



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)



SUMMER COURSE

in Indian Culture and Spirituality





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 & SPIRITUALITY

13-15 June 2014 | Prasanthi Nilayam



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 lie 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 2014/15, the event was held from 13th to 15th of June 2014. 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 themes (study circles amongst students) of the Summer Course were Rise from Animality to Divinity and From Knowledge to Wisdom, based on the 1992 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 2014. 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.





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Welcome Note

Dr. T Ravikumar

Associate Professor, Dept. of Chemistry, SSSIHL
Warden, Brindavan Campus, SSSIHL

The Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality began in the year 1972 in Brindavan. Speaking on that occasion, Bhagawan said, “Bharat is a *punya bhoomi*. The very air that blows through this land has truth in it; the very dust that rises has righteousness embedded in it; the rivers that flow through this land are suffused with love in them and every Bharatiya has forbearance installed in his heart. This is a land whose glory is immeasurable; there is no land of this kind anywhere in the world. But sorry is the plight of Bharatiya culture this day. There is no one who has talked to the youth about the glory of this culture.”

The youth these days see the Bharatiya culture through the eyes of the television anchors of the west and the Internet. The lifestyle of the west has made them starry eyed, making them forget the grandeur and glory of this culture. Bhagawan said, “Nobody has exposed our youth to the wonderful culture of our country. Therefore, I have taken upon Myself the task of doing this to the youth of this country.”

From the year 1972 onwards, we had the Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality. Typically lasting for thirty days, they would consist of students drawn from all states of India. The books that were compiled of these Summer Courses were named Summer Showers in Brindavan- Brindavan (in Bangalore) owing to the location and summer showers owing to the fact that the Indian monsoon typically started around this time of the year (May/ June). The external environment would be cool and Bhagawan would shower His nectarine discourses on all of us. He would pick up various themes of Indian Culture like Brahman, Bhagavad Gita, Bhaja Govindam, Srimad Bhagavatam, Ramayana, Mahabharata and the various epics and scriptures.

Swami said, “Bharat is a *punya bhoomi*, it is a land of penance. The leaders of modern times are trying to convert it into a *bhoga bhoomi* (a land of pleasures); a land of skyscrapers and tinned food. This is a dangerous defiance of history

and a crime against humanity because if Bharatiya culture perishes, so does humankind.”

To expose youth to the culture and scriptures of this land and to know what has made this civilization last from time immemorial, to this day—at His University—we conduct this Summer Course. It also highlights to the youth, the eternal presence and the vibrancy of this Bharatiya culture. It is this culture that the Avatar came down to nurture and nourish.

Let us listen from Bhagawan Himself, what is culture and spirituality:

Students!

We have this Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality. There is no difference between culture and spirituality. In spirituality we have culture or *samskruti*. That which refines oneself is *samskruti*. When you give gold to a goldsmith to make a bangle, he will put it in fire, hammer it and cut it. Finally on the third day, the goldsmith will come and give you a bangle. How much of processing did the gold go through before becoming a bangle!

We get the paddy crop that we bring home and put them in bags, but do we eat it like that? No. It is beaten, the husk is removed, the separated grains are then boiled in water, and then (finally), it is eaten by us. It is not possible to enjoy something directly after it is produced. It is only after the process of refinement that we can enjoy it.

Hence, students; you have not picked up all this knowledge immediately after your birth. You start by learning ‘A B C D’, pronounced them with your mouth, write them (the alphabets) again and again, combine them in the form of spellings and then put them in the form of words which finally can be read. Hence, culture is essential. The gold has to be heated, hit with a hammer and should be cut- only then will it acquire beauty and brilliance.

Embodiments of Love! Indian culture has beauty and bliss in every word. How can you expect to have bliss without beauty and beauty without bliss? Beauty is bliss and bliss is the nectar of Ishwara. This is the nature of Ishwara as mentioned in some scriptures. Read the scriptures of Bharat with a lot of reverence and sincerity. All religions are one; all forms are one. The body is

the temple of God and God is its indweller. One has to realize this divinity immanent in this temple. Summer classes have been started to teach you the truths of this ancient culture. In our day-to-day life, the only objective should be to give up bad qualities, inculcate good qualities and transform our lives. To be cultured is very valuable. Mere knowledge will not make you educated. Without culture you can't call yourself literate or educated. Hence, culture is essential for every educated person. During vacations, there is every chance of wasting your time, indulging in vain gossip, watching films and so on. To make sure that your time is spent in a fruitful way, this Summer Course is conducted every year during the summer vacations.





Inaugural Address

Prof. J Shashidhara Prasad

Vice-Chancellor, SSSIHL

This is the fourth Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality after it was blessed by Bhagawan before He decided to leave His physical form.

The modern man decided to evolve on this microcosmic Earth of this every expanding universe. He encounters basically three types of conflicts:

Man vs nature- man alone has conflict with the world where he lives (and not other species). A man alone in the wilderness battling for survival represents this conflict. In this present scenario, natural calamities like floods, increasing temperatures, increased glacial melting, etc. are reflections of the high-handedness of man and present greater challenges to man collectively. This is the conflict of man vs nature at the macro level. This gave rise to the physical sciences.

Man vs society- an individual struggles against the rules and expectations that society tries to impose on him. Sometimes an individual feels out of place and he doesn't fit into society. A subset of man vs society is man vs man, when there is a disagreement or any other kind of argument. This results in sociological, emotional and psychological turmoil and remedies, and gives birth to the mental sciences.

Man vs self- is an internal conflict where man battles with his own psyche. Trials of the conscience where man tries to do the right thing (when apparently it looks beneficial to do the wrong things) and a person who tries to escape the trappings of his own mind are examples of man vs. self. This conflict results in spiritual and metaphysical sciences.

These conflicts cannot be understood in isolation. We are aware that evolution is an progressive and ongoing phenomenon. Nothing is permanent except the eternal Self. Connecting the whole of reality with the spirit of what is, is God. The mind, in its many levels of knowing, will survive beyond this physical body, which is also proved in scientific learning. On this journey of

life, one has to know that one is never alone, that all are essentially One spirit. In the deeper conscious Self, we all know this truth- that our Self contains many levels of knowing and being.

The physical and mental sciences depend on tools and techniques external to the physical form, whereas the spiritual sciences require tools within the conscious Self, i.e. Soul. Sciences have not solved the problems of many dimensions in the higher energy realms that are around us and which exist in us through our porous atomic structure. These realms from where we came and to where we will go back are yet to be explored and understood. Science cannot explain our reality and the energy that our thought creates. We now know that roughly 95% of the Universe is made up of dark energy. We see that more is unknown than is known. We know the existence of dark energy as it expands the Universe. Other than that it is a complete mystery.

The functioning of the mind and brain is being understood with the help of advanced gadgets and machines but they do not give the understanding of emotions and abstract feelings like love, anger, anxiety, jealousy, etc. It is only possible to identify the regions of the brain where these factors originate. Spirituality is the core of every religion. Seers of the past and great spiritual masters have defined spirituality as the quintessence of the Soul in life and conduct, and reveal that spirituality is present in each one of us. They have identified these intuitive truths enhanced by deep meditation and penance. They have also enunciated the immortality of the Soul. Spiritual texts like the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads hold that the Soul has an existence before birth and also after death. It is neither born nor does it die. Immortality and universality are its attributes. Hence, taking decisions by separating one component of existence—animate or inanimate—from another is not the right thing to do. The Soul inhabits all creation in equal measure, highlighting the dictum- *Vasudaiva Kutumbakam*- the whole Earth is one family. The Soul is present in the whole body from top to toe and it also binds the entire body together. The Soul has an inherent solemnity, which in turn leads to the unravelling of the deeper mysteries of existence, and has the power to integrate and bind things in a common strand. Finally, the Soul is the supreme ruler of all creation, individually and collectively. It is the common thread in all the three types of sciences which came into existence

due to the three types of conflict. This is the main reason for the present day turmoil, which has shattered the peace of mankind.

Vedic sciences speak of the subtle form or energy in addition to the gross form of energy. Divinity manifests in age after age to drive home this Universal transcendental truth so that man can identify his inherent divinity. Our beloved Bhagawan, the Avatar of the age, has given the simple dictum of 'Love All Serve All.' This doesn't apply only to human beings. The 'all' refers to love for nature, fellow human beings and all in totality. Serve refers to serving all that is, selflessly with *trikarna shuddhi*, i.e. purity in thought, word and action. Serving nature implies taking care of all the flora and fauna and not destroying the same for selfish ends.

Swami is not there in His physical form, but one should not think that only physical form is the truth, as dark matter comprises 95% of all existence. It is not correct to question the presence of divinity in subtle form as science and spirituality merge at the quantum level.

Let me bring to your notice an incident that happened in the life of Albert Einstein, the greatest scientific mind of 20th century. He was giving a talk to a scientific community and had populated the big blackboard with innumerable equations. When he was summarizing, a student at the back raised his hand and said, "Prof. Einstein, your equation is wrong- the assumption in a particular step is not tenable to the point made in another step." There was pin drop silence and every scientist in the assembly looked back to see the questioner whom they thought was mad to challenge Einstein. Einstein was unperturbed. He turned back, went through the presentation again and after some time turned towards the audience and said, "Gentlemen, the young man is right. Please forget whatever I have told you in the last one hour."

This shows the humility of a true scientist and his adherence to truth even at the risk of loss of personal prestige. It also shows the open-mindedness and highlights the fact that there is no absolute authority in science. If we can't have absoluteness in science, how can we expect absoluteness in spirituality? The young man was none other than Lev Landau, a prominent Soviet physicist who got a Nobel Prize in 1962. There is a book named 'The Man they Wouldn't Let Die' where it is mentioned that Lev Landau met with an

accident and was in coma for one year. To treat him, at the peak of the cold war, Russia requested French doctors to come and operate upon him.

If this is the case with science, we require a greater humility, foresightedness, open-mindedness and intuitive abilities in understanding spirituality. In spirituality, unlike science, the mind and heart have to be put together. C P Snow, an English physical chemist and novelist, talks about two cultures in one of his books. But with three conflicts and three cultures, I am sure that we can get enlightened by reading the discourses of Bhagawan Baba in the gross form. His inspiring subtle form, which pervades the entire Universe, manifests here and there to confirm His Divinity.





Significance of Culture in Human Development

Prof. B S Nanjunda Dixit

Vedic Priest

Former Professor in History, Christ College, Bangalore

I am very fortunate to be associated with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, whom I always recognize as a very good friend, philosopher, guide and God. In the company of Bhagawan, I experienced all these four concepts. He was a friend to me in the beginning and later he gave His philosophical truths to me, guided me and finally made me recognize that He is God.

When I was asked to come and perform the *Athi Rudra Maha Yagna*, my mind was not certain; it was oscillating. I was born and brought up in a place called Kadugodi in Bangalore, which is very near to Swami's ashram in Brindavan. But I had no mind to go to Him or attend the many Summer Courses held in the ashram. However, when I finally came in contact with Him—albeit quite late—I not only recognized Him as God but also enjoyed His company. On the seventh day of the *Athi Rudra Maha Yagna*, Swami asked me to come to the interview room and asked me, “You have a little ego, why can't you give it up?” When He asked this question, I started crying. Swami asked, “Why are you crying?”

My parents would not have had the chance to guide me like this; my children won't have the courage to tell me like this; who else other than God can bring a change in a person? On that day, I recognized Swami as God and there after I have tried my level best to spread the message of Bhagawan.

Culture is a very important factor in shaping the destiny of humankind. Today the world is facing a lot of crises and the young minds always think about these disturbances. There is no doubt that Bharat is a very great nation. As often mentioned by Bhagawan- in the kingdom of spirituality, Bharat is the king. Many have taken inspiration from our rich heritage, but what is the condition that is prevailing today? This is the greatest question now for which proper answers have to be searched. If we don't show the way to

these young minds, I feel we have failed in our duty. Wherever we go, we find mistrust, selfishness, lack of respect for women, and unwanted competition. The root cause of all these problems is the egoism that is there in our minds. We have to put an end to this egoism. Swami has suggested repeatedly in His discourses the ways to get rid of this egoism. When we get rid of the ego, a tranquil mind will prevail; one which will be in a position to understand our fellow human beings.

In the present scenario, a human being is an enemy of another human being. As commanded by Swami, Rudram chanting was taken up by people around the world and the number runs into crores. Recently, when I went to Atlanta to perform a *Athi Rudra Maha Yagnam*, to my utter surprise, I was able to see people from Europe, America, Canada, Mexico and some African countries gathered there to do a wonderful *sadhana*. These 140 devotees practiced strict *Brahmacharya* (celibacy)- no alcohol, no smoking, no non-vegetarian food for 121 days. They chanted the *rudram*, 100 *Gayatri Mantras* and 100 *Sai Gayatris* every morning and evening. After finishing their *sadhana*, they participated in the in the eleven-day Yagnam. I asked them, “You have finished 132 days of *sadhana*. How many of you wish to continue this here after?” I was satisfied when I heard that 80% of them felt that this is the real life. This transformation was due to the simple message of Bhagawan to chant *Rudram*. This type of transformation is the greatest achievement in the spiritual world.

What is culture? Culture is very important for the development of humanity. Prof. V K Gokak, the first Vice-chancellor of SSSIHL has given an apt definition of culture. He says, ‘It is the complex whole of knowledge, beliefs, customs, moral and spiritual life.’ Culture is the sum total of the development of all these factors. Civilization is what we are and culture is what we ought to be. Civilization refers to the external progress. Culture can be defined as the best way to develop our spirituality.

Whenever we talk about spiritual activity, the youngsters question, “Don’t you think that it is too early to think of spirituality?” There is no age restriction in spirituality. If we had one, we would not have learnt about Adi Shankaracharya, Swami Vivekananda, Jesus Christ and so on. All of them left

the world before the age of 40. Adi Sankara was able to resist the onslaught of Buddhism at an early age of 32 and rejuvenated Sanathana Dharma. Swami Vivekananda, when he spoke in America, elevated the position of Bharat to the highest level. The world recognized the importance of Bharat and started looking up to it. He also left the world before touching 40 years. Jesus Christ also had a tremendous influence. Today, the vast majority of the human race are the followers of Christianity- be it Catholics, Protestants or any other sect. It is unfortunate that Christ was not recognized as God in his lifetime. He was tortured and ultimately crucified. After his crucifixion, he became God. He also died in his early thirties. Hence, don't be under the false impression that to know spirituality, age is a criterion. Prahlada was able to achieve great devotion to Lord Narayana at such a tender age.

The only remedy for all the problems of the world is cultural rejuvenation. Religious institutions have played a great role in shaping the destiny of human beings. In every civilization, importance has been given to religion in its pristine form. Today, religion is in a polluted form. I always tell my students that religion is good but papacy is bad. All religions say that the only goal is the ultimate realization of God; just as Swami says that the different religions are different paths to reach the same God.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism- these eight have been recognized as the main religions of the world. Out of these eight, four religions originated in India. Sanathana Dharma (leading to Hinduism), Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism were born in India. Each religion is unique in its own sense. For example, Islam talks about the unity of God, Christianity speaks about human values, Buddhism speaks about the status of man, Jainism speaks about non-violence, and Hinduism speaks about spirituality. Each religion has contributed in its own way to enrich the knowledge of man.

Today we are getting carried away by science and its advancements. It is true that without science we would not have come up to this stage. We have used science to generate electricity and this electricity is used to power this mike and helps in communication. On several occasions, I feel that the level of interest we have in going to the Moon or Mars should be directed towards

our fellow human beings. We should think of the state of human beings in Africa, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, etc. We can't ignore the miserable plight of human beings in the underdeveloped countries.

There is development due to the hard work of the scientists; we have progressed from the nomadic age to the space age- but there is also a downside of it. We always have a nuclear threat from Pakistan. If nuclear arsenal is used against a human setup, then all the hard work of development (over centuries and millennia) will be smashed in two minutes. Do we want to face such a situation? Definitely not! Our aim is to live with spiritual values.

The temples of yore promoted a scientific temperament simultaneously with the rituals. We have great astronomers like Aryabhata, Varahamihira and doctors like Charaka and Sushruta due to this scientific temperament. Temples played a major role in development of culture. They were centres of religion, education, judiciary, art, painting, music and so on. These facets were developed in many temples and this practice continues even today. The institutions like Temples, Churches, Mosques, Gurudwaras were entirely different from ordinary dwellings. As houses of God, they were superior in all aspects compared to normal houses. In Hindu temples, one can find gigantic *gopurams* with Dravidian style for south Indian temples, Nagara style for north Indian temples and Vesara style- a synthesis of both the styles.

These facilitated in spreading the message of God to human beings to lead a happy and purposeful life. These days—with a few exceptions—the temples have become centers of corruption. We have to put an end to this corruption prevalent in these religious institutions and make them more meaningful and purposeful.

Temple architecture has undergone a change. New styles have been introduced like the Greek columns, the Oriental domes, the Islamic decoration, etc. Even the Hindus thought of making a beautiful temple. Judgments were pronounced in the vicinity of temples for the settlements of disputes. There was lot of weightage given to those judgments and both the parties used to agree to the verdict. The dance forms, art and architecture were also promoted by these temples. The paintings of Ajanta in India and Sigiriya in Sri Lanka shows the cultural heritage of Hindus. This temple architecture of Indians

influenced even the foreigners. One example of this is the beautiful temples of Angkor Vat dedicated to Lord Vishnu. This was constructed by Surya Verman and is considered one of the biggest temples in the world. We can see many such shrines in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Thailand, Pakistan, Nepal and Tibet. All these temples had only one message- i.e. the message of sanctity. I want to make a special mention of the Kailashnatha temple at Ellora. It is a unique temple because it was not made in a conventional way starting from the foundation. It was made from a single rock with carvings starting from the top. Seeing this magnificent temple, an art critic commented, "If you stand in the vicinity of the temple of Ellora, you feel that you are standing in a different world- a world not of time and space but that of intense spiritual devotion." He goes on to say, "If you want to have this kind of creation- your head, heart and hand should work in close cooperation. Head has to think, hand has to execute the work and heart should have the feeling of sacrifice. Hence, culture facilitates us to correct our mistakes and move on the path of Swami.

Spiritual luminaries like Adi Sankara rejuvenated our culture and way of life by establishing the four spiritual centers in the four corners of our country. Shivaji, Vijayanagara and other rulers, and the Bhakti movement contributed to a large extent in nurturing our culture. Our culture withstood a number of persecutions. In spite of these persecutions, Sanathana Dharma continued to be the greatest way of life. Bharat endured the onslaughts of many foreign invaders and still maintained the sanctity of its culture. Moreover, it welcomed these foreigners and included them in our way of life. Culture was enriched by modern spiritual and social thinkers like Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananad Saraswati, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and a host of others.

One economist commented, "India is a rich country inhabited by poor people." Our country is rich in resources but the management of the resources is inefficient.

Being a student of history, I was always fascinated by Jesus Christ. He was an effective communicator. His teachings were very simple- Love your enemy, Do good to those that hate you, All are one- be alike to everyone, and so on.

But I consider that our Bhagawan's teachings are the best means to reach God. They have to be accepted and propagated. These teachings should reach everyone. But we go to Swami for blessings for petty things- like a house, a car, a factory or marriage. This is self-centered thinking. After chanting *Namakam*, i.e. after extolling the Lord in *Namakam*, we ask for a few things from Him in *Chamakam* by chanting '*cha me'*'*cha me'*'. Swami always wonders, "Why do you ask me six or seven things like this. Have deep devotion towards me and I will give you the 369 necessities for your existence." Asking in this manner is like being a *bhogi*; how many of us are yogis who go to Swami and tell him, "We surrender everything, take us to Your feet and give us *moksha*." To remind us to remove our selfishness, Swami used to often comment, 'A fish is better than selfish.'

There is a beautiful *sloka* in Sanskrit:

*kakaha aahvayeta kakaan
yachako na tu yachakan
kako yachakayor madhye
varam kako na yachakaha*

Meaning- if we offer food to crows, they invite other crows by uttering *ka ka*; but if something is offered to a beggar, he tries to grab everything for himself. If you compare these two, the crow is far better off than a beggar. We have not learnt our lessons. We don't know how to share our food, our views or thoughts. We want to confine everything within ourselves.

Swami provides the answer with His dictum, 'Love All Serve All.' Swami has provided us with a healthy body, but we spoil it by indulging in bad habits like smoking, drinking and eating junk food and pray to Him to provide good health. We should keep our body in good condition by practicing yoga and eating pure and nutritious food. This is how our rishi and seers of yore used to survive for a long time. Swami has shown a way- making use of the way is our effort.

I have a question. Can we locate exactly where is the mind in the body? It is very difficult to locate the mind, but some scientists, after lot of experimentation,

have gone to the extent of locating the processes of the mind. To remove this confusion, Swami requests us to surrender everything to Him. Love All Serve All, Help Ever Hurt Never are two important dictums of Bhagawan.

We should do *namasmarana* and service whenever we get an opportunity, create awareness in them and help them to be self-sufficient. We should carry the mission of Swami wherever we go and help in developing our culture and influence others to follow it.





Bhajan Antakshari

Moderator: Sri Amey Deshpandey

Doctoral Research Scholar, Dept. of Management Studies, SSSIHL

Namasmarana - 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 community singing- *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 the personality of a student at SSSIHL. Every day, students spend on an average 45 minutes on 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 at the Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality last year. The Bhajan Antakshari programme attempted to bring out the 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 of the participants. 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.





Lessons from the Ramayana for Modern Society

Sri M Sai Ganesh

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Although the story of Ramayana is thousands of years old, it inspires millions of people across the world even today and will continue to do so as long as human beings exist on this planet. Every character of Ramayana teaches us something. Some teach us how to be and others how not to be! The values these characters stand for are relevant to each and every one of us. I will talk on two very important characters of Ramayana- Lakshmana and Bharata and see what lessons we can learn from them.

We cannot talk about Rama without talking about Lakshmana, for Lakshmana had the greatest good fortune to be constantly in the company of the Lord. This bonding between the brothers started to develop right from their infancy. Since birth, Lakshmana was weeping continuously, clamouring for something that no one was able to understand. None of the treatments worked and the wailing kept increasing everyday. Sage Vashistha, the guru of the Ikshvaku dynasty knew the reason for the unique behaviour Lakshmana exhibited and advised Sumitra to take him and lay him by the side of Rama in Rama's cradle. When that was done, the wailing stopped instantly. From then onwards, Lakshmana never left Rama's company. He accompanied Lord Rama to protect the Yagna of Vishwamitra and also to exile. Even though the exile was meant only for Rama, Lakshmana accompanied Him as he never missed any opportunity to be on the side of Rama. Rama's welfare was the only thing that mattered to Lakshmana. When Rama was asked to go into exile, Lakshmana was very angry. He was ready to destroy those who opposed Lord Rama- be it Dasaratha or even his brother Bharata. In the forest, he felt that his only duty was to serve Lord Rama and Mother Sita and ensure that both of them are comfortable at all times. For that sake, he would forgo his hunger, sleep and comfort.

The greatness of Lakshmana's character reveals itself at many places in the Ramayana. Once when Sugriva places before both the brothers jewels that Sita drops while being taken away by Ravana, Lakshman was asked to identify those jewels by Rama. Taking a look at them Lakshmana says, "*na ham jaanami keyure, na ham jaanami kankanne, nupure they jaanami, nityam paadabhi vandanat.*" Lakshmana was unable to identify anything other than the anklets of mother Sita because he used to worship her feet everyday to take her blessings. He used to revere mother Sita as his own mother and never looked at her, except for her feet.

But the most important virtue of Lakshmana which all of us have to learn is surrender to Lord Rama's will. In Panchavati, on the banks of river Godavari, Rama asked Lakshmana to select a beautiful spot and build a small cottage there for the three of them. He was completely taken aback by this and with pain in his heart, he asked Lord Rama, "What crime have I committed to hear such a cruel command? When did I start to have my own preferences? My only possession is you and my only will is what you Will." Lakshman is always regarded as Rama's shadow.

In the battlefield in Lanka, when Lakshmana fell unconscious due to an arrow shot by Indrajit, Rama, keeping the head of Lakshmana on his lap, lamented, "It is possible to find a mother like Kousalya, a wife like Sita but it is impossible to find a brother like Lakshmana." Rama was not able to bear the separation from Lakshmana even for a few hours- the shadow can't be separated from the object.

If Lakshmana was a shadow of Rama, Bharata was his mirror image. Bharata was an embodiment of Prema- love for Rama. A small incident from their childhood highlights the love that Bharata had for Rama. Usually, the four brothers would play games together and Rama would always be the victor. Once, Rama decided to give a chance to Bharata to win. Bharata was not happy with that, and after the game was over, instead of enjoying his sweet victory, he went straight to his mother and cried out that Rama has lost the game. Bharata was not fortunate to be always in the physical company of

Rama, which Lakshmana had. I felt that at many places in the Ramayana, Bharata was quite unlucky. For no apparent fault of his, fate was punishing him. He was very eagerly waiting to see Rama being coronated as the King of Ayodhya, but upon reaching Ayodhya, he was shocked to see what was happening. There was sadness everywhere, no joy or signs of festivity. When the tragic death of his father and the exile of Rama (with Sita and Lakshmana) was communicated to him, Bharata was crestfallen.

Swami says, “The pain of separation from Rama was much more painful to Bharata than the death of his own father.” At this juncture, Bharata laments that Ayodhya has become a dreary desert due to the absence of Rama. To further add to his woes, Bharata comes to know that his mother Kaikeyi was responsible for all the calamities. Sage Vashishtha asks Bharata to do the last rites of his father and take the reins of the kingdom as a king. Bharata never wanted to be the King of Ayodhya; he only wanted Rama to be the King of Ayodhya. Blaming himself for all that happened, Bharata set out on a mission along with his ministers, his mothers and many people of Ayodhya. He went to the forest and somehow tried to convince Rama to come back to Ayodhya. Rama would never go back on his promise, but in the argument that followed, Bharata realized that faith has decreed that only Lakshmana would have the fortune to be with Rama. Bharata had no choice but go back to Ayodhya as commanded by the elders.

Bharata went back to Ayodhya not as a king, but only as a caretaker with sandals of his brother Rama enthroned as the ruler. The way Bharata conducted himself in those fourteen years is a lesson for all of us. He never lived in the palace but as an ascetic in the village Nandigram, just outside the city of Ayodhya. All the matters of the kingdom were managed by Shatrughna. He was yearning for Rama continuously and was thinking only about Him. If Rama wore an ochre robe, he too wore ochre clothes. As Rama walked bare footed, he too did the same. Rama didn't have a bed of roses to sleep on, and hence Bharata too didn't want one. Bharata was contemplating on Rama all the time, waiting for those fourteen terrible years of separation to come to an end. At the end of fourteen years, Bharata started reflecting Rama himself.

When Rama came back, the people of Ayodhya were confused as to who was

Rama and who was Bharata due to their similarity in appearance. Bharata became the mirror image of Rama.

The lessons that we learn from Lakshmana and Bharata are very simple. Lakshmana followed Rama and Bharata reflected Rama. Lakshmana shows that the ideal way by which we can show our love to Swami is to follow his message. Swami often says, 'My life is my message.' He also says that we should lead our lives in such a way that our lives become His message. This can happen only when we surrender our thoughts and will to Him and letting Him carry out His will through each one of us. Bharata teaches us that the yearning to be with God is more important than being in His physical presence. This is because a very few of us get to be close to Him but yearning for God can be developed by each one of us, which is very powerful. I pray to Swami that we imbibe these lessons and follow them in our lives and live up to His expectations.





Lessons from the Bhagavad Gita for Modern Society

Sri R Sai Swaroop

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*Vedasya saaram pravadanti geetam
Tadeva satyam khalu dharma maatha
Pathataat vindate jnanam
Chittasya annam brudayasya toyam
Tasmat mahataam geetam smaranam karishye*

The essence of the Vedas is explained in the Bhagavad Gita. It is a treasure of knowledge; a food for thought and a coolant for the heart. Hence, always remember that sacred Bhagavad Gita.

Santoshayeva Balasya Aadharah- A snake remains healthy only by drinking water. A hermit who has the power to control the entire universe, lives on roots and herbs. Therefore, happiness is the only source of strength. The Bhagavad Gita is one such book that gives eternal happiness to everyone.

What is the Bhagavad Gita? Gita means rules, regulations and instructions for day-to-day life. We have different Gitas like Uddhava Gita, Vidura Gita and so on. However, the Bhagavad Gita gets special importance as it was given by Krishna- the Divine Lord to Arjuna- man. When we think of the Bhagavad Gita, two questions come to our mind. The first one is: Why was it told on a battlefield?

The word Kurukshetra means Kuru- to do and Kshetra- place; i.e. place of action. Swami explains this with the example of the mind. Swami says that there is a constant conflict between good and bad qualities in the mind and man has to win over the bad qualities, which is symbolized by Kurukshetra.

The second question is: Why was it told only to Arjuna? Swami says that Bheeshma was an embodiment of dharma but was silent when Draupadi was disrobed. Drona has extreme attachment towards his son. Yudhisthira had

paschattappa, i.e. he thought about the consequences of the war after it was fought. Bheema had a lot of anger in him. It was only Arjuna who had the right doubt at the right time. Hence, Swami says that he was the right person to be told the Bhagavad Gita.

What are the lessons learnt from the Bhagavad Gita?

Think before you act- Arjuna was a beautiful example of this trait. He requests Krishna to place the chariot in such a way so that he can see both the Kaurava and Pandava forces. When Arjuna sees warriors like Bheeshma and Drona and contemplates the consequences of the war, he gets confused and falls at the feet of Krishna.

When confused, seek help from God- Arjuna surrenders to Lord Krishna and beseeches Him to explain the correct course of action. Krishna says:

*Klaibyam ma sma gamaha Partha naitatwayyupapadyte
Kshudram brudaya dourbalyam tyaktwotistha parantapa*

Do not be given to cowardly impotence, O Partha. It is not befitting thee; shake off your ignoble weakness of heart. Arise, O Parantapa. Arjuna tries to argue, “Krishna, I am caught between the bonds of compassion, and am unable to make any judgement.” Krishna replies:

*Ashochyananva shochastwam prajnavaanashca bhashase
Gatasoonascha nanushochanti panditaha*

You speak words of wisdom but grieve for things not to be grieved for. Sages grieve neither for the living nor the dead. Krishna starts to teach the Bhagavad Gita with this lesson.

Only God is eternal and the world is impermanent. Krishna says:

Dehinosmin yatha debe koumaram youvanam jara

As the embodied soul has childhood, youth and old age occurring to the body, so too is his change over to another body.

Control of senses. Krishna says:

*Matrasparshatu Kounteya sheetoshna sukha dukhadah
Aagampayino anityaastanstitikshwa Bharata*

The human being learns about the (entire) world only through his sense organs. If he cuts this contact and thinks only about God, he can gain control on sense organs. To achieve this he should develop endurance, as the sense pleasures are transient.

Control of anger. Krishna says:

*Sanghatsanjayate kamaha kamatkrodhobbhijayate
Krodhat bhavati sammohaha sammohat smurti vibhramaha
Smurtir bhramasat budhhi nasho buddhi nashat pranasyati*

Desire is the root cause of anger in a person. Hence cut off the desires and anger will be cut. Shishupala is the best example for this bad quality. Shishupala had great anger towards Krishna and he insults the Lord in the Rajasuya Yagna, forgetting his own limitations. Ultimately he dies in the hands of Krishna.

What are the qualities of a devotee according to the Lord?

*Patram pushpam phalam toyam yo me bhakta prayachati
Tadaham bhaktyupa hrutamashnami prayatatmanaha*

A person who surrenders the leaf of his body, the flower of his heart, the fruit of his actions and tears of joy that come from his eyes to the Lord; that offering of his I accept and he is a true devotee.

Krishna goes on to say:

*Adwashta sarvabhootanam maitra karunayevacha
Nirmamo nirabankaro sam sukha dukha kshami*

The one who sees the entire world as God and who is always full of love and compassion, is free of attachment and ego, is equal minded in joy or sorrow and is forgiving; he is my true devotee.

Let us now understand the aspect of surrender. Krishna says:

*Sarvadharmā parityajya mamekaṁ śaranam brajā
Aham tva sarvāpārebhyaḥ mokṣayishyāmi maśruḥa*

When a devotee surrenders completely to the Lord and is egoless, thinks only of God and behaves as an ideal instrument, God is ready to give him liberation.

Let me narrate to you an incident that happened during the Athi Rudra Maha Yagnam. Bhagawan commanded a student to speak on surrender. The boy spoke very well. However, Swami said that He was not satisfied with him. The student was broken and wept very badly. After a few days, Swami called him and said, “That day you spoke so much about surrender. Where is the surrender in you?” This is a profound question, which each one of us has to answer.

The Bhagavad Gita talks about three important ways to reach God- namely Karma, Bhakti and Jnana. There is a constant conflict about the greatness of each path. Bhagawan says, “Karma cannot exist without Bhakti and Jnana; Bhakti cannot exist without Karma and Jnana. This applies to Jnana also. They cannot be separated from one another. In other words, it can be stated that they are different stages of the maturation of the human mind. Swami compares Karma to a flower and Bhakti to an unripe fruit. When this unripe fruit matures, it becomes Jnana, which ultimately leads to liberation.

The Bhagavad Gita ends with a beautiful note by Sanjaya:

*Yatra Yogeshwara Krishna Yatra Partho Dhanurdharaha
Tatra Sreer vijayo bhootir dhruva neetir matir mama*

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

We have to ask a question to ourselves. Are we all ready to become the Arjunas of our beloved Bhagawan?





Alumni Panel Discussion

Ideal Sai students and their role in society

Moderator: Prof. A Anantha Raman

Professor (Hon.), Dept. of Management Studies, SSSIHL

When Bhagawan walked the earth, He didn't merely transform people, He also created a network of institutions- hospitals, university campuses and social service units. When the rest of the world was puzzled at this improbable outreach of spirituality, Bhagawan saw the relevance of it. When the world was wondering why, He was quietly connecting the dots through a powerful, connecting force- Love. He created an institutional framework that connected, consolidated and integrated all these activities.

For ages, the best minds have been at work to build great organizations, great societies and great nations. They spent time designing social structures, institutional frameworks, rules and procedures; but history showed that many of them failed. But Swami created an entirely different instrument to ensure that it endures. That instrument was His alumnus. With tongue in cheek, Bhagawan used to announce, "Sai is coming to you with a butter of education in one hand and stick of spiritual knowledge in the other hand." He meant, "I will give you an MBA degree provided you want the spiritual education that comes with it." He further asserted, "There was only one Vivekananda before, now I want every student of this University to be a Vivekananda."

Let us explore, as an institution, whether we have come anywhere near this dream of Swami. What impact has the Sri Sathya Sai System of Values-based Education had on our alumni? When pain and anguish come calling, how do they use the anchorage of Swami to solve their problems? How do they apply what they learnt here, to what is euphemistically called as the outside world? To discuss this we have an Alumni Panel discussion with four SSSIHL alumni, each eminent in his or her own way.

The Participants

Sri P V Krishna Mohan (KM), 1992-94 MBA, SSSIHL. Senior Divisional Manager, TATA Hitachi Construction Machinery Company Ltd., Jamshedpur. Convener, Sri Sathya Sai Trust, Bihar.

Ms. Krishna Subhaga (KS), 1993-95, B.Com., SSSIHL. Principal UA Developer, Oracle, Bangalore.

Sri B Venugopal (BV), 2002-04 MBA, SSSIHL. AVP – Portfolio Management, HSBC, Secunderabad. Youth coordinator of Hyderabad Sai Organization.

Ms. Padmashree Radhaswamy (PR), 1989-91, M.A., SSSIHL. Assistant Professor, Department of Business Communication & Soft Skills, IBS, Hyderabad. Mahila Youth Coordinator of Hyderabad Sai Organization.

Moderator: All of us need an anchor in life, something we can look up to. Has Swami served as an anchor for you? If so, how have you used it? Can you give an example of a situation or an event where such an anchor helped you?

KM: Swami has been the biggest anchor of my life. Being an average student, coming from a humble background, whatever I am today, it is all because of Bhagawan. I always had the policy of Swami first and all else next.

BV: People generally think that having Him present physically in Puttaparthi is the greatest solace and anchor but I don't think it is the only anchor. Let me share a small interaction that had happened with Swami- In one of the visits made prior to becoming a student, Swami was very upset with me. While coming for Darshan, He looked at me from a distance of 5-6 feet and said, 'Very Bad, Very Bad'. I was wondering, what went wrong and as He came closer, I asked Him, "What did I do?" Swami replied, "You went and watched a movie." In the outside world, this is as normal as having your food. I said, "Swami, I generally don't go, but few friends called me and thus I went." Swami quickly replied, "Did I not tell you, not to watch movies and

TV.” Then He gave an emphatic statement, “Swami and His message are not different.” In the current context, we can’t be perfect human beings but to the extent possible, we should try to live His message and have a set of personal values and personal message. Having Swami as the anchor means, living His message and see how the magic works.

Moderator: Can you suggest a method on how to keep this anchor, as Swami is not in His physical form? One of the biggest drawbacks for the present batch of students would be the lack of physical proximity to Swami. How do the present students develop the concept of anchorage?

PR: Swami has a way of teaching each of us in His own way. Swami gave me the understanding that He is my anchor very early in my life. On many occasions, even when He was physical present, He used to create situations where you have to connect to the omnipresent Bhagawan. When I was doing my B.Ed., Swami came to me and told me that the omnipresent Swami is always watching me.

Once I was having a conversation with one of my friends who was talking about certain issues that are considered as taboo in the Sathya Sai environment. I was just a listener to the entire conversation. The following morning, when we were sitting for Darshan, Swami came straight to me and said, “*Pichi Pichi maatalu matladite velipondi.*” (If you want to speak inappropriate things, leave the campus). These are the two incidents that help me connect to the omnipresent Swami. Today, when I am talking about integrity, He is watching me, and my heart will prick if I am not following what I am talking.

People always think that I am crazy to hold on to certain values. Let me elaborate with an incident that happened at the work place- We go for intern projects and I went to Delhi and came back. We can avail a certain amount for the trip but my bill came to not even half of that amount. I produced the bill and took the money. Most people were disturbed by this as for a similar trip, they generally produce a bill which is double of mine. At such situations, you face a lot of difficulties and challenges as the people around you are not happy with what you are doing. But I am answerable only to Swami. When I call myself as a Sathya Sai student, there are certain values that go with it and I try not to disappoint Swami on this aspect.

KS: I always treat Swami as my constant friend and companion. I take Him along with me wherever I go and I try to talk to Him constantly. Irrespective of what I am doing, I know that He is watching me and guiding me. For example, on the personal front, I always like to contribute in disaster relief. When the tsunami (2004) happened, I watched the damage in Nagapattinam (Tamil Nadu) on television. I was not able to hold myself back and was wondering how to go there and help in the relief activities. I know that women are not encouraged to be part of such efforts in our Sai organization but I prayed to Swami to be part of this activity. Through His guidance, I contacted a few NGOs and listed my name and within two days I was also part of the relief effort. I was a single woman, and my parents were concerned about me, but knew that Swami is taking care of me. I got into a truck that was carrying relief material to Nagapattinam, and reached the destination. I was given the task of ascertaining whether the relief material had reached the affected areas. I travelled extensively all the while feeling His presence with me. Hence, by establishing that relationship with Him, you can face any challenge in life.

Moderator: How do devotees and students deal with issues of moral hazards in the business world outside? A moral hazard can be like selling a product knowing fully well that it is not good for the customer or selling an instrument of finance to the customer knowing that he is going to make a loss on it. For example, we had an M&A activity where we had to sign a document. I knew that it was unethical but was not bold enough to say 'No'. When I went for the meeting and opened the attaché case, the document was missing. Years later, Swami told my wife, "Ask your husband to be careful, he is losing documents."

KM: This is a day-in and day-out situation for us in the corporate world. But to deal with it, I created an image that I can't be incentivised for anything. Twenty years of my professional life has been in sales and marketing, where I have to meet customers and employees in different branches. I have to do a lot of socializing, networking, and attending parties. On the very first occasion, when I had to attend a party, I was the only person who was not drinking. My colleagues tried to force me into drinking saying that it is very normal in the marketing profession but I put my foot down and said no. I

used to say, “Do the marketing text books of Philip Kotler say that one has to drink? If yes, then I will drink.” Until today, I carry that image which I created in the beginning. If you follow what Swami has said, people will certainly fall in line and they will start respecting you and will approach you for any good thing. There will definitely be some pitfalls and obstacles, but that is part of life.

PR: In our college, we have fresher’s parties and farewell parties in pubs. The college always has a guard watching them over during these parties. The pub authorities would be clearly told that only food has to be served and not drinks. But the temptation in the outside world is too much for the children. During one such party, I saw one of my students very subdued and silent and asked him, “Siddhartha, what happened, you almost look like you are sleeping.” I was very naïve; I didn’t know how a drunken person looks. Jokingly, I added, “Don’t tell me you had something here secretly.” The next morning, this boy came to me and started apologizing profusely after he had sobered saying, “I will never do it again, please don’t inform the management.”

I went to the management and told them, “I have no clue about what is being drunk and by whom. For me Coca Cola and other alcoholic drinks look similar. In the future, I won’t do it and also don’t expect the students to remain saints when you hold these parties at such places.” By Swami’s grace, the management accepted the request and stopped parties at such places. One more component of these parties is dancing. I was very clear right from the beginning that I won’t dance. Many students pestered me but I didn’t relent and in turn told them about Swami’s values. Three of my students came and visited Puttaparthi to see the place. I won’t say that there was a great change in them but they came and saw the discipline followed here and were able to connect with me better.

KS: It is very important to create an image for yourself. Wherever I go, I dress like a Sai student. I have a deep conviction of who I want to be and I don’t need to take to the latest fashion or speak sentences that have double meanings just to get my way forward in the organization. My colleagues are surprised at how well I am doing despite the fact that I don’t suck up to the management. Many a time people come to me and ask me in private, “What

is it that is different about you? I really admire this trait of yours.” I feel we owe it completely to Swami, the way He has moulded us at this institution.

Moderator: Did you face any particular problem when you tried to follow Swami’s teachings? Is there a conflict between the internal and external world? Is it possible to integrate them together? We quote Swami very freely but don’t internalize those teachings. Is that why we are having this conflict?

BV: The only problem, according to me, is that we care way too much about how the world is viewing us. The way to look at it is- how is Swami viewing me? Will Swami be happy with the way I am? For example, Swami used to give a chance to students to speak or perform dramas in Sai Kulwant Hall in His presence. Invariably—irrespective of the quality of the talk or drama—if Swami was happy, everybody was happy; if Swami was not happy or seemed uninterested, people would come and say, “It was not good, Swami was not interested.” Hence, if Swami is made happy, the world is taken care of. If you create an image of yourself with the thought that ‘will Swami be happy with me, or not?’- that is the correct approach. People might ostracize you for some time for your behaviour but for things really that matter, they will all come to you because they know that this is the person who has clarity in his thinking. Such people go a long way in the corporate world because of their clarity of thought and sticking to a value system.

Swami always talks about *maya* with an example, He says- if you walk towards the sun, the shadow falls behind you. In the same way, if your focus is God, the world doesn’t affect you.

PR: The temptation of money is also great when you go out. Whenever I shifted jobs, the interview board would ask about my monetary expectations. I always felt ill at ease discussing money. Swami has several times told His students during Convocation, “When you change jobs, tell them not because you want more money but because you want more work.” He always stressed- seek work, not money. In the worldly point of view, I have always been at a disadvantage; but it has its advantages also. When it comes to work, I do more work than many of the highest paid employees of the organization.

Never say no to any work given to you is my motto. This attitude has helped me. Last year, when my daughter was not well, I used to go to college only when I had classes. Neither the students nor the management had any problem because of my absence. When the intentions are pure, Bhagawan helps you. One of my sisters used to come to take care of my daughter when I had classes. Even though I didn't attend the college regularly, the first time in the history of the organization was an employee paid full salary- despite being a private organization. The letter written by the Dean to the Headquarters (a beautiful letter), was copied to me. It read- Going by her track record, approach to work of never saying 'no' and long hours she has spent in the organization, we need to consider this as a special case and pay her the entire salary. All this was done with no effort from my side.

The benefits of following Swami will not be seen immediately. You might be feel that you are a loser but in the long run, it always helps you.

KS: Once, I was approached for a bribe and being a Swami's student, I didn't fall prey to these temptations and take the easy route. When I refused to pay the bribe, I faced several difficulties. I applied for an electricity meter, the board sent a contractor whom I paid money in the form of a cheque. He did some preliminary work, cut the electricity connection from the meter and went away. I expected that he will come back and do the remaining work but he never turned up. After a few days, an official from the electricity department came and cut my electricity connection as it was not being metered. On a Sunday, when I came back home, I realized that there was no power at home whereas all my neighbours had power. I was staying alone. I was feeling completely lonely. I tried to connect to Swami internally. Swami told me from within, "Do you still want to follow me?" I was shocked by the question He asked because I was thinking that He is my best friend who will console me. He put me in a corner and wanted to see what I will reply. I was very sure of my reply, I told Him, "Yes Swami, still I will follow you." The problem was resolved eventually, but He pushes you to the corner to see if you will follow His teachings.

Moderator: There is an opinion that the culture of Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions tends to make students subservient and respectful. Is that a

problem? Do we need to look at it as part of soft skill training? How does it work in industry? Do our fellows stay at the back and not go forward? Do we lack the killer dog instinct?

KM: I also ask myself this question many times; whether I am cut out to take on the world or not. We need to empower and train our people with respect to the latest management requirements. But regarding the soft skills, I think we don't need to concentrate on this at the institute level as many organizations do it when they take new people. Also, studying at Sai institutions (due to the model of Sri Sathya Sai Values-based Integral Education) trains a student in multitasking. Students sing bhajans, work in maintenance, and are good in sports and at studies. I learnt this multitasking during my two years of stay here. But, I feel we need to train our students in aspects like how to take on the world, how to say no to people.

BV: In the outside world, you are pitched against people who are desperate for money and success, outgoing and aggressive. It is one thing to be aggressive and have a killer dog instinct but another thing to be assertive and stand your ground. As Swami's students, we should focus on our strengths. Our strengths are our values, the skills that we pick up, our knowledge and most importantly having Swami as our anchor. I don't think any other university offers values-based education the way we do. In our case, doing the right thing goes to another level as we do everything with an objective to please Bhagawan. We do the right thing because our conscience tells us to do it, which will make Swami happy. If we stick to our strengths, we can perform well in any kind of scenario. Regarding Sai students being subservient and respectful- I think we should have the clarity on when to keep silent, when to raise our voice and when to be subservient. Let me give an example- I had extreme stage fear. I could not stand on stage and talk one line when I was a child. This continued until I reached college. Swami just picked me and put me on the stage. But when you know that Swami is by your side, you will perform well. This is the confidence that this institute builds in you.

Training will only make you aware about what qualities are lacking in you. You will be able to gain those qualities only when you are put into that situation. All should have the discrimination about when to be assertive.

PR: I come from a background where we give soft skills training. The module for soft skills training starts with the Self-Awareness which Swami has been teaching us- Be aware of your own Self before exploring the outside world. There are many such instances where we get to know ourselves better at Sri Sathya Sai institutions. Also we are taught to have a positive attitude and good perception of life. The soft skills module comprises of goal setting, team building and leadership. If I have become a soft skills trainer, it is only because of Swami. I keep repeating Swami's message in my classes. For instance, Swami very beautifully describes assertive skills as- If you can't oblige, speak obligingly and unity in thought, word and deed.

Moderator: Being a student, what are the two qualities that you acquired here were helpful to you?

BV: I acquired tremendous amount of Self-confidence after joining this institute. After joining this university, I started believing in a higher power to help me, guide me and put me on the right track. The second quality that I acquired here was to translate every type of work- professional or personal-to worship. I learnt to do any work as an offering to Bhagawan to make Him happy.

KM: I learnt how to understand the point of views of others staying here. Second was humility, which I learnt and practiced in life.

PR: One trait is Self-confidence and the second is clarity of goals in life.

KS: I learnt here not to hanker for money, position and fame.

Moderator: What is the one line advice to all the students?

BV: Do whatever you do with the thought of only pleasing Bhagawan. If Swami is watching me, He should be happy with me.

KM: I echo the sentiments of my previous speaker. Don't look at the world, go out and create your own identity and I am sure that with Swami's Grace, all will be winners.

PR: Just be conscious that Bhagawan is with you, watching and will take care of everything.

KS: It is very important to have a deep sense of conviction about Swami's teachings and about the values that we learn here. We don't need to have a second thought or dual mentality (which leads to doubts). We should feel proud that we are Swami's students and practice what He has taught us.

Moderator: Swami Himself said- If you don't practice what you have learnt here, you will be like the cow that doesn't yield milk, a fruit that lacks in taste and a book bereft of wisdom. My students are generals; they will lead armies of good men. The young men and women that emerge from this University will have to cleanse this land of untruth, injustice, violence and fear. They must spread knowledge, peace, tolerance, righteousness and service and be the exemplars for these qualities to the people.

In this mission you won't be alone, for He has said that He will protect you as the eyelids protect the eyes.





Lessons from the Mahabharata for Modern Society

Sri S Sai Giridhar

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Swami narrates a hilarious story explaining how to study this great scripture of Mahabharata. He says that an old woman of 84 used to carry the photo of her husband with her. If someone approached her and asked her about her husband, she would show the photo of her husband who looked like an eleven-year-old boy. How is it possible that this 84-year-old lady be wife to an eleven-year-old boy? It is unbelievable and hilarious. But Swami says, what is important is to travel 75 years back in time when this lady was a nine-year-old girl who married an eleven-year-old boy. Immediately after the marriage, the boy passed away and since then this lady is carrying that photo of her husband. Unless one travels to that social setting and that moment of time when the old lady was a nine-year-old girl and the husband an eleven-year-old boy, one can't comprehend how this is possible. Swami gives this analogy in His discourse in 1976 in Summer Showers on Blue Mountains, where He explicitly spoke on this grand epic of Mahabharata.

Let us go back to 3170 BCE; to that point in history just after the Pandava queen Draupadi was inflicted with inhuman insult at the Kaurava court. The state of her mind would determine not only the future of the Pandavas and Kauravas but also the future of the great nation of Bharath, including the present times. Let us see how this Yagyaseni's thoughts of hatred and revenge were shaped by Krishna for the common good of humanity.

The first instruction given by Krishna to Draupadi was to forgive Duryodhana. Krishna goes on to explain that if Draupadi carries this fire of revenge and hatred, she will fight only for personal vengeance. This will make her weak. "If this is the fate of the empress of the entire nation, what will be the fate of ordinary women", asks Lord Krishna. To change the destiny of the present society where Duryodhana rules, summon all your energies and fight for the

welfare of the entire society. What deep ideals form the foundations of this great Bharath? This seed of forbearance that Krishna sowed in the heart of Draupadi reflects the culture of Bharath.

A student once came and asked me, “Is it not wrong to break the thigh of Duryodhana against the rule of the mace fight? There are many instances in Mahabharata where good forces also have apparently done mistakes. How do you justify this?” The greatest lesson according to Swami that emanates from Mahabharata is that one is responsible for one’s own deeds. The day Duryodhana decided to do that heinous act and pointed towards his thighs and asked the empress of the nation to sit; the thigh was meant to be broken that very moment. The subsequent events; his attempt to secure complete insurance of his body from his mother from top to toe didn’t succeed in protecting his thighs. The Lord says, “I am merely a postman who delivers your destiny to you.”

One more perspective that comes out of the Mahabharata is that one has to be careful with the worldly rules, for rules are meant for men but men are not born for rules. Rules are meant to protect, preserve and uplift Dharma, which in turn is necessary to bring peace and harmony in the society. If those very rules protect the *adharmic* forces and demolish the peace and harmony of the society, such rules are meant to be done away with, depending on the time, place and circumstances.

Who decides what is right? It is not an ordinary question as even the greatest among men, Arjuna, was drowned in this question. He was confused as to who was right and who was wrong. Was Bhishma right, sitting silent in the court adhering to his personal dharma? Was Yudhishthira right in playing a game of dice in the first place? These questions tortured and tormented the heart of this great warrior. If we see the sculpture of this episode in the Bhajan hall in Prasanthi Nilayam, we can understand the plight of Arjuna. An elder told me that Bhagawan personally stood in the Bhajan mandir and directed the sculptor how to sculpt the facial expression of this great warrior. Swami said that Arjuna should not be too depressed as he was a man of courage and

valour; he knew what dharma was but had a deep sense of confusion.

In the 15th chapter of Bhagavad Gita, the Lord says:

Oordhwa moolamadha shakam Aswattam prahuravyam

Krishna describes life with the allegory of an inverted tree. One would wonder that if the tree is upward, how would it gain nourishment. Swami says that the tree is inverted because we understand divinity as a higher state and hence the roots are upwards and the branches are down in the world. Swami says that one has to take nourishment from Atma Dharma, i.e. Divinity and flourish in Para Dharma. Swami clarifies that Para Dharma is all the activities and responsibilities of our day to day life like being a father, daughter, son, husband, teacher and so on and Atma Dharma is to connect to the source that we all are. Swami further clarifies that Para Dharma is all the activities done with body consciousness and one has to face the consequences of the actions performed whether good or bad. Bhagawan also exhorts to realize the eternal, i.e. Atma Dharma; as all this rules and dictums of Para Dharma are based on the body, which is itself transient. Arjuna was caught up in this Para Dharma, which is not eternal and hence was confused. Krishna understood that until this disciple of His looks at the world from the perspective of the body, his viewpoint will not change. Krishna gave a jolt to Arjuna when He said that Duryodhana, Yudhisthira and even Arjuna himself were nothing but the forms of Krishna. Arjuna, after hearing this, was stunned into silence.

But how do we see this practically? Swami says that like the same electricity flowing through the bulb, the fan, the mike, etc., it is the speakers that make them function. In the same manner, the Lord is the electricity that flows through each one of us. Our function, utility and purpose might be different but it is the same electricity that functions through all of us.

How to understand Atma Dharma in day-to-day life? Swami says that listening to the voice of conscience is Atma Dharma. Pandavas did only that; they implicitly obeyed what Krishna told them.

The most important question is- How do I connect to the Lord? We get the answer to this question from the lives of Pandavas and Draupadi. Lord Krishna goes to the Kaurava court as an emissary of peace. Dhritarashtra asks

Krishna, “Kauravas and Pandavas are brothers, why do you discriminate and shower your grace on the Pandavas and ignore the Kauravas?” Dhritarashtra knew that with the blessings of Krishna, victory of the Pandavas would be ensured. Krishna laughed at him aloud and said, “Oh! Dhritarashtra, you are not only blind physically but mentally blind too. The Pandavas are so close to me- the *jnanagni*- the fire of wisdom, that they naturally enjoy wisdom and Grace, just as anyone who is close to fire is bound to experience both warmth and light. Your sons are far away from me. I shower my Grace on the ones who take refuge in me.”

Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita:

*sarva-dharman parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja
aham tvam sarva-papebhyo moksayisyami ma sucah*

Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me.
I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.

This applies in the same measure to Duryodhana as well as the Pandavas. The Pandavas followed the dictum- God first, world next and myself last, which was their mantra of success. Duryodhana followed the dictum - Myself first, world next and God last.

Krishna then said, “Because of the adherence of this dictum, let me tell you Dhritarashtra, what they mean to me. Yudhishthira is the head, Arjuna- the shoulders and the strong arms, Bhima-the stomach and the legs are Nakula and Sahadeva. In this most wonderful and powerful body, Krishna is the heart. I can't live without them, they can't live without me.” Swami has given this very simple formula to us. If we adhere to this dictum of God first, world next and myself last, then we can't live without Swami and Swami can't live without us, where is the question of separation?

The Pandavas show one more trait to remain connected to the Lord: faith.

The first level of faith is to believe that the Lord is there for me every moment and He will take care of me. It is not enough to have just faith but it is important to do the work of God. For example, a couple of years after Bhagawan's Mahasamadhi, during the Annual Sports & Cultural Meet, a big

lot of remote control planes came to Puttaparthi. We didn't understand the working of the plane and there were no trainers to tell us how to assemble or fly them. But with the faith that whatever happens, it happens by His Will, we went ahead and tried to find out. We came to know that the planes had arrived from Singapore and so we telephoned them. The person there gave us the contact of a retailer based in Chennai and said that they would be able to help us. When we contacted the retailer in Chennai, the person who responded said, "We are very happy that this event has been taken up by you, we are devotees of Bhagawan and will extend any sort of help to make this event a success." There could be many who feel that this might not be a miracle, but just a matter of coincidence. But if we go ahead with faith in Him and do His work, such coincidences will become the order of the day and such experiences would enhance our faith further.

As one advances in faith, one comes to understand that the entire cosmic drama is a movement of God's Will and we remain witnesses who enjoy this drama. This morning when I was preparing for the speech, a thought came to me to address all as- On behalf of all these puppets, I offer my *pranams* to the Divine puppeteer. I felt an inspiration to look at a copy of the Sanathana Sarathi and when I opened one page, I found an article with the title- Puppet Show. It was an article by Swami's devotee Sri Ajit Popatji who calls himself as Swami's puppet. He describes his final interview with Swami in this article. He told Swami, "All the experiences and teachings that you have given me have become part of me." Swami said, "No, since you have practiced them sincerely, they have not merely become part of you but they have become you." Swami added, "Whatever has to happen, will happen, whatever needs to be done, must be done." Whatever has to happen by His will, will be done, whatever needs to be done by us must be done; we have to be enjoyable witnesses to the drama of the Lord.

Let us internalize a few lessons from Mahabharata learnt from the life of the Pandavas:

The episode of Roma Rishi- Roma Rishi had a fruit which could quench thirst and satiate hunger for many years. During their exile, when the Pandavas and Draupadi were walking in the forest full of hunger, they find

this fruit. Arjuna shoots down the fruit and just as they were about to pick up the fruit, they find that it is extremely heavy. They find something rumbling under their feet and to their utter surprise, it was the hair of Roma Rishi that had spread to protect the fruit, and unknowingly, the Pandavas had trampled his hair. Roma Rishi immediately decided to capture the culprits and curse them. The Pandavas knew that they were in danger and Draupadi immediately called out to her Lord Krishna. The Lord appeared to their rescue and said, “Whatever I tell you, do it with implicit obedience. I will go to the Rishi’s ashram and you follow me.” The Pandavas, in addition to their faith, displayed implicit adherence to the injunctions of the Sadguru. Krishna reached the ashram of Roma Rishi and as soon as the sage saw the Lord standing in front of him, all his anger evaporated and the sage prostrated at the Lotus feet of the Lord. As Krishna was engaging the sage in a discussion, the Pandavas arrived. Krishna immediately fell at the feet of Pandavas. This is the extent the Lord goes to protect a devotee if the devotee surrenders to Him. The Pandavas were stunned and taken aback, but since they had to implicitly obey the Lord, they didn’t say a word. Seeing this Roma Rishi was wonderstruck and he too fell at their feet. Once you surrender to someone’s feet you don’t get angry at them. Once the rishi’s anger evaporated, Lord Krishna introduced the Pandavas as those who were trying to take the fruit of the sage away. At this juncture, the rishi happily gave away the fruit and said, “Lord, I have you now, let them enjoy the fruit.” This is the beauty of absolute faith and implicit obedience to the Lord.

There is a poem composed by Swami on Draupadi that illustrates her chastity:

*Patula palumatalaku yedduru chappangabodu
Vaari sevalu cheyaga teeradanadu
Tanaku vunna danito trupti ganachundu
Draupadi ki saatiye pativratayu leedu*

She never answers back to her husbands, she is never tired of serving her husbands, she is ever contended with whatever her husbands have given her; there is no *pativrata* like her.

Our life should be like that of Draupadi- ever attentive to the needs and service of our conscience, which is none other than Swami. We should dedicate our

entire life to the service of our conscience. We should ever be contented with whatever God gives us. Swami once said during an interaction, “Whatever happens to you, whether good or bad, have this firm faith and conviction that God is giving it to you. Be contented with what you receive.” If we follow this, the mind will be merged in the conscience and will eventually lead to oneness.

Forbearance or *kshama* is the greatest virtue, which we have to learn from the Pandavas. Swami advocates four types of adherences to develop *kshama*:

Dravya Soucham- The purity of materials; where we have to keep ourselves and our surroundings clean.

Manasika Soucham- We have to keep our mind clear of clutter and criticism of others. We have to remove all negative emotions like hatred, envy, attachment, aversions etc.

Vaak Soucham- We should not speak ill of others or utter words which hurt other’s feelings.

Kriya Soucham- Offering every single act to god and performing of selfless service.

We all post our prayers to God but what is His Address? Draupadi answers this question. When she called out Dwarakavasi, He didn’t answer. When she called out to Him- Mathuravaasi, He didn’t respond; but the moment Draupadi cried out to the Lord O! Hridayavasi Sri Krishna (One who resides in the heart), immediately His Grace started flowing as He was right there at that time, just as He is right here right now.

Swami narrates a beautiful story in this respect. There was a boy whose father was not there and was brought up by his mother. When he reaches the X Std., the school fees to be paid was Rs. 90, which his mother was not able to arrange. The son asks his mother, “Who can help us in this situation?” The mother replies, “God is our only friend, only He can help us.” This poor innocent boy asks his mother, “Mother, please tell me the address of God, I will go and ask him for help.” The mother replied, “His name is Lord Narayana and He lives in Vaikuntha.” This boy immediately wrote a letter to Narayana

addressed as 'Lord Narayana, Vaikuntha'. He was so short in height that he was not able to reach the postbox. The postman came and tried to help him. When he looked at the address written by the boy, he asked, "Boy, what do you really want?" The postman heard the story of the boy and told him, "Don't worry, I will post this letter for you. God will reply to your letter and you will get your money." The boy came back the next day and the postman gave him Rs. 90. The mother wanted to check whether the boy had stolen the money or not. The postman replied, "God has really answered the prayers as he inspired me to pay this amount to the boy looking at his innocence."

Swami says that even if you don't know the address of God, pray like a child. Ramakrishna Paramahansa says that to pray to God, one should be like an innocent child. If we lead our lives by following all these lessons of the Mahabharata, we will come face-to-face with the truth that Swami is with us here, right now.

Let us now listen to the Lord as He narrates the lessons we should learn from the Mahabharata:

The Pandavas can be regarded as the mirror images of the great qualities of Krishna in Mahabharata. It is believed that The Mahabharata is the story of a group of people who are war mongers, who are bereft of the qualities of peace, security and sanctity for mankind. This is not correct. Krishna (representative of the Atma) with the help of the Pandavas (representative of the five elements) along with Draupadi (the basis representing the Jiva) has shown us how to live an ideal life through this epic Mahabharata. First and foremost, we should recognize how Krishna, living as an ordinary human being, showed the world the ideal way of living. If we consider Krishna as God and read any portion of the Mahabharata, we will not be able to understand the subtle truths in it. But if we consider Krishna as a human being, try to follow the path laid by Him, we will be able to understand the hidden truths in the Mahabharata.

Transport your thoughts, ideas and visualizations to that time when Krishna lived, then you will be able to understand the true significance of Krishna's conduct. Remaining in the present times, it is not possible to understand the significance of the actions of Krishna at that time and those circumstances.

Worship a picture as God and not God as a picture; the table, tumbler, cloth, plate and case are God. Take them to the level of God; don't bring down God to the level of a table, tumbler, cloth, plate and so on. In the same way, if you want to follow Krishna, raise your thoughts and feelings to His level; then you will be able to understand the real manifestation of the Mahabharata. You should always be at a higher level. To go to a higher level, you have to read elevating stories.

Dear students! In this Summer Course, by the sacredness of your heart, I hope you will be able to understand the ideal lives that were portrayed in the Mahabharata, practice that type of life and bring glory to our country.





Lessons from the Ramayana for Modern Society

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Mario, a legendary video game character, is a historic figure and exemplary leader who gives insights into life, silently striding through it. He achieves some herculean tasks without uttering a single word. He gives us a quick revision of all our lives- running all the time, where to not clear, winning the precious diamonds, getting crushed in the thorny bushes, encountering the villain within, stepping on the precarious ladders of faith, successful drops into the deep valleys and starting the game all over again. Mario, our childhood friend, reflects our life in all its glory. On the contrary, if Mario, Temple run or Prince just smile and tread on a smooth road, none would attempt to play them? If they did do, they wouldn't be rated as the bestselling video games in the world?

Swami says- Life is a Game Play it. Let us see what makes this life a bestselling game. What makes life an interesting game- determination, devotion, attitude or faith? I feel it is- to put it in student terminology- examinations. Let us take help of the examination process to understand some lessons from the Ramayana. Experience tells us that how examinations can make our life dreadful and miserable. That is because when we have to prepare for exams or start life we have to be provident, go through the action steadily and sensibly, and achieve the desired success. But we are generally lackadaisical, perform below par and are filled with remorse for our actions in the end.

If we prepare well for the examinations or challenges in life, we will be surprised to see its real potential to make life remarkable and invaluable. To understand this, let us go through three stages of an examination.

PRE-EXAM

Let us see some pre-exam syndromes:

Purpose Regained- When the notice board displays the dates of destiny, the air is fragrant with tension, as the students suddenly realize that they are students, and that it is time to nurture their orphaned books. No amount of homework, assignments, punishments or motivational talks can ever see this happen. So the exam is an important component of a student's life and its purpose. Similarly in life, challenges and difficulties force us to think of our actual purpose of life.

Polar thoughts- There are two contradictory lines of thought that one experiences before the examination:

Thoughts of Appreciation- When exams draw near, we long for the routine of dreaming, sleeping, eating, playing and so on. Even in life, when problems seem to approach, we start seeing beauty in the simple routine of life and learn to acknowledge the small joys of life.

Thoughts of Renunciation- Intense introspection of 'why this life' clouds the mind at the mere sight of books just before the examination. We lose appetite for worldly life and the Himalayas naturally becomes the hot topic. Isn't this a proof that unless problems announce their arrival, we wouldn't develop distaste for the ephemeral pleasures?

SMS (Save My Soul) - We pray daily to remind ourselves that God exists. But before exams, we pray to God to remind Him that we exist by calling out to Him like we all do generally- *Tere Siva Prabhu Koi Nahi Hai* (O! God there is no one for me other than you). Whatever be the reasons, life ensures that we seek God because people like the model question papers can give only hints but concrete solutions can be given by God, the paper setter.

Blankness-What is God's reply to our SMS? It is blank because as soon as the exam starts, we start wondering when they will end. My nephew—who is now two years old—recently joined a kindergarten school. While coming back from school, he questioned his father, "Daddy! How long you want me to go to school?" His father was heartbroken. I am sure God also feels the same when we keep asking him, "God, how long should we suffer?" What can God say as we have just begun and already we are tired? God might reply, "Child! Do the best and I will do the rest." We silence Him once again by

saying, “Sure God, you do the best and we will take rest.”

The exam standards are seemingly getting diluted due to the inherent laziness. On a lighter note, this is how the exam pattern will change given this laziness:

1995- Answer all questions

2000- Answer any 5 questions

2005- Select the correct answer (A, B or C)

2010- Write either A or B

2015- Please only read the questions

2020- Thanks for coming!!!

There is always a reason for God’s silence during our trials. I understood this when I became a teacher myself. A teacher willingly teaches the student any number of times before and after the examination, but not once during the exam because that would amount to curbing the growth of the student. If we understand this, we would probably not misconstrue or question God’s silence during our trials because at that time, He must be invigilating. Invigilation reminds me of the next stage:

The Exam- ‘The Hall of Fire’- I chose this concept of examinations and challenges because the Ramayana stands testimony to the fact that a brave effort to battle the odds of life elevates an ordinary man’s story to an epic story. The good in this epic never resisted difficulties, but what is unique is that even God in human form willingly goes through the same.

Continuous Internal Evaluation- Problems in life are ceaseless- you deal with one and another is ready. Each time they come, they come for a purpose, which is to evaluate your performance and promote you accordingly. You are not evaluated for the external but the internal traits. Hence, challenges in life are agencies, which continuously evaluate our inner potency, and thereby the process is called Continuous Internal Evaluation. In the Ramayana war, on one side we find the army of Ravana equipped with lethal weapons which can destroy multitudes, and on the other side we have the meek looking *vanaras* whose only strength is faith in their master and a sense of sacrifice for His cause. As we all know, the war is finally won by inner strength rather than the external paraphernalia.

Willingness- When a problem arises, we tend to repeatedly ask God, “Why should I face it when I didn’t invite it?” When we enter the examination hall, the first thing the invigilator seeks with all dignity and due respect is the candidate’s signature. The question paper is given to you only after you agree to write it going to the examination hall. It is not sent to the hostel or home. We give an application to the university of life in order to learn how to do and undo things that facilitate promotion into higher realms of life. If you want promotion, you should willingly attend the tests. Should the willingness arise out of a desire for promotion or can there be any other objective? Yes, there is a higher purpose, mother Sita’s decision to follow Lord Rama to the forest gives us an insight into this aspect. Mother Sita, daughter of an emperor, the daughter-in-law of an emperor and the wife of an emperor could have easily chosen to stay back in the kingdom and enjoy the luxuries of the same when Rama insists that she should do so. She persuades the Lord to take her along and thus willingly exposes herself to innumerable troubles that we are aware of- the worst of them being the *agni pariksha* commanded by the very same Lord for whose sake she chooses difficulties. This is not out of an ambition for promotion but rather a simple desire to live with the Lord. Following the Lord to the forest, Mother Sita stands testimony to the fact- ‘Better stormy seas with God than calm seas without Him.’ Hence, one should willingly face the tests.

Focus- The best trait of an examination is its ability to tap the potential in you. For example, on the day of the exam, just five minutes before entering the ‘Hall of fire’, a concept/doubt that has been bothering you for around two days, is suddenly clarified and you grasp it by the time you travel to the college building. Intense focus and concentration results in this (this is not in support of last minute learning). Exams make us know that we are capable of high degrees of concentration. All the while, unfortunately, we don’t choose to employ this trait until the exams draw near. When Lakshmana falls unconscious and Rama is in total despair, besides Jambavan’s reminders, it is Hanuman’s urge to save Lakshmana and his desperation to comfort His Lord that renders him the power to fly and the speed to accomplish the task. In the end, we find that Hanuman brings the mountain itself which contains the medicine. A pressing problem imparts such immense power.

Identity- Everyone attends life's lessons with you. Hence, there is a possibility that in the answer sheets everyone write the same answers. To make an impression and score better, you might replicate the answers of a good student and if need be, imitate his handwriting but with a word of caution- don't lose your identity by writing your registration number. It is true that we can learn from others' lives but you should be bold enough to believe and present your experience. Neither you nor your answer paper has any value if you lose your identity fully. Our identity as human beings should not be mortgaged to the hardships or external influences. This is no doubt difficult to practice, but being born as human beings we should behave like humans. In the Ramayana, we have Trijata, an *asura* by birth, who displays this quality of humanity with so much ease. Trijata is a very important character in the Ashoka Vana, for without her, Mother Sita could not have managed the fury of the atrocities that Ravana created. Trijata renders help of Sita well aware of the consequences of the fury of Ravana. Our true identity comes to surface only when we face atrocities. Thus, Trijata proves that identity is not merely what we inherit by birth, it is also what we acquire throughout our life. It is this identity that we need to retain in life despite the challenges.

Question Paper Design- A question paper is designed based on what class or stage a student belongs to. The difficulty level increases when we get promoted from one class to another. It would be disastrous to give a child complicated problems and ridiculous to have an adult solve simple ones. Once, a teacher who is warning kindergarten children against fighting tells them, "Dear children, you are the children of God, so behave like brothers with one another. If you do so, God will come and take you to heaven else he will take you to hell." He continues, "How many of you want to go to the heaven?" All the children raise their hands except one. The teacher goes to this boy and says, "Dear one! Why is it that you don't want to go to heaven, why you didn't raise your hand?" The innocent child replies, "Sir, my mother instructed me that after the last bell, I have to come back home and not go anywhere else." The kind and intensity of challenges life sends our way calls our attention to our growth rate. Meaning- there is a yardstick to measure what class in life's university you belong to. For example, if things happen in life the way you read in books or hear from people, you are in school. If theories you gathered

or believed are put to practical test, you are promoted to graduation. But with every step you take, if you see a series of problems lining up for you to provide the solution, be sure you are pursuing your research.

Choices- Choices can be comforting but can turn confusing if you have multiple choices and one choice is not very different from the other. Confusion in real life also arises due to the semblance of evil to goodness and God. We should be always clear about the truth that God is the right choice in life. We might have this doubt that when God is the best choice in life, why did He create these multiple temptations called the world?

Let me illustrate this with a story. There lived a man named Shadai who was the caretaker of a group of orphaned children. The children were of all types—some of them were mischievous, some quiet, some meek and so on. Shadai loved them all equally. One day, he constructs a wall so that the children don't go to the thick forest that surrounded the house. However, a curious child tries to sneak out and in the process finds a hole in the wall. Surprised, he runs back to Shadai and tells him, "Shadai! Do you know, I found a big hole in the wall?" Dejected, the kid tried to run away. Shadai tells the child, "I deliberately drilled the hole in the wall because I wanted you to choose to stay with me." God doesn't intend to force Himself upon our lives, so He gave us world. In the exam of life, we have a choice to choose God or the world, but we have to remember that our decision will shape our destiny.

Maximum Time- Whether you have to write an answer or erase a flaw, it has to be done in a stipulated time. Life is too short for all the joys we wish to inscribe and all the flaws we long to erase. We are given an opportunity to accomplish this in the form of life or time. In the Ramayana, a bird with weak wings and strong will, understanding this truth, fights headlong with Ravana in rescuing Mother Sita. While Dasaratha pined to die in Rama's presence, Jatayu was willing to die for Rama's sake in Ravana's hands. No doubt, the Lord performs the last rites of this dedicated warrior. Time is opportunity and to serve in God's mission is a lifetime opportunity. Jatayu proves this truth to humanity.

Attitude- Sometimes the attitude of students to the question paper is- You ask what you like, we will answer what we like. This doesn't fetch you marks,

you have to answer the question if you wish to pass. Machiavellian Ravana also possessed this attitude problem, as he never answered questions directly. For example, after he abducts Mother Sita, Vibhishana meets him to warn Ravana of the consequences and tells him, “Brother, why did you bring Mother Sita here, did you not know that it is disastrous to desire other’s property?” Digressing from the point, Ravana says in reply, “Do you know whom you are talking to, I am the most powerful King who could even please the Gods with my penance.” Here the question was ‘why did you steal’ and not ‘who are you’ or ‘what is the power of your penance’. Therefore, Ravana failed.

There is another reason why he failed. Ravana was an extraordinarily intelligent and talented person. Bhagawan reiterates this in one of His discourses, He says, “Ravana was a greater scholar than Rama, he was a master of 64 categories of knowledge; the ten heads represent the learning he had earned from six shastras and four vedas. He had mastered the language of birds, animals and insects. There was nothing wanting in Ravana by way of knowledge. Despite all this he failed.”

If we get 99 marks in Physics, 95 in Mathematics, but only 35 in Chemistry, aren’t we considered failed? So, I presume, Ravana would have scored more than 90 marks in valour, more than 90 marks in strength but below 40 in character; therefore he failed. Life considers character and discipline as very important subjects. We can’t fail in them. In fact, these subjects are God’s favourite subjects. We have heard Swami affirm this many a times. Due to this very reason, our University evaluates a student in integral items in addition to academics. There is a saying which answers the reason for this procedure- Any fool can handle a crisis, it takes a wise man to run a routine.

Let us take the example of the routine at the Sri Sathya Sai Hostels to explain how it shapes the personality and character of a student. After waking up in the morning, a student goes through prayers, jogging, yogasanas, college prayers, classes, extra classes, remedial classes, eating meals, serving meals, study circles, helping friends, guiding juniors, singing bhajans, making dramas and finally retires for the night. This never gives them the chance to execute some very important human rights like ‘right to hate’, ‘right to hurt’,

'right to fight' and 'right to chat'. The students work very hard and play their role well and become role models whereas in the outside world people are busy becoming models. Models lose their charm but role models never do.

The education that is imparted at Sri Sathya Sai educational institutions will require a lifetime to learn otherwise. Certain skills that students might find missing here can be acquired elsewhere in the form of a crash course, but character building cannot be acquired in a crash course. The curriculum followed here is designed by Bhagawan and the students learn all the topics taught here. If leaving a topic before the exam can be dangerous, leaving a subject can be catastrophic and Ravana is an example against selective study.

Director's Seal- A student writes the correct answer with legible handwriting, neat margins, accurate graphs and colourful diagrams; has tied up the sheets, has written his/her registration number correctly and submits the paper to the invigilator. But without the seal of the Head of the Institution, the paper is considered invalid. Do you want to know the importance of God's seal on your lives? When the name of Rama was inscribed on each of stones for the bridge to be constructed to Lanka, they ceased to drown. This proves that however skillful one is, one can't swim in an ocean; only the Lord's name can keep us floating in the ocean of *samsara* and His touch alone can bring an incredible transformation in a stone into a woman and a monkey into a jnani. His name made the stones float and mere touch of His tender feet made the slippers rule the empire. What can be a better proof of the importance of God's seal on our lives?

POST-EXAM

Generally, doctors after an operation and students after an examination give the same reply- we tried our best; can't say anything right now.

Vacation- After exam, the immediate trial that surfaces is results. Supposedly, life understands how tragic and nightmarish both these episodes can be and hence, gives a vacation in between. Indeed, pleasure is an interval between two pains.

Reaction- Lord Rama was told one night that He will be coronated as the king and the next morning He is asked to go to the forest. He was neither

elated before nor dejected later. He maintained perfect equipoise regardless of the results to show us how to respond and not react to the fruits of our actions.

Revaluation- When life sends us happy episodes, we never question ‘why me’ but when it sends problems this question invariably arises. For example, when the results are announced and we unexpectedly pass or get good marks, we don’t apply for revaluation but if we get less than what we expected, we take all the pains to question the examiner. What it would be like to send a revaluation application to God? Can there be flaws in His judgment? If so, what does He do when you question Him?

Let me narrate an experience. Some years ago, Bhagawan had blessed the final year students of Anantapur Campus for an interview inside the Bhajan hall. One sister was made responsible to record the conversations of Bhagawan with the students. She was trained enough to do it well but somehow in the last minute, she pressed the wrong button and there was a loud noise as Swami began His discourse. Before anybody else could react, Swami looked at this sister sternly and said, ‘Aye!’ and continued His discourse. She began to cry (though silently). Her condition was like that of a frog on whom Rama places His bow. The frog cries saying, “Lord, if the world hurts me, I have you to go to, but if you hurt me where should I go?” This sister also shared similar sentiments.

Bhagawan finished His discourse and asked the teachers to distribute pen sets to the girls. As Bhagawan was handing the packets, one packet fell from His hands and fell directly into this sister’s lap as she was sitting in the front. She felt elated that accidentally though, she received the gift directly from Bhagawan. Little did she know that the words ‘accident’ and ‘coincidence’ don’t appear in the Divine dictionary as everything He does is planned well in advance. Later, when everybody was busy in opening their gifts, she also felt inquisitive and opened her gift. She found a small piece of paper in the packet, which read, “I am sorry.” Mother Sai was standing right there to see a hearty smile from this heartbroken daughter. God alone is the examiner whose compassion is boundless and concern is matchless. Compassion and forgiveness might not surface in examinations but they do with God.

It is with this belief saint Ramadas sings:

Kroora karamamulu neraka chesiti neramulyanchaka Rama

O! Rama, please don't count my mistakes and transgressions done unknowingly.

Convocation- Willingly accepting all the challenges, not getting bogged down by the small failures in life and instead facing them bravely with faith in God, not only makes life a best-selling game but makes one an all-rounder. By all-rounder, I mean the one who possess many talents and yet has no desire for them. To one such who successfully passes the exams of life with a distinction, what God gives is not just a gold medal but something that is most valuable in the world: Himself.





Quiz on the Life of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Dr. S Subramanian & team

Asst. Professor, Dept. of Management Studies, SSSIHL

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 the Summer Courses at SSSIHL. 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 the Life of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The nine rounds in this Quiz Programme were:

Round 1 – Leelas & mahimas- Swami's childhood events

Round 2 – Upadesh- Swami's message

Round 3 – Bhagawan Uvacha- Narrate the quote of Bhagawan

Round 4 – Little objects Lofty messages- Identify the teaching of Bhagawan from a visual

Round 5 – Names of the Lord- Identify a *Naama* from Sri Sathya Sai
Ashtothra Shatha Naama

Round 6 – Tell the Tale- Narrate the episode from Swami’s life from cues given

Round 7 – See the picture and Say the Quote- Identify the teaching of Bhagawan from a visual

Round 8 – Discourses- Complete the introductory verse sung by Swami in His discourse

Round 9 – Divine Voyages- Visual Round - Identify the place Swami was (in the photo) and narrate an episode connected with it.

Round 10 – Rapid Fire

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 Baba.





Lessons from the Bhagavad Gita for Modern Society

Kum. Haripriya TV

Student, III B.Sc. (Hons.) in Mathematics, SSSIHL

*Bhagavad Gita kinchita dheeta
Ganga jala larva kanika peeta
Sakrudapi yena murari samarcha
Kriyate tasya yamenana charcha*

Adi Sankara says that a little reading of the Bhagavad Gita will save us from the date with death. The Bhagavad Gita teaches us steps towards enlightenment. According to The Bhagavad Gita, the two virtues that are most important in a spiritual aspirant to realize his Divinity are earnestness and beingness. Our real success is proportionate to our earnestness and beingness. Lord Krishna describes an earnest seeker as:

*sraddhavan labhate jnanam
tat-parah samyatendriyah
jnanam labdhva param santim
achirenathigacchati*

A faithful man who is always earnest in absorbing transcendental knowledge quickly attains the supreme spiritual peace. The essence of this story sounds highly philosophical but after listening to the following story, we would find it practical.

There was a devotee who was an ardent worshipper of Lord Jagannath. From his boyhood, he had chosen Lord Jagannath as his deity. As he grew up, he had a strong desire to go on a pilgrimage to Puri to have Darshan of the Lord. But he was poor and hence was unable to undertake this journey, as it would cost him a substantial amount. So he waited several years and started saving money for this purpose. After he had accumulated a reasonable amount, he finally undertook the pilgrimage that he had cherished for a long

time. Initially, he strayed from the path to Puri, but after struggling for a long time, he was able to reach the abode of the Lord and was able to have Darshan of the Lord. Although he was poor and ignorant, his earnestness and sincerity made him to go to Puri and have the Darshan of the Lord. Thus, to be on the path to enlightenment, we have to desire it very strongly.

*karmanye vadhikaraste, ma phaleshu kada chana,
ma karma phala hetur bburmatey sangostva akarmani*

You have the right to perform your actions, but you are not entitled to the fruits of the actions.

We should never remain inactive. Each and every moment we should work towards enlightenment. That is our prescribed duty. Even if when we remain earnest, fears and desires that our mind creates, haunt us. Lord Krishna says:

*trividham narakasyedam dvaaram naashanamaatmanaha
kaamaha krodha stathaa lobhaha tasmaadetattrayam tyajet*

Lust, greed and anger are the three gates that lead to the degradation of the Soul. They prevent us from having an earnest and awakened way of life. Hence, earnestness itself is not enough. Then what else do we need to understand who we are?

*na hi jnanena sadrsam pavitram iha vidyate
tat svayam yoga-samsiddhah kalenaatmani vindati*

In this world, there is nothing as pure and sublime as the transcendental knowledge. And one who has become accomplished in the practice of devotional service enjoys this knowledge within himself in due course of time. What is this knowledge that we must be aware of?

*aham ātmā gudākeśa sarva-bhūtā śaya-sthitah
aham ādiś ca madhyam ca bhūtānām anta eva ca*

Lord Krishna says- I am the Self (Atma) seated in the heart of all creatures. I am the beginning, the middle and the end of all beings. This tells us that being the grandest absolute being, we must try being our true being. This is known as beingness.

To understand ourselves better, let us consider an illustration. Suppose there is a science student who wishes to be a writer. She knows that she will be happy if she becomes one. But she is not able to write as she is busy with her studies, therefore, she is not being in a state called happy. This paradigm suggests that she has a faulty attitude. She is under an illusion because she can be a science student and still be the other thing called writer. Despite being busy with her studies, she can write during breaks or after the day is done. So there is always time to be who we are, because the time to be who we are is all the time. Our mind attracts unlike things like a magnet. But we must continue to be that being, which we have chosen to be despite the unwanted occurrences like fear, desire, attachment, etc.

*paśya me pārtha rūpāni śataśo 'tha sahasraśah
nānā-vidhāni divyāni nānā-varnākr̥tīni ca*

Sri Krishna shows His universal form to Arjuna and says: My dear Arjuna, O son of Pritha, see now My opulence, hundreds of thousands of varied Divine and multicolored forms.

We can also experience our being to an ever-increasing degree. I pray to Bhagawan to help us to be earnest from today, moving forward with a clear perspective of our true being of who we are, our purpose and our destination; and refusing to be waylaid by our misdirection, turmoil or confusion to reach the intended destiny.





Lessons from the Bhagavatam for Modern Society

Sri Anvit Manohar Hegde

Student, III B.B.M., SSSIHL

Bharat is a *punya bhoomi*. The very air that blows here hums the Divine verses of the Vedas and the Upanishads. This land has nested many epics like the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavatam, which are the guidelines for every being to lead a peaceful life. The Bhagavatam is a repository of the stories of the Lord. Bhagawan says that the Bhagavatam can be applied to every account, every story and every experience that a devotee has with the Lord. In this world, wading through joys and sorrows, man needs someone of his kind with whom he can share all his feelings, his moments of bliss and sorrow. To fulfill this need, God has blessed man with a unique relationship of unshakable Love- one that is pure, noble and free from all desire and ego. In the Bhagavatam, it is described as the 8th stage of Bhakti known as *Sakhyam*- friendship with God. The Bhagavatam describes a four-stage process to achieve this- *Salokyam*, *Saamepyam*, *Saroopyam* and finally *Sayujyam*, where a devotee begins as a friend of the Lord and ultimately reaches the stage of oneness with the Him.

God is described as- *Subrud sarva bhootanam*, which means that He is a friend of the entire creation. But this relationship will only prosper when we open our hearts and leave it in His custody. Swami says that giving our sullied hearts to God is like giving a soiled note to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). A note which is not accepted by anybody will surely be accepted by RBI (and in exchange the RBI gives you a fresh, new note). In the same way, God will accept our polluted hearts and in exchange, fill it with joy, bliss and love. The friendship between Krishna and Kuchela is *Salokyam*, i.e. friendship at the physical level. Krishna, though being Divine, came down to the level of a human being just to honour the relationship which He had with Kuchela which had begun long back in the ashram of guru Sandipani. Kuchela was received by Krishna with all love and generosity and was filled with wealth

and prosperity in bountiful measure for the little parched rice that Krishna took mischievously took from Kuchela.

Treating God as our friend is not an easy task. We ought to have complete faith in Him. Sometimes, God puts us in difficult situations just to check whether our love and feelings towards him are pure or not. In those situations, the only solution that works out is total surrender at His lotus feet. Swami in His childhood blessed many devotees to be with Him and to play with Him. This is the second stage of *Saamepyam*- having Divine proximity with the Lord.

Bhagawan was very close to Ramesh and Suresh. Both were not good in studies. It so happened that during the Eighth Standard Public Examination (ESLC) examination, both Ramesh and Suresh came running to Swami and revealed their fear of examinations. Swami assured them that He would write their paper in their handwriting within the given time. Ramesh and Suresh went into the examination hall and patiently waited for Swami to finish His paper. Swami finished writing His paper in first half hour and in the next one hour He wrote the answer sheets for both Ramesh and Suresh. Finally, when the results were out, Ramesh and Suresh were pleasantly surprised to know that they have scored 95% marks in the examination. Slowly, a lot of transformation started taking place in their hearts due to the Darshan, *Sparshan* and *Sambhashan* of Bhagawan, thus building a strong bond of friendship between them and Him. Finally, they realized that there is none except Swami who came to their rescue.

There is one more incident where Swami had to go with all His classmates to a village fair to serve as boy scouts. Swami had only one set of clothes that He used to wash every evening and wear the same set of clothes the next day. When one of his friends came to know about this, he got a new set of clothes stitched for Swami and during the lunch break, when nobody was there, he silently went and kept it on Swami's desk saying- Sathya, we all are classmates and I came to know that you have only one set of clothes with you. This is the reason I got a new set of clothes stitched for you. You have

to accept them or I will not hesitate to give away my life even. After lunch, when Swami came back, He saw the parcel and this small note and replied to the student- Yes, we are friends, but our friendship is not based on worldly desires and monetary benefits. If you want our friendship to continue forever, then please take it back, I am not going to accept it.

This incident shows that friendship with God is all about selfless love. He keeps giving and never expects anything in return for the love that He gives to all of us.

God is the only solace for people who have no other support in their lives. Let me narrate an incident. Once in Kodaikanal, Swami had conducted Narayana Seva where all the poor and needy people were provided with food and blankets. When this programme came to an end, Swami instructed one of the teachers to place a few blankets in His car. When this was done, Swami went away without informing anyone about it. Everybody in Sai Shruti was confused as to where Swami has gone. He came back and told the teachers and students that He had gone to town to visit a few destitute people. These people were unable to come to Swami; hence, Bhagawan went to them and showered His grace in the form of blankets. This proves that Swami is *Anatha rakshaka*, the only solace and support of a man in misery.

Swami used to describe '*maitri*' as *mai* and *tri*- i.e. friendship which is constant in all the periods of time. Swami says that in these periods of time, i.e. past, present and future, our association with Him and His friendship with us will continue to prosper till eternity. This noble emotion was taught by Krishna to Arjuna. The friendship between them was in the third stage of *Saropyam* where the devotee's expression reflects the God's image. The love between Krishna and Arjuna was so deep that they used to have food in the same plate. During the war when Arjuna was dejected, Krishna infused courage, duty and responsibility on him and thus helped Arjuna to avoid a disgraceful defeat in the war. Arjuna too, like a good friend took the advice of Krishna in high spirits and with full confidence because Arjuna knew that whatever Krishna would say, would be good for him.

The spirit of *maitri* was embodied in the unique relationship of the Gopikas and Gopalas with mischievous Krishna. Krishna—with his sweet innocence—

not only stole butter, but also the heart too. This stage of *Sakhyam* is when all the distinctions between devotee and God disappear and they become one. We have to see God in every being and automatically the feeling of *Sakhyam* will blossom in our heart. When this stage of ultimate trust and faith is reached, the final stage of Atma Nivedanam is very easy and natural to attain. This is how a true devotee of God evolves from the stage of *Salukyam* in the beginning to the ultimate stage of *Sayujyam*, where there is no identity separate from the master.

*advestā sarva-bhūtānām maitrah karuna eva cha
nirmamo nirahankārah sama-dubkha-sukhab kshamī*

A true devotee is the one who harvests no animosity towards anybody and is a friend to all. He is the one who is beyond ego and attachment and has cultivated the quality of equanimity and forbearance.

Bhagawan says- The feeling of Divine friendship should activate every nerve and purify every emotional wave. It has no place for the slightest trace of egoism. You cannot elevate the companionship that seeks to exploit this friendship for personal benefit.

The only friend who can pass this rigorous test is God.





Chinna Katha Analysis Exercise

Oka Chinna Katha- When Bhagawan intercepts the speeding current of His Discourse with these three Telugu words, meaning, 'One little story', all ears are alert, all hearts are quivering. For, the story that follows is a flash that illumines, a shower that cools, a joke that tickles, a 'tablet' that alleviates, a peep into epic grandeur or pompous absurdity, a poetic parenthesis, an exhilarating prick, a lilt that enlightens, a sugar-coated pill of profundity, a disarming repartee, a volley of raillery on religious rigmarole! It may be a tonic tale of the past or the report of a contemporary comedy; it may be a thrust on theological disputation or a dear little dig at some egoistic dignity.

The 'Chinna Katha'- if only we ponder over its relevance, is an effective instrument in Bhagawan's educational process. When He is discoursing, these parables and stories, ever on the wing, hover in flocks in the firmament of His Love; He lets a few fly into our hearts and nestle there, until we fondle and foster them and make them part of our thought and behaviour patterns. Here is a charming, fragrant bouquet of these multicolored Kathas for our delectation, meditation and inspiration.

Sri N Kasturi

Prasanthi Nilayam, 14 January, 1978

In the spirit of Swami's Chinna Kathas, a unique interactive session was added to this year's Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality. The benefits of moral storytelling through parables are well established, and the Chinna Kathas have an added advantage of emanating directly from the wisdom of The One Himself!

The format of this exercise was simple. Each of the four campuses of the university participated. For each campus session, the first part included the presentation of the chosen China Katha by the student members of the campus through narration, skit, PowerPoint, video or other creative modes.

This was then followed by student deliberations, focusing on the message of the short story, subtle nuances of the message, deeper spiritual significance and insights, relevant personal experiences, application of the message in Hostel/Institute settings, application of the message in real world in domains of sports, politics, business, scientific research, etc.

Lastly, a panel of experts interacted with the students, focusing on eliciting through questions, issues/learnings that have not been touched upon by them, varied perspectives to the message, and explaining from their life experiences/experiences with Swami, anecdotes of relevance to the Chinna Katha. Wherever possible, audio clips of Bhagawan's Discourses focusing on the message from the Chinna Katha would be played.

Last—but certainly not the least—was the icing on the cake- Bhagawan's message on the theme (Chinna Katha) would be highlighted.

The **Moderators** included:

- » Dr. N Siva Kumar, Associate Professor, Dept. of Commerce, SSSIHL
- » Ms. U Suma, Asst. Professor, Dept. of Commerce, SSSIHL
- » Dr. R Sai Sathish, Asst. Professor, Dept. of Chemistry, SSSIHL
- » Sri B Chandrasekhar, Asst. Professor, Dept. of Chemistry, SSSIHL

The **Expert Panel** consisted of:

- » Prof. (Miss.) Rajeshwari Patel, Head, Dept. of English Language & Literature, SSSIHL
- » Sri Sanjay Sahni, Director, Brindavan Campus, SSSIHL
- » Prof. S Jagadeeswara Rao, Head, Dept. of Chemistry, SSSIHL
- » Dr. S Siva Sankar Sai, Head, Dept. of Physics, SSSIHL

Chinna Katha Presentation – Anantapur Campus

Central Theme: Seek Ye First Thy Kingdom and All These Things shall be Added unto You.

Once a great Maharaja (ruler) held a big exhibition of paintings and art products. The finest works of art were on display. The exhibition was open to one and all. The Maharaja announced that anyone could walk in and take away whatever one liked. Large numbers of men and women went to the exhibition and took back with them whatever they fancied.

Among them was a lady. She saw everything in the exhibition. She came out through the main door without taking anything with her. The Maharaja noticed that of all the people visiting the exhibition, she was the only one to come out empty-handed. He was curious to know what the reason for this was. He asked the lady, “Madam, how is it you have found nothing to interest you in the exhibition? There are so many attractive things on display. Was there nothing that pleased you?” She replied, “There are innumerable desirable things in the exhibition.” The Maharaja asked: “But was there nothing that you wanted?” “No” she said. The Maharaja said, “If that is so, tell me what you desire and I shall give it to you.” She said, “Maharaja, will you promise to give me what I want? Is your offer genuine? Will you keep your word?” “Certainly,” replied the Maharaja. “If that is so, I want only you,” said the lady. True to his word, the Maharaja surrendered himself to her. When the Maharaja himself became hers, all that was in the exhibition also became hers.

Summary of Student & Panelist Discussions

The students argued that the story depicts the choice between choosing the highest (God) or the world. (The premise was that if you choose the highest, everything under would come automatically). The panelists persuaded the students to think deeper regarding the issue, including the issue of worthiness (of being picked by God) and the principle of unity.

Bhagawan’s message on the theme

If some pray to God for wealth and comforts, God will grant it. If someone

else prays for intellectual knowledge, God grants it. God also constructs Super Speciality Hospitals to remove diseases and ill health. But those who want only God, He will become very close to them. These are the four forms of approach to God. Whatever you ask, God will grant, but that is not important. Only God is important. If God is ours, we can earn anything in the world. Hence, real wealth is God. Real health is God. Man should make every effort to attain God because we have come out of God and should go back to God.

Chinna Katha Presentation – Brindavan Campus

Central Theme: The Power of Words

A certain officer was inspecting the work of a teacher in a school. He had a hearty contempt for mere talk, so he asked the teacher, “How can you ever transform the nature of these children by the words you utter? Show them by deeds; act, don’t speak!” The teacher protested and argued that words have a profound effect on the mind. The argument continued for some time. At last the teacher resolved upon a plan to convince the officer of his point of view. He told an urchin of his class, “Here! Catch this officer by the neck and push him out of the room.” Hearing those words, the officer flew into a great rage and started pouring abuse on the teacher. The teacher said, “Sir, I only said a few words. No one pushed you or hit you or touched you. It was all mere sound. But see how it has enraged you. Words, Sir, do help in modifying character and shaping nature. They have vast power,” he said.

Summary of Student & Panelist Discussions

After a slight confusion (amongst students) that prayerful words to the Lord earn His Grace (He comes to the devotee’s rescue), the panelists pointed out that the Chinn Katha actually describes the power of words not necessarily the power of the Lord’s name because there is no debate on the fact that name of God helps us.

Bhagawan’s message on the theme

To purify our minds and to prevent evil words and traits from entering our

life, we should constantly chant the name of the Lord. The tongue of man is very holy because it can utter the sweet, potent and tender name of the Lord. Such a holy tongue should be used only to speak auspicious words and should consume only auspicious materials. It should not be defiled by speaking impure words and eating impure food. The main objective of the youngsters participating in the Summer Courses is to use this tongue only for uttering sacred words and sounds.

Chinna Katha Presentation – Muddenahalli Campus

Central Theme: Whoever surrenders to the Lord, the Lord accepts him without any reservation.

In the great Indian epic Ramayana, Vibhishana was aware of what his elder brother (Ravana) had done (by kidnapping Mother Sita, the queen of Lord Rama) was wrong. Knowing this, he warned Ravana in various ways. He repeatedly told Ravana, “This is wrong. You should not do this. It is not good for you.” Vibhishana felt that it was his duty to warn Ravana (against his evil ways). Ultimately, failing to convince Ravana, he chose to give up his brother and seek asylum with Rama.

Vibhishana inquired from Hanuman, an ardent devotee of Lord Rama, whether Rama will accept his homage and take him under His protecting shade. He said, “I am the brother of His worst enemy, whom He has vowed to destroy; I am a member of the demonic race; I am unacquainted with the scriptures or the rituals.” Then Hanuman replied, “O you fool! Do you think that the Lord cares for ritual correctitude, or family status or scholarship? If so, how could He accept me, a monkey?” That settled the matter. Vibhishana was assured of Grace. When Vibhishana went to Rama later, Rama asked the elder monkeys around Him whether He could accept Vibhishana into the fold. Of course, He did not need any counsel from any one. He was never influenced by others. But, still, just to bring them into the picture, He consulted them and made pretense of not having made up His mind

yet. When Sugreeva said “No,” Rama reminded him that he too had come to Him first, giving up his elder brother. When Lakshmana said that the only treatment he deserved was to be thrown back into Lanka, Rama said, “Yes! I am resolved to crown him as the emperor of Lanka, after the demise of Ravana.” Someone suggested that Vibhishana should not be promised a throne, for, Ravana may fall at the Feet of the Lord and earn pardon for his iniquity. Rama then replied, “In that case, I will hold both hands of Bharatha (younger brother of Rama who was ruling Ayodhya when Lord Rama was in exile) and beg him to make Vibhishana Emperor of Ayodhya, our ancestral domain. Bharatha and I will spend our time happily in the forests.” Whoever surrenders to Him, Lord Rama accepts him on the spot, without reservations.

Summary of Student & Panelist Discussions

There was an interesting debate between the students as to the correctness of Vibhishana’s surrender to Rama. Was he sincere? And if so, was it *dharmic* that he left his motherland and joined Rama? The students argued well, saying that Vibhishana did his dharma till the end. He stayed there as a minister and advised Ravana not to undertake sinful deeds. Once he realized that Ravana can’t be corrected, he joined the forces of Rama to eradicate the evil plaguing his kingdom. He wanted the end of the evil rule of Ravana for the good of the kingdom of Lanka.

Bhagawan’s message on the theme

We have to achieve surrender in life. Many people think, ‘I have surrendered everything to Bhagawan, then why am I suffering so much?’ A person who has really surrendered will never get such questions in his mind. So long as you are feeling that ‘I am getting tormented, where is the surrender?’ A person who has not surrendered will get such thoughts. A person who has surrendered will consider everything as a gift of God. Enter the field of action, broaden your heart and surrender everything to God.

Chinna Katha- Prasanthi Nilayam Campus

Central Theme: God does everything for the best

There was once a Minister to a King who was in the habit of declaring whatever happened was for one's good. One day the King cut his finger while slicing a piece of sugar cane. Seeing the bleeding finger the Minister said as usual "God does everything for the best." The King flew into a rage and said "Here I am suffering with the pain of a bleeding finger and you say God does everything for the best. Enough of your philosophy. Is this the way of consoling me? How can this be for the best when the pain is intense and real?" The King immediately committed the Minister to prison. Even then the Minister said calmly "Even this sentence is for my best."

A few days later, the King went hunting in the forest alone. When the hunting expedition was over, the King was resting under a tree. Just then the servants of a certain tribal chief of the forest seized the King and bound his hand and feet. The King questioned them, "Why do you bind me? What are you going to do with me?" The tribesmen replied: "We are going to sacrifice you at the altar of our Goddess Kali. It is the custom to offer her a human sacrifice once a year. The time has arrived. We have been looking out for a human being. We are fortunate in having found you." The King remonstrated, "Let me go, I am the King of the realm, you cannot kill me for the sacrifice." The tribesmen laughed and said, "We are glad that this year's sacrifice would be unique and our Goddess will be highly pleased because we are going to offer as sacrifice a great personage."

The King was carried and duly placed on a sacrificial altar. But, just as things were ready for the final deathblow, the priest noticed the bandage on his left hand forefinger. They removed the bandage only to find that a portion of it was cut. The priest said, "This man is not acceptable as a sacrifice to our Goddess. A man with a defect in his body is not fit for sacrifice. Set him free."

The King remembered the words of the Minister uttered when his finger was cut, "God does everything for the best." He realized that the injury to his finger alone had saved him from death. He at once hurried home and

went straight to the prison to set the Minister free. He said, “I seek your forgiveness for the rash and cruel treatment accorded to you.” The Minister said: “Your Majesty, you have done no harm. There is nothing to forgive.” The King once again questioned, “Why did you say that my sending you to prison is for your good?” The Minister replied: “If I had not been confined in prison, I would have accompanied you when you went for hunting. I would have been in your company. When the tribesmen came to know that you were unfit for sacrifice, they would have chosen me and offered me as a sacrifice. So God does everything for the best.”

Summary of Student & Panelist Discussions

Both the students and the panelists largely agreed on the central theme—that acceptance (of what comes our way in life) is best for all of us. The panelists added a useful point regarding the notion of active acceptance (as supposed to passive acceptance), i.e., take everything in positive stride with the knowingness that it is God’s Will that always prevails.

Bhagawan’s message on the theme

Whatever happens to you, think, ‘it is good for me, good for me, good for me.’ If you understand this truth, Divine Grace will be showered on you in abundance. If you follow your own thoughts and feelings, then when will you understand God? Have firm faith that whatever God does is for your good.

SUMMARY

As mentioned in the first Chinna Katha, when Bhagawan asks, “What do you want”, we have to say, “We want only you Swami.” When we have Swami, everything is added on to us. Words (as mentioned in the second Chinna Katha exercise) have lot of power, intent and impact. We have to integrate this power of words with *namasmarana* (chanting the name of God) for our own growth. When students join the University, they have doubts whether Swami will accept them as they have lot of faults. But the third Chinna Katha showed us that Swami accepts us in spite of all our mistakes as He sees the goodness and Divinity in us. With this aspect of surrender, we should move to become better citizens. Whenever a devotee or student would go to

Swami and ask for something, He will reply in the following way:

- » When you ask me for something, I say 'Yes' and give what you asked for.
- » At a higher stage, I would tell 'Wait' and give something better.
- » Finally, I would say 'No' and give you the best.

The fourth Chinna Katha highlights that whatever happens to us, and whatever Swami gives us is best for us!





Valedictory Session

Dr. (Miss) Kiron Bala Arora

Associate Professor in Hindi, SSSIHL
Warden, Anantapur Campus, SSSIHL

The stage on which I stand now is the stage of my second birth. Let me start by narrating an incident that happened in 1977 when I was a student of His College. During one of his visits to the Anantapur Campus, we had enacted a drama entitled ‘Sambhavami Yuge Yuge’. Bhagawan liked the drama so much that He asked us to put up the drama again at Prasanthi Nilayam during Dasara. I was playing the role of Lakshmana in this drama, which was enacted in this Poornachandra Auditorium. As Shabari sang soulfully entreating Rama to come and give Darshan on the stage of Poornachandra Auditorium, myself in the guise of Lakshmana and Rama came onto the dais. As we both approach Shabari and reach the centre of the stage, we heard a terrible cracking sound from above. A big wooden beam holding four 1000 watt bulbs snapped and fell. At that instant, I saw Bhagawan get up from His chair with electric speed and raise his hand as if holding something aloft. The beam had stopped its drop and hung precariously few inches above our heads. Terror had swept the audience and people started running out filled with horror. Since the song of Shabari continued and the play was on, I continued my acting thinking that it would be ridiculous to run out of the stage.

In the next instant, Bhagawan was by my side, with worry and annoyance writ large in His face. As He came onto the stage, He called out the stage in-charge and rebuked him severely. Next, He turned to me and said, “Have you no fear, acting away when the beam is just over your head!” I was shocked with the quick happenings and looked at Bhagawan with tearful eyes. I had never seen Swami so angry. I had not grasped the severity of the situation. The Divine Mother melted looking at my plight and explained tenderly, “Bangaru, I have stopped the beams and held them just above your heads. If the beam would have exploded, you would have been turned into a handful of ash by now.” What could I do except fall at His feet shedding tears of gratitude.

Every time I attend Summer Courses, I am filled with nostalgia at the number of Summer Courses He has allowed me to attend as a student and later as a teacher. Let me recall an incident that occurred during the Ooty Summer Course in 1976. On the last day of the Summer Course, Swami planned that all will go down the hill singing bhajans and clean the bus stand which used to be dirty and come back for a lavish lunch. Swami gave us green sarees with blue buds and flowers as the borders for the occasion. It was a long winding path. We cleaned the bus stand and started our trek back to the Nandan Vanam ashram. Tired, we struggled to climb up. We found our dear Lord climb down a little eagerly awaiting our arrival. He instructed us to stop the bhajans with such love and tenderness dripping from His eyes that our tiredness vanished. He asked us, "Aren't you tired?" We all shouted back, "No Swami." Swami looked at us and said, "You are all buds in my garden." As I stand here, I also feel the same- You are all fresh buds of this Divine garden awaiting the magical touch of the loving gardener to blossom.

These Summer Courses are like the manure and sunshine that will help you to achieve this. We have been exposed to many practical lessons on the two themes of culture and spirituality. According to me, spirituality is something more internal and personal which man reaches in his journey through life while culture reflects this internal light in our social behaviour. Culture is the way we relate to people, things and situations. The more refined and regulated we are, the more cultured we are. To understand the nuances of culture, we revert to the great characters of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which are great repositories of our culture heritage. Let me enunciate the two virtues of *sharangati* (total surrender) and love in the light of these epics.

Rama and Krishna went to any extent to protect the devotees who had surrendered to them. I vividly remember an interview that Bhagawan once gave us. He explained how Krishna would come to the rescue of the Pandavas whenever they called out to him. Krishna changed the whole scenario and protected them. My reasoning mind was in turmoil. There were many instances in the Kurukshetra war where the embodiments of Dharma resorted to adharmic ways at the behest of Sri Krishna. For instance, the killing of Bheeshma, Dronacharya and Karna. I asked Swami, "Why did you do all that, calling it a *dharma yuddha* and resorting to such trickery?" He

(twice) answered me, “Dear, you do not understand the intricacies of Dharma, leave it.” This didn’t quieten my mind and I tried to find an answer for my query as Bhagawan was accessible. In my stupid audacity, I tried to find an answer for my question from Him. He patiently heard and replied, “You don’t understand, it is my first and foremost dharma to protect those who surrender to me without accessing their credentials.” Here is the Lord following His dharma at the cost of being misunderstood and sometimes even cursed. The same was the case with Sri Rama. The scene was the arrival of Vibhishana, a brother of the enemy, seeking refuge at the lotus feet of Rama. Rama calls the leaders of different sections of his army to take their opinions. All including Lakshmana too had reservations about trusting Vibhishana. It is then that Rama declares, “Anyone who falls at my feet with a sense of surrender, I will at all costs protect him.” He always did, does still and will do always.

Let us explore the virtue of love and affection. In the game of dice between Yudhisthira and Duryodhana, Yudhisthira was so blinded that he lost everything that he had. Anybody in his place would have seen the shadow of foul play in the game and would have dropped it, but Yudhisthira went on playing and losing. Finally, he lost himself, his brothers and even his wife in the game. But at no time in the toughest period of exile, did the brothers express discontent and resentment with the act of Yudhisthira which became a seed of their long suffering resulting ultimately in the Mahabharata war. When Arjuna doesn’t return for a long time from Dwaraka, the brothers try to do anything to brighten his spirits.

Coming to the four brothers of Ramayana. They beseeched each other to take up the throne. Each was ready to do any sacrifice to please the other. The scene is the Panchavati River where Bharata goes accompanied with all his countrymen to get Rama back to Ayodhya. Rama on the other hand is determined to obey His father and stay on in the forest. Rama the embodiment of dharma and Bharata the embodiment of prema try to settle the issue. Rama requests Bharata to rule the kingdom on His behalf until He finishes the exile of fourteen years. Bharata puts the sandals of Rama on the throne as His representatives to rule the kingdom. Rama was just one day elder to Bharata and two days to Lakshmana and Shatrughna, but the brothers worshipped and revered Rama as their own father. There was such

love and affection that even prolonged difficulties were unable to break that bond of love between the brothers. This love and acceptance is one great take home message coming from these epics.

Bhagawan sang:

Love is my form, Truth is my breath, Bliss is my food...

In the absence of your physical form, let us adore your Love form. Let this form live in us with truth as our breath too. When love and truth become part and parcel of our lives with unity at hand, purity and divinity will soon follow.

I pray from the deepest recesses of my heart- Lead kindly light towards this unquestioning unity of humanity because when we stand strong when we stand together. Let us all decide to contribute our little part for result not short of excellence and perfection as Bhagawan always demanded.

Let me conclude with a mantra that helps me in difficult times. I call this formula an **A4 formula** having four steps.

First: **Accept**

Second: **Adjust**

Third: **Accommodate**

Fourth: **Appreciate**

Accept others as they are as they can't be otherwise; adjust a little at all levels. Then accommodate differences at all levels and finally, put yourself in the other person's shoes and appreciate the other side of the coin also. Can we get closer to your injunction O! Lord of Love All and Serve All?





Paranayam Sessions

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





Anantapur Campus Sessions

Ms. A Prasunamba

Teacher, Sri Sathya Sai Primary School, Prasanthi Nilayam

Purushottama manava Roopa Dharaa
Mara Sevitha Sarvajanaika Guro
Pranataarthihara Prabhu Sai Hare
Vijayeebava Parthipuraadhipate

Indeed! Purushottama Himself descended in Human Form to mould us. How fortunate we are! It is out of supreme compassion for mankind that Bhagawan decided to take human form. It is this teaching that has made me what I am today.

I studied at Anantapur Campus, SSSIHL between the years 1975 to 1978. During those years, we did not have formal Veda chanting as we have here today. So a few of us decided to learn a particular prayer at home and wait for Bhagawan to give us a chance in His Divine presence. As luck would have it, Bhagawan visited Anantapur on a Ganesh Chaturthi day in the year 1977. We were indeed blessed and lucky for we got a chance to do Ganesh puja to Sai Ganesha Himself. At the end of the puja, we asked Swami if He would listen to our Veda chanting that we had learnt. Bhagawan nodded His Head in approval, and we chanted 'Narayana Suktam'. He keenly listened and said '*Annee Tappule*', which means 'all mistakes'. We were very dejected and thought that that was the end of it. We forgot all about it.

In Parthi, on special festival days like Vijayadashami and Bhagawan's Birthday, we used to come in a procession led by Sai Geeta and the band, Nadaswaram, etc. and we had to sit in the Poornachandra Auditorium to witness the proceedings. On one such occasion, just when the procession was about to proceed, we got a message from Bhagawan that we should chant 'Purusha Suktam'. Now, this prayer is Greek and Latin to us. The then Principal, Hemalatha Madam called us and asked us to refer to a book and she literally requested us to chant by seeing the book. But, we did not even

know how to read this prayer. We said we could not do so and very reluctantly, Madam sent a message to Swami through Mr. Kutumba Rao Garu that we did not know the prayer. Back came Swami's message: 'Let them move their lips'. Bhagawan asked us very lovingly to take *padanamaskar*. So, obeying His Command we went on to the stage only to move our lips into the mikes which were in front of us. Lo and Behold! When the programme concluded, many people came and congratulated our Madam saying that the girls chanted Vedas very nicely.

When I joined Primary School in the year 1981, our Principal Madam, Ms. Muni Kaul desired that school children should learn the Vedas. So, on one of the visits that Bhagawan made regularly to the school, our Principal Madam requested Bhagawan to send Kamavadhani garu, a renowned scholar, to teach Vedas to the children in school. To this, Bhagawan said, "There is a teacher in this school who knows Vedas." So one of the teachers, came asking us as to which among us knew the Vedas. So I said that I knew and went to the office of the school where Bhagawan was sitting. He asked me to chant and I chanted 'Sree Suktam' fearlessly. It was then that Bhagawan made me a Veda teacher. Then He said that He would choose a good day for me to start teaching Vedas. On one of the Sundays, when we went for Darshan, Bhagawan called me by my name and said that it was a good day and I should start teaching the children Vedas from that day. He also said that He would be going to Whitefield and the prayers 'Narayana Suktam' and 'Mantra Pushpam' should be ready by the time He came back.

That year, the students of Primary School chanted Mantra Pushpam instead of the priests for the first time in the history of Bhagawan's Institutions.

Another point that I would like to mention is that Bhagawan always encouraged modesty in our dressing and was particular about our hairdo when it came to our hairstyle. He never liked girls cutting their hair and reprimanded us when He would spot a girl who did that and very lovingly correct her.

There was a girl from Greece who was pursuing her studies at the Anantapur Campus with us. Many girls would flock around her and indulge in talking. When we came to Puttaparthi, Swami would grant us an interview and

reveal His Omnipresence. He said that there were groups of girls who flocked around this girl and spent their time in unnecessary talk. He said, “*Meeku time unte duppattee kappukoni padukondi.*” This was a profound message. It means that if we have (spare) time, we can cover ourselves with a bedsheet and go to sleep, but should not while it away in unnecessary gossip.



Ms. Sai Lakshmi Devi

Senior Manager (Hon.), Anantapur Campus, SSSIHL

*Namah Sabhabhyah
Sabbapathaye Namah*

The storyteller by narrating the stories of God is privileged by getting rid of *Bhavasagara*- the ocean of worldly existence. What about the listener? *Parayana* is in two ways: by listening and by reading. Everything that is sticking on to a regular routine in the name of God, we can say that it is *parayana*. *Sravanam*- listening, *Samsravanam*- relishing and listening are the ways of *Parayana* which benefits the listener in removing his sins and lapses, and leads him to get rid of the cycle of birth and death. Our prayer is '*Samasthalokah Sukhino Bhavanthu*'. This can be achieved by listening and singing the glory of God as per the above said quotation from Srimad Bhagavatam.

I entered the college as a staff member in the office. Once, prior to Swami's visit to Anantapur campus, I requested the principal to allow the chanting of Mantra Pushpam to receive Swami during His visit. Though every one of us knew Mantra Pushpam in our own way, we sat and practiced on that day (the night prior to Swami's arrival- 14 September 1977). I was having a book in my hand when we were chanting. Swami sat in His chair, looked at us lovingly and joined us in the chanting. Once Bhagawan said that the mother teaches the word 'Rama' to her child. But the child could utter it only as 'Lama'. Even then the mother will get the happiness as if her child could say 'Rama'. Likewise, Bhagawan accepted our chanting and told us, "I am very happy, but there were some mistakes here and there- correct them."

We have to understand Bhagawan's way of correcting, and learn and remember it. As a compassionate mother, Bhagawan corrected us in a very loving and subtle way.

In 1980, the National Conference was to begin. Swami sent Sri Kutumba Rao garu to the Principal of Anantapur Campus with a message that girls have to chant the Vedas the following morning. She answered him that we do not

have the girls who could chant Veda. She called us and told us the situation. I expressed my inability saying that I did not learn the Vedas from anyone, and picked up Mantra Pushpam by regularly visiting a temple and listening to the chanting going on there. The Principal insisted us to put an effort to learn Purusha Suktam. Bhagawan sent word that girls have to come to the stage and chant 'Purusha Suktam'. He added, "Let them bring books and just murmur." We weren't that good at chanting (in fact we don't know what we chanted). Yet, Bhagawan came to us, signaled us to take *padanamaskar* after the chanting was over.

Another occasion that is a very precious memory in my life was Ganesh Chaturthi in 1977. Ganesh Chaturthi was on 16 September and Bhagawan arrived on the 15th evening. We were all cleaning and mopping. I was just near the entrance of the prayer hall. Suddenly we could see Bhagawan entering the prayer hall saying, "Oh you are all cleaning and decorating." Swami noticed the statue of Lord Ganesha. Looking at him, Swami said, "Oh, how big is this Ganesha; who got him?" Bhagawan started to remove the goad and the axe from the hands of Ganesha and started to touch his big and bulky stomach and said, "What a big stomach he has!" Swami asked all of us to come to college singing *nagara sankeertan* in the morning for Darshan.

Swami also asked us to sing Suprabhatam. Around 200-300 girls assembled in the marble area in front of the college and started chanting Omkar and Suprabhatam. In one stanza we have a line '*Daathum Krupa sabita Darsana maasuthebbhyah*' which means, 'Oh Bhagawan kindly bless us all with your Divine Darshan in this early morning'. Exactly at that moment Bhagawan, opening the doors, came to give us Darshan. Swami said that He would visit the hostel.

Swami asked, "Who will do the *pooja*?" The Principal pointed out that I would do the *pooja*. I never did a separate *pooja* to Lord Ganesha, though it is our tradition. For me, Swami was everything as I was brought to His Lotus Feet at the age of ten. The Principal told me to start chanting *astothara* (108 names) of Lord Ganesh. I picked up a book and started chanting. Swami noticed it and said, "Do you look into the book to chant? Is it not in your memory? Then no need of doing the *pooja*." Bhagawan's expectation was that

we should have that much concentration on God.

Gathering courage, the Principal told me to start Ganesh *Astothara*. The moment I started 'Aum', Bhagawan stopped talking and sat in the chair in His Chinmudra. Swami practically showed us that we should pay our attention only to the prayer. The moment prayer starts, we should not talk.

We hear Swami making fun of priests; it is not fun but correcting their way of chanting the name of God. If a priest is correct, the society also will be in correct path. That day, the moment I finished the last name (chants), I could hear 'Santhosham' in Bhagawan's voice.

Once, we were all waiting for Swami's Darshan during Dasara. I started chanting the Shirdi Sai Satcharitra Parayana. As I was reading the Satcharitra, I thought, "Those days people were very lucky. They could enter the Masjid and directly approach Baba to touch His feet and talk to Him. Here we have to wait for Swami to come out. Swami may talk to us or may not, may look at us or may not." While I was thinking, our newly joined teacher came to us. That was first time for her, so I offered my first line seat to her and moved to second line. Bhagawan came to us, after crossing a few steps ahead, turned back and looking at me, He said, "Why did you move back? You were in first line, not now, 15 minutes ago" I was shocked and replied, "She joined new Swami."

Swami asked about the new teacher, "Which department?"

I replied, "Home Science."

Swami asked her, "Home Science? Where is your husband?" Bhagawan took another few steps ahead, took *akshatas* (yellow rice) from one of the students, and came back and put that yellow rice on her head. Within one or two years she got married and left the Campus.

This was during my college days. One morning I had a dream in which I found myself in a jungle as a ten-year old girl. While walking in that jungle I found a building with a dim light in the front portion. My heart felt very happy with an anticipation of finding Swami there. I reached the verandah of the house and found a staircase. I called out to Swami. Immediately I

could hear Swami's voice, "I am coming." Swami came down. Swami always reads all our letters at night. Having an open letter in one hand, Bhagawan gave me another hand asking me to come. The moment I could hear Swami's voice, I started sinking. Swami gave me His hand, I took support of His hand went to Swami's room. Swami's cot was full of letters. Pointing out those letters to me, He said, "Look! All these are only your letters." My father was a teacher and postmaster and hence in my childhood I would write letters to Swami once in every five days and also got many acknowledgements with Bhagawan's signatures. I sobbed bitterly and said to Swami, "I will not move from here. I shall stay here only Swami."

Bhagawan in His infinite compassion assured me, "I will always keep you with me." Swami took me down through a staircase and into a big dining hall. A few ladies were cutting vegetables. He called one of them and showing me to her, Swami said, "From today onwards, she will be here. Whatever she likes, provide it to her." Then Swami turned towards me and asked "What do you like?"

I replied, "I don't have any choice of mine. I like everything." Swami left me there. Later when I asked those ladies where I was, they told me that it was the Hostel at Anantapur campus. I used to always write to Swami to keep me in His administration without knowing the meaning or nature of that word.

In May 1980, I thought of seeking Swami's permission to pursue a B.Ed. Applying for five days leave, I stayed at Prasanthi Nilayam. On one of those days, I sat with a big group of children sitting with slates for *akshrabhyasam*, with a hope that I will be able to speak to Swami. Swami heard my prayer and said, "Do it. It is good." I did *pranam* to that Abhayahasta. After that Swami proceeded to the Poornachandra Auditorium. While entering that room, Swami's one step was out and the other one was on the other side of the threshold. Suddenly to every one's surprise, Swami turned back, and started asking, "Who was it that asked me that she will do B.Ed.? Who was it? Who was it?" roaring like a lion. I was shocked and lost my hopes that whatever boon I got, I had a fear that it may be cancelled. Like Syndhava, hiding myself, I did not get up and answer. Not that Swami didn't notice

straight away. He gives us a chance to correct ourselves, to listen to God, to bring down our ego. There was absolute silence. To know what was happening, I lifted my head out of curiosity, looked up, and immediately Swami turned to me and said, “It was you only I know- *Beedilu kooda tagu*. (a play on the words B.Ed.)’

With that fire, Bhagawan cancelled the boon that was given to me.



Mrs. M Shourie

Chief Lady Volunteer, Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam

(This paranayam session took place in the form of a Q&A session.)

At what age did you come to Swami?

I am just a sevak of Swami and came to Swami at a young age and thought of Swami as my mother. Swami asked me if I would work. Not used to doing work, I told Swami that I did not know how to work. Swami said, "Shut up, I know better or you know better? When Swami wills anyone to work, He even teaches them to do so." I learnt everything from Swami, including how to chase a dog from the front of my house.

It is like the doors of fortune have been opened for students for having come to Swami at such an early age- a fortune that I didn't have. Puttapparthi is a *'tap bhoomi'*, but in a very modern context. Swami did not believe in the conventional methods of doing *tapas*; rather, for students the real *tapas* is *'Maatro devo bhava, Pitra devo bhava'*.

Bheesmapitamah told his father about the greatness of a mother. She is greater than a father as she is selfless. She gives birth to children and gives love, education and everything to her children. One may earn merit by one's *prarabdha* but those who understand the value of a mother and revere her, enjoy the wealth of God's blessings. Children must respect elders and earn their love which would take them to greater heights. Where there is love, God manifests Himself on His own without anyone calling Him. This brings about so much of happiness.

The students have the bountiful blessings of Mother Saraswati (Vidya Vahini). By first being a good daughter, a girl will become a good student, a good sister, a good mother, a good aunt and then a good grandmother. The relationship between a student and a guru is a wonderful relation, like that of a mother and child. The first dharma of a student is to take all the wealth of knowledge from his/her guru as it would be useful all through their life. When Sandeepani, the guru of Lord Krishna said that he had given all the knowledge to his disciples, Lord Krishna said that knowledge is such a wealth that it becomes double even after distributing everything. Such should be the

humility of a guru and shishya.

When and how did you come to Swami first?

I had never seen Swami nor was I His devotee. I used to attend bhajans and my family was God fearing. One day, their family doctor, Dr. Sahani asked my husband, Mr. Gautam, if he would accompany him for bhajan. Being a good person, Mr. Gautam agreed but I did not go. If he liked the bhajans, then I thought that I would go. I did not want a clash of opinion in case he did not like the bhajan and I liked it.

Since we enjoyed the bhajans, both of us went again. A big old picture of Swami was placed at the shrine. Swami was in a red robe in that picture. It was the first time I was seeing Swami, and did not understand why I kept crying looking at Swami. I tried to control myself (as I was feeling ashamed) but could not stop crying. But now I understand that it was a perfectly normal reaction (to cry for God).

Dr. Sahani then invited both of us to accompany him to Puttaparthi. In the first meeting, Swami kept looking at both of them as if some long lost devotees had returned. He even remarked to Mr. Kutumba Rao that Dr. Sahani had got his friend to Puttaparthi. That evening Swami called us for an interview. From that day onwards, we never got separated from Swami. This was in the 1970s.

Our visits to Puttaparthi became very frequent but we could not stay there for more than three to four days. Mr. Shourie would leave his car in Prashanti Nilayam and when he came to Puttaparthi, Swami told Mr. Kutumba Rao that Dr. Sahani's friend comes and goes but leaves his car here and very jovially remarked that he cannot leave his car alone. Swami had a great sense of humour. We miss Swami's presence very much. We could talk to Him very freely. Even though it is impossible to know and understand Swami, our eyes and mind started opening slowly and our mouth started closing.

Is there a particular incident made you feel that Swami is God?

Swami knows everything. Nothing needs be told to Him. Ours is a God fearing family, but one that lived a very modern and luxurious life. I did not like that style of living; Swami comforted me saying that He will take care of everything. One day when both my husband and me were with Swami, He told me, “You keep saying Divine, Divine, but your family goes on saying wine, wine.” To my utter surprise, Swami reprimanded me for not taking care of my husband and that all was my fault. To my husband, He very lovingly said that he should stop drinking wine from that day. Then Swami turned her husband’s head to one side and told me quietly, “Now everything is okay.”

I consider my husband lucky because Swami took a lot of care of him. One day, Swami was walking where some construction material was lying around. Mr. Shourie got a little hurt while clearing the way for Swami. Immediately Swami gave him His handkerchief to use, but he refused as it was Swami’s. But Swami insisted and made him use it and not only that, and He asked him to go home. He even sent Colonel Joga Rao to enquire about him later. Mr. Shourie was very conscientious about his duties and did not go until he had finished all his work.

This is Swami’s love and care and this is what is to be with Swami. I congratulate the students as Swami has called all of you to His fold. All the students should reflect upon this truth. Even though Swami’s physical presence is not there, people have not stopped coming to Puttaparthi. In fact, people who have not even seen Him are coming. I feel that Swami has His own ways of communicating to people through dreams, etc.



Ms. M Vijayalakshmi

Teacher, Sri Sathya Sai Primary School, Prasanthi Nilayam

(Silence for a few moments before the speakers starts to speak)

Are you wondering, what has happened to me? Why am I tongue-tied? Dumbstruck? Well...this is exactly what happened to a student, in this very same Poornachandra Auditorium, on this dais. In the early 1980's Bhagawan willed a Sarva Dharma Aikya Sammelan to be conducted. He called a student and told him to talk about Buddhism. The student was ecstatic; because that meant getting more attention from Swami; there is more scope to be in His Presence. The boy was only too happy! As expected, Bhagawan spoke to him, and often guided him in the art of speaking and also got a Buddhist outfit for him. The day previous to the function, suddenly the student became panicky and felt that he would never be able to give a speech in front of a big audience. He just waited for Swami to come out for granting Darshan, to tell Him to pardon him, as he could not give the speech. That particular day Swami avoided him, in a manner that only He can! Finding no other way, the boy went to the hostel and told the warden about his predicament. The warden tried to calm him down; but nothing worked. Within an hour, the student developed fever and was given an injection. The warden asked him to take rest and assured him that things would turn out all right, if he placed his faith in Bhagawan.

The next day, when it was his time to speak, the student nervously went to Swami, held fast to His feet and pleaded, "I just can't speak because I am frightened." Bhagawan gave him a practical suggestion. He said, "Remove your spectacles and speak." Once he removed his specs, he could not see the audience clearly. So, he picked up courage and started his speech. After two sentences...there was a full stop! No words came out, however he tried. Only one thing remained- Prayer! He prayed desperately, "Swami, Please help me...do something...make me speak." Then, what does he find? A glass of water is being held up before him. He takes it...gulps it down and returns the glass. Who gave the glass of water? It was Bhagawan Himself. He walked all the way from the chair, with the silver glass of water, and handed it to the student. When the student gave it back not even being aware that he is

giving it back to Swami, the all-merciful Lord carried it back and kept it on the table. The Divine Ambrosia (the water given by the Lord) brought forth a flood of words soaking the audience in heavenly bliss. The student came back to his senses when he heard a thunderous applause from the audience. The loving Lord, walked up to the student, held him by his hands and took him to both ends of the stage. Bhagawan made the warden to announce not once, but twice that, the boy, on account of his immense love for Bhagawan, gave the speech, in spite of running high temperature! How can one ever speak of the immeasurable Love of Bhagawan?

Let me now slide down the age scale from seventeen to seven and tell you about the sweet experience of the tiny tots of Bhagawan's Ooty students. It was Diwali in the year 1987. Ooty was blessed with Bhagawan's physical presence. He distributed crackers to the students. On the day of Diwali, Swami stood for over an hour when He asked the students to burst the crackers. It was a wonderful festival day for the children as Bhagawan played like a child with shining eyes, enjoying every moment of it. He held the hand of a boy who was scared to hold a lighted sparkler and rotated it. He lit a sparkler of another boy. Finally, He asked the students to get back. He stood at the entrance and asked, each and every boy, "Are you happy?" After the last child went in, He turned to the guests and said, "Papam! These small children are away from their parents. I wanted to make them happy."

"In Ooty, Swami's residence and the school were the same building. Swami stayed upstairs and the classrooms were down. Sometimes, to the joy of the children, Swami would come to the classrooms. It was on one such day, when the school had just started, Swami walked into the classroom in which I was about to start my Human Values class. Bhagawan told me to start my class. I said, "Swami, this is the Human Values class." Swami said, "Good. Start your class." I told Him that students began the period with silent sitting where they meditated on His form. Bhagawan said, "Yes, do it." Foolishly enough, forgetting that the Lord Himself was standing there in front of us, as always, I asked the boys to close their eyes. To aid their mediation, that day also, I started describing the beautiful form of our Lord – the halo of curly hair, the Lotus eyes that pours forth Love and Compassion, the enchanting smile on His lips, the beauty of His hands which knows only to give and the Feet,

as tender and soft as the lotus...After a few seconds, I heard sobs. All the children were in tears. Bhagawan asked the children, "Why are you crying?" They replied, "Swami, You are going away to Kodai. Please stay with us." Swami said, "Boys, don't cry." They started crying bitterly. Looking helpless, He told me to console them. I said, "Boys, Swami is very fond of you. If you cry, you will make Swami unhappy. Your tears will cause pain. So don't cry." They wept, inconsolably. Can you believe what Swami did? He went to each and every child and wiped their tears with His Hands!

This is our Swami! Outside, the guests, the students, devotees...all were waiting for Him. But, that moment, He was only for the children. Whether it is a seven-year-old child or a seventy-year-old devotee...all are same to our Lord. He gave His care and Love to all.

In January 1991, Bhagawan, in His Infinite Mercy, shifted the Ooty School to Puttaparthi. We were fortunate to have His Physical proximity- Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan here.

In Bhagawan's Primary School, it is, 'Bhagawan only You, not we, Only You, You and You alone.' Bhagawan is the heartthrob of every activity that is undertaken in the school. He is the golden thread that runs through, interwoven in the fabric of every activity- be it big or small. Bhagawan has, on many occasions, revealed His Presence in the school- guiding, guarding and protecting us.

It was the opening day after summer vacation. The school lobby was filled with students and parents. The teachers were checking the luggage of the students. All of a sudden, a car drove into the portico. It was Swami's car! Swami got down from the car and it was chaos in the lobby. Students ran toward Swami...Parents also ran and the teachers were trying to move the suitcases to make way. All were rushing forward. Swami stood there, smiling at all, watching the scene. He walked to the XII Std. boys' classroom. The children who had joined were there. Swami said, "Good boys, you have come on time to school. You have followed discipline. I am very happy with you. I came here today just to bless you all." This had a very good impact on the young minds. The teachers would narrate this incident year after year, how Bhagawan appreciated students who followed discipline.

On another occasion, I was in the lobby and students came rushing to tell me that a boy had hurt himself in the dormitory and was bleeding. It was my games duty that day. I ran up and found that he had a deep cut very close to the eyes. After giving him first aid, I told him, “Look here, Srikanth, Swami was here and has saved you. Otherwise, you would have lost your eye today.”

The next day happened to be a Thursday- Darshan day for the school students. The boy went and sat at the back, fearing that Swami would admonish him if He saw the plaster on His eyes. Bhagawan finished His Darshan round and came to the children. As, usual, He lovingly asked the boys about the breakfast they had. Suddenly, He turned to the direction in which this boy sat and indicated with His finger to the boy to come forward. When the boy in front of this injured boy stood up, Swami said, “Not you, the boy behind you.” So, Srikanth got up and nervously moved towards Swami. Bhagawan, firmly but lovingly admonished him for picking up a quarrel and gave all the details of how the incident happened and also told him the boy would have lost his eye if He had not protected him.

Bhagawan had blessed many Primary School boys to act in ‘Shirdi Sai Parthi Sai Divya Katha’ a film made by Smt. Anjali Devi. One day, Swami called these boys to the Poornachandra Auditorium and talked to them. He called a boy and enquired about his father’s occupation. The boy replied that his father was a cashier. Then Swami asked him about the salary that his father got. The boy said that he did not know. But Bhagawan did not leave at that. He said, “How much money would you like your father to get?” Spontaneously the boy said, “Swami, I don’t desire that my father should get more money. But, he must not get less either. He should get the amount that we need.” Swami was very happy with this reply and blessed him with *padanamaskar*. The next day, Bhagawan called this boy to the verandah. Like, a proud mother, He narrated the previous day’s conversation and said, “This is my Primary School boy.” The Primary School is not merely a school. Indeed, it is a temple of Bhagawan.

I am blessed to have been born into a family who were devotees of Bhagawan since the fifties. All the activities in our house are centered on Bhagawan. By His Grace, from childhood, the only aim in my life was to please Him.

When I was in school, I connected to Him mainly through *japam*, *dhyanam*, etc., and so I was eager to get a *japamala* blessed by Swami. The day I bought one, fortunately, I got the first line in darshan. I was sure that it will be blessed and I could start using it right away to become spiritual. Imagine my disappointment when most of the people in the first line were blessed for some reason or the other, but not me. In the evening also, I happened to get the first line. The same procedure and the same result followed.

I was not the one to give up easily. The third chance I got (during Darshan), I thought I will somehow make Him bless the *japamala* and deliberately sat in the second line, although I got a first line. Even in the second line, I sat behind a fat lady and only put my hand up with the *mala*, presuming that He will not be able to see me and will bless my *japamala*! What happened was something that I never imagined. Swami, instead of blessing the *mala*, bent His Head slightly, looked into my eyes and said, “This is not for you”, and walked away. Imagine my plight. I cried my heart out thinking that I was not even worthy of doing Japam. Bhagawan wanted to teach me what spirituality really meant and put me on the royal path of service. He has His own ways! Still crying, I came out of the Mandir and slowly walked back to the room. Accidentally, my eyes fell on the word ‘Japamala’ on the Thought Of The Day board. Swami said:

People want to be spiritual. They think that by just rolling the Japamala and going to temples will make one spiritual. It is far from that. What is Spirituality? It is the blossoming of the innate ‘Divinity in man’. It is not mere Bhakthi, but action-oriented Bhakthi that I expect from My devotees. Hands in society, Head in the forest.

It struck me like a thunderbolt – I understood. One must work and that work should be transformed into worship. This is what Bhagawan expected from me.

One year Bhagawan addressed the outgoing students of the Anantapur Campus in the Mandir prayer hall. My sisters were there in that group. They knew that they would not be able to give back even a fraction of all that they received in the college. But, they wanted to show their gratitude to Bhagawan and prayed for His Guidance and Grace. In His discourse,

Bhagawan directed them to go to the villages and serve. This directive went straight into their hearts and my whole family decided to make an offering to Bhagawan by starting a school in a village. It was very hard work right from the beginning and a time came when they were despondent and wanted to give up. When Bhagawan gave me an opportunity to ask Him about the school, He emphatically said, "That is My School. I will take care." From that day, there was no looking back. Today, by His Grace, that school is considered a model school. The students have won many awards- state as well as national, in academics and co-scholastic activities. Is it possible for three girls to achieve all this? No. Not at all. Bhagawan not only gave the direction, but He walked the path with us. He calmed our fears, inspired us when we were disheartened.

What is it that we do at this juncture? Be simple and straight. Be hollow like the flute. Then, the Lord will pick us up and blow mellifluous, mystical music through us. Whenever we are faced with problems, we turn to Swami and pray to Him to solve our 'big problem'. Hereafter, let us address the problem and tell it that we have a 'Big Lord' and problems will not trouble us.

*There's never any trouble if we think of Sathya Sai
If there's any trouble, it will vanish like a bubble
If we only take the trouble just to think of Sathya Sai.*

We have a great big wonderful Lord to love us, guide us and take care of us.
Let us surrender at His Feet with Love.





Prasanthi Nilayam Campus Sessions

Prof. Radhakrishnan Nair

Head, Dept. of Management Studies, SSSIHL
Dean, Faculty of Management & Commerce, SSSIHL
Director, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, SSSIHL

I think I just want to learn that He owns everything and I just want to live with that learning. So, I hesitate saying something like ‘an offering’. But I certainly have a prayer, which I am sure all of you have. A prayer that I should see Swami in each one of you.

I must share one fundamental thing with all of you that I have been very fortunate that I was not in the physical presence of Swami ever. This is something that obviously surprises everybody who is eager to be in the physical presence. In my case, I have come to realize...as I keep looking back, I realize that God has always been with me. I have found it fascinating to look at each incident very carefully and realize that God played the role that I had wanted Him to play.

Now, looking back, I was born in a family that was full of love. It makes me realize that you cannot choose your parents; you cannot choose your family. So, if you are born in a family who seem to love you and each other, that itself is God’s presence. To be born in a family and to be placed in a family who are always short of everything, you are short of money, you are short of clothes... In Delhi, during winter it gets very cold. It becomes so cold, especially those years...I am talking about the 1960s...when the winters were cold. Warm clothes are expensive. Somehow, you realize that somewhere, in spite of all that, life has not been so unkind. You start growing up. It was the 9th year of my life. I had a situation that I had to go and stay in the hostel. Just imagine, living in a very loving environment and suddenly people say- you have to go and stay in a hostel. The second beautiful thing in my life was, studying in a school that only the rich and famous can afford to study. I just said that I was born in a situation where wearing warm clothes was not very easy. When I was around nine or ten and I had to study staying in a hostel, I was by force put into a school where, you know, rich people study and I was in the

hostel there. In the hostel, there were two kinds of people. There were the rich and famous and there were the so-called scholarship holders. I was not the scholarship holder. I was not rich and famous. So there were people who can afford anything; so easy for them. Life seems to be so easy for them. There were so many of us for whom life is not very easy. So what happens at that point of time? When you are in that situation, one of the worst things that happens to you is, you develop something called an 'inferiority complex'. Have you heard the term inferiority complex? Inferiority complex keeps making you feel that you are not good enough. And two types/kinds of things come out. Your behavior changes and your ears become very habituated because you want to prove you are good enough, or you kind of go into a shell.

God plays a role there.

God comes in the form of friends. Friends who are rich but not arrogant. Friends who are from well-to-do society and affluent environments, but respect you and want you to be in their company. In your college, this place for example, the rich and the poor have to behave alike. Is that right? There is nothing like 'you cannot do a little more or you cannot buy more gold than the other people'. That is not allowed. You cannot display wealth. But that is not the case outside.

When I go back, I find a situation that I had friends who just seemed to be wanting to be friends with me. Now, how does God play this role? He certainly gives you some talent. You don't have that problem here. I had not touched basketball till the age of eleven. Now, people say that if you want to learn swimming, you have to be thrown into a pool when you are a baby. So, if I wanted to be good at basketball, I should have started much earlier. I found myself in a situation where there was a boy who had just returned from Japan. He happened to be my best friend. We lived in dormitories. I used to stay in a similar situation just like all of you are staying in school, which is around 10-12 of us in one room. He taught me basketball. It reached a point that I became so good at basketball that everybody forgot that I was a poor guy.

I am showing you the beauty of not being close to Swami. I can see Swami in every action that had happened. Now as I am joining the dots, I can see now each incident as it happened. At that point of time, I can assure you, I

was (as they put it) complaining and moaning about everything. I used to cry that my mother was not with me. I was studying in the most expensive school in Delhi. Not that my father could afford it. I don't know how he managed. Again I am saying, how he could afford it...I don't know because I did not even know how much I was spending. I am just bringing you back to the thought process that God has some ways that you do not understand. That God—whichever form that you love or live with—is so close to you that you don't even know how close He is. He is right there. He is holding you all the time because, as I went forward, I found myself doing something more interesting.

One day we had a Ballet school, Indian ballet not western ballet. All schools celebrate a Founder's Day. It so happened that this Founder's Day came up. I am talking about the role of God's Hand. When I was 5-6 years old, it so happened that one of my rich and famous cousins came and stayed with us. My parents could not afford to take care of her, but enough money used to come to take care of her. So, she was well taken care of and she needed to learn dancing. So, at that point in time, they went into a thing called '*Kathakali*'. So, when *Kathakali* was happening, my father said, "Why don't you send this small kid also?" So, I also went. I pretended to dance. I pretended also to do all the steps that she was doing. She was an expert. I did not do anything. I did not even know that I was looking stupid. At the age of five, when you do those things, how do you look? You look stupid. So, like as stupid as I could be, I did everything. But, what happened in this process was, I became natural at beats. I would not lose rhythm ever. So, when I was in school and a screening was happening for ballet, because of my experience in dancing when I was five, I could impress my ballet teacher who was very famous in the area of classical dancing. So that ballet teacher took me under his tutelage and I became a great ballet dancer. While this was happening, I was still somebody who did not have money (most of the time) to buy even a hamburger. Those days a hamburger was the biggest thing that we could buy. I am talking late 60s and early 70s. If you can buy a burger, you are rich. During my time, it used to cost one rupee for a burger and I did not have that money.

Then another event happened. We had houses like any other school and a

house play was planned. I was in that school and was getting tested for a role in the play of a servant who had only two dialogues in the play. The best thing was that on the day of the play, I goofed it up.

This is the act of God. I will tell you why. When you make mistakes, you will get noticed sometimes. So, what happened as a consequence? People wanted me to try again. So, I got another chance. This time I got a much better role and I actually acted as a villain. But I got a lovely role of a villain. Have you heard of a thing called 'sahukar'? A moneylender. That was a wonderful role. At that point, I realized the value of a director. We were getting a director who was not up to the mark. Then my housemaster comes in and says, "This is not working out. You students are not doing it the way it should be done." We students were very happy that we were getting our snacks as a part of this thing. Then the housemaster changed the director. He got a famous director from the 'National School of Drama' and then the magic happened. The magic that Swami does, happened exactly there. Each one of us acted in that play as if we were professionals.

I was possibly the shyest person on earth. The following morning, the Principal of the school of 1500 students says, "Where is that boy, Sukh Lal?" My character's name was 'Sukh Lal'. He is announcing on the stage and I am trying my level best to hide behind other people. When I look back now, I am reminded of that boy and this movie, 'Taare Zameen Par.' I was so shy that I did not want myself to be visible to anybody. And then, they pulled me up and made me stand up. And this was a co-ed school and it was very difficult to study in co-ed schools. I was standing and there was this girl sitting next to me and saying, 'you are blushing'. Boys don't blush now. I didn't know where to look. So, I had to go through that pain.

But just imagine. Think about it. When I connect the dots, a person born in a situation, yes a very loving situation but not a situation where you are put through the dramatics club- you were put through music colleges, you are prepared for becoming successful. There was no reason why I should have succeeded. The reason why I am saying this is, at least 95% of people are in this situation. I am not the only one. Each one of you, if you work at connecting the dots, you will certainly realize that miracles are happening.

What is a miracle? Miracles are not only...yes, I feel very excited when Swami creates whatever physically He creates. But I realize that everything is His miracle. There is nothing that it is not a miracle. So that happened. I somehow managed.

By the way, in case you don't know, I was not a good student. I was academically very poor. I am still academically not the best of the people. Because, somehow academics and me have not been friends for most of the time. But, Swami has always taken care. Now I say Swami. But at the time, I depended only on God. Who else can I depend on? As a child, I am sure, each one of you had it. But you may not remember it at my age. As a child when I was homesick and my summer vacation would come, I could not afford a ticket in a higher class or in a plane or anything. So, for a second-class ticket, in summer holidays it was very difficult to get a reservation. I am sure that you all have experienced it in your life at some point. So, what did I do? When I got into that trouble, I still remember, I used to keep doing only one thing. My mother had taught me. She said, "Chant Hanuman Chalisa and everything will work out." So, I would keep chanting Hanuman Chalisa. I did not even know why I was doing it. The other day I was saying in one of your study circles, I was telling the young boys that just do this because you love Swami. It is just like, I chanted Hanuman Chalisa because I love my mother. I cannot live without her. I am so tired of having to stay in a hostel for so many days that somehow I want to get back home. I want to hug her and here I am who got a waiting list ticket 125. What are the chances in today's world? So what do I do? I do Hanuman Chalisa and what happens? I go home. Things worked out. Now, things work not because of anything but because of your faith in God. That is why there is a need to develop faith in God. That is why I am saying, it does not matter. Today I am feeling so fortunate that I could, without thinking of Swami, be always with Swami. He did not let go off my hand in any situation.

School got over. I am saying this because I am not going to talk about any philosophy because I don't know any philosophy. Life itself is philosophy. What more can I talk about? So, school got over. Very average grades. Almost lower average grades. I was quite happy in being a clerk in some organization. In Delhi, in those days, every company needed to hire accounts assistants. I was a B.Com. graduate. I did not have ambitions, frankly. This morning

I have heard some of you talking about aspirations. How much aspiration you should or should not have. May be I was the other extreme. I had no aspiration at all. I was quite happy. My brother who was working in Delhi called me. So, 11th got over and I got into graduation in one of those lesser-known colleges of Delhi. Nothing miraculous has happened except the fact that somehow I managed not to participate in any strikes and things like that. Things worked out.

Three years on, and I finished my graduation. Again, average to lower average marks. Nothing very academic. But what happens in life when you learn from life experiences...your marks become irrelevant. Your personality actually starts working. I don't know how it happens. Again, I can only say that it happens because, there is this person called God who just keeps taking care of you, walks around with you. I finished graduation and I did not know what to do. Actually it was that time I was sitting at home and I got a lot of books on Swami. One of my Aunts gave me a whole *almirah* full of books. So, I started reading these books. I was fascinated. From childhood, I used to dream...for example, when my mother used to talk about Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan or Zakir Husain, the former president of India...I used to imagine that their houses are like magic houses where magic happens. So, if I want anything, I can get it in the president's house. I am saying this because I am telling you 'Never lose your faith in magic'.

The word magic is a misnomer. You can call it anything but never lose your faith in the fact that 'anything can happen'. My experience is, 'Anything is possible in this world.' So, any moment when you are saying 'I will not make it', you are making a big mistake. You never know. You know nothing. At least I realized today that I knew nothing and I still don't know anything.

So, when I finished college, I did not know what to do. I came back home. I read a lot of books. I was very excited. My brother called me back to Delhi because he said, 'Why are you loitering around. You don't have a job. You are just wasting your time. There is no money at home. (My father was pensioned by that time).'" So, I had to come back. I came back and my first offer of a job, which I did not know what it was. I was told, 'There is a lawyer, a family friend. He is looking for someone to help him. So you can help me and you

also do your law at the same time.” At Delhi University, you have a law school on the periphery of the University. So, I said fine and I will do law. I will study and I will also work with this man. And I did not know what the job was. When I went there, the job was of a tea vendor. It was quite alright. I said I will do it. Because I did not want to be a burden on my family. I was a burden on my family. So, I said, I will do it. But, unfortunately that man refused to give me the job, simply because he happened to be a family friend. He said, “If you take this job and I throw tea on you, my relationship with your family will get affected. So, I cannot give you the job.”

So, again unemployed, sitting in Delhi. Then there was again the ‘Act of God.’

Somebody gave me a small job of an accounts assistant. I used to love that job. You know why I used to love that first job? The first job, the first activity that I did was very beautiful. B.Com. boys like counting sometimes. My first job was to write cheques. It was the most beautiful job for me because I love my handwriting. I had a lovely handwriting. The beauty about this thing is- this is where I have seen the act of Swami in some way or the other. He somehow made me feel proud of that work. I will give a typical example of these situations. When I was a kid, once I went out with an elder friend of mine and we were fishing. I was also given a fishing stick and I was also doing this. That man was also fishing. He did not catch anything. I caught a fish, this small. Or rather he caught a fish (this small) and I did not catch anything. He being a grown up... The problem with grownups is, they have such super egos that they don't seem to accept anything that happens to them. So, he came and told me, “You don't tell me that you caught this fish. You tell me that you caught this fish.” Why? Because, catching a small fish is an insult to him. I was full of joy. I said, ‘Yes, I caught this fish.’ Everybody laughed at me and I did not know why they laughed. I thought that they were happy. But they actually laughed at me. And I am quite happy about it. So, when I go back to my writing of cheques, I find that it as a beautiful activity. I realized what Swami means when He says, “You must love every job that you do and don't expect to get a job that you love.” I realized some of those things without actually reading these in Swami's books. I just kept doing that. And one day, I remember, I made one mistake. So, one cheque got cancelled. You won't believe it, I was so upset. That taught me a few lessons. That taught me

that you must really love your work. Just love your work. It does not matter what it is. Just learn to love it. I did that job for almost two years.

Then what happened? There was an HR manager in that organization. These things are all pre-ordained. Like you have family pre-ordained, you have friends also pre-ordained. This man suddenly turns up and starts taking interest in my career. Why should he bother? He tells me, “You must do a postgraduation.” I keep telling him, “Look, I am so happy. I am getting...” You know my first salary was Rs. 400 and I was very happy. And by the way, I had all the habits that are not right. I used to smoke, for example. Those days in Delhi University, if you didn’t smoke it was not okay. I used to do all those things. I am saying this because, you must realize how Swami converts you. Not that He did not do any magic or calling me here and asking me ‘why are you smoking?’ Nothing like that. But obviously He did something. Rs. 400 was enough for some of these expenditures. My brother used to feed me. So, I used to live there and I was quite happy. And the best thing is, the first increment is the best thing I got. I got Rs. 180 increment. Just imagine Rs. 400 became Rs. 580 and I was the most joyous person at that time. I had no ambitions. This man kept on nagging me, “You must do your MBA. I am from this Institute. It is a great Institute.” I said, “I know about all the institutes but I am not sure that I wanted to do MBA.” Because, first of all, where was the money? Those were not the days when we used to taking loans to do an MBA. So, money was not there. I did not expect money to be there. Then what happened? Again, these are acts of God. What else can I say?

One of my neighbours, who was a colonel in the army, walks into my house with a Times of India newspaper. Those days, there was no Internet. So he comes with the Times of India and newspaper and says, “Apply for this.” It was an XLRI advertisement (XLRI is a leading management school based in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, India). Knowing myself and my academic capability (quite well), I told him, “I will apply.” And I left it there. Every day he would come up and say, “Have you applied?” Why should he care so much for you? He was not even related to me. He was somebody I knew just because he was just a neighbor. He literally forced me to apply for XLRI. Now, when I applied for XLRI, that test normally happens somewhere in December. That was the time when one interesting thing happened. My mother had to undergo a

serious surgery. So I was happy in the sense I needn't focus on XLRI. Because I never had any capability and no belief that I can make it to XLRI. XLRI... people do lot of coaching and all that and then they get into XLRI. Very competitive! Getting through XLRI was not so easy. Simultaneously my mother was in the hospital. So, all the nights were spent in the hospital. Ten days before the examination, I was regularly in the hospital, sleeping in the hospital. They said, 'You must study GMAT, GRE and all that...' So I had this GMAT and once in a while I used to pretend to do a few of those and I came home. Yes, I was very fortunate to take care of my mother.

That time, the fees for applying for XLRI was Rs. 50, which was a lot of money. I am talking about 1981-82. Anyway, Rs. 50 went. My sister-in-law was there. That Sunday my mother was going to get discharged. My sister-in-law said, "You anyway applied. Go and write the test now." So, I went and wrote the test. I am sure all of you experience the feeling: 'I am not sure whether I made it or not.' In any of these objective tests, you really don't know whether you have done it well or you have not done it well. I came back and told my sister-in-law, "Look, I have never prepared, so why do I have to expect something will happen?" But this neighbour of mine would not leave me. He still kept after me, "So, when are the results coming, when are the results coming?" When the results come, how can I show my face to him? It is also quite humiliating, you know. Somebody who took so much of interest and you failed. As luck would have it or as the hand of God would have it...at that time I was a part-time follower of Swami, I would pray to Him, rolling beads chanting Sairam Sairam...then what happened, by some stroke of luck, I passed the test. My results came. That was the first time I started feeling, "May be I will make it." So, I got this result and then the interview call came.

In our campus it is very comfortable. But if you go for XLRI interview, it is normally expected you would be in a tie and a suit. With Rs. 580 salary, you don't stitch suits. I was lucky in one way. My elder brother was a shippy. Merchant Navy. He had managed to make money. But I cannot ask money from him. So, what he used to do was, his old clothes would all be landing in our house because he was rich enough to buy a clothes for changing three times a day. In our childhood, we all did not have enough clothes. So, he got

one made as soon as he got his first job. But all his old clothes would come to me. He was very bulky so I had to go to a place and get them altered. So, I had interesting Levi pants, good shirts, but not a suit. Nothing formal. So, on the day of the interview...actually when I went for the interview, I did not know that I had to be suited. This army officer kept telling me about how to keep papers, how to walk into the interview. He kept training me. A person in early 20s, he does not like to be trained too much. But I loved him. I will always be grateful to that man. So, he trained me and I went a little prepared. In the sense, I knew how to carry myself.

But, when I landed in that interview center, I found all the others giving me a severe inferiority complex. I was wearing this kind of a good shirt, a pant. These people were all in suits. I was thinking "What will happen? When I go in, I will look like a fool..." So, I went in. In any case, these people went in, I also went in. No choice. Once you are there, no turning around. I went in and I found three people on the other side. One was equivalent to your Bhagia Sir (a teacher at SSSIHL). A person who was an expert in quantitative techniques. One lady who was an industrial relations expert. And third, a priest. I went through. They asked me interesting questions. The most important thing is...that is where I am saying there is the act of God. The reason why I am saying the act of God is, you don't know what type of questions you are going to get. When you go for an interview, do you have any idea about what is going to happen? Some questions will come to you. The reason why I call this an act of God is, because by that time I was so fond of reading spiritual and mythological stories that I had put that as one of my major hobbies.

Let me do a little rewind. When I was in school and I was in hostel, my local guardians did not have a spare bedroom for me. Some weekends I used to go to my local guardians. They used to send me to sleep in their library. They are my richer cousins. So, don't mix it up. There are rich people in my family. I was not. That's all. So, these people had a library and I used to sleep in the library. In that library, I found all beautiful mythological books. One book which I will never forget, which actually played a major role in my life was a book called, 'Cradle Tales of Hinduism.' It is a book by a lady called Sister Nivedita and it is from Ramakrishna Mission. It is just beautiful. It just takes

you through various stories of Siva, Parvathi. It takes you through Ramayana in a much deeper fashion than just comic books would take you. I used to keep reading these books. I kept reading. As I told you, I actually believe in magic. When you read these books, you see magic. In the Ramayana, you see lot of those kinds of things. So also in any of these. Siva curses somebody... His third eye opens...some of us don't believe it.

I believed.

I actually believe it even now.

I am saying this with all seriousness. In addition to that, I also read some interesting books by a gentleman called Lobsang Rampa. He is a Tibetan. It is a beautiful book around the monastery there. A very, very beautiful book.

So, when I was getting interviewed, I had written, 'interested in spiritual books.' My worst subject in my life, the subject that I always hated and always been frightened off. I am sure all of you can guess? All of you are afraid of Maths and I was also afraid of Maths. I had lousy mathematical capability and this person sitting on the other side was a statistician par excellence. Dr. Bandhopadhyaya. He is right now somewhere in the UK or somewhere in some other country, giving a big lecture on some research that he did on QWERTY. Just imagine. I was sitting on this side and if he had asked me anything on probability, what would have happened? I would have looked at him as completely blank. What did he ask me?

I have been an HR manager, I know the problem. Interviewers sometime like to hear their own voices a lot. So, they keep speaking. Instead of asking the question, they will create the question. So, this gentlemen took me to the whole process of, 'you know there is a story in the mythology about Indra having done this, Indra's brother having done that, and this happening and that happening, and finally this person getting killed and that person...' A huge story. The story was so huge that I lost track of the story. In the end, he asked me, "So, Mr. Nair, do you think that it actually happened?" Probability! So, what was my answer? I said, "It really does not matter whether it happened or not. The moral of the story is that goodness always prevails over badness." The moment I said it, I could see the other two very so happy. The priest was very happy. Act of God.

Always remember, no coincidences but Acts of God. So, what happened? Then this priest asked me an important question. He said, "What are the economic problems of the country?" I gave him a long spiel on population and issues linked with that. At the time, population was considered the biggest issue. After all that, I came back home. My brother asked me, typical of all brothers, "What were the questions?" I gave him the answer. Then I told him that the priest had asked me this question... "You should not have answered like that. You know they are Jesuit priests. They don't believe in artificial ways of population control. So, you should have talked about those..." I said, "It's all over. I can't go back and tell him that I am taking back what I said." Then, obviously the answer...our belief is that people who are suited, booted and better dressed, many ways better than you, will actually make it? And there I get this letter that I have been given admission. What did I do? That was the time when I had a small photo of Swami. I just kept that letter there and I said, "What have you done. Now, what do I do?" Because, there are complications. When you get admission also, it becomes a little complicated. You have to put together the admission fee, you know. Rs. 2850 was no mean sum. Again the act of God comes in. I have reached up to XLRI...

If you can lay your hands on this book...actually you know what happened is, I love this book so much, 'The Cradle Tales of Hinduism' that I bought...I actually believe that today's generation will also like to read it. So, I bought it and gave it to my children. It is somewhere in the attic. They read this thing called 'Harry Potter'. I don't understand. I never read Harry Potter in my life. Just the look of me makes me sick. Nowadays, by the way, the superman comics that are coming are also of very poor quality. My childhood superman looked like a comic character. Nowadays these people look like villains.

One thing I can tell you, Swami has taught me this. He has taught me one thing. 'I just naturally love to be amongst children' and since he has given me a job to take care of His children, which is all of you, and may be your teachers also. Because they are all His children. I have no hesitation in saying that, "I am so fortunate that I have got Swami's children to take care of now." So, thanks a lot for bearing with me. Thanks a lot for listening to what I had to say. We will talk about this in the future. Whenever you fix the next one, I will start from there. But remember, every time I start, there will be some

kind of rewind I will have to link it up with something in the past. So, you may experience some repetitions. But I will have to link it up with where do I... Like I told you, the reason why I was selected for ballet was, because I had done *kathakali* at the age of five. By default. My father could not pay the fees but I did it. After all I was there, so I just had to do a few steps.



Sri Amey Deshpande

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First of all, let me ask you this question: why should we make Swami the center of our lives? The idea behind this particular parayanam session is- connecting to Bhagawan. The first question that I want to ask you is why should I be connecting to Bhagawan? What impact will it make in my life, if I connect to Bhagawan?

Student: "Because He has created me."

But your parents have created you. Right? You come from your parents. So, you should connect to your parents. Why should you connect to God? Let me ask you a more fundamental question. If you don't know the answer to this question, then there is no point. This is the time to question yourself: Why should Swami be an important part of my life?

We should do everything to bring a smile on Swami's face. To make Swami happy. Why should we make Swami happy?

Students:

"We feel happy. That's why we should connect to Swami."

"To offer our gratitude to Bhagawan for all the things that He has done for us."

"Swami helps me to remove the bad qualities. Cleanse my heart. Cleanse my mind."

"It gives meaning and purpose to our life."

All the responses are right and there could be as many answers as the number of boys seated here. First we have to question and get our own answer. The idea here is not to give an answer. But, first ask this question, why should I connect to Bhagawan? Who is this Swami whom I am trying to make happy? Why should I be doing a drama if I can make Swami happy through my studies?

Students:

"A drama gives entertainment."

"To entertain Bhagawan's devotees, who are as important as Bhagawan."

Let me take this as an opportunity to give you what Swami said about

‘entertainment’. He said, “Entertainment is that which elevates. Any entertainment which leaves you higher than where you were before the entertainment started is good entertainment.” Keep this as a benchmark in your life. Whenever you seek a reason to do an entertainment, to watch an entertainment, or to be a part of any entertainment, ask, “Does that entertainment cleanse myself?” One brother said, “We are having Swami as a center of our lives because we want to cleanse ourselves.”

Coming back to drama, there is a brother who was one of the most brilliant artistes, one of the most brilliant actors, who did negative roles in dramas be it Hiranyakashupu, Yama or Ravana. He used to pull it off with such panache and finesse that there was no one in the Institute who could match him in the way that Ravana or Yama could walk. In one of the dramas, he played the role of Ravana; which was a big hit. So much so that every time Swami would come to see the drama, Swami would ask for his role to be played on the stage. That was the power of this person’s acting. So, that particular drama was staged three times in front of Bhagawan. At the end of the drama, Swami was very happy with him. One day, in the Darshan line, Swami called him for an interview and as his parents were also present, Swami called them as well. Swami was praising this boy in front of his parents, saying that, “What a fantastic role he has played, so beautifully he acted!”

Now, this brother was not very good in studies. He used to pass with lot of difficulty. The boy’s parents thought, “Swami, he has not come here to do dramas. Where will drama finally take him in life? He has come here to get degree.” But, here was Swami who kept on praising this boy. Finally, his father told Swami, “Swami, I want to tell you something.” “What is it?” Swami said. “He is very good in drama Swami. But he does not have good concentration. He is not a good student. He is not doing well in studies.” Swami said, “So what, it doesn’t matter.” The parents continued, “No Swami, but later on in his life, he should get a good job, he should reach a position, he should earn well, he should have a good family.” Swami replied, “For the amount of joy that this boy has given me by playing these roles, I have decided to look after his

life for its entirety. You don't have to worry about it at all." This is the promise that Swami gave to his parents! Today, he is the Senior Vice-President (of a company) in Singapore, earning ten times more than what any of us can earn just because he was able to play a role well. That is a boon that Swami gave. That is the power of doing small, small things for Bhagawan.

I will just narrate one more incident. In one of the Corridor dramas (when Swami was physically present), a program was put up in which there was a short three-minute depiction of the beginning of Srimad Bhagavatam Purana. Srimad Bhagavatam starts with King Parikshit, a great king who meets Kali (Kali yuga personified). Kali says, "It is time for me to enter into your kingdom." Parikshit says, "No, you cannot enter." Kali says, "But this is my dharma. I am supposed to." "Fine, you can only live in all the *tamasic* places of my kingdom and in gold," says Parikshit. Parikshit is wearing a crown of gold. So, Kali comes and sits in his crown. He feels thirsty and he is lost somewhere in the jungle. He sees one ashram. He goes over there. A Rishi is doing *tapas*. Parikshit says, "Give me some water to drink." Parikshit gets angry at the unresponsiveness of the Rishi and he puts a dead snake around his neck. The Rishi's son sees a dead serpent around his father's neck and curses Parikshit, "Within seven days, Parikshit will die." Parikshit listens to the Bhagavat Purana during those seven days.

This was the scene that was going to be presented. The brother who was supposed to play Parikshit's role—which was of a duration of one minute—was not looking good. The director was disappointed and asked this boy to practice again and come back. The performance didn't improve. Finally, the whole drama was put up. There was a role in that another boy had, which involved speaking for half an hour and he did it with absolute eloquence.

After the drama concluded, Swami was very happy. Swami called this boy (who played the role of Parikshit) and materialized a beautiful ring and put it on his finger. Everybody was stunned. Here was a brother who gave a half an hour-long dialogue, and he does not get anything, and Swami gives this ring to the student who performed a one minute role. Everybody went and patted him. Everybody was happy for him. That is when this brother revealed, "Just to feel the thirst of Parikshit, I did not drink water for 24 hours. So, it was not

actually an act, it was real.” With that feeling, he acted. Nobody knew it. Only Bhagawan knew it. God silently grants you (a reward) for the dedication in a one-minute’s role.

More than what we do in the drama, what the drama does to us is more important. Today that boy is able to vividly remember and recollect that moment because of something that he did in his own heart. Only he knew about it and there was only one other person in this world who knew and that was our beloved Bhagawan. That is why we have to connect to Him. Because, he knows what we need. Shouldn’t we be connecting to the One who is capable of giving whatever we want? Is there anybody else in this world who can give us what we want other than Bhagawan? So, why not? It is enlightened self-interest and a win-win situation. I depend on Him and He gives me anything. But, as Swami says, ‘If you go to the *kalpa vriksha* (wish fulfilling tree), do you ask for coffee powder?’

Let me narrate to you a Chinna Katha. There was a man whose wife wanted him to get coffee. He hunts from one coffee shop to another, but all were closed. The man thinks, ‘My God! If I go home now, my wife will kill me.’ So, he just sits under a tree, wondering what to do. Suddenly the tree starts to speak, ‘Oh Son! I am the *kalpa vriksha*. Ask me whatever you want and I shall grant it to you.’ This man says, ‘Right now, can you give me coffee powder? Without coffee powder, I cannot enter my home.’ Swami says, ‘That is how we (unfortunately) utilize Bhagawan.’

Bhagawan is the wish-fulfilling tree that has come here on Earth. He wants to give us Infinity and we come to him and say, ‘Swami, one B.Com. degree. That is enough.’ Is that what we should come here to ask Bhagawan for?

There was one brother who was playing the role of Lord Rama. Every time he would come on the stage, we wanted to see Lord Rama. But, we were seeing this boy playing the role of ‘Rama’, which is different from seeing ‘Rama’. We wanted to see Rama on the stage. You know what this brother did? To become Rama (and on the final day when he appeared on the stage, people clapped just for his appearance!) he started chanting the name of ‘Rama’ 24 by 7. He would keep a Hanuman Chalisa with him and keep going through Hanuman Chalisa as he felt that one came become ‘Rama’ only through

Hanuman.” We did not know this. Slowly, but surely, whenever he came on the stage, we could see his performance touching our hearts. Finally in the 2007 drama, the moment he came on the stage, the entire crowd clapped just for his appearance because it looked as though Lord Rama had come there. Again, it was just a five-minute role but an enormous amount of effort went into it. He said after the whole drama to us, ‘Because of this role, today I know the importance of *naamasmarana* in my life.’ A five minutes role had changed his entire life. That is what ‘Rama’ can do. No amount of reading books, no amount of this kind of talking to you and telling you will make that kind of impact. The only way you can create that kind of impact is by going through it yourself. Even it is for a five-minute role, a two-minute role, a one-minute role. So, it is not the magnitude of the role. In fact, it is not about being in the cast of the play at all. There are so many things that are interrelated.

At Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions, drama is like the movies. It will not impact you if I tell you that 165 boys are associated with one drama. There may be only ten actors on the stage that are actually acting. But there are 130 boys who are backing that boy to step on to the stage and each of one them is going through their own little saga, their own little *sadhana*; their own little way of making Swami happy. Which Swami? Which Swami is becoming happy? The Swami who is seated in my heart. When the Swami inside my heart smiles at me, I know that “Yes. My Swami is happy today.” Whether it’s me, or the recording boys who work 24 by 7 in three shifts (so that recording gets completed on time- whether it is music recording or dialogue recording). When it comes to sets, they work 24 by 7 for almost three weeks to get some fantastic sets. Why? Each and every boy wants to say that, ‘This is the best I can give to Bhagawan.’

What is yoga? *Yogab Karmasu koushalam*. Excellence in action is yoga. The moment you get excellence in that action, it becomes yoga. It becomes worthy of an offering to the Lord. Brother Ramakrishna who is over here; he is one who has been associated with the costumes department for many, many years. He also has had several beautiful experiences related to costumes. I would like to call upon him to share some of his experiences with us.

Sri Ramakrishna Motamarri: I had this opportunity to associate with the costumes department for almost ten years now. I am really grateful to Swami for making me part of many plays, starting with the corridor dramas, moving on to the Poornachandra dramas, and Convocation dramas. I want to recall our experience with respect to the staging of the play, 'Veeranjaneya'. We just had less than twenty-four hours of notice for this drama. I was standing near the flag post when Swami was getting inside the car after Arati. When His chair was going inside the car, suddenly, He sent word to Dr. K Anil Kumar and told him to announce that "Tomorrow a drama is going to be staged by the Prasanthi Nilayam students."

It was literally a shock because we did not know it was slated for the next day. Immediately we contacted our warden to get a confirmation and he confirmed that it is correct. In the Ramayana, you see that Lord Rama calls Hanuman and tells him to go and find out the whereabouts of Mother Sita. He really doesn't know where to go, how to go and find her. He does not have any clues. This was our plight too on the previous day evening when arati was going on.

We really didn't know how to put up a drama next day at 5 p.m. It was a complete shock especially because we had sent our entire jewelry items to Bangalore for polishing. We started sorting out the things. What are the things required? We found out that we needed to get some items from Bangalore. When we called up the jewelers in Bangalore, they said they finished the polishing but some final touches have to be given. We asked the jewelers to send the material without the finishing. By Swami's Grace, by night 12 o'clock we got the jewelry set from Bangalore. That night more than half of the hostel was awake. Besides the boys involved in the costumes, maintenance and several other departments were up. Many other boys came and asked, 'Brother, do you want any help?' That is the time I realized that, "Oh my God, when Swami gives work, we get support from so many quarters." Somehow we did the finishing and our jewelry items were (partly) ready.

There was one scene that I remember very clearly- it was almost the last scene of the drama where the coronation takes place. Lord Rama is sitting along with Mother Sita when Hanuman comes into the scene. Mother Sita

removes a pearl necklace and gives it to Hanuman. Hanuman tastes each and every pearl and he breaks the pearl necklace saying that he is not able to listen to any name of Lord Rama from it. This is a tricky incident (to depict live on stage) and we did not know how to proceed with this scene. We didn't know how Mother Sita will remove it over her wig and then give to Hanuman. We tried different ways to prevent the necklace getting entangled in her wig until 3 a.m. in the morning. Suddenly (it is all His Will), we got an idea. We stuck the pearl necklace onto the dress itself so that we are not pinning or tying it anywhere. We tried it out and it was sticking nicely and it was not falling at any point of time. The moment the previous scene got over, the moment the character exited and came out, we were in position to remove the jewelry and attach it to the character in the next scene. This was a war-like situation. One thing that I realized was- when this scene came, we were tensed about what is going to happen! We put in our best effort. Not knowing what the result will be. Leave the decision to Swami. He will take care. We have done our best.

For this drama, Swami was sitting facing the Mandir and not the devotees. When the curtain opened and the scene started, Hanuman came and Mother Sita removed her pearl necklace without any problem of entanglement in the wig and gave it to Hanuman. Hanuman just breaks the pearl necklace and tastes each and every pearl. The moment the necklace was torn out all the beads fell down most of the beads just rolled down and went and stopped near Swami's footrest. Seeing all this from behind the stage, I realized that, when we put our best efforts for His task, He will take care of how the things happen and at the end it becomes an offering at His Lotus feet (in this case, literally).

Brother Ramakrishna: I want to add one more thing. When the drama was going on, we had a lot of monkeys supporting Hanuman. In the process, we had very little time. Additionally, another major event was also scheduled at the venue that day. The tennis courts at the Sri Sathya Sai International Centre for Sports (Indoor Stadium) were supposed to be inaugurated and there was supposed to be live coverage of the inauguration. Swami was supposed to inaugurate the tennis courts and then come for drama. It so happened that we got a call that Swami is already coming out for the Darshan and waiting for the drama to begin. None of the characters were

in the Mandir. The vehicle maintenance team and others kept on shuttling in hostel car almost like 10-15 times to transport all the characters. Swami kept on waiting patiently over there for all the boys. Once it started, because of this short span of time, there were some characters for who we could not put any jewelry. There were a couple of us sitting and crying, “Swami! Please forgive us. We let you down in this way. We did not put jewelry and we did not put any other things.”

Later, after drama got over, Swami called each and every character, and took photographs with them. He was very, very happy. In fact, some characters—for example Rama, Bharata and Mother Sita—He called them twice. He raised His hands for *Abhayabastha* several times, blessed all of us, patiently took many photos, and gave us *padanamaskar*. This is when we realized that Swami is really *Bhava priya*. He saw the feeling with which we put in our efforts (regardless of the results). He didn’t see the external things what we have done. We all knew that we had messed up because of the short span of time we had to prepare. But He really understood the feelings that came from our hearts and He blessed all of us with such wonderful opportunities.

Brother Ganesh: There are so many things that we can learn, not only from the drama, but the other facets of our lives here- facets of our hostel life, of our system of education, etc. Each one of us has to actually go through the particular experience to feel what it really means. One of the strong learnings from this drama of ‘Veeranjaneya’ was: When Bhagawan gives a job, just get up and do it! Swami has in fact said, “I don’t see ability. I just want your availability. I will give you the ability. If you are available, I will give you the ability to do it.” This applies to each and every facet in our life. One more aspect of drama is that you play roles you have never done before. So it gives you the courage to take on something that is something unknown to you. In this manner, there are so many good qualities which naturally get added on to you as you get actively involved in theatre, as there are so many other facets and different roles that we can play.

Brother Amey: A similar situation occurred when we put up a drama on 3 December 2009. The College auditorium (at Prasanthi Nilayam Campus) is about 12-16 feet in height. Sai Kulwant Hall does not have any height

restrictions. Swami came to see a practice session of the drama in the auditorium (which was to be performed at Sai Kulwant Hall). So, all the sets were being fabricated for Sai Kulwant Hall. Swami came to the auditorium, saw it and the end of it He said, “Let’s have the drama here in the college auditorium.” Just imagine- all the fabrications became utterly useless. The play was scheduled for the very next day and all the sets now had to be refabricated to a maximum of sixteen feet. Most of the sets were not even able to get into the auditorium because they were so big (as they had been designed for Sai Kulwant Hall). The boys had to work throughout the night. That night at one o’clock, the power went off and the generator had stalled. The boys, under the able guidance of the teachers, sat throughout the night with cell phone torches and flashlights. They got the sets ready by six in the morning. All the boys had worked through the night and the next day morning, when we returned after finishing recording at Radiosai, we had our first dry run at 7 a.m. (We had to stage the final play at 4 p.m. that evening). The dialogues were also ready at six in the morning.

When I asked one of our faculty members, “Sir, how was this possible?” I remember he said, “Amey, when Swami gives us the work, He also gives us the strength to do the work. He will never give us a challenge that we cannot overcome. Is He not our Mother?” I felt this was such a beautiful message. That if a challenge comes into our lives, know that we also have the strength to overcome the challenge. That is why challenges are given to us. If we did not have the capability to overcome the challenge, the challenge would not be given to us. So in the challenge lies its own solution. We do all this drama so that this drama of life, which is the real drama, will be as smooth as the drama that we see over here. Just like we are performing this ‘Veeranjaneyam’ drama in front of thousands of people, the drama that we are playing here today in this body can become an example for thousands of people in the years to come. Let this drama of life become as successful as all the dramas and be a worthy offering in front of Bhagawan and at His Lotus Feet.





Brindavan Campus Sessions

Sri Aravind Balasubramanya

Senior Technical Officer, Radiosai Global Harmony

Every Avatar that has come on earth has had to give up the body, be it Rama or Krishna or Sai. *Paritranaaya sadbunam*- whenever dharma is on the decline, I incarnate. Of all the four yugas- Sathya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga which is the best? Which is the worst? In Treta Yuga, apparently there was a decline in dharma compared to Sathya Yuga and therefore Rama came. After Rama departed, Dwapara Yuga started. Dharma further declined during the Dwapara Yuga when Krishna came and said *yada yada hi dharmasya*. But after Krishna went away, Kali Yuga started. Does it make you wonder- what are these Avatars doing? After they come, the situation worsens? This question came into my head too. It is only the head that gets questions. But the heart actually never gets questions. If you ask me what is the difference between head and heart, I will reserve that for later if it comes up.

When Bhagawan left His physical body, it looked like all the good that had been done is getting undone. Is there a worse Yuga that is going to start? This is a thought for you to ponder. In the end if you are still interested, I will tell the answer.

Before we talk of Swami or God or anything, one question will always arise in young scientific minds. The question is- How do you know that there is God? Prove that there is God. There is no proof for God. You know all these are questions because science demands proof. There is no way scientifically to prove the existence of God. Don't take my word for it. There have been long discussions, debates. At best, there are only arguments and no conclusive proof. So how come there are so many devotees of the Lord? It is only based on faith and this is something that science hates, apparently. I am saying apparently because I will show you how actually science cannot hate faith. But it looks like that. In science we prove everything. We have experiments. In Chemistry, you put something, you get a colour precipitate and you have a proof. In Biology you observe, you record. Everything is based on proof.

Anything based on faith without proof is humbug. Do you agree with this? Actually there is no scientific proof for the existence of God- because it is based on faith. In one discourse Swami mentioned, “You think faith is bad! How do you know that that lady is your mother? It is because you have faith that she is your mother.” Now this seemed like a very simple statement.

Our arguments can be- my father told me, I have seen my mother from my birth. But until we are three or four years old, we do not register that she is our mother. Does this mean that you accept your mother only based on faith? You say ‘no, my father told me’. So you have faith in your father. There is something called paternity testing where blood samples are taken from you and your mother and tested to match the DNA of the samples. Do you have faith in the machine? Do you have faith in the doctor who certified this machine? So you have faith in that damn machine over there. You do not know what it is doing. You do not know anything. If you do not want have faith in the machine you must yourself build the machine so that you can have faith in it.

You spend twelve years of your life to become an engineer, learn all the technology involved and build that machine. This machine works on a biological principle. How do you know that this principle is right? You may reply, ‘all the hospitals in the world do it.’ If all the hospitals do it, is it scientific? Do you have faith in *all* the hospitals of the world? We can analyse like this continuously, but at the end of it you will be left with a very sad result, where you will not have proof that your mother is your mother. But if you are wise, you will say, “Just have faith that she is your mother.” Throughout your life the way she treats you, you will realize that this has to be my mother and nobody else. It is very simple. It begins with faith.

In geometry, before you learn the advanced concepts, the first concept you are taught is that there are two lines which are parallel and they intersect at infinity. Accept it and you can score hundred out of hundred. This whole thing is based solely on your faith.

You cannot say whether Albert Einstein was a sage or a scientist. This happens when you reach the edge.

I remember there was one Mr. Gopal Rao, former chairman of Andhra

Bank who lived to a ripe old age of hundred. One day he approached Prof. G Venkataraman, a Padmasri awardee and a top-notch scientist of India, and said, “I hear that you are a big scientist, my radio got spoilt can you do something for it?” Prof. Venkataraman did not know how to repair that radio. In the same way, once a king called a great mathematician and asked me, “Calculate and tell me how much area my kingdom has.” It was a huge kingdom but the king thought it to be as simple as doing a high school mathematics problem. He had to convert the whole field into triangles and rectangles and then calculate everything. Now, when he did that, he found that this triangle was not actually a triangle because the kingdom was so huge that it was like drawing a triangle on a ball (The Earth is in the form of a sphere). The sum of the three angles was not 180 degrees, it was more than 180 degrees because it is not actually a triangle.

Therefore he had to come up with spherical geometry, because planar geometry was not enough. Therefore your parallel lines meeting at infinity is not correct. Though they do not meet at infinity, even to this day they teach you that they meet at infinity. Why? Because it works. Do not worry whether it is true or not, it works. When people ask me about God, this is what I say. Accept it, it works.

Therefore faith is like swimming. Will you learn swimming after jumping into the pool or to learn swimming, you have to first jump into the pool? Just like the hen and the egg- what came first, the hen or the egg? They always happen together. Jumping in and learning swimming are interdependent. You cannot have one without the other. That is the same with faith and experience. If you come and tell me – is there any guarantee that with faith this will happen...if you give a guarantee, I will have faith. Have faith and you will have to try it out.

You know how I became a devotee? When I was a child I used to see Swami's photo. I was noticed that something is funny. All others are paintings and idols there is one real photo here. I used to ask my father- who is this? Which God is this? So one day finally he said, “You know He is the person who did my thread ceremony.” Swami had performed thread ceremony for my father- in fact, Swami had placed him on his lap and whispered in his ear the Gayatri mantra. I thought Swami is a priest. I asked my father, “What is so special

about this priest? What about that priest who performed your wedding? What about this priest who performed my naming ceremony? Why you are not keeping their photo? Why are you keeping only this priest's photo? My father said, "Will you accept what I tell you? He is God. I just accepted it. And I must say that after becoming a devotee, what a journey it has been. It is tough not to get emotional. Somebody asked me- how many hours will you need to convey what all Swami has done for you?"

I really do not know whether through words I will be able to tell. You have to feel. It is like describing the sweetness of sugar. All I can do is tell things that will make you feel that you also want to taste sugar. But I cannot give you that experience. You have to pick up the sugar and taste it yourself. Therefore words are inadequate and I just realized that if I had to speak the only thing I would do is stand here and cry and cry. That is all. Because that is what happens to me even now if I ask myself the question – what has Swami done to you?

There are people who are non-believers. I have no problem with them. A critic I cannot stand. Critics are people who talk without knowing. Because even if you get to know an inch about Swami you won't be able to speak. Your mouth will be shut. So anybody who is criticizing, definitely do not have an iota of idea about Swami and for some reason I make it my personal mission statement to educate them. Once, I was going to Odisha and the journey was going to take 24 hours.

A fellow traveller started a conversation:

"Hey! You coming from Puttaparthi?"

"Yes"

"You also like that Sathya Sai Baba?"

What was I to tell him, that I was coming straight from Him now? I just smiled and did not say anything.

He continued, "I wonder why people simply flock to Him...What about you? Where are you from?"

"From Puttaparthi," I replied.

He said, “You stay and work in Puttaparthi? Oh God! Why? What have you studied?”

I thought he was trying to imply that since am staying in a ‘village’ I must be uneducated.

“I have completed my Masters in Chemistry and have an MBA degree as well! In fact, it is Sri Sathya Sai Baba who gave me my education.” I replied.

“That is why you are here. My only daughter also did an MBA. But she is now in America and she earns handsomely,” he said sarcastically.

I said nothing. I noticed that the other people in my area of the compartment were also getting irked by this person. But nothing stopped him from going on and on. I wanted to just keep contemplating on Bhagawan. I did not want to be drawn into an argument. At that time, I had not yet been introduced to the amazing solution from the Mahabharata on dealing with God-bashers! I kept silent and allowed him to speak whatever he wanted.

“See, you have nothing to speak!” he concluded. Soon, we had our dinner and went to sleep. The next morning, I woke up, brushed my teeth and returned to my seat. My ‘critic’ was wiping his face with a towel. He said, “Ah! You slept without answering anything. People say Sathya Sai Baba makes people dumbstruck. He made you dumb or what?” And he sniggered.

Even as he did that, his toothbrush slipped out of his hand and fell on the floor. It rolled under the seat. This person was unable to bend down. I bent down, retrieved his brush and said, “When your daughter is earning handsomely, you should make use of flights instead of trains! Otherwise, you should tell her to come back to you. She can then help you when you need, so that people you criticize do not bend down to fetch your brush!”

I continued, “Listen sir! The education that Sri Sathya Sai Baba has given me can get me a job in any part of the globe. But that same education has taught me to respect my parents and serve them well. They have sacrificed so much of their time and energy for me. It is only right that I repay them to some extent at least!”

There was a tear in his eye I thought. Clearly, he was missing his daughter. I did not want to proceed along the same topic.

I then asked, “Tell me. Do you believe in God?”

“Yes! Of course! Jesus is the only God!” He got back some energy.

“Then, what did he mean when he said, ‘Break down this temple and I shall build it back in three days?’” I asked. He seemed stunned. I explained to him what I had learnt from Swami. “People think that Christ was referring to building when he said the temple of God. He was actually referring to his own body. And that is what he did- resurrected himself three days after crucifixion! Thus, he kept his word!”

I did not stop there. I went on to quote Christ, “When your Lord has told you to show your other cheek when slapped on one, why do you simply go about slapping whomsoever you get with your verbal abuse?” One topic led to another and I told him so much about Christ. He was partially in awe and partially in shame.

“If you love your Lord, you should spend time on journeys like this, reading about Him and thinking about Him.”

He now asked me whether I was a Christian. Now came the perfect time.

I told him that everything that I knew about Christ was Swami’s gift to me. I also told him a few stories of Christians who had been so touched by His presence and Love. He just sat there listening and seemed dumbstruck. He never spoke again—not even once—for the entire journey.

I thanked Swami. He had won over a critic through matters that were close to the critic’s heart- his daughter and Jesus. He took my permission to go to the toilet, at the end of which he asked, “Can I also come to Puttaparthi?” “You can definitely come,” I replied. From Brindavan when we used to go to Bangalore for vacation, in that half an hour journey people will ask, “Are you from Brindavan? What is this Swami?” I used to reply, “See if you are interested, then this is my address. Come home, I will tell you because it is not a small thing, Swami is my life. How can I tell you in twenty minutes? A Ph.D. student cannot tell about his Ph.D. thesis in two hours and you want me to talk about my life in half an hour.”

Even if Swami comes and says, “Bangaru! You know, for twenty years I have fooled you. I am not God.” I will tell Swami, “Nice try!” That is the power of

experience. Each one of us must try to experience God. Suppose your mother, your father and everyone comes and tells you that sugar is sweet, after twenty years you are convinced it is sweet. But in college, everybody tells that sugar is bitter; then during the first year of college you will say that sugar is sweet, but in the second year you will think that may be sugar was sweet twenty years ago; but now, may be it is bitter. In the third year, you will yourself say- sugar is bitter. But once you have tasted sugar in childhood, you will always say sugar is sweet. We must experience God in our lives.

Does experience lead to faith or does faith leads to experience? I have faith that Swami is God and when I need it, I will get a miracle. I was in audio-visuals- most sought after in the hostel. We had the chance to keep the mike for Swami- so many wonderful things used to happen. One day I asked Swami- faith comes first or experience?

Once I was setting up the mike at Trayee Brindavan. I came across a book named Conversations with God. A man called Len had conversations with God. It was an imaginary conversation. He wanted God to do some strange miracle.

Len says: Why don't you reveal yourself to your creation? That experience will simply transform anyone...

(Wow, I thought. This was exactly what I was thinking- one experience and God would gather all the faith He wanted!)

God: I would love to do that Len! But tell me how should I do it?

Len: Simple God! Do a miracle, and make is so magnificent that everyone is simply stunned!

(An obvious answer but now I was completely in grip of the book.)

God: I am ready Len. Can you tell me what miracle should I do?

Len (after some thought): Well! How about this? Make the whole sky and oceans pink in colour. That way nobody will miss the miracle and all will be stunned.

God (with a sigh): That will not work Len...

Len (surprised at God's stupidity): Why? Just listen to me. It will thrill all.

God: The thrill will not last Len. Soon it will become ‘common knowledge’!

Len: What do you mean? How do you say so?

God: From past experience, Len. The last time we met, you called yourself Ben. Then, you wanted me to make the oceans and skies blue. I did so. Now, nobody seems to look at them in awe and thrill. In fact, you have ‘scientific’ explanations as to why the skies and oceans are blue.

Len: So then...maybe we should search for some other miracle...
Something that science cannot explain.

God: Then that gets classified as a coincidence, a stroke of luck, a bizarre oddity or at best something that will be explained by science in due time. Then you guys go about making theories....

Len: But God! The whole skies turning pink along with all the waters in all oceans is indeed a miracle. It definitely is a miracle!!

God: That’s your faith Len.

Len: Now what does that mean?

God: See Len, have you ever wondered as to the beauty of how your heart beats, how you breathe, how you do things that a tree or a stone cannot? That is my miracle Len. A dead body has all the chemicals, structures and proteins of a live body; but it is not the same. Your life is a miracle.

Len: Wow! If seen that way, the wonders of the world will make us experience miracles always!

God: Ha ha! Len, you have stumbled upon a great secret. If one has faith, every breath that one takes becomes a miracle, an experience of the cosmic consciousness. But without faith, even if a ‘miracle’ like the skies and oceans turning pink happens, you take it as some bizarre occurrence, an oddity or at best an unexplained scientific phenomena. Its faith that makes an experience, a miracle. Without faith, the grandest of experiences too get slighted. You know only how and not why. Faith is something very deep.

We should be conscious of our breathing. That is called meditation. If you have faith, every second of your life is a miracle. When you have faith, magical things happen. We can connect with Swami even today. For a few years

of my life, Swami never spoke to me. It was one such phase in Brindavan when Swami was not speaking to me. He was not even taking my letter. So I developed an inner Swami. I used to speak to him and tell Him all my problems. There is no difference between joy and imaginary joy. Realized souls are ordinary like you and me. I told my inner Swami that I want to give you a letter. My inner swami said- why letter? Tell me your problem. No, I want to give you a letter in Sai Ramesh Hall only. To prove that my inner Swami and real Swami was same, I wanted Swami to physically take my letter in Ramesh Hall. Swami insisted that I give him the letter inwardly since physically He had not been taking letters from students for a long time. Hence, if He physically took a letter only from me, all the other students would feel jealous. I told Swami to take the letter from me in such a way that no other student notices. My inner Swami said, “Let me see.”

The next day during Darshan, I sat in a corner. Swami came near me but started to speak to somebody else. We shut out God from our lives when we are depressed. Swami was moving his fingers as if he wanted me to give the letter. My heart was saying- Swami is asking for the letter, give it. My mind was working in the opposite direction. Finally, I accepted my heart’s command and gave the letter to Swami. It was such a wonderful experience. Tears started to roll down my cheeks.

Of all madness that afflict man, craze for God is the least harmful. When you sing a bhajan, feel what the bhajan means. One day during bhajans, Swami had gone for a drive. Sri K Anil Kumar, who was my teacher, started to visualize Swami sitting in the chair. After some time, Swami came back from the drive and actually stood in front of him, enjoying the bhajan. Swami bends down to Him and says, “Inside Swami and outside Swami are same.” That is the beauty of a heart-felt visualization. We are like radio sets and God is like radiowaves. Radiowaves are everywhere, but if the radio set is not tuned, it will not be able to catch the waves. We have to work on catching the music. God is the fruit, world is the shadow. So one should aim at attaining God. Have faith. Give Swami a chance; connect to Him for ten minutes every day. Tell Him all your problems. Then you will find wonderful joy in your life. The most important thing in life is to connect to God.



Sri C G Sai Prakash

Senior Technical Officer, Radiosai Global Harmony

Swami has been very kind to me like he has been to hundreds of thousands of his students and devotees. Time is best spent when we think of Him and remember those beautiful days, which have not stopped, and which are still continuing and which will still continue. I got an interesting email a few days back of the twelve striking features of the Kali age. This happens to be mentioned in the Bhagavatam; where people will not respect their parents, money becomes most important, and so on and so forth. But the striking feature is, they say, people who stand behind a podium consider themselves as scholars. I don't consider myself as one among them but as the Bhagavat Purana mentions this fact, Radiosai brings out these in a beautiful series called 'Sai Inspires' and in today's Sai Inspires Swami is precisely saying the same. Swami is saying, "People who stand behind the podium and speak a few lines, do they think that they have understood the secret of the creation?"

Well, we don't have that much in our capabilities but I just wanted to share a few of my experiences as a student, and I am sure that's what people are looking forward to. Let me narrate a beautiful experience of one of my senior brothers. There was this Unity of Religions (Sarva Dharma Aikya Sammelan) conference held in the Poornachandra Auditorium way back in the early 1980's. This brother was supposed to give a speech, which was his first speech. There were different students selected to give talks on different religions and he was to talk on Buddhism. Just the day before the final day, he got fever and he somehow pulled himself to Darshan and told Swami: "Swami, *bahut darr lagta hai* (I am feeling very scared). I don't want to speak tomorrow." Swami just told him: "*Koi baat nahi* (don't worry), just drink a glass of water." Now this boy felt within, "Even my last resort has let me down." He went to all the senior brothers and the warden and told them about his predicament. The warden told him that he was helpless since it was Swami's instruction for him to speak. He was sweating and puffing the whole night.

The next day, the warden told this brother that those who don't have faith in Swami can go to the General Hospital and take medicine. So he promptly went to the hospital and took an injection to reduce his nervousness. The

next day in the Poornachandra Auditorium, he was at the back stage when Swami went to him and told him to remove his glasses. As soon as the glasses were taken off, everything went hazy and the brother thought that it was a very good strategy. Before him, there were a couple of accomplished student speakers who got a thunderous applause and he was next. He managed to go to Swami and offer a garland. Swami then told him: “*Achaa baat karo* (talk well).” Then he went to the podium, unable to see anybody as he had taken off his spectacles and filled with the energy from Bhagwan’s words, spoke the introductory remarks. After that he just forgot his speech. He was standing there absolutely nervous and his mind was completely blank. The whole auditorium was waiting as there was a generous introduction given to him but his mind was fully blank. And then Swami called the brother and said: “Ae boy.” Swami got up from His chair, walked up to him and gave him His glass of water. The brother was so tensed that he just drank the water and gave back the glass to Swami, without even telling him thank you. After that, he said that he had no idea what had happened. For the next twenty minutes, he spoke so fluently and got a thunderous applause. He even sang the song ‘*Sumara Manava*’- as it has a mention of all the religions in it. He said that the time when he really understood and came to consciousness, Swami was taking him by His hand around the stage. Swami was telling, “Take photos from this side, take photos from that side.” Swami made them announce: “This boy had high fever, but still he could speak.” I narrated this incident because my situation is something like that as I have never given public talks but I’m sure with Swami’s Grace I will be able to share some things that I have learnt at His Lotus feet and three years of my stay in Brindavan.

It was 1996 during my first year undergraduate degree. There was some work going on in *Prashanti Nilayam* at that time so Swami was not coming to *Brindavan*. I was just thinking, “Swami, why are you not coming here?” All of us would make small groups and pray intensely to Swami that He should come to *Brindavan*. He came just for one day and said: “I have come because my boys have called me.” He called us for a Trayee session and fortunately I was pushed to a place very close to Swami, right in front of the *jhoola*. Swami

gave me that mischievous smile that meant, “I know what was going on.”

The Ganges is flowing, it is always there, and it is up to us to get benefited by it. The Sri Sathya Sai educational system is always there, Swami’s Love is always there- but what you make of it, what you treasure of it, how much you value it, why you should pine for it- these are the things that I would like to share with whatever little experience I have had. When I think of the Brindavan days, I always remember the inspiring lives of the Brindavan teachers who stayed in the hostel, sacrificing everything for the sake of the students. They stayed with the boys always ready to help them; always there to clear their doubts; always there to guide them. So you would always like to think of them as the Ganges. They are always there for you. If you want to make the best of them, you have to go and speak to them. You have to go and start a conversation. You have to go and ask a doubt. Sometimes when I think of the enthusiasm I always wonder where does that enthusiasm come from? Why did they choose to stay back? Why did they choose to give up what they could have had in their personal lives and stay with the students here? Yes, it is Swami’s Love. Swami’s Love has many dimensions. For those who have experienced it when He was physically present, His love was magnetic. It always attracted you. It was always giving.

But one of the most comprehensive definitions of Love that Swami Himself has given to one of the faculty members goes like this: Swami said, “You are talking about love. What is love? What is Swami’s Love?” Swami said, “Swami’s love has got three aspects which are very important- selflessness, changelessness and fearlessness.” These are very profound aspects of love. It’s like a triangle. So you have fearlessness, selflessness, and changelessness in all, and this defines what Love is. So we as students never understood what His Love really was. We only experienced it and enjoyed it.

This incident that I will narrate now, occurred in 1999. On May 5th, we all were sitting there in Kodaikanal and Swami was speaking to all the boys and there were also some lady guests sitting behind. There was a staircase behind those people. Suddenly there was a gush of water that fell upon some of the senior devotees who were sitting over there. The ladies shouted out: “Swami Swami.” Swami asked, “What happened?” The devotees replied, “Swami,

water water...” Swami said, “It’s these boys. You know they have not closed the taps inside the bathroom, so the water is coming down.” This was true because when a devotee went to the first floor, they found that water was actually flowing out of the bathroom tap which had made the entire floor wet. The thick carpet was wet and then water had flowed down the steps and had fallen on these people, which created a lot of confusion.

One of the most beautiful things happened that night. We were putting all our efforts to dry the carpets. We kept some room heaters on and slept next to them. It was getting really hot and the place was also limited. I think it was around nine o’clock when Swami came out of his room and said, “You know there is so much water outside. Where are the boys sleeping? Is it still wet? Are you having enough places to sleep?” Then Swami very promptly, without a minute of hesitation said, “Open up my interview room. Boys can sleep there.”

Though it was an embarrassing incident, Swami showered His love by allowing us to sleep in His interview room. As a mark of gratitude, I was thinking, “Swami what can we offer to you? Since it is Easwamma Day, can we offer a small musical offering to Bhagawan.” As Swami came out of the door, some of the elders and some seniors told me not to ask Him for a program, as it was a hectic day. I thought to myself, “I’ll just be ready, in case Swami asks.” The moment He opened the door, he was very happy and said, “Oh! You have brought the sitar, start playing.” My idea was to play the bhajan ‘Easwamma *priya tanaya*’ set in *raag ahirbhairavi* as it was Easwamma Day and this bhajan was set in an early morning *raga*. Swami asked me to play *raag hamsadhvani* and I was playing a light piece that I knew. Swami said, “Not this, play *vaathapi ganapatim*.” I didn’t know the song. Swami said, “Don’t worry. I sing you play.” He was actually singing the song line by line and I was playing on the sitar. So the beauty was- He always does everything and gives you the credit. At the end of the song, as Swami was singing and I was playing the song on the sitar, He materialized a beautiful *ganapati* and gave it to me.

But the story doesn’t end there. In 2010, when Swami went to Delhi and Shimla, there was a beautiful sequel to this incident. I had the good fortune

to accompany Him. As part of the Bhajan group, we thought we'll get a chance to offer a music program, but we didn't get a chance because Swami had gone there after so many years and the devotees had a very tight schedule for Bhagawan. On the last day in Shimla, Swami was sitting there and having tiffin, and all the boys were there, and a thought just came to my mind. I thought, "Swami this is very beautiful because you have called us and we've come with all our instruments and we've come with a lot of practice. We've practiced for this program and we are not getting any opportunity here to perform or to offer it. Forget performing, we just wanted to offer it." The thought came and immediately Swami responded. He was sitting on the chair a little bit away and Swami calls one of the boys and says, "Now, after this tiffin we will have our boys singing." You tell that *veena* boy also to play." I was taken aback and he asked: "Swami, the *sitar* boy?" and Swami says: "Yes, ask him to play." Immediately after tiffin, when the boys came there, they sang *vathapi ganapatim*. So, it was almost after eleven years that Swami was checking whether I had learnt the song or not. That was a beautiful experience that connected 1999 to 2010.

When I was asked to speak, there were two things that came to my mind. The easy way is to tell stories about Swami. It's like a sweet shop where you get a lot of sweets; you get *mysore pak*, *gulab jamun* and a lot of different sweets, but what about talking of the sugar itself? When you enter the portals of Swami's University, unknown to you, many beautiful things happen. As years go by, you start thinking, you start wondering and you start understanding the meaning of all those small things that happened and that gives meaning to your life today.

There is a beautiful thing that happened way back in the 1960s. In those days, Swami used to travel from place to place on commercial flights, unlike the later years when Swami had a chartered flight. They would block a few seats in the front when He travelled. When Swami was on one of those flights, from Hyderabad to Bangalore, there was a journalist who actually went up to Swami and told him, "Swami, I have a few questions which I would like to ask." Swami replied, "You come to my ashram. I'll call you and speak to you." This man was totally new to Bhagawan. He thought he could just go to the ashram and say that he has been called by Bhagawan. When he came

to Brindavan, he was taken by surprise because he saw at least two to three thousand people sitting under the beautiful Sairam shed under the tree. I am sure many of you would have seen the photographs. So he sat there and Swami came for Darshan and Swami called him. This man was a journalist and he had a lot of doubts. He wanted to know why Swami did the things the way He did. He was greatly disturbed by a lot of people talking things against Bhagawan.

There was a time when a lot of people didn't have the earnestness to come and seek Divine clarification from Bhagawan and so they would talk whatever came to their mind. This journalist came up to Bhagawan and Swami called him for an interview. The moment he stood in front of Swami, he was overwhelmed by His love. He was so overwhelmed by His presence, his energy and power, he just broke down. The beauty of Swami's presence is so powerful that he just broke down. He fell at Swami's feet and asked Swami, "Swami, why is it that you do not respond to people who speak against you? So many people do not understand you. When I come and stand before you, I am totally touched. I just break down. Why is it that you do not respond? Why is it that you are silent?"

Swami gave a very beautiful answer. He gave a beautiful smile and patted him on his cheek and said: "What to do? They are trying to understand me with their mind. I am beyond the mind. It is like going to the ocean and trying to measure the length and the depth of the ocean with a one-foot scale. Yes, you can do it, but to understand Swami through the mind is definitely a futile attempt." In fact, many a time Swami would beautifully say: "How do you handle criticism?" In those days, because Swami used to have this beautiful hairstyle, some people used to come and say: "*Butta tala baba* (Baba with a crown of hair on His head)." Some people thought it was actually a wig. Swami says: "Why should I be bothered? For those who think it is a wig, it is not a wig. It is real. So, I am not bothered and for those who think it is real and is too much, it is too much. What can I say?" So He says, "Praise or blame, you should be equanimous." This is exactly what Swami told this journalist. He said: "If you try to understand me with the mind, it will be a futile attempt."

Swami is still here. He is still present. He still guides. Let me give a small example- it was around 2011, when physically we saw Swami's health slowly deteriorating. We thought Swami was not keeping well. But Swami is always in bliss, He says, "I am always happy. That is the truth." Then what is the truth behind His entire creation? What is the truth behind our lives? What is the purpose of our lives?

I remember a beautiful incident. It was in the year 1992, when we were in our 10th Std. Our only aim in life was to get an interview with Bhagawan. As we were in Class 10, we had to face the Board exams and we thought that gave us eligibility for an interview. We repeatedly asked Swami, "Swami please, please Swami, give us an interview." So once Swami said: "Okay, tomorrow morning you all come." The reason I am remembering this is because Swami said, "You all come early. I'll also come early." In those days, the Mandir was still open. The trees were there and the birds were chirping. It was still dark at 6:15 a.m., when Swami came out for morning Darshan. Fortunately, we were already there. Swami called us for an interview and the first question he asked was: "What is the purpose of life?" One of our teachers, who was translating Swami's words at that time said with a lot of enthusiasm: "What is the purpose of life?!" Swami said, "Silence! Silence! Speak softly." But the answer Swami gave at that moment to 10th Std. students was amazing. Swami said, "The purpose of life is to go back from where you came, that is God." The whole challenge in trying to do what Swami has done, to set up educational institutions with students coming from different backgrounds; Swami never hesitated to tell the truth.

Way back in the 1960s, when Swami used to go from village to village and speak to people, He would speak to them about the *atma*, the mind, *buddhi*, *chitta*, *ahamkara*, etc. People would listen to it and go back to their daily lives. Prof Kasturi asked Bhagawan, "You are speaking all this to farmers? You think they will understand any of this?" Swami said, "No, they won't understand." Prof. Kasturi said, "Then why are you going and spending so much energy? You are going and then speaking at the top of your voice in each of these villages." Swami said, "They may not understand now, but they will understand ten births hence." So what Swami teaches you and tells you, what Swami speaks to you through your teachers and friends, what He speaks

to you in many different ways, you may not understand now. You may not relish it now. But in years to come or in births to come, it is inevitable that we go back to that.

The reason I was telling you this is that I was continuing on that story when we were really seeing Swami's physical health coming down (in 2011). We all started reading within. On one of those days, I was reading some of the books on the purpose of life and the reality behind life and existence. I was just praying to Bhagawan. I said, "Swami, if so many people have spoken about *advaita*, so many people have spirituality, Swami must have definitely spoken about it." And so one fine day, at 4'o clock in the morning, I went to the studio and logged onto the Discourse Stream on Radiosai. I just prayed to Swami, "Swami whatever discourse comes in at this point of time is the discourse you want me to listen to." The surprising thing was that the discourse stream was continuously breaking. I went to the Bhajan Stream and that was working fine. I was wondering: 'Why was this happening?' And then an answer came. It said: All the discourses are there with you in your computer. Why do you have to go to the Discourse Stream?

So I went to my computer and searched. Now I was thinking: 'Which discourse to start with?' Believe it or not, at that moment of silence, there was an inner prompting. There was a voice that said, '1990'. I was totally taken aback and I had no clue that Swami had given a series of wonderful speeches in 1990. That was the Summer Course series. Then I started listening to the series of discourses that Swami had given in 1990. It was so amazing. It was like a Ph.D. level whereas we are still at the kindergarten level. Someday we have to rise to that level. It is inevitable. Swami always says that you are God. You have to remove everything that makes you think that you are not God.

When you have the time, when you have the inspiration, when you have the inkling, you must read some of Swami's discourses. Regardless of the number of years you may have spent with Swami, it may be 50-60 years, but unless you go back to His message, you cannot be close to Him. "Why should I be close to Him?" Because that is the only way to be happy. If I am going for a cricket or football match. I am happy if I win it and sad if I lose it. Even there, it is such a beautiful thing.

Let me narrate a funny story when I played cricket only once in my life. It is a funny story because the first ball I was trying to face over there, I blindly hit it and the ball went for a four. But the second ball I was stumped out. That was the only time I played cricket. But later, when I was thinking about that, the first ball that I faced, I had absolute concentration only on the ball. But when the second ball was being bowled, I was thinking about myself- what type of a cricket player I am- rather than concentrating on the ball, and I got out. So the concentration which you get when you actually go back in silence and when you try to connect with Bhagawan, that takes you closer to Him and that is the only way you will be happy and blissful. So these are a few things that I learnt from the 1990 Summer Course series. Swami has given more than 1500 discourses. Every discourse is very beautiful and I am sure that when you start listening to some of them, it will inspire you and touch you.

In that series there are many beautiful things that Swami says. He takes us step by step...how you are not the body...how you are not the senses. Now these are all strange. Who am I? I am Sai Prakash. I am so and so. I am this, I am that. How can you say I am not the body? How can you say I am not the mind? How can you say I am not the intellect? But things will happen in their own time and each one will start understanding and enjoying these things. A very beautiful and interesting thing that Swami said in one of those discourses is, "You think that you have to look after this body. You think you are so and so. You give so much importance to it but looking at it actually, which part of the body are you actually able to control? What is essential to keep your body alive? Your heart has to keep beating, your blood has to keep flowing, respiration has to happen, circulation has to happen. Which of these aspects are you actually able to control?"

So when you think about these, you start wondering, "Do I really have a say in what is going on? Do I have control even over myself?" These are things that will come in moments of silence. When you start thinking of these things, you really start feeling close to Bhagawan. It will happen for each one at his own time. When you go through this series and think of what Swami is actually telling you, He says, "The same spark of Divinity which is in Me is in each one of you. You are used as instruments to do your activities and whatever you are meant to do. So you have to do your activities

without expecting fruits. Just do it sincerely, to the best of your effort, and offer the rest of it to Bhagawan.” These are things that we have heard and I frankly did not understand many of these when I was a student. But slowly, you get to understand these things. I am mentioning this because there is a very beautiful correlation between what happens to you and the way you look at things when you actually go a bit deeper, compared to when you are just experiencing Bhagawan’s Love which we do all the time. In my school and college days, we always thought that we had to do something to please Bhagawan. We always did. We were in the card room. We were making many cards. We were in the music group. We sang many songs. We did everything to please Bhagawan. But now you get to realize that the same Bhagawan is within you, that same Bhagawan has not gone anywhere. The beautiful part is, He makes you realize that every experience that you have had with Him is absolutely powerful and relevant even today in terms of Swami as the *atma* within you.

An interesting experience occurred during the 85th Birthday celebrations of Bhagawan. A beautiful program called *Prema Pravaham* was put up on His 85th birthday. I would very quickly like to narrate just a few things on how you have to have the faith in Swami within you. Swami was physically present at that time and He was the one who had inspired this idea. But He kept us at a distance and made us look within. I will just narrate a few things that happened during that experience because I feel it is very important for all of us to keep in mind. Sometime in August, in the run up to the 85th Birthday celebrations of Bhagawan, we came up with an idea, “Swami, we would like to have songs composed on you. We would like to make videos for that as well.” Then we presented one song to Bhagawan. That song was done in a hurry and we had to put the visuals too quickly. So the song was definitely not up to the mark. Many of the people were having their own doubts. Bhagawan just called us very silently and we said, “We told you Swami that this is a very difficult task; we have to bring in all aspects of Swami’s life. We want to put it and even add visuals to it.” Swami said (in Telugu), “This will definitely happen.” Two of us who heard that sentence were absolutely convinced. Many of the people there who did not hear, thought that the program was cancelled. There were a lot of difficulties that came up after that. We did not

have the access to Bhagawan physically and go to and ask Him. But the way Swami pulled us through...the entire sequence is very beautiful.

I shall tell you one or two things connected to this incident. We composed five songs to start with. Some of the elders came and said, “No, these songs are not up to the mark. You need to really step up the composition. You need to really have very good music directors and composers to make it a grand event.” So we were a bit agitated and called one of our friends in Chennai for some help. Believe it or not, our friend said, “Mr. Rajkumar Bharathi, who is a very famous music composer has just walked into my studio. He has come to say that the other project he was working on is cancelled and he is ready if any project is given to him.” They immediately started and came to Puttaparthi heard all our ideas and went back to Chennai to compose all the songs. We had to get a lot of footage, edit it and put it on the video, which was a really challenging job. Added to that, we had to take care of the P.A. system, putting up the LED screens, entire video coverage of the birthday celebrations and the entire press liaison. One day we thought that before we start any of this, let us go to Bhagawan and pray to Him. So taking help of the Internet, we took colour printouts of a good audio mixer and some speakers and went to Bhagawan to show Him. Swami said, “Very good, very good” and blessed the speakers and audio mixer, which were the latest in the market. We didn’t realize the implication of that Blessing. In fact, when we actually started asking for quotes, for an entire day of Swami’s birthday, they were asking around 5 to 6 Crores of rupees. That was a very big amount. We were thinking how to go about this. We were just praying to Bhagawan, and suddenly one day, there came a phone call. A person from Pune called and said, “I heard you needed a sound system for Baba’s birthday. I am ready to give that.” Actually when he brought his system, it was the same speaker and mixer that Swami had blessed. Those were the latest and they came for just Rs. 10 Lakhs a day. So where is 5 crores and where is 10 lakhs? With Swami’s Will and His blessings, anything can happen.

Going back to *Prema Pravaham*, we had a lot of challenges. We had ten days to put together the entire video of these five/six songs. When we tried to collect the vidoes, we had a few bottlenecks, but Swami cleared them when He said, “Tell them to give everything to my boys.” This program was

a big success and had a lovely impact. The hand of Bhagawan was seen very mysteriously at every step of making this program. That set me thinking and made me realize that everything is possible only if Swami Wills it, but we have to be open enough. So, this attitude of going about life expecting absolutely nothing is something that we really have to grow up to.

Let me narrate two incidents to show that Swami is within you. He is definitely the purest part of us. When Bhagawan used to speak to us, He would give 100% of His attention and connected to the purest part of us. So, when you have to think about Swami now, you have to think about the purest form within you, the purest part of you, which is selfless, which is absolutely fearless. Now that can come when you have pure love. This reemphasizes the point that the Swami that is in front of us, is the same as the Swami within us.

In my eighth or ninth standard, back in the day when the Mandir was still an open Mandir (and Sai Kulwant Hall had not yet been constructed) Swami would come out for Darshan at 3:30 in the afternoon. It used to be very, very hot as they had just put the cement floor. We had sand earlier in the Mandir, which I felt was better than the cement floor. This is because at least the lower layers of sand were relatively cool even if the top layer was hot but this was not the case with the cement floor. Swami was coming bare foot for Darshan and we were sitting on a nice cushion. A thought came to me, “Swami you are walking bare foot on this floor, how hot it is, and we are sitting on cushions, we have our own mats. Who is going to stop you if you wear your sandals and come for Darshan; your *padukas* are as holy as your feet. Please, you should wear *padukas* and come.” Swami passed by me and came to the place where I was sitting. He came and stood right in front of me but was looking at everybody else. Swami said, “What! Is this floor like an ice cream? See, what to do, you all have mats, you all have cushions, beddings.” He looked at me and said, “*techukonadu chuddu* (This boy has brought his bedding not his mat).” So, Swami was going on making fun and I was in tears. I said to myself, “Swami this is too much.” But as He was telling this I thought that maybe this floor is not that hot enough for you as you are the sun. But on the other hand I felt, “No, Swami, this floor is really hot. It must be really burning your feet.” I really felt very bad, but Swami just smiled and walked past me.

He then walked into the interview room and gave a rather long interview. After the interview, boys would run up to the veranda to be close to Him but I purposely didn't run. I sat way back on the cement floor and told Him internally, "Swami, I am going to guide you and you can come only when I say you can." So, I was sitting there and touched the floor intermittently and I was thinking, "Swami it is actually very hot right now and you should not come." So, Swami was not coming out. And at one point of time, finally the sun had gone down and it had cooled down a little bit. I said, "Swami actually you can come now, it is quite fine now, and you can come out." As I was thinking this, the interview room door opened and Swami just walked out. Swami said in His characteristic way, 'Make way, Make way' and walking through a group of boys came straight to the place where I was sitting and said very lovingly, "*Dunnapota* (He buffalo)." I felt He is trying to tell me, "I know what you are thinking, I know every thought of yours." He reads every thought, because He is not far from you, He is within you, and there are many ways in which He can come to you. It could be the word of your seniors, it could be a friend's word, and it could be a dream.

Talking of dreams, there was one more beautiful thing that had happened way back in the 1970s when my parents were staying in Guwahati. My father was working there and visited a hilly region. My father, mother and sister (I was not yet born) were coming down the slope in a jeep. My father lost control over the steering and two wheels were already over a steep cliff. The first thought that came to him was, "Swami, I am so happy that we all are together. We all are going up together," and instantly all of them together shouted, "Sai Ram!" and closed their eyes. The next instant, the jeep was actually moving on the center of the road. They had no clue how it happened. When they came driving down to Calcutta, my father visited one of his friends. His friend came running down to him and said: "Are you safe? Are all of you safe?" My father said, "Yes we are fine. What happened?" His friend replied, "Last night Swami came to my dream, literally woke me up and said, "Now pray for this family." It was so beautiful. Swami made a devotee pray and then Swami saved the lives of my parents and my family.

About dreams, Swami had said in one of our interviews, which we had in XII Std. One student—one of our classmates—asked Swami, "Swami, are

your dreams true?” Swami said, “Yes, only when I Will, I will come in your dream.” The boy posed another question, “But Swami, sometimes I get very funny dreams.” Swami asked: “What dream did you get?” He said, “Swami actually I got a dream in which you are wearing roller skates.” Swami said (in Telugu), “That is all indigestion dream.” This classmate of mine posed another question, “But Swami, then how to tell the difference? I saw you there. I saw it very clearly.” Swami said, “Listen very carefully. When I come to your dream with my Sankalpa, the dream will be very clear and the message I am trying to give you, you will remember that when you get up. It will be something that you are looking forward to. The rest of the dreams are all indigestion dreams.” So Swami can come to you as a dream. Swami can come to you as an inspired thought.

There is also an experience that my father had. He was travelling on a train way back in the early 1970s and he was reading *Sanathana Sarathi*. There was one elderly gentleman who was sitting opposite him. He just spoke fire. He was a Bengali gentleman (the train was going to Calcutta). He said, “Even you youngsters believe in that fraud!” He was very strong in his words. He said, “Sai Baba! He is not telling anything new. He is telling everything that is there in the scriptures. What are these miracles? Even you youngsters are going behind him!” My father just sat for a while and said, “You are an elderly man. I am sure you have experienced more of life than me, whom do you worship?” He replied, “Lord Krishna, of course. Lord Krishna is the only God.” My father replied, “I am so happy that you worship Lord Krishna.” This gentleman replied, “You have any doubt; I can chant the *Bhagavad Gita* from the beginning to the end. If you have any doubts in the 700 slokas, I am ready to answer your doubts.” My father said, “I am happy that you are an authority on Lord Krishna. There are many instances in Lord Krishna’s life that I don’t understand. I don’t know whether I will really understand them. But here is someone who has touched my life. I am from a very humble background. My father is just a postmaster and if I am able to attend an interview in an international company today, it is because of Bhagawan and he is the one who has given me hope in this life and therefore he is God for me.”

The old man said, “All that is not enough.” So my father started praying to

Bhagawan, “This man is really strong in his views. Help me to efficiently convey to him what is in my heart.” That was his only prayer. My father thought for some time and asked: “Since you are such an authority on Krishna and I am interested in art and I do a bit of painting, I would really like to know the height of Lord Krishna.” This man never expected that question. He said, “What did you ask?” My father said, “I just wanted to know the height of Krishna. I want to paint Lord Krishna, so I want to know how tall he is.” He did not have the answer. He was totally dumbstruck. Then my father said, “Do you know why you do not know the height of Lord Krishna? That is because you never asked Him. You have never asked Lord Krishna to appear in front of you. You have always considered Him as an entity that had gone five thousand years ago. You have never prayed to him that he should come to you.”

In one of his discourses in the 1990 series, Swami very beautifully says, “Talk to God. Speak to God. Ask Him, ‘come’. He will come and speak to you.” My father said, “You never did that.” The man was totally shaken.

So, this is an inspired thought. Bhagawan can come to you as an inspired thought. He can come and guide you in your dreams. He can come and give you some advice through some of your elders. He can come to you in many different ways. After all, he is not coming to you. He’s speaking to you from within. These are few things, which if we keep in our mind, we will always be happy.





Muddenahalli Campus Sessions

Dr. S Siva Sankara Sai

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This incident happened after I joined the Brindavan campus. Swami came to Brindavan after the summer vacation and immediately enquired about the new boys. Swami literally played with the boys, joked and made them feel at home. Bhagawan would visit them every Thursday and Sunday either at the Hostel or at the Institute. When Swami was with the boys, He never wanted any disturbance and would spend hours with the boys, making it an experience by itself. Swami, during one of the talks, told the boys that it is neither the entrance nor the interview which brought them to Him but it is His mere Will and the merits of their past lives which brought them to Him. Swami further said that He knew the boys from a long time and their relationship has been from a long time. Swami further made a very important statement that without His Divine Will, not even an ant can enter Puttaparthi. It is because of His call that all of us were there with Him enjoying the fruits of meritorious deeds. There is one boy in the M.Tech. programme who got into the University after applying seven times previously. We must congratulate ourselves, as we have become His students by His will. By coming here we have achieved our first step of going towards God, and our lives are assured by God; and now everything will follow.

Swami said if He would have started educational institutions for teaching spirituality, none of us would have been here. Therefore Swami started secular education that provided worldly education and degrees to attract us and give us the knowledge for which He had come. Swami has beautifully given an analogy for this. When mother Yashoda wanted to catch hold of little Krishna, she would hold butter in one hand and a stick in the other. Similarly, Swami attracts us by degrees and gives us spiritual knowledge. We have to take the spiritual beatings that He gives us with a lot of Love as it is for our own good. Swami has Himself structured the schedule in such a way that there is no requirement for any spiritual *sadhana*, as it is complete in itself. If you follow the routine, you are practicing spirituality.

One of our ex-students lost his mother while pursuing his studies. His father, an ardent devotee and a *sevadal*, was mentally shattered. He brought this boy to Parthi and poured out his heart in the interview room and was worried about his son. Swami hugged that boy and said that He would look after him and be his mother and consoled his father. Later, Swami made him stand in Sai Kulwant Hall and narrate this incident to all the devotees. That is the level to which Swami had come down to make the boy feel the warmth of his mother. Even now Swami loves us and showers His grace on us 'the chosen ones'.

Swami said that if you need Him, you deserve Him. If we ever find the need to call Him, He would be surely there to help. Just the need is enough for Him to shower his Grace on us. We should never feel that we are away from Swami. If billions of people are able to experience Swami all over the world, then why not us, 'His chosen children'. All we have to do is to tune ourselves to Swami's wavelength and automatically His Grace will flow.

One boy in the hostel was suffering from acute stomach pain. This was after the night prayer and all the boys were already fast asleep. He drank some water and the pain subsided, but after sometime the intensity of the pain increased and it was taxing and unbearable. Fortunately, he was sleeping next to the altar. He prayed fervently and told Swami that if he would have been at home his parents would have taken care of him and now he was with Him. He asked Swami "All say you have the love of a thousand mothers, don't you care for me?" After he finished his prayer, suddenly the lights were switched on and a boy entered. He had never seen the boy before. He lifted his hand and asked this stranger boy for help. The boy gave him the tablet kept in the cupboard and filled the water bottle and helped him to have the tablet.

The boy sat down with him for a few minutes and rubbed his stomach with his hand and said everything would be fine. "Have a sound sleep and Swami's dreams." Saying so, he left the room. The next morning he felt relieved and wanted to thank that boy who helped him the previous night. He was sure that he was not a current student who helped him but an alumnus, as he had never seen the boy before in their hostel. And so he enquired about this boy at the Institute, Hostel and in his room, but did not get any information.

Immediately he realized that Swami had come the previous night and thanked Him, but his monkey mind prayed for a proof. The next day he found a vibhuti packet next to his pillow, which he never had before and it was the one that Swami would distribute in the Mandir. He was very grateful and thanked Swami profusely.

Swami was very particular about the manner of serving of the *pulibora* (tamarind) rice and the *chakkara pongal* (sweet rice) after the Global Akhanda Bhajan as *prasadam*. Swami sternly instructed the boys not to mix up both. Swami said that the devotees should enjoy both *pulibora* and the *chakkara pongal* separately, and He personally taught the boys how to serve and on which side of the leaf to serve. Swami stressed that discipline should be the breath of life and we all must adhere to it. Swami said discipline is His subject and everyone (students) must get an 'O' grade in His subject. In my first year at college, Swami used to visit us almost every Thursday and Sunday and spend hours with us chatting, giving talks, joking and so on. Swami repeatedly gave talks on the importance and conservation of the *panchaboothas* (five elements) as they are the different forms of God. Gradually the boys lost their interest and Swami noticed this. Swami gave an analogy for His repeated talks on discipline, conservation of resources and human values. We never feel bored when we feed ourselves from morning to night throughout the year and never feel bored to wash our faces four or five times a day. That is because we love our stomach and face very much, we want our stomach fed and a beautiful face. Similarly Swami gave repeated His talks because He loves His children and wants them to live a happy, healthy and peaceful life. He wanted all His talks to become a part of their (our) life.

When Swami was disappointed with the boys and wanted to teach them something, He would stop talking to them. In return, all the boys would surround Him and plead or cry before Him. Even Swami used to like getting surrounded. Swami said in one of the Chinna Kathas that when the Pandavas were in exile, Krishna gave them a mantra and instructed them to use it sparingly, only when the suffering was unbearable. When such a situation occurred, Yudhishtira opened the palm leaf that contained the mantra very carefully and read it. To their utter amazement it was written "This is good for me." Even if Swami was not talking to them (students), it was for their

own good, so that they can introspect and improve themselves. Swami said that anything that happens to us, we must think that it is always for our own good. We have to always bank on Swami all the time. If we consciously nurture this nugget of gold that is within us, Swami will always respond to our prayers. Swami said “Shut up (mouth), open your heart and eyes.” (Open your heart and let Me enter and see Divinity in all).”



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By God's Blessing, even before I was born, my parents were aware of Swami. My mother was already devoted to Swami. My father hadn't yet come to Swami but was a devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba. I first visited Puttaparthi as a kid along with my mother. It had been her first visit too. My father couldn't come as he was occupied with his work.

My first memorable experience was in the Bhajan Hall when Swami was doing Vibhuti Abishekam to Shirdi Sai Baba's statue. Swami was rolling His hand inside the vessel and a cascade of Vibhuti was falling from it. I was astonished to see loads of Vibhuti coming from the vessel. I remember vibhuti filling the entire Bhajan hall.

When I was in XI Std., I had come for Swami's Darshan in Sai Kulwant Hall. The bhajan *Hey Nanda Nanda Gopala, Aananda Nanda Gopala* was going on when a thought came to my mind, 'This Nanda Gopal is sitting here, do you know Swami?' When this thought came to my mind, Swami cut across, came to me, bent low and asked in Tamil, "Un Peiyar Nandagopala (Is your name Nandagopala)?" Swami asked this and carried on walking. I was speechless and realized that Swami knew everything.

After this experience, there was a long gap of ten years before I could get Swami's Darshan again. My family had shifted to Jaipur and I did nine years of schooling there before I came back to Bangalore. When we were still in Jaipur, my brother had got a chance to attend the first Summer Course in 1972. My whole family came along for having Swami's Darshan in Brindavan. I noticed the privileges the College students were enjoying. Swami was walking along with the students. A sudden fleeting thought arose in my mind, "How nice it would be if I were Swami's student."

Nearing the end of Summer Course, Swami had called all the students to the old Bungalow and was talking with them. Swami told them, "For one month you were all here, but you will all forget me, you will not write to me." Then everyone asked, "Swami, how do we write to you?" Swami materialized

visiting cards and gave it to them. But there was only Swami's photograph with His name below, 'Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba' without any address. The students retorted, "Swami, there's no address on this." "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," and distributed back His cards.

I applied for Swami's College but did not get the call letter. I was supposed to pay fees to Mysore Education Society (MES) College where I had enrolled, as it was the last date. I cycled to the College, and had so many hurdles on the way. I requested the college officials to extend the deadline for paying cash, but they declined. Having no other viable options, afraid that a year will be lost if I don't get the call letter from Swami's college and doesn't join here also, I paid the fees.

I went back home, opened the door. I saw the admit card of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Brindavan Campus lying there. It was indicated in the admit card that I was supposed to meet the provost of the College on the very same day. I was both thrilled and shocked at the same time. I was very keen on not wasting money. If now I wanted to join Swami's College, it meant I would have to waste my parent's money, as MES College's fees were non-refundable. I came to a conclusion that I will join MES College, consoling myself that Swami's Grace was not there for me.

I conveyed everything to my mother. My mother—being a staunch devotee—didn't think about anything, especially not about the money paid there. She didn't have to give it any thought; she knew her son should be with Swami. She right away urged me to join in Swami's College. We didn't have time on their side, so we rushed to Brindavan. We hired an auto that went high-speed to Brindavan College. At that time, I was waiting to go Tirupati and had had long hair. As it doesn't go by the etiquette of Sai Students, the principal of the College commanded me to have my hair cut. For me Tirupati became Bangalore only. Who plans all this? The thought to join SSSIHL also Swami only gave. Finally, I was pushed to the brink. And I fell at the right place. Into Swami's fold.

My parents left me totally with Swami. My father said, "You are now with

Swami. Now you go your way and I'll go in mine.” “What did your parents say,” asked Swami. I said, “Swami, they left me with you only.” Swami acknowledged it and went. In my first two years, Swami was in Brindavan for nine months of the year, and the College had not yet started in Puttaparthi. In 1979, when it did start, our batch got bifurcated. Half of the Students went to Puttaparthi College and Swami individually picked each student. I was commanded to stay in Brindavan. Swami spent so much time with the students. He would come to the Hostel and give Darshan. Swami even designed each of the cupboards there in the Hostel. Swami showed his guests the Hostel setup and the arrangements put up for the students. The guests asked Swami, “Swami, what about cots?” Swami replied, “For my boys, it is Simple living, High thinking.” (We would roll up our mattresses during the day in those days).

Swami provided us with the convenient necessities. These are enough for Sai students to stay focused on their goals. Swami didn't only provide a worldly education- He wanted the wholesome personality of the student to evolve. He also insisted on sports, cultural and extra-curricular activities. Thus, Swami's students are equipped for life. During our time, Swami was with us interacting physically, but now, we need to feel him internally.

I feel that what the devotees are doing now, i.e. trying to feel Swami internally, is a very big (and special) thing. We can always connect to Swami and once we have Swami with us, all our difficulties will be washed away.

During Summer Courses, around 40-50 people stayed in a room. So many people came to see Swami that all places were fully cramped. But none of this really mattered to any students because Swami was always with us. Wherever the Students invited Swami, Swami went. Swami used to come to Dining Hall and ask Students to sing Bhajans. He'd handpick each student for bhajans, 'You sing, you play tabla...' It was like an audition, but the only difference was Swami Himself choosing the students.

There was a boy from Kabul. Once, he had high fever. Swami came to his room and asked about the boy's body temperature. The students rushed and checked with a thermometer to find out his temperature. Swami observed the boy's pulse and casually said “100.4” even before the thermometer displayed

his temperature. Everyone was keenly observing the thermometer, waiting for the final temperature. Needless to say, it showed 100.4. Swami had on many occasions declared things before they even happened, but this was the first time I had witnessed it.

Once during the holidays, a few of us choose to stay back in Hostel. Swami had also left to Parthi. We decided to do gardening around Trayee Brindavan. Swami had permitted us and we were planting coconut trees. We worked hard throughout the day and retired in the evening. The very next morning, we got a letter from Swami appreciating our hard work and blessing us. In that letter, Swami said, "I saw you putting rock salt for the coconut trees, it is very good for their growth." We were stunned. Though Swami was in Parthi, He had been observing us all. We got a taste of Swami's omniscience this way.

I was starting my M.Com. after finishing my undergraduate studies. I, along with others wrote the entrance examination for that. Swami Himself read out the list of students selected for this course and my name was last on the list. I thanked Swami and happily accepted it. At the end of my postgraduation, Swami was upset with the boys for something. He was very stern. "As soon as their exams are over, send them off," said Swami to the Warden. Swami, after a few days of saying this, came to the hostel. All the Students encircled Swami and pleaded, "Forgive us Swami, and keep us with you." Swami said, "Whoever I wish, I'll keep." Swami gave *padanamaskar*. We were all happy as we were getting Swami's *padanamaskar* after a long time. We completed our exams successfully. We told Swami again, "Swami, keep us with you." Swami glibly remarked, "You all have already made your plans, why are you asking me?" Some of us students insisted Swami to tell us what to do next. Swami thought for a while. Then He stared at me, asked me if I wanted to take up Library Science. Swami's word *chesthara* (will you do) is always risky. I didn't know whether it was the correct choice for me. I wanted Swami to make the final choice. So taking a safer path, I said, "Swami, if you ask me, I will do." I kept my palms open. Swami hit my palms with His fist and told, 'Do.' Swami took care of all my expenses, starting even from application fee.

When I was in the 6th grade, I was studying at St. Xavier's School, Jaipur.

The Library in that school impressed me. I thought, “How good will it be if we have a library like this.” Once I finished the course on Library Science, Swami instructed me to take care of the Brindavan Library. Over the years, this thought had gone deep into my mind. But Swami didn’t forget this.

Every aspect of our life is planned by Swami. He is the scriptwriter of our lives. Our work is to just discover it and enjoy it. We definitely need to strive for what we want. But whatever we get, the ratio of Swami’s Grace will be more than our hard work or any other thing. This is what is required in everything we do. Whatever we do, let’s offer it to Swami; this itself becomes worship. No separate worship is required. If we are in tune with Swami, He will give us the best of chances.





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