

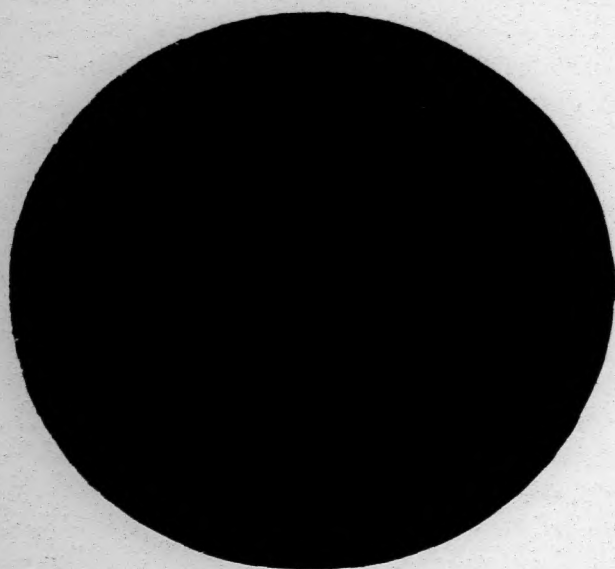
Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA



75th

IN HONOR OF THE BIRTHDAY OF BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA

Winter 2000-2001 • Volume 25, Number 2 • November, December, January



"You have the chance to see, experience and be sanctified by the incarnation of the Lord; this chance you have got as a result of the accumulation of merit in many previous births. For this chance, rishis and devas have prayed long in the past. Having won this chance, strive to taste the sweetness and achieve the bliss of merging without wasting even a single moment."

*-Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Volume II, page 182*



Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

OUR HUMBLE OFFERING AT THE DIVINE LOTUS FEET OF
OUR BELOVED BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA



"The Avatar behaves in a human way so that mankind can feel kinship, but rises to superhuman heights so that mankind can aspire to those heights."

-Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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How Sai Saved Us

By **Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai**

Swami has been preparing all of us for great tasks. When the Avatar plans to do something, He plans for centuries. Moreover, He does not come alone. You are the chosen ones; you are not here by chance. Think about that. Swami has been taking care of us for centuries—preparing us for this time, the greatest event in history.

I would like to give an example of how He has been looking after us. I can only give one of my own experiences. However, it applies to all of us.

When I was born on this earth, it was in the beginning of World War II. Oh, no! Now I have told you my age. I am getting very old! During that war, the Japanese were bombing Bangkok [Dr. Jumsai's home town]. We put up a brave fight for seven hours and then gave up. Then the Japanese occupied Thailand very easily.

It is the custom in Thailand, as it is in India, for families to live together—grandparents, parents and grandchildren. My grandfather was a colonel in the Thai army, so he had a house in the military barracks, and we all lived there together. Of course, the prime target for bombing would be military installations. The Japanese started bombing. Then the allied forces started bombing Thailand. Our family was in great danger.

As I was a baby at the time, my mother told me this story. One day there was a young man who came to our home. He looked like a monk, but he was not a monk. He gave my mother a small packet and told her, "Spread this all over [the roof of] your house, and you will be safe." The next moment, the young man disappeared. My mother said that when she opened the packet, the contents looked like fine sand. She spread the "sand" all over the roof. At the end of the war, our house was the only one left standing in the area. All the rest were bombed and razed to the ground.

Many years later, I had the opportunity to "test" Swami. I was invited to give a talk during one of the Sathya Sai Summer Courses for college students at Whitefield, Brindavan. Swami was sitting there listening the whole time. I told Him and all the students about my mother receiving the packet from a young man. As I was relating the story, Swami was laughing. He turned to the professors and students in the audience and said, "I did not give her sand. I gave her vibhuti [holy ash]." At last, I was able to confirm what had really happened. ❖

From a talk at a regional Sai conference

May 28, 2000



You are my treasure, even if you deny me. I am your treasure, even if you say no. I shall be affectionate to you and attach myself to you. I shall take all the trouble to keep my property safe in my custody. That is to say, in the custody of the Lord, by whichever name you may be calling Him. All the powers I have are for you; I am just the store, keeping them ready to be given to you, whenever you ask for them. I shall give Prema (Love) even if you do not ask, for it is your right to share in it.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Prasanthi Nilayam
September 29, 1960



Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai is the rocket scientist who worked in the American space program, developing the technology to solve the problem of soft landing of rockets on Mars. Dr. Jumsai told how he had solved the problem by going to the top of a mountain and meditating on it, during which he received the answer from a Higher Source.

God Controls Creation

By **Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

God controls Creation

While Truth holds sway over God

But Truth is subservient to a Noble One,

And such a One is the very Embodiment of God



Embodiments of Love! An individual has many experiences in the waking state. The same person has other distinct experiences in the dream state. In this latter state, the person creates everything he or she experiences—feelings, pleasure, pain, joy and sorrow. In the deep sleep state, the person is oblivious to everything worldly or imaginary, and becomes one with primary consciousness. Thus, under three different circumstances, the same person has three different types of experiences. Experiences may vary, but the transcendental being within is eternal and not subject to any changes. For example, a garland drawn on a piece of paper will never move, shake, or wobble with respect to the paper. The paper itself might be tossed violently by gusts of wind but the garland will always remain firm on the paper and not undergo any relative movement. Both the external circumstances and the thoughts of an individual may undergo changes, but the Divinity imprinted within will ever remain steady, constant and never undergo change. All aspirants must cultivate clear vision and constancy of mind.

The Human Body, Tungabhadra

The human body can be compared to a bamboo pole. The bamboo has many joints that interrupt the smoothness of the pole. For human beings, the six vices, namely, kama (desire), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (attachment), mada (pride, arrogance), matsarya (hate, jealousy), represent the bends or the joints. The human body has been referred to as tungabhadra. Why? “Tunga” means infinite and “bhadra” means auspicious. Thus, using the word tungabhadra for the human body means that the body is a reservoir of infinite auspiciousness. Everyone must be carefully introspective to check whether this sacred gift called the body is being properly used, misused or mishandled. Sage

Narada gave this name tungabhadra to the human body.

People mistake Narada to be someone who foments trouble. This is not correct. Such a view is imaginary and it is a distorted perception. Narada is the sage who has shown the path that can put an end to all sorrow. He radiates knowledge. It is Narada who knew the past, the present, and the future, and who was so dear to Narayana (God). It is Narada who gave this unusual name tungabhadra to the human body.

We have to make every effort to understand the sanctity of the body, use it for noble and sacred actions and derive bliss thereof. Human life should not be seen from purely worldly, material and physical perspective. Through intense inquiry, sages of yore unraveled the deeper significance of human existence. People, today, face misery because they do not make proper use of their bodies and do not live life, as it ought to be lived, that is to say, in the service of humanity. People are wholly preoccupied with themselves and their families. They have no thought for the community or the society in which they live. It is only when people become concerned with society will they understand why the human body is called tungabhadra.

Embodiments of Love! You are undoubtedly aware that human life is the noblest and the most precious of all. That is why the *Vedas* declare: “It is a rare blessing to be born a human being.” You must really appreciate this rare and precious human birth.

Indweller and Man Are One

Man is called Nara; this word has two syllables, “na” and “ra.” “Na” means no and “ra” means death. Nara means one who is deathless, imperishable and immortal. If you examine deeply, you will discover that the three words Nara, Narada, and Narayana, all represent the same thing—Narada (the sage), Narayana (God), Nara (man). You must ponder over the fact that man, who is intrinsically sacred, is now wasting and ruining his invaluable existence. God is not dis-

ting from man. Narada recognized the identity of man with God and declared that it was not required to formally worship God.

Man is not different from the indwelling God, and the individual is God himself. Goodness lies in seeing Narayana (God) in Nara (man). On the other hand, man today revels in seeing God as just man, and this is considered great. People think that it is important to achieve greatness. However, it is far more important to be good rather than to be great. The truly good see God in every human being. The evil, on the other hand, reduce even the Divine to mundane levels. Such a person can be described as Ravana who mistook God to be an ordinary human, unlike sage Narada, who always saw God in man. Every individual has divine power latent within.

Lessons from the "Ramayana"*

Students must carefully examine all such matters thoroughly. You must go into the deeper aspects of the stories you read. Take the *Ramayana* (the story of Lord Rama) for example. This epic reveals how the principle of unity can lead to bliss. However, emphasis on diversity leads only to unhappiness and sorrow. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrugna became renowned because of their strong sense of unity. Contrast this with Vali and Sugriva; they, too, were brothers. Both had to undergo suffering because of lack of unity. The Pandavas also illustrate how unity is strength. All the four younger brothers always bowed to the command of Dharmaraja, the eldest brother; they never went against his advice. The glorious example set by them in the Dwapara Age continues to remain a shining beacon even in this Kali Age. Disunity, discord and disaffection between brothers invariably produce pain and suffering. Unity, on the other hand, always paves the way for happiness.

The scriptures illustrate many ideals for people to live by. Ravana who went astray realized his folly in the end. He said, "People of this world! By yielding to lust and anger, I have brought ruin to all, including my sons. I could not conquer hatred and jealousy, and thereby lost all my relatives. Unable to understand the fundamental Truth, I further lost my sons. Do not repeat my mistake." This was the caution given by Ravana just before his death. Noble souls are very powerful because they have completely grasped the basic truth.

Ravana was mighty; he had done great penance. He had acquired multiple capabilities, physical, mental and even spiritual. In the end, of what use were all these various achievements? No use at all. He became a slave to attachment and hatred. Ultimately, he had to suffer and perish. There was not a trace of love in him. If, however, one instills love in his heart, one can emerge victorious even under the most adverse circumstances.

Where Is God?

The scriptures hail man as "Amritasya Putra," or the Son of Immortality. Unable to understand this truth, he has degenerated into "Anrita Putra," or the Son of Falsehood. You should be the child of immortality and not of falsehood. You should not merely love God but become God Himself. It is only when you experience love that you can begin to get a feel for who God is. Who is God? If you believe that God is far from you, He is definitely far away. However, if you earnestly believe that God is very intimate, and that He is the greatest friend of all, then He is as close to you as you are to yourself. It is a great mistake to believe that God exists only in a temple or a sacred place or in a pilgrim center. All this has been explained very clearly by noble souls who have experienced Divinity within. Traditional and ritualistic practices are certainly necessary to start with. It is like learning the alphabet when one learns a language. Once you have learned the alphabet—A, B, C, D—you can learn words like God. After learning words, you can form sentences. Once you can read sentences, you can then read an entire book. In the same way, wise men of the past initiated people to the concept of Divinity by advising them to visit temples, holy places, etc. This is rather like learning the alphabet.

The Mother's Visit

For every spiritual practice, there is an inner meaning, however trivial the practice might seem. Sainath [a teacher and former student of the Institute who spoke earlier] mentioned that even apparently simple things that Swami says are full of deeper meaning. He was speaking from personal experience. All the men who serve Swami—Sainath, Dilip, Satyajit, Patel, Srinivas—stay with Him in the Poornachandra [Auditorium]. At night, they sleep not far away from Swami, and nothing escapes their attention.

On occasions, departed souls visit Swami both during the day as well as at night. One morning, Swami returned to the Poornachandra as usual after bhajans. It was around 10:00 a.m., and He went upstairs. Sitting there in the chamber was Easwaramma, the [departed] mother of Swami. Baba asked her, "Why do you come like this? What would people say? Don't come like this." She replied, "Swami, this is your mother. What do you know about the love of a mother? Only a mother can understand my feelings. I am a mother, and you are God, full of love for all. A mother cannot understand God's love, and God cannot understand a mother's love! I have come here in order to tell you something." Swami then said, "Say quickly whatever it is that you want to tell; I have to go somewhere soon." Easwaramma pleaded, "Swami, I don't know what to do because you are always in a hurry!

Please relax, spare me a few moments, and listen carefully to what I have to say." Swami asked her to continue and she said, "The situation in the outside world today is not very good. Everywhere, it is bad thoughts, bad actions, and evil manipulations. You believe that people who come here are all full of love for you. It is natural for you to think so, but in my opinion, it is not always so.

When you give darshan, so many people offer handkerchiefs to you. I am frightened of this. Please accept kerchiefs only from those in whom you have complete faith; ignore the rest." Swami then asked, "Why are you making such a request?" And she replied, "For you, all are equal. Everyone is your child. However, some people are wicked. The kerchiefs they offer may have poison, and when you wipe your face, this poison may enter your mouth." Swami then said, "All right. To satisfy you, I shall henceforth be very selective."

Some days after this, Swami was resting at night. The boys serving Swami were all sleeping nearby. Around 1:00 a.m., the mother of this body visited once again. Swami motioned her to the bathroom, where the conversation took place. She began to speak loudly, and Swami cautioned her saying, "Shh! Speak softly; the boys are all sleeping nearby. If they wake up, they will know about your visit." Easwaramma said in reply, "Swami, why should I be afraid of them? I am afraid only of you

and no one else. I have not done anything wrong. Only those who have done some wrong need be scared. I have come here only out of my love for you and nothing else." Swami then said, "All right, now tell me what it is that you have come for." She then said, "Swami, yesterday was a festival day and you wore a new dhoti [a garment Sai wears under His robe]. To properly secure it, you went looking for a belt. You did not like any one of those brought to you because they all were rather ornamental." What she said was correct, and Swami did look for a belt. Easwaramma then continued, "Swami, why do you have to ask others? You gave me a chain just before I died. Here it is; take it and use it as a belt."

The day before her death, Swami had materialized a nice chain for Easwaramma because she liked such things. He then placed it round her neck. Next day, she gave up her body crying, "Swami, Swami!" After her passing away, her body was taken to Puttaparthi. Just before that, Ram Brahma, who was the caretaker in Brindavan at that time, said to Swami, "Bhagavan, she liked that chain very much. Let her be buried along with the chain." Therefore, the chain was not removed from the body before it was interred. She was offering this chain to Swami.

"You are undoubtedly aware that human life is the noblest and the most precious of all."

To send her away, Swami accepted the chain. Meanwhile, Sainath woke up. The slightest sound and all these boys wake up. Sainath began to wonder, "I am hearing voices. How could anyone have entered Swami's room? All doors have been locked; the lift [elevator] also has been locked and the keys are with me. How could anyone get inside?" Slowly the boys came near Swami. They all were scared, but Satyajit was courageous and gently asked, "Swami, we heard voices. Who was that?" Swami first said, "That is none of your concern." But seeing their concern for Swami's safety, Swami revealed who had come. Swami said, "The one who came was the mother of this body. She passed away over thirty years ago, before your time." These boys are all in their mid-twenties or so. The boys wanted to know what the lady had given Him. Swami then showed them the chain; they all saw it. Swami then gave the chain to one of the boys, and it is still with him.

Rescuing a Devotee

On another occasion, a woman in Simla suffered a massive heart attack. She had lost her husband and had to look after her two small children. She was suffering intense physical pain, and because of her children, deep mental anguish as well. It was 2:00 a.m. Swami left His body in order to save her. His body then collapsed and fell down, hitting the floor with a big thud. The boys heard the sound and rushed inside. They saw the body on the floor, seemingly lifeless. There was no movement at all. They tried to lift the head but could not. Imagine that! These four or five young men, all very strong, could not lift this little head. They brought towels to wipe the wounds if any, but there was no sign of any bleeding. Slowly, they understood; Swami was away on an extracorporeal trip in order to save somebody. They just sat there and waited for Swami to return. When the task was completed, Swami reentered the body, and the boys were very happy.

Many Experiences

The boys staying with Swami have had many such experiences. They are all extremely devoted to Swami. They never waste a single moment, and rush to Swami's side the moment their work is done. This is true of both those working in the institute and those serving in the hospital. On days when they feel that Swami may retire early, the hospital boys come back ahead of schedule, without having their meals. If Swami asks them about food, they reply that they are not hungry. Swami, however, does not accept such replies and arranges food for them. All these boys are very devoted to Swami, and Sainath is one of them. Swami does not wish to give publicity to these boys, but at the same time, the world must know about the loving care they give to Swami.

It is not possible to enumerate or describe what kind of experiences one can have with God. Divinity and God are not distinct from one another. Drawing attention to this, Sainath observed, "I and you are one." Even this is not a good way of putting things. "You" are not different from "I." There is only "I," and no "You." You are I, and I am you. God, the "I," is present in everything in creation, particularly so in human beings. The body is the temple, and the indweller is God.

Vishnu and Decorated Deities

It is popularly said that Vishnu is the one bearing the conch, the discus and the mace. What is the inner meaning of the words conch and discus? Conch symbolizes sound, and discus symbolizes the wheel of time. Therefore, when people say that Vishnu has the conch and the discus, it really means that God is Supreme Master of sound and time. One should not imagine God to be separate from oneself. All the powers inherent in the body are really in the control of God. Do not think God is separate from you and assign Him a separate form, and then start decorating that form.

About thirty years ago, B. Ramakrishna Rao—a great devotee of Bhagavan, who served as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, and later as Governor of Kerala and Uttar Pradesh—persuaded Swami to visit the holy city of Tirupati, where Lord Venkateswara is the presiding deity. At the temple, Swami was welcomed in the traditional style with full honors, and taken into the sanctum sanctorum, where the idol of the deity is installed. Mr. Anna Rao was then the Chief Executive Officer of the temple. Swami asked him, "Why do you disfigure this beautiful idol with so many decorations and ornaments? If the jewelry is removed, the Lord would look far more majestic. For adorning the idol with the conch and the discus, you apply wax and other adhesives and thereby disfigure the idol. The Niraakaara (formless one) is present here as Saakaara (the one with a form) but you are making Him vikaara (grotesque)!" B. Ramakrishna Rao then said, "Swami, I too do not like all these decorations, but then people always do this to suit their own pleasure." Swami then remarked, "It is better to leave the idol in its natural form." Anna Rao listened to all this but was unable to do anything. Decoration of the idol is not the proper way to see beauty in God and experience joy. Inner beauty is what gives true ananda (bliss), and such joy is the true fragrance of life.

God needs no decoration. However, the human form that enshrines Divinity has to be given due respect and treated accordingly. The human body has been given the name tungabhadra; is it proper then to display it, or treat it in an improper and inauspicious manner? Swami wears a gown so that almost all the body is covered. It is not possible to cover the hands, feet or the face.

Please turn to page 35

Psychotherapy or Sai-Cootherapy?

By **Chris Germer, Ph.D.**

I had a fascinating experience during a recent trip to Prasanthi Nilayam, which seems to address, at a profound level, the interface between psychotherapy and the message of the Avatar. I have been practicing psychotherapy as a clinical psychologist for 16 years and have known Sai Baba for 23 years.

Western psychology, by and large, does not accept the primacy of consciousness over matter, or that consciousness may exist without a physical body. Swami, in contrast, has been encouraging us to discover our true Self—the unchanging being, consciousness, bliss—that exists at a subtle level in all creation. Swami repeatedly reminds us that consciousness is the doer; the mind/body complex is inert without divine consciousness. What then, is the proper way to understand the practice of psychotherapy from this divine perspective?

While at Prasanthi Nilayam, I was often thinking of my patients and, in particular, a few patients who knew of Swami and wanted me to seek His blessings for them. Although I know Swami is aware of everything long before it happens, including writing letters, I decided to write a letter to Him for the satisfaction of my patients and myself. I listed some patients (first names only for confidentiality), their struggles, and my prayers for them. Additionally, I made a personal request to Swami for love in my heart and wisdom in my mind to better serve Him in these people. Swami graciously took the letter, saying “Very good” as He walked away. I released the matter into His care.

The next evening, at approximately 6:00 p.m., I was resting in my room, chatting with my roommate, and waiting for the dinner hour to arrive. After a short while, loud, anguished screams pierced the evening calm. The screams continued for over ten minutes, seemingly the voice of a terrified young Asian woman. I thought she was probably suffering from an acute psychotic episode of some sort. Could I help her? Numerous obstacles immediately came to mind. Perhaps she needs medication, but I am not a psychiatrist and do not carry psychiatric medication. I probably do not

speaking her language, nor am I familiar with her cultural circumstances. Furthermore, men and women do not mix in the ashram, so it might be inappropriate for me to speak with her. I also thought, what can a psychologist whose only skill is his words do in a situation like this? Perhaps the young lady has her family helping her already. . . .

The screams continued unabated. Suddenly, there was a loud crash by our altar in the adjoining room. I ran to the altar and was confronted by a terrific wind blowing through the window. Swami's picture lay on the ground, face up. This rather large picture had blown over, actually somersaulted, onto the floor. Immediately I heard my inner voice say firmly, “You, go!” I grabbed my shirt, pulling it on hastily as I rushed down the hallway in search of the screaming.

Curiously, I felt a strange sense of confidence in the midst of this flurry of activity. I thought that I was about to go through a drama that was entirely scripted by Swami. The outcome was predetermined. Additionally, I was touched that Swami would choose me for the job. What could I really do in this crisis since I only have words at my disposal? The great gust of wind that blew down our wooden-framed picture felt personal and awesome. As anyone who was in Puttaparthi in January 2000 knows, there was very little wind during that month. I blurted out, somewhat intimidated as I left the room, “This is a very powerful Swami!”

Swami could not have scripted the drama better. As I approached the door of the room with the screaming, the father of the young woman came out and asked who I was. When I responded that I was a psychologist, he immediately invited me in. At the same moment, a female psychologist from Italy passed by and offered to join us, thereby solving the gender problem. The terrified young woman was indeed Asian, but she spoke perfect English and calmed down as she spoke. On the advice of the Italian psychologist, we decided with the family that the best plan was to go to the ashram hospital for a tranquilizing medication. Our new patient reluctantly agreed.

The young woman panicked when we went outside to the car. She refused repeatedly, for almost half an hour, to enter the car. I prayed to Swami to change her mind, but to no avail. Finally, in frustration, I went to the Accommodations Office and appealed to the office manager for help. I explained our difficult situation. The office manager disagreed with my diagnosis, saying that it was probably a spirit, and spirits become agitated and troublesome at the ashram. Nonetheless, he joined me and spoke to the young woman with uncommon strength and clarity about how she must go to the hospital. Our patient quietly responded, "OK," and cooperated easily from then onward. We received the necessary medications, and the young woman returned to her room and slept soundly throughout the night.

The same evening and again the following morning I had a chance to converse openly with the family. I explained about the gust of wind and the tumbling photo that brought me to their room. The girl's mother was deeply moved, as was I, about how Swami worked out the details, personally and emphatically, to help their daughter. It was another example of the formless God acting very personally. The parents also shared with me their confusion about their daughter's illness, questions about the medications prescribed by her psychiatrist at home, and how helpless they felt in managing their daughter's psychiatric condition. Since this family was residing in an industrialized country, I could map out a preliminary treatment plan to guide them when they returned home. The family was planning to visit many different temples in South India to get blessings for their daughter, but they returned home the same day. They left Puttaparthi assured of Swami's omnipresence and more optimistic about the future care of their daughter.

A few days later, I met the accommodations manager elsewhere in the ashram and thanked him for the skillful way he handled the tricky situation by the car. He responded, "No, no, that was Swami! I do not talk like that. That was Swami!"

Of course, this leela (divine play) also left a deep

impact on me as well. It was a unique experience to spend three hours in the thick of a psychiatric crisis calmly (relatively speaking) surrendered to Swami. I had the distinct feeling that Swami was enlarging my vision. Good psychotherapy practice is not about filling my heart with love or my mind with wisdom, as I had requested in my letter a day earlier; in fact, it is not about me at all! Doctor, patient, circumstance, outcome—all these are the divine play. We are lifeless puppets except insofar as Swami places us on the stage and guides the play.

Swami says, "God gave you the time, space, cause, material, ideas, skill, chance and fortune. Why should you feel as if you are the doer?"

Back in Boston, I feel more appreciative of everyone who comes through my office door, knowing that each one is brought by Swami just as the young woman in the ashram. Casual events seem less circumstantial and more Sai-full. God does everything. As Ben Franklin once quipped, "God heals; the doctor collects the fee."

We all know how a devotee's divine feelings dissipate somewhat after returning to the States from a pilgrimage to India. A few weeks after returning from Prasanthi Nilayam, I was in San Juan, Puerto Rico. I was quietly reflecting on the episode recounted in this article and lamenting how the idea of chance events was beginning to replace my brief awareness of a completely divine universe. Within minutes of this rumination, a patient of mine from Boston spotted me from across the street and called out my name. It felt as though the divine doctor, Sai Baba, was delivering a booster shot to renew the precious medicine administered a few weeks earlier in India.

By Swami's grace, it is now clear to me that the work of psychotherapy, or any work for that matter, is exclusively the province of the Divine. The human mind, self, effort, and outcome—all these are the unfolding of divine consciousness. When we believe that selfhood is based in the mind alone, we practice psychotherapy. When we see ourselves as instruments of divine consciousness, we practice Sai-Cootherapy. However, at the most fundamental level, there is only Sai, Sai, and Sai. ❖

Five Maxims of Love

By P. V. Shankar, Ph.D.

I have had the greatest privilege of being at the lotus feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for over three decades. Words cannot describe our great fortune. Swami has given us a new meaning and purpose for our lives. Life without Swami would be totally unimaginable. Though Swami has talked to us about so many things, the one message that stands above everything else is the divine commandment, "Live in Love."

However, the concept of universal love always eluded me, because it was never clear to me how one really practices love. This confusion gets confounded, since most of us mistake love to be centered on a person or a thing. While personal love is based on attachment, little did I realize that there is an impersonal or universal love, which is based on detachment, compassion and the feeling of oneness. Swami lives this principle of universal, impersonal love day in and day out. But how do we emulate His conduct? How do we also practice unconditional love for the greater good of mankind and ourselves? It then dawned on me that Swami has been teaching this unconditional love in so many different ways, if only we had eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to appreciate.

I present to you five maxims of love from among the thousands of pearls of wisdom that Swami has taught us over the years. I am still trying to understand the significance of these teachings, and how I may derive bliss by putting them into practice. These principles that Swami is teaching are universal; they do not pertain to any religion, sect or stage in life. By following these guidelines of Swami, one can truly practice love at home, at work, in the community and the world at large.

1. Give More Than You Receive

Many years ago when we visited Swami, He asked me, "How much do you make?" Most of us especially from the U. S., feel it is awkward to answer questions like, "How much do we make?" "How much do we weigh?" and "How old are we?" But since Swami has come to break down our ego, He will directly ask the questions that we

shudder to answer. Nothing escapes his eyes. A well-nourished person is affectionately called a "pakoda." A person with a large moustache is called a "cockroach." A person who is short will be referred to as, what else, the "short man."

When I replied to Swami how much I made, He feigned great surprise and said, "Why are they paying you so much?" Then Swami added, "Do you work hard enough? You should always work twice as hard for what they pay you." Then came the general advice, "You should always give more than you receive."

I thought about it deeply and it made perfect sense to me that this is perhaps the first principle of universal love. Wouldn't it be nice if the husband feels that he has to contribute more for the happiness of the family, and the wife reciprocates in the same way? What if an employee feels that she should work much harder, and the employer at the same time feels he should reward the employee more? What if a leader feels that he should do more and want less recognition, while the followers feel that they should offer more respect to the leader?

Swami is the ultimate example in the sense that He gives and gives, and does not expect anything for Himself. We should start practicing love. By giving more and expecting less, maybe one day, we will be even able to practice the *Gita**, the ideal of "nishkama karma" or desireless action.

2. Appreciate More and Criticize Less

At another time, Swami was very upset with me. Swami, as the loving mother and the guiding father, spends His time molding our character and is always on the lookout to correct us in the most gentle, loving manner possible. Swami said, "Lately you have become very critical, and Swami is not happy with that. Also, Swami does not approve of it." I started to reply in my defense, when Swami interrupted, "I mean, you are thinking critically in your mind, even if you do not speak out. That is not acceptable. From now onwards, dare not think

critically of anybody. Always try to appreciate instead of criticizing."

I felt as if I was hit by a thunderbolt. I felt the Divinity that Swami is, and I was literally speechless. These words of Swami had a very profound effect on me. Though I still slip into my critical ways of thinking, I immediately remind myself of what Swami said. Thinking more about it, it is very clear to me now how a few words of heartfelt appreciation at the right time and right place would make life a joyful and loving experience. On the other hand, a few words of unwarranted criticism would ruin relationships for the rest of our lives.

A great Tamil poet, Thiruvalluvar, said, "A wound caused by fire will eventually heal, but alas, a wound caused by the tongue may never heal." Now I understand the seriousness with which Swami was admonishing me about the grave consequences of unwarranted criticism, and how it would seriously affect the progress of someone who wants to evolve spiritually.

3. Always Focus on the Positive

Swami has always talked about the importance of having a positive attitude. However, in the recent years, He has been talking more about it. Once, while I was commenting on the tremendous service projects that Swami has willed and initiated like the Super Specialty Hospital and the Water Project, Swami stated, "It is all due to a positive attitude. If your intentions are genuine and good, and you maintain a positive attitude, there is nothing that you cannot accomplish." Anyone, not just Swami, can accomplish great things, if he can maintain a positive attitude under all circumstances. Here is a small example: "If you drop a stone in a pond, the waves travel and eventually reach the banks. Similarly, if you have a noble and positive thought, it will generate its own waves, which will eventually result in great success. Be always positive. Positive will attract more positive, and negative will attract more negative."

Swami emphasized the same idea another time when He inquired about a recurring pain on the sole of my left foot. He looked at it and said, "Don't worry about it. Do not go to the doctor. Next time you get a shooting pain, remember that Swami is thinking of you."

What cannot be cured must be endured. Swami turned a negative situation around into a positive opportunity. So now, every time I get that pain, I get to think of Swami.

4. Control and Minimize if not Eliminate Anger

Another time, Swami was very upset with me, and did not seem interested in talking to me. Finally, when He did talk to me He said, "You have anger. It is not good." Before I could defend myself Swami continued, "Just because you do not express it openly, does not mean you do not have anger. I know you have it inside in thought form."

Once again, Swami simultaneously revealed His omnipresence and love at the same time. Swami also mentioned, "When one gets angry, the energy lost in a few minutes has to be recuperated over several months. Anger is the root cause of many diseases, and could ultimately ruin us."

Therefore, the message is very clear from Swami. One should initially try to control anger, and eventually eliminate it. Anger is one of the most dangerous enemies for spiritual aspirants. Anger and love cannot coexist.

Another time, Swami said, "I never get angry, but I pretend to be angry. Otherwise, the devotees will start riding on my shoulders. The other day, I went to the hospital, and did not like something there. I asked the doctors to measure my blood pressure, and it was perfectly normal. Immediately, I became Shiva and feigned such a terrifying anger, the doctors started running for cover. I ordered one of them to measure my blood pressure once more; it was still perfectly normal."

5. Conserve Your Thought, Word and Deed

Swami always says, "A great man is one who has absolute oneness of thought, word and deed." We are born with a certain amount of energy, and we expend it in terms of thoughts, words and deeds. If the thought, word and deed are in unison, we expend less energy on them. On the contrary, if the thoughts are at one place, words are somewhere else and actions are totally different, not only do we spend a lot of energy over these disparities, but also our life could become a total waste.

One day, I was walking back from darshan at Prasanthi Nilayam. Another devotee who had an interview with Swami that morning approached and asked me a question. The gist of it was that Swami had mentioned some other devotee in a particular way. This friend of mine wanted to know exactly what Swami meant by that.

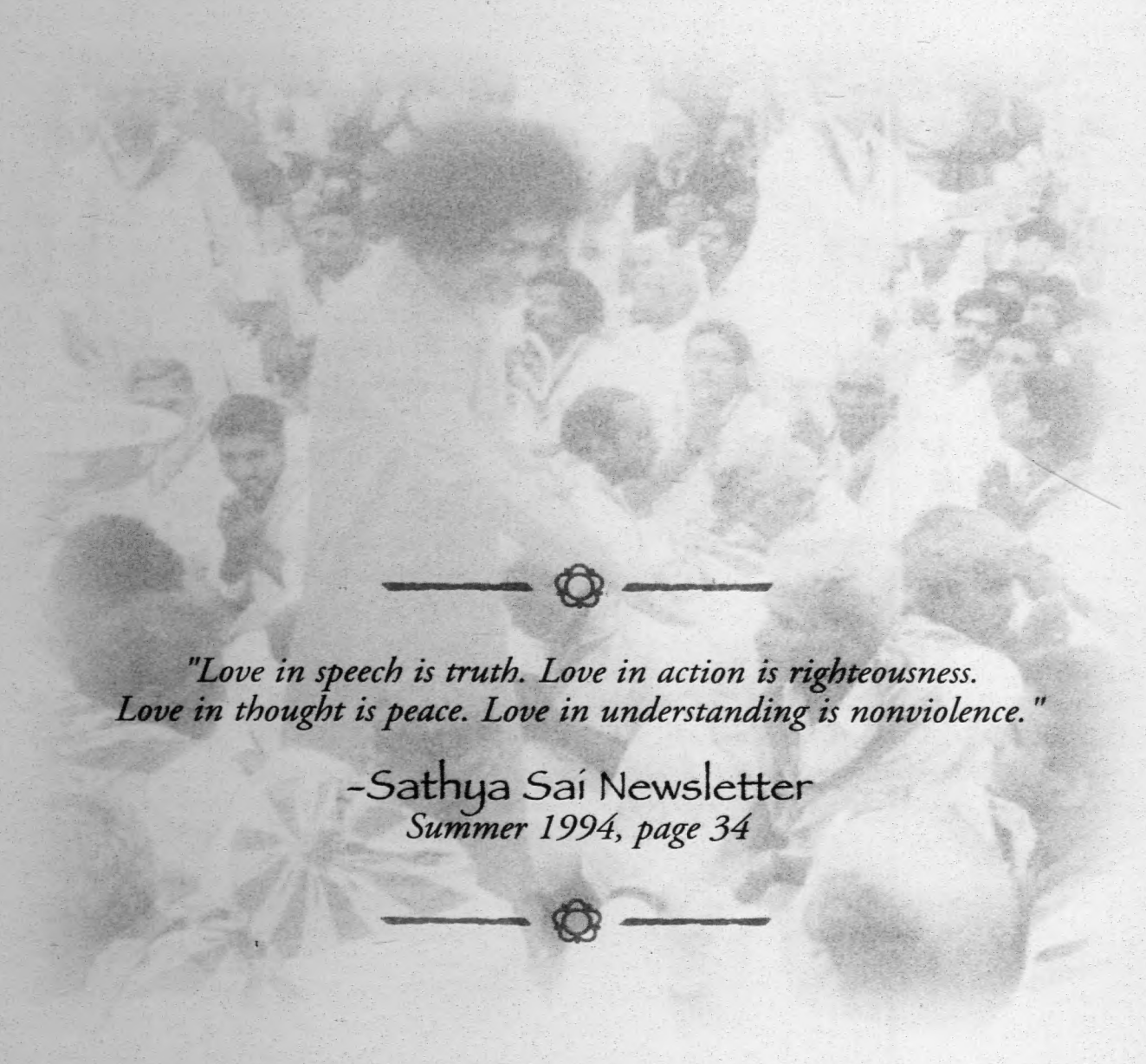
Under normal circumstances, I would not try to understand Swami, let alone explain what He meant. However, that day, due to my enthusiasm, I made the mistake of explaining to the other gentleman what Swami might have meant. When I was about to enter my room, I got a gut feeling that Swami would reprimand me very soon.

Sure enough, Swami called me for an interview that evening and took me to task saying. "If someone asks something about Swami, if you know the answer, you should answer briefly. If you do not know the answer, you should keep quiet. Why did

you go on and on explaining to the other gentleman what Swami might have meant?" Therefore, I learned my lesson once more. It is better to conserve one's energy in terms of thought, word and deed, not just about Swami, but about everything.

In conclusion, giving more than receiving is the very essence of love. Appreciating and not criticizing is the nature of love. Always being positive and hopeful is the foundation of love. Absence of anger is the blossoming of love. True love means total coordination of thought, word and deed, resulting in total absorption on the object of love.

We are all indeed very fortunate to live in an era when the very Embodiment of Love walks among us, talks to us, consoles and corrects us, and will ultimately liberate us by the sheer power of His Divine Love. ♦



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"Love in speech is truth. Love in action is righteousness.
Love in thought is peace. Love in understanding is nonviolence."

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-Sathya Sai Newsletter
Summer 1994, page 34
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*Gita refers to the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna's spiritual teachings to Arjuna.

The Power of the Gayatri

By **Krishnan R. Bala, D.D.S.**

It was a month before Guru Pournima* in 1999. I had not even planned to go to Puttaparthi, when Dr. Singh told me "I will see you in Puttaparthi, and you better make plans to be there." I called my brother-in-law, Ravi (Dr. Ravi Dabir in Syracuse, New York), and asked him to join me. He said, he couldn't because of his work schedule. A week later my wife had a dream and Baba said to her, "Why isn't your brother planning to come to Puttaparthi? Tell him to come." So, we were off to Puttaparthi, heading home to our beloved Mother Sai, to be in her presence during Guru Pournima. We had the good fortune to join a number of doctors volunteering for the medical camp at the general hospital. After darshan both Ravi and I went to the dental clinic to attend to some patients. It was a very satisfying experience.

The day after Guru Pournima, Swami called both of us for an interview. I need not say how excited and thrilled we were. Swami's love was overwhelming. He showered His grace and blessings on us. During the interview, we asked Swami if we could bring our sons to Parthi, and would Swami perform their thread ceremony.** Swami said, "Yes." He told us both to come for His birthday celebrations; that was in 1999. During that time, He said He would tell us the date for the thread ceremony. We were blessed to be present during the birthday celebrations. Two days later, during morning darshan, we asked Swami about the date for the thread ceremony. Swami said, "March 20, 2000 is a good day." Then he told us to come to Brindavan [His ashram near] Bangalore for the ceremony.

With family and friends, we were in Brindavan before March 20th. Swami called us in on that morning, and He materialized vibhuti and gave it to the three boys, Ravi and myself, and He told us to eat it. Then He made the three boys sit in front of Him, close to His chair. Swami started conversing with them, asking questions and explaining about the significance of the ceremony.

He said, "The thread ceremony is the second birth in the life of an individual, and Gayatri is the goddess who is the mother of the *Vedas*. Gayatri is

also known as Savitri and Saraswati. Gayatri is the master of thoughts, Savitri is the master of actions, and Saraswati is the master of words." Then He asked, "What is character?" Swami went on to explain, "When one acts in union with thought, word and action, then he possesses good character." Baba then said, "Thought, word and action should be one."

He then taught the three boys the correct pronunciation of the Gayatri Mantra, and explained the nine mantras in the Gayatri. Then, with one wave of His hand He materialized three "janvaras" [sacred threads], and gave each of the boys one. Swami said, "Om is your birthright. Anything you do is Om. Om is your key; it is all pervading. Bhur is all that you see on Earth, the material aspect, materialization, and it is all negative." Swami said, "Bhuvaha is vibration, and Suvaha is radiation." Baba went on to explain the biochemical composition of the body. He said:

"This body is made up of:

- Five lead balls,
- Ninety-two iron nails,
- Four bars of sunlight soap,
- One bucket of chunnam [calcium hydroxide],
- Two buckets of water."

It was so fascinating to all of us, that Swami explained the biochemistry of the body in such simple terms. Then He stood up and put the sacred thread on each boy. He had the parents stand close to the children while He narrated the Gayatri Mantra and blessed each family.

"Om Bhur Bhuvah Suvaha
(The Earth, the sky, the heavens)
Thath Savithur Varenyam
(The Divine Effulgence we all adore)
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi
(I contemplate on your divine glory)
Dheeyo Yo Nah Prachodayaath"
(Please enlighten my intellect)

Baba said that He was very happy to fulfill the desire of the parents. He told the boys, "Your parents have been asking God in many births to perform this ceremony. Now God has granted

them this boon.” This profound statement gave us all much bliss. Then Baba materialized three golden medallions with a wave of His hand and personally inserted each of them onto the children’s threads. He told them to say the Gayatri Mantra daily and never forget the significance of it.

Now, I must narrate an incident that will reveal the power of this mantra: It was the summer of 1994. At the request of a devotee from Moscow, 18 of us from Phoenix, Arizona visited Russia. It was a well-organized trip. The devotees in Russia were very kind and made all the plans. Every day, we would meet, and some of us would share Baba stories, teach the Russians some slokas, the Gayatri Mantra and devotional songs. It was a delight to spend seven days with those devoted people. There was so much spiritual hunger and eagerness to know more about Baba. We thanked Swami for giving us this splendid opportunity.

On the fourth day of our stay, we all went out shopping and sightseeing. In the evening we were to meet again to sing bhajans and share Baba stories. During the visit to the mall, Todd, Jim and I were walking together and decided to go to the evening satsang (pious comradeship of spiritual aspirants). Todd told us that he knew the way to go to the meeting and there was no need to worry about it. Subways are the popular mode of transportation in Moscow. But everything, including directions, is written in Russian.

Since Todd knew a little Russian, as he had stayed there for about four months, we were confident that there would not be any difficulty in getting to the meeting. As per Todd’s directions, three of us got on the subway. After about 20 miles, Todd wasn’t sure we were traveling in the right direction. All three of us got off at the next station, which was big and looked like a junction point. The subways in Russia are very beautiful, and were built during Stalin’s era. They are always fully packed with people, especially during the evening rush hour.

Todd said, “Well, I think we are lost. I can’t seem to find the name of the train which will take us to the meeting.” The three of us were walking, or rather being pushed forward by the crowd. Jim looked at me and said, “Bala, you keep repeating the Gayatri Mantra, and I will keep repeating ‘Om Sri Sai Ram’, and we will find a way out of here.” Both of us were chanting the mantra and the Lord’s name while Todd was looking for clues to find the way out of that station.

As we were going up the long escalator to the second level of the station, we entered a lobby that led to two different platforms. Suddenly, we were being pushed by the crowd onto the platform, and I practically collided into a lady. I apologized profusely in English, though the majority of Russians do not know English. The lady turned around and said, “Oh, Bala! You’re here! What are you doing here?” I was very astonished; I barely recognized her. I had seen her in an earlier meeting. Along with her, were her husband and a friend. I said to her that we three were heading to the Sathya Sai Baba meeting. She said that they were going to the same place, and led us to the correct platform to take the subway. Jim and I looked at each other in astonishment. Later, we shared the incident with everyone. The lady said that normally she never came through that station to catch the subway, but that particular day she ended up there. Now we can see the power of chanting the Gayatri Mantra and repeating the name of the Lord. If we chant them with faith and devotion, He will always protect and guide us.

It was a year after this incident. I was talking to a devotee and mentioned to her that I had lost contact with Jim. I told her that I did not know where he had moved after leaving New Mexico. She told me that Jim now lived in California. She added, “Jim has not forgotten you. He now owns a colorful parrot that sits on his shoulder, and keeps repeating ‘Sai Ram.’ And guess what? Jim has named the parrot ‘Bala!’” ❖

*Guru Pournima is a day set aside for devotees to honor their guru or spiritual preceptor.

**The thread ceremony or *upanayanam* is when the young boy is led to the guru for further instructions. It is a spiritual experience, and could be described as a rite of passage.

Returning Again and Again

By Jack Hawley, Ph.D.

Philosophy that cannot be understood, scriptures that are not practical—the present world has plenty of these—it is a waste to talk of them.

—Sathya Sai Baba



In this complicated, shifting world it is one thing to intend to do something and quite another to live up to it. As waves of change roll through, the setting alters and your mood turns, deflecting you to another place. What seemed crystalline in one situation becomes foggy in another. Then you forget, you lose your bearings and your strength seeps away. That's what happened to Arjuna. It happens to all of us.

But when we read the *Bhagavad Gita* (holy scripture) again and again, as all scriptures should be read, the words grow in us. We're first interested in the teachings, and then we become preoccupied and engrossed in the high ideals and ideas it conveys. After awhile the process of reading it becomes, as promised, an actual experience of the profound truths it brings. Each time we reopen this ancient guidebook this process repeats. Like a beautiful song, the *Gita* seems to thicken and grow richer and lovelier the more we return to it. Its messages gradually, surely seep into our innermost being, eventually penetrating and prompting every thought and act. It's as if we become a part of the *Gita*, and it becomes a part of us.

Thus, fully absorbed, we are opened up to the spiritual energy in this wondrous old scripture. We begin unconsciously, almost naturally, to put the teachings into practice. We actually are, for those moments at least, what the *Gita* prompts us to be: quieter, more aware of our highest Self, more active in the world and yet more selfless, more accepting, more successful, and ultimately more godly. "Substitute thoughts of divinity for worldly worries."

An experience during our recent trip to India illustrates how being immersed in the *Gita* (or any other high and holy message) can surely influence one's life. After 23 hours in the air and 12 airport

hours on the ground, having crossed 13 time zones and the international dateline (where, in an eye blink, 24 more hours were seemingly added to the distance already traveled), we finally arrived at the little airport at Puttaparthi. We were tired and a bit disoriented, but very happy to be "home." My wife, Louise, was like a little girl returning from summer camp. It was late August. Our plan was to stay here with Swami for six months.

We settled into ashram life and I became completely involved in writing this book. Louise, normally a rather non-domestic person, gladly slipped into her writer's wife role, which in her words is to "hold the space and fill it with love." This meant she moved quietly around our small flat, doing chores, feeding me, making sure the "space" stayed conducive to my writing.

She eagerly joined me each evening to go over my day's notes. We were thus utterly absorbed in the *Gita*—every minute, hour, and day, day after day, eating, sleeping, dreaming and breathing the *Gita*—reaching deeply into those old teachings to hone them for Westerners. The days rolled by quietly and predictably.

But this quiet orderliness was abruptly swooshed aside in late September when something happened to Louise. We were having our lunch. Suddenly her words slurred, her eyes defocused and her head rolled to one side. The food fell from her mouth, her tongue lolled, each breath became a sort of rattle. I held her, straining to infuse my strength into her small body, wondering what was happening and what to do. Should I call for help? How? There's no 911 here! Who could I call? We live in a fourth floor walkup; how could I get her down the stairs?

After a few minutes, she seemed to be surfacing from the wave of darkness that had swept her away. Maybe this attack was just a passing incident I thought hopefully. But as she came to and we began to talk, the wave surged again, submerging her. "Dearest, dearest, beloved Louise," I whispered as I cradled her, "what's happening to you?"

Our neighbor, a cardiologist at the new hospital down the road, immediately put her into

intensive care and began the IVs and life-support monitors and other processes used for stroke victims. The blankness in her brain continued to ebb and flow for awhile and then seemed to move out. She was conscious now but still couldn't think or walk straight, and her left foot wouldn't work, nor her right hand.

I was sitting on a folding metal chair drawn up close to her bed. The modern hospital ward's exceptionally high ceilings seemed to allow extra space for healing. Her eyes were closed. The nurses quietly moving about in their traditional nurse's caps added to the feeling of composure in the large, semi-darkened room.

In my own quiet, I heard Krishna's words from chapter 12, "Accept the knocks of life as blessings in disguise....Be unaffected by the bad or good things that happen to you."

One of Louise's lucid moments arose and she opened her eyes. "Hi," she managed weakly. I took her hand. "We have to accept this as a gift, Weez," I said, not really understanding what that meant. "We have to see this as one of those blessings in disguise." "Yes," she said. We were quiet for several minutes and then she slipped beneath another wave.

A "gift?" What does that mean? The word "acceptance" came to me, clearer now. I rolled it over and over in my mind, "acceptance . . . acceptance . . . acceptance." It took on more and more strength each time.

Then I became aware that I was feeling better, stronger now, more ready to handle this crisis. I was also a bit surprised to find my anxiety had left me. In its place was a quiet, almost subdued feeling. I felt a sort of still happiness in me. Happiness? At a time like this? There was no elation in it, but it registered internally as happiness. Maybe this is what bliss is, I thought.

The "Prasad" Zone

Suddenly, I knew that everything that was happening to her (us) at that point—or ever—was part of the universe's plan. I knew that no matter how things may appear to turn out, everything would be okay. This wasn't mere wishful thinking. I knew it, and was sure I knew it. It was palpable. I knew it deep in my physical being. And I was absolutely certain of it in both my mind and heart.

I referred to this mood of certainty later as a "Prasad Zone." Prasad is Sanskrit for "gift" or "grace." I found out later that prasad also means "divine favor," and "to become clear and calm." It all fit with what I was experiencing.

Indeed, I had become the serenity that comes with divinity. All uneasiness had been swept from me. Does that mean I was Divinity at those times? Perhaps. Krishna would say so.

Not once did negative thoughts enter my consciousness. I was distantly aware of the usual "what-ifs." (What if she doesn't make it? What if she can't live a normal life? What if I can't handle this?) But those self-doubts didn't take shape. Like wolves lurking in the dark beyond my circle of light, they were out there waiting to attack, but as I didn't dwell on negative thoughts, they never gained sufficient strength to close in on me.

Now, back in this "real world" assailed by the News-at-Eleven culture of fear, it's hard to imagine a mental state so free of negatives. But back there in that zone, I lived it. Clearly, my task at that point was but to accept and even welcome what had come, and to perform my duty in good spirits, and to not worry about the outcomes.

This aura of harmonious acceptance had completely enveloped me. Nothing worldly bothered me—the tropical heat, electrical outages in the dark early morning when I was hurrying to shave and get to the hospital, missed taxis, skipped meals—none of those annoyances impinged on that calm state.

An even greater gift: Louise was in the exact same place! Her version of the Zone was to be absolutely sure that all was well and not to worry one iota about herself or her body. Although tethered to the machinery of modern medicine—tubes, monitors, injections, CT scans and such—she spent no energy or attention on her physical health. She watched with detached interest and participated as necessary, but was totally unfazed. No fretting, no fears; she was in constantly good spirits, possessing the openness and easiness of mind necessary for the healing energy in her body to carry out its work.

It was as though the *Gita's* teachings had come alive, as though Krishna himself had come up out of the book to take care of us, reminding us in chapter 2 to "Be unperturbed by sorrow and adversity." Or it was as if our own Swami, Sathya Sai

Baba, (whom millions believe to be the Avatar of this age, the modern incarnation of Krishna) had reached out to touch our hearts and remove our pain and worry. Or perhaps we had actually been transported, as the *Gita* teaches, into serenity itself, which we now know is no less than Brahman, the Godhead.

Looking back, we see now that it was our total absorption in the *Bhagavad Gita's* teachings that really counted, not just the *Gita* itself. The *Gita* was the vehicle, the guide, but it is our fusion with it that brought the spiritual power. Our extraordinary strength flowed from living the messages and being these wondrous teachings for a while.

We remained in that curious zone for several months as Louise pulled through her crisis and began to recover. I learned to be a passable care provider, chief cook and bottle washer. My *piece de resistance*: great toast and tea.

During that time, we lived so close to Divinity that we all but became it. Some people misread my serenity and assumed I was in shock or in denial, or they would comment that I'm "taking it well." Everybody was surprised that Louise seemed so

well. (The old joke comes to mind: "You look terrific, you must have been sick.") We knew, privately, that it was due to our being so immersed in the *Gita*, but we seldom said anything. It is hard to explain acceptance this high.

Even now, a year later, with Louise almost recovered—"miraculously," people tell us—the Zone is still with us. It is not as intense, but surely present. Maybe the *Gita's* teachings, once imbibed, do indeed last forever.

Krishna's final message comes to mind: "Now listen to the most profound secret," He said, "to the highest of all truths which is this: Fix your mind on me [God]. Give me your whole heart. Revere me always. Make me your very own, and you shall merge in me...."

At the end of this sacred text the ever-honest Sanjaya* finished his narration of this inspiring God-to-human dialogue and was clear that he would continue his own immersion in it. He reminded himself (and us) to return often to this divine song, this *Bhagavad Gita*, and rejoice again and again. ❖



"It is a textbook of righteousness in all its aspects. The Bhagavad Gita discusses all the principles underlying righteousness. Arjuna is the individual. The body is the chariot. The teacher, charioteer or driver of the chariot is Krishna, the Lord, the inspirer of divine intelligence. The Kauravas represent demonic nature; the Pandavas represent the Divine. One is evil; the other is good; there has [always] been a struggle between the two. In this conflict between opposing forces, Krishna is ever on the side of righteousness...If you seek to have the Lord on your side as your guide, equip yourself with the divine nature, the qualities of righteousness. For the Lord is where dharma or righteousness is."

—Sathya Sai Baba
Gita Vahini, Chapter I



*Sanjaya was Dhritarashtra's charioteer, who was granted by Sage Vyasa the gift of having a cosmic vision of Lord Krishna and of the whole Mahabharatha War between the Pandavas and Kauravas, during the course of which, Krishna gave the *Bhagavad Gita* to Arjuna.

Permission to reprint this article from *The Bhagavad Gita Walkthrough for Westerners* by Jack Hawley has been granted courtesy of Sheree Bykofsky Associates, Inc., New York, New York, as represented by Georgia Hughes, Editorial Director.

Swami likes to play on words and often jests with His devotees. Some years ago, a physician from Canada arrived late one afternoon at Trayee Brindavan (Swami's residence near Bangalore). One of the devotees who took this gentleman to the ashram, introduced him to Swami. The devotee introduced the doctor to Swami as a well-known radiologist. This happened just before the evening bhajans. Swami warmly welcomed the doctor, and asked him to sit with the college students. He asked the physician to sing a bhajan during the session.

The doctor was thrilled beyond his wildest dreams with the warm welcome he had received and could not believe his good fortune when Swami asked him to sing. When it was his turn to sing, he began with great enthusiasm. The devotees could not believe their ears; even Swami looked shocked. In mock disbelief, He looked at the physician who was, by then, totally absorbed in his singing. Baba let the physician sing for a few brief moments. Then Swami gestured with His hands asking the doctor to stop right away. Of course, the doctor had no idea what had happened. Why this

sudden reaction? His singing left much to be desired in melody, rhythm and rendition. At the very least, it was simply bad. Except for him, everyone else was aware of the problem. The doctor was in bliss that the Lord had asked him to sing during the bhajan session.

Right after the bhajans were over, he rushed to call his wife who was still in Canada, to tell her the good news. She was not willing to listen to him, as she wanted to tell him her story first. She told him that after he had left home to visit Prasanthi Nilayam, Swami had made His presence known in their home. Swami's photographs in the shrine were full of vibhuti. She was ecstatic about it. She, too, was delighted to hear of his good fortune.

The next morning, Swami called the devotee who had brought the physician, and scolded him, asking why he had brought such a terrible singer and introduced him as "a wonderful radio artiste." The gentleman said, "Swami, I did not say he was a well-known radio artiste; I said he is a well-known radiologist." All those who were present around Swami had a hearty laugh. ❖



"God is the echo of the hills, the flutter of the leaves, the whisper of men, the babble of children, the Om that is wafted everywhere. God is present at all places. There is nothing except God. Nature is His manifestation. Man must recognize God in all human beings and in all else that exists."

—Sathya Sai Speaks
Volume X, page 203



Sathya Sai's Growing Impact on the World Stage

By **William M. Harvey, Ph.D.**

Sathya Sai Baba has proclaimed for Himself the task of "leading humankind back upon the path of righteousness." He has been at this mission for over 50 years, and there now exists ample evidence to assess the degree of success His efforts have reaped. Each day, thousands of visitors from all parts of the world visit His ashram which is located adjacent to the tiny village of Puttaparthi in South India. The vast majority of these visitors may be described as spiritual aspirants who believe that by coming into the physical orbit of Sai Baba they will derive immense spiritual benefit. Some, of course, come only out of curiosity. Regardless of the conscious motivation, it would appear that virtually all who come subsequently demonstrate a positive change in their day-to-day behavior once they return home.

Around the world on November 23, 2000, followers of Sathya Sai Baba will celebrate His 75th birthday. The biggest celebration will take place in Prasanthi Nilayam (the official name of the ashram complex at Puttaparthi), where well over a million devotees are expected to participate in the five-day event. Concurrently, the International Sathya Sai Organization will hold its Seventh World Conference. These conferences take place every few years, and involve representatives from the Sathya Sai Baba Centers that have been formed in over 160 countries.

Community Service Projects

Typically, Sathya Sai Baba Center members meet one or more times a week. The program usually includes group devotional singing called bhajans, reading and reflecting upon Sai Baba's spiritual teachings in a Study Circle format, and about ten minutes of silent contemplation or meditation. In addition, many of the center members participate in one or more center-sponsored community service projects, such as: visiting the aged in hospitals or nursing homes, preparing and distributing meals to shut-ins and homeless persons, cleaning up economically depressed neighborhoods, and a variety of other projects.

The rationale is that selfless service is a spiritual practice in the same sense as chanting names of

God, meditating, praying, scripture reading, etc. Sathya Sai Baba indicates that rendering selfless service may be a superior spiritual practice to all the rest because it does so much to reduce feelings of self-importance. Selfless service also tends to destroy the illusion that we are fundamentally different from and more worthy than certain of our fellow human beings. He says that when we give food to a hungry person or perform a kind act to someone in need, we are the real beneficiaries. In other words, He advises that we are serving God in the form of that person.

It is also recommended that their acts of selfless service begin at home, with family members. Only when this is done in a loving and consistent fashion should they expand their efforts to the wider community. He takes the point even further and urges devotees, "not to depend on others to serve your personal needs," and "to become your own servant before proceeding to serve others." Thus, we have an excellent example of the integrated nature of His teachings. One should attend to spiritual as well as worldly matters. Accordingly, the burden one places on society is reduced, exploitation of others is minimized and a good example is set.

Sathya Sai Young Adults

Young adult members of the Sathya Sai Centers, in addition to participating in the regular center programs, conduct a number of special service projects aimed primarily at handicapped and socially disadvantaged youth. One of the more interesting examples of community service project has been taking place in New York City over the past year and a half. It involves the teaching of computer skills to disadvantaged youth by Sai Young Adults. Basic human values are promoted. However, no mention is made of Sathya Sai Baba, nor is there any attempt to recruit participants into the organization.

The project recently expanded to include immigrant youth. It has drawn extremely positive comment from public school officials and others deeply interested in finding ways of narrowing the alarming "digital divide" that is increasing across



the nation. (See *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*, Autumn 2000, page 26)

Establishing Examples for All

We gain an even more illuminating picture of Sathya Sai Baba's growing impact on the world when we examine what is taking place around Him in India. Top government officials not only from that country but also from many other countries, come to pay their respects to see firsthand the social wonders He is inspiring. Visitors find literally dozens of examples of positive social change models when they arrive. At present, three stand out: the Educational system, the Healthcare system, and an incredible feat known as the "Water Project."

A Model Educational System

The building of His educational system began, in India, over 35 years ago and extends from the primary grades right up to the advanced graduate studies level. There are Sathya Sai Colleges in several states. The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning is the first university to be awarded accreditation since Indian Independence in 1947.

It would be difficult to overstate the significance—politically, socially and spiritually—of the educational system that Sathya Sai Baba has put in place. In order to appreciate the situation better, it may be helpful to recall what took place around the world in the two decades following the end of World War II. This was a time of unprecedented socio-political changes being played out against the backdrop of the cold war. On the one hand, fantastic advancements were occurring in the fields of science and technology. Practically every nation experienced various forms of severe social and civil unrest. Youth became more out of control, prompting intense soul-searching on the part of parents and educationists in every country.

What was needed was the development of a model that could be shown to actually work. This is the great contribution of the model educational system that has evolved under the inspiration and watchful eye of Sathya Sai Baba.

Sai Baba asserted that the major cause for the country having come to such a deplorable state of affairs was that "Education of the spirit has been totally neglected, while attention is devoted to the

training of skills and for gleaning and garnering information." He did not advocate reversing the trend, but rather giving equal attention to both, saying that students must develop personal integrity and become good citizens. "The educational system of a country," He says, "is the bank on which the nation draws a check whenever it requires strong, reliable, skilled workers. If it goes bankrupt, as ours has very nearly done today, it is a national disaster. If the system is overhauled and lubricated, the next generation is assured of good leaders and, what are equally essential, good followers. Education does not imply mere acquaintance with books. It is the process, which purifies the inner self. . . Education fosters a person's ethical and spiritual wealth, sustains his character and teaches him to eschew selfishness and imbibe the spirit of sacrifice. Today, however, education is promoting only selfishness and is making people slaves to their senses. Real education must teach one how to master the senses and keep them under control. Education should enable the individual to manifest the innate divinity of humanity."

We may note how practical, functional and patriotic Baba's philosophy of education is. According to Him, one must develop love and devotion towards one's motherland and cultivate individual and national character.

"We must love the land of our birth as deeply as we love our mothers who gave us birth. Besides developing the two-fold aspects of character, one must cultivate discipline. However intelligent a person may be, his education will not bear fruit if discipline is absent. Discipline is essential for all citizens, not only for boys and girls. It steers life in every occupation, whether it is in an organization, a political party, the army, or in a trade or a profession."

The students at the Sai colleges and university rank highly on national standards examinations, and are eagerly sought after by businesses, industries, and the professional fields. Though the quality of teaching is of the highest caliber, observers are astonished to discover that the education is free, whether the student is enrolled in primary school or studying for his or her Ph.D. degree. Enrollment is open to all, regardless of class, status or economic background. Forty percent of the students come from the surrounding villages, which are generally quite economically depressed.

The playing of sports and vigorous physical exercise are required of the students, as is weekly participation in some form of village charitable service. As such, the body, mind and spirit are nourished in equal proportions.

The system has attracted the interest and attention of not only Indian educators, but also their counterparts in other countries. A major international conference was held at Prasanthi Nilayam in the fall of 2000. Top educators in the area of character development from over 100 countries, along with some of their respective government observers attended.

The Healthcare/Hospital System

Medical treatment is becoming more specialized and the costs continue to soar. Citizens of even the wealthiest nations can no longer afford it. Well-to-do people can have their entire savings wiped out because of a single illness. This alarming situation is compounded and more acute in the less industrialized countries, India included. However, once again, we find that Sathya Sai Baba has undertaken to demonstrate a positive way to meet a health crisis that is afflicting the world.

For many years, the Sai Organization has been sponsoring various types of free medical camps in rural areas of India, Africa, Southeast Asia, and some western countries. The basic format is that certain doctors, nurses and other support personnel who are Sai devotees deliver medical screening or treatment for one or two days in a particular area. The services provided in these camps are free, yet they are of the highest quality.

Good healthcare, like quality educational opportunities, should be available to all according to Sathya Sai Baba. The poor should not be denied these birthrights. This is also the case with so-called catastrophic illnesses such as heart disease or kidney failure. Perhaps it was with this in mind that Sathya Sai Baba set about to bring into existence a Super Specialty Hospital in the remote rural environment of southern India. On November 23, 1990, during His 65th birthday celebrations and the Fifth World Conference of Sathya Sai Organizations, Baba announced that a Super Specialty Hospital would be built and be in operation exactly one year from that date!

No one knew anything about it, and no plans had been made to try to accomplish such an

impossible sounding endeavor. More than two months passed before the initial plans were drawn up to be presented for His approval. But how could they meet such an incredibly short deadline? By all accounts, based on our experience in the West, the construction would take five to seven years. Yet, Sathya Sai Baba had declared publicly that not only would the hospital be built, but also the first operation would be performed precisely one year hence!

The saga of what transpired over the next few months, in terms of securing an architect, procuring equipment, and recruiting a medical staff, makes for fascinating reading or listening. Miraculously, everything came together, and in November 1991 the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences was opened with an impressive inaugural ceremony presided over by the Prime Minister of India.

This hospital has to be seen to be believed. It is a truly marvelous structure, with the latest and highest quality scientific and medical equipment. The staff, too, is of the highest caliber, totally dedicated, and filled with compassion. Countless visitors describe it as a "healing temple." It is a model for serving humanity.

The day the 300-bed hospital opened, not one, but four open-heart surgeries were performed, all successfully. Initially, cardiology and cardiothoracic surgery, with all its ancillary and support services were put in place. One year later, the uro-nephrology department was commissioned. In November 1993, the unit for kidney transplantation was inaugurated. The following year, the ophthalmology department was started.

Statistics released for the period of inception through the end of 1999 show that almost 9,000 heart operations have been performed, over 5,000 on open-hearts, of which more than 1,000 were coronary artery bypass grafts. In addition, there were some 8,000 cardiac catheterizations performed, and over 10,000 operations have been performed in both urology and ophthalmology. Remarkably, the infection and mortality rates are extremely low, and would be envied by most hospitals.

The national board of examinations of India has approved the Institute for training and accrediting specialists in cardiology, cardiothoracic surgery, urology and nephrology. The hospital's esteemed medical director recently

reported that it is becoming a center for postgraduate studies and medical research to demonstrate to the medical community of the world "the path on which future medical education and research has to run for the betterment of mankind." He says that there are plans for the establishment of departments of neurology, microsurgery, ear-nose-throat, pulmonary medicine and oncology. It is also worth noting that two international cardiology symposia have been held at Prasanthi Nilayam.

As is the case with all projects bearing the Sai name, there were no public appeals made for donations or funding assistance either for construction or for maintenance of this modern day wonder. Like all services associated with Sathya Sai Baba, there is no cost to the individuals who receive these services. In other words, this very expensive and high-tech medical treatment is provided to those who need it, absolutely free. Sathya Sai is reported to have commented that there was a special reason for building such a high quality, state-of-the-art hospital in a remote rural area, rather than in a big city. The reason is, "That is where the people who need it are." He was referring to the fact that most of the patients cannot afford even the transportation costs to reach a large city.

However, as impressive and breathtaking as this Super Specialty Hospital is, it has been announced that a second Super Specialty Hospital constructed on an even grander scale, is to be inaugurated this November 2000, just outside the city of Bangalore, close to Sathya Sai Baba's ashram at Whitefield.

The Water Project

Safe drinking water is something that has become scarce in every country. It is truly a basic human need. One can do without food for much longer periods than one can do without water. People in certain areas of the world, because of frequent severe droughts or environmental contamination, find themselves without access to this vital necessity. The government has found itself helpless to bring about any improvement in this grave situation. Once again, we find Sai Baba coming forth to meet a critical societal challenge. Deep wells and pipelines have been provided to millions.

In November 1994, during the celebration of Sathya Sai's 69th birthday, while delivering a public discourse in the presence of the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Minister of the

state of Andhra Pradesh, Sathya Sai Baba referred to the lack of safe drinking water and offered to do what the government had been unable to do. He pointed out that to dig irrigation canals, which had been suggested, was not the best solution. Instead, Baba proposed bringing safe drinking water through secure underground pipes rather than through an open canal system. Of course, this would be a prodigious undertaking, requiring the cooperation of national and state authorities, and major engineering and construction firms.

Officially dubbed the "Sri Sathya Sai Water Supply Project," it consists of four schemes:

1. Infiltration wells, collection wells and associated pumping behind a balancing reservoir,
2. Direct pumping from a second balancing reservoir, and treatment through rapid sand filtration system,
3. Storing water in seven summer storage tanks ranging up to 100 acres by tapping water from a canal,
4. Drilling deep bore wells, constructing storage tanks and installing pipeline networks.

More than 700 villages, previously without water, are benefiting. Other states in India and many countries throughout the world, in addition to the World Health Organization, have taken a keen interest in this amazing and previously unthinkable project. Once again, a concrete model has been established to demonstrate that what appears to be astronomical costs need not be a hindrance when it comes to meeting the life sustaining needs of people. ♦

A Historic Occasion

By **Prof. N. Kasturi**

The following is an excerpt from "Sathyam Sivam Sundaram," Part III by Prof. N. Kasturi where the professor describes one of the most memorable and momentous occasions in the history of humankind—Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's discourse given in May 1968 in Bombay, at the First World Conference of the Sathya Sai Organization.

The First World Conference of those who chose to accept Baba as their Master and Preceptor was to be inaugurated on 16th May 1968, at Bombay, in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Campus. Baba declared that this was the first time in the history of the world that a World Conference of the devotees of an Avatar was being held in the immediate physical presence and under the direct supervision and observation of the Avatar Himself. As delegates streamed into the hall that day at sunrise, they found a friendly fragrance beyond all memory, a warmth of welcome seldom known before.

...The public meeting at the campus held later in the evening was attended by over a hundred thousand, and Sai could be seen seated firmly in the hearts of every one of them. The Deputy Prime Minister of India, Sri Morarji Desai presided over the meeting...Baba began His address in Sanskrit.

Professor Kasturi writes: He had directed me to translate His speech into English and I stood behind a mike at the other end of the dais. However, as 'the language of the Gods' flowed so mellifluously from those divine lips, I was almost struck dumb with admiration and apprehension. How, I wondered, am I to canalize this surging Ganga into the Thames?

Soon, Baba continued in Telugu: "The body is the shrine in which the 'I' is installed; the country is the temple of the 'We', the collective will; the world is the temple of the 'He', the sum total of the 'I' and 'We'."

"This is a gathering of people of all faiths and so it is fitting that I assert here that every faith is but an endeavor to cleanse the impulses and emotions, as part of the process of discovering the Truth, both seen and unseen. The search is for the same treasure, the summit is one, only, the tracks are

many. The guides too are many, clamoring and competing for pelf and prestige," Baba said.

"Even those who swear that they did not find any trace of God in the depths of space, or who aver that God is dead, or that even if alive, He has outlived His use for man, that He has ever been a handicap and a costly nuisance for man—these too have to admit that there is something inscrutable

beyond the reach of reason, something which pervades the world and reveals in Love, renunciation and service. That something is God," Baba declared, in the course of a rousing discourse on the Divinity inherent in the universe.

Baba continued, "This Conference is the confluence of three holy streams—the Atmavidya which the delegates and visitors held primal for successful living, the satsang provided by the aspirants from all races and religions, and the basic principles of Bharathiya culture which the Bhavan helped them to remember."

Baba spoke on the grandeur and glory of the name of God, be it any name, and the steady influence for good its repetition generates in the individual. "In this age of materialism, the constant repetition of the name of God is the one hope which man has, to rise up to Him or to bring Him near. Repeating the name brings down grace; Meera quaffed the cup of poison with the name on her tongue; it turned into nectar. Sanctify every minute of your day and night with the unbroken recollection of the name. I do not want you to think that I desire this Name and this form to be publicized. I have not come to set afoot a new cult. Know that this Sai Form is the form of all the various names that man has used and uses now, to identify and adore the One Divine. So, I teach that no distinction should be made between the names—Rama, Krishna, Ishwara, Sai—for, they are, all of them, My name. Of what avail is it if you

*"I must tell
you about my
reality because
ninety-nine out of
every hundred
among you do
not know."*

worship my name and form without attempting to cultivate 'samathva,' equal love for all that I have, my 'shanti,' unruffled equanimity, my 'prema,' love, my 'sahana,' forbearance and my 'ananda,' perpetual state of supreme bliss? Many of you plead for a message from me! Well, my life is my message. You will be adhering to my message if you so live that your lives become evidences of dispassion, courage, confidence, revealing eagerness to serve those who are in distress."

Bhagavan cast His grace-filled eyes on the thirsty faces before Him, eager to drink in the Truth, He was vouchsafing to pour into their hearts. Suddenly His eyes softened in compassion. His voice rose, the speed of His words doubled and trebled. Every one present sensed, almost instinctively, that a great moment of their life had come. In ecstatic thrill, they prepared themselves to listen to a great Revelation, to a benediction that the world can hope to receive but rarely in its history.

He said, "Gathered here today are people who have devotion, people from all sections of society; I must tell you about my reality because ninety-nine out of every hundred among you do not know. You have come here drawn by diverse needs or interests, by a taste for spiritual matters, by eagerness to develop the institutions to which you are attached, by admiration or affection, by love or reverence or loyalty, or just by a spurt of enthusiasm to join others in their exultation or to share with them your own.

"In truth, you cannot understand the nature of My Reality, either today or even after a thousand years of steady austerity or ardent inquiry, even if all mankind were to join in that effort. But, shortly, you will become cognizant of the Bliss showered by the Divine Principle which has taken upon itself this sacred body and this sacred Name. Your good fortune in having this chance is greater than what was available to the anchorites, monks, sages and saints, and even to the personalities that embodied facets of the Divine Glory!

"Since I move with you, eat like you, and talk to you, you are deluded into the belief that this is but a human phenomenon. Be warned against this mistake. I am also deluding you by singing and playing with you and engaging myself in activities with you. But, any moment My Divinity may be revealed to you; you have to be ready, prepared for that moment. Since Divinity is enveloped by humanness, you must endeavor to overcome the

maya (delusion) that hides it from your eyes.

"This human Form is one in which every Divine Entity, every Divine Principle, that is to say, all the names and forms ascribed by man to God, are manifest (*Sarva daivathwa swaroopalanu dhaarinchana maanavaakaram ee aakaaramu*). Do not allow doubt to distract you. If you only install in the altar of your heart steady faith in my Divinity, you can win a vision of my Reality. Instead, if you swing like the pendulum of a clock, one moment of faith, another of doubt, you can never succeed in comprehending the Truth and win that Bliss. Fortunate are you, that now, in this very life, you have a chance to experience the Bliss of the Vision of the *Sarva daivathwa Swaroopam*, the Form of all Gods in all Forms.

"Let me also draw your attention to another fact. In the past, on the occasions when God incarnated on earth, the Bliss of recognizing Him in the incarnation was vouchsafed only after the physical embodiment had left the world, despite plenteous evidences of His grace. Moreover, the loyalty and devotion which those incarnations commanded while in the physical embodiment, arose through fear or awe at their superhuman powers and skills or at their imperial and penal authority. But ponder for a moment on this Sathya Sai Manifestation. In this age of rampant materialism, aggressive disbelief and irreverence, what is it that brings to It the adoration of millions from all over the world? You will be convinced that the basic reason for this is the fact that this is the supra-world Divinity in Human Form.

"Again, how fortunate you are that you can witness all the countries of the world paying homage to Bharath; that you can hear, even while this Body is existing, adoration to the name of Sathya Sai reverberating from the nooks and corners of the world, even when this Form is amidst you, with you, before you."

The thrilling declaration stunned the delegates, and as they left the hall and reached their rooms, each one found inches added to their height, for each felt blessed with a unique vision. Often had Baba spoken of His being the Incarnation of God, of being God Himself in human form, but this time He had so emphatically identified Himself with all Names and all Forms of God that man ever molded in his mind in the course of his history on earth. ❖

The Cosmic Conductor and the Cardiac Surgeon

By Choudary Voleti, M.D.

I came into Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's cosmic fold only recently, about seven years ago. My experiences parallel the experiences of many devotees, but with some singular and unique personal variations. Almost every personal experience with Bhagavan is of monumental proportions; and I would like to share a few of them. Like every devotee who falls into His orbit, the first experience is the most perplexing, as no mortal is prepared for that cosmic encounter. Over the past seven years, His teachings have been permanently etched into my conscience. His 70th birthday, which I was extremely fortunate to personally enjoy, was an event of celestial proportions. I am eagerly waiting to have the same fortune, with Bhagavan's blessings, to be a part of the 75th birthday, just like many of His millions of devotees.

In His cosmic creation, we all have a predestined role to perform, completely orchestrated by Him, including the minor details. I have to thank my parents for instilling a religious attitude in my life from my childhood. My father was very instrumental in my choice of profession as a physician. Bhagavan's invisible hand has constantly guided me in achieving my dream of becoming a cardiac surgeon. Finally, His Super Specialty Hospital brought me into His cosmic fold. During my very first visit to Prasanthi Nilayam, I had the rare privilege of "darshan" (seeing a holy being), "sparshan" (touching) and "sambhashan" (hearing) with Bhagavan; since then, I have been completely enveloped in His cosmic radiance. In that brief encounter, I could feel that He sees through you totally in a three-dimensional way—past, present and future—as well as the fragile mortal framework. As I started to relive the details of my first encounter, His Divinity dawned on me, and since then, it has been a completely new life for me. I never have to look back again.

As a practicing cardiac surgeon, dealing with life and death situations in daily clinical practice, one can be easily lulled into a super egotistical frame of mind and it can transform one into a full-blown prima donna. A popular anecdote about cardiac surgeons poses the question, "How many cardiac surgeons does it take to screw in a light bulb?" The

correct answer is, "One!" We cardiac surgeons are firmly convinced that the whole world revolves around us, so all we have to do is hold the bulb. This was pretty much my frame of mind before my encounter with Bhagavan. He repeatedly tells the professionals and the academicians that ego, especially the intellectual ego, is the most difficult to conquer. However, slowly and steadily, I was able to surmount this major flaw. Now I have the conviction and the courage, under any critical clinical situation to seek divine guidance, and share my firm belief in God with my patients and their families. Before starting every surgery, I momentarily fold my hands, close my eyes and silently pray to God for guidance. This prompted one of the cardiac anesthesiologists to remark that he has seen many cardiac surgeons, but none who momentarily folded his hands and looked at Bhagavan's picture in the operating room before making the skin incision. This has become an integral part of my algorithm.

Bhagavan says, "Jealousy is another bad habit difficult to overcome." Since entering His orbit, I am able to control that attribute. At first, in my selfish opinion, it was difficult to accept why someone has all the material advantages and seems to be enjoying a life that he does not deserve. Slowly, I realized that I have no right to be judgmental about anybody. Once I realized that simple truth, it became very easy to accept others who seem to be prosperous, lucky and fortunate. It was gradual, but nowadays, I have evolved a step further, and instead of jealousy, I feel genuinely happy when I see people acquiring and possessing wealth or achieving success in their lives. Bhagavan repeatedly stresses that bad habits are very difficult to get rid of, and good habits are difficult to cultivate and maintain. He repeatedly emphasizes that we should not procrastinate, but should get rid of bad habits instantly.

Recently, during an interview, Bhagavan narrated an interesting episode. He said that Dr. Gokak, the first vice-chancellor of His University* and a great devotee, though an evolved soul had the bad habit of using snuff. Bhagavan sternly warned Dr. Gokak about this bad habit and

Dr. Gokak immediately got rid of that habit. Next day, Bhagavan was wiping His lips with a handkerchief and found red stains from His own habit of chewing betel nut. After admonishing Dr. Gokak, Swami stopped chewing betel nut from that day on.

In the past, I regularly ate meat and consumed alcohol on social occasions. Since I entered Bhagavan's fold, I have become a total vegetarian and completely stopped drinking alcohol. Though I am a cardiac surgeon and realized the deleterious, long-term effects of animal fat consumption, it was Bhagavan's dictum that made me get over my bad eating habits. Fortunately, I have never smoked in my life.

Anger is the next bad habit Bhagavan emphasizes that we should overcome. Bhagavan was saying one day that it is the basic animal instinct in all of us that invokes anger. He suggested that instead of expressing anger in public, one should immediately go into a room alone and repeatedly say to oneself, "I am not an animal, I am not an animal." Fortunately, from my teenage years, I always felt that if one gets angry one is hurting himself and ruining his health. The most important aspect of Bhagavan that I really love and admire is His principle, "My life is my message." For one week, I was fortunate to stay with Bhagavan at His Kodaikanal abode, Sai Sruthi. Bhagavan stayed upstairs with 37 of His students and four of us stayed in the downstairs bedroom. He worked from dawn to dusk, and dusk to dawn. He consumes less than 300 calories a day. His weight has been 108 pounds for the last 55 years. He reads all His mail everyday. At the age of 75, He can still read small print with the naked eye. When I had asked Him about these physiological aberrations, He revealed two very important aspects. First, He creates energy, and we consume energy. Secondly, He has never used any of His divine powers for His own physical body; He achieves both of these by the principle of "mind over matter." That also explained how He was able to walk and give darshan five days after His hip fracture. Bhagavan's unique disposition is one of constant happiness. Recently, during an interview, He explained that the basis for this divine state of equanimity is due to the three Ps: "Purity, Patience and Perseverance." He strongly emphasized that these three attributes are achievable by everybody with constant awareness. The end result would be the

three dimensional person, with "trikaranasuddhi," meaning complete integration of thoughts, words and actions.

Bhagavan repeatedly reminds us that self-confidence is the stepping stone of life. Self-confidence leads to self-satisfaction, which helps to develop self-sacrifice that leads on to self-realization, the ultimate goal of human life. The two strong pillars on which my personal life stands today are faith and surrender. Both are very easy to acquire but extremely difficult to constantly believe in. Let me tell you about two experiences that have consolidated my faith and consecrated my surrender:

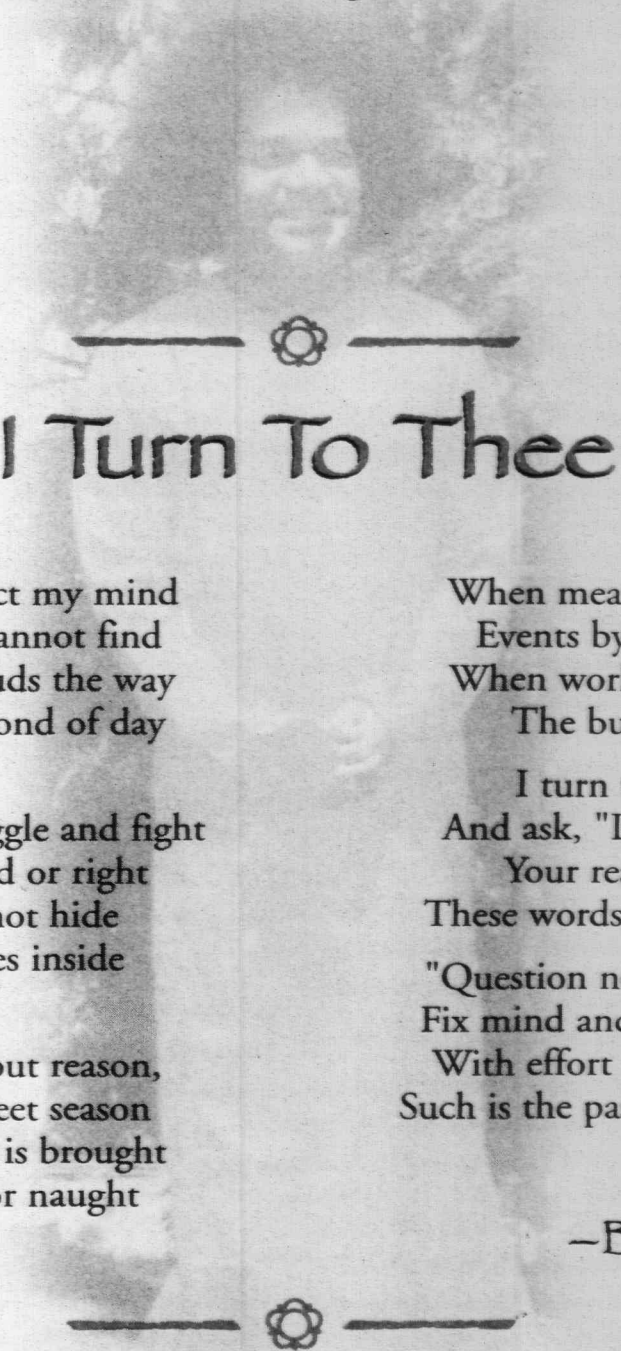
During one of my visits to the Super Specialty Hospital, Bhagavan asked us to take care of one of His longtime devotees. The man runs an orphanage for handicapped children in one of the African countries. He had blockages in all three major arteries supplying blood to his heart, severely compromising the blood supply to the heart. The morning of the surgery, Bhagavan instructed us to rush to the hospital and start surgery at 7:30 in the morning instead of the usual 9:30 starting time. We rushed to the hospital and out of my own curiosity, I asked the patient about his condition. He admitted that he was having severe chest pain the whole night. I asked him if he had informed the nurse or the doctors. His sincere reply was, "No, but I was praying to Bhagavan." With Bhagavan's grace, his surgery went well, but if we had delayed the surgery that morning, he could have had a fatal heart attack. After the patient had sufficiently recovered from surgery, I asked him what his last words were before going under the anesthesia; he said, "Sai Ram." After taking out the breathing tube in the afternoon, his first words were again, "Sai Ram." This man has totally surrendered to Bhagavan and that is how Bhagavan takes complete care of his life. I also know that three years before this surgery, the patient had a cardiac arrest, without pulse or blood pressure and Bhagavan totally revived him. That is the power of surrender.

In a similar fashion, Bhagavan had demonstrated the power of faith to me during my next visit to the hospital. This time, a seemingly healthy 61-year-old retired gentleman wanted to spend the rest of his life in Bhagavan's service. Bhagavan told him to take care of his health, and then he could serve Him. The patient had only one health problem, an

ear discharge. Therefore, he decided to undergo a minor ear operation. Lo and behold, the routine tests before the ear operation revealed that he had serious heart problems. An angiogram of the heart showed that he had severe, life-threatening blockages in all three major arteries of his heart. When Bhagavan came to the hospital to bless him before the operation, Bhagavan made a very powerful statement that really opened my mind. Bhagavan told the delighted patient, "It is your praapthi (what is rightfully deserved), and it is my duty." The operation was successful and barely 72 hours after, on the day of Mahashivarathri, Bhagavan instructed me to bring the patient to the ashram for darshan. We brought the patient just before

Bhagavan's discourse and Bhagavan walked straight to the patient and gave him a leisurely darshan. I couldn't believe the power of faith until the patient later told me that he was praying to Bhagavan from his intensive care bed for His darshan on that holy Mahashivarathri. This is an example of how a devotee can tie down even an Avatar with his relentless faith.

We are all aware of the fact that this Avatar is an Embodiment of Love. One day, in the interview room, Bhagavan said that all He expects from His devotees is just love and that is His protein. Love Bhagavan unconditionally and you will, in return, experience His bliss, the ultimate goal of humankind. ♦



I Turn To Thee

When doubts darkly distract my mind
And small passing joys I cannot find
When disappointment clouds the way
And dulls the bright diamond of day
I turn to thee

When those around me struggle and fight
With no sense of the good or right
When empty faces cannot hide
The anguish desire drives inside
I turn to thee

When all is well, yet without reason,
Emptiness invades the sweet season
When all the profit to loss is brought
And efforts seem to be for naught
I turn to thee

When meaning and purpose are lost,
Events by random tempest tossed
When worldly means cannot enclose
The burden of the inner foes

I turn to thee, I turn to thee
And ask, "Lord Sai, please answer me
Your reassurance I now seek."
These words I then did hear him speak:

"Question no longer to place the blame
Fix mind and heart on God's holy name
With effort success must come in time
Such is the passage from human to divine"
I turn to thee

—By Hal Honig

*Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning

For a more detailed account of Dr. Voleti's experiences, may we suggest the book, *Inspired Medicine, Sai Baba's Influence on Medical Practice*, compiled and edited by Judy Warner.

I Offered Something to God

By **S. K. Upadhyay, M.D.**

Based on a talk given by Dr. S. K. Upadhyay at an Interfaith Meeting in London on June 20, 1998, this article describes the highest miracle of Sathya Sai Baba—that of individual transformation.

I would like to share with you an experience I had many months ago. I call it “transformation.” It is wonderful how Swami changes the nature of His devotees. Sometimes He gives Himself the most difficult people to change. One such person is a professor I have worked with for the past 22 years; he is a top ophthalmology scholar, the best in his field.

Over the past few years, he had often said, “I am going to India. When can I see Sing Baba?” He could not even pronounce “Sai Baba.” I always answered, “The time has not yet come for you.” But I really did want him to meet Sathya Sai Baba because I owed him something special. As my professor, he taught me a wonderful eye surgery technique. With Swami’s grace, I have taken this technology to several poverty-stricken areas. My mission is to restore eyesight to people. When they open their eyes after surgery, they can see nature—a gift of God. When the bandages come off their eyes, they totally believe that God exists.

I had a deep desire for my professor to someday meet Sai Baba. To my concern, the professor had a rather grand notion of Sai Baba’s ashram. He imagined it was like the Vatican. He thought that when he got there, he would have an interview and sit down to talk with Baba. My teacher has operated on the eyes of many very important people in the world. Wherever he goes, he is greeted with great respect and receives red-carpet treatment. He expected the same to happen when he met Sai Baba. I tried to explain that Sai Baba’s way is very different.

Thanks to an organization called Care and Share International Research Foundation, we acquired a new machine that gives instant relief to cataract sufferers. It is especially beneficial for poor people, since a person can have a cataract operation in the morning and go back to work the same day. Thus, a breadwinner does not lose wages. Swami happily accepted the machine for His hospital, and it was scheduled to reach Prasanthi Nilayam in July. Our team went to Puttaparthi to set it up, but it did not

arrive on time. Swami told us to go back home. But I said, “Swami, the machine is on the way. It is definitely coming.” Swami replied, “I know better. It is not coming—definitely. Go home and return in November.” I waited—one day, two days, three days, four days—but it did not come. Then we left. Swami knew best. The machine arrived, finally, at just the time Swami had predicted.

By that time, Swami had heard my professor’s prayer. When I asked Swami if he should come, Swami agreed that my old teacher should accompany me. When I broke the news to my professor, he showed tremendous excitement. Then he instructed me to book him into the best five-star hotel with a swimming pool. Alarmed, I tried to explain: “Sir, we are going to visit a beautiful, divine ashram. We won’t be in a five-star hotel. The only swimming pool will be the pool of love.” “Oh, I’m sure there’s a big town nearby,” he replied. I mentioned Bangalore. “How far is it?” he asked. “A hundred miles.” “Fine, I drive that far every day from my home in Camberly to London. I can stay in Bangalore and drive to the hospital in Puttaparthi every morning.” I tried to describe driving in India, which is not the equivalent of a trip from the suburbs to London. However, my professor was not at all sure he wanted to stay in the ashram. I was worried. As the time approached, my excitement at taking him to see Swami turned to nervousness. I prayed, “Swami, I am bringing my professor, but I don’t know if he will fit into your discipline. Should we cancel the trip?” But Swami knows best.

We planned to travel on November 4th, but when I called the professor on November 1st, I found out that he was in Gibraltar. He returned November 3rd, and I asked if he had his visa. “No, you are arranging the visa.” “How can I arrange a visa without your passport?” Secretly, I felt relieved because now I thought I could cancel the trip. Then I remembered someone who could obtain a special visa for him. But the professor dropped a bombshell: His wife wanted to go, too. She had

never even been to a Sai meeting. I was worried. I asked, "Where is her passport?" "It's in Camberly," he replied. "She will fax you the information." "Sorry," I told him, "the high commission will not issue a visa on a faxed passport." "But I must go, Swami is calling me," he replied. "Then Swami will have to perform a miracle," I said.

Immediately, two things happened. Friends came to see me, and I asked them to pray for me because I was so nervous. Fifteen minutes later, the High Commissioner of India came to the clinic. He told me he heard that I was leaving town, and he wanted to consult about his eye problem before I left. I assured him that we would only be gone for a few days, but he insisted that something had told him to come that day. "I will have to see you later on," I said, "I have a problem." "What's the problem?" he asked. I explained that I urgently needed visas. He made one phone call, and 40 minutes later, someone arrived at my door with the visas. That is how Swami works. Nevertheless, I still had some worries because I had overheard the professor ask his wife to go to an expensive London shop to buy wine to take to India. "Is that necessary?" I asked him. "You said there were no good drinks available there, so we want to take our own," he said. "But, you can't drink in the ashram." "Why not? Even the Pope shares wine with people." "But you are going to the Divine. 'Di' and 'vine' means no wine!" The professor told me not to worry, that everything would be all right. I worried.

When I got home that night, my wife showed me a fax from a friend. It was a beautiful message of Swami, "My son, why worry? He is my guest. I will look after him." I felt as if a burden had been lifted. I sat right down and thanked Swami. But He continued to test me. Within an hour, the professor called to ask if we were going first class. I told him our group always travels economy to save money. "You should have told me," he said, "I never travel economy class. I'll take my checkbook to the airport and change my seat." I doubted that he could make a last minute change. He sounded very unhappy. To make matters worse, at the airport the next morning, all our hospital paraphernalia put us far over the weight allowance—by 200 pounds! "We must take everything," I told the Air India receptionist. "It is all for Swami. If you don't take it, we can't perform eye operations." The receptionist said she would

see what she could do. She returned shortly, "Are the professor and his wife in your group?" "Yes," "Fine," she said, "They are first-class passengers, so you are allowed the additional weight." "How did they get first-class tickets?" I asked. "I don't know," she replied. "I just received a fax saying they had been promoted to first-class. Everything was in order, Swami had arranged for the professor's upgrade.

We arrived in Bangalore at 3:00 in the morning and I was eager to start for Prasanthi Nilayam. I hoped we would get there for the morning darshan. When I reach India, I have only one thought—to see Swami. I never stop to rest in Bangalore. But the professor said, "I am feeling tired, I need a few hours sleep. Can you find a hotel for me?" "Everything is filled," I replied. "You can rest at the ashram." However, convinced that he would not be able to concentrate on the operations, the professor insisted that he needed to rest. We found a hotel nearby for him and his wife. I was upset because I had nothing to do except sit and wait for him to wake up. I tried to find out what was happening in Prasanthi Nilayam but had no luck. What Swami wills cannot be changed. I had learned this lesson time and time again. Still I wanted to push my luck and go as soon as possible.

The professor woke up around 11:00 in the morning. I prayed we would make afternoon darshan, but halfway to Prasanthi Nilayam, he wanted to stop for a drink. "No, no," I said, "The drinks here are no good. They could be polluted and you have had no vaccinations." But we had to stop. Finally, at 4:15 p.m., we reached Puttaparthi. All the people in the accommodations office were at darshan. We left the taxi outside the ashram and went inside. One of our friends who was arranging accommodations was with us. He guided us to the mandir (temple), and the professor sat right in front on the veranda. Wearing his best suit, the professor was sweating and puffing. Everyone was looking at him.

Swami came out and invited us into the interview room where some friends of ours from Russia were also waiting. Swami asked the professor how he was. "Sir, I am fine," he replied. He spoke to Swami as if He were a person, calling Him "Sir." Swami said that since the professor was not used to sitting cross-legged, he could stretch his legs out. "There are no seva dal (volunteer) workers here," He said, "so you can be

comfortable. Inside you will be all right." Swami was very kind. He switched on the fan and we sat down. I wanted to speak to Swami about the professor's accommodation problem. I began, "Swami, he . . ." Swami interrupted me, "You keep quiet. Do not talk," So I kept quiet. Then Swami turned His attention to a young Russian who was sitting next to Swami's chair. He materialized a beautiful ring upon which was carved the sacred Om. Instead of giving the ring to the young man, Swami threw it to the professor who caught it. "What do you think it is?" Swami asked. The professor looked at the ring and said, "I don't know exactly what it is, Sir, but it is some sort of holy sign. I recognize it because Upadhyay uses it each time he starts something new."

Swami said, "In the West, you say that the world started with the big bang. This is the same primordial sound from which the whole world came. It is called Om. Say it with me, 'Om.' "

I did not realize that Swami was doing this to initiate him. At that moment, the professor was sitting with his legs stretched toward Swami, I felt very uncomfortable because I did not think that was correct behavior. But the moment I tried to open my mouth, Swami silenced me, "Keep quiet." Suddenly, as the professor said, "Om," his stretched legs folded and his hands came together in reverence. He said, "Yes, Swami."

Swami told us the following morning we should start the operations and train the doctors at the Super Specialty Hospital in the new technique. Gradually, everyone got up and left. "Where is the professor going to stay?" I asked Swami. He smiled, "There is no problem. He will stay in the ashram." I also asked about the wine and He said, "Leave it outside." I did not understand what He meant. He added, "Come tomorrow morning; I will give more instructions."

This marked the first time I left Swami's room utterly confused. Here He was, telling him to stay in the ashram, yet the professor had said he did not want to stay there. However, when I went to join him, the professor said, "It's foolish of me to think about staying somewhere else. I will stay in the

ashram. I just want a room with a bathroom and a fan. That's all, nothing else." Total transformation! "What about your wine?" I asked. "Let the taxi man have it," he said. "Just get our luggage and leave everything else outside." That was what Swami had meant by, "Leave it outside."

The next morning, when we came for darshan, Swami had arranged for us to sit near His door. The professor asked, "Is it possible for my wife to see Swami also?" "That's up to Swami," I answered. "We don't even know yet if He will see you." "But Swami said He would see me" the professor replied. "When Swami says He will see you tomorrow,

His tomorrows are sometimes very long," I told him. "It could be next year; it could be next life. He may see you. He may not see you."

"No," said the professor. "This morning I prayed deep inside, and I could hear Swami say, 'Yes, both of you.'" Swami came and asked both of us to go inside. The professor whispered, "Ask about my wife."

"You don't have to ask God for anything; He knows everything." But Swami did not give us a chance to speak further.

Suddenly, He turned to us, "Yes, yes, call your wife," He said. The professor had no idea how to call her. He asked how to do it. "Just stand and wave," I suggested. "But how will she know I am calling her?" "You have only one wife," I said. "No one else will come." He had never done such a thing in front of thousands of people. He raised his arm tentatively, and then stopped, thinking she must have seen him. God only knows how she spotted him. However, she came forward and we went inside.

Swami spoke to several people, and then turned to the professor's wife. "What do you want?" I could not imagine why Swami would ask her that question because she had never known about Sathya Sai Baba. I had no idea what she would say. To my utter surprise, she responded, "Swami, I do not want anything. After looking at you, I just want your grace." Swami materialized a beautiful pendant with His picture on it and gave it to her. Then He turned to the professor and materialized a ring for him, saying, "This ring is a communica-

*"It took so long
for you to come to me.
You have been
thinking of coming for
the last 20 years. The
time has come. You are
a kind man; now work
for mankind."*

tion ring. Whenever you want to speak to me, speak through it." As the professor stared at the ring, I nudged him to pay attention. Swami continued, "It took so long for you to come to me. You have been thinking of coming for the last 20 years. The time has come. You are a kind man; now work for mankind." How Swami plays with words.

Swami took them to the inner room. After 20 minutes, they emerged and Swami said, "Go straight to the operating theater." I asked the professor to wait for me since Swami had told me to stay back.

"What is your problem now?" Swami asked me, "No problem, Swami, I leave everything to you." He spoke at length about the eye operations and the new machines. "Make sure that in the evening I get a report of what is happening," He said. "Also, make sure that before you leave, my surgeons are as well-trained as you two, so that they can do the operations on their own." I was about to tell Swami that it had taken us years to learn the skills; I was going to ask Him how His doctors could possibly learn them in three days. Before I could speak, Swami said, "Do not worry about time and space."

When we came out, we passed a woman sitting in a wheelchair. Swami asked her why she had not come inside. "Swami, you closed the door," she said, "and no one was here to lift me up from my wheelchair." "Wheelchair? Why are you in a wheelchair?" He asked. "Swami, I can't walk," she said. "Who said you cannot walk?" Swami was standing outside the interview room with 10,000 people watching. He extended His hand to the woman and said, "Hold my hand and get up." The woman stood up and Swami pushed the wheelchair away. "You can walk now," He said. The professor was absolutely astonished. He did not know what to say. He did manage to say, "Swami, it would be nice if you could come to the operating theater." "Oh, yes, I will be there," Swami replied.

We went directly to the Super Specialty Hospital, changed, scrubbed, and went to the operating theater where a patient and all the instruments were ready. But the professor sat waiting. "What are you waiting for?" I asked. "Where is Swami? He said He was coming." "Yes, Swami said He was coming. He is here, but not necessarily in a physical form." "No, no. He told me He was coming." And the professor—with six patients wait-

ing and a staff eager to finish work so they could go to afternoon darshan—refused to start. So I said to him, "You start and I will find out what's happening." I changed and went out.

I needed to speak to Swami. But you can't just pick up the phone and call Him. I went to the little shrine room and prayed, "Swami, he won't start without you. Please do something. Either come yourself or give him a sign to start the operation." Then I headed back to the operating room. When I walked in, the professor turned to me, "I think we should start. Swami will probably come halfway through. He is very busy." I thanked Swami.

During the operation, something unusual happened. After a cataract is crushed by ultrasound and removed, the next step is to insert a new lens, called an implant. The moment the professor lifted the implant, Baba walked into the room. The professor was speechless, and for the first time, I could see tears in his eyes. He told me he would finish the operation, but I would have to instruct the doctors on the procedure. "I simply cannot speak," he said, "I am in total bliss." The operation was completed beautifully, and the professor found that Swami had left him a message. "Do not rush back; carry on with the second session also. I will see you tomorrow." We proceeded with all the operations. Swami had selected the very poor, those who could never even dream of having expensive eye surgery.

If you were to visit the professor at work as a private surgeon in England, you would see a mad house. Patients and doctors from every nation in the world come to confer with him. Normally, a person waits hours to see him. Yet there he was, operating on the world's poorest people with great happiness and bliss. He was a totally transformed man. After the session, he told me something beautiful. "I have operated on some of the richest men in the world," he said, "but I did not get this much satisfaction. Today, after operating on people so poor that they don't even have decent clothes to wear, I feel I have offered something to God."

Afterward, Swami spoke to him and said that He would see him again. The 24-hour bhajans had just started in the mandir. The professor came and sat with me. As before, he had put on his new suit. I asked him why he did not wear something more comfortable—a simple kurta pajama or light

trousers. "No," he replied, "I heard Sai Baba tell someone, 'Do not try to change yourself; be yourself.' Do I ever wear kurta pajamas in England? No. If I go to meet the Queen, or the Pope or the President of the United States, I go in the best suit possible. I am going to meet the Lord. It doesn't matter whether I feel comfortable or uncomfortable; I should be in my best suit."

The bhajans started, and the professor sat waiting for Swami. After an hour and a half, I noticed that his legs were getting cramped from sitting cross-legged for so long. I said, "I'm sure Swami won't speak to you until tomorrow when the bhajans are over. Why don't you go ahead on your trip?" He and his wife were scheduled to go to Bangalore, so she could do some shopping. Afterward, they planned to go to Ooty and Mysore to see some historic places.

While he was away, I planned to stay and enjoy the bhajans. At 8:00 p.m., realizing that Swami would not see him that night, the professor left for Bangalore with his wife. The next morning, however, he said to her, "I don't feel like going out. I have come here for a purpose—not for sightseeing or shopping. You go ahead; I would like to sit here and read some Baba books." His wife left with a friend, and the professor stayed in the hotel. That evening, they went to bed early. But at 10:00 p.m., the professor awoke suddenly and asked his wife if she had heard anything. "Yes," she said, "I heard Baba say, 'Come back.' " He had heard the same thing. They agreed that the next morning, instead of going to Ooty, they would return to Puttaparthi.

Meanwhile, when the bhajans were finished, Swami gave us prasada (sacred offering) with His own hands. He said to me, "Start the operation at 8:00 a.m. tomorrow. He is coming back." "But Swami, that's not our plan." "No, there is a reason for the change," Swami answered.

The professor and his wife got up at 4:00 a.m., and arrived at the ashram at 7:59 a.m. Swami told us to go to the hospital right after darshan. "Everything is waiting for you," He said.

We understood the reason why we were needed. The surgeons did not feel confident enough to do the operations on their own. We worked intensely all day. At 4:00 in the afternoon, we asked the head doctor if he felt more confident now. "Yes, now I am happy," he replied. We watched him perform an operation on his own, and he performed it perfectly. We rushed to Swami. Like a mother, He was waiting. Darshan was over, but we got there in time to take padnamaskar (touching the feet of a holy person). Then, Swami explained, "I called you because I knew they were not ready to do the operation independently. Now the program is complete. That is why I said to him, 'I'll see you.' " The professor had been worried that Swami would not see him before we'd leave for home. He took Swami's padnamaskar. Then, Swami said, "Do not worry. This is your home. You can come any time." So saying, He blessed us.

The professor is working to organize a mission that will take Swami's message and the new technology from village to village. When Swami touches someone, the transformation is total. ❖



"The Avatar, or form incarnate, is only the concretization of the yearning of the seekers. It is the solidified sweetness of the devotion of godly aspirants. The formless assumes the form for the sake of these aspirants and seekers."

—Sathya Sai Baba
Bhagavatha Vahini, page 2



Printed courtesy of Sai Sarathi, edited by Deepa Awal.

For further reading of Dr. Upadhyay's experiences, may we suggest the book *Inspired Medicine, Sai Baba's Influence on Medical Practice*, compiled and edited by Judy Warner.

Children's Corner: The King-Servant or Master

By **Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

A king was talking with an old friend. He said that he, the king, was the master. The entire country and its citizens were his servants. He did not need money, and all authority was vested in him. He did not have to yield to anyone for anything. He was not a servant to anyone. Hearing all this, his old friend laughed and said, "O king, you are mistaken! From a king to a pauper, from an illiterate to a saint, all are servants. There are no masters. God is the one and only master. If you think that you are the supreme Lord, you are wrong. That is a sign of foolishness. You and I and everyone else—we are all servants." Hearing this the king asked his friend, "Can you prove all this to my people? I shall give you two days time. Ask the people and find out from them whether I am master or servant. If you cannot prove what you say, I shall send you out of the country."

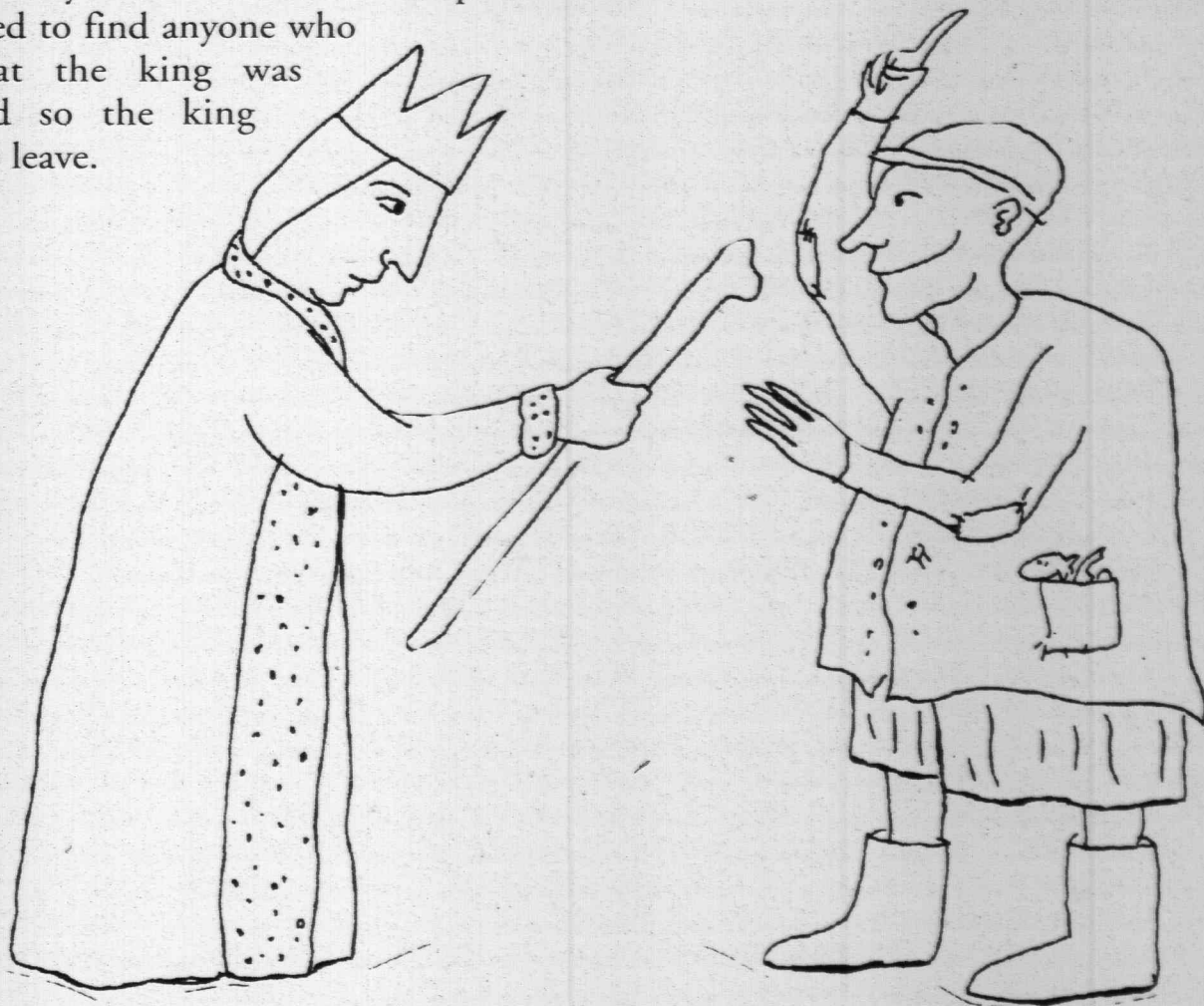
The old friend said, "O king, you can do what you like. Nevertheless, what I say is true, whether you believe it or not. Truth will never change." The king gave two days time for his friend to prove his case. He failed to find anyone who thought that the king was servant, and so the king asked him to leave.

The friend was walking with a third leg, his walking stick. As the king had commanded him to go and he was moving away, the old friend dropped his walking stick and said, "Alas, O king, I cannot bend. There are no servants around, and without the walking stick, I cannot go even one step forward." Seeing the helplessness of his old friend, the king said, "Do not worry my friend, I will help you." As he said this, the king picked up the walking stick and handed it to him.

The friend collected his walking stick and exclaimed, "Well, Sir! You are my servant now! At a time of difficulty, you helped me. Help is service. With all ego you stated that you are not a servant to anyone. To a helpless one like me, you gave me my walking stick. Now I am the master and you are the servant."

Knowingly or otherwise, everyone in the world is a servant and God alone is the Master. ❖

Excerpted from a divine discourse,
November 20, 1992



Children's Presentation

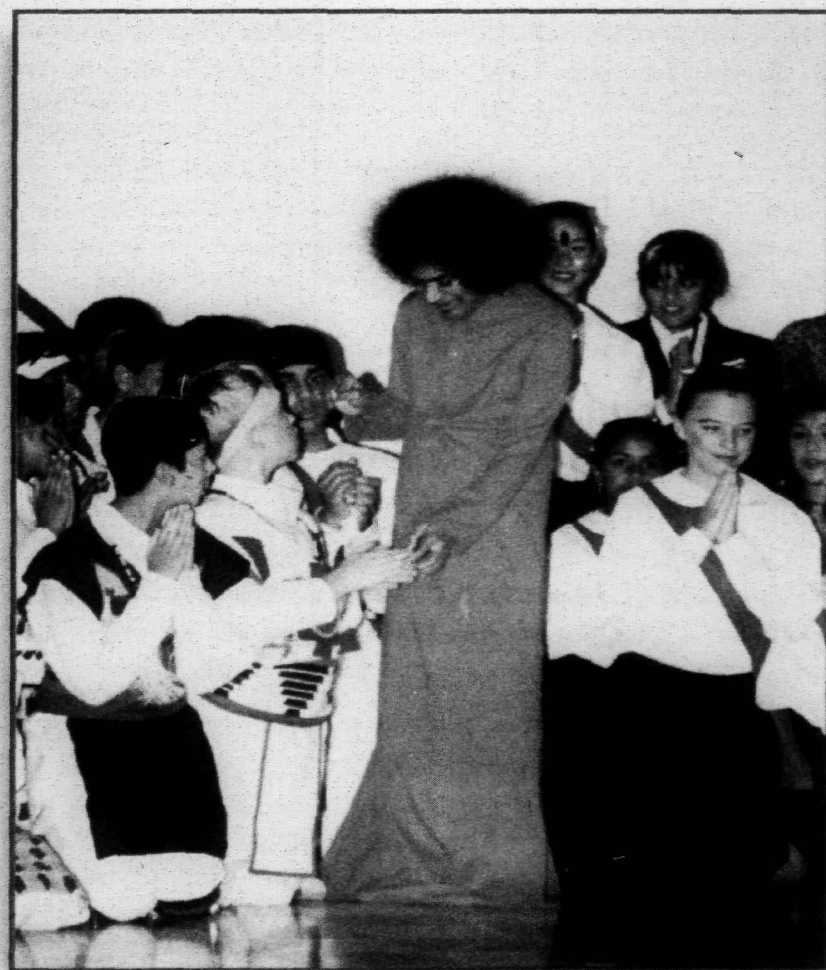
By **Allen Keding**

In the Divine Presence

After many rehearsals, much background preparation, a lot of devotion, dedication, discipline and concentrated efforts toward unity, the momentous event took place in the presence of our Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, on July 18, 2000. When the show was over, there were many teary-eyed spectators among the Sathya Sai Spiritual Education parents and teachers in the audience. The children had given an inspiring performance, and everything had gone smoothly from beginning to end.

An hour earlier, as we sat in the awesome presence of Bhagavan Baba, the huge orange stage curtain rose, and 60 children from southern California sang "America, America" in harmonious unison against a backdrop of the outline map of the USA. The presentation on spirituality in America unfolded in three units. The first was on freedom of religion in America. As the children chanted prayers from the different world religions, photographs of places of worship were projected on a screen. This indicated that all religions come together as one for Sai devotees who know that Sai is the one God worshiped by all. Photographs of some Sai Baba Centers in USA were shown as the children sang, "There is no birth, there is no death, there is no you or I. There is only Sathya Sai, beloved Sathya Sai...."

The second unit was about Native American spirituality, and it dramatized a Pueblo Indian story, in which a native boy sets out to find his father, the Lord of the Sun. As an elderly chief narrates the story, the boys in colorful costumes act it out with dialogue and dance. Taunted by his playmates in the pueblo for not having a father, the hero sets out on a quest to find his father. The corn planter and the clay pot maker are not able to help, but the wise arrow maker knows who the boy is. He fastens the boy to his powerful bow, and shoots him into the heavens. The boy is now face-to-face with his father. But the Lord of the Sun refuses to accept the boy as his son until he has proven himself. The boy undertakes various trials in kivas (ceremonial testing chambers) where, in succes-



sion, he is surrounded by lions (symbolizing anger and pride), serpents (desire and greed) and bees (annoyances of the mind). By recalling the fearlessness and great love of his father, the boy is able to face these challenges. In the final kiva, the boy's patience and calm allows him to be transformed by lightning, and he is happily reunited with his father, the Sun God, who sends the boy back to the pueblo to spread the Sun God's love there. The entire community celebrates the boy's return.

The third unit, focused on a modern day American saint, Peace Pilgrim. This remarkable lady set out in 1953 on a self-imposed pilgrimage, penniless and alone, "walking until given shelter, and fasting until given food." Till she died in 1981, she walked all across the United States, again and again, bringing to all whom she met her message and example of faith and inner peace. The playlet highlighted the transforming power of this saintly lady's love as she interacted with news reporters, jail inmates and a troubled teenage boy. The play ended with the declaration of Peace Pilgrim, "Overcome evil with good, falsehood with truth,

and hatred with love. This is the way of peace.”

The thread holding the three units of the presentation together was an ongoing conversation between two girls of the Sai Spiritual Education program. It is to convince the younger girl of the spiritual strength of America, that the older girl tells her about freedom of religion in America, about Native American spirituality and about Peace Pilgrim. In the final scene, with the entire chorus in the background, the two girls express their desire to be soldiers in the Sai army and to be His instruments of love. The chorus echoes their sentiment by singing, “Oh, when the saints go marching in, I want to be in that number. Oh, When Lord Sai is here on earth”

Another girl stepped forward from the chorus, thanked Swami for allowing the group to make the presentation, and prayed for His blessings. As the children started singing, “You are my mother, You are my father, You are my nearest, dearest friend” Swami rose from His chair and walked toward the stage. The children dropped to their knees and with their palms together, awaited Swami.

Baba posed for pictures with them, distributed saris to the girls and white cloth to the boys, and created a ring for the boy who played the hero in the Native American playlet. What a wonderful scene they made, Swami with the adoring children!

Best of all was to hear Swami’s comment, “Very happy, very happy!” ❖



God Controls Creation

Continued from page 5

However, at times, Swami tries to cover His face with His hair [laughter] but is not quite able to do it. The Avatar’s body comes with brilliant effulgence of its own. In fact, every being has some divine effulgence within. Everything that Swami does has its own innate significance. A small example:

People do not eat when they are not hungry; and people drink water only when they are thirsty. One cries only at times of sorrow, and smiles only when happy. For every action, there is a specific reason. Swami, too, takes care of His body for specific reasons.

Very Important Qualities

The three Ps, namely, purity, patience and perseverance, are very important. Swami is ever the embodiment of purity. Whatever Swami does is always for others and never for Himself. The purity present in Swami cannot be seen anywhere else; that is how Swami’s heart is. That purity draws people in hundreds and thousands from all over the world to Swami. No invitation is ever sent to people to come here, and yet they flock here in such large numbers. Such is the magnetism of a truly pure body.

About Swami’s patience: Mountains may move but Swami’s heart is ever steady and unruffled. However, at times, Swami may hiss. This tactic is used solely to rectify and correct people who are going astray. Such methods become necessary because people do not always respond to nice words of advice. When Swami gently asks people to sit down, they do not listen, but when He raises His voice, there is instant obedience! [Laughter]. Voice and tone modulation is useful and effective and at times, even lives have been saved.

Saving Lives

Once, during the Kurukshetra War, Ashwattama, the son of Dronacharya, took a terrible vow to annihilate all the Pandavas. Coming to know of this, Draupadi prayed to Krishna to save the Pandavas. The leelas of the Lord are not only wonderful but also most mysterious. For the sake of devotees, He enacts dramas and even changes the scenes for their welfare and benefit. In this instance, the Lord saved the Pandavas with a delicate touch that He alone is capable of doing.

He went to meet sage Durvasa*, who was immensely delighted to receive Krishna. The sage then asked, “Lord, what brought you to my humble ashram?” Krishna smiled and said, “I have a small job for you.” The sage was happy and said, “I am at your service. You just have to command.” Krishna then said, “Good! Tonight, you have to save the Pandavas.” Durvasa was puzzled and asked, “Lord, it is you who protects everything in creation. Who am I to do that job?” Krishna replied, “That is a different matter. But for this job, you will be my instrument. I extend protection in many different ways. On this occasion, you have to do something specific, as per my instructions.”

Durvasa wanted to know what it was, and Krishna continued, "Dig a pit, ask the Pandavas to hide in the pit, cover the pit with planks, mud and grass. Then take your seat on the cover that has been prepared. The enemies of the Pandavas may come, and ask you the whereabouts of the Pandavas. They may say, 'O Sage who knows the past, the present, and the future, please tell us where the Pandavas are hiding.'" Durvasa intervened and said, "Lord, I cannot tell a lie." Krishna countered, "Did I ask you to utter falsehood? I am truth, and I will always ask you to speak the truth only. However, you are at liberty to change your voice suitably, to achieve the desired effect. I am sure you understand." The sage nodded and smiled.

Sometime after this, and after the Pandavas had been hidden away, Ashwattama went there, exactly as Krishna had forecast. Durvasa was sitting with his eyes closed. Bowing to the sage, Ashwattama asked in a most humble manner the whereabouts of the Pandavas. Durvasa slowly opened his eyes; they were flaming. Angrily he roared, "Yes, the Pandavas are here, right beneath me." Besides anger, there was also much sarcasm in the sage's voice. Ashwattama was frightened because the sage was well known for having a fiery temper, and his propensity to curse those with whom he was angry. Promptly he fled from the scene, and the Pandavas were duly saved. All Avatars employ such techniques, and Swami does the same when required.

In Rama's Time

During the Rama Avatar, it was the day scheduled for the coronation of Rama. Rama had just met with Kaikeyi (His stepmother) and returned to His residence, where Sita was busy getting dressed for the big occasion. Smiling broadly, Rama told Sita, "Listen to this, for it is very important. I have to leave Ayodhya immediately. On account of a promise given earlier by my father, I have to go into exile in the forest." Sita was stunned. She then recovered and said, "You are going to the forest? In that case, I too will come with you." "No, you cannot. The forest is not a fit place for you to live. You will constantly face danger from the demons and the wild animals." Sita then said, "What! You, the protector of the whole world, cannot protect one woman? I do not believe that you cannot

protect me; it is simply that you do not want me to accompany you! I am determined to follow you!" Rama tried hard to dissuade Sita from going with Him but she was adamant. Speaking harshly, Rama then said, "If you come, it would mean more trouble for me; you would just be adding to my burden. I have to go to the forest by way of obeying my father's command. What role do you have in this? Why do you have to come?"

*"The body
is the temple,
and the indweller
is God."*

Rama then prepared to leave for His mother's residence in order to bid her goodbye. Sita said, "I shall come with you," and Rama agreed. Together they went to Kausalya's palace. Kausalya (Rama's mother) was in tears. She lamented, "Oh, my dear son, I was so happy thinking that you are going to be crowned. However, in a few short moments, destiny has taken such a shocking turn. After you leave, I cannot remain here in Ayodhya even for a second. So I, too, will come with you to the forest." Rama softly replied, "Father is old and also somewhat disabled. No matter what, you cannot leave him and go. For a woman, husband is God. Your prime duty is to serve him." Sita heard all this. She is very intelligent, you know!

On returning to their abode, Sita opened the topic again and told Rama, "I am coming with you." Rama tersely replied, "Not possible." It was now Sita's turn to raise her voice, and she said, "You told your mother that husband is God. In that case, is not my husband God? You, Rama, are the moon and I, Sita, am the moonlight. The moon and its light are linked; can they ever be separated? Moonlight has to be where the moon is. It is unthinkable that Rama is in the forest and Sita is in Ayodhya. I am coming with you!" Rama had to yield to this powerful and indisputable argument!

Wish Everyone Well

As Swami said earlier, never utter a falsehood. However, for the sake of the welfare of others, you can adopt other suitable strategies to achieve the desired goal.

May everyone be virtuous. Finally, may everyone be endowed with wisdom. The key to these three cardinal principles—well-being, virtue

and wisdom—is contained in Swami's three Ps: purity, patience and perseverance. In the strict pursuit of the three Ps, Swami remains unmatched in the entire world. [Loud applause] Whatever Swami does is always for the good, welfare, joy, and comfort of others, and not for Himself. Never does Swami do anything for His personal benefit or advantage. From top to toe, there is no trace of selfishness in Swami, and there is no place for it either. Everything that Swami does is always for you and you alone.

Persevere, Live in Love

Embodiments of Love, boys and girls, it is not possible to fully understand the Divine Principle. No one can ever understand God. People may declare that they have done so, but the very next minute they are full of doubts and confusion. Such vacillations are due to tendencies acquired over many births. Influences of the past can and do hamper spiritual progress. Hence, transformation does not come easily; it has to happen slowly but steadily. That is why Swami repeatedly says: Start early, drive slowly, and reach safely.

Yours is the right age to make a serious start and to begin assiduous spiritual practice. Always be calm

and peaceful, and do not give any scope for your purity to be contaminated. Purity and patience would automatically make perseverance easy.

Swami always addresses you as Premaswaroopalara (Embodiments of Love). Swami is ever full of love and that is why His words, too, are always saturated with love. Swami expects all of you to actually become what He hails you as. You should ensure that your love is not ever diminished or diluted under any circumstance whatsoever. If you live like embodiments of love, Swami is ready to grant you whatever you want. Students of today will become the leaders of tomorrow, and the emancipators of this country. You must therefore drive away all bad feelings, cultivate virtues and always have sacred vision. Be ever careful about what you say and let there be no room for untruthful and improper words. Such ideal behavior would bring great joy to your parents. It is your duty to make them happy. Remember, "Matru Devo Bhava," Mother is God; "Pitru Devo Bhava," Father is God. All parents shower love on their children. Your parents care for you as much as Swami's parents cared for Him. It is therefore your duty to bring ananda (bliss) to them in every possible way. ❖

—Brindavan, May 18, 2000

*Durvasa was a great sage respected by all as he always told the truth. He was also noted for his fiery temper and people were afraid of him.



Very Nice!

By M. Srinivas

Swami had pictures taken on stage with the children. My duty was to hold the plate with the camphor for the aarati ceremony, which would indicate that Swami would soon be leaving and the evening would be over. I was to wait until Swami signaled for aarati, and then hand the plate to the child who would offer aarati to Baba. As He passed me, Swami said, "Very nice." Then Baba stood by me and gave directions to the assistant backstage to bring gifts of clothing for the 60 children who were waiting reverently with their palms together. Swami looked at me and again said, "Very Nice." I responded politely, "Thank you, Swami."

Then, the enormity of my error struck me. Along with numerous others, I too had played my part in this drama of bringing to a successful culmination the presentation in Bhagavan's divine presence. What right did I have to acknowledge Swami's commendation as if I had accomplished something?

At every step, His divine hand had guided the preparations for this presentation. At every roadblock, He steered us through by providing all necessary help. He arranged for two Hollywood casting directors to coach the girls in "Peace Pilgrim." For the Native American play, one of our teachers just happened to be an expert on Native American culture and, in addition, had theatrical background to coach the boys. Musicians came forward to help with the prayers and songs. Devotees with expertise in audio and video recording gave of their time and energy to record not only the prayers and songs but every bit of dialogue as well. Teachers and parents helped in hundreds of ways: painting the numerous large scenery backdrops, making the colorful costumes, assisting with the planning and preparations. Large meeting places became available at no cost. The Sai Organization provided its support in every way needed: critiquing the script, suggesting improvements, obtaining permission from Prasanthi Nilayam to stage the presentation, and helping

with travel arrangements and accommodations at the ashram.

The children were exemplary. They were students from Swami's own spiritual program, and were keenly conscious of the great privilege and blessing they had. The older children, especially, made many sacrifices and worked very hard to prepare themselves to be in Swami's presence.

We were rehearsing in the Los Angeles area in May and June, just before their final exams. They had rehearsals on Saturdays and on Sundays of every week, and the girls had to come more often, two or three weeknights as well, often traveling long distances to do so. There was never a complaint. Such was their dedication that even in the breaks during rehearsals, they chose to practice their lines.

At the ashram, every need of ours was met. We were all accommodated in the same building, allowed to sit as a group at darshan, and given a hall in which to rehearse and meet. Swami even made the weather pleasant. When we needed more time in the Poornachandra Auditorium to get to know the lighting controls and to work out an operating system for our many backdrops, Swami postponed our performance by one day. Not that we prayed for it; we didn't realize that we needed the postponement. Only by hindsight did we discover the value of the extra day. Then to cap it all, Swami showered His grace on us, and everything went smoothly with the performance—not a hitch, not a misstep, not a blemish to mar this offering at His lotus feet.

I had just responded with a polite thank you to Swami's commendation of the presentation! The next moment, with an edge of urgency in my voice, I spoke to Swami as He was walking away. "Swami! From beginning to end, it was all Your grace!" The all-knowing Lord, in His infinite mercy, turned around and acknowledged my comment. ❖

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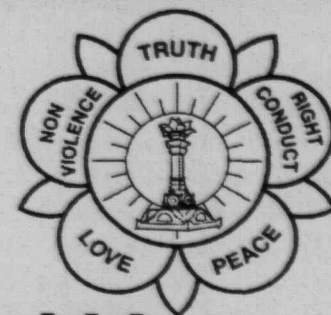
“Embodiments of Love!

The Divine has no special day earmarked as birthday. The day when you cultivate holy thoughts, attitudes, and modes of behavior in your hearts, the day when you decide upon some activity of pure unselfish service—that is the day of birth of the Divine for you. From that day you can celebrate the birthday as a festival.”

—Sathya Sai Baba

November 23, 1981

Sathya Sai Service Opportunities



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SAI COMPUTER CLASSES FOR YOUTH

Understanding how to use a computer is essential for getting a good job in almost any field today, but inner-city and recent immigrant youth often don't have that skill. The New York City Sai Center's solution to this problem: Saturday training classes run by computer-savvy volunteers, who turn technology training into lessons in love.

According to the project coordinator, these classes not only help students get a job but allow them "to build self-confidence, to share good company, and to learn something about human values."

When the project started about two years ago, Center members were able to get authorities at youth-serving institutions to support it because of contacts made during tutoring, mentoring, and other community involvement. Students come from Covenant House, a shelter for homeless and drug-abusing youth, and from two local high schools—one for disadvantaged at-risk teenagers and another for those who need to learn English as a second lan-

guage. "It's an interesting mixture," says the project coordinator. "These immigrant kids want very much to learn something. They are blended with the inner-city at-risk kids. And the inner-city kids see the seriousness of the other kids."

One September Saturday during the current seven-week series of classes, 12 students arrive in the morning at the project's donated Manhattan office space, where they first receive a simple breakfast—juices and muffins contributed by Center members. Food is an integral part of the project, which also includes a vegetarian lunch after the morning class and maybe a picnic or restaurant excursion when certificates are handed out at graduation time. In addition to food, the Center gives subway/bus tokens to the students, since many of them cannot otherwise afford to come to class.

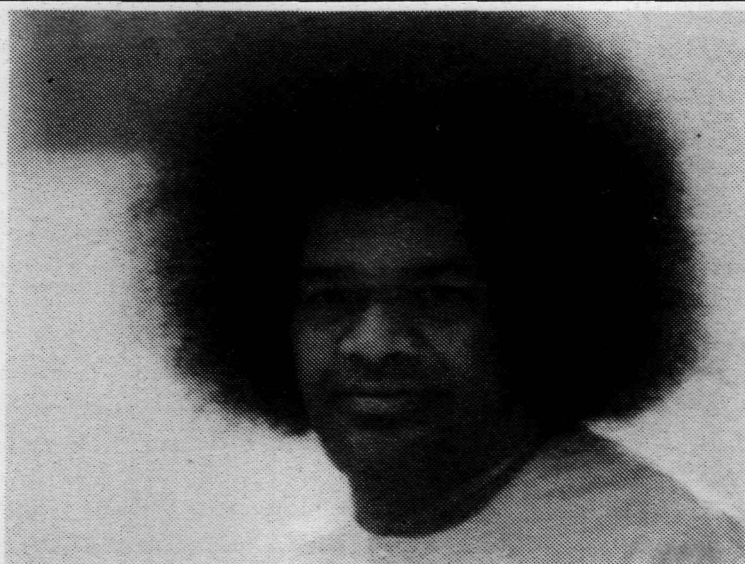
Next on the schedule that September Saturday is the 10:30 a.m. Microsoft Word class. Besides Word, students attend one or two other Saturday classes,

such as "Microsoft Excel," "Basic Computers and the Internet," and "Introduction to Computer Graphics."

In the Word class, as in the others, students see the thought for the week written on the blackboard as they enter the room. Later, in this first class of the day, a Center member will read that quote and give a brief talk on it. The human values component of the project is present in each class, often woven naturally and seamlessly into the coursework. "Instead of using just any words when the kids practice in Microsoft Word," says the coordinator, "they type words expressing ideas that are uplifting and beautiful. When they make a graph in Excel, instead of doing a graph on some kind of nonsense, they do a Ceiling on Desires graph."

During the 1½-hour class, the instructors use a projected computer screen to demonstrate the way to create a folder on the desktop and the basics of Word's menus and tool bars, encouraging students to participate in

(Continued on page 4)



When the body and mind are associated in sacred service, that becomes true yoga. Through service, the mind gets purified and the body gets sanctified. Without a pure mind, the body is useless. The natural state of the mind is purity. It is polluted by contacts with the world. When it is purified through love, it regains its natural state.

♣ Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol, XXIII

SAI MEDICAL VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

Here are two stories of health-related projects. One took place in India; the other, in the United States.

A Doctor's Hospital Service with Swami

When I went to see Swami in India for the first time, I was going as a trained cardiac surgeon and my concentration was on His super-specialty hospital—not on Him. Before hearing about the hospital and its free heart surgery, I had always felt bad that I had no way to help the people I left behind in India, where so many have no access to medical care. Now I wanted to see the hospital and check it out for myself.

The first thing I did when I arrived at Prasanthi Nilayam, in Puttaparthi, was to go to the hospital. As one of the administrators showed me around, I couldn't get over the facilities and the cleanliness.

Sitting in *darshan* (sight of a holy person) the next morning, I began praying to my family deity, Lord Balaji. The next thing I knew, Swami was standing right in front of me, looking at me.

"I'm Dr. Choudary from Los Angeles, Swami," I blurted out.

"Yes, yes, I know who you are," He said. "Aah." And before I realized it, He materialized *vibhuti* (holy ash) for me.

While I was still recovering from this incident, one of the volunteers came running to me and said, "Swami wants to see you inside." They took me into a room where I found myself in Swami's presence. After some discussion of my personal needs, I said, "Swami, I want to work in the hospital." He replied, "Don't worry about that. It's your own hospital. You can work there whenever you want."

Several months later, I asked a few colleagues if they would be willing to come with me to India to perform surgery in the super-specialty hospital. None of them knew of Sai Baba, but they all said they'd come.

In Prasanthi Nilayam, Swami asked us into the interview room and started

talking about heart surgery. He gave the man who runs the heart-lung machine tips on how the pipe connection should be—things you would know only if you were running the machine every day. He talked to me about what cholesterol and high blood pressure are.

Since that first visit, most of the team has returned twice a year to spend a

"I suddenly realized why Swami told us not to wait. If I had waited till nine thirty to operate, the patient would have died."

couple of weeks in Prasanthi Nilayam. Normally, the group arrives at the ashram on Sunday evening and starts work on Monday morning.

One time in April, when Swami was in Brindavan (another ashram, near Bangalore), I went to India alone. He instructed me to go work in the hospital and said He would send word to me as to when to return, so I left for Puttaparthi. At the beginning of April, the temperature there climbs to about 120 degrees every day, and it feels like an oven. After seven or eight days of working in this intense heat, I just could not take it anymore physically. I told myself that the work was done, and I should go to Brindavan. The first day, I was in the first row. Suddenly, Swami came straight to me and said, "What are you doing here? I told you I was going to send for you." Before I could say anything, He was gone. From that time on, whatever Swami says, I do.

On another visit, I arrived and some people told me that Swami was waiting for me. Then they directed me to a patient and said I should have a look at him. When I saw his angiogram (an x-ray of blood vessels, especially those as-

sociated with the heart), I told Swami that the man needed an operation. Swami said, "All right, Thursday morning will be a good day for the operation."

Three years ago, while this man was visiting Swami's Brindavan residence one evening, he fell down in a faint. Technically, you could say he died because a cardiologist who was there said that his heart stopped beating. Swami put water in the man's mouth and he woke up. Swami told him he had just fainted and was going to be fine. But when we saw the angiogram three years later, we realized the man had suffered a cardiac arrest. He had severe blockages in his arteries that had been present for a while, and such a condition can be life-threatening.

The day for the surgery arrived. That morning at *darshan* Swami came to me and said, "What are you doing here?"

"We want to have *darshan* and then operate around nine-thirty," I replied.

"No, go right now and do the surgery." I got up immediately, and the rest of the team followed me. By 7:45 a.m., the patient was in the operating room. I asked him how he was doing. He told me he had been having chest pains all night. I asked if he had called for a doctor. "No," he replied. "I was praying to Swami." With the kind of blockages he

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"I was on a spiritual high and felt that I myself got a healing and catharsis while counseling others. At times, I thought I touched their souls."

Medical Camps at Mid-Atlantic Regional Conferences

About two years ago, I came up with the idea of organizing a medical camp at the 1999 Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference in the Pocono Mountains. At the camp, I could use my skills as a doctor to serve the health, along with the spiritual, needs of Sai devotees. I wanted to raise their awareness and help them in the spirit of service.

My intention was to target the most vulnerable among us, especially the uninsured, who would otherwise have no access to routine wellness checkups.

Like any other physician in this country, in the beginning I felt a little uneasy in undertaking such a project because of liability concerns. As Swami says, "Common sense before spiritual sense." So I made sure I had enough coverage, consulted my lawyer, and prepared the appropriate consent forms with a clause to indemnify me from any liability.

With liability concerns out of the way, I began browsing through many Web sites, searching for information on wellness screenings. After reviewing the literature, I decided on a comprehensive program that would include fasting blood sugar tests, cholesterol checks, lipid profiles, breathing tests, bone scans, and electrocardiograms (EKGs), as well as routine blood pressure measurements and women's and children's checkups.

The project would require qualified health professionals who could administer the tests and provide one-to-one counseling. So I assembled a team of about 7 or 8 volunteer doctors, plus two technicians, one of whom was licensed to run the blood analyzer machine we rented.

Before I left for the Poconos, a friend and I packed two vans with all the machinery and other medical equipment. Also inside one of the vans were posters with pictures of Swami and his words on

cholesterol, high blood pressure, and heart disease, as well as a plentiful supply of health education materials that devotees could browse through or take home.

That night, at the conference site, after volunteers set up the cabin designated for the medical camp and put some of the posters up around the area to direct people to the camp, I thought I was ready for service; however, my mind had other ideas. Some people had been opposed to the project, and now I began to wonder if they weren't right. But in the early morning hours, I had a vivid dream in which Swami appeared in a white robe, serene and blissful as ever. Then He let me touch his feet and disappeared.

Not surprisingly, after Swami's blessing, the response to the medical camp was overwhelming, with many more devotees wanting to be screened than our group could handle. In all, we saw about 175 people during the two days the camp was in operation, and some of them had to wait for hours for their turn to be tested and counseled by a doctor.

But all of them received the time and personal attention they needed. Working together in the spirit of Sai camaraderie, we took a clinical history to assess their risk, and after testing them, advised them according to Swami's teachings, suggesting, for example, that they meditate to relieve stress.

The atmosphere during these counseling sessions was open, honest, and full of trust. The doctors made an instant connection with the people served. And since we were Sai devotees like them, they told us everything.

I was on a spiritual high and felt that I myself got a healing and catharsis while counseling others. At times, I thought I touched their souls. The blessings were countless, and many devotees asked if we could be their regular doctors. Some

asked, "Why can't medical camps be of Sai conferences everywhere?"

Encouraged by the positive feedback, we again set up the medical camp in 2000. This second round of screenings allowed us to see the effect the program had had on the people tested. Based on devotees' solicited statements, I calculated that at least 10 percent of those screened in 1999 had made lifestyle changes afterwards.

One devotee, who had a job but no health insurance, didn't go to doctors unless it was an emergency, so he'd never had his cholesterol tested. In the counseling session after his first series of tests at the medical camp, he found out that his cholesterol was too high. During the next year, he eliminated most of the bad fats from his diet, and his cholesterol dropped from 230 to 202.

Another devotee in similar financial circumstances found out her tests indicated she was in the high-risk category for osteoporosis. She began taking calcium and magnesium, as well as a soy supplement. By the next year, her test results showed dramatic improvement.

The whole concept of the conference medical camp epitomizes the essence of Swami's teachings. He says, "Health is the primary prerequisite for all activities—physical, mental, and spiritual." And he puts the emphasis on prevention. Swami says, "It is wiser to prevent a disease than to run after remedies after it has begun to grow beyond control." So the medical camp offered the perfect place to practice body, mind, and spiritual health—the buzzwords of modern medicine. And by facilitating the journey to optimal health, it became a journey to God.

—Brahma Nand Sharma, MD
Pittsburgh, PA, Sai Center

For more information about how to organize a regional conference medical camp, call Dr. Sharma at (412) 367-2297, or e-mail him at bsharma763@aol.com

Doctor's Service

Continued from page 2

had, chest pains indicated that a heart attack was imminent—one that could easily prove fatal. I suddenly realized why Swami told us not to wait. If I had waited till nine thirty to operate, the patient would have died. We performed the operation, and he did very well.

A second heart patient, who had just retired, had gone to Swami and said, "I want to spend the rest of my life working for You." But Swami said, "No, first you've got to get fixed." The man didn't understand because he thought he was very healthy except for a benign ear infection. He assumed Swami meant his ear must be fixed, so he went to the hospital to correct the problem. The doctor there said, "As long as you're here, we should run some tests."

They put him through a routine treadmill test, and within three minutes, he had failed the test. Now the doctors were telling him that something was radically wrong with his heart. But Swami said, "No problem. Go stay in the hospital." By the time we got there, the patient was in the hospital. After we told Swami he needed surgery, He said,

"You do the operation; Wednesday is a good day. But don't tell his wife or son; I will tell them." Then He added that He would come the following morning to see the patient. He came exactly when He said He would and spent a lot of time with the man and gave him *vibhuti*. "See how lucky you are," He said. "These three doctors came from America just for you." Then He said to the patient, "It's your good fortune, and it is my duty."

The first thing Swami asked me was "How is his blood sugar?"

"It's better today, Swami, because he's being treated," I replied. Then He told me to go ahead with the surgery on Wednesday morning. By Swami's grace, though it took a long time, the surgery went well. Afterward, at *darshan* I got to touch Swami's feet and told Him that the patient was doing fine. He announced to the whole verandah (of the temple), "Look. Successful operation. Perfect operation." Then He came to me and said, "Swami is very, very happy." I cried with joy at having pleased the Lord.

Adapted from "A Cardiac Surgeon's Encounter with Divinity," June 2000 and July/August 2000 Sai Sarathi.



You may think that you have given away ten bags of rice in charity and distributed clothes to five hundred people. Such accounts are to be submitted to the income tax department, not to God. God is not interested in quantity. He sees the feeling behind your acts. So, whatever may be the act of charity you undertake, do it with the spirit of love and sacrifice.

❧ Sathya Sai Baba,
Sanathana Sarathi,
September 2000

Computer Classes

Continued from page 1

discussion. Afterwards, eight teaching assistants work one-to-one with the students as they practice the day's lesson on their individual computers.

The assistants came to their role in a number of ways. Some are young adult Center members, while others are their colleagues from work, inspired by glowing descriptions of the project. Still others are former students who begged to help the newcomers after completing their own coursework.

One of these student helpers is a boy who fled Red China and ended up in a foster home in Queens. He took all the classes, except "Graphics." Now he teaches others who need the same kind of help he once got.

Students are so enthused about the classes they often tell their friends about the program. According to the coordinator, the principal of a collaborating

high school came to see a class in action one day. "We have a waiting list of kids who want to take these classes," he told the coordinator. "If you had more space, we could fill you up ten times over."

As a follow-up to the classes, the Center has just started a Global Values Club and invited former students. The first meeting included icebreakers, games, and lunch.

A number of the students now also attend young adult service projects and Center meetings. "We never push this," the coordinator says. "As the kids get to know the kind of thing we're doing, they find out they're interested. It just happens."

The overwhelming success of the project has sparked the interest of other Sai groups nationwide. Groups already replicating it, or starting to, include the Columbus, OH, Center; Detroit, MI, Center; Miami, FL, Center; and Region 7 (Bay Area), CA, Young Adults. Recently, devotees from the Cleveland, OH, Cen-

ter came to New York to find out how to set up the classes. With Swami's grace, five days after they returned to Cleveland, they were up and running with computers, office space, volunteers, and students.

Cleveland organizers saw Baba's hand in the project—as do young adult volunteers from the New York City Center. "Baba says, 'Only youth can transform youth,'" New York City's coordinator notes. "The young adults from the Center really feel they're doing Swami's work."

Explaining why he thinks the project has done so well, the coordinator says, "It's mostly because the teachers and teaching assistants give the students a great deal of special attention. All these people," he continues, "do things for no money—just out of love."

To obtain a CD-ROM and further information on the project, e-mail Hal Honig at comclass@maestro.com.