etc. – and the ‘Purti’ answers – eternal, complete, Purushottama, etc. – sounded deficient. Meanwhile several answers like – “Swami you are Krishna, Paramapurusha, Ekam Sat, etc”. sprung forth, for most of which Swami lovingly laughed at. Suddenly, I heard myself blurting, “The One without Aadi (beginning) or Anta (end)” – which too received Swami’s smile. Soon, all of us in the room had tried our best and failed to do the impossible – “Defining Bhagavan”!

After a minute of silence, the then caretaker of Kodaikanal guest house entered the hall. Swami asked him the same question and pat came the prize winning reply from him – “Swami, You are You”! Swami blessed him with a gold bracelet, with a heart-shaped pendant. I was banging my head for having tried to define the indefinable! Through that simple question, Swami had made us think and also had conveyed a profound message to us, “Don’t try in vain to define Me. Swami is Swami”!

No matter how much we try to stay alert and remind ourselves of His Divinity, there are always times when a slip occurs and we momentarily err by failing to see beyond the human form of Bhagavan. But our merciful Bhagavan never tires from patiently helping us and reminding us of His Divinity.

Padanamaskar to the Ant

One fine Sunday morning, the students and teachers had assembled at the Trayee lawns awaiting Bhagavan’s Darshan. It was 15 minutes past the usual Darshan time and many of us were taking to silent preoccupations, like reading a textbook, writing, meditating, etc. I was sitting in the front row and was watching an ant that was walking to and fro between the lawn and Swami’s red carpet. The ant apparently lacked purpose in its effort. It did not seem to carry anything during these walks. I was watching this drama for a few minutes, when the Trayee doors opened and Swami floated out on to the carpet. As He came towards me, I tried pushing the ant away from Swami’s path. I tried pushing it away a couple of times, but every time the ant restarted its walk to and fro. As Swami came closer to me, I watched Swami, with

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Effulgence of Divine Glory

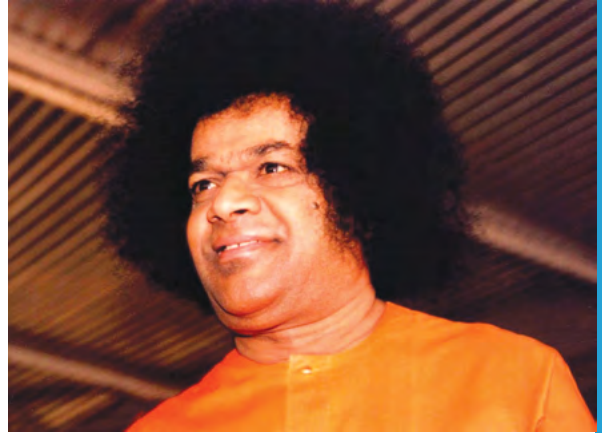
HAVE NO FEAR, BE HAPPY

ALL IT AN ENERGY, A DIVINE Consciousness – whatever you will, it is not an Indian concept. It is universal truth, a universal teaching, a universal reality.

Baba has given me two rings. One bears an image of Shirdi Sai Baba – His previous incarnation, the other Sai Baba's Feet. But I can honestly say that I have never had any inkling of a memory of a lifetime with Shirdi Baba. He has appeared to me in New Zealand, in His Shirdi form and He was nearly as tall as a six foot door. He spoke to me, "Go home, go home." I said, "Oh my God", and went to fall at his feet to embrace them. He said, "No, no! No, no! Go home! Go home"! I was in my little flat in the Bay of Plenty. I knew he meant for me to go "home" to India. He was lovely! Beautiful! It was Sai of course.

I haven't one iota of a memory of having been with Shirdi Sai, except once. I was at an Indian celebration in the Rotorua area, and they were singing some sort of Bhajan and I thought to myself that I heard the Bhajan before somewhere. It was a Shirdi Baba Bhajan which was sung to him by people who went to visit him at Shirdi, when he lived there in the 1900's. I thought "I have heard that before".

Once, in Auckland, I was speaking to a group of people and they had put a glass of water beside me for me to drink. As I was speaking, I heard an inner voice – Sai's voice, say, "Look at the water". I looked, and some bubbles in the water had formed the symbol "Om" in the bottom of the glass. So



I said, mentally, "What am I supposed to do with this"? I then remembered that in 1989 Sai had materialised ambrosia, Amrit for 10 of us from seven countries and fed us with that Amrit and said, "No rebirth – Self-realisation". So I wondered, "Am I supposed to give this water to someone here"?

Suddenly, a little boy of about six years of age and a thin body came up to me. He kept coming to my knees and asking, "Ma, Ma! More water. Water"? So, I started giving him water from the glass. Everybody there (about 80 people) also had a teaspoon of that water, but the glass never emptied. The parents of the child explained afterwards that he had cancer and had been undergoing chemotherapy treatment. They had been told by the child's specialist that there was nothing more that could be done for him.

Three days after this event, they went as usual to visit this specialist and he performed his usual examination but this time he discovered that there was now no cancer. The next Sunday the parents sought me out as I was getting ready to leave for home.



The parents said, “We don’t know what’s happening, the specialist has told us that suddenly there is no more cancer present in our boy”. I said, “Look, I am going to Sai in three weeks. Give me a photo of your son”.

I had that photo in the interview room and I said to Sai, “Beloved, did You heal this boy’s cancer”? He said, “Yes, I did”, and He went on talking to somebody else. And that was not enough for me, so I said, “Beloved, with the water”? He said, “Yes, yes. I did”! So, I brought the photo back and the parents treasure it because Sai verified that He had made their boy well. This is some years ago now, and the child is still strong and healthy.

I receive many, many letters and requests from people asking me to help them get well. Cancer, leukemia, Aids... all kinds of illnesses. I want to state unequivocally that I am not what people call a healer, I am nothing, nothing. There are many persons whom the Absolute can work through, and we are not aware of that. But for the healings that happened with me in New Zealand, I have asked Sathya Sai Baba, in interviews afterwards to verify if it was He who caused the healings and He has always affirmed that this is correct. It is He who heals, not me.

I cannot take the responsibility of saying to someone, “Here, drink this water. You will be healed”. I cannot be Sathya Sai Baba in that circumstance. When people write to me, asking for healing, I have to make them understand that they have to approach their God in their own way if they want to be healed. I am not saying that there are no healers, but I am definitely not a healer. I may be used for Sai’s Will, when He wills it – and for His purpose only.

May God’s Will be done! Love, only love, can resolve problems. By conveying this message directly to our hearts, the Beloved Sai guides all of us towards wisdom, peace and oneness with all humanity. All of us can achieve anything, absolutely anything, if we go within and transform our consciousness.

The Beloved Sai has said, “Great understanding is emerging in the hearts of my Beloveds. In time the coldest hearts will once again flow in Truth and Light. A great unity of Light is forming in all countries gathering a band of light-bearers. Wonderful changes are taking place. We are one, have no fear, be happy”.

– Excerpted from “Sathya Sai Baba and the Universal Reality of Mankind” by Mata Betty.

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half my attention also on the ant. I was praying to Swami, not to step on the ant. As I was praying, Swami stopped in front of me and talked to one of the teachers, who was standing behind the students, with the ant seemingly trapped under His feet all the while! I felt sorry for the ant and took Padanamaskar. After some time, Swami moved away and to my utter disbelief, the ant started walking back to the lawn.

As I was feeling happy for the ant, Swami stopped a foot or two ahead of me, turned halfway towards me and said, “Adi Kooda Padanamaskaram Kosamey Vochindi” (the ant too wanted My Padanamaskar).

– The author joined Brindavan Campus of the Institute in 1990 and passed his M.Sc. from Prasanthi Nilayam Campus in 1995, winning a gold medal.

JEEVANDAATA BHAGYAVIDHAATA

Ram-Lakshman

BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA is the pivot around whom our life is woven. He is the strength, the power, the source and the foundation on which our lives are laid. So to say, He is our very life force.

Our father Sri Narayana Behera, one of the most popular musicians of Odisha, used to play harmonium for Harikatha. Once when he went to a Harikatha for playing harmonium, a Haridasu gave him a photograph of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Father kept the photograph in our Puja room. He aspired to sing Odia songs in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan in Puttaparthi, but it was not fruitful. Afterwards once he had been to Brindavan and got permission to sing Bhajans before Bhagavan. In those days, both of us, his twin sons Ram-Lakshman, used to attend Bhajans. Our father told us that we both had to sing Bhajans in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan in Puttaparthi. Then father advised both of us to do Sahasra Nama Japa (chanting of one thousand names of God) daily, once in the morning and once in the evening. Accordingly, we performed this ritual and practised Bhajans regularly.

Training in Bhajan Singing

By the grace of Swami, both of us went to Prasanthi Nilayam for the first time in the year 1974. At that time, the railway fare from Berhampur to Puttaparthi was ₹ 50. Those days one had to go to Vijayawada by train, from there to Guntur and then to Guntakal and from Guntakal to Dharmavaram. From

Dharmavaram one had to go to Parthi by bus. From Dharmavaram to Parthi, it was a fair weather road. We along with some other devotees were accommodated in the Old Mandir as we came as Seva Dal members.

We had a great desire to sing Bhajans before Swami. At that time, Sri Brahmananda Panda was the State President of Odisha. He offered to Bhagavan a list of singers, who would lead Bhajans in Nagar Sankirtan and inside the Mandir. Swami looked at the list of singers and at last ticked only two names. And those two names were Ram and Lakshman. Then onwards, we both started singing in Nagar Sankirtan. This was the sign of the grace of Bhagavan. The entire incident was narrated to us by Sri Panda.

Again in the year 1976, we made a trip to Prasanthi Nilayam during Dasara. Then too we got the opportunity to sing Bhajans before Bhagavan, besides performing our duty as Seva Dal. Dasara function was over and Swami announced that He would give Padanamaskar to Seva Dal members which meant a great chance for all of them. The Seva Dal members were very happy and ready to receive Padanamaskar. That morning, both of us sat in the Mandir verandah waiting for Swami's Darshan. Swami came and went around the devotees. When He went to the ladies side, He asked, "Where are Ram-Lakshman"? The ladies told Swami that we were sitting in the Mandir verandah. Swami came straight to us and told us, "Ram-Lakshman, Bhajan practice Karo" (do

Bhajan practice), gave Padanamaskar and created Vibhuti Prasadam for us. Since then, we both started Bhajan practice, composed a number of new Bhajans and sang before Swami. During Bhajan sessions, Swami taught us many lessons in Tala, Laya, Ucharana (beat, rhythm, pronunciation). He corrected the pronunciation of selected words many a times and inspired us to sing specific Bhajans.

Once both of us were in the Bhajan session in the Mandir at Prasanthi Nilayam. I (Ram) was singing the Bhajan “Hari Om Namah Sivaya”. When it was in the second Tala, I was ready to conclude the Bhajan. But Swami showed me the third Tala by tapping His hand. And so I began to sing in the third Tala and concluded. It meant to me that according to Swami Bhajans could be sung in the third Tala.

Again in one Bhajan session, I (Ram) was singing “Hara Hara Hara Sambho Sankara”. When it was in second Tala, Swami got up from His chair, came near me and whispered into my ear “it is not Sambho, it is Shambho”. I was astonished, and from that day onwards I took care of the apt pronunciation of words in Bhajans. It means we have to know that Swami is very particular about the words and their right pronunciation too.

Lakshman Comes Alive by Swami's Grace

During 1977-78, both of us got the great opportunity of attending Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality. That was the first long trip we made from Berhampur to Bengaluru. With a lot of difficulty our father sent us to Bengaluru. The Summer Course was going on smoothly and we both attended classes which had been arranged



The authors Ram-Lakshman (standing extreme right) with Bhagavan during the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality.

in the Auditorium. That was how seven days passed. One night Lakshman suffered from fever and it continued for three-four days. We consulted Dr. Bapi Raju and he gave some medicines. But one day at 10 a.m., Lakshman started vomiting with 105 degrees temperature. I cried very badly and prayed Swami intensely. On that day, I decided not to attend classes. I prayed and was determined to talk to Swami. So, that evening I waited for Swami's Darshan. Then I composed the Bhajan “Daya Karo Bhagavan Kripa Karo Bhagavan” and wrote it down on a paper. I kept the paper in my pocket and stood there waiting for Swami.

Meanwhile, a thought came to my mind, “Will Swami talk to me when there is such a big crowd”? Just at that time, Swami was in front of me and He asked, “Are you from Odisha”? Then I answered, “Yes, Swami”. Swami asked, “Are you from Berhampur”? and I said, “Yes, Swami”. Then Swami asked, “Are you Ram-Lakshman”? I replied, “Swami”! Then Swami asked, “What happened”? and I said, “Swami, Lakshman is suffering from fever”. Swami again asked, “What is the temperature”? and I replied, “Swami near about 105 degrees”. Swami



said, "Do not worry. I am here". Then He gave me Padanamaskar and went away. In the meantime, I forgot regarding the letter I was to give to Swami. I called out, "Swami"! He turned and asked me, "What happened"? I said, "Swami, this letter". Swami took the letter. I was relaxed as Swami told not to worry. Then I came to Lakshman and described everything regarding this conversation with Swami.

Meanwhile, two doctors came to our room and asked, "Who are Ram-Lakshman"? Then I replied, "I am Ram and he is Lakshman. Lakshman is suffering from fever". "You need not worry," the doctors told and shifted Lakshman to first-aid room. Then I saw a saline bottle, which was hung there and they attached it to Lakshman. Though Lakshman was given medicines through saline bottle, he was becoming weak. This way, Lakshman remained in the first-aid room for seven days. No improvement was found in his condition. Treatment was going on.

Once I was practising the Bhajan "Prasanthi Nilaya Ram Hey Parthipuri Bhagavan" in the green room of Brindavan Auditorium to sing before Swami. Suddenly, Swami came and asked me, "How is your brother"? I said, "Swami, there is no improvement, temperature is near about 105 degrees and above". Swami told me not to worry, gave me Padanamaskar and then left. The same way three to four days passed, but no improvement was found in Lakshman. I was very upset. Once more I got a chance to sing before Swami and I thought of singing "Daya Karo Bhagavan". When Swami came, I asked Swami about Lakshman. He said, "I will come to see him". The very next day, Swami came to the first-aid room, where Lakshman was sleeping.

Swami checked the medical reports of Lakshman and said to the doctors, "Are you doctors or what"? The doctors were astonished and stood there. Swami told the doctors, "Lakshman is suffering from typhoid and you are all treating him for malaria". Immediately, Swami created two capsules and gave to Lakshman. Swami created Vibhuti Prasadam, gave him and left. After that, things became better. No fever, no vomiting, Lakshman came out fine and perfect.

On the valedictory day, Swami gave to all the Summer Course students clothes, books, cassettes and money. Then Swami called Lakshman and when he went close to Swami, He blessed both of us and said, "Bratiki Vachesara"? which means "came back alive"? That was the turning point of our life. By the divine intervention, we were reborn! Swami introduced us to the students and said, "They are Ram-Lakshman from Odisha and they sing very well". This is Bhagavan's immense compassion, otherwise where are Ram-Lakshman, two simple youth from a remote area like Berhampur in Odisha, and where is Bhagavan, the Lord of the cosmos introducing them. Thank you, Swami.

Singing in the Divine Presence

Then again in 1980 during the World Conference, we both got an opportunity to go to Prasanthi Nilayam. We got permission from Swami to sing inside the prayer hall. One day, we went to the Mandir and practised Bhajans with some students and with Sri Patel and Sri Mohan Rao. Meanwhile, a member from Mandir Seva Dal came to us and asked who we were. When we answered, we were Ram-Lakshman, He asked, "Have you got any permission

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Lessons in Seva at Prasanthi Nilayam

John Behner

One night, Nelson had been reading the book “Sai Baba: Man of Miracles” and fell asleep. Then he felt someone moving his feet, and woke up. It was Swami seated on the floor next to Nelson. In perfect Spanish, Swami asked, “Que tal”? (How are you?) Nelson explained in Spanish that he was finished, he could not move. Swami said, “You are fine, get up and walk”.

THE OTHER DAY, BY CHANCE I was in Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. A plaque caught my eye. On it were the words: inaugurated by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, 23rd November 1980. This brought back some memories. A few days prior to the date on the plaque, volunteers were sought out to help with some Seva in the new Institute where construction had just finished.

Right Mindset for Seva

It was 10 a.m. and the Indian sun was at its finest. When we arrived, we were assigned a clean-up job in the central patio where many pieces of bricks and other leftovers from the construction were still cluttering the entire area. We filled small baskets and passed them down a line of volunteers to a waiting bullock cart to be hauled away. After about an hour of this back-breaking work, with sweat running down my forehead, and my shirt completely soaked, who should arrive but Swami, and with Him walking down the inner corridor was my close friend who had come in His car. My friend was

looking as fresh as a newly-blossomed rose and as happy as someone who had just won a lottery. And here were we sweating tears and blood. Moreover, Swami did not even seem to notice us. He proceeded around briefly showing different rooms to my friend, and went towards the new auditorium. I think my temperature must have increased to double what it was due to jealousy.

Fortunately, I did not renounce Seva because of this incident. Instead, the next day I volunteered for another Seva determined to do better. It was in the Hill View Stadium which had recently been developed for Bhagavan's 55th Birthday celebration. Our job was to remove rocks and pebbles and weeds so that the ground would be ready for devotees to sit and walk around without hurting their feet or stumbling. This time I tried to change my mindset, and pretended to be Sabari who was waiting for Sri Rama to pass that way, as she removed the thorns and pebbles from the paths of the forest. The day went much better, and even though Swami did not come while we were working,





it served as a stepping stone for doing better service in future. It was only much later that I learnt the real meaning of Seva from the teachings of Bhagavan Baba who emphasised that Seva should be done as a spiritual practice for inner evolution.

Seva Project in El Salvador

When we returned to our country, El Salvador, Swami had plans for us to participate in a larger Seva, and motivated by our experience with the Seva in India, we started visiting a group of boys that were incapacitated due to being at the wrong place at the wrong time during the armed conflict in our country. They were in wheelchairs and living in a very difficult situation. We decided to help them by renting a house for them which was level into the street without steps, and in a more central

location. We found just the place close to the central market, and close to schools and hospitals. There were 14 boys at this time, and they were very grateful for our help. The house was old, but it was functional for them. After a few years, the owner offered to sell us the place, and so we decided to buy it. We demolished it and built a three-storey building with an elevator, and with several workshops on the ground floor.

The new home was inaugurated on 23rd November 1997. The wheelchair boys were not invalids, but they could not jump on to a bus to go to work like others do. So, with the workshops, they could learn a skill and help to support themselves. We had shoe repair, and shoe making, watch repair, electrical appliances repair, wheelchair repair, and even a computer room for learning computer skills which were taught by some college students in their spare time. We also had a bakery. On the first floor were the bedrooms, eleven rooms for two each. All doors were one metre wide for the wheelchairs. Kitchen and dining were on the ground floor. On the 3rd floor we made a Sathya Sai Centre. In no time, we had 22 boys but we never insisted that they attend the Sai Centre. We did hold study circles for them from time to time so that they would know what we were doing on the top floor. There were several Swami miracles.

Showers of Swami's Grace

One boy, Nelson, had fallen from a tree and damaged his spine. He had two pins, one on either side of his spinal column. He was one of the few members who would attend the Sai Centre. One of his pins was getting infected, and when a hospital ship arrived with doctors from around the world, one of the devotees took Nelson to the ship



with his X-rays, and the doctor who saw him decided to pull out the pins. The result was a disaster. Nelson seemed to be paralysed, and when he came back to the Sai Centre, he was unable to get up, and spent all the time lying on a mattress on the floor. One night, Nelson had been reading the book "Sai Baba: Man of Miracles" and fell asleep. Then he felt someone moving his feet, and woke up. It was Swami seated on the floor next to Nelson. In perfect Spanish, Swami asked, "Que tal"? (How are you?) Nelson explained in Spanish that he was finished, he could not move. Swami said, "You are fine, get up and walk". It was 2 a.m. Nelson got up, and Swami disappeared. Nelson walked to the phone and called the devotee who had taken him to the hospital ship. You can imagine the conversation, "Swami was here, He told me to walk, I'm here at the phone, and I am walking". After this, Nelson was able to return home and live with his

wife and two children. He got a job selling newspapers.

You may perhaps imagine that after this type of experience, all the other 21 boys would be standing in line to be first in the Sai Centre. No, their Karma did not work like that; there was no increase in membership from our boys, even though the elevator would go up to the Sai Centre. But the opportunity to serve these boys who had difficult lives has been a very rewarding experience for me and other devotees. This home also became the location of the first Sai Clinic with eight doctors from the Sai Organisation working there on rotation, on Saturdays. Now the clinic has moved to another location and is much larger. This November, we will be celebrating 20 years in the Sai Home for the discapacitated.

– The author is the Chairman of Zone 2 of Sathya Sai International Organisation.

...continued from page 23

slip to sing Bhajan inside the prayer hall"? We said, "No. Swami had told us to sing Bhajans". He said, "No. You come and sit in the verandah". Then we both sat in the verandah. Bhajan started with Omkaram; we both started crying and prayed Swami. Nearly 40 minutes passed. Surprisingly, the same Seva Dal member came to us and said, "Sorry, sir. You are Ram-Lakshman. Please come inside to sing Bhajans". We were wonderstruck and sat near the foot stool of Swami. At that moment, Swami came and looked at us which gave us a lot of strength and hope. My God! We had lost all hope. Swami sat on His chair and we got ready to sing Bhajans. That was the first time we sang the Sarva Dharma Bhajan "Rama Krishna Prabhu Tu" before Swami. In the evening Bhajan session, while Lakshman

was singing "Jaya Devi Bhawani Maa", Swami asked the students on the verandah, "Who is singing"? and students replied, "Ram-Lakshman, Swami". Then Swami said, "Chaalaa Baagaa Paadutunnaru Kadaa"? (they are singing very well, is it not?). Later, students narrated this to us.

By the grace of Swami, both of us have been practising, composing and rendering Bhajans before Him. Now both of us are retired from our service and are praying Swami to give us strength so that we sing Bhajans till our last breath. Our sole aim is to express our love and gratitude to Bhagavan through Bhajans and earn His grace. Swami is our Jeevandaata Bhagyavidhaata (giver of life and director of our destiny).

– The authors are noted Bhajan singers from Berhampur, Odisha.

NEWS FROM SAI CENTRES

VENEZUELA

SATHYA SAI STUDENTS FROM the rural elementary and high schools of Abejales celebrated World Human Values Day, 24th April, with



World Human Values Day, Venezuela.

a Walk for Values. Abejales, meaning “eternal beehive”, is a remote land at the foot of the Andes, inhabited by an ancient pre-Colombian tribe. The programme began with a spiritual ceremony at a Catholic church to express love and gratitude to God for protection by the deities and spirits of Nature. In keeping with local traditions, the participants, symbolising honeybees, walked happily around the small village in traditional attire, accompanied by the Prema Sai Musical Band from the school. Many local radio stations enthusiastically promoted human values for living in love and peace. At the end, volunteers served a delicious vegetarian meal to villagers in the village central square.

On 25th April 2017, 56 children along with their teachers joined in a human values parade at the Bolivarian Institute of Special Education, El Vigía, in the State of Mérida. The event, organised by children with mental disabilities, motor impairment and

language disorders emphasised beautifully the practice of human values through songs, dramas, poems and posters, which they had prepared in their classes. A student with Down Syndrome read aloud a poem by the Deputy Director of the Institute, Professor Dominga Jaimes.

CANADA

In Ontario province, 25 SSIO members including young adults and children from the Sathya Sai Centre of Middlefield participated in the city of Markham’s Adopt-a-Park programme on Earth Day, 22nd April 2017. Featherstone Park is nestled amongst a row of houses, but the greenery had been blemished by litter. Sathya Sai volunteers worked together to remove garbage accumulated around the trunks of trees, under stadium bleachers, and near the fences of a baseball field. A neighbour, noticing the noble efforts, joined in the efforts, while another onlooker remarked, “God bless you”. The neighbours appreciated the work of the Sathya Sai volunteers, who in turn rejoiced knowing that they had served Mother Nature, consistent with the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

HUNGARY

On Earth Day, 22nd April 2017, the SSIO of Hungary organised a lecture in the city of Kaposvár, titled “Our Planet and the Universal Human Values”. The programme started with a comprehensive overview of the life, teachings and works of Bhagavan Baba, as well as the activities of the SSIO at the national and international levels. The lecture then expounded on the organic

relationship between humankind and Nature, based on Baba's teachings. After pointing out negative consequences of the overuse of natural resources, the talk emphasised tools available to restore the environment at the individual and societal levels. SSIO musicians presented an uplifting musical programme, combining elements of all major world religions. The programme also featured a guided meditation, focused on the well-being of the planet.

U. S. A.

On 6th May 2017, more than 200 adults and children celebrated Easwamma Day at the Sarva Dharma Service Centre (SDSC) in Howell Township, New Jersey. Sathya Sai volunteers formed teams to perform numerous needed repairs and restoration inside and outside the SDSC building. The programme commenced with multifaith prayers, Bhajans, and a presentation of Baba's message. The guest speaker was Mrs. Isabella Lewis, coordinator of a book-drive programme for needy children in the Caribbean. Sathya Sai children made cards and bookmarks for Syrian refugee children in Lebanon and bead bracelets or beads glued on canvas to create an image of Mother Easwamma. They also packed books for shipment to islands in the Caribbean; assembled hygiene kits for distribution at a health fair in Trenton, New Jersey; made hats and scarves for distribution at homeless shelters; and engaged in other service projects. The older volunteers cleaned up utility rooms, offices and stairways, and painted indoor railings and steps of the facility. SSIO members filled cracks in the driveway and concrete areas, reinforced a fence, repaired traffic signs, removed litter, spruced up the garden by replacing



Easwamma Day at New Jersey Sai Centre, U.S.A.

flowering plants and shrubs, and repaired lawn sprinklers, among other miscellaneous services. It was a productive, enjoyable and memorable day for all participants.

G H A N A

On 1st April 2017, a group including the SSIO of Ghana organised an Autism Health Walk. Over 50 people, including children, joined in the walk on the streets of Tema,



Autism Awareness Walk, Ghana.

in honour of World Autism Day, 2nd April. Flyers handed out by the children to the public helped increase awareness of and



support for autism. After the walk, everyone enjoyed a programme of aerobics and a meditation session.

NEW ZEALAND

The SSIO of New Zealand observed Sri Sathya Sai Aradhana Day on 24th April 2017 at St. Leonards Road School, Auckland. The programme, "From Form to Formless,"



Sri Sathya Sai Aradhana Day at Auckland, New Zealand.

opened with prayers and a melodious Maori chanting of "Te Aroha", followed by a minute of silence in remembrance of the first landing of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) at Gallipoli, Turkey, during World War I. The SSE children presented a short play with a simple message, "You can find love in Nature, animals and in our hearts". Young Adults offered a rousing musical performance incorporating western and eastern songs and musical instruments, after which a panel discussion highlighted the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. A vote of thanks included a tribute to the ANZAC veterans who had given their lives a century ago for the benefit of future generations.

SRI LANKA

To share the message of Bhagavan Baba, the SSIO of Sri Lanka sponsored a three-km Walk for Values on 23rd April 2017 in the capital city of Colombo. About

800 people, including SSIO members and their families and friends, local school children, members of various religious and charitable organisations, and government officials, joined the walk. Twenty religious and spiritual leaders pledged their support to the SSIO for its efforts to serve all and unite society through the practice of human values. The event's altruistic goal inspired mainstream media to publicise the event in print, television and radio, free of cost. SSIO members walked joyfully in unison with other organisations' members, wearing caps, shawls, badges and scarves bearing the official Walk For Values logo. The event began with a multifaitth dance recital and keynote speeches by Dr. Praneeth Abeyesundara, Chairman, All Ceylon Buddhist Congress of Sri Lanka; Sri A.H.M. Fowzi, State Minister of National Integration and Reconciliation; and Sri Mano Ganesan,



Walk for Values, Sri Lanka.

Minister of National Coexistence Dialogue and Official Languages. After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the procession moved through the heart of Colombo, accompanied by four beautiful floats constructed by Sathya Sai children and young adults. The picturesque floats, adorned with structures, decorations and human values messages, carried children dressed in costumes from various faiths and religions. The landmark

event concluded with singing of Sri Lankan national anthem in both Sinhalese and Tamil languages.

BHARAT

Haryana and Chandigarh: Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Haryana and Chandigarh organised Srimad Bhagavata Katha Parayana (narration of the story of the Bhagavata) at Shahabad Markanda from 23rd to 29th June 2017, in which thousands of people came to participate on all the seven days. Eminent scholar Sri Rituraj Maharaj conducted the Katha programme, describing the main episodes from the life and teachings of Lord Krishna, and illustrating his description with the Leelas and teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The Sai Organisation also organised the marriage of three couples which was performed with Vedic rites by learned

priests. All couples were provided household articles (clothes, ornaments, furniture, utensils) and other necessary items to start the life of householders. After the wedding reception, a sumptuous lunch was served to all the members of marriage party and to the public.

Jammu and Kashmir: Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Jammu and Kashmir conducts Narayana Seva regularly all the year around on every Sunday in the premises of Government Medical College Hospital, Bakshinagar, Jammu and in SMGS Hospital, Jammu by serving tea and snacks to the deserving attendants of the patients who come for treatment from far off places. A total of about 500 needy persons are being served daily. Narayana Seva is also being performed in the Red Cross Sarai daily by serving dinner to attendants of patients who come to stay in the Sarai (choultry).



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CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

PILGRIMAGE OF HARYANA AND CHANDIGARH YOUTH

SRI SATHYA SAI SEVA Organisation, Haryana and Chandigarh organised a two-day pilgrimage of their youth to Prasanthi Nilayam on 7th and 8th August 2017 and presented cultural programmes on both the days.

The first presentation was a dance drama “Transformation of Valmiki – From Sinner to Saint” performed by the Bal Vikas children



The drama “Transformation of Valmiki – From Sinner to Saint” showcased the importance of good company.

of Haryana and Chandigarh on 7th August 2017. Based on the theme ‘good company leads to God’s company’, the drama beautifully depicted how the wayside robber Ratnakar was transformed by the company and teachings of Sage Gautama, did intense penance, attained enlightenment and became Maharshi Valmiki, the author of the immortal epic, the Ramayana. Embellished with thrilling dances of Bal Vikas children, the drama highlighted the importance of good

company for the spiritual progress of man. Bhajans led by Haryana and Chandigarh devotees (ladies) followed the drama and concluded with Arati.

On the second day of their pilgrimage, 8th August 2017, the youth of Haryana and Chandigarh presented a very touching



A scene from the drama “Sai – The Compassionate Mother”.

drama entitled “Sai – The Compassionate Mother”. Based on a true story of a Haryana youth, the drama depicted how a patient was fleeced by greedy doctors without any cure when he suffered a collar bone fracture in an accident. Imbued with intense desire to serve his parents, the youth earnestly prayed to God for help in this desperate situation. In response to his prayer, the compassionate Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba appeared in his dream and cured him of his ailment. Bhajans led by singers (gents) of Haryana and Chandigarh followed next and concluded with Arati.

PILGRIMAGE OF VISAKHAPATNAM DEVOTEES

More than 1,200 devotees from Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh

came on a two-day pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam on 13th and 14th August 2017. On both the days, they led regular Bhajans and conducted Veda chanting in Sai Kulwant Hall. On the eve of the sacred festival of Sri Krishna Janmashtami, 14th August 2017, Bal Vikas children and Sai Youth of this district presented a musical dance drama



The dance drama "Mira Madhuri" showcased the life story of Mira through dances and Bhajans.

entitled "Mira Madhuri" (sweet songs of Mira). Beginning with a melodious Bhajan of Mira "Mero To Giridhara Gopal" accompanied by a thrilling dance of Bal Vikas children, the drama presented the main events of the life of Mira showcasing her deep devotion and total surrender to Lord Krishna. All through the course of the presentation, it was an exhilarating experience for devotees as the children presented one scintillating dance after another in beautiful costumes along with choicest Bhajans of Mira. Bhajans followed next and concluded with Arati at 6.00 p.m.

SRI KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI

Sri Krishna Janmashtami was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam on 15th August 2017 with great devotional fervour. Devotional music programmes were held both in the morning and evening to celebrate this sacred festival.

The morning programme began at 8.00 a.m. with chanting of Vedic hymns followed by an instrumental music presentation by the Nadaswaram troupe of students. What followed next was an enrapturing mix of Stotras and devotional numbers by students. Beginning with melodious rendition of the Stotra "Madhurashtakam", they sang a number of songs which included "Aayo Kahan Se Ghanashyam", "Tum Chahe Todo Krishna Mein Nahi Todongi" (You may leave me Krishna, but I will not leave You). Dances of Primary and Higher Secondary School students in between the devotional songs enhanced the value of the programme.

Meanwhile, the procession of cows led by Veda chanting and Bhajan singing groups of students entered Sai Kulwant Hall where senior functionaries of the Ashram fed them



Offer of Arati to cows in Sai Kulwant Hall.

with fruits. Calves, fawns, peacocks, etc., which formed part of this procession were also fed. After offer of Arati to the cows, the procession returned to Gokulam. The last item of the morning programme was the Divine Discourse of Bhagavan, excerpts of which were played on the public address system. In His Discourse, Bhagavan described how Krishna protected the Pandavas in all adverse situations because



their faith in the Lord was total. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan, “Govinda Krishna Jai Gopala Krishna Jai”.

The devotional music programme in the afternoon comprised devotional and patriotic songs in celebration of the twin events of Sri Krishna Janmashtami and 71st Independence Day of India. Presented by



Presentation of devotional and patriotic songs by the students and staff of Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music.

the students and staff of Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music, the programme began with a patriotic song “Jayati Jayati Bharata Mata” (hail, Mother India) which was followed by an enchanting instrumental piece on Veena. Some other compositions included “Narahara Narayana Gopal”, “Aaj Radha Brij Ko Chali” (Radha goes to Brij today) and Carnatic and Hindustani classical numbers. Befittingly, the programme concluded with a touching patriotic song “Aai Mere Watan Ke Logo” (oh my countrymen).

GANESH CHATURTHI

Deep devotional fervour and piety marked the celebration of the sacred festival of Ganesh Chaturthi at Prasanthi Nilayam. The programme held in beautifully decorated Sai Kulwant Hall on 25th August 2017 started with a cultural presentation of students. Beginning their programme at 8.20

a.m. with the Stotra “Ganashtakam”, the students enthralled the devotees for nearly one hour with their melodious rendition of songs and Stotras which included “Ganesh Pancharatnam”, “Sri Ganesha Sivuni Kumara” and a couple of classical numbers. They concluded their enrapturing presentation with a song dedicated to Lord Sai “Sai Ram Sai Ram” illustrating it with a beautiful video clip. The programme was further enriched by beautiful dances of Primary and Higher Secondary School students.

This was followed by a Divine Discourse of Bhagavan who explained the importance of worshipping Lord Ganesh, the remover of all obstacles and bestower of all auspiciousness. He advised the students to fill their heart with love instead of stuffing their head with all sorts of information. Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan “Shuklambaradharam, Ganapati Mantram, Nityam Nityam Bhajo Bhajo” (Chant the name of Ganapati who is clad in white clothes). A brief Bhajan session followed next in which the students sang soul-stirring Ganesh Bhajans which the devotees followed with deep devotion.

The immersion ceremony of Ganesh idols, worshipped in Bhagavan’s educational institutions, hospitals and Ashram departments by the students, doctors and Ashram staff, was performed on 27th August 2017. Beautifully decorated idols on artistically designed vehicles in many shapes and designs were lined up at 4.00 p.m. in Sai Kulwant Hall which presented a grand spectacle. Though all the vehicles were very well designed, yet some of them were very eye-catching, namely, railway engine, ship, coconut, golden chariot, fort, etc. First of all, Veda chanting and Bhajan singing groups





A dance number by Primary School students. Seen in the background is a grand spectacle of Ganesh idols.

of students and staff circumambulated the Bhajan Mandir, surcharging the entire milieu with sacred vibrations. What followed next was a grand display of vibrant dances by the students of Primary and Higher Secondary Schools. After the Mandir priest offered Arati to the idols, the students and staff escorting the idols brought them one by one in front of the Samadhi of Bhagavan. After seeking the blessings of Bhagavan, the students and staff took them out of the hall for immersion.

After all the idols were taken out for immersion, Bhajan started in Sai Kulwant Hal which concluded with the Bhajan “Chittachora Yashoda Ke Baal” (the son of Yashoda who steals the hearts of devotees) sung by Bhagavan. Arati at 6.00 p.m. marked the conclusion of the programme.

PILGRIMAGE OF ODISHA DEVOTEES

More than 2,000 devotees came from the State of Odisha on a two-day pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam from 26th to 27th August 2017 and presented a beautiful cultural programme on 26th August 2017.

A unique feature of this pilgrimage was a chariot journey which started from Puri,

the holy abode of Lord Jagannath, on 14th August 2017, covering a distance of more than 1,600 kilometres and reached Prasanthi Nilayam on 25th August 2017, spreading the Divine Message of Bhagavan en route.

The cultural programme presented by the devotees of Odisha comprised Odia devotional songs, a dance drama and two short plays. The devotees



A dance number from the dance drama “Love Begets Love”.

first presented three Odia songs, the melody and music of which enraptured the audience. Their next presentation was a dance drama “Love Begets Love”. It depicted man’s love of Nature through the story of a child lost in a forest and befriended by birds and animals. Two short plays based on real life incidents followed next. The first play showed the sensitivity of Sai Youth who rescued a boy lying unconscious on the road and united him with his parents. The second play showed how a group of Sai Youth cleaned the surroundings of a mosque and earned the love and goodwill of their Muslim brothers, spreading the message of unity of faiths. Bhajans followed next and concluded with Arati.

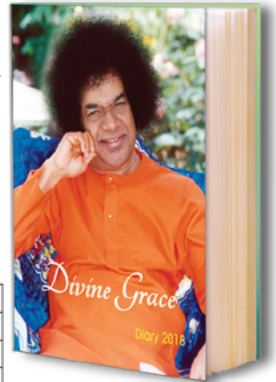


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The Publications Division (SSSSTPD) caters to:

- 1) The publication and distribution of spiritual, religious, and educational Sai Literature and the production and distribution of audio and visual multimedia, photographs, calendars, and diaries for the benefit of visiting pilgrims and devotees all over the world. All the literature and publications are based on the teachings, philosophy, message, and values of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.
- 2) The publication and distribution of Bhagawan Baba's monthly spiritual journal - Sanathana Sarathi - in English and Telugu languages. Since 2011, e-version of the magazine is also released simultaneously and is available in the popular Interactive PDF format on www.sanathanasarathi.org.
- 3) Maintaining a reporting channel www.theprasanthireporter.org, which covers all the major activities taking place in Prasanthi Nilayam, and publishing an e-newsletter 'Sai Spiritual Showers' - for free distribution.
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A dance from the drama "Mira Madhuri" by Bal Vikas children and Sai Youth from Visakhapatnam.



A dance number by Primary School students.



A Ganesh idol on artistically designed vehicle.

Date of Publication: 1st September 2017

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– *Baba*

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