



**SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING**

(Deemed to be University)



**SUMMER COURSE**  
in Indian Culture and Spirituality  
... ————— 2013 ————— ...





Dedicated with Love to our Beloved  
Revered Founder Chancellor

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Vidyagiri, Prasanthi Nilayam – 515134, Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh, India

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SUMMER COURSE  
in Indian Culture and Spirituality

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# Preface

Most universities the world over set aside a few days during the beginning of each academic year to host orientation programmes for newly admitted students. They are designed to help students to engage with the values and traditions of the university, get familiar with the facilities and resources it has to offer, and serve as an introduction to the academic climate and expectations of the institution.

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, founded by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is unique in this aspect. The focus of the university is to inculcate good qualities, mould character and instil Self-confidence in students preparing them to be better human beings who will be ideal examples of goodness and work for the benefit of society at large.

To this end, the University has an intensive two-and-a-half day Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality at the beginning of each academic year to orient students to Bhagawan's educational philosophy and give them deep insights into what they could imbibe while pursuing their higher learning from this unique Institution. It aims at preparing students to make the best use of the extraordinary opportunities that lies ahead of them.

The genesis of the event dates back to the early seventies, when Bhagawan Baba organized Summer Courses in Indian Culture and Spirituality for the benefit of students. The course then was usually three to four weeks long and would typically consist of a series of lectures on Indian culture, the essence of the scriptures and other spiritual topics delivered by learned scholars, senior devotees and men of esteem. The highlight however was the daily discourse by Baba Himself, delivered typically in the evening. The Summer Courses in this format continued through the seventies and after a brief hiatus (in the eighties), they continued into the nineties, until the last one in 2002.

The current format of the Summer Course – two-and-a-half days during the second week of each academic year – has been in place since 2011. For the academic year

2013/14, the event was held from 8th to 10th of June 2013. Students and teachers from all four campuses of the Institute as well Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music, Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam (Class XI and Class XII) and Sri Sathya Sai Gurukulam English Medium School, Rajahmundry participated.

This year, the theme of the Summer Course was the Mastery of the Mind, based on the 1990 Summer Course discourses that Bhagawan Baba delivered. All morning sessions took place in the Poornachandra auditorium at Prasanthi Nilayam and commenced with invocatory Vedic chanting by students of SSSIHL. The evening sessions consisted of talks and music programmes by students of individual campuses, along with Vedam chanting and Bhajans in the Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam. After dinner, each campus of the institute held parayanam sessions, where senior academic staff and alumni would share with students their experiences with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and the wonderful divine love and blessings He showered on all.

This book chronologically represents the entire programme of the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality 2013. This includes all the speeches, interactive sessions such as the Parayanam sessions (experiences with Bhagawan Baba), panel discussions and situational analyses. Every effort has been made to keep the first person narrative intact, so that the reader can appreciate the personality of the speaker and the purport of his or her talk.

The reason for publishing the proceedings of the Summer Course in the form of a book is threefold. First, it functions as a valuable reference publication for the staff, students and visitors of the university. Secondly—for the public at large—it serves as a wonderful introduction to Indian culture and spirituality. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the book is glittered with personal incidents that the speakers have had with Bhagawan Baba and in many instances highlights Bhagawan's teachings on several spiritual topics.



# CONTENTS

## WELCOME NOTE

Dr. Naren Ramji | 10

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Prof. J Shashidhara Prasad | 12

## LESSONS FROM THE RAMAYANA FOR MODERN SOCIETY

Sri Sanjay Sahnii | 17

## LESSONS FROM THE MAHABHARATA FOR MODERN SOCIETY

Miss Lalitha Sarma R | 27

## BHAJAN ANTAKSHARI

Sri Amey Deshpande (Moderator) | 36

## TRANSFORMATION – THE TRUE SIGN OF DEVOTION

Sri Dhruv Vyas | 37

## CULTURE IS CONCERN FOR OTHERS

Sri G Aditya | 40

## ALUMNI PANEL DISCUSSION – IDEAL SAI STUDENTS AND THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETY

Dr. (Miss) P L Rani (Moderator) | 43

## LESSONS FROM THE BHAGAVATAM FOR MODERN SOCIETY

Sri S Sai Giridhar | 51


## QUIZ ON “THE LIVES OF ALL AVATARS” as narrated by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Dr. Shashank Shah & team | 61

## IMPORTANCE OF THE SUMMER COURSE IN INDIAN CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY

Kum Jasmine Rai | 81





**GRATITUDE**

Sri Shravan Sai | 84

**SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS EXERCISE**

Dr. N Siva Kumar (Moderator) | 89

**VALEDICTORY SESSION**

Prof. (Miss) Madhu Kapani | 99

**PARAYANAM SESSIONS - Experiences with  
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

**ANANTAPUR Campus Talks**

Dr. (Mrs.) T Dharma | 105

Ms. Neena Bardoloi | 110

Dr. (Miss) S Kanaka Durga | 117

Prof. Indrani Chakravarti | 122

Dr. (Ms.) Sahida Sharma | 129

Ms. Sadhana Pai | 133

**PRASANTHI NILAYAM Campus Talks**

Dr. Hirok Changkakoti | 138

Sri Vinayak Kalletla | 147

Sri Kannan Murthy | 158

Sri M G Nandagopal | 164

**BRINDAVAN Campus Talks**

Dr. R Raghunatha Sarma | 172

Sri Bishweshwar Prusty | 177

**MUDDENAHALLI Campus Talks**

Sri Sai Surendranath | 185

Dr. A Sunil | 190

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# Welcome note

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Dr. Naren Ramji  
Registrar, SSSIHL

The underlying philosophy of the educational institutions founded and nurtured by Bhagawan is very unique. Let us revisit the underlying philosophy of our university in His own words:

*The Sai educational institutions have been established not merely to enable students to earn a living but to make them acquire good traits, lead ideal lives, and give them ethical, moral and spiritual strength. I have established them with a view to inculcate love and teach good qualities to students. They will learn here humility, discipline and faith.*

*I have established these institutions to impart spiritual education as a main component and worldly education as a secondary one. Education should enable one to cultivate good qualities, character and devotion. The teaching of the university curricula is only the means employed for the end, namely, spiritual uplift, self-discovery and social service through love and detachment.*

*This will be a Gurukula - a place where teachers and taught will grow together in love and wisdom - and like the ancient system of education, it will develop in its students a broad outlook and promote virtues and morals, which serve to foster noble ideals in society. This Institute will be a temple of learning where youth are shaped into self-reliant, contented and enterprising heroes of action and self-sacrifice, for the purpose of serving humanity.*

Students! Please have no doubt that you have been chosen by Bhagawan to study in His institutions; because Bhagawan has found that potential in you which He feels will blossom into the vision of this Institute. While we have the admissions tests and all these so-called worldly mechanisms for selection, eventually it is only Bhagawan's will that has brought you here. This is true for all of us, including the teachers.

The Summer Course is therefore a very apt beginning to the academic year. One that lays the spiritual foundation for the endeavours that we follow throughout the academic year. It marks the beginning and renewal of the sacred relationship between the student and Swami.

Values are taught in our institution and also in many other institutions around the world, but what is the difference between them and us? It is my firm belief that values by themselves are fine but they become mere academic and not practiced due to lack of a spiritual foundation. In this divine institution, Swami laid a spiritual foundation via which He imparts values to us. This gives us the courage and confidence to practice them and face the world outside.

Dear Students! This is a great opportunity and a very important facet of your lives. This kind of university life will never come back to you again. Some of you may spend two, three or five years here. Please don't take this opportunity for granted; it is a very special opportunity given by Bhagawan to you to bring you close to Him. This university gives you a spiritual basis and most importantly, you can experience a spiritual relationship with God.

You may argue that this can be done any time, but please believe me when I say that I have also been a beneficiary of this wonderful system and I can tell you that such a conducive atmosphere to develop this sacred relationship with God is not there anywhere in this world. When you begin to explore and try to contact Him, He will give you the experience that is with you all the time.

Dear Students- Let it be your endeavour that before leaving the Institute, your goal should be to have a clear relationship with Swami, a hotline with Him and the confidence that He is standing next to you, whatever you face in this world. That is why I said that values without a spiritual foundation are very dry, but values with a spiritual foundation are easy to practice as you have the confidence and courage that Swami is next to you, to guide you to do the right thing and to face an adverse situation with equanimity.

I pray to Bhagawan that He gives us all the spiritual insight to begin this academic year in His thought. I pray to Him to guide us all to the goal He has set for all of us.

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# Inaugural address

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Prof. J Shashidhara Prasad  
Vice-Chancellor, SSSIHL

**W**e have some senior students in this gathering who have gone through earlier Summer Courses; some students who have known about the divinity of Bhagawan through Bal Vikas programs and studying in Sai schools; and some who are totally new to this system and Swami. The Summer Course presents an opportunity to the freshers to get to know the senior brothers and sisters and share and interact with them. Summer Course 2013 is the third of its kind after it was restarted with blessings of our divine master.

After Swami left His mortal coil, we often remember the blissful, ever smiling form of Swami and experience a sense of vacuum. Let me share a story of a mother with you all. In the womb of a mother there were two babies. There were having discussions. One asked the other, "Do you believe in life after delivery?" The other replied, "Why Of course! There has to be something after delivery. May be we are here to prepare ourselves for our life later. 'Nonsense!' Says the other baby, there is no life after delivery, what would that life be? I don't know, there will be more life than here, we will walk with our legs and eat with our mouths. The other baby says, "That is absurd; walking with our legs and eat with our mouths is ridiculous. The umbilical cord supplies nutrition; life after delivery has to be excluded. The umbilical cord is too short. There is something which is different there than here." The other baby replied, "No one has come back from there, delivery is the end of life and after delivery there is nothing but darkness and anxiety and it takes us nowhere." "Well, we will see our mother and she will certainly take care of us." Do you believe in mother, where is she now? She is all round us; it is in her that we live, without her there won't be this world. "I don't see her hence it is only logical that she doesn't exist", replies the other baby. To this the first baby says, "You can feel her, perceive her, when you are in silence. I believe there is a reality after delivery and we are here to prepare ourselves for that reality."

This beautiful story can be connected to our beloved Bhagawan. Swami is the all-pervading universal consciousness and each one of us, with individual consciousness, forms a subset of this supra consciousness, which is the *Aum*. Swami always said that

only in silence, can we hear Him, can we perceive Him. We can perceive Him in the smile of a child, in the smile of a fellow human being when you lovingly serve them. He is perceived in the murmur of the rivers, in the starry sky and in the abundant and varied nature.

This is what the *Viswaroopa Darshan* of Swami is, as I remember an episode mentioned in the speech of Brother Satyajit in Bengaluru. Swami asks him, “What would you like to see?” Satyajit replies, “Swami I want to see your *Viswaroopa*.” Swami took him to a window, and pointing to the trees and the sky, said, “This is *Viswaroopa*.” We can see Swami in every creation of His.

The story narrated also reveals a very deep and subtle philosophy with spiritual intonations. A thoughtful observation indicates that it encompasses all the three philosophies of *Dwaita*, *Vishisthadwaita* and *Advaita*. All the philosophies are difficult to understand for ordinary mortals like us. Swami being love incarnate gave pathways for self-realization based on Vedantic texts and Upanishads. The chanting of stotras, japa, prayers and meditation should be practiced depending upon the individual’s interest and mindset. These techniques have been practiced and confirmed by the rishis of ancient past and saints of the present. Scientists and doctors have scientifically analyzed them also.

One such example is of the French doctor, Alexis Carrel who was working at the Rockefeller Institute when he won the Nobel Prize in the year 1912. He was a known skeptic of visions and miracles but became a strong believer of spiritual cures after experiencing the healing of Marie Bailly at Lourdes. In his book ‘Man, the unknown’, he unequivocally upheld the power of prayer. Prayer, he says, is the most powerful form of energy. Radium radiates energy by itself, in the same way, prayer’s energy is a self-radiating, revolutionary source of energy. Dr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a French Jesuit father and well-known paleontologist and geologist, reiterated what our beloved Swami has been mentioning about the divinity of every person and the power of love, right from the declaration of his avatarhood. The father says:

‘We are not human beings having spiritual experiences but we are spiritual beings having human experiences.’

‘Love is a sacred reservoir of energy, it is like a blood of spiritual evolution.’

‘Someday after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness the energy of love, and then, for the second time in the history of the world, man would have discovered fire.’

A few days back when I was cleaning the mess of my office bag after a decade, I came across a dilapidated paper, which had a two-page message of Swami. One titled ‘An interview with God’ and the other ‘Your Mission’. I would like to read through them, as they are relevant to this occasion. The first is what Swami expects us to do and the second one what Swami expects His children to do in His mission. I consider them as the Sai Upanishads.

In ‘An interview with God’, Swami gives directions to be followed by students and devotees.

*To learn that they can't make anyone love them, but what they can do is to let themselves to be loved.*

*To learn that it takes years to build trust and takes a few seconds to destroy it.*

*To learn that what is most valuable is not what they have in their lives but whom they have in their lives.*

*To learn that it is not good to compare themselves with others, as there may be others better or worse than they are.*

*To learn that a rich person is not one who need the most but needs the least.*

*To learn to control their attitudes or their attitudes will control them.*

*To learn that it takes a few seconds to open profound wounds in a person's love and that it takes many years to heal them.*

*To learn to forgive by practicing forgiveness and to learn that there are persons who love them dearly but do not know how to show their feelings*

*To learn that money can buy anything but happiness.*

*To learn that one can get upset but that doesn't give them the right to upset those around them.*

*To learn that great dreams do not require great things but a landing gear to achieve.*

*To learn that true friends are scarce and the one who has found one has found a real treasure.*

*To learn that they are forgiven by others but they should forgive themselves.*

*To learn that they are masters of what they keep to themselves and slaves of what they say.*

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*To learn that they will reap what they plant, if they plant gossips they reap intrigues, if they plant love, they will harvest happiness.*

*To learn that true happiness is not to achieve their goals but to be satisfied with what they already achieved.*

*To learn that happiness is a decision, if they decide to be happy with what they are rather than die of envy and jealousy of what they lack.*

*To learn that two people looking at the same thing can see something entirely different.*

*To learn to be honest with themselves without bothering about consequences in their life.*

*To learn that though they have nothing to give when a friend cries to them, they can appease the friend's pain.*

*To learn that by trying to hold on to loved ones, they quickly try to push them away and by letting go of the loved ones they will be side-by-side forever.*

*To learn that though the word love has many different meanings, it loses value when it is overstated.*

*To learn that they can't do anything extraordinary for Me or I for them, still I do.*

*To learn that the distance they are from Me is the distance of prayer.*

Your Mission has begun...these are words that Swami wrote a message to an Australian devotee, Mr. Charles Penn, in 1979. The full transcript of Swami's words is below:

*Your mission has begun. Those are My words to you, My devotees. Each of you has a unique and valuable part to play in this lifetime. Only those whom I have called can serve Me.*

*My Mission has now reached that point in time when each of you now has work to do. This planet has a purpose in the great galaxy in which it is held. That purpose is now unfolding before our eyes. I call upon you to radiate the Bhakti (devotion) within you so that its unseen power will envelop all who come into your orbit. To successfully perform your part, always remain centred upon Me.*

*Allow yourself to impart that purity of heart within you towards all human beings and all living creatures and do not reach for the fruits of your work.*

*This part of My Mission is performed in absolute silence. You are My instruments from whom My love will pour. Be always aware that the moment you let your ego descend upon you My work ceases. When you have overcome your negative unmindfulness, you will again become My Source.*

*The multiplication of My Love will be felt throughout the world. I have prepared you for this work over many incarnations. I have drawn you to Me. I have made great steps in My Mission over these past incarnations. My work is ceaseless and so your work, too, is without end.*

*Know that I am within and without you. There is no difference. Rid yourselves of the petty matters forevermore. You are now in Me and I am now in Thee. There is no difference. My Darshan (spiritual blessings) will pour forth from Me to and through you. You may be unaware of this constant action. Be ever pure of heart and soul and mankind in your lifetime will benefit from your unique qualities.*

*Others, too, will join Me in this Mission when I draw them to Me. The time is approaching when all humanity will live in harmony. That time will be here sooner than one expects. Before it arrives be prepared for whatever is needed to reveal to every living thing the true purpose of existence. It is not what anyone alive can imagine. It is not something that one can try to aspire to. It is beyond all comprehension. I can say that its beauty is magnificent beyond all dreams. And as each of you perform your silent work, I embrace you to My Heart and henceforth your souls shall be lifted up and your eyes will reveal My Presence within.*

*This I say to all My Devotees from the Lord's Mountain Top where all the Universes become one. Be about My work, My beloved Bhaktas. Your breath will carry the scent of the blossoms of Heaven. Your example will be that of Angels. Your joy will be My Joy.*

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# Lessons from the Ramayana for modern society

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**Sri Sanjay Sahni**

Associate Professor, Dept. of Commerce, SSSIHL  
Director, Brindavan Campus, SSSIHL

A primary school teacher once summoned a parent. The parent was a little wary, wondering what mischief his son was up to that he has been summoned. When he met the teacher, he was very surprised by the request made by the teacher. The teacher said, “I request you to make sure your son doesn’t see the serial Kaun Banega Crorepati.” The parent felt that this was an educational program that would enhance the knowledge base of the child and was very surprised with this request. Rather surprised, he asked the teacher, “Why are you asking me this?” The teacher replied, “When I asked your son, who is your father, he asked me to give him multiple choices!”

The tragedy of modern education is that our youth neither know their father nor their mother. Culture is our mother and divinity is our father. We are born in culture, nurtured in our culture, protected by our culture; and just as the mother can only point towards the father and say, ‘this is your father’, in the same way, it is only our culture which can point to God and say, ‘here is your Lord’.

Swami started this Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality in 1972 with the prime objective of exposing the youth of this country to the glorious Indian heritage. Sanathana dharma draws its roots from the Vedas and it is believed in our country that the quintessence of Vedic wisdom is enshrined in that great Adi Kavya of Valmiki—The Ramayana. A vedic scholar was once sharing with us that the quintessence of the Vedas is in Ramayana, as Ra stands for Rigveda, Ma stands for Samaveda, Ya stands for Yajurveda and Na stands for Atharvana Veda. Even if you have no exposure to Vedas, if you study The Ramayana, you get the knowledge of the entire Vedic wisdom.

How should we approach this study of The Ramayana? There are many who have read The Ramayana and they wonder what is there in it to be known anew. There may be others who are not exposed to Ramayana at all. I remember once Swami recalling a professional interview, when the interviewer asked a candidate, ‘can you tell us the name of the wife of Sri Rama?’ The candidate was perplexed for a few minutes as he

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didn't know the answer. Then he got a brainwave and promptly replied, 'Mrs. Rama' and he thought that he got away with a very appropriate answer. We always think that we know the Ramayana but this is the depth of our knowledge.

My appeal to you is when we approach this great spiritual heritage of India, let us approach it with the reverence of a child approaching its mother. We have seen our mother's face a hundred times, but when we get up the next morning, we don't feel irritated seeing her face again! Similarly, we may have bathed in the Ganges a hundred times but when we are on its banks yet again, we are tempted to take a dip in the holy mother Ganges and purify ourselves. Let us approach the Ramayana with the anticipation that every moment in her presence will be a revelation; a lesson for a lifetime.

As we take up this study, I am reminded of the Tamil poet Kamban<sup>1</sup>. Kamban describes himself as a cat in front of the ocean of milk. He compares the Ramayana to the ocean of milk. When this cat wants to lap up the entire ocean, it is filled with the apprehension: 'the ocean is so infinite and my capacity is so limited, how can I drink the entire ocean?' Swami says that if you want to know the taste of the ocean, you don't need to drink the entire ocean; tasting a drop of it will give you the taste of the entire ocean. We are going to attempt to taste a few drops of this nectarine story of the Lord. Tulsidas<sup>2</sup> exhorts humanity when he says, "Why should we take this mind and plunge it into this lake of the story of the Lord." He says, "All of you think that you are healthy, but all are ailing from a universal disease, which is called as Bhava Roga."

*Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam*- We are caught up in this cycle of birth and death. For thousands of lifetimes, we have been born and we have given up this body and yet we have not learnt the lesson of our life. When Prof. N Kasturi<sup>3</sup> begins his autobiography- Loving God – which is also the account of his sweet relationship with the Lord – he says that when I last came to this school known as life, I didn't write my examinations properly. He says that hence this life is like a supplementary exam, as I didn't pass my exam in the last birth properly. Tulsidas says that the story of the Lord is a sure shot medicine for the disease known as Bhava Roga. In our culture and tradition, it is said that there are four objectives of life- *dharmā, artha, kama* and

1 c. 1180 to 1250; wrote *The Ramayana* in the Tamil language

2 1497/1532–1623; a Hindu poet-saint, reformer and philosopher renowned for his devotion to Lord Rama. A composer of several popular works, he is best known as the author of the epic *Ramcharitmanas*, a retelling of the Sanskrit *Ramayana* in the vernacular *Awadhi*.

3 *Biographer of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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*moksha*. Right action, wealth, desire and the aspiration for final emancipation. To get that liberation from the cycle of birth and death, plunge your mind in the story of the Lord.

The topic assigned to me is ‘Lessons from the Ramayana for modern society’. What are the ills affecting modern society? The diagnostic doctor Vyasa, having seen the entire Mahabharata war, at the end of it and at the commencement of Kaliyuga says, ‘With raised hands, I shout, it is dharma which should regulate artha and kama, but no one listens to me’. This is the lamentation of Maharishi Vyasa who classified the Vedas, who gave us the Mahabharata, who wrote the great Purana Srimad Bhagavatam. Lord Brahma gave a blessing to Valmiki. He said, “As long as there are rivers and mountains on the earth, so long shall this Ramayana live.” Swami said, “Mountains and rivers don’t need Ramayana, then why did Brahma gave such a blessing?” He said, “Mountains symbolize men and rivers symbolize women, and therefore this Ramayana shall survive as long as there are men and women on earth.” Hence this Ramayana is for everybody—for the young, for the old, it is for Indians, it is for foreigners—it is for every seeker of truth.

Bhagawan says, “If you want to protect this country, you don’t need atom bombs. If you want to protect your country, there are two things you have to acquire- first is sathya and the second is dharma.” The story of Rama is the saga of truth and righteousness. The life of Rama is His message. Demon Mareecha tells Ravana, ‘Ramo Vighrahan Dharmaha’- Rama is the embodiment of dharma. We see it in His life. For example- the attachment to the word he gives. He will not give a word if he can help it, but once He gives a word, He will not backtrack.

In the beginning of the story, Vishwamitra comes to Dasaratha. Dasaratha extends warm hospitality to the sage and requests him to ask for any favour. Vishwamitra puts forward his plea, “I am conducting a Yaga. I want your two sons Rama and Lakshmana to come and protect it.” Dasaratha had given his word and when he hears this plea, he is shaken up and pleads, “Master, why are you asking like this. How can my two little sons protect the Yaga. You command me, I will come with my entire army and protect the sacrifice.” Vishwamitra says, “No, I only want your two sons.” Vashistha intervenes and asks Dasaratha to hand over his two sons to Vishwamitra. Rama also comes and pleads in front of his father to let them go, as a word given by Dasaratha should not be taken back. In this way, the two brothers accompany Vishwamitra.

In his journey to Siddhashram and from Siddhashram to Mithili, Rama meets three women. In the story of Rama, these three women are very important. The first woman he meets is Tataka, a demoness playing havoc with the rishis, human beings and anyone visiting the forest. Vishwamitra explains her background to Rama and Rama promptly says that he will kill the demoness. But when he comes face to face to Tataka, he thinks that as she is a woman, he will just injure her. The war continues and he is not able to win the battle. Vishwamitra, recognizing that Rama is not putting adequate effort, cautions him and persuades him to kill the demoness. He says, "Don't be under the false impression that as she is a woman, and that she can't be killed. She is an anti-social element in the society. Her presence is going to cause more harm than good to the society. In fact, you are doing her a favour by preventing her from accumulating more sins." Rama recognizes the validity of the statement of Guru Vishwamitra and shoots an arrow that kills Tataka.

Bhagawan says that Tataka is the symbol of *tamo guna*. In the spiritual path when we begin our journey, *gunas* come into play. The first *guna* which has to be killed and transcended is the *tamo guna*. Rama and Lakshmana accompanied by Vishwamitra reach the erstwhile hermitage of Gautama. Vishwamitra starts explaining to Rama the background of the place. He explains about how through deception Indra created an argument between Sage Gautama and his wife Ahalya, and as a result, Gautama cursed his wife and she became a stone. Ahalya prayed to her husband and finally Gautama relented and said that in future Rama will come and redeem Ahalya.

After hearing this story, Rama is very eager to see Ahalya in the form of a stone hiding in the form of a bush. Accidentally, his feet touches the stone and Ahalya is redeemed. At that very moment, Gautama arrives at the scene and the husband and wife are united.

Swami says that Ahalya is the symbol of *rajo guna*. In the spiritual path, we face *rajo guna* in life but finally it has to be transmuted into *sattva guna*.

The symbol of *sattva guna* is Sita. We have heard Swami talking about the Rama Sita kalyanam on many occasions. Rama was a man of one word. At the time of breaking of the bow, Janaka, the father of Sita is so delighted; he wanted to give the hand of Sita in the hand of Rama. This is something that I want to highlight to our youth of today. When all the kings of the land – including Ravana – had lost, unable to break the bow, a stripling of a lad Rama, breaks the bow and wins the hand of Sita. Janaka, the father of Sita, offers her hand to Rama, but Rama says, "I can't accept her

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because I have not consulted my father. I have to ask my father whether he has given his consent for this marriage, only then can I enter into this alliance.” Immediately, King Dasaratha is sent for. Delightfully, he comes to Mithila and the proceedings commence. The moment comes when Janaka says that he is giving his daughter as *kanyadanam* to Rama. Rama doesn't react at all. He says that in the Ikshavaku dynasty, there is no one who has taken charity, we have always given charity. As you used the word *kanyadanam*, I can't accept Sita as *danam* from you. Janaka modifies his statement to: “as I am giving my daughter to you”, and then Rama accepts. The *purohit* is administering the vows and there is a particular vow which says, ‘*Dharme cha arthe cha kame cha na ti charme*’ - meaning, in life with respect to *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*, we shall be united. When this critical vow is to be taken, again Rama refuses to take the vow. The *purohit* is surprised as the *muhurtam* is slipping away and Rama is not ready to take the vow. As I said, Rama was a man of one word, hence He was not willing to take the vow. Even at the time of his marriage, just as the *purohit* is telling him, he is not willing to obey him. He recalls that he is a prince; one day this prince will become the king, and as the king of the land the first duty or responsibility is the subjects. At any point in life, if there comes any clash between the responsibility towards the subjects and the responsibility towards the family (including wife), the responsibility as a king towards the subjects will supersede the responsibility towards the family. Even at the time of marriage, Rama remembers the possible conflict of interest that may arise and he refuses to take the vow.

This is a very important facet of Rama's personality. On his own, Rama will not give a word, but once having given the word, He will never go back on it. During His exile, the sages of the forest come and say, “Master! We are being oppressed by the demons, please help us.” Rama says, “Do not worry, I will make sure that all these demons are annihilated and all of you are safe and protected.” At that point, a very interesting discussion takes place between Sita and Rama. Sita says, “Rama, why have you taken a vow like this, when the demons have not harmed us? You are resorting to battle, I presume, without any cause.” A healthy discussion ensues between the two and Rama accepts the viewpoint of Sita but says, “Once, I have given a vow, that too to the sages, I am not going to take back that word.”

Many times in the life of an Avatar, we have encountered episodes that create utter confusion. This confusion in the spiritual path prods us to enquire. In the life of Rama, one such episode was when He was about to be coronated. At that point of time when King Dasaratha had announced that the coronation will take place the next day, Rama is summoned in the presence of mother Kaikeyi and Dasaratha,

and the message is conveyed that instead of being coronated, Rama is expected to go to the forest. People think that it is a tragedy but Bhagawan explains, "The time is very auspicious of the star Pushya and the time has been set by none other than Brahmarishi Vashistha. He chose the moment of coronation which had become the moment of exile, how can this be understood or explained?" Bhagawan further explains, "This was the moment when Rama goes to the forest and commences His divine mission for which He was born." That, which looks like a tragedy from a worldly point of view, from the spiritual angle is according to the divine plan. King Dasaratha is not able to tell this to Rama and it is left to Kaikeyi to tell Rama about his exile for a period of fourteen years and the coronation of Bharata as the king. Not a muscle moved on the noble countenance when He heard the news. One moment you have success and the next moment you have defeat and yet there is no impact on you, that equanimity is divinity.

Rama comes back, meets his mother and breaks this news to her. Kousalya is distraught. She says, "Rama, you are obeying your father, what about me, I am your mother. I am the *ardhangi*, I am telling you not to go to the forest." Look at the dilemma of Rama. *Matru devo bhava, Pitru devo bhava*- First mother has to be obeyed and father has to be obeyed. Father has commanded him to go to the forest and mother has not given him the permission to go, how Rama will resolve this *dharmasankat*. In the lives of divine incarnations, you have such times of difficulty and they show us what ideal life is. Rama says, "Mother, never it has happened in the Ikshvaku clan, when a king has given a word and then doesn't live up to the word. It is my responsibility to ensure that father's word is upheld. You are saying this due to your attachment as a mother to me; more than a son, it is actually the husband who is first in your life. Hence the wish of the husband should be the predominant feature guiding your life. Please don't put me in such a *dharmasankat*." Kousalya says, "If it is so then please take me with you."

Rama again dissuades her and says, "Father is very much pained with the turn of events, at this moment the duty of a wife is to be next to the husband." This is how Rama persuades his mother. Finally, mother gives him a blessing, "Rama, the *dharm*a which you seek to protect, that *dharm*a will protect you from now onwards when you go to the forest."

At the moment Rama was to be coronated, He was asked to go to exile for a period of fourteen years which He accepts happily and willingly. This was the supreme detachment that He exhibited. Swami says, "brothers those days would attain

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supreme bliss because of mutual affection, but these days brothers go to ‘supreme court’ fighting over their property. When we are attuned to the divine, we will know what we have to do at what point of time.

Recently, we were in Badrinath and our tourist guide shared with us a very interesting anecdote. The day we reached Badrinath, it happened to be the day of the opening of the temple and there was a massive crowd with lots of dignitaries, VIPs and the Chief Minister. We ended up waiting eight hours in the queue. We were thinking that even in Prasanthi Nilayam for Swami’s darshan, we never had to wait so long. Our tourist guide was sharing that how a leading industrialist of our country had come to Badrinath, saw the huge queue and said rather irritatingly, “Do you know, who I am, do you expect me to stand like this in the queue and get the Lord’s darshan? I will not.” Immediately after this, he faced lot of problems in his business. He then realized that he has made a mistake and every year after that, he comes with his family, stands in the queue and takes the Lord’s darshan. You may be anybody, but for the Lord’s blessing, it is very important to do the right thing at the right time.

Swami says, “Today, brothers go to Supreme Court but look at the relation of Rama and Bharata.” This is a very important insight in the Ramayana. Rama gives up the kingdom and goes to the forest; Bharata comes to know that the kingdom is his but what he will do? He decides that he will not be the king. He says that this kingdom rightfully belongs to the elder brother and he goes to Rama to offer the kingdom back to him. Rama doesn’t relent.

When we are after the world, the world is always ten steps ahead of us and we are chasing it. The day we say- the world means nothing to me, I don’t want anything from it, my true purpose is divinity – we are detached from the world, and the world comes chasing us. Rama threw away the kingdom that was rightfully his as the eldest son; Bharata brings back the kingdom and pleads Rama to accept it. This is a very important lesson that we have to learn from the Ramayana. When we chase the world, it runs away from us, but when we consider God as our first priority, the world comes seeking us. Hence Jesus says- Seek ye the kingdom of God, and everything shall be added unto you.

When Bharata realizes that Rama is not going to relent, he takes his sandals and requests Rama to step on them. Rama steps on the sandals and Bharata installs them on the throne and rules the kingdom in the name of Sri Rama. Swami says, “For Rama, the kingdom was as insignificant as his sandals.” That was the kind of

detachment that Rama had.

Once it so happened, somebody asked Ravana, “You want Sita to be your wife, I will give you a solution- you have all the powers, go to her in the form of Sri Rama himself and Sita will surely accept you as her husband.” Ravana the archenemy of Rama says, “If I take the form of Sri Rama, I won’t have any desire to have Sita.” Please look at the state of desirelessness which is Sri Rama and which is Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and that is the state that God wants us all to aspire for.

Swami says:

Life + Desire = Man

Life – Desire = God

We witness the kind of detachment Lord Rama exhibited. He was unmoved by the number of temptations that come his way in the course of the fourteen years. First, Guha extends an invitation- Please come to my capital and accept my hospitality. Rama replies, “I am now a renunciate, I have to be in the forest.” When Sugriva requests Rama to attend his coronation, Rama send Lakshmana and says, “Sugriva, you are a king and I can’t enter your capital, I am supposed to be in the forest.” When Vibhishana becomes the King of Lanka, he requests Rama, “Please come and accept my hospitality.” Rama says, “No, there is still another day left for the fourteen year exile period to end, hence I cannot visit your capital.” When Vibhshana says, “Can I do something for you?” Rama requests Vibhishana, “Please give your Pushpaka Vimana so that I go quickly to Ayodhya as I have given word to Bharata that exactly at the expiry of fourteen years, I will be there and therefore I have very little time.” Rama sends Hanuman in advance while they all come in the Puspaka Vimana to prevent any delay. Rama tells Hanuman, “Even if I delay by one minute, Bharata will end his life, so please go and tell him that I am arriving.” Rama adds, “While conveying this message, please look at his face and if you feel that he has even an iota of sadness due to his attachment to the kingdom, come and tell me immediately. I will not return to Ayodhya; instead I will make my home somewhere else.” This was the detachment shown by Rama.

Swami also led the same kind of life. In every action of His we got lessons of what one should say, what one should do. Today He expects us to live His message. I will share with you an anecdote that took place in Tamil Nadu when we had an alumni meet. One alumnus, Krishnamoorthy, a ventriloquist, dropped me off to the airport



and was sitting with me in the airport lounge. I had heard about an interesting incident where Swami took his form. I wanted to listen to the experience directly from him. He started narrating the experience.

In May 2012, there was a Bal Vikas program in Ooty where he gave a performance. Subsequently, in July 2012, he was giving a speech in a local *samithi* in Chennai when he receives a message from the samithi convener of Ooty. The message says, "Are you in Ooty or are you in Chennai?" He replies, "I am very much in Chennai giving a performance at a Bal Vikas program." The samithi convener of Ooty asks, "If anyone is around you please give the phone to him." Krishnamoorthy hands over the phone to the local samithi convener of Chennai. The Ooty convener repeats his question, "Is this person in Ooty or in Chennai? I am asking this because Swami came in his form and gave darshan. The Chennai convener got totally perplexed and gave the phone to the alumnus. Then the convener of Ooty started narrating the following experience:

Early in the morning, a truck carrying granite stones arrived in Ooty and the truck driver informed one of the office bearers, a lady, about its arrival. She said that she would reach the spot and starts searching for keys of the Sai centre, which she was unable to find. In the meantime, one person meets the truck driver and offers him his help to unload the truck. He single-handedly unloads the truck in one hour whereas normally it will take four hours to do the same work. This person took the Sai Centre keys, handed them to the truck driver and asked him to hand over the keys to the office bearer and introduced himself as Krishnamoorthy from Chennai. In a few minutes, the lady arrives and the truck driver hands over the keys to her and says, "Madam, the truck is unloaded and here are the keys of the Sai Centre." She was surprised and asks the driver, "Where did you get the keys, there are supposed to be in my house, I have been searching for them but couldn't trace them." The truck driver replied, "You sent the person, he unloaded the truck in one hour whereas it usually takes four hours and said that he is from Chennai." The lady quickly went inside and picked up an album of a recent Bal Vikas program in Ooty and asked the driver to identify the person. The truck driver points at the photo of the boy from the album and identifies him and says, "This is the person who unloaded the truck and introduced himself as Krishnamoorthy from Chennai."

Flabbergasted, they contact Krishnamoorthy; but he said that all the while he was in Chennai participating in the Bal Vikas conference. During the conference, one Bal Vikas coordinator requested Krishnamoorthy to attend a Bal Vikas gurus conference

which was being held in Chennai and share his experiences with all.

As soon as the information about the Ooty miracle reached Chennai, the office bearers showed some scepticism regarding the incident. At that very moment, Krishnamoorthy arrived to attend that meeting. As soon as he arrived, a devotee who looks after Swami's room commented, "Oh! You have come again." Surprised, the alumnus asks the meaning of this statement and says that he is coming for the first time. The caretaker replies, "This is not possible, today only three people have visited this place and you were one of them. You came and asked me, 'is the room upstairs (Swami's room) open?' I told that it is not open and I don't have the keys to the room." This message spread that Swami manifested in the form of this student in Ooty and in Chennai and gave darshan to everybody.

Wherever we go, people ask us, 'when can we see Swami again, when can we have His darshan?' The time has come now, when Swami will give darshan in the form of His students and devotees. Therefore, the message for us is that we must become Him. Swami says, 'your life should become my message- when people meet you, interact with you, they should feel that they have seen me.' This is not the responsibility of just five or ten, but of each one of us. Each one of us has a role cut out in the divine mission; and when the right moment comes, it will be revealed to us. All that we need to do is to be ready.

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# Lessons from the Mahabharata for modern society

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*Parthasarathi roopena shraavetwa shubhangiram  
Parthasya aarti haro deva kripamurti sa patunaba*

**A**K Ramanujan, a contemporary Indian English poet remarked, “No Indian ever reads the Ramayana or the Mahabharata for the first time. These characters are already present in the collective unconscious of our rich heritage and somehow it percolates into the Indian psyche.’

My first rendezvous with the Mahabharata was on a chilly winter night in the comfort of my father’s lap, sitting and watching Kathakali performances in the temple grounds where Nala and Damayanti, Karna and Kunti came alive in greater colourful masks, giant costumes to the dizzying beats of the percussion. Somehow these characters are much more real to me than the people whom I live with. I am greatly inspired by the women characters of Mahabharata.

All my favourite episodes of the Mahabharata have one or more women characters, such as Kunti- the kingmaker, a widow with five little children in the far away forests of Himalayas, who made her children the future kings of the entire Bharatavarsha; or Satyawati- the queen dowager of Hastinapura, who had very difficult and strange experiences all through her life, and yet she was respected for her chastity and virtue. The Mahabharata reminds us about this often. So it was with Gandhari; her blindness was more of a hermeneutic blindness than a physical one. She chose to be blind to her distress and the faults of her sons. Had she not been blind to their faults, the Kaurava clan would not have been in peril. She was a plentiful mother of 101 children, and finally she was not left with even one son. She was left with only her daughter Dusala. She goes with her little grandson in her hands as her husband Jayadratha is killed by Arjuna and pleads with Arjuna, ‘Please spare my grandson. He is the only one remaining of the Kaurava dynasty.’ I admire Gandhari as well.

Of all the resplendent women heroes of Mahabharata, my eternal favourite is Yagnaseni (Draupadi)- the dusky, beautiful princess of Drupada, who challenges our

sense of morality by being party to Krishna's decision for *dharma sthapana*. Krishna lets her know that she is destined to remove adharma from the earth and for this she has to take some unique decisions and stand by them too. She takes all of them with peace and equanimity.

Yagnaseni was humiliated in the noble assembly where wise men sat silent saying dharma is *sookshma*- we do not know, whether what is happening is right or wrong. Draupadi asks Bhishma, "Did Yudhisthira bet me first or himself?" Bhishma says that dharma is very subtle; I am unable to understand what is right what is wrong. When human beings fail to keep up dharma, the cosmic dharma comes into action; the Lord decides to execute His dharma. When she is clad with a single garment and is disgraced, the Lord comes and gives her unlimited grace and protection. One of our teachers used to say that while giving a saree, Swami would say that saree is symbolic of protection. This is protection that Krishna gave Draupadi in return of a small bandage made out of her saree that she gave Him from her bridal dress when He was cutting sugarcane and was wounded.

Dharma, which is very subtle, lies at the heart of The Mahabharata. In literature, the relevance of a literary text can be analyzed by seeing whether it can stand the test of time. Shakespearian texts are studied even today, as they feel very contemporary. We are not imposing our current values on an ancient text, but we are studying the same values under current circumstances, which are relevant even today.

People have used The Mahabharata to explain the *adharmic* occurrences in the corporate world, like the scams and the recession of 2008. They have used it in the context of war. From the Udyog parva to the Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Shalya, Sautika parvas, what attracts our attention is that war is futile. It is important to study the violence and war in the context of First World War, Second World War, the Cold War and also the recent war in Iraq. Much of the damage in these wars is collateral damage. Individuals don't matter in a war.

After the game of dice when the Pandavas go to exile, in the Vana Parva, Draupadi asks Yudhisthira, "Why did you remain silent, when in the open court the wife Kauravas disgraced me? Why didn't you behave like a Kshyatriya." Yudhisthira says that he thinks Ahimsa is the greatest dharma, higher than the dharma of a warrior. He says that *kshama* (forbearance) is the greatest. Swami in one discourse says that *kshama* is *Sathya*, *kshama* is *Dharma*; it is everything. It has two aspects- one is forgiveness and the other is forbearance.

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Sage Markandeya who won over Yama-the Lord of death, and has seen eons pass by, arrives on the scene and smiles at Yudhisthira. Yudhisthira is hurt and asks the sage, 'Are you mocking at me?' Markandeya says, 'I don't intend to hurt you. I was remembering one thing. I have seen yugas pass by, I have seen the Ikshavaku clan, the Rama avatar. I have also seen the elephants being controlled by the mahouts. I only feel one thing- *Meshe balasyate charete Adharmaha* -the one who think that they are weak and indulge in certain actions they are adharmic actions. This dictum is considered as the keystone of the Mahabharata. Sage Markandeya meant that if one is tied to his destiny without having the courage to face the challenges that lie in front of him, then he is doing adharm. In that court filled with evil Kauravas, the stalwarts like Bhishma, Drona, Krupacharya remain silent. Dhritarashtra is opaque to what happens and continuously keeps asking about who has won the game of dice. This greedy voice of Dhritarashtra comes as a refrain. Being a grandsire, we understand that he is not all that fair and impartial. In that court, if Yudhisthira would have said that this game of dice is evil and Draupadi is not a slave and had these five Pandavas shown the courage to take up arms and rebel against the Kauravas, that would have been Dharma too. Dharma is not passive resistance but an active virtue.

In the book Yagnaseni, Prathibha Ray mentions about mother Urmila and mother Sita to highlight the contrast. Mother Urmila remains inside the inner chambers for fourteen years without seeing a shadow of a man but Ayodhya resounded with the call of sati Sita who remained captive in someone else's house for ten months. It is not the cloistered virtue that matters but the virtue that has face-to-face conflict with vice and still shines forth that matters.

Whenever any discussion came up about Mahabharata, either in the classroom or outside, the evergreen hero in the discussions was Karna. It is very difficult to understand what made him go through all the travails in his life. He is a wronged hero. He is wronged by his mother, wronged by his brothers, wronged by his teacher Parashurama and wronged in the last moment by the charioteer Shalya. He is wrong throughout. Karna is a tragic waste of a beautiful life. What are we to learn from him?

First of all, in society, learn not to privilege one identity of a person above other identities. Karna was a generous man and a very caring son to both Athiratha and Radha, his parents, as well as to mother Kunti. He was extraordinary in his generosity. With all this he was branded as the *sutaputra* Karna. He was stung by this term throughout his life. Let us learn not to categorize people into watertight

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compartments. We have to believe in the philosophy of expansion, otherwise we have to moan like Yudhisthira as narrated by Swami- While performing the final obsequies of the Kauravas, Yudhisthira turns and asks whether anybody is left for the performance of final rights. Mother Kunti says, “One is left and that is Karna.” Yudhisthira asks, “Why should I do for a *sutaputra* Karna?” At that time Kunti replies, “Karna was not a *sutaputra* but as much a *kounteya* as Yudhisthira, and rather, being the eldest he is the heir of the kingdom.” Karna was in the wrong side at a wrong time in the wrong party. He was an exemplar of showing to us the limitation of human friendship.

The last moments of Karna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra are very significant. Karna and Arjuna are face-to-face with each other with Shalya and Krishna as their charioteers respectively. As Krishna approaches in his chariot, Shalya praises the beautiful form of Krishna just to distract him from the task of war. Shalya describes the peacock feather bedewed with the dust of the battlefield, the sweat trickling down His beautiful forehead, the beautiful yellow silk garment is rustled due his task at hand and that smile that is ever on His face, come what the task may be.

Karna says, “Stop it, they are my enemies.” This is the first flaw, having God as your enemy. One axiom that goes on repeating in Mahabharata is- *Yato dharmaha tato jayaha*, meaning- where there is Dharma there is shall be victory. At the last moment when the wheel of the chariot of Karna sinks, he says, “the wise ones say that if you follow dharma, dharma will protect you. I see that I have protected dharma all through my life but at this moment dharma is not protecting me.” Lord Krishna says, “It is very well to remember dharma when you are in trouble. Where was this dharma when you sat beside Duryodhana and mocked Draupadi saying that she is a slave to all the hundred Kauravas. Where was this Dharma when four days back that sixteen-year-old little boy Abhimanyu was caught between six to seven giants and all of you killed him cold blooded without considering justice and the rules of war. Where was this dharma when you knew that the game of dice that Shakuni was playing false? Now when you are in trouble, you remind us about dharmic war.” Lord Krishna turns to Arjuna and tells him, “Kill Karna, this is the best moment.” At that moment, we see the beautiful face of Karna fallen in the battlefield shining like the sun. This makes us remember that we should always choose God as our charioteer.

*Yathas Krishna tato Dharmaha, yato dharmaha tato jayaha.*

Where there is Krishna, there is dharma, where there is dharma there is victory.

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The second century Vaishnavites modified and included Krishna in this statement. At times, our mind and intellect can be subdued to tell us what is right, as dharma is very subtle. But our litmus test about dharma is what Swami will approve. If we are able to pass through that single test, the Lord will be our charioteer. There is no worry when He is there; He knows what is victory and the way to victory.

The different characters in The Mahabharata and their life incidents can inspire us in resolving the various conflicts of Dharma. The Mahabharata is not a self-help text where one can know how to practice dharma. In fact, there are few situations where an answer is provided. The text only gives us the various perspectives. In literature, we don't brand people as good and evil but we see them as a blend of good and evil. Perhaps, through the war, Krishna is removing one illusion through another illusion. The Mahabharata happens to all of us in various realms. At one level, it is the war between two sets of cousins, and at a second level it is a war to balance the cosmic level. At the third and the subtlest level, it is an enactment of the crisis of the conscience, which happens in each of one of us if we are aware, moment-by-moment. When it is jarring, we call it *dharma sankata*, otherwise we are not awake to the calls of the conscience.

Another character that baffles us is Ashwatthama. He is one of the few *chiranjeevis* who stands for raw hatred and revenge. His father is wrongly killed, and so he resolves to kill the Pandavas in the Sauptika Parva. But Krishna so wisely takes the Pandavas and Draupadi to the banks of Yamuna to spend the night in the calm environs there. In the camp, the Upapandavas, Druthadymuna and all the men of Drupada are fast asleep when Ashwatthama, along with Krutverma kills all of them. What follows next is most significant for us.

Draupadi, in her anguish of the loss of all her sons, tells the Pandavas to kill Ashwatthama to pacify her grief. We can see Draupadi also as a symbol of revenge. Finally, when they bring Ashwathama in her presence, the mother in her wakes up and she says, "Spare him, I know what is the pain of losing five sons, I don't want his mother to undergo the same pain." Compassion is the highest dharma as Mahabharata depicts.

During the war, preceding his capture, Ashwatthama sends forth the *Bramhashirastra* towards Arjuna and Arjuna also shoots the same weapon towards Ashwatthama. Seeing this fight, Vyasa Maharishi and Narad Maharishi mediate and ask them to recall their missiles. Arjuna recalls his missile whereas Ashwathama who doesn't

know how to recall it, directs the missile to all the unborn children of Pandava clan. He does this to make sure that the Pandava dynasty gets wiped out, like the Kaurava dynasty. But the compassionate Lord resuscitates Parakshit, due to which we have the ambrosia called Srimad Bhagavatam.

The Mahabharata also teaches us the concept of prenatal education. It teaches us that values-based education should start as early as when we are in the womb of the mother. Like Prahlada, who learns about Narayana when he is in the womb of his mother, Abhimanyu learns about martial arts when he was still a foetus. We also see how Kunti brought up the Pandavas with a lot of *sraddha* and *bhakti*. We also see how the Kauravas didn't get that kind of right parenting. Swami speaks about Sai Parenting; the Mahabharata teaches us what type of parenting one should have.

Another important concept that this epic teaches is the futility of war. At the end of the war, when Yudhisthira sees a sea of widows, the wives of all the Kauravas, the panchalas; he says that it was a futile effort and laments his being part of such a war. He feels disillusioned and wanted to leave the whole kingdom and go as an ascetic. Krishna takes Yudhishtira to Bhishma who has the boon of *Swachanda Mrutyu*. Bhishma falls on the tenth day but was waiting for an auspicious time to leave his body, lying on a bed of arrows.

Yudhisthira asks Bhishma: *Ko dharmah sarva dharmamaanam bhavatah paramo matah* What is the supreme Dharma of all dharmas?

Bhishma says with a chuckle, "The one standing behind you is the absolute *dharmam*."

I heard this story from elders that in the same Poornachandra auditorium when once Bhagawan asked a previous editor of Sanathana Sarathi to speak and he said, 'Swami, I will not speak because they are here to listen to you speak.' Swami said, "No, it took Bhishma to explain to Yudhisthira what *dharmam* is; Yudhishtira spend all the time with Krishna but never realized who Krishna was."

*Acharya prabavo devo dharmasya prabhu rakshitaha*- The Lord is the source of all dharma, practicing the word of the Lord is real dharma. We see Yudhishtira going through the test of faith constantly. In the *vana parva* he faces the *Yaksha prashna* where a spirit asks him- what is the highest *dharmam*? Yudhishtira says that compassion is the highest *dharmam*. Yaksha asks him, "All four of your brothers have died, you can revive any one." Without batting an eyelid Yudhishtira asks for the revival of either



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Nakula or Sahadeva. He says, “One son of Kunti, i.e. me, is alive, so please revive one son of Madri, i.e. either Nakula or Sahadev.” One more aspect of dharma is prioritizing others before you.

Another virtue is ‘*Ahimsa Paramodharmaha*’. We think that these virtues can’t be practiced, but emperor Ashoka, a powerful king of the Maurya dynasty practiced this virtue. Emperor Ashoka was disillusioned by war and gave it up saying, “those who win hearts of others by means of *dharm*a are victors; all else one will be vanquished victors like the Pandavas.” Similar is the example of Mahatma Gandhi. As Einstein said, “The coming generations will not believe that somebody like him walked on earth.” He changed the British Empire with the power of Sathya and Ahimsa-Truth and Non-violence.

Hence, we see that the values that are enshrined in the Mahabharata are practicable. I want to draw your attention to one more incident of the Mahabharata in the *Vana Parva*. Sage Vyasa directs Arjuna to procure powerful arms from the *Devas*. Arjuna does penance for months without food, standing on one toe and finally stops even breathing. At the end, there comes a wild boar to disturb his penance and behind him comes a hunter and there ensues a battle between Arjuna and the hunter. Finally, the hunter wins the battle. This wild boar has to be fought with before we can even dream to get divine weapons for the battle of *dharm*a. The wild boar is not something extraneous to us; it is our own negativities, our own flaws and foibles. We have to come to terms with it and we have to remember that the one who has sent this wild boar is the Kiratamurthy (hunter) himself, our dear Lord in a different form. Keeping that in mind, we have to fight as hard as we can to remove our negative tendencies. We will fail as our battle is against him, then He will leave his *kirata* form and assume his resplendent form of Uma Maheshwara and will grant us the *Paasupatastra* which will assist us throughout.

At the end of the Vishnu Sahasranamam, there appears a sloka in the *Phala Sruti*.

*Artha Vishanna Sithilascha Beetha*  
*Ghosheshu cha Vyadhisbu Varthamana*  
*Sankeertya Narayana Sabda Matram*  
*Vimukta Dukhab Sukhino Bhavanthu*

Meaning: The desperate, mentally shattered, fearful souls, those who suffer from dreadful diseases, all other worried persons—if they utter the word ‘Narayana’—will

get themselves free of their sorrows. Just like a mountain of sponge is burnt by a spark of fire, their troubles are vanished by the sound 'Narayana'.

There is a story in the Srimad Bhagvatam where Ajamila, who was on the death bed, calls out to his son Narayana. Lord Narayana hears this and comes to his rescue.

Vedavyasa Maharishi, way before the advent of psychiatric and psychoanalytical techniques, categorized the various depressions as *arta* (desperate), *vishanna* (mentally shattered), *sithilascha* (weak in action), *bheeta* (phobias) and *ghoreshu cha Vyadhishtu* (dreadful mental diseases). He gave a single panacea for all the mental agitations, and that is the sound of the word Narayana. It is not the mantra of Narayana or the name of Narayana but the sound of the word Narayana is enough, according to Maharishi Vyasa. If we just take up this name even without knowing its potency, that in itself will help us to get rid of all afflictions. This is a very important message for all of us in this Kali age.

The entire Mahabharata is an allegory in the search of *dharmā*. The final part after the *Shanti Parva* just before the *Hari Vamsa* begins, Yudhisthira goes for Mahaprasthana with other Pandavas and all the other Pandavas along with Draupadi fall down during the sojourn. Yudhisthira alone reaches with a stray dog when Indra comes with a vehicle and says, "I have come with a vehicle, I will directly take you to heaven with this body." Yudhisthira says, "If I come, this dog also should accompany me." Indra says, "it is not possible as dogs are not allowed in heaven, we can take you only due to your exemplary deeds." Yudhisthira says, "I will not come if dog is not allowed, I will stay back here." When Yudhisthira fought for many others for the sake of compassion and ahimsa and forbearance, we could understand that the stubbornness of him to take a stray dog to heaven is the epitome of compassion that makes him the 'Unhero Hero' of the Mahabharata. When people are asked to spot a hero, they choose Karna, Arjuna or Krishna, but rarely they choose Yudhisthira as he is considered impractical. But he showed us that compassion is a practical virtue.

One more aspect that I feel is relevant in modern society is to observe that Lord Krishna has always been sympathetic and protective about women's honour. Swami has spoken about modesty, humility and chastity as the crest jewels of womanhood.

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Swami has always emphasized that one should uphold the honour of women and we see the same virtue in Mahabharata. This is very relevant in today's world.

I have a prayer: Swami, women shall be honoured and protected wherever they are.

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# Bhajan Antakshari

Moderator: Sri Amey Deshpandey

Doctoral Research Scholar, Dept. of Management Studies, SSSIHL

**N**amasmarana - Chanting the name of the Lord - has been prescribed as the easiest and surest way to emancipation in the this age. Moreover, Swami has time and again emphasised on the community singing - or Sankeertana.

Bhajans are a great gift that our beloved Swami has given to us. They represent a grand culmination of an evolution of the Bhakti Sangeet Sampradaya that has spanned over several hundreds of years starting from Sage Narada himself to Guru Nanak to all the contemporary saints like Meerabai, Tulsidas, Surdas, Tukaram and finally to Sai bhajans. Sai bhajans represent music in its true form... Music for God.

Bhajans play a very important and integral role in the development of personality of a student at the SSSIHL. Everyday students spend on an average 45 mins. in bhajans when they are in the portals of SSSIHL. It becomes necessary to help them to carry out this activity with full vigour knowledge and the right emotions.

To make the process of bhajan singing more interesting, insightful and endearing, the idea of Bhajan Antakshari had been introduced for the first time in a summer course. The Bhajan Antakshari programme attempted to bring out that grandeur and beauty of Sai bhajans. It brought out the variety, colour and soul of sai bhajans. Several rounds were played through the course of the hour-long presentation which tested the bhajan knowledge, creativity, ability to recall, ability to give the inner significance, and knowledge of the meaning of bhajans. Though the format was competitive, the true aim was to make bhajans more endearing and enlivening to students and staff as much as it was to our Beloved Bhagawan.

The students as well as the audience enthusiastically participated in the programme taking home a different and probably better perspective on this wonderful *sadhana* that is so endearing to our Beloved Lord.

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# Transformation – The true sign of devotion

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Sri Dhruv Vyas

Student, III B.A. (Hons.) in Economics, SSSIHL

Once a senior devotee was leaving for abroad and as is the practice, he came to Bhagawan and asked as to what message he should give to the devotees abroad or what kind of *seva* should he undertake to make Bhagawan happy. Bhagawan smiled and said, “No doubt the *seva* being done is important; but what the *seva* is doing to them is more important to me. I will be very happy to know how much this *seva* is making them pure or transforming their hearts.” In a very subtle manner, Swami explains that what He wants is transformation of our hearts. I won’t be wrong if I say that transformation is the true sign of devotion. The goal for each one of us is to transform ourselves from the level of humans to divine. To enlighten us on this path of transformation, the Lord Himself descended in the form of our beloved Swami.

How do we perceive transformation?

To answer this question, let us go back to the time of Krishna. Once, Lord Krishna was sitting on the banks of river Yamuna. A devotee approaches the Lord and asks, “Among so many of your devotees, who are the best?” Krishna gives a blissful smile and asks the devotee to get a stone from the river. Krishna commands the devotee to break the stone and the devotee observes that the stone is dry from inside but wet from outside. Krishna says, “the stone is in the river for thousands of years but not even a drop has entered into it, similarly, there are many devotees who are around me for many years but not even an inch of my teaching and love has entered their hearts.” Today, let us ask ourselves, in spite of being in Prasanthi Nilayam, in spite of being in His close proximity for so many years, how much of His teachings are we following?

Then, Lord Krishna takes a silk dhoti and dips it in the river water. Consequently, the dhoti absorbs water. The Lord then says, “These are the devotees who come in my presence for some time and get their hearts filled with my love and teaching, but when the wind blows, the silk dhoti dries up. In the same way, when the wind of worldly life blows, all my teachings and love evaporate. But they will come again to

get themselves recharged.”

Next, the Lord materializes a sugar candy and throws it into the river. The devotee observes that immediately the sugar candy dissolves in water. At this the Lord says, “These are the best devotees who are very dear to me, they come once in my presence and merge in me.” We all should strive hard to reach the level of sugar candy so that we can also be one with the ocean of the Lord’s love.

Why do we need to transform ourselves?

A beautiful analogy will help us understand. Our heart is like a pot filled with curd. This curd represents the negative qualities that pollute our hearts. The potter of this pot, our beloved Lord is waiting to pour the fresh milk of His grace in this pot but before doing so, He wants us to get rid of all our bad qualities in the form of curd. Even if there is a single drop of curd, the entire milk changes into curd. Thus, in this way, we can transform our heart by annihilating all the bad qualities so that we can be the direct recipient of Lord’s grace. Swami himself has given a beautiful analogy in this matter. In order to grow a garden, the first step is to pluck out all the weeds, only then the flowers will bloom. Our hearts are like the garden; unless we pluck out all the evil tendencies, the flowers of God’s grace can never bloom.

One of the memories that I cherish regarding transformation is during the Grama Seva activities in 2011. I just gave two laddus to a small boy but what I got was not a thank you but a warm smile that melted me, a smile that transformed me. That smile made me realize the joy one derives from service. Then it dawned upon me that the smallest of things in this world has the ability to transform the heart.

How do we transform ourselves?

Of all the things that have the ability to transform, the most powerful one is love. In the 1970s, Bhagawan blessed a group of devotees with an interview. They asked Swami as to what are His expectations from His devotees. Swami said, “Ultimately your body will reduce to ashes, and at that time when you come to me, I won’t ask about your degrees, your qualifications and your bank balance. Instead, I will ask you—how much of the love that I have given to you, have you shared with my creation and humanity?”

Talking about this theme of love and transformation, I am reminded of a unique facet

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of Swami's love, narrated by Prof. Kasturi in the book *Satyam Shivam Sundaram – Part 2*, Chapter 7. He mentions about the unique assurances and inspiration given by Swami to the prisoners of the jail of Andhra Pradesh, which touched and transform the lives of prisoners forever. Bhagawan once sent a message to the prisoners when they asked for it. Let me narrate to you a grateful acknowledgement of one of the prisoners written to Swami: 'We are sinners certainly, but our lives have become full of hope through some stray acts of merit which we have rendered ourselves fit to receive your grace. Really, if there are any who can be declared fortunate in the world, we are the ones; we are truly proud that the stream of your mercy has started flowing towards these mean men who have injured society and who are suffering punishment. This is no ordinary event; we pray that you grant us your darshan and blessings. You have written to us out of the vastness of your mercy that you will elevate us with your darshan, sparshan and sambhashan at Puttaparthi.'

The letter from this prisoner is the evidence of exhilaration felt by prisoners of that jail when a parcel arrived with a message of consolation and courage from Bhagawan. Letters followed from Swami, and the prison became a paradise of the pious. Just like the mother who pours extra love on the wayward child, Swami was kind to the repentant criminals and the sunshine that he spread on all of them was a sign of His universal love.

Let me end with a sonnet:  
Sai is His name and His message is love  
To care for us all He has come from above  
He shows us the way and marks out the pace  
We must make effort to earn His grace  
He gives to us all whoever we be  
If we turn on to Him, He will set us free  
From doubt unto faith, He builds us anew  
And turns us to God in whatever we do  
He has come to this world, a star unto man  
To raise up this earth is part of His plan  
To rid us of darkness, fear and greed  
To bring us together regardless of creed  
Together we love, together we sing  
Throughout every land our voices will ring  
Within every heart and on every tongue  
With love and with joy, His name will be sung.

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# Culture is concern for others

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Sri G Aditya

Student, I Masters in Financial Management, SSSIHL

One can get thousands of meanings for the phrase 'culture'. Great sages and saints who lived in our country gave many meanings to this word. But Bhagawan gave a very beautiful meaning to this word culture which one can easily understand and assimilate. He said, 'culture is concern for others.' I started understanding this statement when I started experiencing it. Let me share some of my experiences that have helped me understand that our culture should be concern for others.

It is during my 12th standard, I had joined school after the vacations. I was attending bhajans and Swami was sitting on the dais, enjoying bhajans and granting darshan. That day we had *prasadam* distribution. We were supposed to distribute mangoes to the students and the devotees. I was distributing *prasadam* to the students sitting right in front of Swami in such a way that my back was seen by Swami. As I was distributing, there was a commotion. I was puzzled, as all eyes were looking at me. One of the brothers told me to look back as Swami is looking at me. As I turned back, Bhagawan called me. I was slowly moving towards Him, as I was taking the steps, I was tense and nervous thinking that I did something wrong. Swami said, "Give *prasadam* to the boys in the front." I nodded my head and started distributing. When I reached the bhajan group, one boy was playing tabla, I thought not to disturb him, hence I skipped him and moved further. I thought that anyway, he will get *prasadam* later from the *prasadam* room.

When I moved further and started distributing, there was commotion again and all were looking at me. This time I was sure that Swami was looking at me. I turned back and Swami called me. Swami said, "Poor fellow! Please give *prasadam* to him also." I was taken aback, immediately rushed to the boy, gave the *prasadam* to the boy playing tabla and came and reported to Bhagawan. Swami said, "Very happy!" and gave me a beautiful smile. That day, Swami was not interested over the fact that everyone in the hall except that boy had got *prasadam*, but Swami was concerned over the fact that this individual did not get *prasadam*.

In the Treta Yuga, when the bridge to Lanka was made from Rameshwaram, there



were mighty warriors, but Rama showed His concern to that small squirrel who contributed in a small way towards making the bridge. That same Rama has come down in the form of Sai Rama to show His concern to His devotees in this Kali Age. That day, I understood that our culture should be concern for others.

It was during last year's Gama Seva, when I fell sick and was diagnosed with dengue fever and was admitted in the hospital. The next day was the Poornahuti celebrations and all my friends and classmates were attending that and were departing to their respective homes, as the vacations would begin. Many of my classmates met me and left. By evening, I was all alone in the hospital and I was feeling lonely. I asked Swami, "Is there anyone who is concerned about my health?" That evening one of my teachers came to meet me and I casually asked him about his departure. He said there is a change in plan. He said, "Myself, along with the director of Brindavan campus and the warden of the hostel have decided to move tomorrow to Brindavan as your father is coming tomorrow. We have informed him also about our stay." This hit my heart, this was as if Swami was giving me an assurance that here are the people who are really concerned about your health. The next day, when my father arrived, it was as if the teachers were handing over the responsibility of my well-being on to the shoulders of my physical father.

Being associated with Swami, even the teachers of SSSIHL lead their lives showing concern for others, especially for their students. These teachers have been personally handpicked and chosen by Swami to take care of His students, His only property. That day I understood that my culture should be concern for others.

In the hostel, the students belonging to the Muslim community observe the Roza fasting during the month of Ramadan. In this time, they get up early in the morning, partake their food and keep fast the entire day. Some of the boys in the dietary department, get up much earlier and prepare food for them so that they can observe their fast. One of the boys who was preparing food for these boys, was my classmate. I asked him, "Why do you get up so early in the morning and prepare delicious

food which takes a lot of time? Why can't you prepare something which they can eat and go?" At that time, my brother gave me a beautiful answer which changed my perception towards life. He said, "These boys maintain the fast as a ritual, as an offering to the God. Being in Sathya Sai institutions, we have to respect all faiths and all religions. I just make sure that whatever food I prepare would be a delicious as his mother would have prepared with all the love and concern for him." That day, I understood that I should live this life just to show concern for others. Being associated with Swami, the students of SSSIHL lead their lives every day in hostel showing concern for others.

I am very proud to say that I belong to such a Sai family where each one lives for other and all live for God. I am very confident that Swami will give many more experiences that will reinforce the virtue of true concern for others. I pray to Swami to give me more opportunities to show concern for others. I pay my obeisance to the physical mother who have birth to this body and the divine mother Sai who is present in this body as a spark of life and has spoken to you all today.

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# Alumni Panel Discussion – Ideal Sai students and their role in society

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**Moderator: Dr. (Miss) P L Rani**

Associate Professor, Dept. of English Language & Literature, SSSIHL

The panel discussion consisted of invited men and women alumni who shared their experiences at SSSIHL and how it helped transform them and those around them. The theme was the applicability of the Sri Sathya Sai System of Integral Education.

## The participants:

Ms. Malati Srinivasan (MS), 1994-1997 B.Sc. in Biosciences, SSSIHL. Principal scientist and Head, CSIR - CFTRI Resource Centre, Bangalore.

Ms. Soundariya Preetha (SP): 1993-1998 B.A. and M.A. English Language & Literature, SSSIHL. Journalist (Business), The Hindu.

Sri V Suresh (VS): 1994-1996 MBA, SSSIHL. EVP & Head Sales, Naukri.com.

Sri Dharma Prasad (DP): 2000, M.A. & M.Phil., SSSIHL. Project Advisor, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

**Applicability of Sathya Sai system of Integral Education:** This will differ from the context, situation and the problem that you are confronting.

**Moderator:** Can you all share any personal interactions with Bhagawan that forms a major guideline for your lives?

**MS:** It is very true that Swami forms an integral part of our education. I recollect four such interactions that impacted me a lot. Twice He called me '*Bangaru*' and twice He called me 'Good girl'. I remember one occasion when He came to me and looking at my eyes directly said 'Good girl'. These words ring in my ears and guide my life and I have to make sure that I live by it. If God gives us a certificate, we have to live by it.

**DP:** I remember my first week in college, Swami comes to me and asks, 'Where are you from?' I told him my village name, 'Sriya'. He asked, "What Sriya!" I clarify, "Swami it is Kasargod." He graphically described the lanes, the bylanes, the famous Ganesha temple of Maddur. I was stunned. On the same day, Swami was distributing the white-coloured paper sweet called as 'Putareku'. I commented to my classmate next to me, "Oh! It is so hot, Swami is distributing kerchiefs." After taking two rounds, Swami comes back straight to me and says, "How is the kerchief?" there all my doubts ended. I grew up in Sai environment as a child and by default, Swami was part of my life. But this experience was important, as I understood Swami on my own and not due to someone's telling. This has been the undercurrent of my life that He, the all knowing one, is guiding my life.

**SP:** I remember an incident that happened after I passed out of college. We the ex-students of Anantapur campus had put up a play on this very stage. Swami would come to the back stage and oversee the costumes, the dressing up. At that time there were two elderly gentlemen who were sitting there to control lighting. Swami looked at us and said, 'Men, move away'. We felt very strange as there were very elderly and we were just out of college. Later I realized that the journalistic profession in which I am demands that I meet all kind of people of all age groups and this message was like an alert signal to me.

**VS:** I recall my first darshan in Trayee Brindavan. Swami used to ask each one of the new students our name and our native place. When my turn came, Swami asked, "Where do you come from?" I replied, "Chennai".  
"What is your name?" Swami asked. I replied, "Suresh".  
Swami asked me, "What did you do?" I replied, "Engineering".  
"What Engineering?" Swami added. I replied, "Instrumentation engineering, Swami."  
Swami enquired, "What is the relation between instrumentation and engineering?" I explained to Him using all my technical knowledge.  
Swami asked further, "What is the relation between instrumentation and engineering; what is the relation between idli and sambhar?"  
Swami had told me few years back to take instrumentation as a branch, He was coming back and trying to reveal to me that He knows everything about that episode.

**Moderator:** This message that He knows everything is the most important thing that carries us through our life even after we leave the portals of this institute. Our culture here of being vegetarians, and teetotalers can be very sensitive in a corporate set up. Can you all recall any incidents that were challenging to you and

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still you stood your ground?

**SP:** I recollect, it was in the Poornachandra Auditorium, when the then Prime Minister Sri P V Narasimha Rao visited Prasanthi Nilayam and Swami gave a discourse on vegetarianism. He explained, what happens when we eat non-vegetarian food. Being a vegetarian, I found myself in a challenging situation when I travelled on work to Finland. This is a strange country with nine months winter and three months summer. They don't have a rich harvest of fruits and vegetables hence they eat lot of non-veg food. This is the case even with every food item like breads, rolls. I had to survive for five days on berries, cherries and other such things but strictly said no to non-vegetarian food.

**VS:** I feel 'we are not living with Swami' but 'Swami is living within you'. This gives us a lot of strength. My first job was at Xerox, which is an aggressive sales-oriented firm. Their perception of me was how can a boy from Sri Sathya Sai Institute who does bhajans and is a teetotaler survive in such an environment? In this firm, they have parties for every small occasion. It was this belief that He is within me, helped me overcome all the temptation which one faces in such parties. The teachers in this Institute are role models; they walk the talk; which inspires us to follow them. In those trying times, I always was able to connect to my teachers and Swami.

**DP:** At my workplace, we had a statewide meeting that I attended. It so happened that the director of the organization observed some *gutka* (chewing tobacco) stains in the washbasin and it became a big issue. After we all went back to our stations, he convened a meeting to find out who would have actually done it. People in the meeting started listing names like Mr. X from Gulbarga, Mr. Y from Mangalore. One of them mentioned that Dharma Prasad was also here. The director strongly fell back on the person who took my name and said, "Don't talk about Dharma." This is the type of faith they would have on us. It is also an onus on us to live up to those expectations.

I have one more incident to share regarding the Institute brass band. I was new to the band and didn't know anything about the trumpet but was inducted as a trumpet player. Swami came to see one of our practices in the first month. I was not playing but pretending to play. Swami comes close to me, puts His arm around my shoulder and tells the bandleader, "Some people don't play, no music and sound." It is very easy to fake values and teachings but difficult to practice them. Swami always expects us to follow the teachings.

**MS:** I feel that more than challenges, it is our responsibility as a Sai student to follow the ideals set by Him.

**Moderator:** Let us go to a boiling issue of the modern times. We have so many scams like the Satyam scam, 3G scam, coal allocation scam and all these have to do with money as the perception is that money can buy anything. But we have a system that teaches us that ‘Money comes and goes but morality comes and grows.’ Is it possible in the professional world to give more priority to morals over money?

**MS:** I am a scientist and also head an institution where there is lot of procurement of equipment. We have set up many laboratories. The vendors who you have to deal with, try to show favour by sending some complementary gifts and presents. But no vendor would come to me with these gifts in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai. They are scared of me. They don't even bother to give me a desktop calendar. But this is not the case with other people in the organization. I have been instrumental in removing many who have taken money in return for contracts. It has been a very tough job to do. In the 12th five-year plan starting from 2012, CSIR gave approval for a ₹23 Crore project for the lipidemic centre. I have been given the sole responsibility for this project. The Govt. of India doesn't give a project of such magnitude to only one person handling it. The Directors and the Director Generals in CSIR know for sure that if money comes to me it will be in clean hands. This responsibility comes because I am Swami's student.

**Moderator:** Bro. Dharma Prasad has an interesting episode on a project of HIV/AIDS.

**DP:** When we began this HIV/AIDS awareness project, the infection rates were very high but now we can see a dent in the epidemic and it is going down. Some lobbies in the NGO started feeling jittery that if the infection rate becomes zero, how can we sustain without money coming in? I started seeing people faking data showing that there is still some issues on the field and write new proposals for crores of rupees. It was not possible for me to swim totally against the current, hence I moved out of it. I quit and joined the education sector. I had to go with a 30% lower pay purely on ethical and moral grounds. But Swami always wants His students live 'kingsize'. Within 6 months I got an offer from a German firm and I got back what I lost till then. Swami never lets you down, you have to have patience.

**Moderator:** I am sure there are many more experiences in the corporate sector Bro. Suresh.

**VS:** As part of my job, I go to many engineering colleges and management schools for campus recruitment. In the last three years due to slowdown in the market, it is difficult to get jobs. Hence, they try to entice you with multiple gifts when you go for a recruitment. Right from air travel to hotel booking to cabs, they organize everything. But the panel of experts who accompany me for such recruitments, know that Suresh will not accept any of such things. It was very difficult for the first two to three years.

We make sure that we stay in hotels that were acceptable to our norms and we don't accept pick-ups from the campus. This is because, as soon as you accept something you are in an obligation. I am reminded of Tiruvalluvar's quote here:

*Eendra pozbuthilum peruthuvakkum than makanai  
Sandror entru ketta thai*

Mother is proud of a son much more when the world calls him a scholar rather than when she delivers the child. I am sure that Swami will be more than happy when His students, whom He calls His property, are living up to His words. The moment we live up to His words, the entire world changes. In my peer group all started realizing the respect that I command because of love of God and fear of sin. I feel conscience is God. Now, not even a single person takes any gift from any campus that they go.

**Moderator:** Being a journalist, can you throw some light on the fact of paid news?

**SP:** When I went on an assignment to a college, the principal asked my educational background. When I mentioned to him that I studied in Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, he asked me, "Very strict, very idealistic situation, can the same ideals be practiced outside in the world?" At that time, I was fresh from college, but later on I realized that any press release which we get from companies, government, politicians comes with gift coupons, cheques and so on. But accept it unknowingly and later we are obliged to publish that news. As brother Suresh said, it was very difficult to say no initially but over a period of time, people know that if anything goes to Preetha, it will be rejected.

**Moderator:** Does this also influence your colleagues?

**VS:** As I was mentioning about the campus recruitment, before I joined all my colleagues used to have lot of comforts staying in five-star hotels and so on, but I

stopped it and they were not happy as their ‘benefits’ were curtailed. I feel it is not important to transform others, if we transform ourselves it is enough; because by looking at you a very slow transformation takes place in people around you. If we do our job perfectly, Swami takes over and takes care of all other things.

**Moderator:** I am reminded of an interesting thing happened to friend of mine who is the branch manager of Corporation Bank, Coimbatore. Her children study in the primary school here and they come back for vacation on April 1st. During that time as it is the financial year ending time, she is very busy in her annual audits and stays late in the evening at her workplace. On one such occasion, she was in the office when her children came back from Puttaparthi on vacation on April 1st. The general manager of the bank—who was aware of her situation—called the auditors and requested them to finish her part of the work so that she can go home. The auditors were ready to oblige and during conversation they came to know that both her children and her are from the Sathya Sai system of education. The auditors flipped to the last page of the accounts ledger, signed it and said, “You should have told us this first, we don’t need to audit your accounts.”

This is the respect that Swami’s students command in the society and this comes due to the solid foundation He lays in innumerable ways when we are here.

**DP:** When we move out from here, we always tend to look out for good companies. In my case, almost all my colleagues had behavioural issues. I worked in the HIV/AIDS sector and I have worked with many whom we always try to be away from; but they also change looking at us. I never talk deliberately about Swami, but after few weeks or months, they themselves come and enquire about Swami. At that time it is very easy for us to talk about the inspiration and the experiences that we have got from Bhagawan.

In my organization, we are entitled to a stay in a hotel with expenditure of around ₹10000-12000 per day, but I started the practice of staying in a hotel worth ₹1000-2000 that had all the basic amenities. There was lot of opposition from my colleagues saying whose money you are saving, etc; it is after all the money of the company. I always used to say that being in an organization in social sector, we should avoid unnecessary expenditure. Slowly the trend changed, and now nearly 90% of the staff stays at basic hotels.

**Moderator:** It is a ripple effect; it goes from person to person and gradually percolates



the whole organization, if only we develop patience. As you mentioned, we don't have to be preachy, we just have to demonstrate by our own actions, and things will catch on by themselves.

In tough times, when you feel nothing can help, not your boss, not your spouse, relatives or children, at such times what keeps Swami's students going?

**VS:** This reminds me of the Lehmann crisis of 2008 followed by the global slowdown. Like any other profitable organization, our company also thought of how to cut costs. One of the suggestions which came to me from the board of management was to do a head count cut, restructure the organization, put a performance appraisal mechanism and remove the bottom 5% of the employees. At such situations, the bottom part of the pyramid is cut, the young inexperienced employees who are not yet deployed, who are non-billable, are removed. I was not happy with the decision but I had to go back to the board in a couple of days with a plan for my firm. I had 2-3 days of sleepless nights, praying to Swami for guidance.

I came up with a different model, which I presented to the board. The board as such is ruthless; it wanted results. The board was looking at quarterly results to please the investors. I tried to address the admin costs, the travel costs and other costs rather than looking at the employee cost, because over a period of time, if the market picks up, these are the same resources you have to hire for your working. When I went with the proposal, my immediate boss, the CEO didn't take it positively. But I was firm that my decision was in tune with my conscience. Finally they deferred the decision and within 6-8 months when the market picked up these people were helpful to us and are doing very well today.

Another interesting incident happened at an investor meet in Hong Kong, following our listing. Some of my colleagues went to the meeting and things didn't go well and I was asked to come to the rescue. When you are straight forward, you are honest, the toughest task comes to you. This was not my area of responsibility, but still, I went with a few of my colleagues to bail the company out of the problem. The problem was an ego tussle between my colleague and one of the investors. I went for the discussion but things were not going in any direction. I prayed to Swami, 'Please help me'. I was wearing a blazer and a tie. The blazer moved a bit and the watch which Swami had given us was in 1996 was visible. It had the photo of Swami and the person on the other side looked at it. This person who was cold to me for the last two and half hours took the discussion in a totally different direction. He started asking me, 'how I knew Swami'. When I said that I am Swami's student, the entire discussion went

onto something else. We had a great lunch, we got the deal and our boss had no reason but to accept that we won the deal.  
He is always there with us; we only have to believe it.

**Moderator:** Each situation we face in life is a chapter from the syllabus of Swami's subject. If we get expertise in this subject, we become experts in all other subjects. Please have this belief that every one of us who have gone through this system will vouch for it. What we have received here is not education, it is *educare*.

... ————— ...

# Lessons from the Bhagavatam for modern society

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*Shaanta Aakaaram Bhujaga Shayanam Padma Naabham Sura Iisham  
Vishva Aadhaaram Gagana Sadrsham Megha Varnam Shubha Angam  
Laksmi Kaantam Kamala Nayanam Yogibhir Dhyaana Gamyam  
Vande Vishnum Bhava Bhaya Haram Sarva Loka Eka Naatham*

*Yasya smarana matrena janma samsara bhandanat  
Vimuchyate namastasamai vishnave prabha-vushnave*

When we hear the word announcement, what is the first thing that comes to our mind? Being students of the hostel, we come across a lot of announcements in our stay. Many announcements are made in the mandir and also during the Summer Course. But there is one announcement that attracts our attention, i.e., at the railway station- ‘Yatrigan krupaya dhyan dey’.

A similar announcement was made eons ago to three different types of people. ‘O! passengers in the journey of life, kindly pay attention; your life sojourn is going to end in a few moments from now’. These three people reacted to this announcement in three completely different ways. Kamsa was bewildered at the announcement that the eighth child of Devaki is going to be the cause of his death. Kamsa used all his might to fight against *kala* (time). To emerge victorious in death itself, he did many heinous acts. The second person who heard this announcement was Gajendra. Though it was not an audible announcement, it was a tug at his leg. The jaws of death held on to his leg and was dragging him into the waters of destiny, which—in its torrential flow—doesn’t allow anybody to survive. Gajendra used all his might; he called out to his kith and kin and when he realized that his kith and kin were not there for him, and that his own strength was limited – he then surrendered to the Lord. The third person who heard this announcement was King Parikshit.

King Parikshit was in the forest and suddenly he felt a deep sense of hunger and thirst. He started looking for some food and entered the hermitage of the great sage Samika. The sage, who was deeply immersed in the Self, was not able to recognize

the affairs of the outside world. The king was awaiting a reply from the sage and when he found that there is no response, in a fit of anger, picked up a dead snake and put it around the neck of the sage. Shringi, the son of this great sage was playing with his companions when a boy came and narrated all that happened in the hermitage. He didn't believe this episode at first but when all the others chided him, he ran to the hermitage to find out if whatever was told was the truth. Shringi found that it was King Parikshit who has meted out such an insult to his father and immediately pronounced a curse to him saying, "In seven days' time, by the bite of serpent Takshaka, Parikshit will meet his end." Parikshit was unaware of this curse until a Rishiputra made an announcement was made in his court. When this announcement was made, King Parikshit didn't cry in frustration, didn't try to use his might to find out how he can overcome death. Instead, he said to the Rishiputra, "My dear Rishiputra, do you even call this a curse. All my life, I was involved in the affairs of the world and as a result, I have become slothful to the affairs of the Self, the God and the godly, which is the purpose of life. This is not a curse but a blessing from Hari himself. In fact, it is His will and grace that has moved the tongue of that sage Shringi and got this curse pronounced so that at least last seven days of my life, I will use it for my fulfillment.

Kamsa as we all know, incurred the wrath of God, Gajendra though initially moved by his ego, later surrendered his ego to the lotus feet of the God and earned His grace. Parikshit, a man of equanimity, a man of ultimate love and devotion to God, verily attained God realization.

As soon as Parikshit heard this news, he coronated his son Janmejaya and went to the banks of the river Bhagirathi. It is said that thousands of sages and saints thronged the banks of Bhagirathi after receiving this news. There was a cloud of confusion as no one had a clear answer to the query of this devotee of the Lord, the grandson of Pandavas. He said, "O! sages and saints, tell me, what is the best means to spend the last seven days of my life in contemplation of the Lord?" No one had a clear answer and as this dark cloud of indecision and ignorance was abound, suddenly there was a brilliant light, not of one sun but of a thousand suns.

A divine and splendorous persona walked into the arena. That son of Krishna Dwapayana, the one who was born realized, that wonderful sage who can be compared to Lord Narayana himself, that sage Suka, entered the scene and all the dark clouds faded away. He brought with him a torrential flow of divine nectarine love stories between the Lord and His devotees. This torrential flow not only liberated Parikshit but continues to liberate thousands of devotees for thousands of years and

will continue to do so.

In one of my journeys, I came across a great devotee of Bhagawan. During a conversation, he was talking about bhakti and he posed a question to me, “Do you know the four types of Bhakti that the Bhagavatam speaks of?” I was immediate to reply, “Yes, I know. It is the *artha bhakta*- one who prays in distress or spiritual discontent, the *artharthi bhakta*- one who prays for the fulfillment of his desires like wealth, power or even spiritual powers, the *jigyansu*- who seeks liberation and realization steadily, and finally the *jnani*- who has identified himself with the truth of the universe and has come to the Lord’s presence to enjoy His play.

I was very satisfied that being a Swami’s student, I was able to answer his question, but the ‘googly’ was yet to come. He then asked me, “Which level devotee are you?” I immediately started making calculations in my mind- ‘First two levels seem little low they don’t suit us, ‘Jnani’ might be too much of self-glory, so I thought that *jigyansu* is the right answer. All of us are here as *jigyansus*. I was about to tell him this when came the next question, “Can you give examples of these four types of devotees?”

When we have discussions, we say that all the patients coming to the hospitals are the *arthas* as they have physical ailments and physical suffering. *Artharthis* are those who come to Swami seeking power, position, transfers, marriage and promotions. *Jigyansus* are the ones in white dress yearning to know more about life, and of course *janis* are very few around.

On that day, that devotee, who has been established in his devotion to the Lord, told me something which overwhelmed me: “Prahlada is the *artha* devotee.” Prahlada whom Swami extols to the highest degree, who was ever immersed in the *namasmarana* of the Lord; who was inflicted with many physical troubles by his own father Hiranyakashyapu and every time he called out to the Lord, Narayana was physically there to save him. The pandava queen Draupadi and the likes of Sakkubai come in this category.

He then wanted to know about the *artharthi* devotee. I was safe not to answer this time. *Artharthi* according to this devotee was Dhruva because he wanted a place on the lap of his father Uttanpada. He went with that objective but didn’t know how to have darshan of Lord Hari, but Hari seeing his pure-hearted intention sent foremost of His devotees Narada to teach Dhruva about how to please God. Eventually, Dhruva attained God and today he is a star in the sky. Bhagawan says that the likes

of Arjuna fall in this category.

Then comes the level to which out of my sheer ignorance, I thought, I belonged- *Jigyansu bhakta*. When this elderly devotee asked me, I thankfully maintained silence. To my utter astonishment he said, “It is Radha- Radha is verily Krishna—they are inseparable—but she played the role of *Jigyansu bhakta*. The great friend of Krishna, Uddhava also finds his ranks among *Jigyansu bhakta*.”

The devotee finally said that the *jnani bhakta* is the likes of sage Suka, Sant Kumara. He then asked me, “To which category, you belong to?” I defined a new level of devotion for me, i.e. Level 0. I realized that these are the great ideals in front of me but the time is too short, what should I do? Just like Parikshit had just seven days, I feel that the time is too short. He said, “Don’t despair, why fear when the Nanda Nandana Himself is with you.”

During the Kodaikanal trips, Swami would send us for shopping. He would encourage us to buy something for our parents and ourselves. Bhagawan is our divine mother and father, so we get something for Him too with a prayer in our hearts that He should accept it. On those trips, Swami always wanted Meera bhajans. He was talking day in and day out about Meera and was saying that she was the greatest devotee. Hence we thought an idol of mother Meera would please Bhagawan. We bought the idol of mother Meera, went humbly to Him and showed him the idol. Swami said, “I know”. We said, “Swami, it is for you,” Swami said, “I don’t want it, keep it with you.” We replied, “We got it only for you, please accept it.” Swami touched the idol and said, “This is just a doll, Meera is verily within me.”

He was imploring us not to go for the external alone but look for what mother Meera stood for. Her only intention in life was to be one with the Lord and all her life she struggled and strived to achieve that oneness. Every moment of her life was spent in deep and loving contemplation of Lord Krishna and Krishna Himself declared, ‘she is verily in me.’

Bhagawan says, ‘I am Brahma, I am Vishnu, I am Maheshwara – all forms are verily in me’.

Introducing Himself he says-

*Sarva Roopam dharama shantam, sarva naam dharam shivam*

*Satchidananda roopa advaitam, sathyam shivam sundaram*

Swami says that all these forms are His; he doesn't discriminate between different forms. He says, "if you concentrate on My form alone, fully believing in Me, I will bless you and reveal to you the truth. I am you and you are I."

Though the genesis of the Bhagavatam was based on fear, it is not really so. In fact, the birth of enquiry is the genesis of the Bhagavatam. It is not the fear of death, but what is to be done, between life and death, the answer to which is the entire Bhagavatam itself. The Bhagavatam is our own life story; it is this hall that has been witness to the love of a devotee to his Lord and the love of the Lord to His devotee.

The Bhagavatam gives us a clear-cut path. We are born so that we are not born again, we die so that we don't die again. How do we go about doing it, that is the lesson that the Bhagavatam teaches?

The first step that the Bhagavatam teaches, which Parikshit too learnt, is *Sharavanam*. Swami says that those who listen to this narrative with earnest devotion and reflect upon its value and significance and act according to the light it sheds on their minds, will merge in the bliss of Vasudeva, who is the embodiment of bliss. Their hearts will be filled with the sweet nectar of *Madana Mohana* and will experience Advaitananda, the bliss of being one and only one. Swami says that in the beginning, it might be a struggle to get a taste for the *leelas* just like how our staple food was milk when we were babies but our mother knew that we can't live on milk all our lives. She decides to feed us rice. At the beginning the rice is not palatable to us, but she doesn't give up; she persists and gives us little by little, so much so that we become familiar with the taste of rice so that today it is our staple food and we can't live without it.

In the same way, Swami says that we should have the *satsang* of the Lord every day; at the beginning it might not be so easy, but don't give up on it. Everyday take a little bit of it, remember the stories and the glories of the Lord every day, and slowly you will be so intoxicated by it that it will be your life breath and you can't survive without listening and reveling in them. That is the power of *satsang*.

The second step is *Keerthanam*. A devotee can't live without bhajans, without *sankeertanam*. Swami gives an assurance in Bhagavatatha Vahini that loud singing or recitation of His name with full vigilance of thought, feeling and utterance is the highest sadhana. I remember that how Swami even at the cost of His physical strain

used to sit and clap loudly to show us how to do bhajans. Bhagawan says that we have to sing the bhajans loudly as this removes all our impurities. The take away from this lesson is that wholehearted singing of His glory everyday is the greatest purifier. Swami says that just as Krishna danced on the head of the thousand-hooded Kalia and removed all his venom, let the name of Krishna dance on our tongues and help us remove all the venom that is within us, purify us and make us available for Him.

In Krishna Tulabharam, Satyabhama wanted Krishna all for herself. Krishna knew that this is not the right attitude and thus He and Narada together devised a plan. It was the day of mother Rukmini's birthday and Satyabhama, because of her possessiveness, was not allowing Krishna to go and meet Rukmini. Krishna signaled to Narada to start his drama. Narada says, "Today is mother Rukmini's birthday, why the Lord is here?"

Satyabhama replies, "The Lord is mine, of course, I have not bound him and kept, he can go if He wants."

Narada tries to clarify and asks, "How can you see that Lord is solely yours, I will believe if you prove this to all." He adds, "I will get a balance arranged, on one side will be seated the Lord and on the other side you have to place the wealth that equals His weight. Mother Satyabhama was very confident, she had all the wealth in the world and also she had the Symantaka mani.

The Lord Himself agreed to be seated on one side of the balance and on the other side, she brought all her wealth, her bangles, jewels and placed them but the balance didn't tilt a bit. She took the Symantaka mani which produces jewellery worth a million tonnes and placed it on the balance; still Krishna was heavier. Sathyabhama accepted defeat and Narada at that point to rub salt on her wounds said, "Mother, why don't we consult, mother Rukmini?" Her ego was shattered at the thought of consulting her sister. The sister who had not been allowed the proximity of the Lord now became very dear to Sathyabhama. She approaches Rukmini and says, "Sister, Narada is devising a plan to take away our Lord from us, unless we tilt the balance towards our side, please come and save us, we want our Lord." She comes looks at Lord Krishna, gives a smile and says that only the name of the Lord can equal His form. Narada doesn't accept this and says that something has to be put in the other pan to balance the Lord and the name is actually formless. Rukmini picks up a Tulsi leaf, chants the name of Lord Krishna and says, "Lord, since your name alone can equate your form, I chant your name to equate your form and let this leaf of Tulsi, tilt the balance." When she places the Tulsi leaf, the name of the Lord equated His form and that single leaf of Tulsi overweighed Krishna. This is the power of the Name.



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We will now quickly move the step of *Vishnu Smaranam*. This means to remember the Lord in gratitude for His unconditional love. Parkshit's life was saved and all his life he searched for the one who saved his life. He wanted to know more and more about the one who saved him. If we also enquire, the arrows of Karma are being broken down and shattered to pieces by the same Nandalala. Everyday if we enquire thus- what is our relationship with you, why are you saving us, we will be remembering Him and looking for Him in everything and in everybody. This is truly Vishnu Smaranam, as He pervades everything.

Swami says that to worship His lotus feet i.e., *Padasevanam* is to contemplate on His divine lotus feet and implicitly follow His directions like Bharata and to obey His directions like the Pandavas.

*Vandanam*- Swami says is to offer all our *dasendriyas*- five organs of cognition and five organs of action, in humble and loving service to the Lord. If we use them the way God had ordained them to be used is good enough.

*Archanam*- Swami says, "Give me your body patra (leaf), offer all your actions to me as *deba patram*. *Manas phalam*- Surrender the mind to the conscience. *Hrudaya pushpam*- fill your heart with compassion towards all. *Ananda Vashpam*- think of me, think of my glory and when the tears roll down from your eyes, that is *toyam* (sacred water). This is what God seeks from all of us.

*Dasyam*- this starts with the feeling of servitude and who else other than Hanuman embodies this? When Hanuman came face-to-face with Ravana, Hanuman didn't say, 'I am the son of Vayu, I am an avatar of Rudra and this very moment I can shatter you to pieces.' Hanuman said- *Dasobam Kosalendrasya* (I am a humble servant of my Lord Sri Rama). This is the attitude that we have to develop when we do service. Hanuman was the servant of Atma Rama; we too must be servants of our conscience. Ravana led a life of misery and pain as he was the servant of the body and mind. Rama hugged Hanuman asking him what He could give him in return. This is the indelible bond of nearness and dearness which the Lord gifts us if we practice servitude.

*Sneham* is a gift of God.

Finally comes *Atma Nivedanam*. Let us consider the incident of Krishna lifting the Goverdhana hill on the small finger of His left hand. The Gopikas and the Gopalas,

though being the greatest devotees of the Lord, were deluded by their ego. They held sticks in their hands to support Krishna in lifting the mountain. They said, “Krishna, your arms must be aching, you are holding it for such a long time, please relax, we will hold it for sometime.” Krishna pulls his arm down, the entire Govardhana giri comes down with extreme force and all the sticks shatter to pieces symbolizing that the thin bamboo like egos of the cowherds getting shattered. If we become like the gopals and the gopikas, then Atma Nivedanam becomes a gift from God himself.

One day, some of the students were imploring Swami, “Please talk to us, please give us an interview.” At that time, Swami said that He is not interested to speak to them, as they are part-time devotees. Swami asked them to give full time devotion. Swami turned to an elderly devotee and asked him, “In the previous company where you were working, how many types of employees you had?” He replied, “Swami, we had two types of workers, one temporary or contract-based and the other were the permanent ones.” Swami said, “How do you pay them?” the elderly devotee replied, “The temporary workers are paid wages on a daily basis, whereas the permanent workers get regular salary, increments, bonuses, dearness allowance and also pension. Then Swami said, “Don’t be a temporary devotee, it will give you only part time grace. In order to earn full-time grace with bonuses, increments and most importantly nearness and dearness allowance and also pension for after life, inculcate full-time devotion.” Swami then said that it is easier to have full-time devotion. When this devotee asked as to how to inculcate full-time devotion, Swami replied, “Accept whatever happens to you with full equanimity, treating it as God’s gift.” Once in Chennai, when a student asked Swami about *sharanagati* (surrender), Swami said, “There is nothing that you can give me in *sharanagati*, have the firm faith that whether good or bad happens to you, it is given by me. That is full-time devotion.” The gopikas, the pandavas were such type of devotees.

Swami has given a mantra for full-time devotion in many of his discourses that Draupadi used to chant incessantly, and which the gopikas would chant day in and day out. The mantra was- *Kleem Krishnaya Govindaya Gopijana Vallbhaya Svaha*. Swami says that each of these mantras are verily God itself. Merely chanting the mantra is not enough, he teaches us how to practice it. Swami says that we have to chant the mantra and also practice the teachings of the Lord whose mantra you are chanting. *Kleem* represents earth, *Krishnaya* represents water, *Govindaya* represents fire, *Gopijana vallabhaya* represents air and *Svaha* represents ether or space. This is the combination of all the five elements, which our whole universe is made up of. It is not the breeze that brushes our cheek- *Gopijana vallabha*, is not the fire of the

arati and the digestive fire which digests our food, Govinda himself. Let us enquire into these truths and this enquiry gives a *bhakta* the six practices to follow. These are:

- » Do not waste: food, water, money, energy and time
- » Body made of five elements is verily the temple of God, hence treat it with respect
- » Do not criticize or harm others, as they are also divine. Swami often says- *Sarva jeeva tiraskaram keshavam pratigachati*- whatever abuses we give others reaches God.
- » Remind yourself: those who criticize us are doing a great service to us! Be grateful!

Swami says that when someone criticizes you, they are actually taking a part of that bad quality from you. Hence they are ready to make themselves impure at the cost of your purity.

- » See God in all, as all
- » By performing every work for the pleasure of God – work becomes worship

Krishna would go to the residences of the Gopikas asking for butter. The gopikas used to say, “Krishna, first you do what we want you to do and then we will give butter to you.” Krishna used to agree and do whatever they use to ask Him for. He would dance for them, bring out the voice of a cuckoo and roar like a lion, making the Gopikas tremble with fear. They would wonder at the leela and miracle of such a small child Krishna. Krishna says, “Mother, I have done as requested by you, now please give me some butter.” The gopikas replied, “Krishna, my mother-in-law will not allow me to give you the butter, I just wanted to have fun with you.” Krishna would go disappointed, but the Lord has His own ways to get the butter.

Once in Kodaikanal, one of our brothers shared an experience. If one is travelling with Swami to Kodaikanal, he is called a ‘form boy’ in the parlance of students. This boy went with Swami to Kodaikanal, but for the entire trip, either Swami was ignoring him or admonishing him. Hence, it was difficult for him to decide whether he was a form boy or formless boy. He was totally out of favour with Bhagawan, which is known as ‘out of form’. He had a video camera and was shooting secretly the arrival of Swami into the hall for session with the boys. When Swami entered the hall, He spotted the boy with the corner of His eye, came to him and said, “Aye! You are a thief, a camera thief, without my permission you are capturing my images secretly.” This boy immediately shut the camera and put his head down. He was apprehensive that this act of his might spoil the whole session that day and was feeling that due to his folly all other boys will miss out on a golden opportunity to be

with Bhagawan. What a noble thought!

Swami looked at him at that instant, broke into a smile and said, “You are camera thief but I am ‘chitchor’- stealer of hearts.”

Listening to the glories of the Lord, singing out aloud His glory, remembering that every atom around us including us is verily Him, will purify our hearts, fill it with His divine love and transmute it into divinity. Our duty is to follow the nine-fold path, to follow His words with utmost sincerity and the rest will be taken care by Him. Swami says, “Make your hearts soft as butter, then even if you keep it at a place which is unreachable, I will make my way to that place. I have my own committee to find out whose *chitta* is ready to be stolen by me.”

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# Quiz on “The lives of all Avatars” as narrated by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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Quiz has always been an effective tool in the teaching-learning process for many centuries. The formalised structure in which quiz competitions and programmes are conducted in schools, colleges and universities has always fascinated many generations of students into the ‘art and science’ of quizzing.

Quiz programmes have always been an important part of Summer Courses at the Institute. While they were held in the Divine Presence of Bhagawan during many Summer Courses in the past, there were occasions when quiz programmes were even conducted during Bhagawan’s visit to the Hostels at Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan and in the Sai Sruthi Mandir at Kodaikanal. The objective of these programmes was always the same – to make the students aware of the rich and varied heritage of Indian culture and to acquaint them with the life and teachings of Bhagawan Baba.

In line with this sacred tradition, there was a lively inter-campus quiz programme during the Summer Course. This year, the theme was on the lives of the various Avatars (incarnations of the Divine on earth).

The nine rounds in this Quiz Programme were:

- Round 1 – Avatars: An introduction
- Round 2 – Vamana and Parashurama
- Round 3 – Rama
- Round 4 – Krishna
- Round 5 – Buddha
- Round 6 – Shirdi Sai Baba
- Round 7 – Sathya Sai Baba (Visual Round)
- Round 8 – Sathya Sai Baba
- Round 9 – Audio Round

Along with the students, even elders enthusiastically participated in the event by

answering questions passed by the participating students.

The quiz brought before the students, cherished memories of the wonderful times they were blessed to have, in the years gone by, in the immediate physical presence of their Revered Founder Chancellor – Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai BabaBaba.

**Note:** Answers to questions were given directly by Bhagawan Baba over the years and are referenced (in brackets) below each answer. Round 9 was an audio round, and hence has not been published.

## ROUND 1 – RAMAYANA

### 1. What is the meaning of the word Avatar as defined by Bhagawan?

The word Avatar means descent. It is not coming down from the peak of a mountain or the top storey of a building. It is a descent from the state of the Atma to the state of the body.

*(Summer Showers in Brindavan 1979)*

### 2. What are the five kinds of Avatars as elaborated by Bhagawan?

In the world, God has descended as human incarnation in five different forms. These forms are based on the different aspects of the Divine:

Nityaavatar

Viseshaavatar

Aveshaavatar

Leelaavatar (Also known as Amsaavatar)

Poornaavatar

Nityaavatara, Viseshaavatar and Aveshaavatar have only five to nine *kalaas* (aspects) of the Lord.

Only in the Poornaavatar are all the sixteen *kalaas* of the Divine present. The ancients regarded only the Poornaavatars as the full manifestation of God.

In this context, every human being must be deemed as Avatar as he has some aspect of the Divine in him. It is because he has descended from the Divine, he is entitled to be called an Avatar.

*(Bhagawan's 63rd birthday, 23 Nov 1988)*

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### 3. Every Avatar has six types of powers. What are they?

All-encompassing Prosperity, Righteousness, Fame, Wealth, Wisdom and Renunciation (or non-attachment). God is the possessor of these six attributes. Every Avatar of God in every age and every place has these six attributes.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 22, Kodaikanal, 14 Apr 1989)*

### 4. Why does an Avatar incarnate?

God comes in human form because man has strayed away from the path of righteousness. To reform man and bring him back to Dharma, God has to take the human form. Birds, beasts and insects lead lives according to their specific nature. They do not need Avatars. Today, only man has given up all righteousness, forgotten his divine essence and degraded his humanness. To reform man in this state, God has to come in human form. The Avatar has to protect the good, reform the erring and punish the wicked.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 29, 20 May 1996)*

God takes human form when the Godliness that is inherent in man is submerged, when the moral code and the spiritual discipline that have been prescribed by the experience of godly seekers are neglected, when man slides into beast from which he rose and becomes a terror.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 5, Gokulaashtami, 19 Aug 1965)*

The role of every Avathaar (incarnation of the Divine) is to establish the reign of Truth and Righteousness, banish all that is evil, false and unrighteous in the world, and help to manifest the divinity in mankind.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 29, 15 May 1996)*

## RAMA AND KRISHNA SPECIAL

### 5. Each Avatar descends for a particular purpose? In Bhagawan's words, what were the resolves of the Krishna Avatar?

Krishna incarnated with three resolves:

*Dharma Samsthaapanaarthaya Sambhavaami Yuge Yuge* (I Incarnate from age to age to establish Dharma);

*Yogakshemam Vahaamyaham* (I shall promote the progress well-being of my devotees);

*Mokshayishyaami Maa Suchah* (I shall liberate those who take refuge in Me).

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 17, Guru Pournima Day, 13 July 1984)*

**6. Each Avatar descends for a particular purpose? In Bhagawan's words, what were the resolves of the Ram Avatar?**

When dharma was showing signs of decline, Rama appeared to protect: *Dharani* (the earth), *Dharma Patni* (his consort) and *Dharma* (Righteousness).

It was for these three-fold purposes that Rama Avatar took place. He had three resolves: One word (for protection of *Dharma*), one arrow (for protection of *Dharani*) and one wife (*Dharma Patni*).

Rama declared that whoever sought asylum from him, would be totally protected. Examples of Sugriva, Vibheeshana and many other characters in the Ramayana depict this resolve.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 23, Krishna Janmashtami, 14 Aug 1990)*

**7. While both Rama and Krishna were Avatars, what was the major difference between them?**

Some of the distinctions as given by Swami are:

Krishna Avatara is a *Sampoorna* Avatara, the Lord appearing with all the 16 *kalas* (distinctive marks); whereas Raama shared the *kalas* with other brothers.

Rama appeared as if He was associated with Gunas (qualities), or as having qualitative behaviour, whereas Krishna was above and beyond such, unaffected by the gunas.

Krishna never prayed, even in the direst crisis! But, Rama does so, to Aditya (Sun God)

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 4, 26 Nov 1964)*

**8. What were the primary human values embodied by Lord Rama and Lord Krishna?**

In the Treta Yuga, Rama came as the very embodiment of Satya and Dharma (Truth and Righteousness)

In the Dwapara Yuga, the Lord incarnated as Krishna, the embodiment of Santhi and Prema (peace and love).

Today, the Avatar has come as the embodiment of all the four - Satya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 23, Krishna Janmashtami, 14 Aug 1990)*



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## ROUND 2 – VAMANA AND PARASHURAMA

### 1. Bali wanted to perform the Vishwajit Yaga. According to Bhagawan, what does this Yaga signify?

Vishwam means the totality of Pancha Bhutas (five elements), Pancha Indriyas (five senses) and Pancha Koshas (five sheaths of the human body). It is the victory over such a Vishwam which the word ‘Vishwajit’ symbolizes.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 14, 4 September 1979)*

### 2. Swami always urges us to have good thoughts. He has explained that God is constantly pronouncing the blessing ‘Tathaastu’ on all of us, and whatever we think, good or bad, will be granted to us. In the life of Vamana, Bhagawan explains the importance of having good thoughts by narrating an example of how Bali’s daughter Ratnamala suffered as a result of having bad thoughts? Can you recount Bhagawan’s narration of the anecdote?

As Vamana entered the *Yaagashala*, Ratnamala, the daughter of Bali saw the young boy and developed a desire in her mind to have Him as her own child and fondle Him in various ways. But, in the meantime, as you know, Vamana had pushed Bali down into the Patala (netherworld). This event turned her love towards Vamana into hatred and she felt that she could kill the child herself. The all-knowing Vamana noticed what was passing through the mind of Ratnamala and pronounced ‘*Tathaasthu*’ (May it be so!).

He told Ratnamala, “Mother, you first desired to fondle Me as your child. But seeing your father’s downfall, your desire turned into hatred. You felt like feeding poison and killing Me. You will be born in Dwapara Yuga as Poothana and feed Me with poisonous milk, and you yourself will die.”

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 33, 31 August 2001)*

### 3. According to Bhagawan, what is the inner meaning of the word ‘*Jamadagni*’? ‘*Jamadagni*’ means a man with one eye. This need not be taken in the literal sense. It actually means a person with one point of view. This aspect of his personality emerges through his life story as the father of Parashuram.

*(My Dear Students, Volume 3)*

- ...
4. According to Bhagawan, Parashurama defeated the Kshatriya clan 21 times. What is the significance of this number 21?

When Parasurama's father (Jamadagni) was beheaded by a *Kshatriya* king, his mother Renuka, cried in anguish: "Rama! Rama!" Parashurama, who was away from the *Asbram*, could ethereally hear the cries of his mother from afar and rushed home. He counted that his mother had called his name 21 times. On reaching the *asbram* he saw his father's head severed from the body. The horrible crime had been committed by Kartavirya's sons. Parashurama took a vow to wage war against the vile *kshatriya* rulers 21 times and end their rule all over the earth. Parashurama accomplished his mission by defeating the *kshatriya* kings 21 times and came to his *asbram* to pray to his ancestors for restoring his father's life.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 19, 15 Sep 1986)*

## ROUND 3 – RAMA

1. During the Rama Avatar there were three people who were completely aware of the Rama Principle? According to Bhagawan, who were these three personalities? Hanuman, Sumitra and Vishwamitra

*(Rama Navami Discourse, 1987)*

2. Our Lord sometimes appears in two places at the same time. Our beloved Swami appeared at the altar of the Virupaksha temple and at the same time outside the temple leaving His brother and His family completely wonder struck. Can you recount an incident that took place in Rama Avatar where He appeared at two places at the same time?

On one occasion Mother Kaushalya left baby Rama sleeping in the cradle and went towards the altar to fetch the *Prasadam* for the children but to her surprise she saw Rama partaking the offerings in delight. She came back running to the cradle to check if Rama was sleeping there and she found baby Rama blissfully asleep. This is one instance where the Lord revealed His Divinity.

*(Rama Katha Rasa Vahini, pp50-51)*

3. We know that Lord Vishnu is known as Shanka, Chakra, Gada, Padma Dhari. Along with a series of Divine weapons gifted to Rama, Vishwamitra gave two

... ————— ...

very special Gada or mace to Lord Rama. What are the names of these two mace?

Modak and Sikhar

*(Rama Katha Rasa Vahini, p112)*

4. When Rama was passing through the forests, with Sita and Lakshmana, the hermits who recognised Him as Divine gathered around Him with a prayer that they be initiated by Him and given some Mantra (sacred formula) which they could repeat for spiritual uplift and victory. Rama replied that He was a prince in exile, wandering in the forests, and so He could not presume any authority to initiate hermits into spiritual path. He moved on along the jungle tracks. Yet the Rishis got a Mantra watching Rama walk past them. What was it?

Watching Him walking fast, with Sita immediately behind Him and Lakshmana following in the rear, an aged hermit exclaimed, “Friends! See! Rama is initiating us! He is awarding us the Mantra! God (Rama) is leading. *Prakriti* - Nature (Seeta) (His constant companion, His shadow) is following; the *Jeevi* - Individual (Lakshmana), part of the Lord, the wave of the ocean, is in the rear; he can see the Lord only if the deluding Nature is propitiated or by-passed. This is indeed a silent lesson in *Sadhana* (spiritual discipline)...”

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 8, 17 May 1968)*

5. Rama and Lakshmana were combing the forests to discover where Sita was. They were tired and thirsty. Suddenly, they came upon a clear pool and, while placing their bows on the ground, dropped their arrows which partially sank into the wet bank. After slaking their thirst they put the bows on their shoulders and pulled the arrows out from the bank. Rama noticed a stain of blood at the tip of his arrow and was curious to find out how it came there. Where did this stain of blood come from? (It was from an animal).

Lakshmana discovered a little frog that had been hit by Rama’s arrow when he dropped it on the ground. Rama told the wounded frog, “Poor thing! Why did you not cry out when you were hit?” The frog replied, “Whenever in trouble, I cry out to you Rama. But, when Rama Himself inflicts pain, whom am I to cry out to? I accepted it as His Grace.”

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 14, 20 Aug 1978)*

**6. Both Rama and Ravana were equally eminent intellectually and were great scholars. Yet, according to Swami, what is the fundamental difference between them?**

Ravana was a great man. Rama was a good man. The difference between greatness and goodness should be understood.

Ravana, out of egoism and uncontrolled desire, misused his knowledge and brought about his ruin.

Rama used his knowledge for the benefit of the people and made them happy.

Ravana did not digest his knowledge properly and suffered from the consequences of indigestion.

The difference between Rama and Ravana was that between *Dharma* (Righteousness) and *Adharma* (unrighteousness).

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 29, Rama Navami, 28 Mar 1996)*

**7. The first pronouncement which Rama made on the occasion of the coronation is remarkable. What was it?**

He said: “*Who is it that is primarily responsible for making today’s celebration possible?*”

Hanuman was solely responsible for the successful search of the whereabouts of Sita and helping me to recover her. Hence, at the outset I express my deep gratitude to Hanuman.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 29, 29 May 1996)*

**8. What is the meaning of the name Rama? Why is it so auspicious to chant His name?**

*Ramyate Iti Ramaha.*

Rama means He who pleases, He who fills with Ananda.

So, when you repeat Rama Nama, you are but touching the very source of Ananda, the Atma-Rama (God as Self).

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 5, Ramanavami 19 Apr 1965)*

## **R**OUND 4 – KRISHNA

**1. What is the meaning of the word Krishna?**

The word (Krishna) has three meanings:

... ————— ...

*Krushati-iti Krishna*, that is, “The One who ploughs is called Krishna.” The field here symbolizes the heart. The heart should be cleared of weeds (evil qualities). It should be filled with love. The seeds of the Lord’s name should be sown in it. Krishna is the one who inspires the devotee to do all this.

*Karshati-iti Krishna*, that is, “The One who attracts is called Krishna.” Krishna has the supreme power of attraction. By His words, His sport, His music and all His actions, He attracts all people. This power of Divine attraction is present in everyone. Hence, everyone is potentially Krishna.

*Kushyathi-iti Krishna*, that is, “The One who imparts bliss is called Krishna.” Everyone seeks happiness. The Divine, who is the embodiment of happiness, is in you. God wants you to be happy, but you do not realize it. Try to recognize the source of bliss within you. It is not the true nature of man to be unhappy. When anyone is sad, people around him are concerned about him. You should always be happy, because you are the embodiment of the Atma. Never give way to worry.

*(25 Aug 1997)*

## 2. When was Krishna born?

Krishna was born on 20 July 3227 B.C., the year of Srimukha in the month of Sravana, fortnight by the name Bahula, and the day of Ashtami. The star was Rohini and the time was 3:00 a.m.

*(Summer Roses on the Blue Mountains 1976)*

## 3. When Krishna was three years old he saw an old lady carrying a basket of fruits from the jungle. Krishna told her he would like to have some fruits. What happened thereafter?

The old woman said he could get them only if he paid the price. Krishna innocently asked the meaning of the word price. The woman said that something should be given in return for the fruit. Krishna went in and brought a palmful of rice. The woman placed the rice in her basket and gave Krishna some fruits. She was charmed by the beauty of the child. As she was returning to her cottage, she felt that the basket was getting heavier. When she placed it down in her hut, she was amazed to find that all the rice grains had turned into precious gems! She thought the child must be divine. Otherwise how could the rice turn into gems?

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 27, Gokulashtami, 28 Aug 1994)*

4. **What was Krishna's strategy in slaying Jarasandha? Why?**

Krishna set out to kill Jarasandha. But whenever Jarasandha came out of his city to fight Krishna, Krishna would flee from the battlefield. Was Krishna afraid of Jarasandha? Not at all. But Krishna wanted to find out the appropriate means of slaying Jarasandha. Krishna had a strategy. Each time Krishna went to challenge Jarasandha, he would get enraged. He would come out to pursue Krishna. Krishna would go on retreating. By repeating these tactics several times, Jarasandha was made to expend his strength in futile rage. A man's strength is considerably reduced by his anger. A man's life-span is cut to pieces by the shears of envy, anger and hatred. Envy is the main cause of shortening a man's life; when a man gets angry, his whole body trembles. His blood gets heated. It takes three months for the blood to get cool again. One moment of anger may consume the energy got from six months of eating. This is the way anger debilitates a person. By systematically weakening Jarasandha in this way, ultimately Krishna managed to slay him.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 26, Gokulashtami, 10 Aug 1993)*

5. **Krishna always venerated the cow as *Go Maata*. And Balarama always sported the plough as His ornament and armament. As detailed by Bhagawan, what is the inner significance of these two to modern society – the cow and the plough?**

Krishna propagated the view that what gives prosperity to the world is the cow. He regarded the cow which gives us milk as wealth, and this wealth was distributed equally among the people. The requirements of humanity are essentially of two kinds. One is the milk and related products and the other is the agricultural harvest. These were distributed between the two brothers. Gopala looked after the milk and other related products and the cows; and Balarama, symbolised by the plough, looked after the agriculture and the various products that come through agriculture. Truly the prosperity of the human race depends on the harvest and the milk and milk products. These requirements of the people do not drop from the sky nor do they generate out of the earth of their own accord. They must come through the cattle and the land.

*(Summer Roses on the Blue Mountains 1976)*

6. **Once, Krishna pretended to be suffering from headache, intense, unbearable headache! He acted that role quite as realistically. He wound warm clothes around His head, rolled restlessly in bed. His eyes were red and He was in evident distress. The face too appeared swollen and pale. Rukmini, Satyabhama and the other queens rushed about with all kinds of remedies and palliatives. But they**

... ————— ...

were ineffective. At last, they consulted Narada and he went into the sick room to consult Krishna Himself and find out which drug would cure Him. What was the drug suggested and how was it finally procured?

Krishna directed him to bring the dust of the feet of a true *Bhakta!* In a trice, Narada manifested himself in the presence of some celebrated *Bhaktas* of the Lord; but, they were too humble to offer the dust of their feet to be used by their Lord as a drug! That is also a kind of egoism. “I am low, mean, small, useless, poor, sinful, and inferior”, such feelings also are egoistic; when the ego goes, you do not feel either superior or inferior. No one would give the dust wanted by the Lord; they were too worthless, they declared. Narada came back disappointed to the sickbed.

Then, Krishna asked him, “*Did you try Brindavan where the Gopis live?*” The Queens laughed at the suggestion and even Narada asked in dismay, “*What do they know of Bhakti (devotion)?*” Still, the sage had to hurry thither. When the *Gopis* heard that Krishna was ill and that the dust of their feet might cure Him, without a second thought they shook the dust off their feet and filled his hands with the same. By the time Narada reached Dwaraka, the head-ache had gone. It was just a five-day drama, to teach that self-condemnation is also egoism and that the Lord’s command must be obeyed without demur by all.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 3, 7 Jul 1963)*

## 7. According to Bhagawan the essence of Gita lies in just two words. What are they?

They are the first word from the first verse of the Gita:

*Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre Samaveta Yuyutsava  
Mamaka Pandavaschaiva Kimakurvata Sanjaya*

Dhrutarashtra said, ‘Sanjaya! What did my people and the sons of Pandu, assembled with the desire of fighting in the Dharmabhumi of Kurukshetra do?’

The last word from the last verse of the Gita:

*Yatra Yogeshvarah Krishno, Yatra Partho Dhanur-Dharah  
Tatra Srir Vijayo Bhutir, Dhruva Nitir Matir Mama*

... ————— ...

Wherever there is Krishna, the master of all mystics, and wherever there is Arjuna, the supreme archer, there will also certainly be opulence, victory, extraordinary power, and morality. That is my opinion.

MAMA DHARMA: The message of the Gita is to undertake “MY DHARMA”

**8. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna declared, “*Chaaturvarnyam Mayasrishtam*” (All the people of four Varnas were created by Me). Bhagawan says *Varna* means colour, but it has been misunderstood to be caste. What are the four colors that define the different races of mankind?**

The four colours are: black, yellow, white, and red. The Negroes and the Bharatiyas (Indians) are black in complexion. The Japanese and the British are white in complexion, the Chinese are yellow and the Russians are red.

(24 Nov 1998)

## EXTRA QUESTIONS

**9. After the victory in the war, Krishna and Arjuna came back to their mansion. On that day, when the chariot came and stood in front of his house, Arjuna insisted on Krishna getting down first and opening the door. Krishna did not agree to this; and, in fact, in somewhat strong language, he admonished Arjuna, asked him to get down first and go inside. What happened at the end of the argument? What was the reason behind the event?**

As soon as Arjuna got out and no sooner did Arjuna go inside, Krishna, in one leap, jumped out of the chariot. As soon as Krishna jumped out, the entire chariot was in flames. All the Pandavas who were witnessing this were surprised and asked Krishna why the chariot had burnt away like that. Then Krishna explained that during the battle, very powerful weapons were sent by heroes like Karna, Bhishma, and others and all these weapons were subdued and kept under his feet. If he had not got down first, the weapons would have exploded, killing Arjuna and the others. Krishna explained that this was the reason for asking Arjuna to jump out first and his jumping out later. In order to save his devotees, God plans so many different actions in several different ways. Devotees, not being able to recognise and understand the inner meaning of such actions, misunderstand and think that God is giving them unnecessary difficulties

(*Summer Roses on the Blue Mountains*, 1976)



10. Once a *Gopika* went to a well to bring two pitchers of water. After placing one pitcher on her head, she wanted someone to place the other water-filled pitcher on the first one. At that time, Krishna came there and she asked him to place the water-filled pitcher on the first one. Krishna refused to do so. Soon another *Gopika* came along and helped the first *Gopika*. The *Gopika* carrying the two pitchers reached her home. Krishna followed her to the house and without even waiting to be asked, he took the top pitcher from the *Gopika*'s head and placed it down. She was surprised at Krishna's strange behaviour. She asked him, "Krishna, at the well, you refused to place the pitcher on my head when I appealed to you to help me. Now you take it down from the head without my asking. What is the inner meaning of this action?" What reply did Krishna give?

Krishna replied, 'Oh *Gopika*! I remove the burdens borne by people and not to add to them.'

(*Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 25, 20 Feb 1992*)

## ROUND 5 – BUDDHA

1. One day in his wanderings, Buddha came to a village. The residents of the village were performing a *Yajna* and, as a part of the rituals, were preparing to sacrifice an animal. Buddha saw this and advised the villagers not to do so. Elaborate on the conversation between Buddha and the head priest.

Buddha said, "No harm must be done in any manner whatsoever to any living being, because God dwells in all." Buddha added, "This is what I have learnt. God dwells in all; therefore the individual is God and God is the individual. Hence, it is wrong to kill this animal." The head priest replied, "Sir, we are not killing this animal; we are offering it liberation." Amused by the reply, Buddha said, "You are offering liberation to an animal that did not ask for it. Instead, why don't you liberate a person who is asking for it? Your argument has no basis in the scriptures. No Veda advocates what you are saying... Do you think liberation can be granted by inflicting harm, pain, and injury? No! Your father, mother, wife, and son all want liberation. Why don't you offer them in sacrifice and grant them all the liberation that they seek? You are so eager to liberate an animal that has no desire for it but unwilling to liberate fellow humans who are hungering for it. What kind of perverted logic is this? What you are trying to do is the worst of sins. Never hurt, injure, or kill living beings." This is how Buddha conveyed the idea: *Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah*. *Ahimsa* (non-violence) is

... ————— ...

the greatest *Dharma* of all.

*(Buddha Poornima, 21 May 2000)*

- 2. At the time Buddha had to give up his body, He had a small coin with him. There is a story behind that coin. What is the story behind this coin and why was it with him till the very end?**

To please Buddha, kings and emperors built great mansions for him to stay; but Buddha was not happy with this. One day an old lady came to him and said, “Sir, I am poor and do not have much money. But I love you and want to give you something. I have this small coin. Please accept this as my offering”. Buddha was very happy; the amount was small but the heart of the giver was large and full of love. Large amounts gifted with pomp and ostentation do not count for much. A small gift with pure love is far more precious. Buddha retained this coin till the very end of His life.

*(Buddha Poornima, 21 May 2000)*

- 3. In his wanderings, Buddha used to take with him some young men. Some persons criticized Buddha, charging him with spoiling the young men. What was Buddha’s reaction to this criticism? What was the reaction of his young disciples?**

Buddha listened quietly to their accusations and left without uttering a word in reply. When the disciples asked him why he chose not to reply to the criticisms, Buddha said that unanswered criticisms return to the critics who made them. By not getting excited over the angry words of a critic, one becomes superior to the critic. Otherwise, one descends to the same level as the critic. Bear no ill-will towards anyone.

*(Buddha Poornima, 15 May 1996)*

- 4. When Buddha was on the verge of attaining *Nirvana*, Ananda (his brother) started shedding tears of sorrow. What was Buddha’s parting message to Ananda?**

Buddha consoled him saying, “*Ananda, why are you unhappy over my attaining Nirvana? I have been craving this state of Nirvana for the past many years. Why do you shed tears of sorrow when I am experiencing supreme bliss?*”

Ananda understood the truth and followed the teachings of Buddha. Ultimately, he too attained *Nirvana*.

*(Buddha Poornima, 30 May 1999)*

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## ROUND 6 – SHIRDI SAI BABA

1. **According to Swami, Shirdi Baba had never cried in his life, except when Shyama died, Shirdi Baba shed three tears. What according to Shirdi Baba, is the significance of these three tears?**

According to Baba, the three drops of tears were to wash away the remaining sins of Shyama.

2. **Before leaving his physical body, Shirdi Baba revealed the secret to one of his devotees that He would give Darshan in the name of Sathya to uphold the truth. According to Swami, this secret was revealed to only one devotee. Who was it?**

Abdul Baba

3. **According to Bhagawan, how many siblings did Shirdi Baba have?**

One brother and one sister

4. **According to Swami, what was one of the main reasons for Shirdi Baba to perform miracles?**

In those days, there were bitter differences between Hindus and Muslims. With a view to end such communal differences, Baba wanted to show through His miracles the truth that Baba is the Supreme Master of all beings.

5. **The present Samadhi shrine of Shirdi Baba was built by a devotee called Booty. Do you know the original intention of building the shrine?**

Booty had originally intended to build a Muralidhar temple there. He also wanted Baba to install the idol of Krishna in that temple, but Baba somehow kept procrastinating. Later, Baba's Samadhi was made where originally Booty intended to install Krishna's idol.

6. **According to Swami, Shirdi Baba declared that in this world he had only one disciple; the rest were only devotees. Whom did he consider as his only disciple?**

Shyama

7. **From the 1839 to 1851, for a period of twelve years, Shirdi Baba lived in an ashram. Who owned this ashram and who took care of Baba in this period?**

Gopal Rao Deshmukh, also known as Venkusa or Venkudas

**8. Just as Krishna showed Yashoda the fourteen worlds in his mouth, Shirdi Baba also showed the same vision to a lady when he was young. Can you recount this incident as narrated by Swami?**

When Baba was a boy he used to play marbles. He was so good in the marble game that from a distance he could hit any marble. And all the boys who played with Baba would lose their game. And generally the people who lose get angry. These people insisted that Baba should play again as they wanted to win a game. But this boy did not have any marbles left. He went to the worship room. There, there was a *Shaligrama* (a venerable stone) worshipped by his mother every day. It also looks like a marble. He brought the marble and played with it. Baba thought, "Ah this very good, I would like to win it!" He hit the marble and won the marble. He took the marble. But the rich man's son said, "You should give back this marble to me." Baba swallowed it. The boy kept crying and fighting with Baba. The mother saw what was happening. She came down and asked why the two of them were fighting. She asked the boy, "Why are you fighting with that boy? What did He do?" The boy replied that Baba had swallowed his marble. The mother chastised the boy saying that she didn't give him money and enquired how he got the marble. The boy replied, "I did not have any marbles so I went into the worship room and got the *Shaligrama*." With great devotion she was worshipping this *Shaligrama* every day. When she went and saw the worship room, the *Shaligrama* had vanished from there. She was very angry. She prayed to Baba, "Boy, give me back the *Shaligrama*. I will give you how much ever money you want." He said, "How much ever you plead, I am not going to give you." She got very angry and slapped on both the cheeks of Baba. She then asked Him to open His mouth. Just as Yashoda had seen the fourteen worlds in the mouth of Lord Krishna, this lady had the same vision. She was very blissful and touched the feet of Baba and cried.

## **R**OUND 7 – SATHYA SAI – VISUAL ROUND

**1. Identify the location and the occasion**

Bhagawan's visit to the Sri Sathya Sai Airport to oversee the practice of the paramotors event by the Brindavan Campus.

**2. Identify the event and the members on the dias along with Bhagawan**

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The event is the inauguration of the new building of Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Women at Anantapur.

The members on the dias are Sri V V Giri, President of India and Sri Brahmananda Reddy, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh.

**3. Identify the location and the occasion**

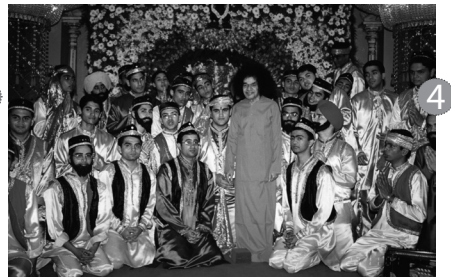
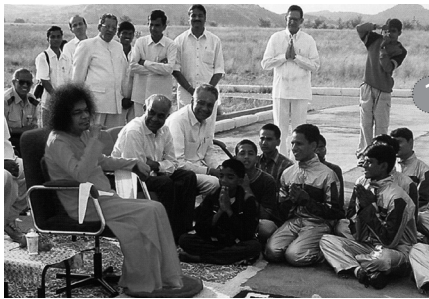
Sri Sathya Sai Space Theatre, Prasanthi Nilayam.

The occasion is the National Symposium on values-orientation in Higher Learning, 24-26 September 1987.

**4. Identify the occasion and the inner significance of this event relevant to the prevailing world scenario.**

The Qawalli Programme on the occasion of the XX Convocation of the Institute on 22 November 2001.

At a time when USA was struck by Islamic extremists' terrorism, and the whole world blamed the radical nature of the religion, Bhagawan had His students perform the Qawalli programme that highlighted the devotional aspect of Islam.



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## ROUND 8 – SATHYA SAI

### 1. In Swami's own words, what is the purpose of the various talismans that He creates for His devotees?

The purpose of the *talisman* is that if the individual wearing it is in some danger or difficulty, the *talisman* will immediately bring to Me in a flash the news and goes back with My grace to you. This is the function that the *talisman* that I give performs. It constitutes a kind of link between the wearer and me in times of danger. Such material gifts have been protecting thousands of people.

*(Who is Sathya Sai Baba?, Summer Showers in Brindavan 1974)*

### 2. In 1937, a renowned psychic had Swami's Darshan at Kamalapuram. Name him.

I have not until today revealed this incident anywhere to anyone. It was 1937. This body was then 11 years old. I was then moving the whole day with groups of boys who had gathered around Me. I was then at Kamalapur with the boys. On seeing Me, one person (Wolf Messing) ran up to Me, took Me in his arms and kissed Me, with tears pouring down his cheeks and uttering the words, "I am so happy. I am so happy". He was also madly dancing with joy repeating, "I love you. I love you". My companions who were watching all this wondered, "Who is this white man? He looks like a lunatic. Evidently, he is planning to kidnap us." As we moved out he was standing riveted to the spot wistfully watching Me until I disappeared from view.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 14, 22 Nov 1980)*

### 3. On one occasion, Bhagawan elaborated on how His name stood for the triune paths leading to Divinity. Please elaborate.

The significance of the three letters in *SAI* should be understood. *S* stands for Service. *A* stands for Adoration. *I* stands for Illumination. These three represent *karma*, *bhakti* and *jnana* respectively. Sai teaches these three. All the three concepts are equally important. Sai is the combination of three spiritual paths of Action, Devotion and Wisdom. Just as the *pranava* sound is made up of the three letters—*A U M*—*SAI* stands for the triple forms of spiritual *sadhana*.

*(18 Nov 1995)*

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**4. In one of His Divine Discourses, Swami has elaborated his views on whether India needs to develop a nuclear arsenal and atomic bombs. Kindly share the same in your own words.**

Once Sri K.M. Munshi convened a conference of intellectuals in Bombay. I was the chief guest at the meeting and Munshi was seated next to Me. Munshi requested Me to clarify the doubts of intellectuals regarding spirituality and right conduct... One member of the audience asked Me whether it was necessary for India to equip itself with atom bombs in view of the fact that both affluent America and communist Russia had huge piles of atom bombs.

I replied, "What folly is this! When there are millions in the country who lack food, clothing and shelter, the provision of these necessities is the most urgent task and not manufacturing of atom bombs. Of what use are bombs when you cannot feed the people? Crores are being wasted on armaments. I cannot agree to such wastage".

Then another member asked, "How are we to meet an attack from outside?" I replied, "Our country's name is Bharat. For this country, the Mahabharata is another guide book. The heroes in this epic are the five Pandava brothers. Among them, Arjuna and Bhima are incomparable warriors. Nevertheless, they submitted themselves to Dharmaja, the eldest brother. If India upholds *dharma*, then America and Russia will have to respect Bharat. Confronted by *dharma*, anyone, however powerful will be cut to size. Therefore, the most vital thing for Bharat is *dharma*."

*(Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 27, 23 Nov 1994)*

## EXTRAS

### 5. How has Swami often described Himself?

There are many who do not understand the Sai principle. Who is this Sai? Why are certain things happening in this manner? These questions are asked. I am not a *sanyasi*. I am not a *yogi*. I am not a *bhogi* (pleasure seeker). I am not a *thyagi* (renunciant). I am 'I'. This 'I' is the first name given to the *Atma*. A *sanyasi* is bound by certain restrictions. The *bhogi* is bound in many other ways. I have no restrictions. I am limitless. Mine is boundless bliss. My name is 'I'. It is not a name given after one's birth. To understand Me, everyone has to realise that the 'I' is present in everyone, the 'I' used by everyone in every context, whether he is a millionaire or a pauper; this 'I' is *Brahman – Aham Brahmasmi*. Everyone uses the 'I' from dawn to dusk without understanding its meaning.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 25, 23 Nov 1992)*

**6. What was the very first lesson that Swami gave when He declared His Divinity at Uravakonda?**

The very first lesson I gave when I declared My Identity at Uravakonda was: “*Maanasa Bhajare Gurucharanam, Dusthara Bhava Saagara Taranam.*”

*(Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 4, 14 Jan 1964)*

**7. How has Swami drawn a similarity between the role that Lord Krishna discharged towards Draupadi and the one that He has to play in this Avatar?**

*Dharma*, the very clothes that she (Bharat Mata) has worn since centuries—which is the expression of her natural style—is now seized on by wicked irreverent hands. They wish to dress her in unbecoming styles, as their own imitative or frenzy dictates. So, Krishna has to come again for rescuing the victim of the wicked.

Krishna revealed the hollowness of the people who were confident of their capacity to dishonour Draupadi and the weakness of those entrusted with the task of protecting her. Now too, I have to foil the attempts to undermine *dharmā* and to stand in support of those who are the traditional protectors and protagonists of *dharmā*.

*(Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 4, 15 Apr 1964)*

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# Importance of the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality

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Kum Jasmine Rai

Student, II B.Sc. (Hons.), SSSIHL

The all-knowing Lord is above all power and above all wisdom. His power can neither be comprehended nor surmised by man. He alone is the doer and we are all His instruments. O Lord! Let thy will be done. A sense of fulfillment and gratitude fills my heart on the very thought of being called Swami's property. This beautiful fortune of becoming a Sai student is only due His will and grace. We are all extremely fortunate for our lives have been touched by Bhagawan, who is our true companion. Each one of us has special memories of our first trip to Prasanthi Nilayam as a student of Bhagawan. The year I joined the institute, the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality was resumed. That was our first darshan and connection with Swami.

Once, when we asked our teacher to share her feelings about the Summer Course, she phrased it as a feast for the mind and the body. She told us how Swami would take care of each and every detail during the Summer Course. He would often ask about what to speak on and once started, He would be so immersed that one can be immersed in the sweetness of the nectar flowing in the words of Bhagawan. He would then walk among students, asking them about their opinions and even taking care of the meals. That divine form would suddenly appear in front of the audience surprising everyone by His sudden presence.

Imagine. A fifteen-day feast with Bhagawan! But, for us this three-day feast is one of its kind and the most priceless gift given to us by Bhagawan. Swami started the Summer Course in 1972 to revive Indian Culture. Being Indians, it is of paramount importance for us to be aware of our culture as well as being conscious about the urgency to preserve it. In this modern age, most of us are not acquainted with our culture. The Summer Course gives us an opportunity to learn the greatness of our culture. I am sure that all of us have benefited from the insightful discourses and the educative speeches delivered in the Summer Course. I was always inquisitive about the significance of our sacred texts like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, because the stories in these texts can easily be understood and narrated. What of its significance and its relevance? Why do we need to know about them even now?

Bhagawan in His own inimitable way answered my queries. The beauty and the profound depth of these texts were unfolded in the Summer Course. Who else can be more fortunate than us to be able to listen to and absorb the richness of these texts told by God Himself? Some of my friends and I were sharing our thoughts about the Summer Course last year; and all of us felt a strange urge to do something for our country. What Bhagawan wants from us by imparting Sai education is not merely earning a degree, but much more than that. I felt extremely proud that this prompting was something that was common to all of us, even for those who were not acquainted with Swami before they joined the Institute.

One of my batch mates told me that she has never seen Swami, and yet she felt an inexplicable connection and a desire to transform herself after attending the Summer Course in 2011. Despite our ignorance, Swami has given us this beautiful opportunity to learn about the greatness of our culture and to transform ourselves. The beautiful relationship that we share with our Bhagawan has a uniqueness and charm. In my case, I never saw Swami physically and the same is the case with many of my friends. Yet, we are filled with so much love for Him.

At this moment, I am reminded of a sweet experience, which I had last year. It was during the birthday celebrations in this very Sai Kulwant hall. I was very deeply engaged in a conversation with Swami and that day I was feeling very despondent and worried. Without my realization, I started crying bitterly. Someone very kindly put the *prasadam* on my lap. When I opened my eyes, I saw that it was my favourite sweet wrapped in a cover on which were written three words: Always Be Happy. It is only because of His love and the hold of His unseen hand that we are learning to see Him in everything we do, in people around us and most importantly within us.

I always have something to learn from others, especially my teachers and my own batch mates. Their innocence, their simplicity, their spontaneity, selflessness and many more traits are the virtues that define our dear Lord. Whenever I see such sweet innocence that is Swami, whenever I see simplicity that is Swami, whenever I see love and affection, it is Swami. My stay at His abode has taught me to live a miraculous life by learning to see good in others which takes me closer to my God.

The first step is to transform our own selves by learning the virtues from God. Let us all strive to be not just the student of SSSIHL but students of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. As we bask in His divine radiance, the warmth of His love melts our hearts directing it to Love all and our hands to serve all. Swami has already set the stage

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for us to cultivate in our hearts the spirit of selfless love. By giving the world what it desperately needs, we become, in the words of Bhagawan- Embodiments of Love. The sole purpose of Mother Teresa was to lead the life of Jesus Christ. To live the life of God is to love all just like a flower which offers fragrance to all without any discrimination. We too are the flowers blossoming in the garden of Sai. Let us all spread His fragrance wherever we go.

Dear Swami! What shall we render to you for all that you bestow on us? Install yourself in our hearts; Pray! Live in us so that we may become like you.

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# Gratitude

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Sri Shravan Sai  
Student, III B.C.A., SSSIHL

*Namo Vaakham prachasmahe Yena kritam idam jagat  
Jala neelroopaibi nityam paalayati praninah*

**M**y salutations to the one who created the world and who provides air and water to all beings. Gratitude is a virtue that has been ingrained in our culture since ancient times. Knowingly or unknowingly, all of us embody it. We have this tradition to offer something to God when we visit a temple. We also believe to offer the best to God. When we have a pooja at home, we offer the best to God. We not only worship God but also Mother Nature and the *pancha bhootas* (five elements).

It is at this juncture when science questions and asks, 'Why should we worship such lifeless objects?' Our ancient seers explain- soil gives us food, the sun causes rain. The five elements are the core of our existence. Nothing can exist without the *pancha bhootas*. Then what is wrong in worshipping the *pancha bhootas*, the nature and God? Swami says that we should be grateful to them as they are the core of our existence. Worshipping nature is a way of expressing gratitude to nature.

When we talk of existence, we should not forget the primary cause of our existence- our mother. The mother nourishes the child in the womb and fosters the well being of the child after birth. Swami says that it is our duty to be grateful to our mother.

*Karuna rasa sampoorane vatsalya sukh sadane  
Janani santatamaham nivedayami kartagnyam*

O! Mother, you are the ocean of love and the house of kindness thus, I always express my gratitude to you. Swami has set an example by expressing His gratitude to His mother Easwaramma by fulfilling the smallest of desires of Mother Easwaramma in a magnificent way. Mother Easwaramma requested Swami to build a small dispensary where the villagers can be treated, a school where the village children can be educated and a drinking water facility. Swami gave a word that He will fulfill all her desires. Swami built a general hospital, a super specialty hospital, and He started

a water project, which not only serves the village but the people of the whole district. Swami stayed in Puttaparthi throughout His life as mother Easwamma asked him not to leave Puttaparthi.

Swami says - My life is my message. Throughout His life, He showed us how to be grateful to the people who have given us a helping hand and support. When I talk about Swami being grateful, my mother, who was a student of Anantapur Campus, recalls this incident that happened in 1982. During Bhagawan's birthday celebrations, the Anantapur campus students were instructed to prepare laddus for all the devotees, which they did very sincerely. After the birthday was over, Swami came to them and said, "All of you work so hard for Swami, but Swami was not able to meet you because He was busy. If you had been at home, your parents would have given you variety of laddus and sweets, but Swami gave you only one." To this the students replied in one voice, "Swami, what you give us *mahaprasadam*." Then Swami said lovingly, "When guests visit home, mother is always busy taking care of them and her children are working. Swami is also your mother, you are all His children, Swami will always take care of you."

In those days, students visited villages during Grama Seva, spoke about Swami to the villagers, and spread awareness about health and hygiene. Swami would wait for the students to come back and everyday. He used to have some *prasadam* to distribute to the students. On one such occasion, Swami had pulpy, juicy mangoes to distribute to the students. He gave one mango to each of the students and expressed, "All of you work so hard for Swami, you toil so hard under the hot sun, if you would have been at home, your parents would have got you different varieties of mangoes, but Swami is able to give you only one."

In these incidents, Swami showed us that it is not the quantity with which gratitude is expressed but by the sweet words we speak and the feeling in our heart. Swami not only spoke to the students politely but He also gave them an assurance that He is always there for all of us. This is the fundamental teaching of all the avatars. When

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Krishna and Balarama entered Kamsa's palace, they noticed a washerman with a bundle about to enter the palace. Balarama asked as to what he is carrying with him. The washerman replied, "These are the most expensive silks of the king and you look like villagers; I can't allow you to touch them." When Krishna heard this, he gave a tight blow to the washerman, and the washerman fell down with his bundle. After adorning themselves with these silks, Krishna and Balarama were about to enter the gates when a lady named Kubja approached them. She was the perfumer of King Kamsa. She had a beautiful face but three physical deformities. Seeing these boys she felt that they look like the sons of Devaki and Vasudeva and appeared like the avatars of Narayana. She thought to herself, 'How nice it would be if they accepted my perfumes.' Thinking thus, she went to Krishna and Balarama and offering them the perfume she said, "No one knows the secret of my perfumes, there are many more perfumers in Mathura but the king accepts perfumes only from me. Please accept my offering." Krishna lovingly put His fingers into the box and dabbed all over His clothes. Kubja was very grateful. She thought that her life was redeemed because the Lord accepted her offering. Shedding tears of joy, she expressed her joy to Krishna and she moved aside with an intention to leave. Krishna stopped her, pressed her feet with the little tiny feet of His and lifted her up. All her deformities were gone. Krishna relieved Kubja of all her physical deformities as He was grateful to her. He expressed His gratitude to Kubja by relieving her of her handicaps. He also showed us that the more you give, the more you get.

Rhonda Byrne writes in her book *The Secret* - one should be grateful for all that one gets in life. Even in the morning when we wake up and put our first step on the floor, we should be grateful for the new day. She also writes - the more gratitude you show, the more you receive.

Here I am reminded of an incident. The students were planning to put up a drama in front of Swami and one boy was playing the role of a thirsty king. Many people felt that his acting was not so good but still the boy wanted to give the best performance before Swami. After the final performance, Swami posed for photographs with the boys, came straight to the boy who played the role of the thirsty king and materialized a ring and gave him. All other actors were puzzled, as there were many actors who had far greater amounts of dialogues and acted in many scenes, but Swami chose an actor who acted in only one scene with hardly any dialogues and showered His grace on him. Later, the fact came to light that this boy didn't drink water for one full day just because he wanted to put up his best performance before Swami. This boy received a priceless gift from Bhagawan for all the hardship he went through.

Therefore, I believe that we should be grateful for all the difficulties that we face in life. It is only at the time of difficulties, that we think about God more. This takes us a step closer to Him. Mother Kunti knew this and thus when Krishna asked her what she wanted, she said, 'I want sorrows. If I lead a life of comfort and luxury, I will forget you, but if I lead a life of suffering, I would never forget you.'

When I talk about difficulties, I am reminded of a beautiful incident of my father. In the 70s and 80s, Swami would allow the Summer Course students to sing before Him. My father was fortunate to be chosen by Swami in the fourth Summer Course to sing before Him. During the 1980 world conference, my father and uncle visited Prasanthi Nilayam. During the morning darshan, Swami said, 'Sing in the evening.' There were very excited and started practicing. In the evening when they were sitting in the Prasanthi bhajan hall, a *sevadai* came and asked them for their ID card. Those days, every singer was given an ID card to be allowed to sing in the bhajan hall before Swami. Now they remembered that they had completely forgotten to issue an ID card.

They tried to explain to the *sevadai* that Swami had asked them to sing and they had forgotten about the ID card in the excitement. But the *sevadai* paid no heed to their request and made them to sit outside on the verandah.

The bhajans started and still they were sitting on the verandah. They started crying and praying to Swami in their hearts. Five bhajans had already got over by then and when the sixth bhajan began, the same *sevadai* came to them and said, 'Sir! I am sorry, Swami has asked for you. Please come inside and sing.' It was at that time that my father got a chance to sit in the first line of the bhajan hall right in front of Swami's pedestal. When he started singing, Swami entered the bhajan hall, looked at him and gave His mischievous and beautiful smile. Whenever my father recollects the experience, he feels grateful for the difficulty he faced and the pain he had in his heart. After this experience, he got a number chances to sing before Swami and offered all the bhajans to Bhagawan.

During the incarnation of Lord Rama, He gave a lot of gifts of gratitude to all those who supported him in the war against evil. But knowingly, Rama did not give anything to Hanuman. Mother Sita noticed this and felt a little pity towards Hanuman. She took out her pearl necklace and gave it to Hanuman. Hanuman accepted the gift but started to bite the pearls and placed them against his ears. Everyone was puzzled and people were irritated by this weird behavior of Hanuman. It is only Lord Rama

who could understand the feeling in his heart. Hanuman was trying to listen to Lord Rama's name in those pearls because anything without the name of Rama was insignificant to him. Rama approached Hanuman and said, 'What can I give to a devotee like you? I have no gifts to give to a devotee like you, therefore, I give you myself.' Saying this, Rama embraced Hanuman.

Hanuman had done a lot of service to Lord Rama and therefore Rama gave Himself to Hanuman. On the other side, there are we, who have done hardly anything for Swami, but still Swami continues to love us. He showers His grace and love on all of us. Swami guides us not only in our daily life but also in our spiritual life. The least we can do to express our gratitude to Swami is to follow a few of the teachings that He has taught.

I express my gratitude to Swami because throughout my life, right from the time I was born, Swami has been taking care of me. Whenever I am in trouble or I am sad, I just say, 'Swami, please take care', he takes care of all the problems. I still feel Swami is holding my hand and taking me through this journey of life. Swami has accepted me as His student and He has put me in His youngest campus, the Muddenahalli campus.

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# Situational Analysis Exercise

**Moderator: Dr. N Siva Kumar**

Associate Professor, Dept. of Commerce, SSSIHL

with a team of students and a panel of experts (Directors and Wardens of SSSIHL)

The purpose of the situational analysis exercise was to discern the grey areas on everyday decision-making situations. Since there is no singular principle on how to make decisions that are based on complex circumstances, the situational analysis exercise brought together a number of students and a panel of in-house experts, all of whom who shared their viewpoints on various situations.

The students were divided into four teams, named after some famous personalities from Indian culture. They were Janaka, Ubhaya Bharati, Chanakya and Yudhisthira. Each of these teams were given a situation. They had to discuss the situation for 2-3 minutes and arrive at a decision (solution) in 7-8 minutes and then answer questions from the panel of experts.

Panel of Experts:

- » Prof. (Miss) Rajeshwari C Patel (RP), Professor and Head, Dept. of English Language & Literature, SSSIHL
- » Sri Viney Thakar (VT), Associate Professor (Hon.), Dept. of Management Studies, SSSIHL
- » Prof. R Gangadhara Sastry (GS), Professor in Political Science, SSSIHL
- » Sri Sanjay Sahni (SS), Associate Professor, Dept. of Commerce, SSSIHL and Director, Brindavan Campus, SSSIHL

## Situation 1: Team Janaka

Ankit is a student of Sri Sathya Sai hostel. One day, when he is alone in the college during the lunch hour, his close friend Sabareesh enters the class in a hurry. His eyes and face show that he is confused and terrified. When Ankit asks Sabareesh what the problem is, he tells Ankit that he would tell him only if Ankit first promises that he would not tell anyone in the hostel. Ankit hurriedly makes the promise. Sabareesh

then confides in him a mistake he has just committed. Ankit is baffled to hear that Sabareesh has just broken a serious hostel rule.

The next day morning, when Ankit is going to the college, he sees the warden shouting at Parth, a junior known for his mischievousness. Later, Ankit comes to know that the warden is contemplating action against Parth for the mistake done by Sabareesh. Dismayed, Ankit hurriedly goes and meets Sabareesh and asks him to own up to his mistake. Sabareesh refuses and says that Parth anyway deserves punishment for all his mischief. He also reminds Ankit of his promise.

What should Ankit do?

**Arguments:**

- » There are four main issues to consider here:
- » Sabareesh breaking the rule for which he has to be reprimanded
- » The promise that Ankit has made to Sabareesh of not to tell anyone
- » A junior (Parth) is being punished for Sabareesh's mistake
- » Sabareesh is not ready to come forth and confess

We have to find out a solution which addresses all the above four issues. Solutions provided by team:

- » Ankit pressurizes Sabareesh by telling him that if Sabareesh doesn't go, Ankit will go and complain to the warden.
- » Ankit goes and complains to the warden without Sabareesh's knowledge.
- » Ankit tells that if Sabareesh doesn't confess, Ankit will take the blame upon himself.
- » Ankit tries to leverage his friendship and make Sabareesh confess to the warden.

We think that first, Ankit should go and talk to his friend Sabareesh and tell him the consequences of his action to Parth and confess himself in front of the warden. However, we are not sure that he will do it, so we might require a second line of action. The second line of action would be to go and inform the warden himself, as this is for the good of Sabareesh also.

**Panel of experts:**

**SS:** From the discussion of the group, we find that there are four stakeholders, Sabareesh, Ankit, Parth and the warden. Are there any more stakeholders in this

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situation, if yes how would you rank all of them in priority and why?

Team Janaka: One very serious stakeholder is the system by itself. If the situation is not handled properly, the system will suffer the most and according to us, it should get the top priority.

SS: Who has created the system?

Team Janaka: Bhagawan has created the system and He is not separate from the system, hence He is the main stakeholder.

RP: Swami always talks about individual discrimination and fundamental discrimination. As an individual, Ankit can protect his friendship and a promise given to Sabareesh by remain silent, but as you all suggested, it will affect the system, i.e. we have to chose between Vyasthi (individual) and Samashthi (society).

Can bringing Parth into the picture while talking to Sabareesh bring some more value to the discussion? Can he be made to realize that a junior of his is being punished for a mistake of his?

What I feel is that peer pressure is very powerful in solving such problems, rather than going directly to the warden. Ankit the well-wisher can talk to both Parth and Sabareesh and resolve the situation. The loyalty to a friend and loyalty to Bhagawan - i.e. the system - is in conflict and Bhagawan has to be chosen over a friend.

**Essence:** Fundamental discrimination overrules individual discrimination.

## **S**ituation 2: Team Ubhaya Bharati

Miss Usha Sinha is a lecturer at the University. Her student Parul Tiwari, whose academic performance is usually good, is failing in the mid-terms. Miss Usha is also Parul's mentor and in conversation with her, Miss Usha gets to know her background. Parul is having major problems at home, which are weighing heavily on her mind. Miss Usha suspects that a bad performance in mid-term is due to stress. Parul is sensitive and reactive by nature. While Miss Usha appreciates her out outspoken nature, she is aware that her conduct offends her classmates.

Meanwhile, the warden of the hostel is concerned about the emotional tantrums and her behavior in the hostel. She tells Usha that Parul's behavior is setting a bad example to other students, so she should be corrected publicly. Miss Usha is in a bit of a quandary.

### Arguments:

The conflict is between the individual and the collective. Individual meaning that Parul's problem is affecting her behavior and her academics. Collective meaning Parul's behavior is affecting the students in her class and her hostel. Our team is divided between individual good and collective good. The solutions on both the approaches are:

Individual good: counselling is a good option. If it doesn't solve the problem then we have to bring Parul's parents into the picture or introduce some kind of psychiatric help. Swami always emphasized on the need for love to transform. He always said that love in action is Dharma; hence for righteous action, love is necessary.

Collective good: We feel that she ought to be punished but it need not be a public reprimand. She can even tender an apology to the students she has offended. Emotional balance is a very important trait. We have no right to upset others if we are upset. Our *shastras* tell us:

*Tyaje deekam kulasyarthe, gramasyarthe kulam tyajet,  
gramam janapadasyarthe, Atmarthe pruthiveem tyajet*

To save the family one must sacrifice an individual, to save a village sacrifice the family, to save the country sacrifice the village and to uphold the principle of Atman, one must give up the earth itself.

Let us try to get a solution by considering both the viewpoints.

- » Taking the individual good into consideration, Parul should get the love and care necessary for her mental strength
- » She could apologize to ensure that the collective good is fostered and the right mode of behaviour is encouraged
- » Enlisting professional help and parental intervention
- » Focusing only on her academics and hoping it will solve the problem
- » General sensitizing to increase the probability of understanding from the peer group

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### Panel of Experts:

**VT:** We have to not only consider the short term good but also long term good. The mentor has to teach life skills rather than current situational skills. Parul has to be taught the fact that ‘bad action has bad consequences’. Miss Usha should tell her mentee that a public reprimand or a toned down public apology can serve the purpose in this case.

**RP:** Swami in His educational vision has clearly said that the bond between the teacher and the taught must be a bond of love not fear.

The parents also should be involved and they should be told that the child should not be exposed to emotional trauma and find out if there is a solution from the parent’s side.

The mentor can ask the warden for a time for two more weeks before taking a drastic step like public apology. Love and not fear should be the bond between the teacher and student. The mentor can also talk to the classmates and tell them not to be judgmental.

### Situation 3: Team Chanakya

Vivek Shashtri is standing near the coach S3’s door and contemplating the course of events which led him to this point. Last evening, he was in a very upbeat mood. Having won the football match and also being complimented for his outstanding assignment submission, he was going around Trayee Brindavan and thanking Bhagawan for the wonderful life. Even as he ruminating on his recent string of successes, his roommate Ratan came running and informed him that he was required in the Warden’s office immediately.

The Warden informed Vivek that he needed to pack his bags immediately and leave for his home as there was an emergency at home. He reached the station and purchased an unreserved ticket. However, since the chart has already been prepared, the ticketing clerk tells Vivek to contact the Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE) for a seat allotment.

Vivek was pleasantly surprised to note that there were a few empty berths and was confident of a seat allotment. However, the TTE asked him for an exorbitant amount

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for a berth. Vivek feels it is unfair as there are quite a few berths which are empty. Vivek protested and asked the TTE to allocate a seat for the right amount. The TTE promptly directed him to either pay up (more than the required amount) or travel in the unreserved compartment. As he was travelling alone, that option did not look safe to Vivek.

The TTE asks him to decide quickly so he can move to other passengers' requests. Vivek is standing near the door of coach S3 and considering his course of action.

If you are Vivek, what is the choice you will make?

**Arguments:**

**Objectives:**

- » There is an emergency at home, hence the first objective is to reach home.
- » As there are quite a few berths available Vivek has a right to a safe and comfortable journey.
- » In any situation, Vivek Shastri should not resort to paying a bribe.

Possible solutions: Pray to Swami, put our full faith in Him, do our best in an ethical method like requesting the TTE with politeness and firmness. After this as Swami says, 'Do your best and leave the rest to Swami.'

**Panel of Experts:**

**GS:** Do you think that an emergency should compel you to compromise your values and settle for a bargain?

**Team Chanakya:** Exhibiting values in conducive environments is only for our training purpose. This training should help in facing such situations. Swami puts us through such situations to test us and we have to go by Swami's directives.

**RP:** You mentioned that Vivek thanked Bhagawan for a wonderful life and was in an upbeat mood. This shows that he was a confident person and has faith in Swami. Hence, if the TTE doesn't agree, Vivek should go to the unreserved compartment.

**Team Chanakya:** Ends never justify the means so whatever the situation may be, he should never change his values and become unethical.

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**SS:** If the situation is such that you have to pick up your aged grandfather and undertake the journey, will you still go in the unreserved compartment or would it change your decision?

Team Chanakya: Under such a circumstance, we might get tempted to go the unethical way but for a cause like this, if we take unethical means it will have its own repercussions. We will pray till something happens. This is not a hypothesis, it has happened to several students before in tougher situations.

Summary: Our life groomed on values-based education is not for using the values in calm situations. This is like saying that the soldier is not trained for war but for peace time. At such occasions, when our values are questioned, we have to stand ever firmer.

## **S**ituation 4: Team Yudhisthira

Mr. K K Varma is a forty-year-old Judge in Mumbai where he lives with his family. He is currently presiding over the trial of Neeraj, an alleged bank robber. Neeraj has been accused of stealing ₹36 Lakhs from PML Bank's Mumbai branch. Through sources that the judge can trust, he has come to know for sure that Neeraj is innocent. However, being a judge, he can establish this only by a judicial procedure. It is clear that Neeraj is being framed by someone to become the accused in the case.

As Mr. Varma is pondering on the case, thinking of a new line of motive, and holding Neeraj's background file, when the phone rings – breaking his deep thought, and flashes 'private number calling' on its display. He feels that this could be something bad. With a trembling hand and fearful mind, he answers the call. The judge then hears some terrible news. Looking at his shaken expression, one can guess that something terrible has happened.

The scene is as theatrical as in the movies – the judge tries to continue the conversation in vain as the caller cuts the call leaving him to hear the cries of his daughter, 'daddy, daddy' from a distance. Someone has kidnapped the judge's daughter and is holding her hostage. They demand Neeraj's conviction for the PML bank robbery in return for the release of his child. The judge is obviously shaken and disturbed. Who the kidnappers are, is not known- perhaps enemies of Neeraj or perhaps the real robber who is trying to escape being caught should Neeraj's innocence be established.

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The judge has contacted the police. Two-and-a-half days have passed and the police have tried to locate the child, but to no avail. The cries of his little daughter two days back on the phone are still ringing agonizingly in the judge's mind and he fears the kidnappers could be abusing or even torturing the child. Neeraj's case is thirty hours from now.

What should judge Verma do now?

**Team Yudhisthira:** We have two clear alternatives for judge Verma. One is to save his daughter and second one is to follow dharma. But we also should think out of the box where we can have benefits of both the options.

- » Strike an understanding with someone higher in the judicial system and convict Neeraj, free the daughter from the kidnappers and subsequently acquit the person by making appeal in the next higher court or take similar judicial recourse.
- » The judge can buy himself some more time by postponing the judgement of the case.
- » If judge Verma acquits Neeraj, he puts his daughter in danger and if he convicts Neeraj, he goes against his dharma by convicting an innocent person. Hence, he should disclose his conflict of interest and step aside from this case which is known as judicial disqualification.

Final verdict: The group feels that judge Verma should step aside from this case.

#### **Panel of Experts:**

**GS:** If judge Verma steps aside do you think his daughter would be safe and left out?

**SS:** In our tradition there is a concept of '*Apad dharma*' i.e. dharma in crisis, how is it applicable to this situation? In our culture, are there options to follow an alternative route?

Judge Verma should take an alternative route. He should pass the judgment taking appropriate people into confidence like the police, the higher judiciary. This should be a strategy already planned especially when you deal with criminals. By this he can save the child and immediately after that he can retract his decision. In this way, the child is saved and also the safety of the innocent man is ensured. This is a case of '*apad dharma*'.

**RP:** We have come across similar incidents in the past. One is about Rubaiya Sayeed, the daughter of former union home minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. She was



kidnapped and held ransom in return for five militants. The government buckled under pressure and released the militants.

The second one was the hijack at Kandahar, where the hijackers demanded the release of hardcore militants in return for the safety of the passengers of the Indian Airlines flight. The Govt. of India was forced to release three militants to save the lives of the 176 passengers on board (one of whom died of fatal wounds). In this case, the judicial system can be taken into confidence or the kidnappers can be nabbed.

**GS:** The concept of *apad dharma* is very relevant as it is approved by all the dharma shastras. Wisdom has to be exercised in settling cases where one has to resort of *apad dharma*.

Let us first look at the types of ethical issues:

- » Ethics in personal life – the case of Ankit.
- » Ethics in public life- the case of Vivek Shastri and the train TTE.
- » Ethics in professional life- the situation faced by the teacher Miss Usha Sinha and justice Verma.

### **Simple Rules to Resolve Ethical Dilemmas:**

- » The rule of the conscience- Don't follow the senses, don't follow the mind, always follow the conscience. How to know whether the mind is speaking or the conscience is speaking? Conscience always represents the absolute truth, hence it has no fear. If we can tell boldly the action which we are contemplating, it is the action of the conscience. But if we wish to keep an action a secret it is not prompted by the conscience. Swami always says, 'I don't have a secretary as I have no secrets to keep'. He is our true conscience.
- » The larger good rule- when faced with many alternatives, choose the alternative which provides the maximum benefit to the maximum number of people. In the case of Ankit, he has to take into account the larger good of the entire hostel rather than the good of his friend Sabareesh.
- » The No harm rule- Never hurt anyone knowingly. 'Help Ever Hurt Never'. If a course of action harms anyone, it should be avoided.
- » The 'JOY' rule- Swami always elaborates this as – Jesus first, Others next and Yourself last. When we reduce our selfishness and feel the concern for others, automatically we get better solutions.
- » The rule of Dharma- Dharma is love in action- 'Do unto others, what you want

others do unto you.' If Parul in Case 2 has to get concern from others, she has to be considerate to others.

- » The SAI rule- Whatever action is being contemplated, we have to ask this question- Will Swami approve my action? If we get a categorical yes, then alone we have to go ahead. But if we have some doubt, we have to be careful. Swami says, 'SAI means See Always Inside.'

There are no readymade solutions to ethical dilemmas, but there is one solution that Bhagawan has always told, i.e. prayer. If we pray sincerely, Bhagawan will provide a proper solution.

Ethical dilemmas are only in the realm of mind. There are no dilemmas for divinity because whatever divinity does is the right and perfect solution.

If we pray to Bhagawan sincerely, He will provide us the correct solution. He can even change a situation to ensure that we get the correct solution.

The most important takeaway from the situational analysis exercise is constant and sincere prayer to Bhagawan, so that He will guide us in every situation, how ever difficult it may be.

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# Valedictory Session

**Prof. (Miss) Madhu Kapani**

Head, Dept. of Education, SSSIHL and  
Dean, Faculty of Economics & Humanities, SSSIHL

The main purpose of the Summer Course is to make us aware of our rich cultural heritage that will enable us to develop deeper insights and understanding into Bhagawan's teaching with respect to human life and spirituality. In the last two days we have heard inspiring talks on the relevance of Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavatam for modern society. The beautiful videos of Bhagawan were a feast for the eyes and food for the soul. Bhajan Antakshari and Quiz stole the show. The panel discussion and interactive sessions were all very interesting and informative. In the Parayanam sessions, we had the opportunity to listen to senior devotees and staff members, which inspired all of us. The situation analysis session was really insightful.

Swami always expects us to treat all the students as our own children. Once while I was travelling by train, one of the co-passengers, a very elderly person, asked me, 'How many children do you have?' I very spontaneously said, 'I have 23 daughters.' His facial expression changed, and rather surprised, he asked me, 'You don't look that old?' I said, I don't look old because my daughters are young and I am with them all the time. If choices are given, it is easy to choose, but if no choices are given and decisions have to be taken, we have to keep the guidelines that Bhagawan has given us. Swami says that even a fraction of a second is enough to realize the truth if His grace is present.

Ramayana is not the biography of an individual; it is the very essence of Dharma to be followed by an individual at different stages of life. It also emphasizes on the dharma of the family and the dharma of society. Two prominent lessons learnt are the value of detachment and the need to become aware of the divine in every being. Each character in Ramayana signifies a deeper meaning as given by Bhagawan in His Rama Katha Rasavahini. Sita gave up the luxuries of Ayodhya so that she could be with Rama in exile. But when she had the desire for the golden deer, she lost the presence of Rama. Swami says that when *kama* (desire) entered her heart, she got separated from Rama. This teaches us that renunciation leads to joy and attachment leads to grief. Hence Bhagawan says- Be in the world but not of it. We heard the speakers extoll the lead characters of Ramayana but even the lesser known characters

have sterling qualities which are rarely brought to the limelight. Bhagawan has given due importance to their virtues which have to be emulated by all. For example, in Sumitra we find compassion, sympathy and detachment. She realized that her twins were gifts of Kousalya and Kaikeyi. She tells them that her sons will serve Rama and Bharata throughout their lives. Swami says that Urmila encourages Lakshmana to serve Rama and Sita with utmost dedication. She was not perturbed when Lakshmana comes and tells her the decision of following Rama for fourteen years. In fact, she tells him, 'Don't worry about me, don't think of me. Serve Sri Rama and Mother Sita. I will contemplate on you in Ayodhya.' She exhibited courage, nobility and a sense of equanimity in trying circumstances. We also see the spirit of sacrifice and dedication of the wives of Bharata and Shatrughana, namely Mandavi and Srutakirti. Jatayu's sense of sacrifice, the one pointedness of Shabari, the righteousness of Vibhishana and the faithfulness and chastity of queen Mandodari are worth highlighting. These lesser characters could be considered for the next Summer Course.

In the Mahabharata, we see that Kunti was a good mother. She nurtured her children with love and affection, fostering in them *Daiva Preeti*, *Paapa Bheeti* and *Sangha Neeti*. They installed love and faith for Krishna in their hearts; whereas, in contrast, Gandhari, the mother of Kauravas, didn't dissuade her sons from leading an adharmic life. She not only kept herself blindfolded but also was blind to the follies of her sons. Draupadi kept the family united with Krishna on her side. The Pandavas followed dharma and were recipients of divine grace and won the war ultimately. On the other hand, Karna, who was known for his charity, valour and courage had to face defeat in the end because of the company he maintained. We have often heard Swami saying- Tell me your company and I will tell you what you are.

I would like to mention that life is a growth school ideally created to give us opportunities to learn each of the lessons which we need to learn in our life sojourn. The earth we live in can be called a schoolhouse, and we live in circles and at the end of our lives we reach where we first began our journey. A circle speaks of wholeness and integrity and the purpose of life is all about reaching wholeness. The process by which we leave our authentic self and become people who we are not by taking upon beliefs, behaviours and values from people around us is known as enculturation. We have an original nature and assume a mask of false personality, which is not the way we are meant to live. Our personality is not real but one that we have created in order to be liked and loved.

Bhagawan says - You are not one but three: the one you think you are, the one

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others think you are and the one you really are! At this juncture, I remember, we had taken some photographs to an interview with Bhagawan to get them autographed by Him. We thought that in place of taking an ordinary pen, we will take a bold permanent marker pen so that Swami's signature would be bold on the photo. When I handed the pen to Bhagawan and He opened the cap, He was taken aback by its spirit like smell. I immediately said, 'Swami it is a permanent pen.' I repeated the statement. Swami looked intently into my eyes, which sent shivers down my spine and asked stressing on each word, 'Who is permanent?' I fumbled and said, "Swami is permanent, God is permanent, Atma is permanent." He picked up the conversation from then on in the interview room and explained us all about Atma. The job of every human being is not improvement as we are perfect at the deepest level, and we can't improve upon perfection.

We are all sparks of the divine and I have the story of the golden Buddha to share with all of you. Once upon a time, long long ago, there were a group of monks who had a huge golden Buddha statue that they worshipped, meditated around and was their prized possession. A time came when there was a threat of a foreign invasion; so all the monks were worried about this prized possession of theirs. All sat together and were thinking of different ways to protect the Buddha statue when one monk came up with a very simple and effective idea. They applied layers and layers of mountain mud and covered the statue of Buddha. This was successful as the invaders were not able to find out the statue.

One day a mountain monk was going that way when he saw something simmering in the mountain dust. He called all his brother and sister monks and they slowly started to peel off all the layers of mud covering the statue. Finally when all the layers were removed, they were able to behold this golden Buddha idol. This is a very powerful metaphor to all of us in the schoolhouse of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. Each day, life will teach us the lessons that we need to learn if we pay attention. Each day will provide you with opportunities to move through one more layer of mud that is covering up the brilliance and the goal that you truly are. The purpose of life is to remove the dirt so that the gold within us shines and sees the light of the day.

As days pass by, you will experience that every act of courage, every act of goodness and every act of self responsibility will have an immediate pay-off for you. Each time you do what you know as the right thing and follow the truth rather than the dictates of the crowd, a little more mud covering up who you truly are will be removed and

you will be able to tune yourself to Bhagawan. Each time you act with love and not fear and listen to your heart, you will become more of who you really are.

Another incident comes to my mind when I got a personal interview with Bhagawan accompanied by my parents. Swami assured me and said, 'Follow the conscience, do what you feel is right even if others don't think so.' I said, "Swami, how we will know that we are listening to our conscience." Swami replied, "When you do work following your conscience, I will be on your side even if the rest of the world is on the other side."

Bhagawan Himself has planned the entire schedule of the Institute so that we are able to remove the layers of mud covering us. Spending time alone every day is a tool that will help you all awaken and reclaim your authentic power in this schoolhouse. For this you will need the help and guidance of the teachers. Bhagawan has planned everything so meticulously that you all have teachers staying with you in the hostel and be every ready to be your friend, philosopher and guide.

However there are some virtues that have to be followed in our lives for better living. These include:

- » Mastering the mind and cultivate it so that it blossoms beyond your expectations. The quality of your life is determined by the quality of your thoughts. Speaking on thoughts reminds me of another incident. When I joined this Institute, I developed this strong desire to buy diamond studs for my mother, so I started practicing ceiling on desires to save money. It so happened that I had to utilize the money saved for something very important at that moment. I was feeling very bad about it. I sat down, wrote down a letter to Bhagawan expressing my feelings. Swami came and took the letter. After 2-3 months, my parents came to visit me and the next day, which happened to be a Sunday, Swami called us all for an interview. In the interview room after a few queries, Swami circled His hand and created a pair of beautiful pair of diamond studs. I immediately stretched my hands thinking they are for me; Bhagawan gave a mischievous look, smiled, nodded His head and said, "No, not for you, it is for mother." So saying, He placed one stud in my hands and one in my mother's hands and added, "Put it on her right now."

This example tries to highlight thoughts that are pure and selfless. I wanted the studs for my mother and Bhagawan immediately answered my prayer. One sentence which I wrote in the letter was, 'Swami, I don't know how many years it will take for me

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to save money to buy diamond studs.' Bhagawan sees our thoughts and hearts and reacts accordingly. There are no mistakes, there are just lessons that help us grow and expand in our journey.

- » Follow the purpose- Focus on your priorities and maintain balance. As students your priorities are to pay attention to your studies and also to participate in all the activities of the campus.
- » Live with discipline- discipline is built by consistently performing small acts of courage for which you need will power. For e.g. training yourself to get up one hour earlier everyday and sticking to it until it becomes a habit. This will help you in life.
- » Respect time- Time slips through our hands like grains of sand, never to return again. Those who use time wisely from an early age are rewarded with rich, productive and satisfying living. Guard time well. Remember that it is a non-renewable resource. I feel we have lost a lot of our time thinking about mundane things though we are with Bhagawan. We have so much to learn, we have so much to do for our spiritual growth. I remember Bhagawan telling me once, 'You worry about everyone but not you, worry about you.' I immediately replied, "Why should I worry, you are there for me Bhagawan." I took this statement of Bhagawan at a very worldly level. I used to write to Bhagawan prayers about other people's ill health, for example. I thought Swami meant that by His statement. He did not mean that He wanted me to grow spiritually. I now understand the real meaning of the statement. Let us not waste our time. All of you students have such a wonderful opportunity, such a beautiful ambience. You have so much of energy and creativity in you, which you can channelize properly, become the 'golden Buddhas' that you all are.
- » Serve selflessly
- » Live in the present- Swami says, "Past is past, future is uncertain, live in the present and this present is not ordinary present, it is omnipresent." Bhagawan said, "we are not human beings having spiritual experience but spiritual beings having human experience."

Let us all achieve the goal of life together by following the principles laid down by Bhagawan for us in this Institution. These Summer Courses are like the induction programmes to not only prepare us for the new academic session, but also for our mental and spiritual development. In the path of spirituality, we are all students and learners. Let us all master these values and then we will all value our dearest Master.

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# Paranayam Sessions

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Campus-wise evening sessions sharing  
**Experiences with**  
**Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

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# Anantapur Campus Sessions

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Dr. (Mrs.) T Dharma

Former Professor and Head, Department of Philosophy, SSSIHL

Before coming to India, my talk was scheduled in Saraswati Hall, the most prestigious hall in Colombo. I thought that only a few people would be present there. I was surprised to see this event reported in a daily newspaper. I tried to prepare by writing some notes but was unable to write anything. I reached the hall and found it filled to the utmost capacity. I don't know what happened. I started talking at ten minutes to seven and finished at ten minutes to eight with a 'Jai Sairam'. People flocked to me and even garlanded me. I was in bliss. It was really Swami who helped me to talk. That was a very great experience, which I will never forget. In the meantime, I got a telegram from Swami to come to Puttapparthi. I came to Puttapparthi and Swami called me for an interview. He said, "You are a very good loud speaker of mine. I saw you struggling to write notes, thinking what to speak. I made you speak. You are my loud speaker." That was my first experience of Swami... I would say, miracle.

I was not familiar with Swami in the beginning. Once while teaching in college, a few boys disturbed my class. "What are you all talking about?" I asked angrily. One of the boys got up and said, "Madam, I hear there is somebody in India, who materializes watches, clothes and chains." I said, "This is not the place to discuss all these things" and punished the boys.

Some time passed and subsequently, when I went on a holiday with my husband, I lost him. After that, I happened to come to Puttapparthi. During darshan, I called out, "Swami!" He asked "beloved?" "Yes, Swami," I replied. "No, no, he is here with me," Swami replied.

Thereafter, my life changed. Swami looked after me and He asked me to go to Anantapur. He looked at the date and said, "Tomorrow is Thursday, do not go during *Rabukalam*." He fixed the date and time, and sent me to Anantapur. It was very interesting when I arrived at Anantapur. I expected a nice, posh room with a nice bed, and sheet, a table, all set for me, etc. When I opened the door, I found one bare cot, an iron one! Today, that has really become a place of worship for me! I asked

myself where I was going to sleep - the cot had no mattress, no sheet, nothing. That night, I laid myself on the cot. What do you think was my plight? If I put my head on the cot, my leg would be down, and if I put my leg on the bed, my head would be down. I had to decide which had to be put on the cot. I slept somehow. On top of that, when I went to toilet, one good neighbor girl told me, that there were scorpions inside the bathroom.

I wrote a letter to Swami saying I was not going to stay there. I wrote four pages pleading with Him to let me go, and was ready to give it to Him. The following day, Swami sent Sri Chiranjeevi Rao *garu*, who came to my room in Anantapur. I thought since I had already written the letter, Swami must be asking me to leave. But he came and said that Swami had sent him to build an attached bathroom for me, pointing at the place, and fixed the time to begin construction. Can you imagine? Who can do this? How did He know? My letter had not reached Swami. That is His omniscience. What I want to tell you is: for me Swami is God. Now why do we say He is God? There are so many big Gods,- Lord Shiva, Ganesha, Krishna, Rama, etc. We worship all of them. They are many, but Swami is all in one. He looked after me so well and made me so happy. Sometimes I used to wonder - in India there are highly qualified professors, especially in Indian Philosophy. Why should He select me? There is a purpose really. I am what I am today because of Swami's grace and blessings. Whether we accept it or not, we have had experiences of His omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence and omnifelicity. I start with omnifelicity, that is happiness. Swami always says be happy, because He is happy. In any circumstance, He is happy. He wants us to be happy.

Now I will tell you a small incident. When I was sitting for Darshan, there were three ladies who had come from Bangalore, and I was told that Swami often goes and stays with them. That day there were only two ladies, and they were weeping. I was wondering why they were weeping. Then someone told me that said somebody had died in their family. When Swami came close to them, He asked them why they were crying. One girl said, "Swami, Lakshmi is dead." You know what He said? "Ayyo Paapam, Vishnu." Now we might think that this is humorous. No. That is the way Swami tackles people. He knows they are in great agony, they are in great distress. When He said this, they could not weep anymore. They stopped weeping. So, that is the greatness of God. You know, the omnifelicity, the happiness.

Another humorous incident I will tell you about Swami's omnifelicity. I was in the interview room when a lot of overseas devotees were there. There was one big fat

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lady. May be fatter than me. Swami asked each one in the interview, “What do you want, what do you want, what do you want?” Everybody told Swami what he or she wanted. He came to this lady and asked what she wanted. “Swami, I want to merge with you,” she said. Then He said “Ayyo! how can you merge with Me? I am so small and you are so big!” This is the humorous side of Him. And he sees to it that everybody is made happy. Not that He did not know what she meant. She meant what she said. Yet, that is His sense of humour. These are the things that touch our hearts too.

Then, about His omnipresence and omnipotence—there are hundreds of incidents. I will share one such incident. There was a girl from Mauritius. I had met her in Mauritius. She is from a very humble family consisting of father, mother, son and daughter. I heard that the four of them sang bhajans everyday – morning and evening. One day I was giving a series of talks. My friend took me to this lady’s house that day because I wasn’t too well to talk at a public meeting. She said, “I will take you to a private house.” I went there. This girl’s name was Latha. She told me about her experiences of how Swami had come out of the picture, appeared to her, etc. Of course, I was not that very convinced about it. Yet it was nice to hear all this. I forgot about her. Two year later, I met the same girl at Whitefield in the Canteen. She said, “Aunty, don’t you remember me?” I said, “Yes, your face is familiar, but I cannot remember your name.” She said she was Latha from Mauritius. I said, “Oh! Why don’t you come over to my room and tell me your experiences.” She told me how Swami comes to her house, speaks to her, comes out of the picture and disappears. It was nice to hear. Again, I forgot about it. I then went to Bangalore, and I was staying at my niece’s house. That day I did my omkar, suprabhatam and was sitting on my bed. I said, “Oh! this Latha says Swami appears to her. I hope He will appear to me also one day.” Would you believe me? Swami was right in front of me in a white robe wearing crystal chains, and He was trying to take one of the crystal chains to give me but it got entangled. I suppose I am still entangled and so He did not want to give it to me. I saw Him and I touched His body to see whether it was a dream or whether it was really true. Two days later, when I came back to Puttaparthi, Swami called me for an interview. He took my hand and put it in His, which convinced me that it was Swami who had come that day. That was a very tangible experience of Swami.

There is another beautiful experience that I would like to share with you. It was on Swami’s 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday. I had been to Australia. By then, whenever I went abroad, the first gift I buy, would be for Swami. After that I do my own shopping. So I bought white lace curtains and some beautiful flowers. When I came to Puttaparthi, I got

my house painted. I put the nice white lace curtains in my room, made lovely flower arrangements, and I sat and wrote a letter to Swami. I said in the letter, 'Swami, my room is looking very beautiful. Fit for God's entrance.' I kept the letter at the altar. Believe it or not, I went to the toilet, came back, and sat on my bed. It was 1 am. Three knocks were heard on my door. Very casually in English I asked, "Who is it?" "Vishnu," the answer came from other side. That was all. One word answer "Vishnu". And if you know of maya and illusion, I thought that was maya. I fell asleep after that, and forgot about the whole incident. Early morning at 6 o'clock I rang up my daughter. I had already told her about my house and how she should also come for Swami's birthday. When I rang her up and told her what had happened, she said, "Why amma, you just told me that you wrote a letter to Swami saying, 'Fit for God's entrance'. Swami must have come. What do you think?" Now I feel, had I opened the door, I would not be sitting here today. The shock would have been such, I would have collapsed. So that is maya. Swami disillusioned me with that experience so that I take that as something that is absolutely real; and yet not absolutely false.

Once at Colombo, I was telling a friend (who always visits Parthi for Shivaratri) that she had said that Swami appears to people when they think of their own Ishta Deva. So I was also hoping to go for Shivaratri, and for Swami to appear to me as Shiva. I forgot about it and did not come for that Shivaratri. Another time when I did come, I was sitting on the aisle and three or four rows away from Him. I looked at Swami's face, He glared at me; and I also glared at Him, because that gives you supreme pleasure; it is the highest pleasure one can experience. Then I suddenly noticed, I did not see just His two eyes; I saw the third eye, it was red like marble, I looked and looked. At one stage, I just could not look at Him anymore, I looked down. When we have such experiences, what can we think of Swami? That He is nobody else, but Divinity itself.

I loved going to temples and observing all rituals and poojas. But ever since I came to know Swami, they lost their significance. I have in my room, Swami in front, Swami behind, Swami here, Swami there. When I am angry, I look at one picture. If I am happy, I look at the other picture. Likewise life goes on, looking at Him. I could have gone away from this place, lived in comforts and lived in joy. But what is it that is drawing me here? Swami is physically no more. But something is drawing me here, to be here at this age, keeping me here forever and forever.

This energy that I have today, except for the fall that I have gone through, is because of the blessings and grace of Swami. You pray to Him. They say prayers can move

mountains. And prayer is mightier than the sword of a warrior. I have experienced it. Pray hard to Him. He will respond. That one thing, one must remember. I remember Swami telling us once that when you pray, do not ask for what you want, ask for what you need. There is a vast difference between wanting and needing. If you need, God will come to your help; and if you want, you have to find it yourself. This is the experience I have had of Swami since 1983, when I became a devotee of Swami.

When I first met Him, this place was a jungle. That was simetime in 1968. When I sat for Darshan, it was my friend who was a devotee and not me. Swami came with a basket full of vibhuti, and He did not stop in front of my friend, He stopped before me. My friend said, “Take padanamaskar”, and I did not know what a padanamaskar was. She said, “Touch His feet.” Then Swami gave me a handful of vibhuti. That was the beginning of my devotion for Swami. From then onwards Swami has been looking after my family and me. I am happy, contented and I think I have had everything in life. To sit here and talk to you all, is another blessing of Swami. I never expected that I would ever meet all you people, here, in this hall. There are hundreds and hundreds of experiences. But I do not want to take too long, because it is already late for you all. And it is time that all of you went home and had a good sleep. I hope you are all happy. Let me tell you that Swami is all in all. He is not one in all, but all in one. So depend on Swami, pray to Him, and I have my own experience that He will respond, provided, what we ask is what we need; and not what we want.

Thank you so much.

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## Ms. Neena Bardoloi

Teacher, Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School

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Looking at all of you I am reminded of myself as a I B.A. student thirty-six years ago. That seems a long, long time ago. Dr Kasturi's words come to my mind. He said that every one of us has a role to play in Swami's display of life and in His mission. I would like to tell you that thirty-six years ago, I would never even have imagined that I would be standing as Bhagawan's school teacher talking to a whole lot of Anantapur girls.

One very important fact I want to tell you is this: you may think that you have come here because your parents wanted it, or you wanted it, or you just got admission. But that is not true. Swami has handpicked and chosen each one of you and all of you have a role to play in His Mission.

Now since you are in the middle of the Summer Course, I would like to say something about it. I joined the Summer Course in 1977 as a student from Uttar Pradesh. During the Summer Course, Swami made it very clear that He conducted the Summer Course because He wanted spirituality to be the basis of our lives. The Summer Course was an endless series of lectures. We would be sitting for long hours – sometimes three to six hours. But there was always anticipation, a thrill, an excitement in the air. It was always as if there was something going to happen. Swami would be doing unexpected things like suddenly coming in to the dining hall when we were eating, suddenly coming into the lecture hall, suddenly coming into the auditorium, or suddenly throw mangoes at us and do all kinds of things; suddenly standing next to us, talking to us. Or when we would be cleaning his premises, He would look at us from the window. It was an endless sea of anticipation. But He never let us forget that education is a way of life.

Imagine the Lord of the Universe, coming to us and giving each and every student a badge, a pen, a notebook. Then he taught us a lesson on meticulousness and He would ensure that every student got the badge. Once, He even took the badge from a student and pinned it onto His shirt and said "Look, this is the way you have to wear it."

He was very particular about modesty amongst the Anantapur girls. To go to the College auditorium, we had to cross the Darshan line. This meant that we had to

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cross the Boys' Hostel and the College. Swami would say "Look, when you walk through, bend your head and walk. You will be looking trying to spot your parents here and there but others will think you are looking at the boys." In the very next breath, like a loving father, showing us that He had complete trust in us, He would say "I know you'll never do such a thing. But then, why give a chance for others to talk?" So this is his way of showing His love.

There were also hilarious moments during the Summer Course like when we would be eating the mangoes that He had thrown at us—huge mangoes—and the monkeys would come and snatch it off. Imagine, Swami would be standing right up, at His window and looking and having a hearty laugh at our pathetic plight!

After the Summer Course, even before I could get admission into Anantapur College, Swami just packed my parents off and packed me off to Anantapur with a few girls who were going to the hostel. I found myself in Anantapur with those girls. I put my bags down and someone said "we will show you the prayer hall, we will show you the prayer hall terrace, and that hill that Swami has called Lion's Hill." So I made a bee line for the terrace. As I sat on the parapet of the terrace, believe me, girls, I felt I'd come home...really home. Those years in Anantapur were the most beautiful of my life.

Our seniors were very nice and kind. They would teach us how to get close to Swami. Those were wondrous days. It was like being immersed in Darshan all the time. He gave us various, countless instances of His omnipresence. I'll tell you one. Many of us had gone to Puttaparthi. The next day was the first day of Dasara and the Anantapur girls always led the procession from the mandir to the auditorium here. It just happened that we I year students happened to have an exam. To our dejection and despair, we had to stay back in the hostel. After dinner, we went straight to the prayer hall and incessantly sang bhajans. After the session, to our amazement, when we looked at the back, the rear end photos had *amrit* flowing profusely. We were all very happy but the icing on the cake was the following day. As we were going to write our exam, we saw one of the teachers who had gone to Parthi coming very excitedly towards us. She said "You know what; Swami has called you to Parthi. He says write your exams fast and He will not start the procession till you reach." Imagine our joy.

We quickly wrote our exams, ran to the bus, and ran to the mandir. There was Swami with his beatific smile on the sands! We joined the procession and then Swami said “Now, start the procession.” That was His infinite mercy and love.

All the time we were vying for Swami’s attention. One day, I had a very slight temperature. But I convinced myself that my temperature was very high. So I wrapped myself in a shawl and sat in the first line, very expectantly. Swami came, gave a very compassionate smile and said “Fever unda? Ayyo papam!” and promptly created *vibhuti* and gave it to the perfectly healthy person sitting next to me. So Swami knows what is happening in the inner most recesses of our mind.

Most of us never liked to go home because we would always foresee an interview coming. One such time, when we went in, there were ants on the wall. Then, Swami said “Look at those ants, how many (are they in number)?” Obviously we were baffled. Swami told the exact number and said “My eyes see everything.”

I want to tell you another incident when once some of my classmates were sitting in the Darshan line. A Singaporean devotee, a very ardent devotee, who used to have a very sophisticated hairstyle was sitting next to us. Those days, mind you, Swami would come at 6:30 a.m. for Darshan! We started talking amongst ourselves, saying “My God! We get up in the middle of the night and somehow make it for Darshan. How does this lady have time for this elaborate hairdo?” We went on and on in this strain. Swami came out for Darshan and as He came closer (to us), His face became sterner. We knew that there was something coming. As soon as He came near us, He said, “Talking, Talking, Talking; Talking of this; Talking of that; Talking of hairstyles.” Then, of course, we were floored! Swami then very sweetly said, “Swami sees only what is there in the heart.” We felt like sinking through the floor; rather the sand! But He had taught us that every word that we speak is known to Swami. And to never find fault with others.

During our I year B.A., whenever we came (to Parthi), it was inevitable that we end up in the interview room. In our final year, like a loving father, He’d tell us all about how we should behave when we went out for further studies. One point we would always tell Swami was, “Swami, you give so much importance to the boys. You spend so much time with the boys. That’s not fair.” Then Swami very patiently once told us “Dekho, I’m not partial. Boys and Girls are like my two eyes. But, see, I’ve come in the human form.” Then, very cleverly, He turned to us and said “Do you want Swami to get a bad name?” Obviously we all said, “No Swami, No Swami.” Very cleverly, He



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had satisfied us all!

Now there was the Ganesh Chaturthi in 1977 when Swami came to Anantapur. He spent the whole festival there. If I'm not mistaken, that was the last time Swami stayed overnight in Anantapur. We were running from here to there because Swami was going from hostel to college and college to hostel to look at the Ganesha which had come from Bangalore. He was making fun of the rat, the *mushika*. Jayamma madam and Pushpa madam got permission for us to chant Suprabhatam on the marble floor. Bathed and all dressed up in the morning, we sat on the marble floor in the college below Swami's room and started chanting Suprabhatam in very strenuous voices. From the corner of our eyes, we saw a red spot and as we watched breathlessly, Swami came out majestically – gliding down the stairs, walking amongst us, looking at each one of us. We were only about 175 students. He looked at every one of us. Later in the hostel each girl could offer a flower at His feet and take *namaskar*. He even had lunch with us. Every time He went to the prayer hall terrace (I hear there is no Prayer hall terrace now, but there was a prayer hall terrace then) we would rush to the terrace above and look at Him. He would shake His fingers at us, smile and say “Hey dunnapotha” because we were behaving like *dunnapothas* (Male buffaloes)! Swami says that every joke that He makes has a message behind it. He does not just joke. There is always a message.

There is another poignant incident which comes to mind. It was during *akhandā bhajans*, and one of my classmates was sitting in the prayer hall. As the Ganesh bhajan started, Swami was looking at her very angrily. This continued for a few bhajans and she was really remorseful because when Swami would look at you angrily that means you have done something wrong. So she started introspecting. But, she could not find anything wrong. After Swami left, the girl seated behind her tapped her and asked, “Why was Swami looking at us so angrily?” This girl was heartbroken and she decided she would not eat till Swami personally came and told her to eat. So that night, she did not have her dinner. Next morning, after bath, she refused to have breakfast. Those days we would all fit into the prayer hall. In the afternoon there was some commotion at the back. Swami just walked in from the back door of the prayer hall and He came straight to her and asked her, “Have you eaten?” Tears of gratitude rolled down her eyes. And she shook her head in the negative. Swami made a sign and said “Go and Eat.” See, Swami has access to the innermost thoughts in our hearts and mind.

Talking of my years at Anantapur, I have to mention the eighteen very glorious and

beautiful days that we spent in Brindavan, in the immediate presence and vicinity of our Lord. It was a few days prior to Christmas. In those days, whenever Jayamma madam or Pushpa madam got a call, we would all be peering from the balcony, because we would know that it was either Swami's message for us to come there or He would come to Anantapur. So just before Christmas, madam got a call and Swami said "All of you come for Christmas." Now, 50 of us were remaining, who had not booked our tickets. We made a beeline for Brindavan. Swami called us into the dining hall of the boys' hostel and along with the foreigners, we ate dinner. Swami gave each of us a *laddu*. All the other girls left. Fourteen of us had got permission to stay on during the holidays. But to our dismay, we realized that Swami was not going to Puttaparthi. Swami was going to stay in Brindavan. Very apprehensively, we approached madam and said, "Please madam, can you ask Swami? Can we stay in Brindavan?" Now that was something almost impossible. Madam said "I don't think so" because Swami never allows girls to stay in Brindavan. Then it just happened that suddenly Ma'am came and said "You know what? Swami has said you can stay." We were in seventh heaven.

Those were really blissful days. It was Darshan from the time you got up until the time you slept. It was Darshan and more Darshan and more Darshan! There was no time even to eat that sometimes we were hungry and would say "Swami, let us eat at least now!" At night, till He had His dinner, we could have Darshan. Sometimes, He would come up on top of the stairs and open the door. He would be wearing those pink fluffy slippers. Then He would talk and joke right from the top. We would go to sleep at around 9:30, after a whole day of Darshan. The best part was where we stayed was not this Trayee Brindavan. It was the old temple. Swami would stay on the first floor. Half the front part of the ground floor was Swami's interview room and the room where the boys are. At the back, there were a few rooms, which were given to us. So, we stayed right under Swami's house. We would chant Suprabhatam very slowly and softly because madam said, "Let us not disturb Swami." The next day Swami would come and say, "Why are you singing Suprabhatam so softly? I can't hear you." He would teach us how to chant Omkaram. He would come into our room anytime. So we had to always keep it tidy. He would sit on the chair and He would talk to us.

One very great lesson He taught us there was about benevolence. One day He walked into the room. It was a huge room. In one corner there was a very rich ardent devotee of Swami. She had a cot there. She was an old lady. Swami went to her and said "Do you share all your eatables with my girls?" and she said, "Yes, Swami." Believe me!

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You know what He did? He bent down, He looked under the cot, and from under the cot he took out a packet of biscuits, and He said, “Did you give this to the girls?” Very sheepishly, she said, “No, Swami.” That was a great lesson He taught us that we must always share. We must always be benevolent.

Swami would often come and sit on the lawn and we would all sit around Him and sing Bhajans. He would be interacting with us. We had glorious times then.

One small incident before I close. I told you we never went home. We never liked to go home. We were old students and Swami had told us sit in front and sing loudly. He was very particular about bhajans. “You must enjoy bhajans,” He would say. “Immerse yourself in bhajans.” He told us to sit right in the front and sing loudly so that the public can follow. Swami is a great master. He knows everything. He notices every small thing. He noticed one or two girls had not sung. Swami was furious. In those days when Swami is furious, we used to tremble. Swami called Mr. Kutumba Rao and said, “These girls, ask them to go out of the prayer hall!” We were immediately scooted out – almost carried out! We were very afraid. We saw that we hid ourselves from Swami every day, for quite a few days. We never showed our faces. We hid behind right at the back of the crowd. Several days passed. And Swami had noticed that we were not there. One day He called Mr. Kutumba Rao and said, “What happened to these girls? Where are they? Why don’t I see them?” Then, He said “I never said they should go completely out of the prayer hall. I just said that they should not sit in front.” Then, we were royally and told to go back in the front. That was the love of a thousand mothers!

I cannot end without telling you about Primary School. I joined Primary School as per Swami’s instructions. Those were the years of sheer bliss because Swami would come every day. He would give, give and give to the children. There is one small incident which I often tell my students about Swami’s omnipresence and love. He would come for prize distribution and every child would get a prize from Swami. This particular prize distribution, He stepped into the lobby and the children started singing bhajans in the Bhajan Hall. He would walk very fast. He quickly climbed up the flight of stairs and just before He reached the Prayer Hall, He asked the aunties, “Is everybody in the Prayer Hall?” Promptly, they said “Yes, Swami everybody is in the Prayer Hall. Everybody is enthusiastically singing bhajans.” Swami said, “No!” “Go to the XII Std. bathrooms and see what is there.” All the teachers rushed there, and, can you imagine, there was a boy who had locked himself inside! Somebody had said something to him. He was angry. Anger was always at the tip of his nose.

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He was there inside the bathroom having locked himself up. Here we teachers were all in the Prayer Hall teachers and had not seen this boy. Swami had just come from the Mandir and He immediately knew there was somebody missing. This is Swami's, infinite mother's love. He cares for every child, every one of us.

Today morning there was this bhajan a student had sung 'Hari Bhajan Bina Kaisa Jivan'. I remembered a very favourite poem which Swami has written and given to Kasturi garu. I would like to end with that poem:

### **I Firmly Believe**

I firmly believe there is none kinder than you, to shower Grace on me.  
Tell me, is this not the reason why I am at your Lotus Feet?  
I firmly believe that you will respond quick  
When I do pray and plead.  
Tell me, is this not the reason why I am crying aloud for you?  
I firmly believe You are ever beside me to guide my steps aright.  
Tell me, is this not the reason why I am yours through day and night?  
I firmly believe You can never say 'No'  
Whatever I ask from You.  
Tell me, is this not the reason why I long for a glance from You?  
What have you designed for me this time?  
Why this dire delay to offer boons?  
However long you make me wait and wait  
I will not leave. I'll be standing still  
Until Your loving eyes do turn to me.  
I shall stand and stay and longingly gaze with thirsty eyes until my day of bliss does dawn.  
And I am yours, your very own.

Sai Ram.

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## Dr. (Miss) S Kanaka Durga

Professor (Hon.), Dept. of English Language & Literature, SSSIHL

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Undoubtedly, our lives are enriched and sanctified by the Divine grace of Baba. I entered the portals of His educational institution way back in 1974. And my coming also was, I should say, not a miracle, but the Divine will. Anyway, down the memory lane is like a journey into the cosmos and specially, if we have to recollect our thoughts about Bhagawan, it is like journeying with time and you may have to crisscross into the three points of time: past, present, future and of course—I put it humorously—we know that there are *pancha koshas*: *annamaya kosha*, *pranamaya kosha*, *manonmaya kosha*, *vigyanamaya kosha* and *ananda maya kosha*. In my case, there was a long jump from *annamaya kosha* to *anandamaya kosha* and I used to always, with Divine grace, shuttle between the two. And there are many experiences...of course Swami trained, gave me food for the mind as well as for the body and He made me take the spiritual path. So I say—the body, mind and atma—they were brought in alignment like the sun, the earth and the moon, and that is why I say it is a journey into the cosmos and anything that is said by Bhagawan by way of casual chat cannot be taken casually. It has to be taken seriously by us. That moment or much later, the truth will someday dawn on us. I have many such lovely sweet memories to quote. But I will make them short.

I remember the year I joined...I joined on 21 September 1974. Very shortly, it was Dasara function and we all came to Puttaparthi and that time, this auditorium—Poornachandra—was under construction. There was all rubble around and surprisingly, Swami called us for an interview here. There were just thirty of us teachers from Anantapur Campus. We used to have a very rickety bus (of course blessed by Bhagawan), a small bus holding not more than fourty. I can't call it a rickety one, but it is a very strong one morally. And we used to come every week and Swami would allow us to participate in the social work like carrying sand, as the Sarva Dharma Stupa was also being built then. Those were the days, lovely days and we used to innocently participate in everything and I remember here, in the centre of the hall, Swami called us and we were sitting on the ground and Swami was sitting on the chair. He asked, "How many of you have a sevadal badge?" All of them...all the teachers around me lifted their hands and they said they have, except me. Then I said, "Swami, I don't have." "Then come here" and He put the badge with the scarf around my neck.

I will tell you the preamble to this. When I was doing my M.A. in Hyderabad, my mother used to prevail on me, “Join social activities, join the sevadal organization, you will learn to work for others.” As one of the brothers said today- *concern for others is culture*. I point blank refused saying I don’t believe in working for others whilst wearing a badge” And in my high handedness I declined the idea. And the first thing I had with the Lord here is He personally gave me the badge and He told me clearly, “You join others, in today’s service, wearing the badge.” This is the omniscience of our Lord.

And He happened to come to Anantapur after a month. There were interviews going on and He casually happened to come to the staffroom and those of us who were appointed newly that year—there were seven of us—including Padma Madam here, we were made to stand in the verandah opposite the staffroom and Principal madam, Dr. J Hemalatha, was walking behind Bhagawan. She was coming with Bhagawan, leading Him to us and she introduced each one of us, “She is so and so from this department, newly appointed.” I was the last person to be introduced to Bhagawan but somehow, Madam just smiled and walked away. She didn’t introduce me. So I was perplexed as to why she didn’t. Then Swami looked at me.

“You are English teacher. I know.”

“Yes Swami.” I nodded my head.

“Hyderabad?”

“Yes.”

“I will talk to you in the evening.” He said.

Immediately I was elated, overjoyed. Oh! Swami is going to give me personal interview.

Then He asked me, “What do you want?”

I said, “Nothing Swami. But Your grace”

“Cheesko” He said.

That means *padanamaskar*.

That evening He called our newly appointed teachers, along with our madams, our elders and the governing body members to the prayer hall in the hostel and He gave us almost a short discourse on how we have to treat our Institution as a spiritual training ground, which is meant for both the teachers as well as the taught. Nobody is spared where spiritual training is concerned. He made it very clear with an anecdote. He said, “If a beggar comes for alms at your door and you give Him alms and by mistake he drops it on the ground and then you call him, take pity on

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him and call him back. Similarly, when I give you opportunities, there may be times when you miss them, for any reason, call it your laziness or negligence. But once you have the Lord in your heart, He will just give you opportunities after opportunities.”

I was an asthmatic from my childhood. It was a congenital problem for me. I tried all ‘pathies’. What I mean is homeopathy, allopathy and naturopathy. Then finally I came to *Jagatpathy*, who cured me at last. One day, it was very severe for me. Rama Sundari Madam, who was my roommate, was trying to help me out. And my sister was also next to me in the darshan ground. It was very severe. I couldn’t utter a word. Swami said, “asthma na?” I just nodded my head in pain. He said “*chachipo birrina Chachipo*” (die soon, die) and He walked away.

The people around me, they just stared at me. They stared at Swami and they said- how merciless this Lord is when she is suffering. And that night I was admitted in the hospital. Where we have Sai Srinivasa Guesthouse now. That was the first hospital built by Bhagawan. I was admitted there. Dr. Prabha and other doctors attended on me. They gave up all hopes. They also fixed an oxygen cylinder to me. That is how severe and serious my condition was.

It was early in the morning, 3 o’clock. I just got up in the morning with no pain, no asthma, no cold, and no ailment. I was quite strong. He made me strong physically, mentally and spiritually (I suppose). Because one day He told me something, just casually coming towards me after darshan. Those days the Kulwant hall was not there. It was just sand everywhere. And we used to sit happily in the sand, wind or rain or anything. And we used to enjoy the divine proximity. But that day, He came casually and stood in front of me and He said, “*nuvu float avutunavu, drown avutunavu, mulugu tunavu, telthu navu, mulugu tunavu, telthu navu.*”

I was waiting, what He will say the third time. Because number 3 is very auspicious for us Indians. He said, “*teltavu.*” Thank God. That means- you are drowning and floating, drowning and floating and finally you will drown and float. I then said- ok Swami, thank you. I thanked Swami in my heart.

And there are many such incidences. One was, when the Institute was newly formed. The first meeting we had, the staff meeting with the Divine Lord, in our audiovisual room here in Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. I remember that day. Swami came. He fixed the meeting on a Sunday. He came around 4:15 and they served us two *mysorepaks*. They were big blocks, not small pieces, *pakodas* and some sherbet. And there is a

saying-where angels dread, fools dare. So what I did, there were four seats. One occupied by principal madam, Jayamma madam, and another by Pushpa madam. Pushpa madam very lovingly called me. I went and plonked myself next to her, right in front of the Lord and the table was very close. And there was our Vice-Chancellor, the Revered Late Prof. Gokak, and Swami. Both of them were sitting at the table and Swami said, “Ten minutes only. *Rabukalam* will come, finish eating all of you.” Everybody was busy eating except me. I was very daintily sipping the sherbet. In front of the Lord it looks awkward to eat. Then Swami looked at me. “Thinu” (eat) He said.

“Taravatha tintanu Swami”, (I will eat afterwards) I said, very politely.

Then Prof. Gokak said, “Swami cheputinaru, thinu.” (Swami is saying, eat.)

Then He turned to Gokak and said, “neeku telidhu le Gokak, dieting chesta undhi.” (You don’t know Gokak, she is under a strict diet).

First time in my life (after this incident)—believe it or not—I got what is called typhoid. I never had fever or anything before that. The next day my fever started with excruciating pain in the head as if somebody was hammering in my head. I sat in the darshan line and I told Swami, “Swami, my head is aching very badly.”

Then he said, go to the general hospital for a checkup. “Valle chustarle po. They will check.”

Then the doctors conducted for me blood test, and concluded that I have to be in the bed for 15 days, as it was typhoid. So you can imagine the rest. Typhoid means they gave me varieties of waters- coconut water, barley water, whey water, and all varieties of water like ganji. Then one day, Dr. Kamala and Dr. Vamsa were given an interview by Bhagawan. Dr Vamsa was my personal doctor, Swami sent her. Fifteen days had passed by then. They were continuously bothering me with all varieties of liquids, not a solid food coming through. Then I prayed very hard, I cried. When the bhajan was going on in the mandir... in my room here, I cried and cried. I said – Swami send me some solid food, at least allow me to have semi-solid curd.

Then I realized the mistake of not eating the *mysorepak (prasad)* that day (in the audiovisual room). You know we have to take the inner significance of Swami’s statements. We can’t take them as causal remarks. And when it dawned on me, I prayed intensely. After the bhajan was over, interview was over, Dr. Vamsa and Kamala, when they were coming out of the room, Swami called Dr. Vamsa And He gave her vibhuti packet and told her “idhi perugu lo kalipi, Durga ki administer cheyyi”. And so the Lord listened to my prayers and she came running to our house



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and she asked my mother, “get a cup of curds. I have to give this, mix vibhuti, given by Bhagawan and with curd I will give her”.

What I want to impress on you is let us not take Swami and our life with Him casually. There are of course many more things I can think of but I will talk to you on some other occasion. But one thing I will tell you, He put me on the spiritual path, through all these little, seemingly insignificant incidents.

Once I remember... I will wind up soon... we had a staff meeting and Swami generally starts- “emi samacharam?” (what is the news?) And after that He will slowly lapse into what is called His discourse, His messages’ profound messages. So I was very intently listening to Him sitting in the second row of the interview room- a small room. There was one more row of persons sitting in front of me. Then Bhagawan suddenly said, “*nuvvu atma lo jeevinchu.*” He looked at me very intensely. Meaning you live at the atmic level. I didn’t understand. I thought it was not for me. I just ducked my head.

Then He said, “*aye picchi, ninne.*”

“What Swami?”

“*Ninne. Atmalo jeevinchu.*”

Then He resumed his talk. Now I know the truth of it.

He has taken us from the Form to the formless...but He is very much installed in all of us and I wind it up with a sincere prayer that you should remain in His fold forever.

Jai Sai Ram.

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## Prof. Indrani Chakravarti

Principal, Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music

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**M**y spiritual journey started since my early youth. My parents and their four children were staunch followers of the Sri Ramakrishna Order and were initiated in the Ramakrishna Mission. Ever since I was in school, I had participated in many Essay Writing competitions on Thakur Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva, Sri Ma Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda that were organized by the Varanasi Ramakrishna Mission Math.

I learnt (through my studies) that Sri Ramakrishna strictly prevented His disciples from attempting to perform miracles. If they were urgently needed, He would Himself perform siddhis ('Siddhai', as He called); and that too, only at the behest of Mother Kali. Later on, His disciples also performed miracles in some restricted situations. Hence we—the devotees—whole heartedly believed that the performance of siddhis dislodged a *sadhaka* (seeker) from his/her *sadhana* (spiritual attainment).

As time passed, I had memorable associations with many saints and seers. I performed Sitar recitals for them and received their affections and blessings. Among them, Anandamayi Ma, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Shankaracharyas of Kashi and Kanchi Peetham could be named with reverence. Their love for me is deeply imprinted on my inner Self. But surprisingly, I never felt an urge to have a Darshan of Sri Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparthi. We had vaguely heard of Him— that He performed miracles very frequently and materialized things as He wished or when His devotees asked for. I remember once I cracked a joke on Him too, when my student told me that in some houses Vibhuti and Amrit were materialized in Sai Baba's and other deities' photos. It was our ignorance that we mistook Him as a *sadhaka*, and not *sadhya* (The Supreme One).

But when the proper time came, my life took a new turn; for which I might not have been prepared for. I will narrate a few of those experiences in short.

In December 1992, the State President of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, Shimla came to my office with another professor and proposed me to visit Puttaparthi and have Darshan of Sai Baba. I was then serving at Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla as Head and Dean, Faculty of Performing and Visual Arts. My immediate response was; 'Will Baba listen to my Sitar?' They answered; 'Why don't you come with us

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and ask Him personally?” However, it took me a few days to decide to visit to Parthi. To fulfil my curiosity, I joined a group of 13-14 members from the university to see what was happening in Puttaparthi! We boarded the train in the first week of January, 1993. On the train, I asked someone to narrate about Baba and His ashram, as I did not read any Sai literature up until then. The answer was ‘*Wahab jaa kar aapko sab pata chal jayega!*’ (You will know everything once you reach there!) We reached Dharmavaram after almost a two days journey from Shimla. We boarded a bus. I came to know that it would take one and half hours to reach to Puttaparthi. I was also told that Sri Sathya Sai Baba renamed Puttaparthi to ‘Prasanthi Nilayam’.

In 1993, greenery was a rarity in Parthi. Very few trees were seen on the road. Later on, I learnt that the whole area was draught stricken because of water scarcity and insufficient rain. Even drinking water was not available easily. After a while, Swami’s Drinking Water Project gifted uninterrupted drinking water to the hands of the entire population of Anantapur and other districts!

As our bus proceeded and approached Parthi, I suddenly felt, ‘Oh, how come, this road feels so familiar to me? I have been here for so many times! Even the cows, the trees felt like my own!’ I felt an uncontrollable excitement, like entering my own home after a long time away! I felt restless. I told my co-passenger Reshma about my feelings. (She was the aunt of Dr. Maitali Verma, Asst. Professor, Dept. of English Language & Literature, Anantapur Campus). Reshma was shocked (to see me in this state) and asked me, ‘When did you come here?’ I had no answer. I did not realize then that the ‘miracle’ had already taken place in my life from that very moment, with His Divine Will.

In 1993, Kulwant Hall was not built. We used to sit under the scorching sun in the open area; but always be happy to sit there hours together and surprisingly never felt the summer heat unbearable! During the time of darshan, Swami came barefoot, moved like the waves of the ocean, but did not look at me. Suddenly, I felt something unusual was happening inside me. It is difficult to explain. For three days, He did not come near me. And I too, could not sleep those three days and was constantly yearning for His nearness. On the fourth day Swami suddenly stopped and stood before me! I could not believe it. Immediately I fell at His Divine Feet and started

taking Pada-Pranams. Once, twice, thrice...and it went on and on. Those feet were so soft, like Lotus! When I was satisfied with many pranams I saw Him still waiting! Suddenly I took out a letter and offered Him. I had wrote it four days earlier. He accepted it with smiles, blessed me and proceeded. I felt boundless joy. 'He has blessed me!' I murmured inside and started crying profusely. But they were tears of ecstasy and bliss.

Dear students; will you believe, I started writing Bhajans, poems and songs from the very next day! I had never succeeded to write songs or poems before, though I tried hard. But now the poems, lyrics and *dobas* were coming out so spontaneously! I wrote the songs and bhajans, sang in tunes as if those were pre-composed! There was no specific times to write the songs. Within a short period, the number crossed 3000! I wrote in Hindi, Bengali, Braja and Bhojpuri languages. Two books in Hindi and one in Bengali were already published and offered to Swami. In one interview, when I offered Him one book named 'Sai Amrit Dhara', Swami browsed the pages and asked me; 'You have written?' With folded hands I told; 'Swami, You have made me write'. Swami was very happy. He put His right hand over my head, blessed and said 'Bangaru, Bangaru.'

Seeing a sudden change in my behaviour, some of my friends cracked jokes on me and sarcastically called me 'Meera'. I was completely in 'trance' then. I did not like to talk to anyone. After morning and evening darshans, I used to sit under some tree, to meditate on Swami, to sing songs on Him and often cried for His nearness, Grace and *Sambhashan* (dialogue). This state of mind continued for a few months, to the point of being unbearable. I prayed to Him, 'Either You call me to Parthi permanently or make me normal. I am unable to teach and do routine jobs at my workplace.' The *Kripa Sagara* heard me and soon I became normal and started performing His jobs again.

From Parthi I went to Varanasi (my home town) to meet my parents and other family members. They were shocked to see my condition. My chatting, my cracking jokes and bursting with laughter were all gone and lost. They were rather worried to see me crying like a child. Moreover, I could not tolerate any foul words against Swami if uttered by any. They were perplexed to find me writing songs and singing them constantly. No one could understand what to do.

But my mother understood me. She was a great *sadbika* and devout follower of Sri Ramakrishna. She had many experiences with her *sadhana*. She showed unconditional

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affections for me and came to know my experiences with Swami in Puttaparthi. She supported me wholeheartedly. Ma affirmed that such experiences happened when the Sadguru showered His Kripa (Grace) on the blessed one! And to her, I was one of them. She instructed me to follow Swami sincerely.

One day Ma asked me, “You are writing so many songs, can’t you write one for Thakur (Sri Ramakrishna)?” With pain, I answered her, “Ma, it is not me who is writing these songs, it is He who is making me write, though I do not know what to do with these.”

After returning to Shimla, one day all of a sudden, I wrote a long lyric on Sri Ramakrishna. In a joyful mood I phoned Ma and sang for her. She was very happy and blessed me. Later on, in Sri Sarada Math of Kashi (Varanasi), I sang this Bhajan.

After my return to Shimla, one day I saw materialization of a few drops of honey on the small photos of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ma kept in my altar! I felt dumbfound, and then exclaimed with unbounded joy. To be sure, I tasted one drop. It tasted of pure honey! In the evening, Neeta Khanna, Bal Vikas Coordinator of Himachal Pradesh, unexpectedly came to my apartment and involved me immediately in Bal Vikas Classes. Since then I became Bal Vikas Guru! The other professors were shocked and cracked jokes on me. They asked me, “Madam, what is this Bal Vikas? It does not look nice. You are Head and Dean of the Faculty. And you are taking Bal Vikas?” I answered them, ‘Listen, you parents are viewing trash serials & films on television with your small children. What are you teaching them? Whereas, I am teaching your children cultural values, songs, skits and many other things. Now you decide who is right.’ Since then they never dared to jeer at me, rather they sent their children to my Bal Vikas classes! I continued Bal Vikas classes for four years. My students appeared for exams as well.

Himachal Pradesh performs Parthi Seva in July every year. I did seva for four years. On Swami’s 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations, I was on duty near the canteen. I had to stand hours together. I prayed to Swami to give me a sitting duty. And after a while in 1997, I became the Vice-Chancellor of a Music University: Indira Kala Sangit Vishva Vidyalaya, Khairagarh, Madhya Pradesh (now in Chhattisgarh). In 1999, on Guru Poornima Day, Swami announced the establishment of a Music College at Prasanthi Nilayam. I was present here then. My friends from Shimla chided me that Baba announced a Music College to bring me there permanently. I confronted them saying “Why will Swami will call me here?” But they were sure that Swami

was establishing a Music College only for me. In my inner heart I already planted the hope and told myself, 'Maybe He heard my prayers and will give me chance to do His seva'. During the Dussera festival that year, Bhagawan in His Divine Discourse announced my name and said that I would be the Vice-Chancellor of His new College of Music. He further informed the gathering that I was from Kashi (Varanasi) and also a 'Musicologist of Worldwide Reputation.'

Swami asked me then to prepare a project plan for the Music College. Within a week, I sent Him the plan. Bhagawan was very happy and approved it. To begin with, He approved two buildings- one for the Music College and another for the Instrument Museum. Swami called me from Khairagarh to discuss with the architect the designs of the buildings before His final approval. He extended His unparalleled love for me and blessed me with many experiences, both in direct and indirect ways.

In 1999, for three days, Swami called me for an interview. My sister accompanied me. On the first day, He spoke only to my sister and did not speak to me much. He discussed with my sister about her personal problems and consoled her in His own unmatched ways. He materialized a beautiful chain and put it around her neck. The locket was engraved with OM on one side and 'Rama Darbar' in other side. He told me; '*Kal phir bulata*' (I will call you tomorrow again). I was very happy. Before coming out of the interview room, Swami materialized vibhuti and gave everyone present there. I was the last one and received a little more. Immediately Swami looked at me with the *Prasanna Mudra* (happy gesture) and said "More."

The next day Swami called us again. Before entering the interview room, an idea struck in my mind. I thought; 'yesterday Swami gifted my sister a chain. Today if He gives me a ring, I would love to wear it.' And I took out my ring and slipped it in my purse. When we were called inside the room, I sat near Him. Swami looked at me and suddenly materialized a *Navaratna* ring! Immediately I extended my right ring finger towards Him. He lovingly put it in my finger. It was perfectly fit. Then He said; 'See, how perfect it is! All of Swami's work is perfect.' I urged with folded hands, "Swami, please make me perfect." Swami was very happy. He put His right hand over my head and said, "Good, Good. *Bangaru, Bangaru.*"

On the third day He again called me for an interview. Looking at me He murmured, "Watch." And Lo! He materialized a wrist watch and put it on my wrist and uttered 2-3 times 'Bangaru'. Students, you are aware that Swami had taught us the real meaning of W-A-T-C-H (Watch your Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character and

Heart).

A few days later, I asked a lady, “Swami often calls me Bangaru, Bangaru” - what does it mean?” She was shocked and repeated; “Swami calls you Bangaru?”  
“Yes, but what does it mean?”

Eventually Swami entered the hall. We sat peacefully. Swami moved towards the ladies and thereafter the gents side. I always felt that He did not walk on the floor, but He flowed above it. He took His chair and instructed something to one boy. Someone brought a table and mikes. Oho, Swami was going to deliver a discourse unexpectedly! We sat alarmed. After a nice start, suddenly Swami paused and gave me a deep look. Then He uttered, “People say, “Swami calls me *Bangaru Bangaru*; what does it mean?” Again He looked at me and explained, “the meaning of Bangaru is Gold.” He continued with His chaste Telugu- how a man can become gold? Anil Kumarji, an ardent devotee and one of the best translators of Swami’s discourses, was a bridge between Swami and those of us who did not understand Telugu. He nicely translated what Swami told. I was extremely happy. My Sadguru had accepted me with His Grace and unparallel Love. I offered my obeisance from the core of my heart.

Swami always came in my dreams and guided me whenever I had problems or prayed to Him. He comes in my dream even now to console me and more often to clear my doubts. In one dream, I held His hand very tight and urged with a plaintive tone, “Don’t leave me Swami, please, be with me.” He patted my head just like a mother does to her child, and answered, “I am not going anywhere. I am near to you, I am besides you.”

I will repose to my Guru-Kirtan now with one more sublime experience. In 1997, I was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Indira Kala Sangit Vishva Vidyalaya, Khairagarh, Madhya Pradesh (now in Chhattisgarh). It was then the only Music University in India. After taking charge, I was shocked to know that the university was completely bankrupt and running with overdrafts. In its three account books, not a single penny was left. Teachers had not been paid their salaries for three months! I was startled from the bottom of my heart. I could not find a way to overcome this situation. I asked myself, “What to do? How will I run this university?” I, then stood before Swami’s photograph kept near my bedside. With folded hands I prayed - Swami, it is your university. If it succeeds it is your success, if it fails it is your failure. Now, You have to decide. Believe me or not, my mind became peaceful after that. Since then

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on, I did my job with much sincerity. Yes, I faced many hurdles, but always won with dignity. After serving for seven years, when I relinquished my duty, I deposited an amount of ₹1 Crore in the University Fixed Deposit Account. Swami always looks after His disciples if they perform their duty with Dedication, Devotion and Love. We are His miracles!

Thank you and Sai Ram.

(The talk was followed by a song - *Ab Chod Tumhe Kahan Jaon, Prabhuji...*” composed and presented by the speaker).

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## Dr. (Ms.) Sahida Sharma

Asst. Professor, Dept. of Chemistry, SSSIHL

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I have been very lucky to be born in a Sai devotee family. My parents were Sai devotees and by Sai devotee I mean who believed in Swami's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence through and through. In other words, they believed that Swami was God and I believed likewise. The main purpose of my coming here was to be in Swami's physical presence and in the powerful presence, experience the peace, calmness and fullness of Sai consciousness present deep within me.

My belief in Swami's omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence is strong and sometimes when things seemingly do not happen as Swami had predicted, I do not get ruffled. Swami left his physical body earlier than he had predicted but I did not get ruffled as I truly believe in his omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence. He has showered his supreme grace upon me by implanting this belief strongly in my heart. Even though I miss the form—the glorious, beautiful form—it does not dampen my enthusiasm and interest to make efforts to tap into the Sai consciousness within me. This very belief saved me from feeling the sting of loss when Swami left his mortal coil.

I remember, it was the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2011, and Swami was in the Super Specialty Hospital. His physical body was undergoing medical treatment. At that point of time I had an important post that needed to reach its destination safely. I prayed to Swami to see that the post safely reached its destination. For me—form or no form—Swami was God. I got an opportunity to be in the physical proximity of Swami for six years and I thank Swami for the opportunity from the bottom of my heart. Or else I would have missed the golden opportunity of being in God's physical proximity.

I joined the Anantapur Campus in November 2004. I have a couple of small but sweet experiences with Swami. In July 2005, on the occasion of Guru Poornima, Swami distributed sarees to His school and university teachers. A Maruti van packed with sarees was brought to the Kulwant Hall and Swami started distributing the sarees. The school teachers were called first, followed by us. There was a young teacher by name Meera who had joined our campus as a Zoology teacher. Swami questioned her, asking: new teacher? I, who was standing a few rows behind, expected to be asked the same question. But when I went up to him, he exclaimed: Aah! – as if to say – you made it, you came. That gave a very wonderful feeling.

The second time I interacted with Swami was again during a saree distribution session. It was during such occasions we got to go near Him. Teachers were seated in two different rows to receive their sarees. I was seated in the row close to the pillar. Swami started distribution from the opposite row. The sarees had an onion pink hue. But before he finished with the row, the sarees got over. Those of us who had not received got tensed with anticipation. However, a fresh lot in blue and green arrived. Swami continued to distribute and leaving the teacher's row started distributing in the VIP row. Mrs. Chetna was handing over each saree to Swami who was distributing them. Deepa madam, who was sitting next to me, looked more tensed than I, as she had seen in some earlier occasion Swami bypass a whole lot of teachers who had not received their share. I did not have such an experience and so was optimistic and believed that Mrs. Chetna would guide Swami towards us after finishing with the VIPs and not let him move on to the gents side. In like manner Swami came near where we were seated. The sarees got over again, but He waited patiently for the fresh lot to come.

I observed each teacher receiving her saree from the divine hands and then take *padanamaskar*. Now, I found Swami waiting for the fresh lot of sarees to arrive and nobody was taking *padanamaskar*. A strong feeling to touch the lotus feet overcame me. I took *padanamaskar* without taking my saree. Swami moved a little ahead and I also inched forward with a hope to take one more *padanamaskar*. It was a lifetime opportunity and I did not want to miss it. So without taking my saree I took *padanamaskar* four times. I was like a kitten playing with the mother cat. Swami just watched. He did not say anything. Elderly devotees were pleading with him for a saree and I also told him that I did not get one. Then the sarees arrived and Swami started distributing them one by one. When a saree came in front of me I hesitated to take it as Swami was not looking at me. However, taking the clue from Deepa madam that it was for me, I took it. Deepa madam also got her saree. In fact, everybody got theirs. When Swami started to leave from there, he glared at me, his eyes burning like amber. He went ahead a little, turned around and glared again. A shiver went down my spine. That night, as I was sleeping, the picture of Swami glaring danced before me and I got jitters. However, I thought Lord Shiva had burnt the dross in me by glaring so hard and felt pacified. I even mentioned about this incident to my parents.

My father, who recently attended a lecture session here at Prasanthi Nilayam, heard the speaker say that when he asked Swami for something material, Swami did not speak to him for three days. When he finally spoke, Swami told him to ask for greater

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things from God when he was right there to give. My father reasoned that Swami was amused with my taking *padanamaskar* again and again without thinking about the saree. But when I asked for the saree, by gesture he tried to impress upon me that when God was there to grant me greater boons why was I asking for something very material.

My next experience happened during *Akbanda* Bhajan. After the twenty-four-hour-long bhajan, *prasadam* distribution started. Swami was inside the mandir and we began distributing *prasadam* in the Kulwant Hall. After finishing distribution, I sat down to partake of my share of *prasadam*. I was keen on telling Swami that I had eaten *prasadam* to my fill, as He would invariably ask us (while crossing us on his way to Yajur mandir) whether we had eaten *prasadam* to our fill by touching his belly. I even encouraged students sitting around me to eat their share of *prasadam* well and tell Swami they had eaten well. As soon as I finished eating, a student came from inside the mandir saying that Swami was calling me. I was flabbergasted. With a lot of joy and excitement in my heart, I entered the mandir and greeted Swami by saying Sairam. Swami reciprocated by saying Sairam. He gave me a saree, I took *padanamaskar* and sat there at his lotus feet and nobody asked me to move from there. Looking at the lotus feet, I sang *Maanasa Bhajare Gurucharanam* several times. I chanted Om Sri Sairam many a times. Swami smiled and nodded in approval.

It was the day of Buddha Poonnima. I had arrived from New Delhi that very morning after the summer vacation. A meeting of faculty members of SSSIHL with Swami was arranged in the Yajur mandir at 4 o'clock. I did not know about it. I reached the Kulwant hall by four and found none of my colleagues there. A sevadal member told me that all had gone to the Yajur mandir and I could also do so. I ran at the top of my speed and reached the gates of Yajur mandir. The security allowed me in on seeing my identity card. Within a minute of my reaching there, Swami came over to the ladies side, when I could take *padanamaskar* and seek blessings for my parents and son.

In Swami's own words, Rama *namasmarana* is a potent tool for transformation. I cherished the longing of being formally initiated into the mantra by Swami. It was the holy day of Ramanavami. Swami was in a giving mood. In the mandir he distributed Shiva-Parvati and Ganesh idols to old lady residents of Prasanthi Nilayam. When He came out of the mandir after the distribution, bhajans were going on. The atmosphere was charged with divine vibrations. Swami sat on His chair and asked for the mike. Lo and behold! He announced, "Today I give you

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the mantra of Ramanama.” I heard it. It went straight to my heart. I practice Rama *namasmarana*.

Having received the mantra from God himself, if I am not serious about practicing it, the golden opportunity may not come to me even in a billion lifetimes. We have heard how the great Kabir lay himself on the steps leading down to the holy Ganges at dawn, to be accidently stepped upon by the revered guru Ramanand, who uttered the Rama nama for the inadvertent mistake he had made by stepping on Kabir and Kabir took it as his initiation into the mantra.

Jai Sai Ram!

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## Ms. Sadhana Pai

Teacher, Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School

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**M**y humble pranams at the lotus feet of Bhagawan. Dear children. We are all children first when we come to Swami, and then we get our designation as students, teachers, heads etc. So we are all Swami's children first. I would just like to share my feelings with you. I just want to tell you how Swami pulls the strings of our life, how He brings us to Him. This happened to me way back in 1975 when I was in Assam. Where is Assam? Where is Puttaparthi? We didn't know anything about Sai Baba. But it started...you know...we were getting dreams, a person in red robe was coming, He was entering our house. We couldn't make out who he was. Then one morning in the Illustrated Weekly, we saw Sai Baba's photo. It was in Dharmakshetra, where Swami was giving darshan. We were shocked- Sai Baba. Oh! This was the man with the red robe- Sai Baba. Sai Baba! That's all. We didn't know anything beyond that. And with the consequence of events, Swami's master plan started unfolding. We were in the university campus one day, and as we were moving, somebody told us- Sai bhajans were being conducted. Sai bhajans? Sai Baba- Sai bhajans...ok! Sai Baba's Sai bhajans means something. Let us go and see. My father said, "You go. I am not coming." He was a scientist and he didn't believe in any God. So my mother took us for bhajans, and again, it was Swami's will, Swami's wish, Swami's attraction, Swami's magnetic pull. We were so happy to attend the bhajans. This continued for quite some time during 1975-76. In 1977, I came to Anantapur. Prior to this, so many incidents took place, which again, was Divine *leela*.

I will tell you an incident. We had lots of cats and dogs in our house. They were friendly; very friendly. They never fought with one another; they would sleep next to one another, play with one another. One day when I was studying for my X Std. exam, I suddenly saw the dog and cat fighting. I went out and I tried to separate them. As I was trying to separate them, they bit me. They bit me so badly that my whole hand was bleeding. I came inside. My parents said, "Lets go to the hospital." I said, "No". I went to the prayer room, locked myself and I said, "Sai Baba, whoever you are, they say you are God. If you can cure me, cure me. I am not going to the hospital come what may." My parents were knocking. They were worried. They said "Please come out. You have to go to the hospital." I said, "No. I will not go." Then I took vibhuti, applied vibhuti on my hand. When they saw I was stubborn, they said, "Ok. We won't go to the hospital. You come out'. When I came out, my whole hand was swollen.

There were only 10 days left for my X Std. board exam and with my swollen hand, I could not write anything, I could only read. I was crying. I was in the prayer hall, all the time looking at Sai Baba's photo- because we never called Sai Baba Swami until we came here. "Sai Baba, whoever you are, I have not seen you, but they say you are God; they say so many things about you. Please do something." In the meanwhile, we went for bhajans, where I came to know that the college at Anantapur was for girls. I thought to myself, 'If I pass my X Std., then I can go and join the college. Ten days were left for the exam and nothing happened. My hand was swollen; swollen to the extent that the fingers were stuck to each other. Four days before the exam I had to go to collect my hall ticket. When I went there, students and teachers said, "How are you going to write your exam? You are not in a position to write." I said, "I don't know. I will see." I couldn't sign because my hand was swollen. I don't know how I signed. It was Swami's wish, I signed. I went back.

Three days...two days...the next day was the exam. I was crying. I was not able to concentrate. I was sitting in my prayer room where we had a small photo of Swami-Sai Baba...not Swami...Sai Baba. I was crying. You won't believe it - The next day morning, when I got up, my hand was normal. There was no swelling; just a normal hand. I went to the examination hall and I wrote the exam. Soon after was the 1977 Summer Course. As soon as I wrote my exam with the Summer Course group, I also came to Brindavan. Remember that you are the luckiest amongst the thousands and millions of students who want to come but who don't have the chance, but who cannot come. So you should not misuse the chance that you are getting because this chance will never, never come in your life. And once you pass out, you will realize the importance of being with Swami.

I would like to tell you one more incident that happened at home. One evening mummy told me to go and switch on the light. When I went to switch on the light, I just stepped on something, and whatever I stepped on, turned and bit me. When I switched on the light, I saw a big snake. As the snake bit me, I naturally lifted my leg and then I saw the snake moving away. I went running and told mummy that a snake had bitten me. She scolded me for speaking lies. I told her that I was not speaking lies and I told that I would show where the snake had bitten me. So both of us went to the hall where I had switched on the light and looked for the snake, but will the snake wait for us? I knew that the next will be 'lets go to the hospital'- and before they could say anything, I ran to the prayer hall and locked myself and cried "Sai Baba please help me" I took vibhuti and applied it on my leg. Again, my parents asked me to go (to the hospital) so that they could remove the poison, otherwise it

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my be dangerous I said, "I am not coming out, Sai Baba will save me." Father said, "What Sai Baba Sai Baba- you have gone mad!" I said "No. I have not gone mad. I will not come out" They said, "please come out, we will tie the leg and you will get relief." I said "If Sai Baba has to cure me, He will cure me. And cure He did.

Of course there was the Summer Course...we arrived...but the testing period was not over. God tests us so much that He doesn't allow us to live happily. We have to be happy only after all the tests so that life will be beautiful. But He says test is my taste. What happened next was I came to Anantapur, but to my utter surprise, Principle madam told me that St. Mary's convent was not recognized; so she had to send word to Hyderabad to enquire if my school was recognized and in the meanwhile I could stay in the hostel. My mother asked, "what are you going to do?" My mother repeatedly asked me If I was ready to stay in Puttaparthi. We didn't know where Puttaparthi was. We have seen Andhra Pradesh on the map, but we didn't know where Puttaparthi was. Where is Assam? Where is Puttaparthi? I said, "I will not go back. Sai Baba will give me admission. I have full faith. Faith can move mountains." He made me stay for three days. On the third day, when I was coming down the stairs, there was a final-year girl from Assam; she asked me how I was in the hostel (because we are not supposed to stay in the hostel during class). I told her my problem. She said, "I am also from St Mary's convent! Come, we will go to principle madam," and she told principal madam, "I joined three years ago and we are from the same school." Principle madam at once called the office in charge and told her to check. She came with a positive note.

Those days there was no admission test. One had to sign an application form and get into any group that one wanted. Sai Baba had told me to take Commerce and so I took Commerce. I was Sai Baba's student. After that there was no looking back. I was with Sai baba. I knew that Sai Baba whom we lovingly call Sai Maa. There was no more Sai Baba. Sai Baba dissolved into Swami, Sai Maa.

I was a recipient of that love. I know I should not boast, but I have received, and I know my cup of grace was always full. I just have to recollect those days and feel happy over what Swami bestowed on me. I just wanted to tell one more thing. When we would go for bhajans in Guwahati in Assam, there were very few people who came to attend bhajans. People didn't know much about Swami as you they know about Swami today. So one of them asked my brother, "Can you sing?" He said I am not a singer but I will try. So he would sing one or two bhajans when there were no bhajan singers. When we came for the Summer Course, one day Swami came into

the prayer hall, and asked my brother, “Can you sing bhajans?” He said, “Swami, I am not a singer. I just sung in Assam when it was needed.” Then He said, “Today you sing.” And that was Akhanda Bhajan day, when as you know, the best singers are selected. And he didn’t know how to tell Swami, ‘Swami, I am not in the bhajan group. I am not a singer.’

Swami’s command has to be followed, so he kept quiet. He told the boys, “See, afternoon 2 o’clock you will go for rest. Give me one chance to sing. Because Swami has told me, I have to listen to His command.” They said, “Okay brother, you can sing at about 2:30.”

In those days you know, boys used to sit first. There was no rotation as it is today. They used to fix places for everybody. You won’t believe, he sang, ‘*Tum bina prema koyi nabi dene waale.*’ That was the bhajan.

He started the bhajan. Believe me girls, we saw the doors open. You know when the door opens, there is a commotion. Boys were not there. The place is empty. Because all had gone to sleep. They know Swami won’t come out at that time. If at all he comes, he will come up. He will give darshan from up. So all had gone. Swami opened the door, walked on those mats which they had placed and came to my brother (my brother was there and 2-3 boys were sitting). He looked at him. My brother sang the whole bhajan. Swami stood there. After the bhajan, He made him take namaskar, and went away.

That is Swami’s love. You may be a singer, you may be a bathroom singer, as long as you can sing, as long as you can catch God’s attention, you can be dear to Him, near to Him...His child. I want to tell you one last thing.

Once Swami had called us for an interview; and whenever He calls us interview, He will say, “ask me questions, ask me, I will answer them.” I think Subamma madam was there with us and all the old girls who used to stay back. So Swami said, “Ask me questions.” So as usual, we would ask some questions and He would answer. Then one would ask, “Swami, why should we put *bindi*? It is something that irritates everybody. We don’t like to put *bindis*.”

Swami said, “You know what? It is the third eye, it is *shakti*. It is the third eye. It is very necessary. It is Indian culture.”

We are talking about Indian Culture and Spirituality. So He said, “It is necessary for every woman, lady...every woman in India should put *bindi* because that is her



*shakti; shakti* which she can use whenever she wants to use. So always put a *bindi*.”

That is why *bindi* has now become compulsory and don't say that it is compulsory because nothing is done without Swami's command. Whatever Swami has told teachers; those things are being put into practice. You may feel there is too much of discipline- something which we don't want to do. But if you love Swami, then you would surely follow and when you follow the discipline of any of Swami's institutions, you will be very happy; your future life will be very happy. You are going to be mothers. You have to teach your daughters. Every mother can teach her daughter all the things that Swami has taught you through the teachers, because physically Swami is not present with us. If that happens, Swami's mission on earth will continue. And as we say, we are Swami's forbearers, mission bearers, torchbearers or soldiers. Keep this in mind; follow Swami.

Be like a child because a child is very innocent. He takes everything. He gets angry but at the same time he comes back to the mother lovingly. Do the same thing with Swami. Just think that all these teachers have been put here because Swami wanted it that way. He has a mission to guide the future citizens. If teachers were not there, or Swami did not guide teachers, then I don't think this college would have existed. It exists because Swami has personally guided all the teachers. They have got His grace and that grace they are trying to give to you. So make the best use of your stay. And be happy. Swami says- be happy, be happy, be happy. Always be happy.

Thank you. Sairam!

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# Prasanthi Nilayam Campus Sessions

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Dr. Hirok Changkakoti

Alumni (1976-1992), SSSIHL

Om Sri Sai Ram. My name is Hirok and I had the fortune of spending a lot of time at Bhagawan's Lotus feet. I came in and joined the Pre-University Course (PUC) in Brindavan where I finished my B.Com. and subsequently came here and did my M.Com., and later went on to do my Ph.D. I taught in the institution (for sometime). I would like to start my talk with an invocation to Lord Sai. "*Twameva Matascha Pita Twameva, Twameva Bhanduscha Sakha Twameva, Twameva Vidya Dravinam Twameva, Twameva Sarwam Mamadeva Deva.*"

The first thing I want to share with you is how I came to Swami. I come from a place that is on one of the farthest quarters of India- a state called Assam. I spent my initial years—when I was a young child—in a place called Shillong. Shillong is in Meghalaya, quite a distant place from where Swami was in Puttaparthi. So, I come from Shillong and in the late 1960's or the early 1970's, a common family friend of ours talked about Swami and he said, "See, there is a very famous saint from South India." In those days, there were a lot of miracles that were happening. He said, "Why don't you all come? We have a bhajan session at our house." So, my mother, father, my brothers- all of us went there.

Unfortunately for us, the bhajans were over by the time we reached. But then we saw a photograph of Swami. It was a very small photograph. I was too young to really understand the significance of that figure in my life. But my mother—without any hesitation—accepted him as God. That was the first initiation that I had of Swami. And we got into the routine of going for bhajans, singing bhajans. And then, you know like the hounds of heaven...God also perceives you. So, what happened was, when we started doing bhajans at our house, strange things would happen. We would find sometimes fingerprints of Swami in the *prasadam*, sometimes *amrit* would materialize, or there were times when *vibhuti* used to come. And then these miracles started happening across various houses that we visited.

One of those experiences that had a major impact on me was, when we were sitting in bhajan on a Sunday. We were staying in an old, British-style bungalow that had wooden floors. Shillong is a very cold place. So, there used to be this wooden flooring, which used to cover the entire house. All of us were sitting in the last room and actually had a direct view to the front door, which was closed. And then...what we

heard was...we kept on hearing the some sounds as if someone was walking towards to the Pooja room. All five of us then clearly heard footsteps coming from near the temple. And then, the steps stopped near the entrance of the temple. And then, in front of all of us, (I was not the only person who saw. My brother, my elder sister, my mother and my two elder brothers – all of us experienced this) we saw a light which emanated from the point where the footsteps had stopped and it went and hit all the photographs. And in some of the photographs, the flowers started bending like that and *amrit* started flowing down. This was something that was unimaginable. We could not realize the significance of this.

We subsequently moved on to another place. By that time, my brother had already come here; my brother was with Swami from 1973 onwards. Swami told him, “Ask your father to come for the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations.” So, my father and everybody were trying to make arrangements to come to the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. At that time, we were not that financially sound, so, my father could not make it. So, Swami sent a telegram “Come, Apply, Safely – Baba.” Okay. The telegram came. And at that same point of time, some money, which was due from the government of India, came into my father’s account. He booked a flight and came to Puttaparthi. Swami showered a lot of love on him and asked about each one of us. He sent clothes for all of us and said that, “give it to them and then you come by March. Come with your full family.”

So, all of us were waiting for March to come so that we can come to Puttaparthi. And it so happened that we came to Puttaparthi and found that Swami was not here. Swami had gone to Brindavan. That time, Sri Kutumba Rao sent a message to Swami in Brindavan saying that, “Swami, Roopak’s (Hirok’s brother) parents have come.” And Swami said, “What are they doing there? I asked them to come to Brindavan. Why did they go to Puttaparthi?” Of course, we took a bus hurriedly the next morning. There was only one bus that used to start in the morning at about 6:30. We took that bus and reached Bangalore. Swami in his love sent a car along with my brother and told him to pick us up.

So, Swami got us picked up and from then onwards, love started flowing. He asked us to stay in the same bungalow in which He was staying. Swami was staying upstairs and we were staying downstairs. Swami started showering His love on us. You know

why? Just to see that we all come nearer and nearer to Him. And then there was a function in which Swami also came to the college and while passing by me, He said, “Dekho, *Tumhe bhi edar aana hai.*” He literally snatched a thought out of my mind. That’s what I was expecting. I wanted to come to Brindavan. And then, I went back and sat for my X Std. exam. Without waiting for my result I came to Brindavan. Our results were not out. But Swami had sent a word saying, “No. Let him stay in the hostel. Give him provisional admission and let them stay.” That was how I came to Swami. Its literally like, you know, from the time when we came to know about Swami, He kept on persuading us of His Godliness; He kept on showing us various aspects of His Divinity so that we got convinced and then try to come here.

That’s the humility of God. God takes an Avatar, assumes the form for the sake of His own creation. He comes and moves around with us so that we can get closer to Him. He does not have to take the form of an Avatar, the form of a human body. But He takes the form of a human being only to make us feel close to Him. What is the necessity for Him to bring us closer to Him? Absolutely no necessity. But then, He wants us to come closer to Him. He follows us and makes us come closer and closer to Him. All of you who are here, don’t just think that you want to be here. You are here because He has wanted you to be here. So, God is like the hound of heaven, who keeps on pursuing you, coming to you, trying to convince you... Come, come, experience my Love, come closer to Me. This is what He did with all of us.

I have travelled quite a lot in the world; but I can tell you with least hesitation that I can never forget this place. This place is our DNA. And maybe once you go out as well, you will also understand the captivating power of this place. Here, when you interact with people, everybody interacts with you on a level field. There is no hidden agenda within anybody, any of them. When I interact with say, Pallav or Venkatachalam or Siva Shankar Sai, I interact with them only as a brother in Sai. I don’t have any hidden agenda. I have a close affinity to them because of the fact that they are people who studied in the same college, who lived in the presence of Sai, who loved Sai and all of us are united in our love towards Sai. That’s the power of this place. That’s the power of this place because He wanted you to be here. He has got you here. He pursued you like the hounds of heaven and then got you here. So, that was how I came to Puttaparthi.

I just wanted to tell a few things on how Swami used to interact with all of us. Actually, in the beginning of the speech, I told you that I am petrified of talking to you all. In fact, I know for certain that I am not a speaker. Swami also tried to

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make me a speaker. It was during my first year PUC during the time of the Summer Course when Swami asked me to speak for fifteen minutes. There was a topic on the Avatars and they wanted us to speak on Shirdi Sai Baba or Sathya Sai Baba. Just a few days prior, Swami had spoken on Shirdi Sai Baba. On that first occasion, he talked about Shirdi Sai Baba's parents; he talked about where he was born. So, none of us knew anything about Shirdi Sai Baba at that point of time. But, I was a clever guy, I thought, "Okay. I will speak about Shirdi Sai Baba because Swami has already spoken". Fifteen minutes. All set. I heard Swami's speech at least 3-4 times, made extensive notes and then I was supposed to speak for fifteen minutes. Only fifteen minutes. So I went with all the confidence that I have. Swami said, "Hirok, you go and speak." I thought, "Okay. Since Swami told, I should be able to speak." I had minimal exposure to Swami in terms of His interaction with people. I went and spoke. As it happened, I got so petrified regarding what I was supposed to speak for fifteen minutes, that I spoke for only five minutes and came off. And then, that was it. That was the end of my speaking career.

So, when Pallav called me and said to me, "Hirok, why don't you come speak at the Parayanam session?" I said, "No boss, I cannot speak." If Swami cannot make me speak, and Swami could not turn me into a speaker, how can I be able to speak to all of you? But then, I thought, "Okay. Let me give it a try."

That brings me another aspect of Swami's interaction with students. I am not a trained singer. I have never got trained in singing. Whatever singing I have learnt is only because of the positive reinforcement Swami used to give to us as singers. With all our croaking voices, with all our fallacies and all our flaws in singing, Swami still used to say, "*Chala Baga Padaru. Mana Pillalu...Entha Baga Padaru.*" (They sing well. How well our boys sing). That was how all of us were inspired to sing. Why were we inspired to sing? We were inspired to sing because Swami could make out that he has given a gift to us. The gift of singing. Maybe I did not have a proper appreciation of that gift. But He always knew that, "Yes, he can sing." And then through positive reinforcement He always used to come and tell us, "*Paadara Paadu.*" (Sing, come on, sing)

For example, I will tell you one simple thing...Swami is sitting here and then we are singing. Swami will keep on giving the *taal* and then look at you and smile. In that smile itself He will tell you that He is the master of singing, He is the master musician. He is the Divine musician. When He himself sings, what does He do? He will sing and then give one *taal*. *Bhajana bhina Sukha Shanthi Nabi...* When he sings

like that, He looks at us and then says, “How am I singing?” Look at the amount of confidence that He gives us. This was the nature of His interaction (with us).

Shankaracharya. Swami sent a word through the warden that Hirok will play the role of Adi Shankara in a drama. At that time, I had no clue about acting. I have never acted in my life. Over and above that, I cannot see without my spectacles. And Swami says, “Listen, Hirok is going to play the role of Shankara.” I was again in complete anxiety. What to do? How will I see, how will I act? I cannot see without my specs but then, what does He do? Over the next one month, He came literally every day for drama practice. Every day He came and encouraged us to act and told, “*Choodu... Atla Cheyyala... Etna Cheyyala*” (Do like this?)

How should the set be made? He gave us instructions about how the set should be made. He gave us instructions about how the lightings should be done. He gave us instructions about how each of us should be interacting. How should I deliver my speech. How should I sing. What should be the basis of my singing. Swami was very insistent on us singing MS Subba Lakshmi’s version of *Bhaja Govindam*. So, all of us were thinking- what is this...Karnatak music...how do we sing this? So, all of us in our extreme wisdom—thinking of our egoistic wisdom—said, “Swami, why don’t we sing the version of Jesudas?” Swami heard us, and then after putting a lot of thought on our opinion, He said we were egoistic people thinking that we know much more than Swami. And Swami said, “Don’t worry. Why do you bother. You sing that MS Subba Lakshmi’s version only. Doesn’t matter. That will be good, as you have been practicing it for some time...” Little did we realize that the devotion with which MS Subba Lakshmi sang *Bhaja Govindam*. It is the devotion that she puts into her singing is that must have struck Swami’s heart and He wanted that to be sung. That was the version He was interested in.

You know what I wanted to tell in this aspect is the fact that all of us who have been here, who have had the privilege of coming here, who have stayed here...all of us have had some way by which we were touched by Baba. Today, when I sing or when I interact with people, I know it is a result of what Swami taught me. Swami used to be so concerned about His students; you will be actually surprised to know how many times he has come (to the drama practice sessions).

I will tell one more incident. A new warden, Sri B N Narasimha Murthy had taken over. When he first came, he had come from Muddenahalli. He came and talked with us and various people. He came with a mission. He felt that he had come to

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the hostel to set up a band of disciples who will be completely dedicated. Yes, it was a noble version. So, he started talking with all of us. One day, I was also called and I talked with him. I was a very lazy guy. During the course of my talk with him, the topic of meditation came up. He gave me his *fundas*. Half of it, I did not understand. It was over my head. I don't know whether he went and talked with Swami, but Swami came to the hostel two days later and gave a speech on *dhyana*, on meditation in this hall.

We were all sitting here. Swami asked, "Who all want to do meditation? Okay. Today I will talk about meditation." He came and talked for a long time and most of our doubts were cleared by that time. But of course, we could not convert all of it into doing meditation. Even though He spoke on meditation, the concern he had was that some of His students wanted to learn about meditation. So He came and gave a speech. That was the concern that He had. All of you—I am sure—in some way or the other we are guided by Swami. Swami is going to look after you. I am sure about it. And the fact that you have come here, the fact that you are staying in His colleges is no accident. It is preordained; He wanted you to be here.

Another incident that I thought I should tell you is this. My brother used to be with Swami and would travel around with Him. Swami at that time used to go to Ooty and Kodaikanal. And on His way back, He would visit a place called Mudumalai. Mudumalai was a forest area and there was a bungalow that was on the top of a hillock and Swami used to invariably spend a day or a day-and-a-half at the bungalow. On one such trip- Roopak, Radhakrishna and one more person were there with Swami at this bungalow. The morning after they arrived, after breakfast, Swami came out on the front lawns of the bungalow.

Those were the days of the Polaroid cameras, which gave you instant printouts of your picture. Swami said, "Roopak, Photo *theesko* (Take a photograph)." While Swami was standing for the picture, one part of His robe was not straight; it was not covering His feet. Mrs. Ratan Lal (Swami's cook) tried to straighten it. Swami blasted her, "Sssh...chup." Ratan Lal was the lady who was with Swami for years and years. So, she broke down. Swami said, "Photo *theesko*..." After Roopak took the photograph, Swami took that Polaroid photograph directly into His hand and then He started clicking it like this. You know what was the image that came out of the photograph...Dattatreya! And the part of His feet that the robe was not covering; that was the place where the cow was licking Swami's feet. See, He used to interact with all of us like a human being. His humility was so much that he came and started

interacting with all of us. Why? Because He wanted us to follow what he wanted us to follow. He interacted with us at the normal human plane. And in that human plane, all of us were sometimes little bit carried away by His *humanness*. And in such instances, He suddenly showed us a glimpse of His Divinity. Suddenly He became Dattatreya. The photograph was taken of Swami, but He became Dattatreya!

I will tell you another incident. During the time when I had a tonsil operation, I used to fall sick very often. And then sometimes, I could not see properly. Swami said, "*Choodu, Oka Pani Cheyyi. Nuvvu Hospital ki poyi akkada ENT specialist unnaru, ayana daggara choopinchu.* (Go to the hospital and show yourself to the ENT specialist)." So, I went and you know what the ENT specialist said? He said, "See, you've got a septic sinusitis. You need a course of antibiotics and then you will be okay." And he gave me a course of antibiotics. But then what happened? I still continued to fall sick. Swami said, "*Chudu, Inkoka sari poyi, malli choopinchu* (go and show it once again)." And then it was found that I had acute tonsillitis.

I was telling you all that I came to Brindavan in 1976. Most of you would not have born then. I am quite an old guy. I have a son who is in Class X. So, Swami saw that and then he said, "You have got tonsillitis. An operation needs to be performed." At that time, everybody was scared about what will happen to my voice. Swami said, "Everything will be fine. Don't worry. I will look after him." And then, for the next three days, every day he would come and ask me, "*Etla Unnav Ra. Bagunnav?*" (How are you? Are you okay?) And He looked after my parents. We were staying in Brindavan and my mother was scared. Swami said, "No. Don't worry. I will look after him." The day before the operation, Swami took us in his car to the hospital and got me admitted. The operation was on the following day. He came early morning to the hospital and to the operation theatre. He was there during the performance of the operation. And because Swami was there, everybody else came into the operation theatre. It was crowded.

Unfortunately for us, at that time, the tonsils were being operated on general anesthesia. Someone went and hit one plug point and there was a huge burst and all the lights went off. So, what they usually do is open up the mouth and then try to remove the tonsils. So, the doctor who was performing the operation did not have light. This was a dangerous situation. But Swami was there. Swami held the torch. Doctor performed the operation and then the operation was successful. What was apparent from this was the concern that He had. Today a tonsil operation is a normal operation, a normal procedure. In those days, people considered it a major operation.



Swami consoled all of us. He looked after us. He said, “Don’t worry. Nothing will happen.” Most of the people were concerned and thinking that I may lose my voice. And then, the next thing is, Him being in the operation theatre was necessary because, had He not been there, there would have been some catastrophe. Because, general anesthesia, electrical spark...who knows what would have happened to the operation.

So, these were some of the concerns that Swami had. One of the reasons why I don’t speak so much about my interactions with Swami is the fact that, by talking about some of these things, there is an element of ego in us, and that should not be allowed. What I learnt from this is summarized by very nice couplet. It says, “*Prabal prem ke paale pad kar prabhu ko niyam badalte dekha...Apna maan tale tal jaaye par bhaktka maan na talte dekha*” What does it means, He won’t let any of your mark, your respect, be brought down. He may bring his own name be spoiled but not His devotees! Swami will see to it that His students never will be in a position where people will speak ill of them or think that they are not doing the correct thing. He will change people’s views.

Life in Puttaparthi with Swami was pretty easy. We got up in the morning, did *suprabhatam* and all. Life did not throw the challenges that you have in the outside world. So, what Swami used to do... Suddenly He would stop talking to you. He will avoid you. And then, what would happen? A sense of introspection starts with you. Why did it happen? Why is Swami not talking to me? And then, there were times He used to send a word through the warden, “*Choodu... Vallaku cheppu...they are eating like pigs, dogs...tell them that.*” And the following morning, He would ask, “*Nuvvu Cheppava? Yemi chepparu?* (Have you said? What did they say?)” These challenges that He used to throw at us made us realize the good fortune that we have of spending time with Him. And after sometime He says, “*Choodu, Call them and tell them to ask me for pardon.*” So, all of us used to go and catch Swami in front of so many people. Everybody is waiting to speak to Swami. Three or four of us would go up to Swami, surround Him and hold Him. Everybody used to think, what are the students doing?

What He would do is get you caught. And then of course, by the time the students who were the part of this lesson would have learnt enough and would say to Swami, “Swami, please forgive us.” He would forgive. And then, things would go back to normal. These are the challenges that were thrown at us so that we realize the good times, the lovely times and the divinity of Swami, which we experienced.

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I am sure all of you will be aware of what your good fortune is in terms of the opportunity to study in this hostel. And you know one thing; people like you are the need of the hour. And I am sure all of you will become leaders who will go forth and bring about the change that Swami wants to change. The world at the moment is very, very corrupt. You must be aware of various corruptions, scandals and scams that are going on. And that there is a huge dearth of people who have a core of goodness in them. What does Swami do? All of us are intrinsically good. Swami brings out that goodness in us by putting us into a hostel that will bring out the goodness in all of us and then giving the love and the nurturing that the goodness requires. You will be the people who will bring about the good. You will be the change, you will be the people who will start the change, you will be the people who will set the high expectation of goodness in civil life. You people are capable of doing that. I am sure, in years to come, many of you will come up as leaders of goodness, leaders who are famous because of goodness. And you will look back on the time that you had in this hostel. And may be some of that goodness, some of that leadership, some of that incorruptible fervor would have been instilled during your stay in this hostel.

Live in Sai, Live for Sai, and Live with Sai.

Before I go, I just thought that I should sing a bhajan which is the voice of my soul. This is on Swami. *“Mukthi Pradayini, Prema Pradayini, Shanthi Pradayini Maa... Janani Maa Janani Jagath Janani Sai Maa...Daya Karo Sai Maa...Jaya Maa Jaya Maa... Daya Karo Sai Maa...”*

May Sai bless you all. Thank you very much.

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## Sri Vinayak Kalletla

Alumni (1981-1988), SSSIHL

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**M**y humble pranams at the lotus feet of Bhagawan. Well, I am given about 10-15 minutes to address you, but I don't know. To briefly tell you about my own journey to Bhagawan, I hail from Hyderabad. I was studying at the Hyderabad Public School. It was during the 1980s. I come from quite a humble background. My parents were not actually devotees but one of my uncles (my mother's brother), he was a very close devotee of Swami. Actually, he was a civil contractor and constructed the first building of the then Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Women at Anantapur in 1969-70. There are still some letters written by Swami.

So, those were the days. And although my parents were not much into Swami's fold, I was very inspired by my uncle's visits to Puttaparthi and the regular bhajans that they had.

It was in the year 1979, when my uncle's son (my cousin) joined the college in Puttaparthi. In fact, he was Hirok's classmate. This was the very first batch when Swami started the college in 1979. So this chap, I would say, was a notorious rowdy in Secunderabad. And when he joined Swami's college and came back home for vacation: 100% transformation. And it was so incredible and unbelievable.

At that time, I made a decision- I had only one ambition in my life: to join Swami's college. My dad was very possessive of me. He never wanted me to leave home, leave Hyderabad and stay in a distant place. But, from that day, when I made this wish to Swami, I would come regularly to Puttaparthi, I stopped eating non-vegetarian, and I stopped watching films. By the way, I was so plastered about films that I would watch each and every movie that was released in town. And I think that was the big bargain I made with Swami. I gave up watching films, I gave up watching television. I said, "I am doing so much for you that you have to give a seat in your college because I want to be something like this guy, my cousin."

When Swami visited Hyderabad in 1979, I went to Swami with fruits and flowers in my hand. I was seated in the very first row in Shivam. When Swami came out, I was praying in my mind, "Swami if you are going to accept these offerings from me, then you are going to give me a seat in your college. Otherwise I don't know what I am going to do." And I was waiting with a lot of expectation. When Swami

came out, He came straight to me, I put my hand forward with fruits and flowers in my hand. He took the flowers and said, “*Bangaru, Pandu needeggere vunchuko* (Keep the fruit with you only).” I did not know what that meant that time...but whatever Bhagawan says, whatever words comes out of His mouth is not casual, or not just a coincidence. He is Sathya Sai Baba. He is the embodiment of Truth. And every word that He utters has a lot of significance and I experienced that in my life. So, He took the flowers and gave me back the fruit to me. What is it mean? Is he going to give me seat or not going to give me seat?

So, in 1981 I wrote my X Std. examination and unfortunately my overall percentage was very low. And in the month of August that year, when I came to Puttaparthi for admissions, I was rejected because I did not get the qualifying the marks in my X Std. I was totally depressed; I went back to my old school, joined there in XI Std. But one fine day, out of the blue, my uncle who was the contractor for Anantapur college came home and said, “You have two days holidays vacation right (due to Sunday and 15th August)? Come, let’s go to Puttaparthi. Let’s try, let’s give it a chance.”

So, we came to Puttaparthi and Swami was actually in Brindavan. And the warden and the principal said, “Nothing doing. All the seats are full and Bhagawan has already closed the admissions. Nothing doing.” My cousin about whom I talked about was already studying in the college and he said, “Why don’t you go to Brindavan.” So, we went to Brindavan and then my uncle got up to say something. Swami just said, “Sit down.” I also gathered courage and just folded my hands. Swami held my hands and that very evening, we got a phone call from my cousin and said, “Warden had sent a word with me. Swami has granted you a seat. Come over.” And my heart knew no bounds. I was literally crying with joy. And that’s how I ended up in the college here.

And then afterwards...basically I was a very shy guy and though everybody has this desire of talking to Swami, expressing yourself to Swami; but to do that in front of everybody I used to feel very conscious. Because you know how free Swami is with students and He will be joking. So, what if Swami cracks a joke on me, what if everybody laughs...you know...I was over conscious in those days. So, all the time I was mostly communicating with Swami through letters. I never had the guts to get up and talk to Swami straight away in front of everybody. But, even though I was

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communicating through letters, Swami answered each and every prayer of mine. Imagine, every other student gave letters. Swami gets so many letters. Even in those days, Swami used to get so many letters by mail. But physically as well, He would read each and every letter and respond to the students. In fact, as I just said, I come from a background of performing arts. I was never much into games or sports. I was more towards the fine arts. And I was very adept in dancing, though I did not learn formally the art form of dance. I had lot of passion for dancing. So, one day I wrote to Swami saying that, “Swami, I have this passion for dancing. I would like to learn dancing. I also want to perform one day in your presence.” So, it was just a youngster’s fantasy and I just wrote that letter to Swami. That evening the warden called me and said, “You asked Swami that you want to learn dancing.” Actually that year the Hill View Stadium was inaugurated and the Vice-President of India was supposed to come and inaugurate it. So, Swami has actually hired some dance teachers from Hyderabad so that the students could get trained in some dance performances on the stage in front of the chief guest, the Vice-President.

So the warden said that Swami had hired some dance teachers from Hyderabad. And he said, “You can actually learn and begin your classical dance sessions from tomorrow.” And Swami had even fixed the time! In those days, college would start at 9 o’clock in the morning and listen how Bhagawan goes into the details. What was the necessity that out of 500-600 students, he tended to the individual need of one individual student? But Swami took so much of pain and care. He decided the timings. He fixed the place also, in the sheds behind West Prasanthi. “Let him go there every morning at 8 o’clock.” He even permitted me to skip the morning prayers that we had. In fact the rules were very strict. Nobody was allowed to go anywhere and roam in the mandir and outside. (I guess the rules are still the same even now). But Bhagawan gave permission that from 8 to 9:30. I could attend dance classes and then get back to college for classes.

So, that’s how for a month I was initiated into classical dance training. And then again, the next desire- I wanted to perform in front of Swami. Again, I started writing letters. “Swami thank you so much...so sweet...so wonderful that you answered my prayers. Now I want to perform before you.” So, one day He came during darshan time and said, “You want to perform in front of Me? You look....(I was very lanky

and thin. Not stout.)...I don't think will you be suitable to perform in front of an audience...Anyway, we will see.

I felt little crestfallen. But again, the program of the Vice-President's visit was there. So, I was chosen in the group dance. And in this very hall, I remember it was just half of this size. Bhagawan was sitting here and we all performed there. I was a part of the group dance. Then, after the group dance, He used to come and give namaskar. While taking namaskar, he lifted me and asked me, "Are you satisfied?" Actually I was not. Because I wanted to have a solo performance in front of Swami. But still, He gave me that opportunity and I feel blessed for that. Ultimately the vice-president's visit was cancelled that year and so was the dance program. Though the training took place for two months, the program never happened. So, I could see that all this was just a *leela* to answer just one person's passion or yearning.

Then, my next passion was 'acting'. It was during the year 1985, during the 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations. There was a drama that Swami had written during His childhood. It was titled, "Radha Krishna". Swami had written the play Himself. So, Swami had chosen all the actors. Mr. Siva Shankar Sai was playing the role of Krishna and the drama rehearsal had started. But, I was not there in that. I wrote to Bhagawan saying that, "Swami, you are directing a play and when I see all my friends and my seniors coming to you for rehearsals...I feel very passionate about acting and how could you forget me." So, incidentally, Bhagawan had read the letter and in that day's meeting with the group which went for the rehearsals.

The drama ends with Radha...it was drama about Radha's love for Krishna. And the drama ends with Radha meeting Krishna after many years of separation and ultimately she gives up her life at the feet of Krishna when She sees Krishna coming back from Dwaraka to Gokulam or Brindavan. The drama ends on a pathetic note with Radha crying. So, after one month of rehearsals, Swami said, "I think our drama has very sad ending with Radha dying...Why don't we give a happy ending to it, happy touch to it? So, after Radha dies, let Krishna come back and visit Yashoda."

So, Swami created the character of Yashoda and then He sent a word through the warden. I still remember the words of warden, "Vinayak. Be careful. Bhagawan's eyes have fallen on you...You learned dance and now he is choosing for the character of Yashoda..." He said this because I used to be a little flamboyant. I used to be more of a rule breaker. So, the warden tried to caution me. So, He chose me for the role of Yashoda.

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I cannot forget those days during the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations. There used to be hundreds and thousands of devotees, so many activities going on: medical camps, Narayana Seva, and that time the planetarium was to be inaugurated, the University Grants Commission chairman was there...so many activities. There were 5 lakh devotees. A large-scale celebration was happening at the Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium. Amidst all that, Bhagawan used to come everyday and literally spend two hours with us during rehearsals. And again, as I told you, I was very shy, very conscious. On the first day that I actually had to perform in front of Swami, I was feeling so scared that I was always praying to Swami that, "Swami, please don't see my scene. If I come in front of you and performing, I will be shivering. I don't know what, I might collapse also." So, I was actually praying to Swami...Look how counter-productive and idiotic the mind can be. On one side the heart was actually yearning for performing in front of Swami and Swami comes and gives you an opportunity, and on the other, the mind was saying that No I cannot do it. Look at the conflict. I was actually praying to Bhagawan. But Bhagawan again read my mind and He made it so light and so interesting. In fact, as I was coming climbing up the stage, He was commenting, "*Veede kada dancer...Vedu stage ekkakamunde kulukuthunnadu. Stage yekkinaka inka entha kulukuthado?*" (Oh! He is the dancer. He is dancing so well backstage, imagine how well he will excel on stage in front of everyone) So, like that He was trying to make it light and encourage us. And you know when Krishna comes, I was supposed to say, "Oh my son Krishna, have you come..." and then in the olden style... Swami said, "*Patha kalam lo...*In the olden days, the mothers used to touch the face like this...you are supposed to do that." So, when I was doing that to Krishna, He said, "Careful, careful- Krishna will have blue paint. Don't do too much. Otherwise, his paint will come on your hand." So, in this manner, Bhagawan was really fun to be with. And He used to make feel us so comfortable and light just in a friendly manner. Even the most shy, sensitive guys used to feel so comfortable and light and confident in His presence. And this Yashoda role was not be stopped there.

And of course there were many things that happened. I wanted to go abroad and study and how Bhagawan actually permitted me to go abroad. That's all was a big story. Time is running out so I don't want to go into that story. But since I mentioned about Yashoda and I was introduced as a founder of "Abhyasa", there is a connection there. So this Yashoda role happened in the year 1985 and exactly nine years after that, in 1994, I was at the crossroads. I left this college in 1988 and I took up my passion in the field of advertising and marketing. I thought advertising is a field that has a lot of creativity and would be very fulfilling for me. But somehow the lifestyle

in the field of advertising was so conflicting to the values that we have learned here. So, I was in a very confused mind. Pursue advertising or go back and do something else? So, during that stage, again I was constantly praying to Bhagawan. And if you remember, that year in 1994—following the unfortunate incident that happened in the year 1993—the old students were somewhat in a cold storage and we did not have real access to go to Bhagawan and have the courage to ask him something.

Again, the communication was through letters. But friends, what I want to share here is the infinite love and also the omnipresence of Bhagawan. Today all of us here may be feeling, “Okay. We missed some of the best parts of Bhagawan and physically He is not with us.” But, what I want to actually stress here is, He is always there with us. He is everywhere with us. Now and then, in our life, He is there with us. So, the communication was through letters and He started replying through dreams. One day he came in my dream and said, “Remember, that role of Yashoda.” So, in the dream, I was actually asking Bhagawan, “I am not very comfortable with by doing the role of this advertising and the things like that...” Some are conflicting to my values... So, Bhagawan said, “Do you remember the role of Yashoda? I want you to play that role in real life.” I was stunned. What does it actually mean? What I am supposed to do? So, again I came to Parthi, I had a letter in my hand and Swami in those days literally used to avoid the old students. How do I get my answer? What I am supposed to do? I had a letter in my hand. Ready to give it to Bhagawan. So, from a distance He looked at me and just said without taking the letter, “Send the photographs.” When he said that, I really did not have any sense of what these photographs actually mean. Then, when I went back to Hyderabad again, my Dad had purchased some agricultural land in the outskirts of Hyderabad. And I was actually thinking of making it into a spiritual resort. So, one Sunday when I went there, I was sitting there.

By the way, I was also an official photographer for the college and hostel. I had many opportunities to take photographs of Bhagawan. So, the camera was always in my hand. So, I was taking pictures of that farm and suddenly I remembered Swami’s words “Send the photographs.” So did He actually mean these photographs? What ever it is, it did not make any sense to me. But, I took the pictures of that farm; the land that we had. I actually mailed them to Swami. Within three days, I again get an answer. Bhagawan comes in my dream and says, “Yes. Play the role of Yashoda. Build a school there.” And even while saying these words, He actually brought a full plate of sweets to me in the dream and said, “Take these sweets. Some children are playing there. Go and distribute these sweets to them.”



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So, the message was so clear and so transparent. I shared this idea, the dream with my parents... They said, "Okay. This is one of your fantasies, one of your dreams. Okay let's see. Do whatever you want to do." And going by my nature, I always had grandeur plans. School for me does not mean a small school, in a small room in a building and all that. I had grandeur ideas. I wanted to have a big school, a big residential school, a *Gurukula*. Something that replicates Prasanthi Nilayam. That was my ambition. And where will all the money come from? Again when I was going from place to place, trying to pool the money and all that.

Again Bhagawan said, "Look, you are not beggars. Don't go from people to people asking for money. The money is there with us. It will come at the right time. Don't stretch your hand in front of everybody." Friends, this is a very powerful statement. Because, Swami not only His being whatever He is, or whatever He practices in His life, He wants His students also to be like Him. We all know that. Swami used to just announce a project and funds used to come. He never asked anybody for funds nor Did He start any project just because He has funds. He declared and it just used to happen. And the most interesting part is, He wants His students also to be like Him. He does not want His students to bow before others, or to stretch their hands in front of everybody. That is the beauty of Swami. That is the Love of Swami. That is the other dimension of His love.

So, again I was perplexed. Because, my dad and mom challenged me, "This is another of your fantasies. We don't know what you are going to do. Let's see what you are going to do." I was going all around with passion, trying to collect some funds and here is Bhagawan who comes and says, "Don't put your hand in front of everybody." What am I going to do now? My brother lives in US. I actually made plans to go to the US because they are rich with funds. I thought of approaching NRIs and make them invest in India and all that. And actually I had even got my US visa and then Bhagawan said, "No. You are not going anywhere." How am I even going to share my dream with... I mean... even in a normal worldly sense if you say, "Look. I got a US visa and Bhagawan said not to go, that's why I am not going." People will think that I am crazy. As I told you, not everybody around me is a devotee who would actually understand what Bhagawan means to me. And I had to do these difficult explanations to different people.

Believe you me; those were the days (1994) of the liberalization in the P V Narasimha Rao government. My Dad had purchased some shares way back in the 1970s. He got about 1 lakh worth of shares. During the boom time, suddenly the value of the shares

shot up to almost a Crore...And the best part of it, I was not aware of it. My Dad never shared anything with us. So one day, Dad himself called me and said...Look at the words of Bhagawan, "The funds are with us! You don't have to go anywhere." I did not know about it. My Dad himself calls me and says, "Look, I had invested this amount in shares those days. Now the value is so much. (Those were the days of Harshad Mehta scam and all those things.) I know that this boom is going to cause a tumble in the stock market. This is the right time to sell. I better sell off all this. From now onwards, I am sure the stock market is going to fall. (Thanks to Harshad Mehta). I am willing to give you that fund."The person who challenged me himself came and said, "Look, I am going to give that to you."

It was just unbelievable. The words of Bhagawan which I could just write off as a dream, my figs and events of my imagination...Every word of Bhagawan coming true. And thus came "Abhyasa" into existence. And every year, we used to bring our students here. And those were the days, every time we brought our students, He used to come, bless all our students, talked to the students, materialize vibhuthi, give to all the students. The first time when I said, "Swami, you should visit Abhyasa." Swami said, "*Thappakunda Vasthanu.*" (Definitely, I will come) Though in physical terms He has not arrived there, I strongly believe that He is going to come there. Maybe as Prema Sai, Maybe as what, I don't know. But I am looking for that glorious day. Bhagawan is going to make His visit to Abhyasa.

And then, as years passed, I will quickly fast forward to the movie of Bhagawan, which I am associated with. After the school was established...remember I was talking about my passion for performing arts...this passion was unsatisfied. So, I used to write a lot of plays and dramas for the students of Abhyasa and direct them. Then one fine day, I had a flash. I don't know whether it is Bhagawan's inspiration or so...Because somebody asked me, "when you were ten years old, what did you want to become in life?" I was attending a personality development program and this was the question somebody asked me in that gathering. I said, "When I was a ten years old, I wanted to become a film director." Then they said, "Then why are you a teacher, why are in education? Why did not you become a film director?" Actually I went into advertising, but I thought that probably it's not my cup of tea and that's against my value systems, so I left it. So, the chap, the personality development trainer said, "You literally fled from that place just because it conflicted with your value system? Why not you actually enter the foray and change the system?" I said, "No. That's too much of a high thought. If I get into the system, you know, I might get spoiled and blah blah blah..." "No. You are a coward. You are actually running away from your dream.

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You are not trying to be what you want to and you are afraid that you will get spoiled and you ran away from the situation.”

So, this thought this personality trainer, that brief interaction I had, was pricking me for a long time. Then, I thought, let me take it up as a personal challenge. Even though I was running the school, I went and joined a film school to study a course in direction. When I started going to this film school, this course in direction and acting, I was pursuing my dream. And I was writing to Bhagawan frequently, but I was not literally getting any answer from him. I was not getting an answer from Him on this front...whether I should go ahead or should not go ahead with this. Nevertheless, the training from the film school was going on. At the end of the film school training, one day I had come here. I remember it was January 2010. Again, when I was a student, I was sitting among the students, and the VIPs used to sit in the main corridor just in front of the interview door. Many a time I used to sit and think that one day, I should come back and sit among the VIPs as a VIP. I should acquire some high position in society and I would like to sit there as a VIP in front of Swami. And Swami fulfilled that dream also. In 2010, the Andhra Pradesh Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations trooped all the top educationalists from Andhra Pradesh. All the Vice-Chancellors of all the twenty universities in Andhra Pradesh and heads of various top colleges, top schools were invited for a conference in Prasanthi Nilayam. And I was fortunate enough to be a part of that delegation. For the first time I was sitting along with the Vice-Chancellors and other heads of institutions right in front of Swami in Parthi. I could not believe that another dream had come true. And you will not believe, Bhagawan started His discourse, and suddenly He started talking about films. Out of nowhere. It is an educational conclave! He started with the Sathya Harishchandra story. For half an hour he spoke about films. How life in films is and how you should conduct yourself there. And after He told the story of one actress calle Kanchanamala...I mean, I have never heard about Bhagawan talking about films for half an hour. And at the end of it He said, “We have to be careful in life, follow your passions, follow your...” He just gave me one look and that was my answer. Go ahead, but be careful. And at the end of my film school career, life was not very easy. The film world is as good as the political world. If there is one person to achieve his ambitions...if one person trying to climb, there are 99 people to pull you down. Believe me. I literally experienced it.

Why am I telling all this is...Friends, tomorrow when you pass out, when you go out into the world, when you want to pursue your big dreams...Allow me to say this, because this is what I tell my students in Abhyasa also. Each one of us here

should not be actually going and seeking jobs elsewhere. Each one of us should be an entrepreneur, each one of us should be a leader, and each one of us should create jobs and create the transformation in the society...for every one person there are 99 people trying to pull you back. And that was happening to me also in the film school. There were thirty students in my class who went through with the direction course. And everybody who goes out of the way gets a chance. I was being snubbed or I was being completely put down because of my background. Probably, I could see that my professor and the assistant professor were from the communist background. They knew that I was a devotee of Sathya Sai Baba and they somehow disliked me for that and they saw to it that I would not get any chances. They would recommend everybody to the producer but they would see that I was completely in the background.

And then in 2011, it so happened...we all know...that was the time Bhagawan physically left us. And the very next day, one of the leading producers in Andhra Pradesh announced that he would be making a film on Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I thought, I am the most apt person for that. Because to the best of my knowledge, there are very few alumni from Bhagawan's institutions whose field of work is films. And here I was fully trained in film direction for two and half years, and also been with Bhagawan, observed Him, literally lived with Him. Who else can be the best person to be in the direction department? When I went and approached the producer, he literally hugged me. He felt as though Swami Himself had come walking to him. Sorry, forgive me for my last statement. This is what he felt and this the push that Bhagawan gave me. Again there is no looking back. That is how He takes care so that His students should not go to anybody with a begging bowl or with their hands open and say, "give me a chance."

You trust Him, He takes care of you in every step that you take in your life! So His film is being made. I am not only a part of Bhagawan's project but I am without actually waiting for any producer to give me a chance, I started making my own short films. Soon, I will be going to International film festivals. And I am sure with Bhagawan's blessings; I want to create a new genre called 'Spiritual Cinema'. We see action cinema, we see melodrama cinema, we see romantic cinema, and we see all this sort of cinema. We see devotional cinema, Bhaktha Ramdas, Annamayya, and all that. But I want to help create something called 'Spiritual Cinema' where you take everyday stories but Bhagawan's message and spirituality is imbibed into it. So, with His blessings, I keep my fingers crossed. Thank you for giving this opportunity. I feel very happy to be here and I can see one of my Abhyasa students sitting here.

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I feel very good when the students from Abhyasa actually come and join Parthi and Brindavan. I feel like a grandfather now (laughter). Nevertheless, my humble request to all of you is- never, ever feel that you are missing Bhagawan physically. He is always with us. Pray to Him to keep your dreams alive, He will take care of you; He will hold your hand and take you forward in your journey. And as brother Hirok said, each of us here are here by His Will. Nothing less, nothing more.

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## Sri Kannan Murthy

Alumni (1977-1982), SSSIHL

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Om Sri Sai Ram.

**M**y humble pranams at the lotus feet of my beloved Sai Krishna. I say Sai Krishna because that's what I have been calling Him since the day I first arrived here. He is Sri Sathya Sai Baba for the universe. For me, He is Sai Krishna. My father has been coming to Swami since 1955, way before I was born. In the old days, the present-day Kalyanamandapam in Puttapparthi was the old mandir, where devotees would come to see Swami. There were no roads back then and devotees would walk from Bukkatnam and through the River Chitravati in order to get here.

I was born in Coimbatore. My father was an advocate at the Chennai High Court. In 1964, when Swami came to Chennai, He spoke to us. In those days, the crowd was less. Swami asked us to come to Parthi. I am the only son to my parents. But I am a brother to all of you. When we arrived at Puttapparthi in 1965, Swami gave us an interview. (In those days, Swami would grant an interview to many devotees). So, when He called us for an interview, He said to us, "*Veedu Naavadu. Meevadu Kaadu.*" (He is mine. Not yours!) So, that *Naavadu* (till today) is taking care of me from that day onwards.

Yesterday, one of my brothers Hirok told me that he is not used to speaking in public. Nor am I. I am only a worker. I never had any opportunity to speak. This is the first time speaking in front of you people (students from SSSIHL), so I may get emotional.

The manner in which Swami envisioned this institute helps us realize what we must take up in our life and what is required of us. In every *yuga*, God takes a different avatar. In this *yuga*, God has come to teach human values to humanity, so we realize what it is to be human. Hence, we have to respect our human selves.

See, I had an opportunity to serve Swami. I have been with Swami since my childhood. The first miracle of Swami that I experienced was in 1969 as a 7 year-old. I think all of you know of Mr. Mahalingam, a cook in the main kitchen at Prasanthi Nilayam decades ago. The present Gopuram was the kitchen. Not this big kitchen where we have now. Back in the day, that kitchen catered to a maximum of 5000 people (even

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that would be only during major festivals). Even Prasanthi Nilayam only extended till the Poornachandra Auditorium in those days. Now, it is so different.

That is His wish – He made this spiritual empire to show the world what humanity is. Not for any other purpose. Another point I want to make is that His body was a selfless body. He has created such a big empire for what purpose? Only for all of us to enjoy. Not for His enjoyment. We are enjoying that empire. He created this empire with His own love. So, all you youngsters should understand His divinity. Sitting in one place and attracting the whole world is His Divine power. You might have seen this in places across India where you may come from. How spiritual messages spread throughout all communities! One may be a Hindu, another a Muslim, or from another religion. But this form belongs to whole Universe. Not one human being or anything. He loves all creatures. His body belongs to all creatures.

Do not think that we had joined thirty years back and you have come now (once His form has left the mortal coil). No. We were born at that time and you are born now. That's all. All of us are having a wonderful life. This place where we have come, it is not easy to come to this place. That's entirely His wish. As brother Hirok mentioned, without His wish, no one can come here. But the opportunities you get when you come here, you cannot get elsewhere. Let me share an example.

Back in the day, we were managing all the kitchen activities. I had opportunity to serve my brothers in all ways possible. That is the wonderful thing about this place. This opportunity—of serving each other in the spirit of brotherhood—we would not get in any other place. This relationship we share is something hard to find even in our own families. I think most of us would agree with that. Because, I have been here for twenty years and I have been outside for twenty years. The comparison I am making is the world outside of Prasanthi Nilayam and the one inside Prasanthi Nilayam.

One thing is, you students should not lose your heart, stating that Swami is not with us physically. He is there with us. Today I am standing in front of you. You may be thinking that I may be a very healthy fellow. No. I already had three heart attacks. When I was here in Prasanthi Nilayam, I was taking care of the *Gokulam* with my

other brothers. We were a batch of six students. I would sleep for only two-and-a-half hours per day. That was the schedule created and instructed by our Lord. The reason I am telling you this is for you to make a timetable of your lives. It is an opportunity that this place presents us with. We would get up by 2 a.m. and go to *Gokulam*. These days, I suppose, we have about 300 cows. In those days, we had about sixty cows and twenty buffaloes. So, a batch of six boys would manage them. We used to do all the milking for example. It might sound funny. But no. This was an opportunity for us to learn fundamental and spiritual lessons in our lives, which we are not getting outside. This is an opportunity to all of us to be in the Universal God. Do not think that you do not have opportunities. All of us have opportunities. Make use of it. Don't misuse the opportunity. Don't think otherwise.

People may wonder why you came here, etc. No. Just imagine the present day situation outside, and the cost of education for our parents. For example, an M.B.A., or M.C.A. outside will cost our parents about ₹4-5 Lakhs (if not more). Just think. Is it possible? People in North India do not have opportunities, education-wise. So, those things you have to take into account of your life. What is the cost of your education going to be outside? All of us are getting free education here. So, those things you have to take into account. Don't miss those opportunities and make use of it.

To continue the story about Mahalingam...It was Swami's birthday time. For Swami's birthday, usually all elders would apply oil to His hair. But in the middle, He stopped this practice. What happened? He was preparing *upma* in a big vessel and mixing it. These were the days before gas stoves. Only firewood. One day, the vessel fell down on His body. Normally, He would go freshen up once the oil is applied. That day, after this incident, He didn't do that. He walked straight to the hospital (in the same location as the current General Hospital). That old hospital was just a big hall with a couple of doctors. Mahalingam was there, almost close to death. Swami created vibhuthi and applied to Mahalingam's body. Otherwise he was no more. I am telling you this incident because God will come to earth and choose the people He wants to run His mission.

In the present Kali yuga, He selected all of us to transform humanity by being a model human being and serve our people. Because most of us in the world aren't used to doing any service. We expect our parents to do even our own duties. Most of the people who have come here for the first time, have never washed dishes at home before. The Institute helps us develop self-discipline where one ought to realize his/



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her own self value. That is opportunity where we learn here. So, this Avatar is a unique avatar where He has chosen all of us. Some of us came before, you are here now. Make use of it. Learn what is required and take that learning to the whole world and practice it. Don't practice spirituality only for the commercial aspect. I have been a practicing auditing tax consultant for last twenty-two years. I have been interacting with many government authorities. People use their influence or pay money for an education seat at a reputed institution. They do it because of their influence. What influence do you have here? Your only merit is your examinations results. So, when you have this opportunity, you have to make your parents proud and you also will feel proud that your parents chosen this institute to get you educated.

Here I am standing in front of you today. As I mentioned before, I have had a (heart) attack three times already. I had a massive attack at 4:30 a.m. on 22 September 2008. They declared this body dead at 6 o'clock. The doctor asked my neighbours to come and complete the formalities and take the body back. Before people came (to take my body at 6 o'clock), Swami came to me and said chidingly, "Levara Dunnapotha... Leguvu (Get up male buffalo, get up!)". That is the reason I got up like this. (*Applause*).

He never used to call me by my name Kannan but always addressed me as Dunnapotha only, right from the first day I came to Parthi, until I graduated. Do you see why I am saying this- the opportunity that we are all getting, don't misuse it. I have been sincere in applying what I have learnt here. Only then can you get a chance to contribute. Learn what is required. Then make use of that learning when you go outside. All of us are having the triple S (Sri Sathya Sai) trademark. Once you enter, your trademark is there. Don't think that your trademark is not going to be there outside when you go out. It is there. That is my experience with Swami's blessings. As I told you, I have been practicing as an Auditing tax consultant. I never went to any client. Clients have come to me. I have about 130 to 140 clients. Of these, about 60 are corporates. Some of the biggest corporate names (that most of you drink) like Sprite, Coca Cola, are some of my biggest clients. So, your identity- it is definitely there the moment you enter this institute. That is the beauty and sacredness of this institute.

Yesterday I drove 150 km. from Bangalore to be here. Because, when fifteen days back when brother Pallav called me and asked "Sir, is it possible to come and share your experiences?". I told him, "Don't say is it possible. Order me, and I will come." Then, His wish should be there for us. Because, all of us are brothers. Most of you, I may call as children or Sai children. So, make use of all the opportunities here. Have

faith. He will definitely respond to you. Faith is important for any human. We should have faith in ourselves. If we don't have faith in ourselves, you cannot please anybody.

I think all of you have that feeling that Swami is not physically around us. He is there with us, taking care of all of us. You might have observed your seniors, who have joined three or four years before you. He showers His love. So we should not feel that we are not having our parents' love. Because all of us are left our parents and came and joined here. We see our parents only once in a while. That is the reason, He is named as Sathya Sai Baba. Why is He named as Sathya Sai Baba? Sai means Mother, Baba means Father, Sathya means Truth. He says: I am the true mother and father of the Universe. So, He says that we should not miss our parents' love. That's the reason I am giving my love to you people. Make use of it. Have courage, make use of what you study, make use of it in your life and make your life a success. Pray to Swami. Think of Swami for five minutes whenever you have the problems. That is what I do. Even now I do. In my profession, we get so many complicated cases. Sometimes, we don't know how to solve it. Many a time, when I appear before the court, before they answered the questions of the judges, the judgement will come out. That is His grace. We don't know how it comes. Some of my colleagues ask me (there in the courts), how does that happen with me? I tell them, ask Him. Because, He is the master for me. Nobody else.

One last thing- whatever you do, do it practically. Don't do things to satisfying somebody else. You approach your things practically, and sincerely. As Swami says, first satisfy our parents. He never asks anything from us. He only says, go outside and spread your humanity and what you learnt here. First thing, even then He says, satisfy your parents first. Why have our parents sent all of us here? To learn some good things. That is the reason for His proverb: Do Good, Be Good, See good. Then in the end He says: Help ever, Hurt Never. We really have to develop that. Developing that is very difficult for all of us. Because, we are humans. In the present day, even neighbours don't help one another. So for these things, we should pray to him. Let Him give us good strength to digest all that we learnt here and put them into practice. That is what I learnt from this place. Involve yourself in all available activities so that you will be busy doing different things. Don't restrict yourself to only one thing. This is what I have done. This is what I have learnt here. Along with my studies, as I was telling you, I was able to sleep for only two hours or so.

I wan to share one incident before I end. It is regarding the Omnipresence of our Lord. Last year during Guru Poornima, at about 4:30-5:00 o'clock in the morning,

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Swami was with me in my house, in the drawing room for nearly half an hour where He gave me a chance to do his *Pada seva* and He gave me Namaskar. I am telling you this incident because He is Omnipresent. Have faith in Him, He will walk with us. As He says, if you take one step towards Me, I will take ten steps towards you. What I want to share with you is: He is always with us whether a new student comes, a new child comes, an old person, or anybody. The moment we enter this Institute, He is behind us taking care of all of us. Have that faith in Him. That's what I want. All of you develop that and make your life comfortable and happy.

So, with this, I thank all of you for hearing me patiently and pray to Swami "O Sai, give us full strength in our mind." And let us pray to him "always be with us, take care of us and do not allow our mind to hanker for the gossip of the world. Let us take what we have learnt here and share outside the world, do our service, service to mankind."

God bless you. Sai Ram.

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## Sri M G Nandagopal

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Sairam to all of you. Kannan Murthy has left me a tough task continuing the Journey that we had together. I joined him. I should say it that way. In the year 1977, when we all were together in Brindavan. We spent two years together. After that Swami decided to start the college at Prashanthi Nilayam. And literally He divided us; bifurcated us. He knew each of us in the batch. Prof. Narendra. Principal Narendra. For us principal means it was Prof. Narendra. Vice-chancellor was Prof. Gokak. So He called Prof. Narendra and said “Okay, you send him there and you send him here.” For each one of us. Then I was still left. “*Vallani Brindavan pampichesay*” (you send all of them to Brindavan). That’s how their batch and our batch, half of it came here to Puttaparthi and started this college.

The first hostel was as I said, in the old hostel. They spent their lives there and many of the Brindavan boys know how it is to stay at the old hostel. They studied there. They stayed there, studied there in the street lamps, and worked. One beautiful incident happened there at the ashram in that old hostel. Every time they would call Swami and ask Him to please come to the hostel. Swami would say, I will come, I will come. And suddenly one day, He said, lets go. So, all the boys rushed. They went out to their rooms. Swami was walking down with no one except one of my classmates, Vishwanath. He became a Professor in Physics here. For quite sometime, he was teaching here. He was there and many of us had the opportunity to learn vedam. We were put under Kaamadevi Garu, who could chant the vedam backwards as well. He was the one under whom ten of us learnt *Rudram*. A certified chance to get from Swami was to learn vedam or be in the bhajan group. We were always looking where the chance was- either during bhajans or vedam, to get a chance to be near Swami. So, when Swami came, he (Vishwanath) was alone there. Alone, he chanted vedam and got Swami’s hand and got him to the first floor. The opportunity—the fulfillment of having learnt vedam—was at that time when you could chant alone and escort Swami up to the hostel. That was how He gave us various opportunities in the hostel to be near Him, to become dear to Him, to Love him in all aspects.

As I said, He provided beautiful facilities to us here. Right from the teaching part of it, the academic part of it, the games part of it and the accommodation part of it. When we joined, that was the time we can say the first batch of the hostel that was prepared there. First batch of the college building. The front facet of the building

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was made in 1977. The hostel got inaugurated in 1977. So, Swami would just walk in everyday and the review the cupboard system which we now have (top empty and one cupboard that had three parts) and then Swami would proudly show it to the devotees. Any VIP who was there assembled for His darshan. We would be standing in front of the hostel there waiting for Him to finish the darshan. Inevitably, He would take little more time beyond the college start time and then say, “pondi pondi pondi – go to college.” He would come near Saraswati (a statue in Brindavan) and wait for us to troop out to the college and then walk into the hostel. Then, whilst taking some guests, He would say, “*Choodu*, my boys.” And if they said, “Swami, No cots?” He would reply, “No No No...see this is the cupboard, they will keep the luggage on top, and fold the bed below and keep this is for their clothes, this is for their other items of toiletries and utensils, and below, they will keep their books. See they will open like this (and He would show the cupboard) and whenever they have to sleep, they will fold out their bed and sleep. Simple living, high thinking.”

That was the philosophy from the beginning for Him. Simple living and high thinking- so that if you live in this hostel, you can live anywhere in the world. Small comforts, small discomforts, or big luxury will not matter to you if you go through this system of education at His educational institutions. Sometimes you may crib (complain), but cannot help enjoy what Swami has kept for you. Then it will be with you throughout life.

In this manner, He would come to the hostel and sometimes He would come even when we were there. There was a back door entry for the hostel. As He would come from the front door, all of us would troop inside from the other side. We would station ourselves in our rooms and wait for Him to come. And He would slowly walk through from room to room. Just next to the warden’s room was our room, where I first stayed, along with Mr. Ramakrishna Reddy (High School teacher). He was my first senior when I joined. The cupboards were a little short. So, he shared his cupboard with me. For about six months we were cupboard mates. That room was such that. Swami would just walk in quite often. We would say, Swami please, please come in and bless the room. So, He would walk in and walk out of the other room. There was one beautiful incident that happened in that room...we slowly started getting small alters and keep Swami’s photograph there. Suprabhatam (morning

prayers) was the same as it is now. In fact, Suprabhatam was at 4:45 a.m. Now, it has come down to 5:20 a.m. 4:45 a.m. means, we would get ready by 4:30 a.m. and then assemble there. At 4:45 a.m. suprabhatam would start. Over time, Swami said, "*Haa pillalu inka* (they cannot manage so much). Let them get little more time. At least seven hours they would have to sleep. So, 10 o'clock switch off the lights. 5 o'clock let them get up and then have the suprabhatam at 5:20." That was how He shifted the time. But, for the first two years, we were having suprabhatam at that (early) time only. So, when He would come into the room, He would look around and open some cupboards. Invariably, one boy- GSR Prasad (who worked in our Book Trust also for quite some time) would always keep his cupboard neat and clean, knowing that anytime Swami would walk in and open his cupboard to show it off to the visitors.

He would be so proud that we were so willing to follow the system and take in the stride to lead that life of simple living and high thinking. There was a boy from Kabul, Afghanistan by the name of Sandeep Shastri. Presently, he is the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Jain University. He also appears on television shows as a political analyst. He studied together with us as a batch mate. He joined the degree programme whilst I was in XI Std. One day he felt sick and Dr. T Ravi Kumar and some other roommates were taking care of him. We were also there. And suddenly Swami walked in. He was there on the bed lying down. He got up and stood. Swami said, "Don't get up." He put on the blanket and sat there. Then Swami came and saw that he had temperature. Swami asked how much is the temperature. Some dispensary boys went and quickly got the thermometer and put in his mouth. Meanwhile Swami just caught in his hand and said...Hmm...98.4...He just got his pulse and uttered the temperature he had. So, all of us were eagerly waiting when the thermometer would come out so that we can verify what is the temperature. It was exactly the temperature that Swami had already mentioned. Like this, through small incidents, He showed us His divinity. More importantly, He instilled in us a lot of confidence to stay with Him.

Before I came to the college, my brothers and I attended two Summer Courses in 1972 and 1973. Before that, when I came for darshan in 1968 and 1969, the college had started and so there were boys who were standing near the hostel. That hostel was not yet built. The old Kalyanamandapam was there and boys would line up for darshan. I would be on this side and say, oh, how nice it would be if I were also on that side. Just a passing thought. Later I realized that, a couple of years later I too joined the college. My brothers tried, but they could not get admission. But, one unique experience one of my brothers had was, when they were leaving the Summer Course, Swami said to all who came, "You will remember me. Isn't it?"

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“Swami we don’t have your address and we don’t have your card,” somebody said. So, Swami did like this (moved His hand in circular motions) and all His visiting cards materialized with his photo and name. And He gave it to all of them. Then somebody said, “Swami there is no address on this.” He was so free that He allowed to ask such questions. Give it to me, He said. He collected all the visiting cards in his palm. He tapped it and gave it back again. His address was printed there. He said, “This is Sai press. It is instant. You don’t have to wait.”

Another incident, much later, after computers were introduced (earlier only typewriters were there). So, any documents Swami would say, we would type and shown to Him for his approval. Give a signature to it. When the computers came, Swami was waiting to be typed, He said, “Yedi, let me see.” Swami, wait Swami, we have to go and get it printed. “*Yem Prayojanam ledu. Typewriter ela koditha ala vachestundi*”. (There is no use doing it on computers. On typewriters, the output comes immediately – as supposed to computers where you have to type first, then print it – referring to the fact that many steps are involved before you get the output). That was the simplicity of Swami.

Before I joined, my brother was attending the Summer Course in 1977. I had just given in my application at that time. I was waiting. I was also about to go to Tirupathi. So, I had a long hair and waiting to go to Lord Venkateshwara and have darshan and come. That was my idea. But, meanwhile I was called for the admissions interview came. So, when I arrived, the Professor said, “No...this is not the way you can come. Trim your hair and come.” So, I offered it to Swami and came and had interview. And, the admissions process was very interesting. In those days, the whole list (of qualified applicants) would go to Swami. And we would all wait there outside the gate near the arch.

So, the Principal had given the list to Swami and He ticked all of us into the college and we got admitted. The next day, we joined and came to the hostel on around June 16 and on the 17<sup>th</sup> Swami left and came off to Puttaparthi. So, we were wondered what to do. Some were saying, okay, you can go home and come back on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Some of us decided to stay back in the hostel. At that time, our warden was Mr. Sudarshan and our ex-registrar, Dr. A V Lakshminarasimham was Assistant Warden. So, we decided to do some work. In front of the bungalow of Swami, we have lot of land there and one of our classmates’ father had a farm in Chokkadi. He used to get coconut plants from there and give them to Swami. So, they were all available. So, we decided to plant all of them. The giant coconut trees that we see now are the ones

that we planted at that time. So, we were digging around the coconut trees and we put rock salt in it. Lakshminarasimham Sir said that is good. We completed the work and went for bhajans. The next morning we got a letter from Swami. "My dear boys, blessings to all of you. I saw you putting salt into the coconut trees. It is very good for their growth. They will grow straight." That was our first revelation of Swami's omniscience.

Right from a very young age, my mother brought me to Swami in 1964 here in the old mandir. My only memory of that mandir is lots of vibhuthi. Lots of smoke-like vibhuthi in the hall. Much later when we were groomed in vedam chanting, we got an opportunity to sit right next to Swami as He was giving Discourse. In those days, after the vedam chanting Swami would instruct pundits to go and get water from the Chitravati to sanctify the *kalisam* we kept for puja. After that, Swami would start sprinkling (the water) on everyone. Once, during Swami's discourse, Brigadier Bose suddenly fell down. He was sitting in the VIP enclosure. He suddenly fell flat. Swami continued His discourse and He looked. Some doctors attended to him and they saw Swami and said, "gone." Swami stopped the discourse, and rushed down. We could see him just running like a mother to a child and said, "Bose *Leguv*" and He got up. He was the one who was responsible to build the Sarva Dharma Sthoopa. He was also responsible for building our hostel in Brindavan. Swami gave Him an opportunity, "You have got a lot of work, Get up." Just as He revived brother Kannan Murthy, He did the same for Brigadier Bose. We were there, eyewitness to it. That was the chance we got as vedam boys, to sit there and be witness to these miracles.

So, this was the time, the Summer Course that my brother attended. That time I gave my application and entered, sat there where my brother had his *Upanayanam*, in that very hall where now I am working. Little did I know that that it would be my place of work also. That very library where I sat in that badminton court or reading room area was where my brother got his *Upanayanam* done. I also sat there and got the opportunity to be blessed by Swami. That time, I was staying at home. I had not joined the hostel. And my grandfather was very seriously ill. Just a month before that, he breathed his last and I was inconsolable. I really loved him and I cried and cried and cried so much. Because he was breathing hard and realizing that something is wrong with his breathing, my uncle had sent me to call the doctor, who was about ten houses away. The doctor came slowly, only to pronounce that He is no more. So, owing to that attachment I had, I cried a lot. And my brother was also very attached, but he was not told else he would not miss the opportunity there in the Summer Course with Swami. So, he came afterwards and he was also very disturbed. Then



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I joined the hostel. One year later, my grandmother too passed away. She had just only one opportunity to see Swami. She was fed through the nose as she could not eat with her regular mouth. We brought her like that only. Swami saw her from far and blessed her. He did not talk to her. We came back. I joined the hostel. One year afterwards, she passed away. Now, I came to see her body that time but I had a change in me. Though I loved her so much, I got the strength to console everyone else. The previous year I was outside and inconsolable. The same grandmother, whom I loved so dearly, I could take the grief with me and console everyone else. This strength and confidence that “Swami is there with us for everything” came to me after I joined the hostel. That is what He granted. That is the love and concern that He showed, which moulded us into what we are now.

Every aspect of our lives here has been predetermined. What we are doing, and what we are going to do also gets predetermined. I will just highlight this and stop. I will fast forward to my M.Com. days. Two glorious years I spent here. Once we finish our degree, we were wondering what we will do. We have seen our seniors staying in the hostel and going to the city and coming back. But we were wondering where our postgraduate will be. Because after B.Com., there was nothing there. We were wondering whether we have to go out, how the situation will be, we did not know. Luckily at that time, the thought of starting a postgraduate course started. And Swami thought, Yes we will start M.Com. But, we were wondering when that will happen. So, when the time came, and we were praying to Swami, and He luckily listened to our prayers and allowed us to join the first batch of M.Com.

And two years passed. At the end of it, it wasn't always easy for us. Swami was very lovable but when He had to be strict, He was really stern, even during our Postgraduate level. Once, Swami was in the Mandir and He was about to go to Brindavan in a weeks' time. He sent a word through the warden: tell the postgraduate boys to just keep their luggage out. I am not happy with them. As soon as the exam finishes, just keep their luggage out and send them. This was the message we got during examination time. We were all stunned. Because we did meet His expectation of not talking too much talk, or having many groups. He never liked that. In fact, one time in our X Std., He said, you are talking too much. Concentrating for what you have come for, studies and Swami. But you are not taking care. You are making friends. You come here and forget the purpose for which you have come here. We were all stunned.

We were still in our old ways. Swami knows everything. He picked up a boy and said,

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“You come here.” One boy from somewhere was picked up and He brought out ten pairs of students who were always together. We were all stunned. Such acts should always bring us in line to what our purpose is when we joined here is. We come in the name of Swami, Swami’s college, Swami’s school. We come to study here and then get good education. Not to see others’ faces. But we make our associations and forget the purpose. That is when Swami draws a line and jolts us in these acts of ‘acting anger’. When He acts, He acts very well.

So, He said, “Throw them out. Let them go.” But, when He closes a door, He opens a window. So, He told our Controller of Examinations, Prof. Nanjundiah (who is now retired), “*Chennu Nenu Hostel ki vastunnanu.*” (Sunday I am coming to the Hostel). So, he quickly told us this that Swami is coming, you better catch him. And sure enough, He came. He had spent some time as if nothing had happened. All the postgraduate boys surrounded Him and pleaded, “Swami please keep us. Please please please. Forgive us, forgive us.” All surrounded him and pleaded with him. Finally, He said, “*Evarevariki Etna Etna Unchukuntano Atla Unchukunta.*” (Whoever, however I want to keep, I will keep). It was a very nice statement to hear. Take *namaskar*, He said. Once He told us to take *namaskar*, we forgot this statement and just took his *namaskar*. And you know, we were very satisfied and He also went away.

But things cooled. We finished our postgraduate studies. Then what? There was a chance to apply for Ph.D. Those who got a GPA above 4.0 applied and of course only those above 4.5 were selected for the Ph.D. course. But, because of that He called us for a few interviews. And by then, some time has passed, about one month had passed. We were waiting what to do next. And we said again, “Swami Swami, we want to stay with you.” He said, “Haa. You keep saying that. See that boy, he has already made a partnership with his father. He joined his father’s business.” “No... Swami Swami...”. “*Yeh, Sariga Cheppu.*” (Tell properly). In this manner, He picked up 4-5 of us and said, “you have already decided your future.” Then, He came along and said, He looked at me and one of my classmates Jogi Raju and said, “Library Science Chesthara? (Will you study Library Science)? Maa college ki librarians *kaavala.* (We need librarians for our college)” I said, “Swami, Cheyyi ante Chesta.” (If Swami wants me to study, I will study) He put his hand on my hand and said, “Cheyyi.” (Do it) And He Himself got us the application and everything, got us enrolled at Bangalore University. He allowed us to stay at the hostel and travel to the university from Brindavan.

The reason I mentioned this is, at that moment of time, one thought flashed back in

memory. I was in VI Std. I was studying at St. Xavier's in Jaipur and the school had a very good library for all children and a good catalogue. We were taught how to use the catalogue to quickly find any book we were looking for. So, we would do that and go to that section (of the library) and read the books we were interested in. But, at that time, just a single thought came, "How good it would be that a library should be so well equipped like this for everyone to very easily browse and read books." VI Std., one single thought. So when Swami said, "Library Science Cheyyi," this thought flashed.

He has already planned our destiny for us. We only have to see how it is revealed to us on the tape of our life's history. That is how He brought me here and kept me in His presence.

Thank you. Sai Ram.

# Brindavan Campus Sessions

Dr. R Raghunatha Sarma

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It was my first year in Brindavan. Swami used to talk to us during the Trayee sessions after evening Bhajans. In our childlike innocence, some of us in the B.Sc. class wanted to ask Him to play the flute like He did in Krishna's time! We went to one of our faculty members who was supposed to take our next class. He was taking a class for the senior students and generally never liked to be disturbed whilst teaching. We knocked the door, and when he opened the door we asked, "Dear Sir, will you let us free for the next hour? We would like to procure a flute for Swami." He got very angry and said, "What stupid things are you speaking? You are coming and disturbing me in the class for such foolish things. Next hour I am going to give you a dose!" We all went back fearing and started praying fervently to Bhagawan. Next hour, Sir came to the class, continued the lecture and totally forgot about the 'dose' that we were supposed to get. We jumped in joy telling ourselves that our prayer worked! A miracle has occurred! Sir did not remember anything!

That evening, Swami called us for Trayee session and asked one of my classmates to speak! He started speaking and emphatically said, 'Today one miracle has happened' One teacher said that he will give us a 'dose' because we disturbed him. Then we prayed to Swami; in response the faculty member did not remember anything! Swami also got curious and asked "Who is that teacher?" There were peals of laughter in Trayee. The life of a Sai student was intertwined with Swami's message, His jokes, His chidings, His advice, His admonitions, etc. Every second, every moment He would think about students. Now when we look back, we understand how valuable those days were. Swami used to sing a very nice Telugu song on Lord Krishna:

*Premarabita marubhumulalo Premankuramulu pemponda Premaveshamulo  
Premasudhavarshaamu varshimpaga Premanadulu pravahimpaga murali ganamu  
seyagade krishna! Ganamu seyagade!*

In this song, the gopis plead with Lord Krishna to shower His nectarine love. When the Avatar comes down, Swami had once said, "*Vari sthayiki digivacchunu daivamu jeevaprajnatopatuga daivaprajna!*"

As a human being He will descend amidst us, move with us, eat with us, play with us, but at times He will reveal His grandeur for us to understand divinity. Finally,

the underlying truth is—as the song says—to sprout those saplings of love in our hearts. The sole aim of God is to see that the seeds of love grow into a plant. Once you understand love, you cannot live without it. It encompasses every sphere, every aspect of your life and you would want to immerse yourself in that love, whether you are doing your job or any day-to-day activity. He always filled the lives of many with Divine Love. When you say *Sahasra shirsha purushah, sahasraksha sahasrapaat*, it means Swami can come to us in any form – perhaps in the form of good advice from a faculty member, a friend or a message in a book or Swami Himself coming in your dream and advising you. He builds that relationship, which is very unique. Everyone is entitled to this unique relationship.

My family has been coming to Swami right from my grandfather's time. We have a photo of Swami in the alter of our house for the last sixty years. In those days, we used to stay in a small village near Anantapur called Pamidi, on the banks of the Penna river. Swami once came to Pamidi and performed miracles on the sands of river Penna like He used to do on the sands of the Chitravati. He took out *jalebis* from sands of river Penna once. People were hesitant in eating them as they felt some sand particles might be stuck to the jalebis. Swami said, "When I could take out Jalebis from sand, don't you think I will take care of the sand particles. Eat it without any fear."

My grandfather was standing in the crowd and looking at this young person clearing all the doubts and blessing everybody. He thought to himself, "If he is really a spiritual person, why is he addressing the physical problems and day to day problems? He should be talking about God and spirituality. Immediately one man from the crowd came to grandpa and said, "Swami is calling you!" My grandfather was taken aback. When he went to Swami, He said, "I will come to your house, will you give me food? My grandfather said, "Swami, please come." He came to the house. In those days there were a lot of orthodox customs being followed by people. Sensing that, Swami said, "I will sit in this particular room, I will not come into your kitchen, you need not worry." My grandfather was dumbfounded.

When I joined the B.Sc. programme, Swami came for darshan and asked me, "Where do you come from? I said, "Swami I come from the village Pamidi, you came to our

house. Swami vividly recollected, “I came to your house more than thirty years back! I stayed in that village for almost a month, your father was an eight year old lad.” Once Swami had told us- the past, present and future exists for you but for me it is as if everything is on a single plate.

Bhagawan literally moved with students as a friend! Swami would come for darshan and ask primary school kids, “What was the breakfast today?” Kids will reply in unison, “Swami, idli.” Then Swami would ask about the size of the idli by gesturing with hands and saying, ‘this much or this much or this much’. All kids put up their tiny hands depicting the size of Idli. That sight was so pleasing to all of us. Undergraduate boys would ask Bhagawan for the major-subject to be taken for their specialization in Physics, Chemistry or Mathematics. Students would also get their cricket bats signed by Bhagawan before the match and would call Him to witness the matches.

I had fever once during my 3<sup>rd</sup> year (undergraduate) and was admitted to General Hospital. I was writing exams with the fever. It was so severe, that I used to lose consciousness at times. Swami sent vibhuti and I was able to write my exams well. I came back and sat for darshan immediately after exams. Swami came and said, “Your fever lasted for three days, it should have been there for 3 months. You know how it happened? I had sent you prasadam, so that you will do well and pass your exams.” If I think of it now, I just wonder what made Swami love me so much!

I had the opportunity to study in Brindavan for one and a half years. Those days were the best days of my life. Almost every day Swami used to call us for Trayee sessions and materialize marvelous creations. It was Buddha Poonnima day and Swami described Buddha and his path of Self-realization. Then He said, “Do you all want to see Buddha?” We were all wondering what Swami would do. Swami waved His hand and out came a beautiful idol of Buddha. He passed it around and said that it is the exact replica of Buddha in Kathmandu. He took a *tulasi* leaf, blew on it and turned it into a golden leaf. He changed it back to *tulasi* leaf with one more blow and did this several times. Finally He asked “who wants this leaf?” Many of us eagerly stretched our hands. Bhagawan stretched His hand and moved the *tulasi* leaf tantalizingly across our faces and suddenly popped it into His mouth and smiled mischievously!

Once Swami called out to a boy during Trayee session and told Him that he has a heart problem. Then Bhagawan created a transparent lingam with a heart inside. One could see the heart and the veins of blood inside it. Swami asked him to pour

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water on it saying Sairam, Sairam, and drink it everyday to become alright. Another student was having a severe cold. Swami created a small box with hundred pills and asked him to take the pills as when he gets a cold. Then He spread His palm in front of us and said that there are medicine factories in this hand.

One day Swami was talking about the devotion of Sai Gita, the elephant. Swami again waved his hand and created a beautiful idol of Sai Gita. Swami said be devoted and disciplined like Sai Gita. We were so enamored by it that we started looking at it. Swami then said, "All of you are looking at this object that I have created. For a moment you all have forgotten about Swami, you are not looking at me. This is what happens in the world, all will look at the creation; they do not look at the creator. If you turn your view from creation to creator, your life will change."

I remember another incident. A student was given a ring. One day he gets up and asks Swami, "Swami can I show this ring to my parents?" Swami always used to say that whenever He gives a gift, it should not be shown to everybody. Swami took that ring immediately, blew on it and it disappeared. This boy was stunned beyond words and Swami said, "To show to your friends you did not take permission but to show to your parents you want permission? Is this the regard you have for your parents?" These kind of incidents used to nurture the students with valuable lessons of life. Just as a carrot attracts the rabbit, the educational system at Bhagawan's fold is meant to attract students close to Him. After one experiences Bhagawan's love, one gets transformed into a better human being.

He also alleviates our family problems. Once my mother was not well. I went to Swami and told him that my mother is not well. Swami immediately materialized *vibhuti* and said, "No need of operation." I went back and reported this to my mother. My mother was so happy; she said that if she would take the *vibhuti*, all her problems would go away. Believe me, from 1989 up until now, she gets a *vibhuti* packet every year and that too miraculously. Her belief is that as long as *vibhuti* is there, there is nothing to worry. He solves all your family problems so that you are ready for the correction.

Once while I was taking my lunch at the South Indian canteen in Prasanthi Nilayam, I observed that a 90-year old NASA scientist was distributing sweets. We asked him as to why he was distributing sweets? He replied, "I have been coming to India for 35 years and every visit I would desire a *padanamaskar* of Swami. Finally, I was fortunate enough to have it so I am distributing sweets as this might be my last visit. Swami

used to look at us and say, “How lucky you are, you are staying so close to me. A day will come when you will be standing far and pining for my darshan.”

One day a boy pulled Swami’s feet. Looking at him, Swami said, “This is your right, this is how you should grab God’s feet.” We would literally run like horses into the interview room. Once, Swami visited Brindavan after a gap of two years. One day after bhajans were over, Bhagawan gestured to us to come for a Trayee Session. We charged in and in the process, broke 8 to 9 flowerpots. All the faculty members were very upset. We had also flung Swami’s footrest and spilled the water kept for Him on the floor. We thought that all was over and Bhagawan would go back to Puttparthi because of our bad behaviour. Swami entered and saw water all around. Surprisingly, He broke into a song- *da dada dada da da*. We felt relieved. We told each other that we would be careful now on. A very senior devotee stood up and told Swami, “Boys are very selfish, they do not behave properly when millions of devotees are waiting to have the darshan of Swami. Students are given so much and even then they are not respecting this. After a few minutes of his barrage, Swami intervened and said, “Do not say anything to students. This is not selfishness. If I make you sit far then you will understand what students are feeling in their heart. He added, “When you say selfishness, selfishness is attached to the body! When boys are running towards Me, they do not remember their bodies, they have no body consciousness. They do not care whether they will fall, or break their bones. Their focus is fully on Swami. They want to just sit close to swami. That is meditation.”

What a beautiful message. When you remember only the Lord without anything else, that is meditation! Dhyana! When you are running for God you should not think of anything else. A saint once told me, “Do not think you are at Swami’s place as a mere chance. You are all chosen specifically by Swami. He is your Master. Just follow what He says, no other *sadhana* is required for you.

Staying in this place you should inculcate a Swami-centric life or values-based life. Everything else gets addressed. We have to build a unique association with Swami! Offer things to Swami that you are good at and practice it daily. For e.g. if one is good at *tabla*, he should play it everyday as an offering to God.



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## Sri Bishweshwar Prusty

Content Manager, Radiosai Global Harmony

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*Om Bhur Bhuvah Swaha  
Tat Savitur Varenyam  
Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi  
Dhiyo Yonah Prachodayat*

It was one occasion inside the interview room when Bhagawan was with Sumeet Tappoo, a famous playback singer. Swami asked him, “Can you chant the Gayatri Mantra?” He said, “Yes Swami.” “Chant,” Swami told him. He had the opportunity to massage Swami’s feet that day. Even as he was doing this he began chanting the Gayatri Mantra, Swami heard and said, “No, not like this. This is not how it should be chanted” and then Swami Himself started chanted the Mantra.

As Swami started “*Om Bhur Bhuvah Suvaha*,” Sumeet, who was massaging Bhagawan’s feet felt that Bhagawan’s body was actually getting warmer. As “*Tat Savitur Varenyam*” came, he felt Bhagawan’s body was getting hot. He wondered how to continue the massage; this was a coveted chance he had got but it was so difficult to continue. When Swami chanted “*Bhargo Devasya*”, His body became hot, just like molten iron and he just took off his hand. Finally Swami chanted “*Dhiyoyonah prachodayat*”. He now sat there staring at Swami, shocked and shaken with the whole experience, and hoping and praying Swami’s body is like before so that he could avail more of that blissful chance.

So that is the Cosmic Lord in whose presence we are so fortunate to live in.

All the article series in the Sanathana Sarathi—be it Vidya Vahini, Upanishad Vahini, Prema Vahini—were all written by Bhagawan between the years 1958 and 1984. Every month Swami would pen these down diligently. It is stunning to know that He would not waste even as much space as an ant could crawl on. We have Bhagawan’s manuscripts in our archives and it is amazing to see how Swami has optimally used every inch of space.

When Bhagawan moved to the new building in Yajur Mandir, the boy who was looking after Him came to know that He has the habit of writing and so he kept a notebook in Bhagawan’s bedroom. After a few days, he saw that Swami had started

writing and felt very happy that Swami was utilizing the notebook. But one thing surprised him. He thought, “Why is Swami writing everywhere? There is no space left on either side, the top or bottom.” He thought maybe Swami is thinking this is the only notebook available, so he added four more empty notebooks. A few days later when he examined them He found that Swami continued to write in the same fashion, not wasting even a centimetre of space. This is how our cosmic Swami teaches us how to lead our lives.

On one occasion, Prof. Kasturi went to Swami to ask for His article. Swami at that time was writing the Upanishad Vahini. It is a very difficult job to be the editor of Sanathana Sarathi because the publication can't be delayed (as subscribers will be looking forward to it) as everything has strict deadlines. Time was running out and Prof. Kasturi was in a predicament about how to remind Swami. One day he went to Bhagawan and cautiously pleaded with Him regarding the next installment. Looking at Prof. Kasturi's desperation (that day), Swami just waved His hand and gave him an another article for the vahini series.

Song: *Antaritam ritam poorna omkara roopam param sadgurum Sai naatham bhajebam.*

Let me now take you to Brindavan because the place always brings back such beautiful memories and I too was fortunate to be a part of that campus. There have been occasions when Swami touched a bud and it blossomed into a flower. There have been occasions when Swami took a Tulasi leaf and gave it to a boy and it got converted into a gold coin. There have been occasions when Swami has resurrected lives in Brindavan. Take the history of the hostel or the library or the stores that Swami has visited and sat in for so many occasions or the history of the Institute auditorium where the Summer Courses used to be held year after year. Brindavan was where the Summer Courses actually started. The history of the Summer Course is so entwined with Brindavan. It is the first college that Swami started in 1969; Prasanthi Nilayam came much later. I urge you therefore to explore Brindavan. Do you know how the Brindavan hostel came up or how the stores came up? Do you know how there was a Sairam shed with a beautiful Krishna statue and how when Swami inaugurated this He sweetly placed the flute on the idol?

The most beautiful aspect of Brindavan are the Trayee sessions. These were occasions meant exclusively for students. It was in these sessions that minds got moulded and hearts got healed, and lives were transformed and resurrected. Today let me take you through some instances of how this Param Sadguru, this Divine Teacher, used this

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ambience of Brindavan to alter hearts and minds. As many would say, Brindavan is Swami's home and Prasanthi is His office. In fact I would say that Brindavan is His playground; it is not for any trivial reason that Swami has named it Brindavan, like the Brindavan of the Dwapara Yuga.

This experience dates back to 1994. Three boys from Kerala joined the Brindavan campus. They were fast friends and once they joined the campus, everything seemed very odd. They were used to a very different life in Kerala. Life in Brindavan is between two bells as they say – first bell get up and second bell start walking, first bell form a line and second bell start moving. You cannot go out, there is no so-called adventure, and so, to some it may seem like an insipid experience.

One night as they were sitting in the dining hall and doing group studies, one of them said, "You know today I actually went out and smoked." The other two were stunned. The boy further said, "You boys told me that one cannot do anything like this here and that everybody is watching, but see I've done it. No one knows about it; even you didn't know about it!" But one of two said, "How do you know that Swami also doesn't know?" The boy thought for a while and replied, "Well, if Swami tells me, 'Don't smoke, then I will quit smoking.'"

In Brindavan, students used to go to Trayee Brindavan from Sai Ramesh Hall after the *bhajans* were over. A couple of days later, it so happened that all three boys were sitting in the first line for the Trayee Session. At the end of the session two boys used to get chance to offer a rose and *Aarti* to Bhagawan. Swami would be offered the *Aarti* plate with a matchbox on top of it and He would Himself take the matchbox and light the camphor. The boy would then quickly move the *Aarti* stand from the right hand to the left hand in time to receive the matchbox from Swami in his right hand. This was considered good manners. Boys would treasure the matchbox as it had been received directly from the Divine hands.

That day, one of the Kerala boys offered a rose and another boy offered *Aarti*. Swami took the matchbox, lit the *Aarti* and as this boy was waiting to receive the matchbox, Swami just turned and threw the matchbox to the boy who had smoked. He then looked at him and said, "I am giving you a matchbox, but don't smoke." Everyone laughed except these three boys. From that day, their lives changed forever.

Once, a boy who was a brilliant singer joined the Brindavan campus. Other boys suggested to him, "You sing so well. Ask Swami for a chance to sing." So he took

their advice and wrote a letter to Swami. On every occasion, when he tried to give the letter, Swami would say, "Marriage? You want to marry?" The boy would be stumped and would sit down. Some other day he would say, "Swami, please. I want to lead bhajans." Swami would ask, "Want to become a leader?" The boy would say, "Swami, please. I want to sing." Swami would reply, "Do you need an interview?"

The boy didn't know what to do and out of desperation started praying. One of these days when Bhagawan was speaking in Trayee Brindavan, He sang the beautiful song '*Aduḡaku ve o manasa*' which means "O mind, do not ask God for anything. If you ask, it will be delayed or it may be denied. So don't ask."

It's like you go and pray, "God, I want an iPhone 5." And God says, "Sure" and you say, "I am very clear. I want iPhone 5." So God finally grants your desire but adds, "Actually I wanted to give you an iPhone 6, which is just coming, but anyway you wanted an iPhone 5." So we should not ask God for we do not know what is good for us. He is the best to judge what is good for us at any point in time. All you need to say is, "Swami, I surrender to You. You know whatever is good for me. I accept Thy will."

So this boy decided that he would not ask Swami for anything. His friends told him that it was not the right thing to do but he was firm with his decision. The next day in the Trayee session, Swami asked the warden if there were any singers from among the new boys. The warden immediately mentioned about this boy and his audition happened right in front of Swami! And that is how he started singing in front of Bhagawan. The Lord was pleased with his rendering and gave him the permission.

Later when he came to Puttaparthi for his postgraduate studies, he continued to sing, being part of the Bhajan Group. He was an exceptional singer and would sing regularly. But one day he found his name not appearing on the list of singers for the day; that was very unusual. The next day too his name wasn't there on the list. This repeated now for the third day! And now he started thinking maybe something has gone wrong. Then one of the boys told him that Swami had critically commented on his voice.

He was deeply saddened. If a music teacher had commented, he could request him to give him one more chance but if Swami has done this, unless Swami Himself gave permission he cannot sing again. It was almost like you have lost your identity because the Bhajan Group has always been such a privileged group – thanks to this opportunity you always get to be seated in front of Him, be it any occasion or

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festival. In addition, most of the times you have the chance to accompany Bhagawan wherever He was going.

This boy would be graduating with his masters degree in a few months and this made him despondent. Some boys suggested that he should write a letter to Swami but he argued, “How can I do it? I got the chance to sing without ever writing a letter to Swami. How can I now write a letter for the same purpose?”

Anyway, during the Akhanda bhajan that year, after Swami retired for the evening, this boy got a chance to sing, and he poured his heart out with the bhajan, “*O Bhagawan, O Bhagawan, araj suno mere Sai Bhagawan.*” He thought that probably was his last chance.

But the next morning when bhajans started, the seniors let him sit in the Bhajan Group for he had sung the previous evening. And when Swami went to the interview room after sitting in the Bhajan Hall for sometime, they gave him another chance, so he started, “*Sankata harana Sri Sai Ramana.*” And Swami came out. Now, the seniors were in a fix as they thought Swami would take them to task for giving him a chance to sing. Next, Swami came and sat in His chair and everyone was petrified. This boy just closed his eyes and continued to sing, his heart filled with desperation. Bhajans ended and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. Swami had not stopped the bhajan. In fact, He seemed to enjoy the bhajan.

Immediately after he finished singing, Swami went to the Institute Auditorium to see a rehearsal of the Convocation drama. There, after the performance when Swami was talking to the students, He started commenting on bhajans and said, “There are some singers who do not pay attention when the women students are singing... they are busy preparing for the next bhajan. They try to play harmonium to check the *shruti* of their forthcoming bhajan... but that ‘parrot voice’ is not like that. But this boy had actually written a letter to me saying “Swami, please give me one more chance to sing. I do not want anything else. I do not want to play harmonium. Just one more chance to sing.”

As this boy returned to the hostel after the evening bhajan session that day, one boy came looking for him and said, “Hey, Swami was talking about you.” This terrified this singer because he thought “What now?” But when he heard the whole account he was in tears. The most beautiful part of this whole episode is that this boy had never written a letter to Swami. Bhagawan just confirmed the faith he had that if

there is a sincere prayer in our heart, He knows it. It reaches Him.

This boy recalls that on one occasion in 1994, Swami didn't call boys for Trayee sessions for successive days. After 3-4 days when Swami finally gave the chance, He said, "The reason I didn't call you for these 3-4 days is that I wanted to teach you to slowly look for Swami within."

For this singer, that lesson has been a tremendous source of support, a pillar to hold on to, especially after April 2011. This is what helped him to sail through that disastrous phase of his life.

The building between the Brindavan hostel and the college is called the Rajmata's house. She was a very pious and devoted lady who had done immense service to Bhagawan. There is a beautiful story of how Swami fulfilled one of her wishes. Her grandson Indreshwar, an alumnus of Brindavan Campus, studied up to his Class X in Rajkot, after which he decided to go to a prestigious university in Mumbai. After his Class X examinations were over, he reached home with his future plans chalked out. His grandmother asks him, "Gopal (nickname), as the exams are over, how about going to Prasanthi Nilayam?"

He becomes speechless and tears start rolling down his cheeks. The Rajmata was overwhelmed thinking that her grandson had so much love for Swami that with the very mention of Prasanthi Nilayam, tears had started streaming down his cheeks. But the boy thought, "Oh my God, now what's this?" It's like you have built a beautiful castle and a bulldozer comes and just pulls it down to earth. It is not that he didn't have love for Bhagawan. In fact, Swami had named him. Swami was very much a part of their lives, but he felt that studying in Puttapparthi was not for him as it lacked the adventure he craved.

In any case, He agreed to go there for just one day. But he was still scared as he felt that Puttapparthi is a very mysterious place where one's plans can change in an instant. Swami—much to his dismay—called his grandmother for an interview on the day of their arrival itself and he had no choice but to accompany her inside.

Gopal was praying that Swami doesn't talk about his education. The conversation went on and Swami too talked about everything except his education. The boy heaved a sigh of relief; but just then Swami asked, "Rajmata, what about Gopal's education?" And now Gopal did not wait for what his Grandmother could say to

Swami. He immediately blurted out quiet assertively, “Swami, I have finished my Class X in Rajkumar College in Rajkot. I have done extremely well and I am going to join Xavier’s College in Mumbai, and later the Armed Forces where I will take training for one or two years. After that I will be joining the Army. So everything is planned and taken care of.”

But next came the grandmother’s turn and she said, “Swami, my only cherished desire is that you should take my grandson into your fold.” And the boy turned pale. He could not intervene as the rules of discipline, courtesy and politeness expected him to be silent, especially when elders were speaking. So he started praying fervently. In fact, Swami Himself came to the boy’s rescue and said, “Rajmata, what he says is correct. Moreover, he likes non-veg food.” The boy nodded his head in affirmation and said, “Yes Swami, I like non-veg.”

Then Swami went on to narrate how on Mondays and Thursdays when there was no non-veg cooked at home, Gopal would go to joints and have his fill. Gopal agreed to all that because he thought, “If this is the qualification needed to be disqualified from this college, then so be it.”

Swami then looked at Rajmata and said, “Sometimes he goes to Bharati, and at other times, he goes to Reshma.” Now Gopal’s face just became red and he didn’t know where to hide himself. He was in a fix as to how to explain to his grandmother that Bharati and Reshma were actually names of food joints, one being an omelet joint and the other a kebab joint. But he could not do anything in the interview room and the moment his grandmother heard this, she just flung herself on Swami’s feet and said, “Swami if you don’t do anything, his soul will simply go into oblivion. You have to do something.”

Gopal realized that he was fighting a lost battle. So, he came out of the interview room, not knowing what to do about all those dreams of his which had all been shattered. He went back to Rajkot and decided not to prepare for the entrance test so that he fails in the examination.

A Sai devotee came to his house and said, “Gopal, how are you preparing for the entrance test? I know you will really do well. You will keep up the name of your family. Your family has got such a great history (with Swami) and you will really come out in flying colours.” Then it struck him – “If I fail in the exam, what will people think of me? Family prestige is paramount.” So he thought, “I must clear the

entrance. At least they will have no doubt about my IQ level.”

So Gopal cleared the written test and in the interview he was asked to sing a bhajan. He politely told the panel that he was not interested in bhajans. The panel asked him to sing a movie song and now he sang the famous song ‘*Ram teri Ganga maili ho gai, papiyo ke paap dhote dhote*’, which is not a devotional song. But when the interview panel heard this they felt ‘Look at this boy! He is so rooted in his culture, even though he sang a film song it is all about Ganga, Rama, and washing away of sins’. They felt that he was the right person to be moulded into a man of character. So they told him, “Congratulations Gopal! You are selected.”

Swami once told Gopal, “When you were in Rajkot, you wanted to make a man out of yourself; when you joined the college you learnt to make a gentleman out of yourself; when you leave the portals of the Institute, try to implement what you have learnt here and you will learn to find God in yourself.”

Before ending this talk, I just want to throw some light on the Gayatri Mantra and tell you the amazing cosmic relationship this mantra has with Bhagawan. Mr. J B S Haldane, an English researcher came to India and did a lot of research in Neuroscience and Biology. At the end of his work, he said that the Gayatri Mantra should be inscribed in the laboratory of every institution.

Just the other day I was speaking to a boy who recently joined the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and he was recalling the last year he spent with Swami in 2011. He counted the number of blessings he had received from Swami and the number came up to 49 *padanamaskars*. He felt very happy that in one year he had 49 of them but felt sad that he was one short of a half-century. That night Swami came in his dreams and told him, “*Teesko* (take).”

The Sadguru is always waiting. He is ever eager to shower His blessings. It is our duty to open our hearts. So I request you all to explore love and experiment with prayer. Your life will be beautiful!



# Muddenahalli Campus Sessions

Sri Sai Surendranath

Teacher, Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School

Offering my humble Pranams at the lotus feet of our most beloved Swami. I am very happy to stand before you and thank you for giving me an opportunity to go back to my olden days. We feel very nice to get back to memory lane, retrace them, reflect on them and rejoice again and again, because the closest proximity with our most beloved Lord always remains ever fresh and loving in our mind.

This evening I thought I would share some of my beautiful experiences with you because I see many new faces, and most of you have joined last year or this year. What can this place give you ?

Let me introduce my association with Swami. We came under the umbrella of our Lord through my grandmother. She came to our beloved Lord in the year 1949. She was instrumental in bringing my father to Swami in 1954. I was born in 1958. My parents told me Swami is your guru, your God and He is everything for you.

So therefore there was nothing left for me other than just accept Him, as I was born to a family who had firm faith in this sweet Lord and I am extremely grateful to the Divine Lord for this. He kept us near His lotus feet, nurtured me, and moulded me to this level. If I am standing before you today, it is because of His grace and Love.

During my pre-university days at Chennai, I developed a chest pain. Few said it was gastric problem, some said it was heart problem. One day it was very severe and they rushed me to the nearest doctor. He said, "This boy had a heart attack." The news in itself was a heart attack for all of us, including my parents. They asked "Doctor, how you can say he had an attack, he is just sixteen years old." Doctor said, "This could happen 1 in 10000 cases." They advised me not to lift weights, follow a strict diet and not to lead a strenuous life. Finally I was asked to take complete rest and my education was discontinued. At that juncture, my parents decided to go to Parthi and seek Swami's blessings. In those days, if you wanted to reach Prasanthi Nilayam, you have to travel via Penukonda or Bangalore, either by train or bus. They finally reached and stayed for several months.

Sri Kutumba Rao and Sri Chiranjeevi Rao were the caretakers of ashram back then, and they insisted that as per the rules of ashram, one cannot stay inside the ashram

for long. We used to stay in the shed near the current Patashala Block named Ganesh shed. We were allowed to stay there only for one month and then we shifted to rooms outside the ashram owned by Bhagawan's sister Smt. Venkamma garu. We stayed for three months. During these three months, Bhagawan made trips between Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan at least two or three times, and also to Chennai, but we didn't go anywhere.

I spent my whole day doing service at various places. In those days, Sri Basant, the garden in-charge, divided the garden (consisting of plants and coconut trees around Swami's residence) into four quadrants and everyday, one section would be watered. He was also taking care of the baby elephant, Sai Geeta. Sri Basant used to look after the elephant and I used to help him in watering the plants. My dad and I would work the whole day. I got the chance to work in the bookstall and even in canteen and attend the bhajan sessions. This went on for nearly three months. Swami would quietly observe us from His room window and enquire about us with Sri Chiranjeevi Rao.

Meanwhile, every day during darshan, my parents gave letters and prayed for an interview. Swami would take our letters daily but nothing happened and we waited and waited for three long months for His grace. Finally, one fine morning Swami blessed us with an interview. He blessed us and told every that had happened in Chennai regarding my health and said it is only gas trouble and nothing to worry. God made me do all the hard work all these days, only to prove that I am healthy and fine. He spoke about my sister's marriage. And then my father pointed towards me and said, "Swami what about my son." He said, "I will take care." By then I lost interest in studies and wanted to take up job with Air India. When I prayed, Swami said, "No, I want you to complete your education." I asked Swami, "Will you give me a seat in your Bangalore College." Swami said, "My students are brilliant, rank holders. Will you get a rank?" I said, "Swami, if you give me a seat and also the strength and blessings, I will also get a good rank."

Swami blessed me and told me to apply. I posted my application to Swami directly instead of sending to college. No reply came so I went to college they asked for my application number and I said I don't know. Just then, somehow Swami sent my application form to the college on the same day from His room and later I met the Principal, Prof. Narendra and Sri Nanjundaiah garu (the Controller of Examinations) and got seat and I joined Brindavan campus in 1977 for the Intermediate Course.

During my 2<sup>nd</sup> year, Swami asked all of us how many of us were interested to join Prashanthi Nilayam College, as He was planning to start a new university. I responded quickly raising my hand. That's how I became a 1<sup>st</sup> batch student of the B.Com. Class. The 1<sup>st</sup> batch was the most privileged group. We were the first to start the bhajan group and Swami gave me a chance to play the tabla. Swami took personal care and nurtured the Prashanthi Bhajan group. He used to teach us how to sing bhajans.

After finishing my B.Com., I continued into M.Com., by taking Swami's permission. After M.Com. I applied for a Ph.D. At that time, they were looking for a teacher in higher secondary school. All eyes were on me and they match fixed me for this post! One day during darshan, Swami asked me, "Are you willing to teach Commerce at the Higher Secondary School? I told Swami, "Whatever you command I will do and I have no personal wish. Swami you know what is best for me." I could see the joy in Swami's face and He proudly called Mr. Habbu, the Principal. He instructed him that no interview and formalities, just give the books and show him the classroom, he will take care.

Swami's Love cannot be explained but needs to be experienced. I was the first student to get a teaching job appointed by our Lord and with His blessings I have completed almost 28 batches in my teaching career. That is how Swami pulled me here, educated me and made me a teacher in His institution. All of you are most fortunate to be associated with such an esteemed institution founded by our sweet Lord. You are here due to His grace.

The Summer Course during our time (as students) spanned an entire month. The students of Brindavan College, Anantapur College and some pre-sevadals from each state would take part in the Summer Course. It was generally theme-based; like Ramayana, Bhagavatam, etc. Bhagawan invited scholars to give talks and He himself would give discourses explaining highest philosophy in the simplest of words. As students of the hostel, we had some additional responsibilities. Every day we woke up in the morning and cut around 50 Kg. of vegetables, 25 Kg. of onions, roll chapattis etc. because food needs to be ready for 1500 delegates. The best part was- Swami would come and supervise and advice us while doing our work, crack some jokes and shower immense Love towards all of us.

In that one month, Swami would dine with us at least 5 to 6 times. Even before we start eating, He would finish His food, move around lane-by-lane and give joy. We

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would be served with different types of sweets and mango every day and after one month, all of us would have put on at least five kilograms of weight.

Our hostel was a mix of students from all over the country and also abroad. We stayed united with a unique joy and no mental blocks. Swami ensures that we all belong to one big family, “Sai family”.

One day, when I was sitting near the interview room door for darshan, Swami called a family for an interview with an old man on a wheelchair. Swami saw the old man and told him sternly to get up and walk. The family members were little jittery and told Swami that he has some problem and that he couldn't walk for the past 15 years. Swami again repeated, “Get up and walk.” Swami patted his legs, held his hand and made him walk. After the interview this old man was pushing his own wheel chair and walking comfortably. After the incident, I summoned courage and asked Swami, “There are so many devotees sitting on wheelchairs, why don't you make everyone walk?” Swami said, “God has His own laws and He abides by it. He is the eternal witness.” What you see is the present situation but God sees your past, present and your future too. He will give you what you deserve.

Once an Italian devotee got a green Benz car for Swami. Swami refused to accept this car and told him to take it back. Since he insisted and to make him happy, one day Swami signaled a few boys to get into the car and He dropped these students in front of the college. A few days passed and I—like an obedient student—waited for Him to tell me personally and didn't want to be an indisciplined student, running in front of all the devotees. He continued this for some more days and some boys got more than one chance to go in the car. I got fed up of not getting a chance and finally, I also decided and run to get into the car. I was too late and I could not get into the car as I was half inside and half outside with no place remaining. I looked at Swami pathetically. Swami looked at me and said, “Don't worry, I will take you another day.” I got an assurance from Him and came back. I thought that He would call me the subsequent days. But in the next couple of days, the car developed a technical problem that couldn't be repaired and our free trips stopped.

Whatever Swami says is always the truth. After around seven years, when I joined as a teacher, one of my colleagues was sick and I went to buy bread for him. As I was riding my bicycle with bread in one hand, my cycle skidded and I crashed landed with a fracture and a ligament tear on my right leg. The doctors told to me that it will take six weeks to become normal. I cursed my stars as I won't be able to play tabla

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in front of Swami and worried what Swami would think of me. In those days, our Loving God went for a drive after morning bhajans at least three times a week and I had darshan near the hostel gate. It became a great blessing in disguise.

Once after the Krishna Janamashtami celebrations in Puttaparthi were over, I was still sitting in the mandir waiting for my rickshaw to come. Swami usually went to Gokulam to bless devotees and take *Mangala Arati*. Swami came out of interview room and asked, “Why have you not gone yet?” “Swami, I am waiting for my rickshaw to come.” Swami said, “No rickshaw, come, get into my car.” People around helped me and I found myself seated in a Benz car, red in colour, instead of green. Only two of us, Swami and me, were in the back seat. He took me to Gokulam and on the way back dropped me at the hostel. It didn’t strike me that time. After few months, I realized that Swami kept up His word, the assurance given to me. I had to wait for seven years, but His words never failed. With Swami, when, where and how? These questions have no significance. We have to wait patiently, it will happen even without our knowledge.

What is the difference between prayer and meditation? Prayer is what you want God to listen, so you open your heart, mind and mouth and pray, while meditation is what you should listen to Him in silence. He talks to you and answers all your prayer.

One day in the interview room, a devotee asked Swami, “Why do you teach spirituality to small children and young students. It should be taught after they grow up.”

Swami replied very sweetly, “A sapling needs protection and care when it is small, if it is not given the due protection, it will grow crooked. Later, even if you try with your might to straighten it, it will break. When this can happen to a sapling, why not to a human being? Students at this age learn and practice good values and be strong in their mind and body.” “See good, Be good, and Do good,” this is the way to God.

It is due to God’s blessings and merits of your past life, that you have been chosen by God to be part of this great institution. Whatever Swami has designed is always for our wellbeing. Enjoy staying here and participate in all activities; learn the simple way of living, enrich yourself with all values, as they will brighten and enlighten your life in the outside world.

God Bless us all.

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## Dr. A Sunil

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Let me recall one incident that happened in Kodaikanal, when the first batch of M.B.A. students went to Kodaikanal. They were all having a session with Swami. Swami was speaking to them and in-between, Swami was pulling each student's leg, saying that they didn't do well in their exam, they didn't get good marks in their entrance examination. One student got up courageously and asked Swami, "Is getting a seat in your Institute is because of our merit or your grace?" Then Swami replied wonderfully, "Merit is also grace, Sir." Yes brothers, it's so true. Imagine a topper forgets; his mind goes blank in exams. Will he be a topper? We should understand that it's all grace of Bhagawan or God that enables us to achieve things in life.

I recall a beautiful incident of a senior boy who completed three years of undergraduate studies in Puttaparthi. He asked Bhagawan, "Swami the three years I spent at your Lotus Feet have come to an end and now we are going to outside world, how are we going to feel and experience You?" Every time we see You, we feel happy. But once we go out we don't have access to your physical form." Then Swami replied, "The time you spent in Swami's institutions, you will have wonderful experiences and insights. You should cherish and remember all those experiences; then automatically you will feel happy and feel the presence of Swami." It is so true. What a great opportunity for me again to narrate Swami's experiences and cherish them by sharing with all of you.

It was in 1984 that my father had built a new house. The area where the house was built was a little hilly and there was some water problem. He had to go one kilometer away to bring water on a bicycle. So later he decided to lay a bore well. All the neighbours had tried to lay a bore well but none of them could succeed in getting water. But still my father took a courageous decision; he just went on to lay a bore well. The day came when bore well was dug. Even though the bore well was dug down to 300 ft, not even a drop of water was found. Later one of my father's colleagues advised to pray to Sai Baba of Shirdi and prayers will be answered. As advised by his colleague he prayed to Sai Baba, "Swami please give us water and I will come to Shirdi and have Your darshan." The next morning, to his utter surprise, the water level rose to 150 ft, and because of this miracle, he decided to visit Shirdi. My father went to Shirdi and there in the darshan line he met a person who happened to be our Sathya Sai Samithi convener. He introduced Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to my father saying that he is none other than the Avatar of Shirdi Baba. In this way,

Swami entered our family and sowed the seeds of devotion in all our hearts.

We used to participate bhajans and service activities very regularly. My mother used to see vibhuti and kumkum coming from Swami's photos at various places. She would pray, "Swami we regularly worship you, please give us such experiences at our home as well." It was the summer holidays that time and she being a teacher, was correcting the answer scripts. At that time, my age was four years. Suddenly to our surprise we observed honey flowing out from Swami's photo and then my mother revealed to us what she had prayed for. Think of Swami and He responds to that, it's just so wonderful to have such a Lord.

Right from childhood days, I had only one goal, that is to get into Swami's institution. Religiously, I applied to this His institutions right from my first standard to get a seat, but in vain. In 1999, after my tenth standard board exams, during the summer (as part of Andhra sevadals), I got an opportunity to serve at Puttaparthi. After the seva, we went to Brindavan to take Swami's blessings, as Swami stayed there during summer. We arranged ourselves for darshan in lines and Swami came to each line and blessed us with paadnamaskar and vibhuti. When my turn came, I asked Swami, "Please grant me the opportunity to study in your college." Swami replied, "It is not your college; it's our college, come and study happily." I applied for eleventh in Parthi but couldn't get selected. I felt dejected. Then after my twelfth, I had applied for the B.Sc. (Hons.) course and got selected to study at Brindavan. Only then I realized that I had asked Swami for a seat in college and not in school. Swami kept his word. I have learnt my first lesson that we have to be very careful in asking anything to God. He blesses us very lovingly but we have to bear the consequences for what we have asked for. After that I always only prayed, "Swami please give me true devotion and strength to accept and obey your will."

In Brindavan, during one of the trayee sessions, Swami asked students to ask any question. One boy asked, "Swami, we have come here due to our past good karmas. Now that we have come here, what is the *sadhana* we have to do?" Swami smiled and replied, "For all the students the greatest *sadhana* you can do is to follow hostel rules and earn Swami's grace." For past two days we have been listening to discourses where Swami explains us to control our senses. At this young age, our mind is very

fickle and Swami has set this hostel schedule so meticulously that we don't remain idle. We have to indulge in studies or in Self Reliance work. For example, if we want to play a game one has to follow the rules and stick to them once we are on the court. We come to Sai institutions from far off places to learn Swami's teachings and right way of life. So it is very important to follow the guidelines set by Swami in the hostel so that we can fare well in the game of life once we enter the world outside.

Swami also talks about the importance of seva (service). I would like to narrate an incident (in relation to this) that happened in Sai Kulwant Hall. One fine day, Swami asked a few students to take prasadam and distribute it. Once the distribution was completed, Swami asked the students, "Why do you think that I ask you to distribute prasadam?" Students said, "We feel that you are giving us a great blessing!" For this Swami replied, "The important thing one should note is the act of seva, you do. In life, whenever you are in difficulty and call out to me, I will remember this act of yours and rush to you immediately." What a wonderful Lord He is. He insists us to do seva so that He can help us in return! These opportunities are available at Sri Sathya Sai institutions and organizations and hence, whenever we get an opportunity for service, we have to participate. Let it be serving in the dining hall or helping our own brothers in Self Reliance departments. For every act, you are being accounted for and the grace of the Lord will be showered bountifully. We see that the students who pass out of our institute reach great heights because of this very reason.

Let me share with you the greatness of a word from Swami. During my second year as a postgraduate student, I got admitted to the hospital on account of high fever. I was upset as the Doctor diagnosed it as tuberculosis. I immediately reported this to Swami. Swami said, "Doctors will tell like that, but don't worry, tomorrow morning everything will become normal." Believe you me, the next morning my body temperature read 98.4 F, which was not the same previously. His one word can turn chaos to orderliness! Thus, the grace of God is like anesthesia that can numb down the pain of suffering. Hence it is very important to put sincere efforts to earn God's grace.

I would like to narrate a wonderful experience of my brother-in-law. My brother-in-law stays in Canada, and he had a desire of having a girl child. After six months, the diagnosis was done for my sister. The doctor said, "It is a baby boy." My brother-in-law felt sad about that. Later my mother advised my sister to tell my brother-in-law to write a letter to Swami and he followed the instruction. During the seventh month, after the checkup, to our utter surprise it was found that it is a girl child. The



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doctor couldn't believe it and told that it was the first time that it had happened like this in his vast experience of thirty years as a doctor. My brother-in-law felt very happy and named her as Sai Saranya.

In our life, at some point we have to surrender to God to understand and experience Him. My Ph.D. was over and it was the time for my final defense on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February. I was informed that the expert panel would be from two top class research institutions and that they can test me in all the aspects of Chemistry and I have to get prepared for that. On the night of 31<sup>st</sup> January, as I was preparing for the final defense, at one point I stopped, and within me emerged a prayer of surrender to Bhagawan to help me by showering His grace. With this, I was continuing to see the PowerPoint slides which I had prepared. As I looked at the slide, there flashed an insight of the concept. For every slide there was some indication of an answer to a particular question. The day came where I had to present my thesis to the examiners. The presentation went on well; it was time for the questions for which I have to defend. It went on for forty-five minutes; I was able to answer every question. Then came a flash of thought, that it was the same sequence of questions that flashed as I was going through the slides. It was evident to me that it was purely Swami's grace that I was successful that day.

In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord says that Arjuna should give up all the processes that have been explained to him; he should simply surrender to Krishna. That surrender will save him from all kinds of sinful reactions, for the Lord personally promises to protect him. Yes brothers: just do your duty and develop the attitude of surrender to God; the end results will be accomplished.

At this juncture, I remember the experience of one student. During his undergraduate studies, he did not do well in his Chemistry exam and he had attempted only for 35 marks. He was very worried how he can face Swami with his bad performance. During the evening, at Trayee, Swami asked about the exam and he answered the same. Swami said, "Do the other exams well." When the results were announced it was found that he had passed with a good grade. The following day, in Trayee session, Swami asked him, "How marks in Chemistry?" The student replied, 53 marks. Then Swami smilingly replied saying that it is He who changed 35 to 53 marks. Such is His love for His students. So, we have to just surrender to Him alone.

Swami's omniscience made all my family members wonder-stuck and this incident tells how Swami's assurance can take us a long way. One day my sister fell ill and

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she had a problem in delivering her baby. She was admitted in the hospital and the situation was very serious. My parents asked me to inform Swami and pray for His blessings. During darshan, I was holding a letter sitting somewhere in the middle and hoping for Swami to take it. Swami lovingly looked at me and said, “Sister”, took the letter and went off. I was wonderstruck experiencing His omniscience. Later that day, in the hospital, my sister witnessed a dream where in Swami said, “Just don’t worry, you will be alright. I am sending Srinidhi to you.” She had delivered the baby and the next day when she got up, she narrated this dream to us. Later, she regained her health and the baby was also healthy. The baby was named as Srinidhi. The name ‘Srinidhi’ happens to be one of those names normally chosen by Swami to name a girl child.

It was the time when I was supposed to choose my honors subject for my B.Sc. (from either Mathematics, Physics or Chemistry). Something within me prompted me to take Chemistry and following it, I finished my U.G., P.G. and M.Phil., and also started my Ph.D. in Chemistry. On one occasion in 2009, Swami asked me about my studies and I promptly replied that I was pursuing my Ph.D. in Chemistry. Swami replied, “Physics would have been tough for you. You opted for the right choice of selecting Chemistry by hearing the voice within.” After listening to this, I was confused of what Swami was meaning. I went back to hostel, opened my diary, and then I remembered the dilemma I faced and the decision I took by following my inner conscience. Brothers, though Swami is not physically present with us, He always guides us in unseen ways. For that we have to silence our mind and listen to Him.

The talk ended with a telugu song: ‘Maa prana daivam...’

O Lord Sai! You are the Lord of our life and our true mother. Our bond of Love has been from ages. Your ocean of Love is a boon for us and the Love in our heart is only for You. In any birth, we seek only your proximity. Bless us all!

Jai Sai Ram.

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