



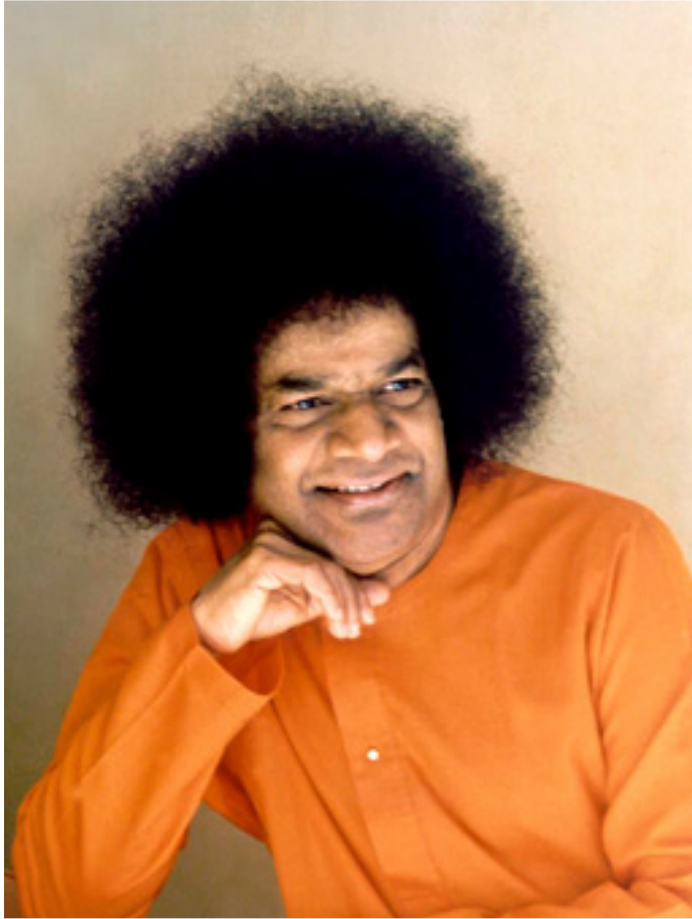
SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING
(Deemed to be University)



SUMMER COURSE
in Indian Culture & Spirituality

2016





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

17-19 June 2016 | Prasanthi Nilayam

Preface

The Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality serves as an induction programme to all students and teachers of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning with an objective to expose students of the University to the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of *Bharat*. It orients students into Bhagawan Baba's educational philosophy and gives them deep, first hand insights into how they can directly benefit from this unique institution.

At universities across the world, induction programmes go beyond the academic and practical requirements of university life and include social elements, that more often than not, disperse the focus, time and energies of students.

At Sai educational institutions, integral education (which includes the focus on a connection with the Higher Self) is a close confidant to the academic curriculum. It is in line with the vision of the Founder Chancellor, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, that spiritual and empirical education must go hand in hand. In fact, He had initiated the series

of Summer Courses as early as the 1970s. It was and still is an effective way to inspire young minds to follow a life of good values and character.

The event—which took place from the 17th to 19th June 2016 at Prasanthi Nilayam—marked the beginning of the academic year for students and teachers of all the four campuses of the university, as well as 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. Over 2500 students and 200 teachers participated.

The Format

Each day is typically split into the morning, afternoon and evening sessions.

The morning sessions consist of talks by teachers and research scholars of the University. Typically, they entail key insights and lessons from the ancient Indian scriptures, spiritual personalities and concepts. The sessions also feature a short video

show on Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. through these intimate sessions.

The Book

In the afternoons, students and teachers from all four campuses have breakout sessions where they discuss teachings and lessons from Bhagawan Baba's discourses. This year, the main themes were From Ignorance to Liberation (Baba's Discourse on 22 May 1973) and Seek the Company of Good People (24 May 1973). Key moral messages from these are creatively presented on the final day before the valediction.

The evening sessions on the first two days of the event consist of a music programme by students of individual campuses, along with *veda* chanting and *bhajans* at the Sai Kulwant Hall.

Perhaps the highlight of the day for students are the post-dinner *Parayanam* sessions. These sessions consist of talks by alumni or teachers of the University who share the first-hand personal experiences they had with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and the profound impact they had in shaping their lives. The valuable and profound life lessons and the sheer love that Baba had for His students and devotees is vividly communicated

This book chronologically represents the entire programme of the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality 2016. This includes all the speeches, interactive sessions such as the Parayanam sessions (experiences with Bhagawan Baba), panel discussions and presentations. 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, which, in many instances highlight Bhagawan's teachings on several topics.





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Welcome Note

Prof. (Miss) Madhu Kapani

Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Economics, SSSIHL
Director, Anantapur Campus, SSSIHL

In the year 1976, my father planned a tour to South India. We came by road from Odisha to Bangalore. We had planned first to go to Brindavan, Whitefield and have Swami's Darshan and blessings. But when we reached Bangalore, we got to know that Swami was in Ooty. Having come this long and also since the Blue Mountains were part of our itinerary for the trip, we went there first as He was our priority. When we reached Ooty, we came to know that the Summer Course was going on and that it would continue for a few days. It was crowded, and we waited for His Darshan. Bhagawan came out, took a short round and went inside. Although I had his Darshan, I was not satisfied. The doors were closed and I saw people trying to get a glimpse of Bhagawan through the window. I too went near the window to have glimpse and hear what He was speaking. Even though I am tall, I still had to be on my toes to see him in between the heads that were glued to the window. At one point I felt I saw Swami looking at me while delivering the discourse. Our eyes met for a second, I felt blessed and satisfied, and moved away from the window as my toes were hurting.

Ten years later, on 4th September 1986, I came to Prasanthi Nilayam to attend my interview for the post of Lecturer in Education. Introducing me to Swami, the then Vice-Chancellor, late Prof. S N Saraf said, "Swami, she is Madhu Kapani." To my utter surprise, with a familiar affectionate smile on his face, Swami said, "I know, I know her, she is my Summer Course student."

For Swami, those few seconds of meeting my eyes during the Summer Course discourses was enough to call me His Summer Course student. I would often think why did Swami say so? I had not attended any Summer Course formally; how could He call me His student? When would I actually get a chance to become His student? That is when I joined the Institute as a Lecturer in Education in the year 1986 and became a regular Summer Course student of Bhagawan from 1990 onwards, when He resumed it after

a gap of eleven years!

So, all of us who are attending the Summer Course are His students.

I am privileged, as the Director of Anantapur campus, SSSIHL, to extend my warm welcome to all of you to this academic year's first formal get together for the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality. I also welcome the staff and students from Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam (Class XI and Class XII) and Sri Sathya Sai Gurukulam English Medium School, Rajahmundry.

Swami has abundant trust on the youth of India. He once said, "The future of the country depends on the skill and sincerity of the youth. Therefore, the necessary enthusiasm and encouragement must be generated among them. All my hopes are based on the students. They are very dear to Me."

Any college around you can easily impart skills to you. But what is unique about our Institute is that, we focus on building wholesome individuals through our system of Values-based Integral Education. Each one of us sitting here is a chosen one. We are not here by accident or by chance. We are part of the larger play Swami is directing.

Swami started the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality in the year 1972 for imparting to youth a comprehensive outlook on the glorious heritage of India and its essential universality, and to create awareness among us of the profound teachings and lofty ideals of life illustrated in our sacred scriptures and epics. Continuing the tradition and with the Divine inspiration of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning is organizing this annual Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality on the theme of *Bhaja Govindam*.

On 14 January 2000, Swami said, "The youth of today are the future leaders of the nation and the architects of the new society. The future of a nation depends on its youth and the strength of the youth lies in their spirit of

patriotism. Their primary duty is to render service to the society. The physical and mental strength of the youth is the foundation on which a nation is built.”

Earlier, these summer courses were of longer duration. Now we have them for only two and a half days. Give your heart to it. Listen to all sessions. Participate in all the discussions. Remember that you are called here by Swami and handpicked by Him from the millions of youth out there. That is because Swami wants you to be leaders. Leaders to protect the world. What type of leaders? Leaders like lions – self-reliant, courageous, majestic and just. Swami is in you. You are in Swami. No matter where you go, He is inside you, guiding you at every step.

We hope that all will benefit immensely from the valuable inputs that we will receive in these two and a half days. We pray to Bhagawan to bless all of us and this programme, help us to internalize and assimilate the insights from the *Bhaja Govindam*, and other talks, and help us to practice them in our day-to-day life.





Inaugural Address

Prof. K B R Varma

Vice-Chancellor, SSSIHL

With the blessings of our beloved Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, I extend a warm welcome to each and every one of you, to this unique program on Indian Culture and Spirituality.

The Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality provides an exceptional opportunity for new students to share the rich cultural and spiritual experiences of their senior brothers and sisters, and also to establish close contacts and healthy interactions with them. The Summer Course has always been a memorable experience for all those associated with it in whatever capacity. The warmth, support and co-operation that the new students receive from their seniors in this Institute stands in marked contrast to the crude, cruel, uncivilized, and vulgar 'initiation' practices prevailing in the other educational institutions. I would like to utilize this occasion to extend a hearty welcome to the new students to this Institute.

For me, and for my colleagues, today is the most hopeful day of the academic year—the day when the University, now almost 36 years old, is refreshed by the arrival of our new young members.

This Summer Course is the sixth one in series after it was restarted with the blessings of our beloved Bhagawan in 2011. Whilst three days are not enough for a very comprehensive view on Indian Culture and Spirituality, I am sure that the Summer Course will induce the cultural and spiritual appetite, and curiosity of the newcomers.

The ambience here is filled with fragrance of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's philosophy of life dedicated to bringing peace, prosperity and welfare to every single member of humanity in the world. I am glad that all of you became part of this family and I look forward to our journey together.

It is a well-recognized fact that the primary objective of education is the overall enhancement of one's personality. The right type of education is that which prepares a person to face situations in life fairly well and guides him/her on how to adjust his/her personality in many of life's changing situations. If education does not make one's personality dynamic and does not equip a person as to how to adopt and adjust himself/herself to the realities of the world, then such an education lacks a very crucial component. This is where the spiritual component comes in.

It is a pity that many educational institutions, not only in our country but also elsewhere in the world, have not given any worthwhile attention to spiritual education as one of the means of enhancing or elevating one's personality or mental health. As a result, in those institutions people have to frequently visit mental health clinicians or consultants to solve the problems concerning their mental ill-health, conflicts, abnormalities, stress or tension. People in many educational institutions are now beginning to realize that spiritual education is the solution to resolve conflicts and enables one to feel relaxed, happy and play a creative, socially useful and contributive role in society.

One of the important aspects of personality development or mental health is: Full expression of one's potentialities and native urges. If one's inner urges are repressed and not fully expressed, one does not have a well-developed personality. One would become weak-willed and feeble in one's character and may develop abnormal behavior and may result in many mental and physical ailments.

I have no doubt in my mind that every one of us would like to acquire or possess all the components and ingredients which facilitate personality development in total. In our country, prior to late 1960s, one failed to find a unique educational institute where one could experience different aspects of our culture associated with spiritualism besides academic rigor. Bhagawan Himself was more than convinced at that point of time and strongly felt that people in this country needed quality education blended with our culture and spirituality.

Accordingly, Swami established a model education system, including primary schools, secondary schools, and an accredited University with four campuses, offering undergraduate, Masters, and Ph.D. degrees, designed to foster self-discipline and pro-social conduct.

I am very sure that you would all strictly adhere to the teachings of Bhagawan Baba and help yourselves to lead an enlightened, blissful and most vibrant life.

Generally, 'civilization' is considered to be synonymous with 'culture' but both are not the same. Both culture and civilization are in my view are progressive in nature with time. Due to the materialistic nature of human beings, the development of civilization became very rapid with huge changes. Indian culture comprises of numerous elements. Programmes on spirituality and Indian culture (such as this) may show us a path to understand the characteristics of Indian culture and possibly even provide answers to spiritual questions. In my view, spiritual practices help us understand the basic concepts or paths, namely, the way of knowledge, the way of devotion, the way to carry out one's duties as service to the entire world, as a path to enlightenment. The way is indeed an unknown and a difficult one, but with the help of a *guru* or a teacher, one can attain the goal.

We are very fortunate to have our beloved Swami as our Sadguru. Although His physical presence is not with us, His way of life is before us. These programmes will not only make you understand His simplicity and sacrifice He made for the benefit of mankind but also revive our confidence and faith and give each one of us the strength to honour His legacy.

The evolution of Indian culture blossomed from the Indian philosophy of the continuity of life and realization of the soul as a manifestation of divinity. As we have a strong spiritual foundation, we believe in the concept of the world being a global village and the harmonious existence of human beings. As globalisation brought the whole world close and is one of the main reasons of westernisation of our culture, we should use globalisation itself to spread

our culture to the whole world.

Ancient Indian culture began with one of the first human civilizations, thousands of years ago. The ancient culture of India developed rituals, traditions, celebrations and beliefs that are popular in our country even today. All of us do not share the same beliefs. Though many different religions are practiced in our country, the fundamental cultural values are similar throughout the country.

There exists various unique values associated with the Indian culture. One of the important values is to share and care, which enables everyone to live in harmony. Prayer is a unique concept embedded in our civilization and culture and is the most embryonic, fundamental and important language for humans to communicate with God.

Family plays a significant role in our culture. For generations, India has a prevailing tradition of the joint family system. It is a system under which extended members of a family, parents, children and their spouses, off springs and so on would reside under one roof. In such an ambience, individual can easily tackle the situation of sorrow from the strong support he or she receives from the other members of the family.

For centuries, arranged marriages have been the part of our Indian culture, even though men and women have always had the choice of who they want to marry. Even today, the vast majority of Indians have their marriages planned by their parents and the other respected family members. This facilitates and cements a durable relation between two entirely different families.

In ancient Bharat, even the mighty kings/rulers revered the sages, sadhus and sanyasis. As a result, the world was gifted with a rich galaxy of great sages, seers, saints and savants who taught and spread the message of peace and co-existence against conflict, violence and unhealthy competitions. Therefore, the world still regards Bharat as the torchbearer of the light of truth. The global prestige and respect of our country have been chiefly due to the spiritual foundation and deeply insightful philosophy.

For many people, spirituality is achieved through religion and religious groups. For these people, this is the key to living a full, upright and moral life and to experience higher level of spirituality, and possibly even encounters with the divine. Spirituality is achieved by making a strong commitment to the values, teachings and beliefs of the faith and adhering to these values as fully as possible.

Spirituality, which was the core of the *vedic* way of life indeed facilitated accomplishing healthy progress in worldly pursuits. Our history is witness to the fact that we were at our best in the areas of science, sculpture, astronomy, mathematics, commerce, etc., and indeed ancient Bharat was on top of the world. Our country made fundamental contributions to the growth and enrichment of human civilization and culture. Our beloved Swami was very keen that every student of His educational institutions should be equipped with spiritual, ethical and moral values through which they could bring back the past glory and pride to their motherland.

If one is deeply involved in culture, it will enrich his/her life in many ways. One would experience a great deal of joy and happiness in life which results in accomplishing basic goals and objectives. It would also help in enhancing one's understanding about what is most valuable in life. The more one gets immersed in culture, the more one's life would become spiritual in nature. Of course, there is no unique single path to spirituality. There are many paths to spirituality, just as there are many paths to happiness, contentment and fulfilment in life.

To date, little consideration is given to the role that culture is capable of playing in opening the doors to spirituality. Culture is an ideal vehicle for achieving spirituality. It also provides a gateway to living life on a higher plane of existence. I strongly feel that we, at this University, have made enough progress in the right direction, which I believe will help in unlocking the secrets of the sublime, and perhaps even the divine.

If one wishes to be in bliss, he or she should attempt to erase bad thoughts and feelings. Thoughts mould one's character. If one entertains noble thoughts, one

would develop a noble character; if one entertains evil thoughts, one would develop a base character. This is the indisputable law of nature. Therefore, one can deliberately shape his/her character by cultivating sublime thoughts. Thought materializes and becomes an action. If one allows the mind to dwell on good, elevating thoughts, one would naturally involve in good and laudable actions. Cultivation of good conduct needs rigorous discipline and constant vigilance. You will have to watch every thought, word and action. One must be extremely careful when one conducts himself/herself with others.

Even with all your good intentions, you might get carried away by the force of your previous wrong impressions, instincts and impulses. Even highly educated people, these days, lack in behaviour. Good behavior indicates that one has a refined and disciplined mind and good spiritual culture. The practice of Japa, pranayama and *mouna* will help you to control the impulses.

Henceforth, this University is your immediate home. Therefore, we are placing a big responsibility on you to imbibe the culture of this University and take forward the teachings of our Bhagawan as true members of the Sai family; that is, to be strong, talented, positive, and supportive, and to live in peace and harmony with each other, help each other and to remain good human beings throughout.

Let me conclude by citing the following quote from Wallace Huey:

Do not do tomorrow what you can do today.
If you feel the need to forgive, forgive today.
If you feel the need to risk, risk today.
If you feel the need to apologize, apologize today.
If you feel the need to love someone, love them today.
If you feel the need to create something, create something today.
If you do this there will be no conflict within, you will grow in Spirit because you will be your true authentic Self - living at full potential.
Live for today, not for tomorrow.





Benedictory Message

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Revered Founder Chancellor, SSSIHL

You have come as a part of this world. So long as you remain with this body as a part of this world, it is the duty of the youth to understand and enquire the truth behind all this, viz., what is this body and what is your relationship to this world. In the minds of the youth, which are like the morning in a day, to sow the seeds of spirituality is the determination of Sai. Yours is an appropriate age where you can become future pillars of Bharat. There is no use in preaching these spiritual truths to the elders who are in their evening of their lives. In this Summer Course, youth will be educated not only about ancient Bharatiya culture and spirituality but also about the western spiritual concepts and the different religions of the entire world. This is the purpose of this Summer Course. During this period, there might be some inconveniences caused to you. You may not get the comforts which are normally available to you. In spite of these discomforts and inconveniences, you should feel proud that you have been born in India and that you will be given the chance of maintaining and resuscitating the glory of Bharatiya culture without allowing your mind to wander from this ultimate goal.

Many people who are educated, who are holding responsible positions in educational institutions don't know the basics of what ethics means, what morality means and what is the meaning of religion. By asking such questions and by showing ignorance they are confusing the minds of the young students. It is clear that such teachers possess only bookish knowledge and have no practical knowledge. Due to such people holding positions of authority regarding education, this country is going further down.

I hope that students of today will conduct themselves in such

a manner so that they will open the eyes of those who are in responsible positions with regards to education. All my hopes rest on the conduct of young people. Today, they have a great chance to set right the future of this country. Thus, by handing to youngsters the task of upliftment of Bharat by nurturing in you a strong faith in Indian Culture and Spirituality and thereby helping you in put the traditions of this country to its pristine state, is my determination.

Sacred Students!

For a man's life, there are two things which are important - Self-confidence and cleansing one's mind. Man can't live in this world in an isolated manner. The entire world depends upon the social structure and upon the manner in which the individuals are knit together into a society. It is a good fortune that such a society with forbearance in the social structure can be seen only in Bharat. Blood flows through veins and arteries of Bharatiyas and not water. Today, you have to make a determination to revive the sacred culture of India through your own blood. Bharatiya youth should be ready to dedicate their life for the sake of truth. Bharat is a country which has traversed along the path of truth and has shed the light of truth. Today, due to certain circumstances and concurrent detrimental time, Indians have forgotten the truth and their culture and have become a laughing stock.

The sacred tenets like *Matru Devo Bhava*, *Pitru Devo Bhava*, *Acharya Devo Bhava* and *Atithi Devo bhava* have become meaningless in our make up today. With a view to resuscitate our ancient such gatherings have been arranged where experienced people have been invited to share their valuable thoughts about the greatness of our culture and thereby change your hearts. The purpose of having summer classes is to take you to heights of appreciation of the ancient culture of Bharat. The youngsters

must cleanse their minds and must develop pure ideas. You should utilize this opportunity and experience the sweetness of divinity. You must bring back our ancient culture to its pristine glory. Your ideas must be sharpened by participating in this Summer Course and reestablish the traditions of this country.

I hope that you will be able to go to the different parts of this country as messengers. That you have joined this Summer Course is no satisfaction to us. Whatever you listen to during this period, you should put in your heart, put it into practice and derive pleasure that comes out of it. You must uphold the reputation of our country. I am giving this to you as a blessing.





Self-Confidence: The Foundation of Everything in Life

Sri Gopal Rao

MD – India and Operations Manager, Landmark Education

I have had an opportunity to visit various events and programmes at many locations of Sai Organizations, and every time I speak, I am introduced as a Sai devotee. I have never been comfortable with the term ‘Sai devotee’, because in my view, a devotee is a very high status which only Bhagawan can give us. But fortunately, on many occasions, especially with other devotees, Swami has introduced me as, ‘He is my student’. That statement by Bhagawan became a lifelong mission for me, a direction for my life. Being a student of Bhagawan is a lifelong accountability in my case. I have taken on intensely studying the life and teachings of Bhagawan.

I want to begin by giving a small bit of advice to everyone: Don’t listen to any advice. If, during this talk, you could look along with me and discover what I have to say, whatever you discover for yourself, becomes a part of you. It will no longer be as Swami says, ‘bookish knowledge, borrowed information or somebody else’s learning’. Such a knowledge has power and helps you when you need it. For example, once you discover balance while riding a bicycle, no one can take it away from you, it is yours! It is available to you whenever you need it.

In this talk, I will share with you whatever I have discovered in thirty years of intense observation and research into the field of human performance and productivity backed with Bhagawan’s teachings. If you were able to find something and discover something for yourself in what I have to say, then this morning would have made a profound impact on your life. I am not asking you to believe me or disbelieve me. I am only asking you to look along with me and if you see for yourself, it will make a huge difference.

Let us look at the word Self-confidence. It is a term with two words, Self and confidence. As I was looking at this word, I noticed that confidence is somewhere linked to the word Self. There is lot of literature and books on the nature of Self. Some books call it the atma, some soul, some the core of the being, and some call it your true essence. But none of that made much sense to me. I read a lot about it, got a lot of information on it, but for practical day-to-day living, it didn't make much sense. Every morning, I wake up, get ready, deal with people, deal with challenges, my commitments, come back home and be with my family but what this Self is, I could not get my hands to accessing what it is.

After years of struggling with the term, I started to search for it in the reverse direction. I started by looking that is this body the Self? The answer is no. Why? Because we all would have seen people who are physically challenged or handicapped. In fact, my mother-in-law unfortunately had a train accident in which she lost both of her legs. But in the twenty-five years that I knew her, I never experienced her sense of Self in any manner diminished because she had lost her limbs. Obviously, our body is not our Self.

Similarly, our financial status, our position is not our Self. What about our thoughts and emotions? Thoughts are not who we are. We have thoughts and emotions. But unfortunately, we have the habit of saying, "I am angry! I am upset! We make our emotions as to who we are but that is not so. You have anger when anger comes and you have sadness when sadness comes. Examining this way and eliminating one by one whatever I could possibly look at. Finally, I reached a place where there is nothing that can be called as the Self. Probably, the Self is nothingness- the *shunyata* that Buddha spoke about. Maybe the Self is no-thing, i.e., nothing. Then something stuck me: what if Self-confidence is confidence based on nothingness?

The whole world is busy trying to be confident, based on something. Some are confident because of their position in life, some because of their designation,

some because of the books that they have read, some due to the knowledge they have, some due to the many countries they have visited and some are confident due to the tremendous praise, admiration and respect from others. The flip side is that if people don't praise you or admire you, or if you don't have that much of knowledge, information or degrees, they tend to experience their confidence levels coming down.

What if all this was the wrong tunnel that we have taken? What if confidence is what you and I intrinsically *really* are? What if confidence was the expression of our true nature? If our confidence was based on some knowledge, property or title, we will always run into someone who will have more than what you will have. The moment you encounter such people, suddenly you will feel diminished and low on confidence levels.

The question is not about how to achieve Self-confidence. Probably, we have to look at what destroys Self-confidence. It will be better to look at what is the cancer which eats away what is naturally and truly our nature. No wonder Bhagawan kept saying that Self-confidence is the foundation on which your whole life has to be built.

I request all of you to try out an exercise. I request you to look around some time and observe a tree. Once you have seen a tree, take a moment and look at another tree. Look at both the trees very carefully. My question to all of you is: When you look at the trees, will you see an imperfect tree or a perfect tree? Probably, you would not have heard of the notion of an imperfect tree because there is no such thing as an imperfect tree. Every tree you look at will be the perfect tree and yet are they both similar. If you don't like trees, look at two different clouds. Both will be perfect. I challenge you to find an imperfect cloud. There is no such thing as imperfect cloud, yet both are not similar. Similarly, every one of you sitting here are perfect trees. One of you is a mango tree, one a papaya tree and one a jack fruit tree. Each tree is perfect the way it is and perfect the way it is not. No papaya tree says, "I wish I were smaller and yellow like the mango." No mango tree will wish to be rounder and browner like the chiku tree and no chiku tree says that it should have

been bigger and spikier like the jack fruit tree. But that is what you and I do. We destroy the uniqueness that we have. We are constantly comparing ourselves to others.

When I stayed with Bhagawan, our relationship was one of love, affection and space - to be ourselves. He never used to compare. He accepted us just the way we are and the way we are not. Every learning with Bhagawan was a learning of expansion. It was not like being corrected or fixed, not that something was wrong with me. It was all the time growing. Every tree loves to grow if it is given the proper nutrition. My experience with Bhagawan when I look back was always that of nurturing. Bhagawan nurtured, valued and nourished the uniqueness that each person was irrespective of his language, religion and nationality. There was a magnetic attraction around Bhagawan because we experienced the space of acceptance.

In the outside world, all organizations — enterprise or company — need unique people. They don't want copycats or duplicates. They need strong and reliable people.

I am going to make an assertion now. What if each one of you is uniquely extraordinary, which is just a fact, just like the white shirt you are wearing is 'white' whether you believe it is white, whether you are convinced it is white or not. It is a fact that it is white in colour. This university, where we had the privilege to study and all of you have a unique opportunity to be here; it is an extraordinary space for you to discover your uniqueness. With my level of intelligence, if I was able to discover my uniqueness, I promise you that every one of you can get it here.

Another powerful lesson I want to share with you. This happened during Dasara of 1988. Swami had given a discourse on bhakti in the Poornachandra Auditorium and after that He retired to His interview room. He took a few students into the interview room and asked them, "What did you learn from My Discourse? What did you understand about bhakti?" I was going through mixed emotions. On one hand was the thrill to talk to Bhagawan and on the

other the utter nervousness I was feeling as I had no idea about philosophy or bhakti if He asked me a question. But He did turn to me and asked the same question. Mustering all courage at that moment, I told Bhagawan, “Devotion is not my cup of tea, I don’t enjoy it. For me Jnana marga or Advaita is more attractive.” I asked Swami, “What is the difference between the two?” “Both are the same”, He said and continued, “In Bhakti marga, you worship Swami.” Then He waved His hand and produced 27 copies of a black & white photograph which had Swami talking to Himself. He gave each one of us that picture. He said, “This is Jnana marga. Your duty is to see everybody as Swami including yourself.” He added, “The problem comes when the other Swami is misbehaving. Let the other Swami be bad, you remain the good Swami.” It was a very interesting anecdote.

Swami, during His interactions in our student days, would give extraordinary nuggets of gold absolutely free of charge to us. He would pass those statements and walk past and we never realized the value of it. Today, my company works with Fortune 500 companies like Boeing, Lockheed, J&J, US Armed Forces, Asian Paints, Tatas and we charge millions of dollars to train their people in exactly the same values that Bhagawan taught us absolutely free. Swami would say a statement and walk by and I would take years and years to understand the depth of the statement.

When my life went through challenging moments, I had tough people to deal with, people who were weird or acting in a dishonest way. It is in those moments when this message of Bhagawan helped me to recover faster. It left me with an experience to let having to diminish myself or lower my standards because the other person was not behaving in a normal manner. Swami said, “No matter what the outside world is doing to you, never diminish yourself.” Always maintain your standards. We get hypnotized by the outside world thinking that without corruption or cunningness, one can’t rise in life. Many of the students think that all these value systems are good only in Prasanthi Nilayam. How can they be practiced outside? Let me assure you and I am saying this with a solid basis of my own life, the world wants strong people who are reliable, trustworthy. That training you get in abundant measure over

here. You may not realize it while you are going through it.

This University lays an extraordinary foundation. In my career, I have never given even a single rupee in bribe to anyone. As the head of the company, I have to deal with government agencies, income tax officials, sales tax officials. I undergo a lot of hardships but I never had to compromise on my values and I am extraordinarily successful. I have never cheated to rise up in my life. I am neither proud of it nor embarrassed about it. For me it is just a normal fact.

The flip side of Self-confidence is integrity. My company is, right now, spending huge amounts of money and years of research on the subject of integrity. Integrity is now proving to be a critical factor by which a company's productivity shoots up by almost 500%. Recently during a conference, we had the chairman of Reebok, Paul Fireman, saying that integrity increases the productivity of a firm by 500%. Companies are hiring people to train them in integrity. Bhagawan has many times said that integrity is the oneness of thought, word and deed.

For years, I never understood - if I see a television set and I get a thought to own it, does that mean I have to go to the shopkeeper, tell him, I want it, pay him the money and take it home. Then my thought, word and deed are one. There is no limit to that. This whole abstract notion of integrity, oneness, *ekagrata* kept troubling me, on the other hand, I clearly could see that if any part is missing from the whole, that whole will not function very long. The chair in which all of you are sitting — if the leg breaks — that chair will no longer function as a chair. If the spokes of a bicycle wheel start breaking, that cycle will not function properly for very long. Still, I kept on struggling with what Swami meant by thought, word and deed being one. How do I actually live it in a practical day-to-day life? I am never satisfied with bookish knowledge as Swami always used to say. I wanted to know it experientially. I had to find it and make it practical available to my day to day life for me to really embrace the value of it. One fine day by Swami's grace, some clarity came to me.

When Swami says that thought, word and deed are to be one, probably, what word or promise you have given, have your actions and thoughts be consistent with that promise or word. I am a father of two teenage children. I have promised myself, “I will be there to nurture, raise and protect my family.” I have taken actions consistent with that promise. Similarly, I will never entertain the thought that let me put them up for adoption because that thought is not consistent with my promise. As Vice-Chancellor Sir said, “If you entertain negative thoughts, your character will not develop.” Exactly the same way, the more we indulge in thoughts which are inconsistent with the word you have given, you will experience a lack of integrity. Every time you experience a lack of integrity, you will experience a diminution of who you are. Experience of your Self-worth and self-esteem will get lowered by this.

Swami expects us to be lions, walk tall and be somebody of stature. Bhagawan’s vision is that we students are the future of the nation. You can’t be that if you are meek, weak, hesitant or doubtful.

My request to you all, which you can accept or decline, is this: Increasingly, make sure your actions are consistent with your promise and don’t indulge in thoughts which are inconsistent with the word or promise. Some of you might have a promise to your parents, teachers or yourself that you will study well. Some might have a promise to have a great career, some might want to serve society and nation or powerful promises in the field of spirituality. Practice maybe for a week or two weeks and see for yourself what happens when you don’t entertain thoughts which are inconsistent with that promise.

Sometimes we may say ‘Sairam’ to our elders in words but we indulge in negative thoughts about them. So, who we are externally and who we are internally might not match. That is a lack of integrity. Every time we do that we become smaller. The breadth and depth of who you are at the level of human being gets diminished.

Don’t believe me or disbelieve me, look for yourself, try it out, practice it for

a couple of weeks and if you find anything extraordinary in it, that is yours. In Bhagawan's words, every one of you is a Swami. No matter how bad the other Swamis are, you stay the good Swami. The more you practice integrity, the more strong, reliable and trustworthy you will become. When your Self-confidence and Self-worth are high, you will have less attention on yourself. In other words, the more of you is available and you can have more attention on others.

Culture has many meanings, but I was moved by what Bhagawan said about culture. In one of the discourses, Swami said, "Culture is care and concern for another person." In other words, service to humanity is real culture. The more you are complete with yourself, the less you have to pay attention to yourself, you are available to others and your life can be about service which is the most extraordinary level of living your life. If our life is about service, it will be useful.





A Rainbow of Sai Wisdom

Quiz on Bhagawan Baba's Teachings

Quiz has always been an effective tool in the teaching-learning process for many centuries. The formalized 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 even 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 A Rainbow of Sai Wisdom.

The quiz consisted of multiple rounds of incisive questions, not just on the life of Bhagawan Baba, but His teachings, and many touch points of His life in terms of the humanitarian projects that He initiated and the philosophy and learnings for all humankind. Some of these were very creatively depicted-through audio/video clips and Chinna Kathas (stories and parables that carry deep and meaningful moral messages), for example.

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 Ramayana

Sri R Srikanth

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When Rishi Valmiki approached Narada and asked, “Is there anyone in this world who is the perfect example of integrity, idealism and character?” Without even thinking for a minute, Narada said that it is Maryada Purshottam Ram whom you are searching for. This statement inspired Rishi Valmiki so much that he wrote one of the greatest epics in the history of mankind – The Ramayana. Today, I am going to narrate some stories from The Ramayana, focusing on the ‘5 D’ principles which our beloved Swami has given us. These are: Discipline, Devotion, Dedication, Discrimination and Determination.

Talking about Determination, the best example that comes to my mind is that of Shabari. Her entire life was full of penance. Every day she was prepared as if that day Lord Rama is going to come to her house. But it didn't happen so easily. For years she had to practice the same routine, the same faith and determination and finally one day, Lord Rama blessed her, fulfilled her wish came to her house and took the berries which she had collected for Him.

What better example can I get when I am talking about Dedication? It has to be Lakshmana. Lakshmana was considered the shadow of Lord Rama and Rama, of course, embodied the brilliance of a thousand suns. So wherever there was Rama, Lakshmana had to be there. Lakshmana dedicated his entire life serving Rama, selflessly, without complaining, without any regrets. In fact, at one point Rama made this statement. He said, “In this world, there may be another consort like Sita, but it is impossible to find another brother like Lakshmana.”

The entire Ramayana is an example of Lord Rama's Discipline. *Ramo vighrahan Dharmah*. Rama is embodiment of righteousness and the basic step of righteousness is Discipline. An indisciplined man cannot be righteous. What is discipline? One of the most important thing of discipline

is unity and purity in thought word and deed. Rama is a man of one word, one consort and one arrow. The amount of self-control that Rama exercised was phenomenal. It is said that even a person who thought of Rama imbibed His qualities unknowingly, subconsciously. When Ravana abducted mother Sita and kept her in Ashoka Vatika, every day he would assume some form or another in order to impress her, so that she accepts him. But all went in vain. So the minister of Ravana, advised, He said, "Please try Rama's form, and 100% mother Sita will accept you." Ravana said, "It is not possible, because as I think of Rama, my thought, words, and deeds become like Rama. The thought of another woman as my consort vanishes from my mind." Such was the self-discipline of Rama that even when Ravana thought of Rama, subconsciously he became Rama.

Discipline alone is not enough, because discipline can be misused if there is no discrimination. From doubt to a good decision, we require discrimination. As our beloved Swami said, *nitya anitya vivekam jivitam*. It means the main purpose of life is to discriminate between what is right and what is wrong, what is real and what is not real, what is permanent and what is ephemeral.

There have been many instances where Rama has illustrated the importance of discrimination. One of them is when Rama was going towards the forest and his charioteer Sumantha, had took him to the outskirts of the city and he found that Dasaratha was following him and Dasaratha was shouting, "Rama stop, Rama stop! This was because he wanted Rama to be in Ayodhya. Dasharatha finally ordered Sumantha to Stop. Rama told Sumantha, "Sumantha you continue, don't stop."

Sumantha was in a moral dilemma. He turned to Rama and said, "The King is ordering me to stop, I am answerable to the King, I am accountable to him." Then Rama said something that is very revealing. He said, "Yes, you are accountable to the King, but the person who is ordering you is not the king. He is an emotional and attached father of a son. You are not answerable to him." This one line showed the importance of fundamental discrimination which Rama exemplified.

Of course, who else can be example of Devotion? It has to be Lord Hanuman. Once one of my teachers said that if Rama wanted he could have said, “Ravana you die, Sita you come and the entire Ramayana would’ve got over.” He didn’t do that because there was a purpose. One of the purpose was to show the world what is devotion, through the example of Hanuman.

When Rama came back to Ayodhya after defeating Ravana and he was anointed King of Ayodhya, all the brothers were discussing how in different ways they can serve Lord Rama. Hanuman very smartly took the job of serving Rama and said, “Whenever the King yawns, I’ll snap my fingers.” Who knows when Rama is going to yawn? So by taking this job, Hanuman ensured that he is always by the side of Rama. As the day was getting over and Rama was retiring, Hanuman followed Rama to his inner chambers. Then Mother Sita saw this and said, “Hanuman you did a good job for today, tomorrow you continue this it because now Rama has to take a little bit of rest.” Then Hanuman very innocently asked, “Then why are you staying with him, you also come out.” Then mother Sita said very diplomatically, “Hanuman you see this *sindoor* (vermillion) on my head? It has given me the privilege and freedom to be with Rama every time.” Immediately Hanuman went and he covered his entire body with *sindoor* and came in front of mother Sita and said, “I am fully covered with *sindoor*. Will you allow me to be with Lord Rama?” Mother Sita was speechless.

But that’s not important. What is important is the innocence and the devotion of Hanuman. His devotion had innocence and smartness. The only desire of Hanuman was to be with Rama all the time. In fact Hanuman has said, “I don’t want to do what I am capable of doing, I only to do that what my Rama expects me to do.”

So these are the five small stories which I wanted to narrate from The Ramayana, focusing on the five key principles Swami has given us. If we resolve to follow any one of these stories, I think our destiny will be different. It will have a very positive impact on our lives.





SAI – See Always Inside

Sri S Shyam Sunder

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All of us seek one thing in common: happiness. Throughout our lives we are chasing it, without realizing that it is within us. Similar to the musk deer which runs its entire life seeking the fragrance, without realizing that the fragrance emanates from its own body.

All of us have a system called the limbic system in our brain. This limbic system records all the actions that caused us happiness previously and prompts us to do such actions again and again. But we fail to realize that the true happiness lies in realizing who we really are. We need to anchor ourselves to that divinity which is within and not seek happiness from the external world. All of us are confused in respect to this. We always think that happiness emanates from outside and through the external world.

We identify ourselves to something which we really are not. To explain this, Swami time and again used the kerchief example. He would take a kerchief in His hands and he would ask, “Do we say this is my kerchief and do we say this kerchief is me?” Similarly He would ask, “Do we say this is my body or do we say this body is me?” Though we understand this clearly, we continue identifying ourselves to something which we really are not. We continue attaching ourselves to something which we really are not. As a result of this, we are subjected to fluctuations of emotions. We become happy and we become sad depending upon the actions which are going around us.

This could be explained through a simple story. There lived a rich man in a town who owned a magnificent mansion. Many were ready to purchase it for double the price. But he was not ready to sell it, since it was his most cherished possession. Once it so happened that he had to leave the town for some work. As he returned he was shocked to see that house which he built brick by brick was in flames. Thousands were gathered there but none could put out the fire. He rolled on the ground and wailed like a child. Seeing this

from far, his son came running and said, “Don’t you worry father, this house is not ours.” This man was perplexed. His son said, “Yesterday night a rich business man came to our house he offered to purchase the house for thrice the price. Since you were not there, I accepted the offer on your behalf.” When he heard this, at that moment, the entire grief, all the tears that he had in his eyes, vanished. He along with thousand others gathered there, joyfully watched the house that he himself built, turning into ashes.

As this was going on, his second son came running. He said, “Father, I am afraid the deal is not yet complete because the rich man has settled only the advance money, and he has to settle the remaining amount.” When he heard this, his hands and legs started trembling in fear. He was worried about the future. Once again he broke down. As this was going on, his third son came. He seemed to be happy. He said, “Father, the businessman seemed to be a nobleman. He seemed to be a man of his word. He has promised to settle the entire amount, irrespective of what has happened to the house.” Once again, needless to say, the rich man reached the pinnacle of happiness.

Throughout this story if we notice one thing: there is a factor behind the fluctuation of emotion of this rich man, and that factor is the attachment that he has to the house and what it represents. This house can be replaced in our real life with the body, mind, our abilities, our skills, our relationships and our self-image. The moment something good happens to the object to which we attach ourselves with, we become elated. The moment something bad happens, we are shattered with grief without realising that they have nothing to do with our happiness.

Swami says, “Man has sought material pleasures by setting his foot on the moon. But man has failed to go few inches within to realize his true identity.” Even the epics are stressing and giving an emphasis on this fact. When we realize our true selves, the entire life becomes a play. The entire life becomes another drama. We become a witness to what happens.

Let’s take a few instances from Krishna Avatar, Rama Avatar and our beloved

Swami's life. Let's for a moment forget that Krishna was God and all the demons that he had to fight were nothing but a metaphor of all the difficulties that a man had to face. Krishna was born in a prison. Right from His childhood, he had to fight several battles with demons like Kamsa, Banasura, Paudraka, Pralambha, Putana, etc. The list goes on and on. If we observe, Krishna's entire life was surrounded by trials, tribulations and turmoil, yet he seemed to have lived with tranquillity. What is the secret that Krishna had? Krishna was aware who He was.

Similar is the case of Rama. Rama stood as an example of equanimity. Rama was neither elated, when he was told about the coronation, nor did he sink into depression, when his own father banished him into exile. This was because, even Rama was aware of his own reality. This is evident in the conversation between Rama and Vasishtha in Yogavasishtha.

Now let's move on to our beloved Swami's life. When Swami had his hip fractured, one of the devotees asked Swami, "How is the pain?" Swami said, "There is pain, but there is no suffering. Pain is inevitable for the body, while suffering was optional." Even at the tender age when Swami was taken to the exorcist, when Swami was cruelly treated by him, he did not utter a single word. He underwent all the troubles just to show the world that we are not the body and we are not the mind.

Swami says: Life is a dream realize it. What happens in a dream? We see many things, we experience many things, but do we take it seriously? We don't because we know, all that we see is nothing but the projection of our own mind. Similarly, the waking state is nothing but the projection of our own mind. It is nothing but a prolonged dream state. All that we see like the sun, the sky, the moon, the stars, why even, the God that we saw with our eyes, is nothing but a projection of our own mind. When such a mind is withdrawn from external objects, and when such a mind is focussed towards the supreme self within, the mind ceases to exist. The mind extinguishes itself and that is the end of mind. And this is what is called as liberation. That is why in Vedas it is beautifully said, *Mana eva manushanaam, karanam bandha*

mokshayob. The very same mind is the cause for bondage and the very same mind is cause for liberation. What remains after the death of mind is supreme Self, the supreme consciousness, the absolute divinity.

Swami says, 'Dust you think, dust you are, God you think, God you are'. Think God, Be God! If we notice carefully, Swami has said, Be God and not Become God. There is nothing to become, we just need to be aware of our own divinity. We just need to turn within.

I'd like to conclude my talk by chanting the first verse of *Nirvana Shatakam*. This *Nirvana Shatakam* was born, when a sage met Adi Shankara in the Himalayas and asked him, "Who are you? That sage was none other than his own preceptor, Govindabhagavadpada. Adi Shankara said:

*Mano Buddhi Ahamkar Chittani Naham
Na Cha Shrotra Jivhe, Na Cha Grana Netre
Na Cha Vyoma Bhumi, Na Tejo Na Vahu
Chidananda Rupam, Shivoham Shivohma*

I am not the mind, I am not the intellect, I am not the five senses, I am not the five elements. I am the pure eternal consciousness. The bliss absolute and Shiva himself.

Brothers and sisters, lets from this very moment, start to See Always Inside. Let's us try to see the seer, lets us all pray to Bhagawan to bless us all with this understanding.





Sri Adi Sankaracharya:

His Life and Ideas

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About 2000 to 2500 years back, a huge spiritual calamity was upon the land of Bharat. The followers of Sanathana Dharma had forgotten the essential teachings of the Vedas, had got lost in rites, rituals, superstitious ideas, misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Many sects had risen, not as a response to a human's inner calling, but more as a negative manifestation. Buddhism and Jainism also had lost their pristine glory. It was in these troubled times that we needed a divine being to resurrect Sanathana Dharma to its pristine glory. And as the Lord promised, 'I will come whenever virtue subsides', He came.

This time the manifestation was in Southern India. As Swami tells us the year was called Nandana, the month Vaisakhi, the day was Panchami and in the early hours of the morning a devout Brahmin couple delivered a boy, who later came to be known as Sri Adi Shankaracharya.

Adi Shankaracharya lived a very brief but an extremely brilliant and sparkling life. A life of such divine beauty that it is hard to describe it in words. When he was all but eight years of age, he renounced worldly ambitions, took on the highly challenging life of a sanyasi.

A few days ago, accidentally, I found a book on my desk. The book was a Kannada book. It was written by a famous Kannada author, Gopalakrishna Adige. Thankfully, it was a translation of a collection of poems.

One such poem caught my attention. In that poem, the author is explaining his own experience of *vairagya* (dispassion/detachment). I will share the gist with you. One day this man had a huge financial loss. He came home very

sad and distraught and he had a huge fight with his wife. And he thought to himself, what use is all of this? And he felt like Buddha. We all know that Buddha in the middle of the night, looked at his beautiful wife and his one year old son and walked away.

So he was gripped by renunciation and *vairagya* and he too decided to walk away to the Himalayas and to spend the rest of his life in tapas. So in the middle of the night he got up, looked at his wife and child and walked out. He went to the railway station to catch a train bound northward towards the Himalayas. Unfortunately or fortunately, the train was four hours late. The man waited for an hour, he waited for two hours and by the end of the third hour, he *vairagya* began to cool down. Better sense prevailed and before the train arrived, he quietly walked back home and went to bed.

Adi Shankara's *vairagya* was not of this kind. Once he decided to make it his life's vision, mission and goal, to resurrect Sanathana Dharma, to bring to the forefront the distilled essence of Vedic lore, once he made it his goal, he gave his entire energy, all his time, complete commitment, complete dedication, and limitless determination. His contribution to the Bharathiya way of life, to our culture is immeasurable. All of us, who love the Bharathi way of life, must bow down, again and again in Love an gratitude to this great being.

The theme of the Summer Course is Bhaja Govindam. It is said that once Shankara was walking with his fourteen disciples in the oldest city alive, the land of Shiva, the great city of Varanasi. He came across an old man sitting and reciting a certain rule of grammar called dukrun. Shankara felt such an immense out pour of pity and sympathy and compassion that through him burst forth what is now has come to be called as Bhaja Govindam. The first verse goes like:

*Bhajagovindam, Bhajagovindam, Govindam Bhaja Mudha Mate
Samprapte Sannihite Kale, Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrun Karane.*

Literally meaning, that when the last moment comes, when the God of death comes knocking on your door, all these rules of grammar will not come to your rescue. So, O foolish man, spend your time in chanting the name of the Lord.

Let us look a little deeper. *Dukrun karane*, the man was sitting and mindlessly repeating certain rules of grammar. It not only stands for rules of grammar or other such scriptures, it symbolises a life lived under a conditioned mental structure. Whenever we live a life of mindless repetition, it is *dukrun karane*. Whenever we open ourselves to more beautiful currents of love and life which are ever flowing through the present moment, it is Bhaja Govindam. It is not just chanting the name of the Lord, but to see the changeless behind the changing. Whenever we live with a mind, it is *dukrun karane*. When we live aligned with our heart, it is Bhaja Govindam.

Talking of mental structure, Swami once told me, “The most important thing to grow spiritually is to first learn to let go. Forgive, forget and let go.” Unless we have mastered the art of forgiving, forgetting and letting go, it is almost impossible to climb higher in the ladder of spiritual evolution.

There is a famous teaching in Taoism about an empty boat coming and ramming into you in the middle of the river. You are rowing a boat in the middle of the river and an empty boat comes and rams into you. We don't feel angry. But if someone were sitting in that boat, then we'll be hugely enraged. That is the difference. All the grievances, all the grudge, all the complaints we hold it is all a waste of time and energy, because all the people who we think did not treat us kindly, they are just empty boats. They are compelled to act the way did, driven by their own unexamined selves. Once we realize this deeply, it becomes easier to forgive, forget and let go.

Once a traveller was travelling by a village. He came to an old man who was known to be very wise, who lived in the village.

He asked him, “Sir, I am planning to relocate to this village, I am planning

to settle down in this village. Can you tell me what kind of people are living in this village?"

The old man asked, "Where are you coming from?"

"I am coming from so and so village."

"What kind of people did you have there?"

"Oh My God! They are the meanest, greediest, most hideous kind of people possible."

The old man said, "Those are exactly the kind of people who live in this village too."

After some days, another traveller came.

He asked the old man, "Sir, I want relocate to this village. Can you tell me what kind of people I'll find here?"

The old man asked, "What kind of people did you find in your last village?"

"Oh they are such gentle, loving souls. I had a great time."

"Those are exactly the same kind of people you'll find in this village."

Bhagawan said it in three words. This universe is reflection, reaction resound. We see what we are. Who is there to blame? The most important thing in life is to take complete responsibility for our inner space. How we are what we are what we feel, nobody under sun is responsible. We must have the courage and the conviction to take complete responsibility of our inner space and we should guard it with great enthusiasm and zeal because this is the most primary element of our life. All that happens, happens inside. Nothing happens outside.

Samurai were the personal guards of Japanese emperors, experts in martial arts, very skilled, very sophisticated warriors. Once, one of these samurais went to a monk and asked, "What is heaven and what is hell?" The monk looked at him and said, "Have you seen your face in the mirror? You look very stupid to me, even if I tell you wouldn't understand." Nobody had treated the samurai treated so shabbily ever. He was furious. He began to unsheathe his sword. The monk said, "Oh you have sword too? It looks very blunt to me. I don't think it can even cut a blade of grass." This man was beyond rage. And

then the monk said, “Here, here opens the gate to hell. The samurai realized his folly, he put back his sword, went down on his knees, bowed down to the master and said, “I am so sorry, please forgive me.” The master said, “Here opens the gate to heaven.” All experience is within.

Another verse of the Bhajagovindam of Shankaracharya says:

*Ka Te Kantah Kaste Putrah Samsarosyam Ativa Vichitrah
Kasya Tvam Kab Kuta Ayatah Tattvam Chintaya Tadiha Bhratah*

Who’s your wife, who’s your son, where have you come from, where are you going? What is your source, what is your destination, brother, dear brother think, deeply ponder on these truths.

Once a king went to see a Sufi master. The Sufi master was sitting on a straw mat, there was nothing in the house. The king asked him, “Sir where is your furniture?” The Sufi master in turn asked the king, “Where is your furniture?” The king was surprised. He said, “I am a guest.” The Sufi master said, “So am I.”

A bridge is used to crossover, not to build a house on it. It is beautiful to share our life, share our love with as many people as possible, mother, father, brother, sister, friend, wife, husband, etc. But let us remember, we came alone, we’ll go alone. Let us not draw any sense of self-worth from all these things. Let us not add to the baggage to our already existing mental structure.

There was once a man who was galloping on a horse at top speed. He looked in a real hurry to reach somewhere. A man on the road side asked, “Sir where are you going?” He said, “I have no idea, ask the horse.” The same way, let us not be led in blind rage and fury in the ever present rat-race of the modern world. Let us pause now and then to ask ourselves- what really matters, what is truly essential what is not, what am I doing? What do we want, truly? These questions are the essence of our contemplative and introspective life. This is the exhortation of Adi Shankaracharya.

Do not get so captivated by form consciousness that we fail to ask who we truly are. The answer will not be found in a book. The answer will not be found in the words of the greatest of masters. In 2007/08, I used to read a lot of books, especially books on Shankaracharya. Just about the time I was finishing my Ph.D., Swami once told me in the interview, “Stop reading books. Throw away all your books. Never again read a single book ever.” I have hardly read a book after that. Only a book that lands in my hands I may flip through the pages, but I have never sat and read a book and I am so much happier than I was then.

Answers are not found in the pages of a book. Answers are not found in the words of whoever, however great. One has to look within with interest and enthusiasm.





Faculty Panel Discussion

Reminisces of the Bhaja Govindam drama
staged in Mumbai, 1988

Moderator: Dr. T Ravi Kumar

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

The Participants

- » Prof. G Nageswara Rao (GNR), Head, Dept. of Chemistry
- » Dr. B Sai Giridhar (BSG), Head, Dept. of Management & Commerce
- » Dr. C N Sundaresan (CNS), Associate Professor Associate Head, Dept. of Chemistry
- » Dr. N Sivakumar (NSK), Associate Professor and Associate Head, Dept. of Management & Commerce
- » Dr. Shailesh Srivastava (SS), Asst. Professor, Dept. of Physics

Moderator: It gives us great joy to reminisce about this Bhaja Govindam drama and bring out the lessons that were learnt at Bhagawan's lotus feet. When the Avatar comes down on earth, He uses the various art forms to communicate his message to mankind. The Sathya Sai Avatar has used the art form of drama at various points of time to communicate His message of love and oneness of mankind. The Bhaja Govindam drama is very special, as it has been enacted in the Divine presence, and in presence of various audiences ten times. This drama has been directed by Bhagawan. It was a SSSIHL Convocation drama, a drama on Gurupoornima, and also the drama on the 50th birthday of Bhagawan in Poornachandra Auditorium. This drama had been put up in Mumbai twice and was aired on All India Radio in the Yuv Vani programme twice.

It was 42 years ago in the year 1974, and I was in my intermediate class, when Swami suddenly said one November morning, "We must have a drama for the college day." We were all very excited about it when Swami started selecting students for the various roles.

In those days in Brindavan, the old bungalow was a palace and there was a room which had huge 20 feet by 15 feet mirrors on three sides. You can imagine our thrill to see Swami in the middle of that room, mirroring His image thousands of times. In this room we had our rehearsals 3-4 hours every day, for 90 days!

The drama was first enacted on 27th of March 1975. The next morning, a very interesting discussion happened in what we call the safe room in Brindavan. Swami asked the elders, “How was yesterday’s drama?” All of them were very enthusiastic about it and were very appreciative of the drama. Sri Indulal Shah suggested to Swami that this drama should be put up in Mumbai, the financial capital of India as this drama has lot of messages for people related to finances. Sri Sohan Lal, the state president of New Delhi said, “Swami, though Mumbai is the financial capital, Delhi is the actual capital of India where all the heads stay. These heads need Bhaja Govindam in Delhi as Adi Sankara stressed that this is for both the head and the heart.”

Then justice Balakrishna Iraddy, a judge of the supreme court came up with a brilliant idea, “Swami, this drama should be put up in Kerala.” We all wondered- Why Kerala? Swami asked him this question. The judge replied, “That is where Sankaracharya was born.” There was a consensus that this drama should be put up all over the country. One idea which came up was:- All these boys should be given a year off; a train should be arranged which will go from town to town and city to city and stage this play and convey this message which it holds for the entire mankind. Adi Sankara united this country in those days and this drama will unite this country in these days.

Swami dismissed this idea with one stroke, “These are college students and not a drama troupe.” We thought that this will be the only time when we staged this drama. Two and half months later, all the actors of the drama received letters from the warden that Swami had asked all of us to be present in Brindavan on the 7th of May. When we all landed in Brindavan, we came

to know that this drama will be staged in the Shanmukhananda Hall in Mumbai. This auditorium was the biggest in Asia in those days. The most beautiful part was that Bhagawan would come to Mumbai with us all. We were thrilled. We had gone to Mumbai for the inauguration of the Sarva Dharma Prema Aikya Stupa. This was the first stupa which was unveiled in the golden jubilee year of the avatar. As this drama was put up, it was felt that this should be put up in the Poornachandra Auditorium on the evening of 23rd of November 1975 which was the 50th year of Bhagawan's advent.

The impact of Bhaja Govindam has been very powerful down the ages on all sections of the society.

CNS: I want to share how reading discourses of Bhagawan touched and influenced my life. It was in the year 1973 when I fell in love with the gentleman's game of cricket. Slowly, I became crazy about the game and I got addicted to it. Most of the time, my efforts were concentrated on playing cricket. My desire that time was to become a test cricketer and I put my heart and soul in trying to achieve this objective. As the years passed, my craze became more and more. Due to several obstacles which you generally face trying to achieve your objective, I felt depressed. I had an opportunity to read the Bhaja Govindam discourses of Bhagawan and I was touched and got an inner serenity and peace.

I joined Swami's college for the undergraduate course in 1977. Within first week of my study Swami came and asked us boys, "How many of you are interested in acting?" I raised my hand but unfortunately, I was not selected. Slowly, I started associating myself with costumes, make up and sets. Little did I realize that God will give me a chance later. God's delays are not his denials. It was in 1987 when I was selected to act as a disciple of Shankaracharya. We are always in a hurry to get things done but God has His own time, and we have to wait patiently.

Moderator: I remember that in the 1986 convocation drama, Dr. Sivakumar was there. Can you narrate something about that drama?

NSK: In the year 1986, I was in my third year B.Com. (Hons.) at Brindavan Campus. After close to a decade, it was decided that the Bhaja Govindam drama be staged. Many students were selected for different roles and it was my good fortune that I was selected for the role of the grammar pandit more popularly known as the *dukrun karane* pandit. If you know the story of Bhaja Govindam, it was this pandit who without knowing about what he was reciting, was repeating the rules of the grammar like a parrot. Seeing him, Adi Sankara bursts forth into the Bhaja Govindam *sloka* which says that at the time of death, these rules of grammar will be of no help. We used to have practice sessions in Brindavan and the highlight of it was the rehearsals at the central hall in Trayee Brindavan in the presence of Bhagawan. After the rehearsals, we had the opportunity to stage it as a Convocation drama. I finished my B.Com. (Hons.) in the year 1987 and joined the M.B.A. programme at the Prasanthi Nilayam campus.

A few months later, we came to know that the University was planning to hold a Vice-Chancellor's conference. Being a student, it was just additional information to me, as I had no specific role to play in it. A few days later, I was informed that the Bhaja Govindam drama will be staged and I was being selected for the same role of the grammar pandit once again.

In the Lalitha Sahashranamam, the mother goddess is described as *avyaja karuna murthi* - meaning the goddess who blesses her devotees without any reason. I stress this point because with regards to staging this drama for the Vice Chancellor's conference, only Doctoral Research Scholars would be selected for the various roles in the drama. The Research Scholar coordinator was given the role of making a list of the Ph.D. students who will play the different roles in that drama to be staged in 1987.

I was not a Doctoral Research Scholar and so there was no reason for me to be selected for this drama. In the interview room, when discussion about different roles was going on between Bhagawan and the Doctoral Research Scholars, mention of this grammar pandit came up for discussion. Swami said, "There is no need to select any research scholar for that role, the student

who played this role last year from the Brindavan campus has now joined the Prasanthi Nilayam campus for his M.B.A. Let him play this role in this drama also.” I got into this drama in the year 1987 even though I was not a Doctoral Research Scholar. Bhagawan is the *avyaya karuna murti* who blesses without any reason.

Many a time I notice students hesitating to pray to Bhagawan, ‘Am I fit enough, am I deserved enough to be blessed by Bhagawan?’ Bhagawan indeed blesses without any reason.

Moderator: Swami doesn’t select the qualified, He qualifies the selected.

SS: That is very true. I remembered something very revealing in connection with what brother Sivakumar has said. I remember Swami picked up another boy who was doing his M.B.A. for this drama. It was for a scene known as the pilgrim’s scene which was one of the longest scenes in the drama. This brother was not adept at acting. He was not used to acting and it took him some time to get into the role. One day Swami came for the rehearsal into the auditorium. The previous night, this brother fell very sick and was not able to come for this practice session. As the gap was supposed to be filled in, one of the Research Scholar coordinators took over this role of a pilgrim. Naturally, when an expert does it, everybody will like it. The elders sitting next to Bhagawan told Bhagawan at the end of this performance, “This research scholar can do this role, he is doing it much better.”

What Swami said in reply is very revealing. Spontaneously, He said, “The drama is not important, the boy is important.” If we reflect on this we realize that it was not the role or the actor that added value to the drama; on the contrary, the role used to add value to the one who performs it. The sequel to this is that when the drama was staged in Mumbai and when Bhagawan returned from the Shanmukhananda Hall to Dharmakshetra where all of us were staying, Swami asked Mr. Michael Goldstein, “How was the drama?” Spontaneously Mr. Goldstein says, “Swami, the pilgrim was the best actor.” What did the statement, ‘the boy is important and not the drama’ do to the

boy? It transformed him from an ordinary actor to the best actor in the eyes of the world. If we look at our lives, He is directing the show, we are merely the actors. If we carry on our roles to the best of our capacities, in the end everyone will be happy.

Moderator: In one of the evening sessions in Dharmakshetra, Swami was mentioning as to how to enact a role. Any insights on this, Prof. Nageswara Rao?

GNR: Swami called the drama group boys for an interview and told them how one should act. Referring to a very famous Telugu film actor, Nagayya, He said, “When Nagayya used to act as Thyagayya, he used to forget himself and live in the role. In the same way, when you are on the stage, forget yourself. Identify yourself with the role you are playing.” In our day-to-day life as well, whatever actions we do, we have to give 100% involvement in them.

Moderator: That is the beauty of taking part in a drama in which Swami Himself is the director, because the lessons of life are taught through the drama for the bigger drama of life. Once in a while, the director parts the curtain to show that He is the director of the entire Universe.

We were having our rehearsals just before the Vice-Chancellor’s conference in the auditorium at the Institute. Swami would come and watch the rehearsals, call the singers and make them sing, call the actors and give them a few tips. He would spend some time with us, give all of us *padanamaskar* and then leave. On one particular day, 14 August 1987, He came and saw the play and all of us were sitting around Swami. Suddenly Swami got up and said, “Quickly finish your namaskar, I have a lot of work, I have to go.” We were wondering about the reason of this sudden urgency in His voice.

We soon realized that Swami went to the General Hospital where Prof. Kasturi was lying down and counting his final minutes of his life. Swami went into the ward, gave him *prasadam* and reminded him to continue chanting Swami’s name. He came and told the doctors, “It is just a few minutes from

now.” When the director decides to draw the curtain, the curtain is drawn. He would stun us with His omnipresence. When He would do it with a gleeful smile on His lips, we would be stunned and excited.

One incident which comes to my mind is the trip to Mumbai in 1988. We had reached Mumbai by train and Bhagawan had arrived there by flight. As we went to Satyadeep and we were sitting around Swami, He was enquiring about our journey. Swami said, “I like to travel by train, this flight was very tiring, there were over 100 passengers and every single one of them wanted to do namaskar. I had to give namaskar to all of them. In the train, it would be exciting isn’t it?” He looked at all of us. He continued, “Yesterday evening at 6:30 you had bhajans, isn’t it? But one boy sang the drama song and not the bhajan song, isn’t it?” All of us replied in the affirmative. Swami added, “He didn’t sing the way I taught him hence when he went to a higher tone, his voice broke.” There was a beautiful smile on Swami’s lips assuring that He was with us in this train journey and probably reminding us that He is with us in this journey of life.

Swami’s eye for detail was fantastic. Brother Giridhar, can you share anything in this regard.

BSG: When staying with Bhagawan, there are so many things which we can observe and learn. One of them is His eye for detail. The way with which Bhagawan comes down to the nitty-gritties, we can incorporate it in our lives. As a director of a drama, Bhagawan never left anything to chance. For example, there was a rich man’s scene. He went to the extent of what type of turban, angavastram and footwear he should wear. Swami said that the rich man should wear footwear that is very jazzy and should have a round tip. Bhagawan ensured that all these things are arranged for the rich man. For a householder’s scene, Swami was very particular about the type of saree the lady of the house should wear. He bought a new saree and it was worn by this character for the drama in the Shanmukhananda Hall. There were many queries regarding the lady; whether she was from the Prasanthi Nilayam campus or the Anantapur campus. Another eye for detail which I recollect now: when we reached the Shanmukhananda Hall and we were getting ready

for the play, Bhagawan arrived earlier than us and was going around seeing how the make-up was going on. At that point, He comes and sees the rich man. He checks whether the turban, the *angavastram* and the footwear are fine or not. He then turns to the household scene members and asks, “Where is the baby?” I replied, “We have two dolls which are in the green room.” He asks me to get the dolls. He looks at the dolls carefully and chooses one over the other. If we do whatever job we are doing with such eye for detail, then we will be able to discharge our duties in a perfect manner.

NSK: I want to add one more point as to how much Swami goes into details. If you refer to the discourse of Bhagawan on Bhaja Govindam, Swami uses the expression - old Brahmin to describe the man who was repeating the grammar rules. When I was part of this Bhaja Govindam drama in 1986, I was decked up as an old Brahmin with lot of white hair and a white beard. The drama went off very well but Swami said, “Drama went off well, however, the voice of the actor did not match with the voice of the old Brahmin.” Hence for the drama performed subsequently in 1987 in Prasanthi Nilayam and in Mumbai, my costume was that of a young Brahmin as my voice will suit the costume. *Yogaha Karmashu Koushalam* - perfection in action is yoga. This was what we learnt from Bhagawan during this Bhaja Govindam drama.

SS: I am reminded of another interesting detail as brother Sivakumar was talking about his voice not matching the character. You would have thought why he didn't use a voice over. In those days, everything in the drama was live, all used to speak live, the music was live, the songs were live. Dr. Naren Ramji was instrumental in making the sound system and recordings for our dramas. He will know how they used to struggle because the choreographer had to also choreograph the movement of the students so that the wires of their mikes don't get entangled. It was much later that we started recording the dramas.

Moderator: Swami used to say that the old man should come from the left side because if he comes from the right side, he is blocking the old man who is already sitting there and the wires will get twined.

NSK: For every actor there used to be a student who would manage the wires when the actor moves. The entire drama would be a live performance including the music.

SS: I am reminded of another episode which took place. We used to have the rehearsals at the Institute auditorium and I was part of the music group. We used to sit in the pit below the stage. Swami used to come and sit in the first row. The drama rehearsal was going on and we were very busy playing the music. Suddenly there was a tap and when I looked up, Swami was standing right behind me, He bends down and says softly, “Play softer, it is very important that the dialogues are heard.” We get lost in the music and all the external paraphernalia whereas God is only interested in the *bhavam*. He wanted to hear each and every dialogue. This holds good for all other dramas whether it was singing or dialogues. We had the background music, the special effects to highlight the feelings and give punch but for God it was only the words. For Him, the words and meanings were one and the same. He didn’t want any other external paraphernalia. Just imagine how interesting it would be if Surdas, Meerabai or any devotee crying in agony to Krishna and God would say, “There should be a violin or a sarangi to add punch to your feelings.” Swami would always tell us to play the music in the gap and if you we are playing it over a dialogue then He would tell us to play if softly. The external things are only for us humans; for God if you pray with feelings from the heart, He responds.

Moderator: God is Bhava priya and not Bahya priya. We need the external music to create the feeling but the feeling with which the devotee sings is enough to touch the heart of the Lord. This drama was not a drama in the conventional sense; Swami gave us a chance to go out. He insisted that we go out for shopping. I remember that in 1975 when the host arranged for a shopping trip, Swami gave us some money and said, “Go and buy whatever you want.” We were little reluctant as we can see Mumbai and its markets any time but being with the Lord is so rare. So, we pleaded to Him to allow us to spend time with Him. Swami replied, “They would have made some arrangements, you should not disturb their arrangements.” As we were trying

to mutedly protest, Swami sent for Sri Indulal Shah and told him, “My boys have no desires except one. They want to see Mumbai along with me. So, arrange a bus and I will take the boys around Mumbai myself.”

That evening after the bhajans, there was a mini bus waiting to take us around Mumbai. It was a fully air-conditioned mini bus, probably one of the best available at the time. We thought that Swami will travel in His car and we will follow him in the bus. But some time after we started the journey, Swami alighted from the car and got into the bus. We were 15 students and there were only 15 seats. My seat was next to the door. I immediately got up and offered my seat to Swami. Swami asked me, “Where will you sit?” I replied, “Swami, I prefer to stand.” Swami said, “That is not correct, it is a long journey, let us share the seat.” Hence both of us sat on the same seat. Someone quickly closed the curtains. Swami said, “I don’t want you to close the curtains, I want you to see the world.” He always wanted us to see the world and see God immanent in the world. He then took us around point out various landmarks - Sardar Vallabhai stadium where He gave a discourse, Sai Datta Studios which He inaugurated, the Gateway of India, the Taj Mahal hotel, Chowpatti, Malabar Hill, etc. It was a journey for four long hours. Joy in life is to discover Him in the creation around. This shopping trip happened even during the 1988 trip which we had to Mumbai.

BSG: Whenever we go along with Bhagawan, He will send us for shopping and this was also the experience at Kodaikanal. As a mother, He will ensure that you have the money so that you can shop and He was always keen on seeing what you have shopped. We were also eager to show Him what we have shopped. On this trip as well, we had gone out for shopping and the senior Doctoral Research Scholars had figured out what we can offer Bhagawan. He used to stay in a very small room in the old mandir and they came to know that Bhagawan never used even a carpet.

Winters used to be a little cold and people wanted to ensure that Bhagawan is comfortable. We picked up a carpet to be placed next to His bed.

Moderator: This was done in total secrecy. Even the teachers accompanying the students in the trip were not aware of this.

BSG: When we got the carpet and came back to Dharmakshetra, Bhagawan sent word, “Tell them whatever they have bought, they need not bring it up.” He had called us for tea at Satyadeep and we were wondering how this happened. Then we understood that Bhagawan is omnipresent and omniscient. We started pleading with Him saying that this is our love for Him. We were able to see the joy on Bhagawan’s face. He probably felt, ‘How His children have thought about him as to what He needs.’ But at the same time, He didn’t want to accept it saying that He doesn’t need it. Finally, He was ready to accept it on the condition that He will pay for it. He then pointed to me and said, “This boy arranges for my discourse table, give it to him, he will know where to keep it. It will be useful when I give a discourse and stand for more than one hour.” Bhagawan’s Love for us is so much that He gets into every minute detail of the activity which we are into.

Moderator: Swami said, “Come to me with empty hands, if you come to me with gifts, how can I fill it with grace? I have come to give and not receive. All that I want is love in your heart. You are not prepared to give me that love, you give me only this tinsel and trash which is there in the world.”

Accompanying Swami is an exciting journey. Dr. Sundaresan, please tell us something about the journey.

CNS: I am reminded of a journey which lasted for 24 hours from Bengaluru to Mumbai. Mr. L C Jawa, an ardent devotee of Bhagawan and owner of Joy Ice Creams, had arranged a full compartment for us. One fourth of the compartment was filled with snacks and fruits and ten different varieties of ice creams. Every 45 minutes they used to serve us snacks, fruits, drinks and ice creams. We were literally pampered. When we reach Mumbai, the devotees in Mumbai arranged air-conditioned accommodation for us. All the essentials were kept by our bedside including needles, buttons and safety pins. We were moved by the hospitality. After every meal session, two *sevadals*

would offer napkins to us to wipe our hands dry. We didn't know who they were. Towards the end, we enquired and found that one of the *sevadals* was the Chief General Manager of Nirlons, where Sunil Gavaskar, the world's best opening batsmen in Cricket, was working at the time. The other person owned two five-star hotels, one in London and another in Mumbai. This was a lesson in humility for us. They were so highly placed but did a job which we didn't expect.

Moderator: One afternoon at Dharmakshetra, Swami called us upstairs. Snacks were served to us, and we were sitting around Swami, eating. Swami was eating only water melon pieces. In the context of the discussion, Swami gave a profound statement which I request Prof. Nageswara Rao to tell us.

GNR: It was the day when we started from Mumbai and came back to Brindavan. It was afternoon tea time and Swami called all of us upstairs to His residence. All of us were sitting with Swami and having tea and snacks. Swami was eating only water melon pieces. He mentioned something that occurred earlier that morning in a meeting. Swami was giving an interview to a group of top doctors from Mumbai. The doctors asked Swami, "Swami, the whole day you do so much of work, such activity needs food equivalent to 3000 calories but the amount of food you take comes up to hardly 500 calories. How do you manage?" Swami said, "My proteins come from within not from outside."

Moderator: It is a beautiful remark which applies to Prof. Nageswara Rao also. After all it is a drama. What is so great about it is that we are having a panel discussion on it! I remember the pilgrim scene where the rich man goes from one pilgrim centre to the other. After he comes back, his friends drop in and praise his good fortune as he visited so many pilgrimage centres and earned a lot of merit. The rich man replies, "Yes, I have earned a lot of merit. In the north, I have gone right upto the Himalayas."

One of his friends had a doubt and said, "O rich man, whenever we go on a pilgrimage, they say you must give up something. Did you sacrifice anything?"

This businessman was not used to sacrifice and so he was stunned. With a lot of deliberation, the rich man said that he had given up eating bitter gourd. One friend replies, “You never liked it in the first place.” The rich man says, “A sacrifice is a sacrifice, be it bitter gourd or anything else.” This boy had done it some many times in front of Swami that he had an infliction in his voice.

Many years later, one afternoon in Kodaikanal as we were sitting for lunch, the boy who was serving Swami uncovered the plate and there was a curry. Swami asked, “What is this?” The boy replied, “Bitter gourd!” Swami said, “A sacrifice is a sacrifice be it bitter gourd or anything else.” This boy had got straight into Swami’s heart with a piece of dialogue which was enacted many times in His Divine presence. A drama is an opportunity to come closer to Swami.

SS: This is the basic difference between the human aspect and the Divine aspect. Swami had seen the drama and two to three years later, He recollects every dialogue of it. He knew each and everything about the drama and still whenever He came for each and every rehearsal of the drama, it seemed as if He is watching it for the very first time. When we were putting up the drama and Swami came the 15th time to watch the drama, He came with absolute the freshness and innocence of a child. Only yesterday, I came to know that it was not the 15th time but 115th time. This is the basic difference.

Even as we are coming to a close of this session and even as we go from one Summer Course to another, actually we remember nothing. Many of us forget everything. Yet when we sit, we feel bored listening to the same thing again and again. Here was God who actually remembered every dialogue yet He came and sat with the freshness of a child again and again, possibly just to remind us that we have to go through the same exercise again and again until a bit of it rubs into our heart.





Bhaja Govindam Presentations

All Campuses

Every Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality has a theme based on specific teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. These are derived from two of His previous Summer Course Discourses.

During the 1973 Summer Course Discourses, Bhagawan Baba spoke elaborately on the topic Bhaja Govindam and gave us the essence of Sri Adi Sankaracharya's rendition. This year, the theme **Bhaja Govindam** was chosen from the following two Divine Discourses:

From Ignorance to Liberation – 22 May 1973

Seek the Company of Good People – 24 May 1973

Students from all the SSSIHL campuses and participating Sai Educational Institutions were given the discourses in print and audio form one week prior to the event. They spent time listening to and reading them to assimilate the messages on Indian culture and spirituality within them.

During the Summer Course, students from each campus and educational institution presented their learnings in creative ways. Given below are abstracts of their presentations.

SSSIHL Anantapur Campus

This innovative and interesting presentation simulated a WhatsApp conversation between two students during the summer vacation, about the Bhaja Govindam presentation. It revolved around the concepts of identity, ephemerality and effort, taking reference from the following two verses of Bhaja Govindam:

*Ma kuru dhana jana youvana garvam harati nimeshat kala sarvam
Mayamayam idam akhilam hitva, brahma padam tvam pravisha vidhitva*

*Geyam gita nama sabasram, dhyeyam shripati rupamajashram
Neyam sajjana sange cittam, deyam dinajanaya ca vittam*

The essence of first verse is ephemerality and the second one is effort. The conversation highlighted the real Self through the concept of identity:

Once upon a time, a tiger cub got stranded in a forest and found itself among a herd of sheep and started behaving like one. One day a tiger attacks the herd and when the herd of sheep start running it finds a tiger also fleeing. It took the cub to a nearby stream and showed the cub its reflection. Then the cub realized who it really was.

Our lives are like this cub caught amidst the sheep of mundane and complacent life. We are then chased out of our comfort zone by God/life so that we can realize our true Self. Swami always says that we are more than what we think we are - we are God.

What is God? God is the combination of all the following to the power infinity:

Mother + Freedom - Anxiety
Father + Expression - Expectation
Teacher + Laughter - Lecture
Friends + Fun - Fights

God is an all knowing and ever compassionate who can be accessed by all at all times under all circumstances.

How to connect to God? The number always seems unavailable when we try to connect to Him. Perhaps it only means we have to reconnect to him which requires immense effort and we have to repeatedly try.

Why effort? Sacred activities like reminiscing the message, name and form of the Lord, having noble company or engaging in charity - any of seemingly small efforts directed towards God will lead us to our reality. This is the essence of the Geyam Geeta Nama Sahasramam according to Bhagawan in the Summer Course 1973 discourses.

How crucial is effort? Effort is crucial but failure is dreadful. But turning our lowest point as the starting point is the real possibility in failure. This is especially true with God standing by our side as a mother.

Our mothers and perhaps God are not disheartened when we fall, and instead they rejoice every single time we rise up. Every single effort is acknowledged, rewarded and counted, if it is in the right direction.

Why that clause of right direction? So often, one invests much toil to amass material objectives such as name and fame but all of them are transitory. Life is transient, it assaults the good and the evil equally. Was not J F Kennedy or Paul Walker's fame abruptly terminated by death or the epic downfall of Lance Armstrong due to doping disgrace or the skiing injury which traumatized Michael Schumacher? Are not youth and beauty snatched away in a few seconds? This is described aptly by the verse in Bhaja Govindam: *Maa Kuru Dhana Jana Youvana Garvam.*

Repeatedly recollecting that we are pursuing impermanent shifting goals helps us refocus and sanctify our time as reiterated by *Geyam Geeta Nama Sabashram*. One word which echoes through my days at college is: prioritize. Studies, seva, sports, submissions, self-reliance activities, Summer Course, periodic tests and hostel duties - all in a single semester or even one month. This schedule helps us break from our limited boundaries and realize that we can achieve much more than what we think.

To summarize the presentation, a video of the entire schedule of students at SSSIHL was shown with the help the popular ZooZoo characters (white creatures with ballooned bodies and egg heads used to promote various

value-added services for Vodafone, the world's second-largest mobile phone company).

This was to drive home the point that in this packed daily schedule is hidden the agenda of self-discovery through the steps of follow the master, face the devil, fight till the end and finish the game...

SSSIHL Muddenahalli Campus

Bhagawan Baba says, "Man is born to learn how not to be born again." However this enticing world leads us astray and makes us retrace this entire cycle of birth and death - from womb to tomb. Swami is our Sadguru. Only His grace can help us remove this veil of maya and reach Him.

The presentation depicted a conversation between souls in their intermediate state between death and rebirth. All the souls are busy with their arrivals and departures in this state. The souls included the one of Shakespeare, the Princess of Wales and Steve Jobs. Their discussion centred around how they spent their time in their earthly sojourn and what their desires and plans are about the next step of their soul's journey. One of them wanted to be as powerful as the ancient Pharaoh of Egypt but realized that in one of their many million births, he was one of them. They congratulate each other for completing or nearing their 5 millionth birth. But they have to meet Chris before going ahead with their unstoppable 'arrivals and departures'.

Chris enquires, "All is well?"

All answer in the affirmative, when Chris comments, "When all seems well, it isn't well but when all seems unwell and we wish it would get well, it is actually well." Chris poses a question to each of the souls about their next destination. One expresses his desire to go to the USA and be one of the wealthiest men. Chris enquires, "Why wealth?" The soul replies, "What else can give happiness? Nothing can grant greater joy than wealth and I want to

enjoy that.” Chris replies, “Enjoy my friend, end-your-joy.” Chris observes, “What is the use of a stone to a sculptor which only shines at the surface.”

The second soul wishes to be a powerful, influential and charismatic person. Chris laments the choice of these souls and says, “A stone hardened by arrogance is of no use to the sculptor.”

The third soul wants to have an unquenchable thirst for knowledge in its next sojourn on earth as knowledge is wealth and power because when a knowledgeable man arrives, even the wealthiest and the most powerful men prostrate before him. Chris comments, “An individual seeking knowledge is like a stone in the ever running currents of knowledge and a stone under water gathers moss. A sculptor has no use of a stone covered by moss of ignorance.”

The fourth soul says that it has attained a lot of wisdom from many trips down there and wants to go this time and spread it across to all. Chris comments, “A partially sculpted stone imagining itself to be an idol is lost in its own glory.”

At this juncture, a soul named Jeevan comes to Chris. Jeevan faces a predicament that he has wished for and got all that the others have asked for but still lacks something. If there is anything beyond, what is it? Jeevan seeks help of Chris to unravel this mystery.

Chris says that the challenges and problems in the earthly sojourn are meant to make you grow and find your own answers. Chris says, “This entire universe is created only for you and you alone, no one else exists in it. All the other people are different manifestations of you.” Jeevan questions, “Am I all the human beings who ever lived or ever to be, am I Gandhi, his followers and also Nathuram Godse who assassinated him. I am Hitler and the millions he killed. Whenever I help someone, I help myself and whenever I hurt someone, I hurt myself. If everything is me then who are you. Is it true that you are I are one?” Jeevan questions

Chris responds, “Is there anything which you see and I don’t and anything which I see and you don’t?” Jeevan realizes the truth and feels that he has nowhere to go and nothing to choose. Chris comments, “Ah! A perfectly sculpted idol that reflects my own image.”

When other souls come and see they are stunned that both Chris and Jeevan look exactly same. Jeevan has lost his identity and has become one with Chris.

SSSIHL Brindavan Campus

The Infinite Loop

The presentation depicted the life of one employee Virat, of God’s call centre where people from the earth call for the fulfillment of their desires and prayers. He gets flustered with the frivolity of the desires which goes through the infinite loop of desire and despair. One day he gets a call of a desperate father praying for the life of his son who was terminally ill. But due to the destiny of the son, he passes away. This makes Virat search for answers and any way man can get out of this vicious cycle of desire and despair. Sage Narada comes to solve this predicament. He quotes two verses from Bhaja Govindam:

*Dinayaaminyau Saayam Praatah, Shishiravasantau Punaraayaatah
Kaalah Kriidati Gachchhatyaayub, Tadapi Na Munchatya Ashaavaayub*

Daylight and darkness, dusk and dawn, winter and springtime come and go. Time plays and life ebbs away. But the storm of desire never leaves.

*Bhajagovindam Bhajagovindam, Govindam Bhaja Mudhamate
Sampraapte Sannibite Kale, Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrunkarane*

Worship Govinda, Worship Govinda, Worship Govinda. Oh fool! Rules of Grammar will not save you at the time of your death.

Lord Narayana takes Narada to the *Bhu Loka* to show him the Lord's greatest devotee. They see a farmer who toils hard in his fields and thanks Narayana for whatever has been conferred on him. He remembers Narayana around 6-7 times a day. Narada feels crestfallen that he is not the greatest of devotees and protests, "I chant your name incessantly, and how I am not figuring on the top of your list?" To teach Narada the real meaning of a true devotee, Narayana tells Narada, "Narada, I am thirsty, can you fetch me a pot of water kept there which is filled to the brim. Mind you, not even one drop should fall down." Narada diligently brings the pot of water. The Lord poses a question, "Narada, how many times did you chant my name while bringing this pot of water?" Narada remains silent. The Lord replies, "The way you were engrossed in bringing this pot of water, man has been caught in this loop of desires and forgets to remember me and the few who remember do it for the fulfillment of their desires. But this devotee of mine chants my name not for fulfilling his desires but for Me. Should you chant Bhaja Govindam for fulfilling your desires or for me, think for yourself."

The best way to get out of this loop of desires is to desire for only the Lord and everything will fall in place.

SSSIHL Prasanthi Nilayam Campus

*Gurucharanambuja Nirbhara Bhaktah Samsaradachiradbhava Muktab
Sendriyamanasa Niyamadevam Drakshyasi Nija Hridayastham Devam*

Oh devotee of the Lotus feet of the Guru! May thou be soon free from Samsara. Through disciplined senses and a controlled mind, thou shalt come to experience the indwelling Lord of your heart!

Once in a hermitage, a guru used to stay with his four disciples. One day, he wanted to test their learning and hence asked them to be ready the next morning so that they can catch a train and go on a trip. The train was Pragati (Growth) Express from *Baharpur* to *Undarpur* (Outside to Inside). Of the

four disciples, one was not able to catch the train as he got up late and hence was left out. Another was lost in the tinsel of the world, went astray and was left out.

The guru was happy that the remaining two disciples were able to stay with him through the journey. The preceptor asks the disciples, "There is a cup with the poison of a venomous snake, I want you to drink it all." One disciple replies, "This is what you want us to do, you want to take our lives even after the service that we have done for you?" The second disciple says, "Master, your wish is my command, I shall have it all." The first disciple dissuades the second one from drinking as it will kill him. The second disciple drinks the poison and says, "I trust the master fully and will do whatever he says." Seeing the pain of the second disciple after he drank the poison, the first disciple leaves in disgust.

Lo and behold, the second disciple is revived by the master and the master speaks as an inner voice, "The final test you alone have passed, Grace and Blessings abound have you amassed. Wherever you go, you no longer need to hanker behind my form; for in your every step, in every breath of your greatest good, will this inner voice be with you, even in form."

Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School (Boys Wing)

Bhaja Govindam

The skit depicted that as long as one has health and wealth, his kith and kin will be attached to him. During the later years, when he becomes old and is unable to support his family, no one really cares for him. The name of the Lord alone will be refuge to him. This is depicted as a conversation between an elderly man and his grandson.

*Bhajagovindam Bhajagovindam, Govindam Bhajamudhamate
Samprapte Sannihite Kale, Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrunkarane*

Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda, Oh fool!
The rules of grammar will not save you at the time of your death.

*Yavadvittoparjana Sakta Stavannija Parivaro Raktah
Pashchajjivati Jarjara Dehe Vartam Koapi Na Prrichchati Gehe*

So long as a man is fit and able to support his family, see what affection all those around him show. But no one at home cares to even have a word with him when his body wobbles due to old age.

Valmiki's previous life as Ratnakara (a cruel hunter and fearless thief) was depicted. Once when Ratnakara was looting a passerby, Sage Narada asks him, "Whatever you are doing is a sin, even your wife will not accept a part of this sin committed by you. Why are you still doing this?" Ratnakara wanted to confirm this from his wife and asks him. She says, "Why should I be part of your sinful deeds. My duty is to take care of the family which I am doing. Your part is to bring in the money and provide for us. The manner of that doesn't concern me." Listening to this, Ratnakara repents and goes back to Sage Narada. Narada asks him to chant the name of Lord Rama incessantly, which purified him.

Ajamila's story (which occurs in the sixth skanda of Srimad Bhagavatam) was depicted next. Ajamila was a man with full of vices. At the end of his life, being attached to his youngest son, he calls out his name which happened to be Narayana. Though he uttered the name of Narayana unknowingly, he was safe from the clutches of Lord Yama and his attendants as the Divine name of Narayana came on his lips before leaving his body.

Sri Sathya Sai Gurukulam

The Captain of our Life

In the journey of our life, the higher purpose is lost in the tumultuous ways

of survival. The shore seems inexistent with endless waters on all sides, the stars are held in the storm and the tide begins chipping into our feet. What is the respite from this ceaseless whirlpool? Surrendering to the compass of His grace, we must allow Him to become our guide and soon we will discover the lighthouse of His love in the horizon, bright as the new dawn, breaking out twilight. Indeed His heart is our harbour and His name is our oar through this *bhavasagara*.

*Bhajagovindam Bhajagovindam, Govindam Bhaja Mudhamate
Sampraapte Sannibhite Kale, Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrunkarane*

The story of a boatman ferrying a scholar across a river was depicted in this presentation. There was a poor boatman in a village. He was illiterate. He used to row a boat from morning to evening only to meet his ends and was very happy and contented. A scholar got into his boat saw the boatman quite happy. He asked the boatman. “Do you know about the 18 *puranas*?” “No,” replied the boatman. The scholar got astonished and told him, “Without the knowledge 18 *puranas*, 25% of your life is waste. The boatman was sad.

He again asked the boatman, “What you know about the Vedas?” The reply of the boatman was the same as before. This time the scholar told the boatman that half of his life is wasted. The boatman kept silent and went on rowing boat in a sad mood. The scholar continued, “What you know about the epics?” The boatman, “I don’t even know their names.” The scholar said, “You don’t even know about the epics, 75% of your life is a waste.”

Suddenly, the weather became gusty. The sky was overcast with clouds. There was darkness all around. There were also heavy showers with lightening. The boat was about to capsize. The scholar was trembling with fear. But the boatman was very quiet because he was used to this weather.

He asked the scholar. “Sir, do you know how to swim?” The scholar replied, crying, “No”. Now the boatman said, “Alas! Your whole life is a waste. There is no use of reading sastras, vedas and epics. Pray to God for your safety.”

Realizing his mistake, the scholar calls out to Narayana to save him from this calamity. Hearing his heartfelt prayers, the storm subsides and the scholar thanks God profusely.

The following day, the boatman is surprised to see the scholar alive and asks him as to how he was able to survive such a terrible storm. The scholar replies, “The study and knowledge of holy scriptures could not help me in danger. I chanted the name of the Lord and surrendered to him. It was the almighty who rescued and protected me. This experience was an eye opener for me and I realized that *namasmarana* is the only path to realize one’s innate divinity. Worldly education is a transient one, only the *paramatma* is permanent.”

Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School (Girls Wing)

Bhagawan says, ‘I incarnate to uphold and foster dharma. A baby that wails has to be comforted quiet joy by means of prattle and play, toy and jingles, sounds and swings. I, who am the mother of the Universe, have to act in manifold ways to secure the twin aims of the removal of grief and the earning of bliss.’ Man is known by the company he keeps. Bhagawan Baba says, “Tell me your company and I shall tell you what you are.” Bhagawan is the Indweller of all and hence all of us are sparks of the Divine.

Once in Kodaikanal, Swami alighted from His car and boarded the bus of students. Even after that, His car received salutations, coconuts and flowers. The mere touch of the Lord made the car Divine. That is the efficacy of Divine company. Dust, in the good company of the wind flies up but in the bad company of water settles down. The iron which is dark, dull and hard becomes red, soft and bright when it comes in company of fire. The same iron loses all its lustre when it comes in contact with dust and moisture. A rat when seen in a house is killed but when seen in the company of Lord Ganesha, is worshipped as *mooshika*. We worship the snake which is in association with Lord Shiva. Truly, association with Divinity elevates and sublimates us. Bhagawan Baba came down to walk with us, talk to us, eat

with us and breathe the same air as we and made us feel one with Him. The Divine company of Bhagawan raises us from animality to the level of humanity and from humanity to divinity.

*Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
Satsangatve Nissangatvam Nissangatve Nirmohatvam.
Nirmohatve Nischaltatvaam Nischaltatve Jeevan Mukti*

Be in good company and sing God's name which will bring detachment born out of discrimination and break the shackles of illusion leading to the stillness of mind and liberation of the spirit. Letting go of past baggage is detachment. A child promoted to second class no longer clings to his erstwhile classroom or books. This is the highest form of detachment unconsciously practiced by a toddler. Company of God gives us such a type of detachment from the world and leads us to live a life of moderation.

A fish lives in water but never allows the water to enter it. We also should live in the world and yet be not of it. Baba says- Head in the forest and hands in society. 'Live life in the fullest firmly believing that God alone is the doer. Detachment is an attitude of the mind and moderation is the medium.

The human body has been given to us to do service, which is the highest dharma. We have to eat to live and not live to eat. Living to eat is indulgence and eating to live is moderation. Non-resistance to what is and the acceptance of the now leads to stillness. Bhagawan Baba has established mammoth educational institutions and programmes to rejuvenate and revitalize young minds into ideal living.

In the Kaliyuga, each and every moment is an *agni pariksha* for every being. One can emerge unscathed out of this ordeal great, grand and Godly, if one has perfect unity in thought, word and deed. Bhagawan has given students His Divine *sannidhi* so that we can go within and seek the Indweller in our hearts, who is our constant companion. He is both the initiator and the culmination of our spiritual sojourn.

Once a student sought Bhagawan's permission to go to Bengaluru for some urgent personal work. Bhagawan gave Him permission physically, however, he had an annoying and uneasy feeling in the heart about the whole trip. His trip went on successfully and after two to three weeks he was summoned by Bhagawan for a personal interview. In the interview, he expressed His gratitude to the Lord for enabling him to Bengaluru and accomplish his task. The Lord reprimanded him and asked him that how he could go when the Lord had not given him permission.

The brother was stunned to say the least and waited with bated breath. The Lord continued, "Had I not sent you unremitting reminders in the form of uneasiness. Why didn't you listen to your inner promptings?" Bhagawan concluded, "Bangaru, when will you learn to listen to me within you?" The Divine companion within each one of us is waiting to be listened. Divine companionship and thinking about the Lord are the mightiest and strongest armours which one can have. They embolden and enliven us. Hence, let us all seek the company of Bhagawan Baba.

Sai Ram Sai Ram Rama Rama Sai Rama
Company of Sai leads to detachment
Detachment breaks the shackles of the world
Follow so man this steadiness of the mind
Steadiness of the mind liberates us all
Sai Rama Sai Rama Rama Rama Sai Rama





Mind and its Mysteries

H H Sri Sri Sri Jayendra Puri Mahaswamiji

Sri Kailash Ashram Mahasamsthana and
Sri Raja Rajeshwari Devasthana, Bangalore

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

In this Summer Course, I have found that the topics chosen and the students chosen to speak on the topics have been excellent. This Summer Course will have a wonderful transformation in the hearts of everybody who have attended it, especially the youngsters who have a very long way to go in their life. Around 3-4 years back, I was sitting in my ashram, the Kailash ashram, and a thought occurred to me. All of you are aware that we need not do anything for having a thought. I might have to do something for an action, but for a thought to come to my mind, I need not do anything. The thoughts automatically come.

What was the thought? Over the years I have been reading scriptures and works by philosophers from both the East and the West. There I got an idea that what this entity called mind is. But I have not touched the clinical aspect of this entity called mind. I should know something about this as well, i.e., the clinical aspect of this mind. This means how the doctors look at this mind, what is their opinion of this mind, etc.

Have you ever thought from where this thought comes? I am reminded of a veda mantra - *Aa No Bhadra Krtavo Yantu Vishwatah* - may noble thoughts come to us from all directions. This means that the thoughts are unrestricted. I am also reminded of a German song entitled, Thoughts are free. The meaning of the song is - The thoughts are free, who can guess them. They are like the waves in the ocean. I expressed this thought to one of our devotees there and we decided to organize a conference which was Mind Mystery (Mind your mind). We are planning to have a second conference, Mind Control (Mend your mind). Keeping this topic in mind, we invited some stalwarts in the field. We invited Dr. R M Verma, one of the founders of National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS). I will give a gist of his talk. According to the medical science, the mind is located in the brain. Inside this brain, the activity of the mind goes on.

If I say that I am present here, it means that I am physically present here. But in the case of the mind, if there is no thought, there is no mind, because mind is a combination of thoughts and nothing else. I tried to read more about this clinical aspect of the brain. I found that the brain has two sides- the left and the right side. Later on, I read something very interesting: The left has nothing right in it and the right has nothing left in it. If we read this statement with adding 'side' to right and left it means left and right brains have no components of the other side. But if you read it as it is, it means that the head is empty.

The right side of the brain is predominantly emotional and left side is predominantly rational. Let me explain this rational and emotional a little bit. Rational means analytical and emotional means sentimental. The left brain doesn't accept anything without questioning it. Let me pose a question, "Why are we conducting this summer camp?" Then we get the answer that this summer camp is to make our life meaningful. Normally, whenever there is a summer holiday, the tendency is to while away time without any goal. When we have a summer camp with a fixed goal of upliftment of the individual, then automatically, the individual's character will blossom beautifully. This also gives knowledge about the spiritual aspect of the human

being, the purpose of life.

Why should we talk about the mind? Most of the people, 99%, all over the world, have some sort of worry or the other. I am leaving 1% for people like Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, all the other guru maharajas and all the mahapurushas. What are the worries?

There was a great king known as Raja Bharatruhari who was the elder brother of King Vikramaditya. King Bharatruhari has authored Shrungar Shatakam, Neeti Shatakam and Vairagya Shatakam. In the first one, he describes the joy of married life, in the second one he describes the necessity of rules and regulations in human life. In Vairagya Shatakam, he describes the futility of all life and the ways and means to get liberation. Adi Sankara describes this in Bhaja Govindam verses:

*Kate Kanta Kaste Putrah Samsaro'yamativa Vicitrah
Kasya Tvam Kah Kuta Atatah Tattvam Cintaya Tadiha Bhratab*

Who is your wife? Who is your son? Strange is this material world. Of whom are you? From where have you come? Brother, ponder over these truths here.

King Bharatruhari says that everyone in this world has some fear or the other.

Bhoge Roga bhayam - If you are enjoying anything in this world, you will have fear of disease. In Tamil it is said - *Alarwai Meerinal Amrutham Visham Agum* - it means that when you exceed limits, the most enjoyable activity will become poison. We enjoy many things through the five sense organs and if the limit is exceeded there is a danger of disease.

Kule chyuthi bhayam - If one is born in a high class family and if parents have taught not to exceed any limits then is there anything which one will be afraid of? Even unconsciously if one commits a mistake, one will be penalized from that *kula* or clan and be made an outcaste. Hence for a person from a noble clan it is said in Hindi as a good *Khandaan*, i.e. one who eats judiciously

‘Khan’ and one who gives judiciously ‘Daan’.

Vitthe Nrupalat bhayam - If you have money, you have fear of the government.

Maane Dainya Bhayam - In prestige there is fear of dishonour.

Bale Ripu Bhayam - In power there is a fear of an equally powerful enemy.

Roope Jaraaya Bhayam - When one is good looking there is fear of old age.

There is a verse in Bhaja Govindam which describes this beautifully:

Angam Galitam Palitam Mundam, Dasanaviheenam Jaatam Tundam

Vridhdho Yaati Griheetwa Dandam, Tadapi Na Munchatyaashaapindam

When the body has drained, hair turned white, the mouth is toothless, and the old man walks supporting himself on a stick; yet the meat of desire does not leave him.

Shaasthre Vaada Bhayam - When you learn the *shastras* and become a scholar, then there might be one more scholar who will claim that what you have learnt is wrong and will argue with you. This is also a type of fear.

Gune Kaala Bhayam - If one is virtuous there is fear of wicked vilifying persons.

Kaale Kruthaanthad Bhayam – Even if one takes in all pathies like Allopathy, Homeopathy, Nephropathy etc. without remembering Pranapathi, when the day of departure comes, no pathy in this world can save us.

Hence the king says that everything in this world is plagued with fear. There is only one thing which doesn't have fear and that is Vairagya. We discussed this verse to know why we should know about the mind. Mind is the house of every single worry.

Manayeva Manushyanam Karanam Bandha Mokshayoh - Mind is the cause for bondage as well as liberation. We should understand bondage and we should

understand before we understand what is the mind. *Bandhanam* means the feeling that I am bound.

A few monkeys were playing in a place where potters were working. One monkey was playing pranks with some pots. One of the pots was a narrow necked one. This monkey went there and tried to put its hand into this pot. Its hand was not going inside so it made its hand smaller by folding all the fingers and tried to push it in. Once the hand went in, it opened its hand. The moment it opens its hand, it finds something inside and grabs it as much as possible. When it grabs the matter inside, the hand has become bigger and when the monkey now tries to pull the hand out, it is not able to take it out. The monkey started to scream thinking that someone has grabbed its hand. The monkey then gives up whatever it is holding and the hand comes out. Just as the pot has caught hold of the monkey but actually has not caught hold of it, in the same way, the world appears to catch us but it doesn't catch us. We are the one who catch the world and then blame it. This *bandhanam* means getting caught which is an imaginary bondage. If we have got ourselves bound to the world, who will release us? Is there anyone else who can release us from the world? It is we alone who can release our minds from this bondage.

Can you all raise your hand a little bit keeping it on the hand rest? If I ask all of you a question, why did you raise your hand, the answer is very easy, "It is because you told us." Now I request all of you not to raise your hand when I say so. If you notice your hand didn't come up. Even if I tell you to raise your hand, if you don't wish to do so, it will not come up. Unless and until, we wish something to happen, it will not happen.

In the olden days, there were slaves in many countries who used to work under force. The force might be the owner with a whip or a gun. Please contemplate and tell me whether the slaves have freedom or not. My answer is, 'Yes they have the freedom to come out of this slavery.' You will argue that how is it possible with so many security guards, high walls and a watch tower? Can anybody prevent them from making an attempt to escape? What

is preventing them from escaping? They want to live in good bodies, they don't want to get their limbs amputated by these wicked people until the day comes when they can overpower their wicked owners. In our body, we have five senses- *srotram* (faculty of hearing), *chakshu* (faculty of seeing), *sparashanam* (faculty of touching), *rasanam* (faculty of tasting), *ghranam* (faculty of smelling).

If we close our eyes, *roopa* or form can't be perceived, which is what we do in meditation. For closing the ears we need our hands. We can't close our nose as we need it for breath. The tongue perceives anything only when something is placed on it. Our body perceives touch continuously. These five senses are continuously gathering information. If I see something and it is beautiful, I will turn back and see it again. Many times we see many things but looking is putting mind into what we see. If we add our mind, we gather even more details. If we are walking and find a beautiful painting of Krishna preaching Arjuna in the battlefield, we get attracted to it and come back to see it. Then we notice the bewitching face of Krishna and Arjuna and the intricacies of the chariot. There is a difference between tasting and relishing.

To decide the taste of tea or coffee there are people who taste them and give them gradation. Putting any eatable on the tongue is called tasting but asking for more of it is known as relishing. Similarly, it can be for other senses. If you hear some sound and you want to hear it again, if you smell something and want to smell it again and if you touch something knowingly or unknowingly and want to touch it again then you are hankering after that experience.

In all these instances, the senses are the masters and we are the slaves because we are not controlling them, they are controlling us. The controlling is not in the eye, it is in the mind. Inside us there is the *antahkaranam* which controls the entire activity. When I am speaking, every word has already been formulated in the mind. My thoughts are being processed and come out as words. These processes have been going on since time immemorial.

What is the effect of an uncontrolled mind? Just like the fact that slaves

are slaves because they have accepted to be slaves. They can escape but they don't escape. Similarly, we have become slave to our senses because we like it. Sometimes when two people talk to each other they mention their likes and dislikes. For example, one says, "I like mangoes very much, I can't live without them." It means the mangoes are ruling you. This applies to people also. If I can't stay without some important person(s) in my life then it means that I have made myself a subordinate to somebody and therefore my life can't be happy. It can also be the other way. 'I can't stand the sight of that person.' That means my peace is dependent upon a person's presence or absence.

How to control the mind? Is it necessary to control the mind? If you think mind control is not needed, there is a place in Bangalore — the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) — which has many good and spacious rooms, and you can book a room there. Once Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru visited NIMHANS when he was the Prime Minister. He went to one patient and asked him, "How are you?" The patient replied that he is fine. Pandit Nehru asked him his name. He replied, "My name is Ramesh." The patient asked Pandit Nehru his name and his occupation. Pandit Nehru replied, "I am Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, I am the Prime Minister of India." Then the patient quickly took Nehru to one separate room and said, "Please be careful, I was also speaking like in this manner and that is why they brought me here."

If you don't control your mind, it will be a disaster. This is explained very beautifully in Kathopanishad by Yama Dharma Raja. He tells Nachiketas, "O! Nachiketas, this jeevatama is the person riding the chariot. The body is the chariot, the senses are the five horses, the mind is the reins, the intelligence is the sarathi and the road on which the chariot is going is the object of the senses." It means that the eye likes the form through the mind, the ear likes the sound through the mind, the nose likes smell through the mind, the tongue like the taste through the mind and the skin likes touch through the mind. Therefore, the mind is the reins. If you control the mind, automatically all the five senses will come under control. If you do not control the mind, the horses will pull the chariot in different directions and the chariot will break

into pieces.

Nowadays, there is an awareness in the whole world about global warming. Bangalore and many places in Karnataka were never so warm, they were quite cool. The cause for this is cutting trees which is being used for different purposes. Now, due to increased awareness, people want to plant more trees. The root cause of all this is human mind. There are 742 crore people living in this world now. In India alone, we have 132 crore people living. All these people have a mind and all are working according to each one's wish and pleasure. When we build a building, we first go to an architect. This is because, this solid three dimensional structure has its origin in the mind. What the mind thinks is good, it will be for the good of the world, if what the mind thinks is wrong, then it will be detrimental to the world. The clothes which you wear today, the cloth, the colour and design have come from some mind. The chairs you are sitting have come from some mind. The paintings on the wall have come from the mind. Everything has its origin from the mind only. In Lalitha Sahasranamam, it is said, '*Chidagni kund sambhoota*'. The *Chith* is the thinking mind and the goddess has come out of that.

In clinical science it is said that the mind is in the brain. But in the beginning, who made a plan for the world itself? Have you heard of the Big Bang theory? It says that the entire universe started from a single dot. Now there is a new theory known as the Big Brain theory which means that the entire universe has come from a cosmic mind. The cosmos is known as the Brahmanda in Sanskrit. This Brahmanda has come from the Divine mind. At the time of the creation, the *Brahmanda karta*, the *paramatma* didn't want to do His activity of changing the world so he divided the responsibility of changing the world into two. One portion was given to nature. So in nature we have seasons, the movement of sun, moon and other heavenly bodies, cyclones, volcanic eruptions, and also birth and death happening naturally. The remaining half of the responsibility was not given to animals, serpents etc. It was given to human beings. The responsibility of maintaining the world order was not given to any other living being but human beings.

Let us understand the difference between an animal and a human being? I once asked a child this question. The child replied, “Animals have four legs whereas humans have two legs.”

A Sanskrit subhashitani says:

*Ahara - Nidra - Bhaya - Maithunamdi, Samanyam Etad Pashubhir Naranam
Jnanam Hi Tesham Adhiko Visheshaha. Jnanena Hina Pashubhish Samanah*

Is there a difference between our hunger and the hunger of animals? They also eat food when they feel hungry, we also eat food when we feel hungry. Probably the only difference is that we eat in plates, we eat different varieties of food with spoons and forks which they don't do. Whatever may be the mode of eating, it is only to satiate the hunger or the tongue which is common to both. There is no difference in sleep also. Even in procreation, the process of having children, there is no difference. In the same way, animals have fear, we also have fear, then in what way are we different from the animals? If animals have indigestion, it knows how to correct it. It will not eat food, it will go and eat grass. It is said that even if a lion is hungry, it will not eat grass, it will look for its own food. It is only the human being who eats if he is not hungry, doesn't eat when he is hungry, sleeps when he should not sleep, is awake when he should be sleeping etc. All these violations are there only with the human beings. In animals, birds and reptiles, they have a natural instinctive behaviour whereas a human being works with his intellect.

There is a positive aspect of this. If some human beings go for a function and food is available for five people and a 6th person turns up, then a cultured human being will share the food with the 6th person. Have you seen animals sharing their food? Animals will never share, only the mother will give to the kids but sharing is not there in animals. The animals dash for food. If a human being also dashes for food what is the difference between an animal and a human being. Hence, if you make up your mind, you can change many things in this world for your welfare.

When I told you to raise your hand, you did it because you acceded to my request. But otherwise in your life, whatever you are inspired to in your life, you do only when you agree to do it. You can't put the blame on someone else for any action of yours. If you correct that part where your agreement to do an action is involved, your life changes. Duryodhana was asked, "You know the difference between Dharma and Adharma, then why you are always doing Adharma?" Duryodhana replies, "*Janami dharmam na cha me pravrutitibi janami adharmam na cha me nivrutitibi kenapi devena hrudi sthitena yatha niyuktosmi tatha karomi.* (I know what is Dharma but I am not inclined towards it, I know what is Adharma, but my mind doesn't come away from it. I think there is something within me which says do; that is why I am doing.)"

Is he not following his conscience? Hence the old saying to follow your conscience has to be corrected. Conscience has to be followed after it has been trained by Satsanga. If you don't train it by Satsanga, it will become a very wicked conscience.

There is a lot of power in wicked words, they can change the mind of children. Mother Kaikeyi had so much love and affection for Rama that He would spend the maximum amount of his time with Kaikeyi and not with Kousalya. But when king Dasaratha declared about the coronation of Lord Rama, all were rejoicing in Ayodhya. Even Kaikeyi was happy but when Manthara speaks wicked words to Kaikeyi, it changes the mind of Kaikeyi in one hour. She says, "Have you gone mad that you are rejoicing, once Rama becomes the king, you and your son Bharata will become the slave of Rama. Don't you realize that?" Kaikeyi protests at this callous comment of Manthara. Manthara adds, "Why do you want Bharata to be Rama's slave, don't you want Bharata to be the king?"

With just a few words and a little time, Kaikeyi changes completely. She goes to the *kopa bhavana* which is a place exclusively to get angry with her hair shrivelled. King Dasaratha goes to search for queen Kaikeyi in her chambers and he is told that she has gone to the *kopa gruha*. Dasaratha visits Kaikeyi in the chamber of grievance. Kaikeyi says, "I will not talk to you until you

promise to give me those three boons which you had promised me earlier.” In a war between the Gods and the demons, Dasaratha — who was fighting on the side of the Gods — was riding a chariot. At one point of time, the axle of the chariot broke. In order that the chariot stands, Kaikeyi used her hand to support the chariot (like the axle) so that it stands and Dasaratha won the war. Becoming mighty happy with Kaikeyi, Dasaratha grants her three boons. She says that she will ask for them at a later stage.

Kaikeyi asks the boons: First - that Rama should not be the King. Second – that Bharata should be the King and third - that Rama should be sent to exile for fourteen years. All these ideas came from the mind only.

The camera only captures the video and doesn't have any emotions. It doesn't know what is right and what is wrong. If you keep the camera on, it will keep on capturing. In the same way, the senses do not have any sense, they don't have any right or wrong built within them. They capture the information and feed the mind. If there is any possibility of restricting the senses, it is only due to your decision in the mind.

After the Mahabharata war, all the dead bodies were lying on the battlefield. A troop of foxes came and wanted to eat the dead bodies. One fox goes to a particular dead body and was about to eat the hand of the body, the head fox accosts, “O! Fox don't eat those hands because this person never did any charity with those hands.” Then the fox wanted to go and eat the ear when the head fox said, “Don't eat that ears as they never heard any satsang.” Then when the fox tries to eat the eyes the head fox again tells the fox not to eat the eyes as they had the Darshan of a sadhu. The same thing happened with feet and stomach as this person never went to a temple or a sacred place and always filled his stomach with food bought from corruption money. Finally, the head fox says, “Leave that body and eat another body as this body never did anything good.”

The value, regard or esteem of you is because of your mind. This mind is fed through the senses. If you don't control the senses and if you don't give

the correct feed to the senses, the mind will go haywire. If your mind goes haywire, all your activities also will go haywire.

Devotees who go to Sabarimalai go with two bundles on their heads, one of punya and the other of paapa. The saint Avaiyyar tells the Lord: To be born without any defect is great, now when you go to the altar of God, you have to make sure, you have kept this body and mind pure then only it can be offered to God. Saint Kabir says - *Chaddariya Jheene Re Jheene* - Life is like a thin transparent shawl permeated with Rama nama. It has to be kept pure to be offered to God.

If you want to change this mind, you have to change the feeders of this mind to make it pure and useful to the society. The five feeders are the eye, ear, nose, tongue and the touch. Change these feeds and see how the mind becomes pure. For this I suggest that all of you read the 6th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

Let me conclude by telling you the condition of Arjuna just before the great Mahabharata war. To remove his despondency, Lord Krishna tells him the Bhagavad Gita. Even after the dialogue exceeds five chapters, Arjuna is still not convinced. Krishna now starts the sixth chapter. In this chapter, Krishna talks about the stability of the mind and where the heart is full of peace and happiness.

Then Krishna tells Arjuna to make an effort to make this mind absolutely calm and quiet. Arjuna says:

*Yo Ayam Yogas Tvaya Proktaha Samyena Madhusudana
Etasya Aham Na Pashyami Chanchalatvat Sthitim Sthiraam*

O! Krishna whatever stable mind you have spoken about, it is not possible for me as my mind is very fickle.

Krishna replies:

*Asamshayam Mahabaho Manah Durnigrabham Chalam
Abhyasena Tu Kaunteya Wairagyena Cha Grhyate*

Undoubtedly, O mighty-armed, the mind is difficult to control and is restless; but, by practice, O Son of Kunti, and by dispassion, it is restrained.

Once you control this mind and master it, the quality of your life will improve. Then you will radiate joy, peace and happiness.





Insights from Srimad Bhagavatam

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All of us seek one thing in common: happiness. Throughout our lives we are chasing it, without realizing that it is within us. Today, I would like to share some of my thoughts on Srimad Bhagavatam. There is a story associated with the genesis of Srimad Bhagavatam that I would like to narrate. Sage Vyasa who was deeply dejected, in spite of having composed the great epic, The Mahabharatha, classified the Vedas and written some the Upanishads. In response to his despondency, Sage Narada appeared by his side and pointed out a cardinal defect. He said, “O wise rishi, you have expatiated on social relationships and dharma, but forgotten to highlight the glory of God.” Sage Vyasa sat in his hermitage and composed the great Purana called the Bhagavatha Purana.

Bhagawan and bhakta form the word Bhagavatha. In fact, it is the eternal relationship between God and his devotee. Bhagawan wants a bhakta who is detached from the world and attached to Him alone. Such a bhakta is called a bhagavatha. When detachment from worldliness takes place, Bhagawan gives a thrill of experiences to the Bhakta. Hence, Bhagavatha is also the name to the descriptions of the experiences of those who have realized Him and have been blessed by Him.

The Bhagavatam can be approached in two ways - philosophically and practically. Under the philosophical approach, we have the concepts of Avatar and *ekaagra* bhakti, and under the practical approach, we have the Uddhava Gita.

When we speak about the concept of an avatar, one thing which can be understood clearly is that the formless takes a form. It is believed that the

Avatar descends on earth for two purposes – destruction of the evildoers and protection of the righteous. Yet, the truth lies in the fact that God descends on earth for the ascent of mankind. He comes down as an answer to the call of the sincere seekers and gives them the nectarine taste of his physical proximity. The gopikas stand as testimony to it. The gopikas completely immersed themselves in Krishna consciousness to such an extent that though Krishna parted from them physically, they could never part from the thoughts of Krishna. They saw Krishna not only in themselves but also in one another, and this is the highest stage of spirituality called advaita, which the gopikas reached through bhakti.

Bhakti begins with the duality between Bhagawan and bhakta, and culminates in advaita or non-dualism. The same holds good in the present times when Bhagawan is no longer present in His physical form with us. We can recapitulate those sweet moments of his *darshan*, *sparshan* and *sambhashan* and derive joy from them. In fact, this is the best way of connecting ourselves with Bhagawan, exactly like the gopikas.

Now there is no compulsive rule that God should take a human form alone. Whatever place and form suits the cause of fulfilling the yearning of the devotees, that place and form is chosen. So, all the avatars that man knows today - *matsya*, *varaha*, *vamana*, *kurma*, Krishna and Rama - they all came for A single purpose: the love of God for His creation.

The yogis perceived God as having a thousand eyes, ears limbs, etc. The multiplicity signifies that God and his creation are one and the same. Hence, Bhagawan Baba says, “I separated Myself from Myself to love Myself.” This is the most important message that can be derived from the concept of Avatar from the Srimad Bhagavatam .

Another important aspect Srimad Bhagavatam talks about is the concept of *ekaagra* bhakti or single-pointed devotion. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna in Chapter 12 of the Bhagavad Gita:

*Atah Chittam Sama Dhatum, Na Saknosi Mayi Sthiram,
Abhyasa Yogena Tato Mam Icchaptum Dhanamjaya*

Ekaagra bhakti or single-pointed devotion comes from the fixation of mind on the divine.

Now why mind? The word manava, comes from the root manas, which means mind. Mind forms the basis of the world or jagat. Hence it is said, *mano mulam idam jagat* - Mind is the basis of this world. In the episode of Prahalada, from Srimad Bhagavatam, the demon king Hiranyakashapu tried to impose his demonic propensities on his son, Prahalada and forced him to follow the *asuric* path or *kama* and *artha*. He even tortured him (almost to his death) because Parahalada's *ekaagrata* and intense love for Lord Vishnu that not only earned Prahalada the Lord's darshan but also emancipated his father at the hands of Lord Narasimha.

The Gajendra moksham episode reveals that the alligator representing the illusory world or maya can be overcome by clinging on to the lotus feet of the Lord. On the one hand, the gopikas reached Krishna through the path of *madhura* bhakti, on the other hand Shishupal attained Krishna through the path of hatred or *dvesha* bhakti. The one thing that is common here: single pointedness or *ekagaaratha*. With love or hate – the thoughts dwell on Krishna alone.

In all the preceding examples, Prahalada, Gajendra, the Gopikas and Shishupala represent or stand for the individual self or jivatma and God stands for the supreme Self or Paramatma. When Paramatma is the sole focus, using the mind as an instrument by the jivatma, body consciousness may be overcome. This is called *ekaagra* bhakti or single-pointed devotion, another important message from Srimad Bhagvatham.

In the practical approach, there is a significant point in the conversation between Lord Krishna and Uddhava, popularly known as the Uddhava Gita. Lord Krishna enlightens Uddhava on various aspects of spirituality. He

teaches Uddhava that thought, which is generated in one's mind, is a force which is responsible for one's own good or evil. Thus, thoughts need to be controlled and such control is possible through self-discipline. One way of achieving self-discipline is through *satsang* or good company. Lord Krishna tells Uddhava, "Neither the reading of the Vedas, Upanishads or sashtras can win me. The company of sadhus or satsang can win me."

Relating the concept of Uddhava Gita to today's modern world, the company of sages, saints and elevated ones is practically impossible. However, good people, good books and contemplation on the Self as well as the divine are some of the ways to attain *satsang*.

This *satsangati* leads to the gradual elevation of the mind and one no longer considers himself as the doer. He attributes the fruits of action to God. This leads to the elimination of the sense of 'I' and he becomes a *sharanagat*, one who surrenders. This is a cyclic process. Satsang leads to self-control through thoughts and this self-control leads to *sharangati* or surrender. A person with surrender in turn becomes a source of *satsang* for somebody else.

Summing it up, Bhakti leads to *virakti* or detachment and *virakti* leads to *mukti* or liberation. So, I pray to our Lord Sai Krishna to give us the Bhakti which the gopikas had, the bhakti which Prahalada had and which many other devotees of God had; all of whom reached Him by dwelling their thoughts on Him. So, Swami, let our thoughts dwell on You alone.





Love, the Spiritual Element of Indian Culture

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To this tiny bud of love blooming in my heart little by little every day, to this love confected of my comfort, peace and satisfaction, of my amazement of my excitement and my esoterically beautiful pain, to that *prema bhava* which satiates the hunger of my soul and to the *prema swaropa* who slakes the thirst of my eyes, to them who are verily one and the same, I offer my loving pranaams.

At the behest of this grand occasion, the Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality 2016, I am tempted to deliberate and thereby make this august gathering ruminates on the belief of the great Indian thinker, who saw Love as essence of life in India.

Now this belief need hardly be objected to, for India is replete and resplendent with its multifarious religions, languages, traditions, music, art, monuments and dances has always been rooted in love. From the majesty of the Taj to the eloquence of the Gita and Koran, in the verve of *bhangra* or the profundity of the *vedic* lifestyle. Be it the magnificence of Bengali traditions or the intricacies of the Carnatic music, Indian culture has this unfailing ability to evoke love in others, for the created and or the creator. And this is where I believe lies yet another hidden facet of our culture and its inherent spirituality. The purpose of culture, we are taught, is to build character. But how good is a character bereft of love? It is hollow, shuttered in dark, utterly meaningless. Love being the foundation, the beginning of our culture must also be the zenith. In fact, in 1979, Bhagawan remarked: all the *japa dhyana* and the deeds of merit you perform will be futile if you cannot cultivate universal and selfless love.

Love also happens to be Swami's greatest teaching and the basis of the greatest of His miracles, the transformation of hearts.

Once Prof. Sampath, our respected Vice-Chancellor of SSSIHL, told Bhagawan, "Swami, you are the ocean of love." Swami said, "No!" Sir again insisted, "Your love is like that of an ocean." Swami said, "No, This ocean is but a drop of my love." To confabulate about this very love is why I stand before you today. It is the love which has pulled thousands to Prasanthi Nilayam, the abode of supreme peace and lovingly prodded them towards their own inherent divinity. It is the love which has captured our attention, fascinated our mind and transformed our lives. It is the love like none before in the annals of mankind, of the dearest parent, the closest friend and the greatest master we have (and perhaps will ever know), for this is the Love of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Kali Yuga avatar.

On the 4th of July 1968, Bhagawan declared, "I have not come on the behalf of any particular dharma. I have not come on any mission of publicity for any sect creed or cause. I have come to light the lamp of love in your hearts, to see it shine day by day with added lustre." To emit love and evoke love in others is the foremost duty of man, especially in this time and age. However, love can be of different kinds. Some, Swami cautions, can even be dangerous. So what kind of Love is being referred to here? Swami distinguishes love into two kinds: worldly and pure, the former is dangerous, because the former binds, and the latter divine, because it liberates.

I refrain to delve into the dangerous kind, but I would like to share with you today the three attributes pertaining to this divinity of pure love, which I have to come identify in the recent years. The first attribute of pure love is that it is selfless. It knows only to give. One needs to go back to the lush green gardens of Brindavan to understand what this really means. One day Krishna returns from the Kurukshetra war to Brindavan and he goes to the banks of the river Yamuna in search of mother Radha. He finds her seated under a tree lost in her thoughts and with the intention of surprising her, he slowly walks around the tree and suddenly confronts her, expecting her to jump in joy and

surprise. But to his utter surprise, all mother Radha did was look at Him and give a smile. Now Krishna was astounded. He said, “Radhe, I am your Krishna, I have come back for you.” But mother Radha’s face had a question mark. She looked at Krishna and said, “Come back for me?” She then took Krishna to the banks of the river Yamuna picked up a palm full of water showed it to him and said, “Look Krishna, in every drop of the Yamuna, is it not you who is there?”

She hurried back to the tree under which she was seated and very carefully bent a branch showed him the leaves and said, “Look Krishna, in every leaf of this tree is it not you who is there? In every blade of grass, it is not you who is there? If you were always with me and all around me, when did you leave that you are saying you have come back for me?” Krishna, overwhelmed by such unconditional love of mother Radha says, “Radhe, I am Lord of the Universe. Ask. Ask for anything and I shall give it to you readily.” But mother Radha says, I don’t want anything. Astonished, Krishna says, “Don’t you want even my love?” And then, mother Radha gives the most beautiful reply. She says, “I know that I love you. I know that you are mine and you will always be mine. You are eternally mine. It doesn’t matter if you love me or not.” And then Krishna for the very first time, fell on his knees before mother Radha, looked into her eyes and said, “Radhe, this is for the first time in my entire creation that I have, in such measure, unconditional love from my devotee. And so I say, pure love is selfless.”

The second attribute of pure love is that it is assuaging. It is capable of evidently (and sometimes surreptitiously) soothing our sorrow and satiating our satisfaction. Talking of this attribute, I am reminded of a very touching incident that occurred nearly two decades ago. The Sri Krishna Janmashtami celebrations are a part of the celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam every year and the cow procession is a part of these celebrations. So, Bhagawan’s students bring the cows in a procession from the Gokulam to the Mandir and it was during one such procession that one of the students injured himself and developed a fracture. Bhagawan was showing very keen interest in this student and showing a lot of concern as he always does for the health of His

students. It so happened that one day he called that student to the interview room while his foot was fractured and he materialized a liquid of a curative kind and personally applied this liquid on the fractured foot of that student. The student was very embarrassed. The Lord of the Universe applying medicine on his fractured foot? The student said, “Swami I will do it myself, I am feeling very embarrassed that Bhagawan is doing this.” Pat came the reply from Bhagawan, “If you would’ve been at home, wouldn’t your mother have done this? I am your mother, why do you distinguish between this Divine mother and your own mother?” Truly, the Love of Swami is that of thousand mothers rolled into one. It is the love that soothes, not just the wounds of this body, but those of the heart and mind as well. And so I assert that pure love is assuaging.

The third and final attribute of pure love is that it is invigorating. This particular attribute takes me back to the 27th of July 2015 when I was diagnosed with dengue. For those who don’t know what it feels like to be suffering from this disease, let me tell you, it is no joy ride. It saps your energy, cripples free movement and snatches your zeal and zest for anything and everything you love. The same and more was happening to me. I began to lose weight rapidly, for I had lost my appetite, my body ached in indescribable pain and I couldn’t move an inch away from my bed, in spite of the best effort of my teachers and my brothers, my health just deteriorated.

In fact, the report showed that my platelet count was far below the normal of 1.5 lakhs to a mere forty four thousand. But I was stubborn. I refused to take any medicine because I knew there was no allopathic cure for this disease. I was even refusing to ask for help from Bhagawan, because I thought if I fought a little longer, I would emerge triumphant. I couldn’t have been more wrong. Days passed and things only got worse. It was on one of these nights when I could take no more that I surrendered my spirit. I knew I had pushed my body to its limits and it was then with tears in my eyes, shackles on my hope, crumpled on my bed that I cried out to Swami. I pled, “I cannot do this anymore Swami. Please help me.”

A few moments later, I drifted off into sleep. The next day I was woken up by the golden rays of a beautiful morning and I must say, I was least surprised to find my pain gone. My zeal was back and so was my appetite and I was strong enough to go to the hospital all by myself. But then again with the grace of Bhagawan, the twist of surprise is inevitable. And so it happened when I met doctor that evening to collect my test results, he told me that the test showed my health had in fact deteriorated, it had become worse. Now I was thoroughly baffled, because there was I, feeling at the top of the world, hale and hearty and here was my doctor telling me that I should be lying on my bed unable to move a muscle or eat a morsel. He looked at me perhaps as baffled as I was back then and asked me 'how'? At that moment all I could remember was whom I prayed to the other night and what he was capable of. So I looked at my doctor, I gave him a smile, he understood and I left. Almost a year later as I reflect on this experience, I can see how that physical and mental strength Bhagawan gave me on that fateful night has today evolved into a spiritual strength indomitable as ever and so I assert pure love to be invigorating.

To my knowledge, there is only one love that epitomizes these three attributes, S – Selfless, A – Assuaging and I – Invigorating. SAI's love is the only love I know to be so pure so divine. As I leave today, I pray to you O Sai: Help us to put your love into practice, and just as the sun shines effortlessly for others, just as gracefully and delicately a flower blossoms and gives its fragrance to others and just as the candle consumes itself to give light to others, I pray you enable us to love as wholeheartedly as you always have.





Panel Discussion –

Love All, Serve All

Moderator: Sri Sanjay Sahni

Controller of Examinations, SSSIHL

The Mahabharata is also referred to as the Panchama Veda. Swami has often described it as a treatise on good and virtuous living along the path of dharma, which is known as *iba* and results in a pleasant after life which is known as *para*. This entire epic is a quest for dharma and has illumined many seekers studying it. Bhagawan says, “When dharma fails to transmute life, the world is afflicted with agony and fear, tormented by stormy revolutions.”

The Mahabharata demonstrates this particular aspect to perfection. It provides various facets to the nuances of dharma. The panel will discuss a few aspects of dharma which will allow us to have an insight. The endeavour of the panel is to look at a few of the characters from the epic, namely Bhishma, Vidura and Gandhari, who by their own rights had many good qualities. Let us examine how in certain situations, their ability or inability to understand and practice dharma could have changed the scenario and could have taken a totally different path. Contextually, we will look at how this translates into current day situations and what are the type of dilemmas that we typically face.

The Participants

Sri C Rommel, Indian Foreign Service (Retd.) (CR)

Sri H J Bhagia, Visiting Faculty, Dept. of Management & Commerce (HJB)

Dr. (Ms.) M R Geetha Bala, Associate Professor, Dept. of Economics (GB)

Moderator: Swami used to say: My life is My message. Whatever He wanted to communicate, He used to live it in his own life. He said that He can transform the sky into the earth and the earth into the sky or a boy into a girl

and a girl into a boy. But these are not the signs of Divinity. The true sign of Divinity is love. It is to taste the nectar of that love that millions of people from all over the world come to Prasanthi Nilayam. This panel discussion is a tribute to our Beloved Master who came to teach mankind that the only secret for the creation of this whole universe is love. Love is inherent in every individual.

Another very important facet of Bhagawan's teaching is that love has to manifest itself in service. Love is not love if it doesn't flow through the medium of service. They are two sides of the same coin. I recall one of His anecdotes from The Ramayana. Hanuman, in search of Sita, is scanning every inch of Lanka. Suddenly he comes across the architecture of a house which looks like that of a Vishnu devotee. He alights on the roof of the house and peeps in, and lo and behold, he finds an individual in Lanka who is chanting the name of Rama. When he enters the house and introduces himself, he comes to know that he is in the house of none other than Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana. During a conversation, Vibhishana tells Hanuman, "You are so very fortunate, I have been chanting the name of Lord Rama for years but I was not blessed to have his Darshan; here you are all the time with Sri Rama." Hanuman gives this advice to Vibhishana, "You are chanting the name of Rama but are you doing His service?" Vibhishana asks, "How can I do any service to him here in Lanka?" Hanuman asks, "Sita has been here for many months, what have you done to make her stay here comfortable?"

It is good to have love for the Lord in the heart but it has to be translated into service. 'Love All, Serve All' was the central message of Bhagawan to the mankind. It is the purpose of today's panel discussion to look at the nuances of this great teaching of Bhagawan and how we can imbibe it and practice it in our daily lives.

First, I request Sri Rommel to share his thoughts on this topic.

CR: Dear students, if all of you recollect one of the final Darshans of Swami in March 2011 when He came on a wheelchair to Kulwant Hall to give us Darshan and blessings. That evening when the *Samastha Lokaha Sukhino Bhavantu* was going on, Swami lifted His hands in full length in salutations, first to the gents side, then the ladies side and again to the gents side. Why did Swami do so? We should go back to the last supper of Jesus when Lord Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The disciples were retreating their feet but Jesus insisted. He did wash and wipe their feet. Why did Swami do namaskar that day? It was not for only those who were in Kulwant Hall that day, it was for each and every Sai devotee. It is a great honour and privilege to get a namaskar from Swami. Even His mother Eswaramma used to bow to His feet. It is so lovely that Swami put His hands together and bid us a sweet farewell message: Love All and Serve All.

This was His final message to each and every devotee for He knows that through this message we can get into the golden age. I request students to adopt this posture. He has given His namaskar so that we give up our *ahamkar*. He gave us this namaskar to take us away from *mamakar*, i.e. attachment and take us closer to *paropkar*, i.e. Love All and Serve All. Every morning I feel Swami is giving me a namaskar and with prayerful tears I pray to Swami to make me worthy of this namaskar.

This salutation was for each and every devotee and particularly His students whom He loves the most. For Swami, His students were everything. He was ready to do anything for them. Even now, Swami will give you whatever you want, but the only request Swami made to us is: Give up your bad habits. Kuchela gave a handful of parched rice, Draupadi gave a small piece of cloth, we have to give up our bad habits, if any. If you don't have any bad habit, develop one good habit and offer it to the Lotus Feet of our beloved Swami.

Moderator: Swami would say: *Sarva jeeva namaskaram Keshavam pratigachati* – To whomever you do namaskar, it will reach the Lord. *Sarva jeeva tiraskaram Keshavam pratigachati* – Whatever criticism or abuse you give to anybody, that also reaches the Lord. Now I request Sri Bhagia to share his thoughts

on this theme.

HJB: I want to mention one final qualification about what love and service is. I have been immensely blessed by Bhagawan to be in Prasanthi Nilayam from 1986. In my second interview with Bhagawan in 1987, Swami gave a discourse and at the end of the discourse He was distributing Vibhuti packets to all the devotees present. I had one question to ask and I requested Swami for the answer. Swami permitted me to ask the question. The question was: Swami, we know that the Avatar is here. I want to hear from the Avatar Himself, as to how to use the Avatar? Swami looked deep into my eyes and told me two things: Love is God, God is Love, Live in Love and Aham + Aakar = Ahamkara.

On another occasion Swami said, “You all say, you have love for Swami, love should be expressed in service. You say you are a teacher, but do you share that love which I give you, even a little bit, with the students?” Bhagawan says that love has to be the component of service. Why not do service with love which purifies and elevates us? If you see the words engraved on the Mahasamadhi of Bhagawan, they read: Love All, Serve All and Help Ever, Hurt Never. If you love and serve someone how can you hurt him?

Moderator: Now I request Dr. Geetha Bala to share her thoughts on the topic.

GB: Swami says:

*Prema Roopambu Brahmanu Premamayamu Prema Premato Sandhinpa
Neemamagunu*

Kani Premanu Poortiga Kaligivunna Advitiyambu Cheraga Arhudagunu

The best way to please Me is to serve me in all beings just as you would like to serve Me. This is the best form of worship which will reach Me.

Swami says: Love and Service are like two wings, when you love somebody,

serve them. Without love, whatever we do is mechanical and we might be doing it for name and fame. So, whenever we serve, we have to serve with love. Swami says: Sathya is the thinking aspect of love, Dharma is the doing aspect of love, Shanti is the feeling aspect of love and Ahimsa is the understanding aspect of love. All His values revolved around love so once we understand love, we can do the service.

Moderator: As teachers, when we start teaching our subjects, we first define the terminology. We are using this word love. What is love?

HJB: In one of the interviews with the M.B.A. students, Swami allowed us to be inside the interview room. We put this question directly to Swami: What is Love? Swami drew a triangle and explained, “The apex of the triangle is Divine love which is selfless, I always give and give, I never take anything from anyone. I am not like you M.B.A.’s who give to receive more in business. The second corner of the triangle is changeless. This means that my love doesn’t depend upon your financial or social status, it is beyond these considerations and is changeless. The third corner is that it is fearless.”

The selfless aspect is very well known to all of us: right from His childhood till He was physically present, and even today, He has been giving and giving.

To elaborate on the **changeless** aspect, I will narrate the story of a boy who was very close to Bhagawan. For some personal reasons, he got married and left Bhagawan. Bhagawan blessed him before he left. After twenty years, the boy comes back to Swami. Because there was a gap of twenty years, people didn’t recognize him. A few senior volunteers recognized him and made him sit in the ex-student’s block. Swami, during his Darshan, came to the place where this boy was sitting. This boy was scared of facing Swami as he had left Swami. When Swami came near him, Bhagawan called out his name. Immediately the boy stood on his knees.

Swami asked him, “How is your mother?” The boy cried and replied, “Swami last year, my father passed away.” Swami rejoined, “That is why I asked you,

how is your mother?” Swami continued, “How is your daughter?” The boy was speaking only in the language of tears and Swami’s robe was fully wet. Swami said, “You left this place, you never came back, but I have been taking care of you. You got married, you never invited me, your father passed away, you never informed me, you got a daughter, you never told me. I only gave a name to your daughter. Ask your wife, I came in her dream and told her the name.” This is a wonderful example of Swami’s changeless love. It doesn’t change on what we do, how we behave, where we are, etc.

Let me narrate an incident to illustrate Bhagawan’s fearless love. In one small gathering, Swami had invited many VIPs in which there was the daughter of a Chief Minister of a state. The daughter had a small boy who was around 3-4 years old. Swami started talking to all of us and He gave a small discourse. As Swami started, this small boy was restless and won’t allow her mother to be there. He was yelling to draw the attention of his mother. Swami looked at them and with a raised voice asked them to go out.

Then Swami explained, “Whether it is minister or minister’s daughter, discipline is discipline. Because the mother is not able to control the child, all the listeners are getting disturbed. I am not scared of anybody, this is out of my love. I correct them out of My Love.” This is the fearless aspect of Swami.

Love also rushes to alleviate the agony of others. Once in our staff quarters, one family was staying next to our house. The small boy in the family was continuously crying for two successive nights. I was not able to bear the agony of the child and went to their house in the night and enquired about the child. When I came to know that he was not well, I immediately gave him a homeopathy medicine which reduced his agony and the boy was able to sleep without any disturbance.

I also want to mention about the three characteristics of His Avatarhood. First is that this Avatar has come to only give, give and give and never receive anything from anyone. Second is that this Avatar has not come to destroy any wicked people but to correct everybody with love. Third is that when the

Avatar gives a promise, even if the devotee forgets, this Avatar will not forget.

Moderator: One of the thoughts we get is that we love our friends, family, parents...is it possible to love everybody? For example, can we love a terrorist?

GB: We can refer to the experience of Phyllis Krystal, a Psychotherapist from California, and a long-time devotee of Bhagawan, to answer this question. Once she was going back to London after a visit to Prasanthi Nilayam. Her flight was hijacked. Two terrorists were segregating people on the basis of their passports. They emptied all bags and filled them with explosives, emptied all the liquor and perfume bottles in the flight and were ready to blast it. All were in terror, but Ms. Krystal was relaxed. She took out a picture of Swami, a Vibhuti packet given by Swami and a ring that Swami had materialized, on her lap and started sending telepathic messages to Swami, “Baba, please save all of us on the flight.” She heard an inner voice from Swami which said, “You send love to them and everything will be alright.”

But she was not convinced about loving a hijacker. Instantaneously, her heart was filled with love and she started passing it on to the hijackers. When one of the hijackers was connecting the wires of the explosives to make it ready for detonation, he cut his hand and it was bleeding profusely. Seeing this the other hijacker was nervous. They also realized that the jet’s fuel was very low and the Amsterdam airport authorities gave permission for the flight to land in a remote area. The hijackers allowed all the passengers to get down the flight through a plastic chute. After getting down, all the passengers were made to board a special flight to London. On the flight, she thanked Bhagawan for transforming these hijackers through His Love.

HJB: Before coming to Bhagawan, I was working at a drinking water supply plant in Bahrain. I was in-charge of monitoring the quality of water that was supplied to one third of the population in that country. I had a very rough boss who would think that we Indians are slaves. He always used to abuse me and treat me very harshly. Still, I used to speak to him with love, trying to follow Swami’s teachings.

There was an accident where one of our workers inhaled chlorine fumes and was very serious. When I told my boss, he came down heavily on me to have brought this issue to him and didn't give any attention to this problem. Without bothering about the consequences, I took him to a hospital which was 45 kilometers away. This worker's condition was growing from bad to worse. I would have been in big trouble if something would have happened to him. I took a pinch of Vibhuti and put it on his lips and prayed to Swami to take care. When we reached the hospital, by Swami's grace there was an Indian doctor known to me, who was in-charge at the time. Without bothering about the medico-legal issues, he treated this worker and he was fine. When I took this worker of mine, who was a local, back to his house, his mother thanked me profusely.

There was an assistant chemist in our organization who had some personal problems, due to which she was not able to discharge her duties properly. Her son, who was very young, had the issue of constant purging. I offered to cure the boy with homeopathy, provided she keeps it a secret as homeopathy was not allowed in that country, as it has alcohol as a base. The boy recovered and she came back to me and shared her secret that she was the niece of the Prime Minister of the country and was working only as a spy. She said, "I have seen that you always conduct with everyone with love, even with your harsh boss and help everyone who is in need. If you have any problem of any nature in this country you tell me, I will help you. I can even remove your boss if you desire so."

I refused the suggestion of my boss's removal. The purpose of narrating this story is to highlight how Bhagawan will help you, if you follow his teaching of Love All, Serve All.

Moderator: Love lives by giving and forgiving. Sri Bhagia had the power to get his boss removed but he didn't do it. That is an expression of his love. In this context, I remember a very significant insight which I got from Professor Habbu. He was the former principal of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam. I had a chance to work with him for many years

when I was in Puttaparthi. When he passed away, it was Vaikuntha Ekadashi day, and our Sports Meet rehearsals were going on. There is a belief in our country that if somebody passes away on Vaikuntha Ekadashi day he directly reaches Vaikuntha. Swami hearing about this demise said, “When he has passed away on such an auspicious day, finish off the last rites today.”

A few days later, I met his son and he shared this experience with me. Sometime back when he went to visit his father at the hospital, he saw his father apparently talking to someone who was not visible to him. That being was trying to convince Prof. Habbu to do something. Prof. Habbu said vehemently, “I can’t forgive that person.” This parley went on for some time but the son was able to hear only the father.

Finally, after lot of deliberation and discussion, the father said, “I will forgive him.” Within a few days, he passed away on *Vaikuntha Ekadashi*. I never forgot that lesson that I learnt from Prof. Habbu, that for the final emancipation, we have to give up everything, even our bitterness with anybody in the world. To practice love, one of the most important ingredients is patience. Lord Jesus said, ‘Love your Lord with all your heart, all your soul, with all your strength and your neighbor as yourself.’

It is very easy to love people in America or Russia but you find your own roommate unbearable. If there is a construction going on in your neighbour’s house, you are not able to tolerate the sound and get irritated. Hence, loving your neighbour is very important. There is a very beautiful saying: Patience with family is love, patience with others is respect, patience with oneself is confidence and patience with God is faith.

There are many challenges in practicing Love All, Serve All. Now I request Sri Rommel to share his experiences as he has travelled the world widely. What are the challenges that you have faced in practicing this dictum and how did you overcome it?

CR: Coming to the question of loving a terrorist, we should not love a

terrorist, we can silently pray for them and send them Swami's love. That is the best thing to do.

Regarding Love, there are three types of love: Animal Love, Human Love i.e., love for our parents and children and Divine Love. Please be away from the animal and human love and inculcate the Sathya Sai Love which is Divine love. This Divine love is our goal as after many lifetimes all of us have got this opportunity to become devotees of Bhagawan Baba. As an 8-year-old boy, Swami started the Panduranga bhajan at Puttaparthi village. Now there are around 38,000 bhajan mandals all over the world. Swami would carry water when He was ten years old and now 38 lakh villagers are getting free water from the Sri Sathya Sai water schemes. Swami started the hospital with one bed and as per rough figures, there are 18,000 patients getting free medicines either in our hospitals or in the Sathya Sai clinics now. For others, love may be God but for Sathya Sai devotees, Swami is Love. Our only focus in life is Bhagawan.

Regarding challenges, I remember my tenure in Saudi Arabia. Whichever country I go to, I first enroll myself as a Sathya Sai Seva Dal member. I found out that there was no Sathya Sai center there. My colleagues warned me, "Don't be so adventurous. Sometime back, a Filipino pastor was caught teaching a Bible on a Sunday in a school and his finger nails were removed and he was sent back home."

I thought to myself that let me follow the rules of the land as Swami always asks us to do so. After six months, Swami came in my dream and repeated one statement twice: *Anduku panikirani vadu*, i.e. you are good for nothing. I was shocked. I cried for three successive nights unable to understand what to do because getting a remark like that from Bhagawan is unbearable for any Sai devotee. I was thinking - Should I resign, should I get back to India as I was not able to start a Sai center there? I was pleading to Swami. Just at that time, one Sai student entered my chamber and said, "Sir, is there any Sai devotee here, I want to start bhajans in Saudi Arabia." I readily agreed.

From the following week onwards, we started bhajans at my home. We would receive threatening faxes that we will be killed and I would redirect all of them to Bhagawan asking Him to protect. Believe it or not, after 18 years, there is a bhajan center, narayana seva and bal vikas in Saudi Arabia. We even did *nagar sankeertan* in Jeddah. Every challenge is an opportunity. We used to have *omkaram* and *suprabhatam* at home, and all the devotees — about 30 of us — would go around the city of Jeddah in six cars singing bhajans, come back and do Arati. In that country all women must wear a *burkha*. All the ladies use to prepare sandwiches and other food, neatly pack them, wear *burkhas* and distribute them. Where there is Swami, everything is possible. We have to plead and cry to Swami from the depths of our heart for Him to come to us.

Moderator: One question which has come from the audience: How can a poor person, who can hardly afford a meal a day, do service?

HJB: For doing seva, you don't need money, status or position. If you have the intention, every moment you can do service. In Holland, where I was working as an assistant plant manager, there used to be operators. A few of them were captured as slaves. One worker was very simple. He used to clean the control room and the operation panel. In the beginning of the month, we used to get 60 coins to be put in the vending machine for taking coffee, tea or choco milk. I used to spend only 10-15 of these coins. The remaining 45-50 of them, I used to give to this worker. This didn't incur any expenditure for me. One important aspect of service is that it is not only at the gross level. At a higher level, speaking from the heart is also service. Doing your duty sincerely is service.

Just to illustrate my point, there used to be a person just outside the staff quarters in 1986. He would always ask for something. Initially, I used to give something to him, but later on, I stopped it, realizing that it has become his habit. I used to just say 'Sairam' and go to the Institute. One day, somebody met me and as I was talking to him on the road, this person kept on saying "Sairam, Sairam" to attract my attention. I was a little annoyed, as I never give

him anything, so why was he insisting so much. I looked back at him and told 'Sairam'.

The following day, I asked him firmly, "Why were you so eager to hear Sairam from me when I was talking to somebody?" He said, "Sir, I have enough money and food as people throw money to me but no one says Sairam lovingly to me." Is it not seva to say Sairam with love? An even higher level of seva is sitting silently and abiding in your own Self and knowing who you really are. In that way, you will do seva to humanity. Are the sages and saints doing penance in the Himalayas wasting their time?

Moderator: If we start loving everybody, the people on the other side don't know that we love them and they try to mock us and tend to do bad to us. What should we do in such situations and how can we handle such people?

HJB: When you serve, you are serving yourself and it removes your ego and makes you humble. It gives you an opportunity to practice patience and forbearance. When you love somebody and he doesn't reciprocate it, you continue to love. You be the good Swami and let him be the bad Swami, which means that his external appearance is not in tune with what you expect.

This was around twenty years ago. There was a boy in the hostel who used to misbehave with students and teachers alike. I was requested to go talk to him. I tried to approach him once, and he was very harsh with me. I prayed to Bhagawan and went to Him again and suggested to him to write a letter to Swami. He was very skeptical as he felt that Bhagawan favours and helps only a few people. With lot of resistance, he agreed to sit in front one day and give a letter to Swami. That day, Swami came but ignored this boy completely. A couple of days later, He came running to me at the Institute and said, "Sir, you know, Swami came in my dream, took my letter and said that I am a good boy. He also said that he will solve my problem. I am very happy."

He had lot of problems in the family. His father met with an accident and became invalid and this strained his relationship with the family. This boy

was concerned about the emotional turmoil his sister was going through at home and was praying for her.

Five years later, this boy came to Puttaparthi, met me and said, “Sir, I am so happy, Swami took care of me and solved all my problems. I got a job, my sister finished her graduation and has also got married.”

We can't solve anyone's problems. The solution comes only from Bhagawan. When you encounter a difficult situation, pray to Him. Swami has always said that everyone has a pure heart. Once that purity of the heart is touched, the fountain of love will just spring out.

GB: I remember a story which my mother would tell me in this regard. A newly wedded bride went to her in-law's house and she didn't like her mother-in-law at all. She would go to her father's friend and cry. He said, “Don't worry, I have a medicine which is a slow poison, if you give it to her, over a period of time, she will pass away and you will be happy. But you behave very nicely with her and make her happy by cooking nice food and add little amounts of this slow poison so that no one comes to know about it. She continued like this for some time and in the process, the mother-in-law started treating the daughter-in-law very well.

After a few months, the daughter-in-law felt guilty and thought to herself, “My mother-in-law is such a nice person, why did I give her this slow poison, very soon she may leave this world and go?” She went and cried to her father's friend again, “Uncle, my mother-in-law actually is a very good person at heart, I don't want her to leave the world, what should I do?” Her father's friend replied, “Don't worry, I was giving her only energy medicine, you showed love to her and she responded. So always love everyone.”

Moderator: One question which is often asked by our students is: All of you have seen His physical form, you all had interviews, had padanamskar, heard His melodious voice; but what about students who are joining today? How can we relate to Swami?

GB: Faith is very important to relate to Swami. If we have the faith that Swami is there and He will guide us, it is very easy to connect to Him. If we pray to Him to show us a way, He will definitely show us a way.

CR: I wanted a ring very badly from Swami. I pleaded to Swami many times about it. Finally, He gave me the ring and I landed into a very serious problem for nearly seven years. The ring protected me for these seven years. Why should I ask for a ring and get into a problem? I wanted Vibhuti from Swami's hands. I had a grave physical problem and Swami had to come to me and materialized Vibhuti for me and cure me from the ailment. We have to have total love for Swami. We have to always remember that He is not the physical form. The less you ask from Swami the better for you.

Moderator: What is the easiest way to connect to Swami? You may believe in God and may not believe in God, but just this fact of belief or non-belief doesn't deprive you of the spiritual joy. The easiest way to access spiritual joy is service.

There is a popular quote: *Mad bhakta yatra gayanti tatra tisthami Narada* - Wherever my devotees sing my glory, I install myself. But Bhagawan says: Wherever my work is done, I install myself. We will experience Bhagawan only when we take to seva. The ones who have taken to seva understand this.

GB: I learnt a lot about service from my mother. She always preferred doing seva compared to worship, vratam, etc. Whenever any relatives or family friends were sick, she always used to take the night duty to nurse the sick back to health. Once my sister-in-law underwent a surgery in our Super Specialty hospital. I got an opportunity to take care of her for twenty-one days. For the first two days, I was not at all comfortable to do the work. During my free time, I went around the hospital and closely observed the sevadals. I was touched by the amount of seva done by them. Even though many of them were well educated, they were attending patients with lot of love and concern. I thought to myself that the sevadals are doing so much of service to the patients whom they don't know and I was feeling reluctant

to serve my own sister-in-law. There was a transformation in me after this. I took care of her for the rest of her stay with a lot of love. From then onwards, I don't hesitate in doing service, whatever may be the nature of the service. Probably, after my service in the hospital, Swami being *Sulabha Prasanna* - the one who can be easily pleased, gave me a job in His Divine University. Even if you don't expect any returns for the service rendered, He will reward you with His bountiful grace. Unless we develop love to what we are doing, we can't do service. So, service and love are both inseparable.

HJB: I remember, one devotee got nearly sixty interviews! We wondered what Swami is talking to Him. He said that Swami is telling them the same thing which He tells in the public discourses. The focus of Swami or any sadguru is to guide to our true guru, who is within. So many times, Swami gave us the direct experience of His omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience. If you hold on to that and develop conviction, then He is with you all the time. In all the examples mentioned by me, Swami was physically not present with me but the conviction that He is always there with me made Him respond to my prayers.

I revere all of you who have not seen Swami's form. You all are in a higher stage of spiritual evolution because you didn't need to see the physical form. The patient who requires emergency medication will be treated immediately by the doctor. Maybe we all were patients who needed treatment, and perhaps all of you might be healthy on the spiritual path. Never consider yourself lower when the form has not been seen.

Whenever students leave, they ask me as to how to practice Swami's teachings. I tell them, "Remember that Swami is always sitting next to you. Will you do this in His physical presence? Will He approve of this or will He like it? If yes, go ahead and if no, then rethink the action." No guru will remain with the devotees permanently. We have to internalize Him. It is said that the atoms have a nucleus, and electrons and protons revolve around the nucleus. We have not seen it but still we believe it because the scientists have found out. When so many of us are telling you what Swami is, you have to believe it.

Moderator: It was Jesus who told Thomas: Blessed are you Thomas for you have seen and believed. But even blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed.

CR: My suggestion to you all is: join Sri Sathya Sai Sevalal. Once you join, all your problems will be solved. I am 64 and I had joined as a sevalal at the age of 18 and I have been very successful in my life. Once you do this, you will be successful in all aspects of your life. Write a letter to Swami and plead with Him to grant you some service. Until we beseech Him, He will not give you even an inch of service. Please pray to Him sincerely whenever you have any problems. The solution may come immediately or it may come after a year; but don't give up praying to Him. Bhagawan is looking to His students to become role models in society. He has invested His maximum time on students as He knows that the golden age can be brought by His students.





Valedictory Address

Dr. Gowrishankar R
Head, Dept. of Physics, SSSIHL

In the last two and half days, we were on a spiritual journey which exposed each one of us to the vast and varied culture of the holy land of Bharat. In this modern materialistic world where rituals, culture and tradition has been discarded and condemned as a waste; when people forgetting the dictum of love, sacrifice and service are living for themselves; when hear-to-heart communication has been replaced by mobile phones, artistic emojis represent human emotions and so on. At such a time, dwelling on Indian Culture and Spirituality is the need of the hour to resurrect mankind.

As Swami has put it in no uncertain terms: The youth of the country have to be propelled to sharpen their intellect and to think and dwell into the basics of this Indian Culture so that they grow up as pillars of Bharat. This is the purpose of the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality organized by Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. At the very beginning of the event, our Vice-Chancellor mentioned that the ancient culture is associated and centered on the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. This leads to the fact that mankind has to live in harmony with one another and all should live for God. A man has to love himself, no doubt, but he has to live not for tomorrow but for today.

The stories of The Ramayana, The Mahabharata and The Bhagavatam which we have been hearing in the last couple of days, like those of Shabari, Lakshmana and Hanuman provide insights into the fact that human life dwells on the 5 Ds of Duty, Devotion, Discrimination, Discipline and Determination. Whatever be our profession, whatever we may do for our livelihood, if we can dedicate all these activities at the altar of God such that we remember him until the end of our life, then our salvation is guaranteed. Sri Adi Sankara's Bhaja Govindam came as no surprise to mankind at that point of time because it sent a profound message that only remembering the Lord's name will take us away from the infinite loop of birth and death.

It is easy said than done. How do we put it into practice? Bhagawan Baba says, “Cleansing one’s mind and developing Self-confidence are the two aspects that will take us closer to divinity. That Self-confidence comes from within, in the integrity of thought, word and deed which the ancient scriptures call as *Trikarna suddhi*.”

The holy land of Bharat has seen from time to time, sages, saints and avatars who have shown mankind the pathway to Self-realization. The life of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna teaches us the lessons of equanimity, to keep our emotions in check without any fluctuations, to be aware of our Self, to think God and be God. During festivals, guests coming to our house are served with different varieties of delicacies.

However, if we want to rejoice and get nourishment from that food, it would not be enough if we just stare at the food. One has to take the food in the hand, put it in the mouth, taste it and only then will he will start relishing it. Similarly, the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality has served us with several dishes which can be called food for thought, food for the mind and food for the soul. Only if we dwell on these concepts without any fear in the mind, will we will be able to taste and relish our own culture. The mind is the cause for bondage and freedom, and hence it is up to us to get bound by fear or travel to the realms of freedom.

Dear students, Swami has given a great opportunity to each one of you who has joined this Institute. To be part of this Institute, not just to secure a degree but to enlarge your vision, to open your hearts, to understand the purpose of life and be of service to society is the objective of studying here. We have to train the conscience and then follow the path to liberation. We hope that the glimpses provided here in the last couple of days will arouse curiosity and interest in all of you so that each one of you will be able to lodge deeply in Indian culture and spirituality, which is the purpose of this Summer Course.





Paranayam Sessions

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



Dr. (Mrs.) B Rudramamba

Associate Professor (Hon.), Dept. of Education, SSSIHL



I am here today only because of the immense grace, love and concern showered on me by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, my beloved Mother Sai. I consider this rare opportunity of serving Swami as the fruit or outcome of my parents' prayers and good wishes. My journey towards the Lord started with his Divine call in the form of an application for the post of lecturer at His college. At the time, I was not interested in joining the Institute as I had no idea of Swami. So, I did not send in the application. The very little I knew of Swami was through my classmates to whom I never paid much attention.

Again, I was called to apply for the same. But, I ignored it again and kept quiet. After a few days, I received a telegram, summoning me to at least attend the interview. I did attend the interview. I came to know subsequently that I got selected for the job and when I was asked to join, I told them that I would not be able to join then, as I had to submit my Ph.D. thesis.

Finally, on 6 July 1998, I joined the Institute along with my colleague, Prof. Madhu Kapani. During those days, all the outgoing students were blessed with an interview by Swami. In the interview during my first year, Swami approached me and I told him that I don't wish to continue anymore, and to that Swami firmly replied "No. I want you to work here." This is how my journey with Bhagawan started.

After I joined the Institute, my mother was worried about my marriage. Swami, being the compassionate mother, assured her that he would fix an alliance for my marriage. True to His word, he not only chose the right person whose cooperation helped me render my services, but Swami also blessed me personally with a wedding saree and a ring. I am convinced that I am here only because of Bhagawan's Grace.

Teaching practice is an essential part of our B.Ed. programme. During these sessions at Puttapparthi, Swami has blessed us with many interviews and Darshans for which we would await eagerly.

Swami said I would be blessed with a child and also materialised Vibhuti after I conceived. I was fortunate enough to receive padanamaskar several times, and when I could not be near Him physically in the latter stages, He blessed me in my dreams. After the child was born, Swami said, “Bring your daughter to Parthi, I want to see her.” As directed, I brought my daughter and showed her to Swami and He blessed her.

Once, an unfortunate incident took place in my brother-in-law’s family. They met with an accident and his elder daughter had a severe head injury and was in a coma. The whole family was worried. During the last few days of Darshan (prior to this incident), I was blessed with a Vibhuti packet which was given by Bhagawan. I preserved this packet as Bhagawan’s prasadam. I gave this packet of Vibhuti to my brother-in-law to be given to his daughter who was hospitalized. The girl was in a critical condition for fifteen days, and on fifteenth day, the doctors gave up hope of her regaining her memory and speech. They presumed that it may take six to twelve months for her to recover. As the parents were planning to get the girl discharged, the younger daughter (her sister) saw Swami for the first time in her dream wherein He stated, “Your sister will speak tomorrow.” When she told this dream to her grandmother, none of them would believe it. As they were preparing to go back home, suddenly, they heard a voice calling from behind. Lo and Behold! It was the voice of their elder daughter. She could also remember her name and other personal details. Everyone’s joy knew no bounds. This is one of the most memorable miracles which took place in my family.

Swami emphasized that Parayanam sessions are important as they help us to know the right path and develop faith in God. Hence each of us should be an active participant in the Parayanam sessions and lead a worthy life.

Dr. (Mrs.) G Pavana Kumari

Associate Professor, Dept. of Chemistry, SSSIHL



All of us gathered here have come into Swami's fold by His will. We feel it is accidental but it is His plan. Today, I'd like to share my experiences with God and narrate how I joined His University. I come from a family with a background of agriculture. My father being the eldest son of a joint family, was trained in cultivation and farming at the young age of 16. At that time, technology was not developed and the cultivation was done just by using man power, bullock carts, oxen, etc. Kothacheruvu (a village near Puttaparthi) was then famous for oxen and bullock carts. My father once visited Kothacheruvu to buy these cultivation requirements of his farms. It was there he saw and met Swami for the first time. Swami was in His twenties. Swami, along with a few people, had come to Kothacheruvu. Knowing nothing about Swami and the purpose of His visit to Kothacheruvu, my father started a casual conversation with Him.

During this conversation, Swami asked my father many questions like "Who are you? Where have you come from? For what have you come here?" Although my father didn't know anything about Swami then, yet the meeting left a deep impact on him as he experienced the strange uniqueness of Swami. After this meeting, until the 1980's, our family had no experience related to Swami. Only later, when I was in high school (VIII Std.) did I have Swami's Darshan. Back then, I would visit the Anantapur College to watch the Sports' Day celebrations along with my cousins who were pursuing a degree course at our College. In those days, Sports Meet was celebrated at the Campus. Swami would come to the Anantapur Campus and distribute prizes.

In this way, we were lucky to have His Darshans, though from a distance. At that tender age, it was sports alone that attracted me. I decided that I must pursue my Intermediate studies at Swami's College. So, after my X Std., I joined the Sri Sathya Sai Junior College for Women as an Intermediate student in the year 1985. Both the Intermediate and college courses were taught in the same main building of the College at the time. Sports Meet

took place in the month of January. When I was a Junior Intermediate, Swami came to Anantapur for the Sports Meet celebrations. I was part of the Rangoli group, and we put rangoli on the path which was taken by Swami to enter the premises. For the first time then, I got a chance to get Swami's close Darshan and experienced great devotion towards Him.

Although I got selected for the B.Sc. programme at our University, I couldn't join because it was compulsory to stay in the hostel. My parents wanted me to stay at home, so I pursued the same at another college at Anantapur.

I entered the divine portals of His College after I finished my postgraduate education. While I was pursuing my Doctoral Research program elsewhere, I joined the University as a faculty at the Department of Chemistry in the year 2000. I came to know later on from an authentic source that there were several applications for this post but Swami picked up my application and told them to select me as a teacher. Truly, we are all chosen by Swami either directly or indirectly.

According to my experiences in life, I believe that when our feelings are strong and intense, Swami always responds. When I joined as a faculty in the year 2000, Swami's 75th birthday was to be a grand celebration. I had decided that I would not miss the celebrations. Therefore, I had to go up and down from Anantapur to Puttaparthi every day for three weeks, leaving my one year old son at home with my mother. I could do this only because of Swami's grace. Whenever I would see Swami talking to some devotees and giving them sarees with His own hands, I used to yearn for this rare opportunity as well.

As He says, 'God's delays are not His denials,' He fulfilled my desire too. When I came to Prasanthi Nilayam to get my Ph.D. thesis blessed, Swami asked me in Telugu, "Ph.D. cheseva (You did a Ph.D.)?"

He then blessed my thesis and my son who was sleeping on my lap. I also took padanamaskar at that moment. That was the first time Swami spoke to me. He fulfilled my desire of talking to Him.

The wish to receive a saree from Swami's hand was fulfilled in the year 2002. That year I lost my father. He passed away because of an illness and I was extremely sad. I cried to Swami saying, "You are our mother, father and everything." That year during His birthday celebrations, He distributed sarees to all the Anantapur teachers. I was luckily in Sai Kulwant Hall and we were all asked to sit in two rows. Swami first finished distributing sarees in one row. In the second row, I was sitting in the third place. Swami distributed sarees with His own Hands. After finishing the distribution of sarees to all the teachers, He came towards us once again and He stood in front of us. He looked deep into my eyes. Since I had lost my father a few months ago, I was in pain. In that moment, He looked deep into my eyes and asked, holding a sari in His Hands, whether I had received a sari or not. I couldn't speak a word. I just looked at Swami with eyes filled with tears.

The three blessings: darshan, sparshan and sambhashan with Bhagawan are precious in anybody's life. In my life, I am fortunate to experience these three. When senior teachers would share their experiences with Bhagawan, I used to think I don't have any great experiences. But after Swami left his physical coil, I now understand the importance of these experiences, which are very precious. I feel I'm lucky and fortunate to have the darshan, sparshan and sambhashan of God.

According to my experience of God, I feel that if one member in the family comes under the fold of Bhagawan, the whole family is taken care of. In 2005, my husband met with an accident. His left leg got fractured. The doctors at Anantapur asked us to take him to Hyderabad for better treatment. So we took him to the Apollo hospital in Hyderabad where the surgery was done. It was successful but during the post-operative care in ICU, due to the doctor's carelessness, while my husband was under sedation, he lost a lot of blood and became very anaemic. When I saw him in ICU, he looked weak and drowsy. When I enquired about my husband's weakness from the orthopaedic surgeon, he told me that my husband looked weak because he was under sedation, which was a wrong observation. I could feel a negative difference in his general health. That whole night I was tensed and prayerful. I continuously read the Shirdi Sai Satcharitra and chanted Sai's name sitting

outside the ICU. I was broken.

That night, at around 3 a.m., one patient was admitted in the same ICU due to a heart attack. He was accompanied by his wife and two sons. They sat in front of me and when they observed my anxious condition, the lady, after a few hours asked for the reason for my anxiety. Since I was reading the Shirdi Sai Satcharitra and had Swami's photo in the book, looking at Swami's photo, she asked me if I worked at His Institute or was related to Him. I told her that I am working as a lecturer at Swami's Institute. The lady then told me that she too is a devotee and her two sons had studied at Swami's College at Brindavan. She called her sons and they told me that they were very close to Swami. She told me that her husband who was in the ICU was working as a Vice-Chancellor of the Telugu University in Hyderabad and her sons who had studied at Swami's college were now teaching at a college in Hyderabad. Then, one of her sons asked me if I had informed Swami about the accident and advised me to send a fax message to Swami.

But when I told him that I neither knew how to send the message nor was in a condition to send a message, he sent a fax message to Swami the next morning on my behalf. He also brought Vibhuti materialised by Swami for them in one of their family interviews. He asked me to give it to my husband. I went inside and gave the Vibhuti to my husband who was still very weak. Soon, one of my family members who is a doctor, a cardiologist working at Care Hospital in Hyderabad, arrived unexpectedly. When he observed my husband, he discovered that my husband had become anaemic due to the loss of blood. He then requested the orthopaedic surgeon to give my husband some blood. After giving two units of blood, my husband's condition improved by night.

I can never forget the grace Swami has showered on me, my family and my children. I have always felt Swami's grace and I have no words to express my gratitude to Him. I pray to Swami to shower His blessings on all of us.

Dr. (Mrs.) M Praphulla

Associate Professor in Telugu Language & Literature, SSSIHL



Sarvajnathvam (All-Knowing) and *Sarvavyapakathvam* (All-Pervasive) are the attributes of the Supreme Brahman. These are to be experienced and enjoyed. Our beloved Bhagawan stated, “Come, experience and enjoy.” Because of the good deeds of my parents and Bhagawan’s grace, this Jeevi (myself), standing in front of you, got an opportunity to enjoy many moments with Divinity. I would like to share some of them with you.

Bhagawan is the All-Knower. In June 1999, I came for Darshan, along with staff and students of Anantapur campus. That was the time after my employment here got regularized. I wanted to inform Bhagawan through a letter. As I had planned to come to Puttaparthi, I thought of writing a letter during Darshan time. When Swami was about to enter the Kulwant Hall, I realized that I don’t have the letter that had to be given to Him. Also, I did not have any paper or pen to write a quick letter to Him then and there. So, I told Swami silently in my heart, “Swami, job got regularized.” But I was unhappy for not giving it in a letter form to Him. After the first round of Darshan, Swami went inside the interview room. Swami came out of the room after some time and unexpectedly started walking through the path where Anantapur students were sitting. Students created a path for Him and when he came near me, he said very softly, “*Thelesu* (I know).” After Swami moved further, for my confirmation, I asked the teachers sitting next to me, “What did Swami say?” They said, “Swami said that He knows. About whom it must be?” Then it flashed to me that, it was a reply to my words about the regularization of my employment.

On November 24, 2001, during the Valedictory Function of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations World Conference, Swami was addressing the devotees. During his discourse, Swami said, “*Preminchadam kashtamanukuntaru. Kani nijaniki preminchadam chala sulabham* (Many of you think that it is very difficult to love, but it is very easy).” During that time, I was very unhappy and agitated due to some misunderstandings in my personal life. In that mood, soon after Swami completed the sentence, I told Him within myself,

“Aha! Bale chepaarule. Adi andariki sadyam kadu (Indeed! Well said, but it is not possible for everybody)” His next sentence was, “*Vaddu. Preminchadam chethakakapothu maney. Kani dveshincha vaddu* (No. If you can’t love, leave it. But do not hate).” It is a valuable lifetime message for me. But I did not find these lines in the published discourse. So, I thought it is meant for me to foster peaceful relationships in the family.

It was during time of the Ati Rudra Maha Yagnam in September 2006. My daughter was pursuing her final year B.Tech. As a mother, it is my responsibility to get her married. In these days marriage equates to taking a risk. I was afraid of getting her married. I was praying to Swami to guide me in this matter. On the second day of the Yagna, Swami gave a discourse and it was on marriage. Swami said that if a person gets married, his/her responsibilities get increased. Then I asked Swami in my mind, “So, does it mean that I should not get her married?” Immediately, Swami said, “This doesn’t mean that I am saying that one should not get married.” I immediately felt that I got assurance from Swami regarding my daughter’s marriage.

Swami is present everywhere. One day I was going to the College on my vehicle. I was alone and nobody was sitting behind me to talk. So, I was lost in my thoughts. A poem came to my mind, written by a Telugu poet, Sri Pothana, from Prahladacharitham of Mahabhagavatham:

*Indugaladanduledani Sandehamuvaladu chakri sarvopagathundu
Endendu vedakichoochina Andande galadu daanavaagrani vinte.*

When Prahlada was asked by his father Hiranyakashipu, “Where is Hari?” the former replies, “Do not have doubt whether He is here and there. If you search for Him, He is present everywhere.” After the recollection of the poem, a thought crossed my mind. “So, Swami! Right now, are you here?” I was in the middle of the traffic, and I wondered as to how I can see Swami. But Swami is omnipresent. In the very next moment, I saw swami’s photograph on the backside window of a bus, which was right in front of me. I followed the bus on my Scooty from a distance and when I reached it, I could no longer see the picture of Swami. So I was thrilled by this *Sakshatkara* (direct

perception) of Swami.

In December 2007, I was invited by TTD, Tiruchanoor, to give a talk on the occasion of Brahmasthanam of Goddess Padmavati. It is my belief that if I come across Swami's picture on my way to any work, the work will go smoothly. In Tirupati, we find the pictures and photos of Lord Venkateswara. We cannot even expect a single Swami's photo in that place. I was about to get down from the vehicle. Then I told my husband, "I am unable to find any picture of Swami in this place." To my surprise, as soon as I got down, I saw Swami's photo in abhayaastham posture from a distance. It was on the back side wall of a hotel. You can imagine my joy.

Swami is *Apadbandhava*. It was 2 January, 2001. After college, on my way back home, I was driving when suddenly I felt giddy. My vision was blacked out. I could not see anything. In such a semi-conscious / unconscious state, I saw a person in white clothes. I could not see the face and only his feet were visible. He was directing me saying, "Slow down the accelerator and hold the brakes." I did as I was instructed and after that, I had no idea as to what happened. I found myself on the door step of a tailor shop and my Scooty was in front of the tailor shop, away from the main road. People helped me with some water. Before this happened, one tractor was going in front of my Scooty, and a lorry was coming from the opposite side. That is all I could remember.

I had another similar experience. One day, I was going to college. I had to cross a bridge on my way. I tried to overtake a tractor. But a hook like thing of the tractor pulled me back. I fell down from the scooter. I fell unconscious for a fraction of a second. I felt the back wheel of the tractor being driven on my head. The tractor moved forward and stopped. People on the road helped me to get up. Then a man standing in the tractor told the driver "*Ayamma bathike vundira* (She is alive)."

These are my few experiences. Swami has been in me, with me, around me. We are all blessed being born as the contemporaries of the Avatar. I pray for His Divine blessings on us forever.

Dr. (Mrs.) M Srijaya

Associate Professor, Dept. of Food & Nutritional Sciences, SSSIHL



My experience with Swami has been a long, love filled and an incredible journey through the decades. I consider myself fortunate to be born in a family which has been devoted to Bhagawan for over forty-five years, especially my mother, Smt. M Seshakumari, who worked for twenty-five years and retired as a Lecturer in Chemistry at the Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science Junior College (SSSASJC), Anantapur.

My mother graduated from Benaras Hindu University and worked as a faculty member at Osmania University, Hyderabad. After marriage, she had heard that Swami was starting a Women's College in Anantapur. Since Anantapur was my father's native place, they moved from Hyderabad so that she could teach at SSSASJC. In those days, Bhagawan would personally interview the candidates. Along with her, there were two more candidates with higher qualifications, who applied for the same post. But Swami personally convinced the Board Members saying that, "She comes from Anantapur and surely will not leave the College." And that is how my mother would enter the portals of the Institute as a faculty at SSSASJC in the year 1970. She felt that her difficulties and sorrows would end if she joined Swami's college. She was not aware of the fact that she was coming under the shade of none other than the Kalpavriksha tree.

Whenever she came to Puttparthi and told Swami about her problems, He firmly assured that, "I will look after you and your family. You don't let go of your mental strength." It is her faith and devotion in Swami that provided strength to my parents during times of adversity.

To have had the privilege of being with Bhagawan from one's infancy puts a great sense of spiritual responsibility on anyone who claims to be His devotee. The greatest treasure I have inherited from my family is enjoying Swami's grace. I do believe that Swami brought me up and every incident in my life has been influenced by some specific instruction or the experience that He has given. Therefore, I bow with all humility at His feet and share a

few incidents that had happened in these four decades.

My recollections of childhood centred around the care, warmth and guidance of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Swami, out of His infinite Grace and compassion, gave my mother Vibhuti prasadam on several occasions when he visited the College and several more when she was carrying me. He visited the college every month. I was lucky enough to receive his Grace right from my time in the womb and I spent my formative years listening and seeking Swami's miracles. There are certain unforgettable days in the life of every individual and my life is no different. The first being the naming ceremony, done by the Lord himself, when I was a one-year old baby. Later, rituals like *annaprashana* or putting bangles were the memorable occasions that would always be cherished in our family.

I now consider myself blessed and fortunate when some of my teachers — who are in fact my aunts — keep reminding me about these beautiful incidents. I feel Swami's gentle hand had always been guiding me and my family members.

With Swami's Grace and support, my two elder brothers graduated from reputed Institutes of our country. My younger brother, whom Swami would address as 'strong fellow', secured a gold medal for M.Tech. in Computer Science from our University and he is currently working as a Vice-President at Goldman Sach, a leading global investment banking, securities and investment management firm. My brother also received Swami's Grace in abundance.

It was my great fortune that I have completed most of my education at Swami's Institute. Having completed my education, I got married and settled in life. My ultimate joy, blessing and good fortune was in 1996, when Swami was shown the photographs of the candidates who had applied for the post of Teaching Assistants at the Dept. of Home Science, and Bhagawan picked

my photograph and told our former Principal and Director, Prof. Jayalakshmi Gopinath to appoint me as a faculty member at our Institute. Without any struggle, he ensured that my life went on smoothly. I never asked Swami for any of these things. The Loving Lord knows what His devotees needs are and grants them when we qualify to deserve them. I also feel that I am serving Swami by joining His Institute after my mother's services.

Bhagawan's love and Grace continuous to pour, and my two daughters recipients of it. I was able to bring up my two daughters by giving them exposure to our family customs and traditions through Balvikas programmes.

Life is ruled by destiny and our past deeds, but surely with our sincere worship, good thoughts and devotion, we can overcome any kind of situation. My elder daughter, Darshana, was fond of table tennis. She started playing the game as a five-year old. She could learn the game within no time. In 2008, when she was a 10-year-old, she won several state level championships and was selected to take part in the National level competition, held in Chandigarh. We planned for her visit to Chandigarh within a week.

As the saying goes, "Man proposes, God disposes." She was diagnosed with a serious illness. The illness started with ordinary fever for which the prescribed treatment was regular course of medicines. After a day, her condition deteriorated. She was admitted in hospital and all the necessary tests were done to identify the cause of illness. All of a sudden, she had a seizure and she fell unconscious. It was the first time in my life that I witnessed an epileptic attack, and that too to my own daughter. As her condition was worsening, she became breathless and her blood pressure dropped and she was almost in a coma. The doctors even said that she has to be taken immediately to Bangalore otherwise it may prove fatal.

We had to shift her to Manipal Hospital, Bangalore. *Daivam Manusha Roopena* - God helps in the human form. Some of our teachers and my colleagues had helped me to overcome my sorrow. Upon reaching the hospital, as we were approaching the emergency ward at about 9 PM, to our

surprise, doctors came to us and asked us if we were from Anantapur, and within no time, my daughter was admitted in the ICU and was aided with life supporting devices. All this happened on a Sunday night, when it is least expected for a professional doctor to be present. To our surprise, it was not just the doctor, but a person who specializes in treating the illness that my daughter was suffering from, was also present. The immediate attention we got in hospital, without any delay was because of our Divine Mother's grace.

At that moment, my family members and I could not do anything but to pray to our Lord for help. Even after one day, the same condition prevailed and doctors were still in the process of diagnosing the cause and some of them suspected it to be Meningitis. As we surrendered to Bhagawan completely, quick came the response from Him assuring us that, "She would be fine and it was all due to change in weather conditions and she would recover soon."

He also sent his blessings through Vibhuti packets. We applied the Vibhuti on of her entire body and within two hours, to our surprise, she regained her consciousness, after which the life supporting devices were removed as they were no longer required. As she was shifted from the ICU, pointing at Swami's photo near the bed, the doctor exclaimed, "It was a miraculous escape." It was only due to His Divine Grace that my daughter was conferred a rebirth. Presently my daughter is hale and hearty and is also a good table tennis player. These are a few memorable incidents of Swami's immense Grace.

Mrs. Bina C Haldipur

Teacher, Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam



Today, as I speak to you all, I feel I am reliving my B.Ed. days. Since I have been also introduced as the student of the second batch under the B.Ed. programme, let me begin by giving you all a picture of what it was to be the student of the second batch. You may or may not know that the first and the second batches of the B.Ed. programme were carried out at the Brindavan Campus. We all stayed in one building and the building next to ours was the Boys Hostel. So, we were not allowed to enter the wing of the hostel which was attached to the Boys Hostel.

We stayed only on one particular side and were not allowed to go to the other side. The main shutter to the hostel was always closed. During the day, only a few inches of the shutter would be kept open for the Sirs to come in and go out. We never went out of the hostel once we entered it. We had only one teacher, Prof. Madhu Kapani, with us. We were twenty-three girls. You all know how big Anantapur Campus is. After studying at Anantapur Campus, when we entered our new hostel in Brindavan, we felt it was a jail. There was a small quadrangle in the middle, where we played throw ball. Madam also used to play with us. Although Madam was our warden as well as our teacher, she was more like a sister to us (also because she was the same age as us). Although, in this manner, we would enjoy ourselves in those days, we always felt bad because we were not allowed to go out of the building and were therefore stuck in it. Faculty members would come during the day, take classes and leave.

As you all know, it's a tradition that after the admissions, all the freshers come to Prasanthi Nilayam to take Swami's blessings. We too wanted to visit Parthi for Swami's blessings when we joined the course. But Swami sent the following message to us: Don't come, stay there. When this message reached us, we wept inconsolably. Even during the evening bhajans, we continued crying because we were fed up of staying inside the hostel building and there was no chance of going outside. The only hope of visiting Prasanthi Nilayam was now thrashed.

Swami messaged, “Don’t worry, I’ll come. You all don’t come, I will come.” Many months passed but there was no sign of Swami. We expected Swami and therefore, we had cleaned up the whole hostel awaiting His arrival, but Swami did not come. For the evening bhajans, while we sang the bhajan “Aana hi Padega Baba,” we wept and begged Him to come as that was our only hope. We wanted to see Him badly as we were missing Him a lot. One of our batch mates, Ms. Prabha, who was elder to us and is now teaching in the Primary School, was returning from her room to go to the dining hall. She was sad as all the girls were crying. On her way, she saw Swami’s photograph above Madam’s room door and prayed hard. She just looked up at Swami and said, “Swami, the girls are so sad, why are You not coming?” Suddenly, she observed that nectar was coming from Swami’s eyes. So she came running to us inside the prayer hall and said “Amrut is coming from Swami’s photo in Madam’s room. Swami is very happy with us, He will come.” At last Swami came and we were all in bliss.

When Swami was in Brindavan, we were allowed to go out of the building and sit for Darshan. We were only twenty-three of us. We had heard how much the first batch had enjoyed with Swami. We were all looking forward to this. We had heard that when Swami comes to the hostel, it is bliss. Swami came and all of us asked Swami, “When will you come to the hostel?” Swami said, “No! No! You all come to the interview room.” And we replied, “No!” We had heard that it is fun when He visits the hostel. So we requested Him to come to the hostel and He agreed.

That night, all of us stayed awake, cleaning up the hostel. Madam told us that Swami has said that He will come early in the morning. So, we prepared breakfast for Swami. The whole night, a few of us, the senior girls and Madam, we all sat for the whole night and cooked whatever each one of us knew, like samosa, naan-katai, cake, etc., for Swami. We had a small kitchen garden where Madam used to grow mint leaves; we took things from that garden and made chutney for Swami.

The next morning, we awaited Swami's arrival and He came. A few of us who were cooking, could finish our work only in the last minute. So, we had limited time to go back to our rooms, have bath and come back for Swami's Darshan. But by the time we reached, the other girls had taken photographs of Swami and a pen for Him to sign the photos. We were the last ones to come down and we saw that all of them were having a photograph each except us and they had asked Swami to autograph it for them. But, we had not got anything to get blessed from Swami.

That visit of Swami was supposed to be a joyous occasion but somehow it did not turn out to be a joyous one because all of us did not get all the blessings which a few others from our group got. But Swami was very nice. He went, ate, and tasted everything that we had made. Believe it or not, he took a bite from each item and left a part of each for us as prasadam. He sat and spoke to us as well but we all were not very happy. Madam collected whatever Swami had left and shared it with all of us. We all got to eat what Swami had tasted and left behind for us. Then, we realised that we shouldn't have argued with Swami. He asked us to come to the interview room; we declined and called Him to the hostel instead. May be we were wrong. We should not have forced Swami to do what we wanted to do instead we should have done what He wanted us to do. That is the first lesson we learnt from the first visit of Swami.

There was pin-drop-silence in the hostel that evening. During study hours, we had our books open but nobody had their minds focused on the subjects. Our minds kept repeating "Swami came, yet we are not happy." And then a message came from Swami through Ramabrahmam garu who used to be the in-charge of Trayee then. Swami had asked us all to come for an interview the next day. We felt very happy. The next day we were all prepared for the interview and I was the first in line. Madam used to be very particular that we should enter the interview room roll-number wise so that everybody gets a chance to be in the front. We took something or the other like fried groundnuts, tender coconut water, etc., for Swami.

To reach the Interview Room door which was kept slightly open, we had to cross the bridge and then Madam would push the door open and we would go inside and sit around Swami's chair, and then He would come down and talk to us. He was very particular about finishing the interview with the girl students before the boys returned from their classes in the evening. The boys used to sit inside Trayee, in the lawns and we would sit along with the public.

Brindavan Darshans were blissful moments. Sai Ramesh Hall was not yet constructed then. For the first Darshan, we would sit outside either under the shed or under the banyan tree. For the second Darshan, we would assemble in the Kalyan Mandap and as Swami's children, we were given the front rows. Swami used to give us Darshan there and sometimes give a discourse as well. On other occasions, He would either call a guest to speak, or ask the boys to speak. He would then materialize a watch for student speakers and the Darshans would end with Arati.

The third Darshan was given inside Trayee Brindavan. Only overseas devotees, permanent residents and students were allowed from the public Darshan Hall to the Kalyan Mandap, and only a selected few (of those) were allowed into Trayee sessions. If you have gone to Trayee, you would know that the central room is a circular room and around that room there is the second semi-circular room with the jhoola where Swami used to sit with the men students around Him.

We would sit in the circular room and from the doorway we could see only Swami. We could see Swami only He would turn towards us. During these sessions, a few people would sing and others would interact with Swami. Swami too would speak and joke with all of us. We had to strain really hard to listen to Swami. Along with the overseas devotees next to us, we would try hard to see Swami but we hardly had His Darshan. Moreover, most of our attention was usually on the people around us rather than on what Swami spoke. We later realised that we were ungrateful to Swami for such lovely times as we used to grumble about the overseas devotees who used to sit next to us.

After the sessions, Swami would give sweets to us. He had to cross the room we used to sit in to reach the stairs which led to His room. That Darshan was the most awaited bonus Darshan for us. After the Darshan, we would come back to the hostel, have dinner and then study. Strangely, while my batch was pursuing B.Ed. in Brindavan, Swami stayed there for both the semesters. He came to Brindavan after the Guru Poornima day in July and stayed back until Ganesh Chaturthi. Only after finishing the pooja that day, after lunch, He left for Puttaparthi.

Since we started taking Swami's Darshan for granted, He decided to teach us a lesson. The sevadal in-charge who used to take care of us would monitor who would go inside for the Trayee session. One day, she went to the city for some work and nobody was able to control the crowd and some people who were not allowed to enter Trayee, entered it. As a result, Swami got angry and said "No ladies, No ladies." This included us as well and therefore we were all banned from Trayee. So we would have the Kalyan Mandap session but had to return to the hostel after that.

We were hurt and felt miserable. Only then we realized the importance of what we had taken for granted up to then. We realised that we shouldn't have grumbled about who was sitting next to us and instead learn to adjust with everybody with Swami in our minds as our goal. One evening after I finished playing games, I returned a little late, and heard a few girls discussing, "We're feeling sad because we are missing the wonderful chance of going inside Trayee. Let us show our unhappiness by not going for dinner tonight."

Food would be cooked at the Boys Hostel and sent for us. I had finished my M.A. from Swami's College and felt that we were wrong. So I said to them, "How can we do that? Food has already come for us. If we all send back the whole thing, we will all get into trouble and that food will go waste and Swami won't like it. No, no, we can't do that. That's not correct."

But then we had to show that we were sad. It was a Thursday. Thursdays and Sundays, we would get sweets (a dessert). That Thursday it was Gulab Jamun.

So I said, “If we want to show that we are sad, we will not eat the sweet. We will have our dinner and we will send the sweet back. We are not happy, so no to sweets.” Everybody agreed and I was appointed to go and tell Madam. I went and told Madam that we were all very sad and that we would not eat sweets, so she could send it back. She was shocked. She tried convincing us but we said, “No, we are not going to eat, we are not going to eat. Please send it back.”

The next day, Madam brought Ratan Lal auntie (Swami’s personal cook) to the hostel. She spoke to us and she asked, “What is this girls? You all can’t do this.” She then gave us a lecture on how we have to obey Swami and that we shouldn’t do this and that. With this that episode got over.

Only after I finished my B.Ed. and got married, Madam told me later that on that day she was very upset and didn’t know what to do. She was worried that what she would say if they would ask her why the whole Jamun sweet basin came back. So she went to Ratan Lal auntie to find a solution. Auntie then told her, “So that is why Swami didn’t have His dinner that night! He was very upset, we didn’t know what was upsetting Swami, we didn’t know why Swami was refusing to eat His dinner.” We then realised how much of love Swami has for His children. We decided here that we would not have sweet and there He had decided not to have His dinner.

There were so many lessons that we learnt in that one blissful year we spent with Swami. He would come to the hostel and spend time with us. We had very close Darshans when He used to come and sit in the prayer hall. We had observed that the boys used to keep their palms on the ground and Swami used to walk on them and bless them. We used to feel that boys were specially blessed as we had heard them saying (in the Kalyan Mandap) things like, “This is my three hundred and sixty-fifth Padanamaskar.” Even during the Kalyan Mandap darshans, the boys would speak and get watches from Swami.

On occasion, we too were blessed with something similar. Once a few senior girls and married girls spread their hands to do *padaseva* for Swami. While

we were busy looking and listening to Swami, I suddenly observed Swami had allowed the women to press His feet. I too grabbed the chance and tried to touch His holy feet. We were scared, lest Swami gets angry. But when we saw that He was quiet, we all took turns and pressed His feet. He would talk to us casually about everyday life. We could discuss all our problems and speak to Him about anything. He would encourage us to discuss all our worries with Him.

Being girls, especially in our second semester before leaving, some would ask Swami about the marriage proposals they would get, they would say, “Swami, parents want me to get married. A marriage proposal has come for me.” He would say, “Manchidi, chesko.” Then a few would tell Him, “Swami he’s not a devotee.” Swami would reply, “It doesn’t matter, today he’s not a devotee, tomorrow he shall be one. That is not a reason for you to say no. Your parents will always choose the best for you. Trust your parents. Say yes, go, and get married.” One girl’s elder sister had a failed marriage. Her husband used to torture her, so she was brought back home by the parents. She was at home. So this girl said, “Swami, *Bhayam ga undi*, Swami. How to get married? *Ma akka ki ila jargindi, ma akka inti ki occhesindi* Swami.” I wish, like me, you all could listen to Swami’s reply to this girl. He said, “Always be positive. Why do you want to think that bad things are going to happen to you? Never anything bad will ever happen to Swami’s child. Why fear when I am near and dear?”

Like this, we would get answers for small, day-to-day worries of our life from Swami. One day a girl asked Swami, “Swami, ego Swami. Ego is such an evil, how do I destroy that?” Swami said, “Ego will stop you from coming close to Me.” When the girl asked how to get rid of it, Swami said, “It is very simple. Just imagine this whole universe; and in that universe this earth; and on this earth there are so many countries; among all these countries, India is such a small country; and in such a small country, India, Bangalore is such a small place; in Bangalore, Whitefield is such a small place; and in this Whitefield there’s a minute you. So in proportion to the rest of the universe, what are you? You are nothing. When you think of yourself from that angle, there is no

chance of ego.” So in such simple ways, Swami taught us many things.

Soon, it was time for us to leave Brindavan as the semester had come to an end. Before leaving, Swami called us for an interview. This time, we cooked onion and potato bhajjis for Swami. Usually, whenever we were called for the interview, Madam would open the interview room, we would sit inside and wait for Swami to arrive. But this time, when Madam pushed open the door, Swami was already there waiting for us on the other side of the threshold. We were all shocked because we didn't expect that Swami would be standing there, waiting for us. He said, “What is this? From when have I been waiting for you all? You all are taking so long to come.” We told Swami that we had got the message just then and that as soon as we got the message we had come. This time He taught us the lesson of punctuality. We were late, but God waited for us.

When we sat, we saw that in one hand, He had a packet of sweets and in the other hand, He had a bundle of currency notes. He opened the bag and started distributing sweets to us. We felt very happy as we took sweets from Swami. He said, “*Inka kaavaala?* Take.” We were only twenty-three of us and after distributing the sweets to us, some were still left in the bag. So, He kept saying, “You want to take more? You want, you take more.” He kept giving. When we saw the bundle of currency notes with Him, we thought He would give them to Madam for official purpose. But then, He opened the bundle of the fifty-rupee notes He was carrying with Him. He took out two notes and He gave it to the girl in front. She and the rest of us refused the money because we thought it was meant for Madam. Swami then lovingly explained, “Why are you saying a No? You're all going to leave. You're finishing your studies. You're leaving. You're going home tomorrow. When you leave your mother's house, you don't leave with empty hands. That is why I'm giving all of you.” Thus, He gave each and every girl two fifty-rupee notes and said, “Keep it with you always.” It is one of the most precious things which I own.

After that, Swami asked us to sit and started talking to us. He materialized Vibhuti, put it on Madam's hand and applied it on each one's forehead. Many

girls had decided that they would ask Swami that why He was partial to the boys and allowed only them to talk and not the girls. The girls expressed their desire to speak, to which Swami replied, “So many men sit there. How will you talk in front of all those people?” When the girls argued saying that they would not mind speaking in front of them, He said, “No, it’s not nice.” The girls insisted that they too can talk and want to talk. They questioned why the boys alone should be allowed to talk, but Swami didn’t say anything. Instead, He said, “You all are going to go. Just because you did B.Ed., don’t think you all are going to go out and work. You will all become housewives. Very few of you will work.”

Until then, I had made up my mind to join the Primary School. I had decided not to get married because after knowing Swami, I didn’t want to go away from Him. So I prayed to Him to let me be near Him forever and work in the school. My parents have three daughters so I thought I will remain unmarried and look after them in their old age. But, Swami went on insisting throughout the year, “No, get married, get married, get married. You have to get married.” After we had spent time with Swami, we took His Arati and He sent us back quickly because the boys had returned.

So we moved, and sat outside. Now, everybody started thinking, “What if Swami asks us to talk?” Everybody started preparing and when they asked me what I had planned to speak if Swami calls, I said, “I am not going to talk, I didn’t say I’ll talk. You all said, so you decide.” After the interview, we went straight to the Kalyan Mandap for the second session. Swami came, He sat and very innocently told the boys, “Every day you all talk, no? Today, for a change, let the girls talk.”

He then looked at us and said, “Come. Who wants to come?” The girls who had argued with Swami got up one by one to speak. As the girls got up one after the other to speak, I kept shifting behind till there was no place for me to shift. Meanwhile, as I moved, Swami continuously looked at me. My intention behind joining either the Anantapur Campus or the B.Ed. programme was to stay close to Swami. That day was yet another opportunity

which I decided I should not lose. Therefore, I got up to speak in spite of deciding earlier that I would not. I expressed similar emotions in my speech. I started by saying that for all of us, our mother is the most important person because she is the person who shows us God, and takes us closer to Him. We get to know about the Universal Mother, Swami from our individual mothers. Then, I addressed Swami and said, “Swami, after spending such beautiful moments with You, I don’t want to leave you.” Over the years, I have seen girls pass out from Swami’s College and never return. I was determined to get it promised from Him that unlike those girls, He should bless me that I would come back to Him; therefore, I requested for the same in my speech.

As Swami says, we should return to Him to get ourselves recharged and then go back in the world, I requested Him, on everybody’s behalf, that He must call us to recharge us again and again, since we were about to leave. Until then, I was not looking at Swami but at the wall at the other end. After I finished talking, I looked down and saw that all my friends were crying. I wondered what I had said which made them cry. I then looked at Swami, and sat back at my place. Later, my friends told me that Swami was nodding affirmatively and saying, “Yes! Yes! Yes!” to everything I was saying in the speech.

From our batch, I think, most of us visited Puttaparthi regularly, under some pretext or the other. I used to come as a youth coordinator, sevadal or under the pretext of Vidya Vahini. For some or the other reason, we still come to Swami. What I want to tell you all is that Swami gives you whatever you want, so ask for Him, everything else will follow.

Miss T Janaki

Teacher, Smt. Eswaramma High School, Prasanthi Nilayam



Before I start, I have a small game. Can we have two groups of students with ten in each. This is just a small game; nothing to be scared of. The rule is very simple; in each group the ball must pass through each hand. You can place yourselves the way you want to, but the ball must touch each of your palms. That is the condition. Let us see who finishes the fastest. Are you all ready? You can stand anyway you like. I want someone to see whether the ball is passing through everyone's hand. When you finish, you say "Stop!"

(The game is played)

How much time?

Five seconds.

Can you improve your performance, please?

Yes Madam.

Okay, let's see. Ready? Start.

Two and a half seconds!

Okay. Still less? Yes? Ready? 1... 2... 3... Start.

Two seconds!

One more chance! Let me see who comes to one second. Ready? 1... 2... 3...

Start. How much time did they take?

One second!

Very good.

Now, can anybody tell me when you were playing the game, what were your thoughts? Those students who played the game, what did you think? That you should win the game? Did you have any other thought? Did you see who was next to you or what kind of student she is? No. The only thought was how to finish faster.

Well, when we were students, our only thought was how to please Swami. That was our only thought. We had girls coming from different parts of India and I came from Sri Lanka. But then, I tell you, we never felt the difference.

We lived like one family and that is because of our Swami. His love for His students was so much that we were ready to do anything for Him.

In the hostel, all these rules which we thought would be difficult meant nothing because whenever we came to Puttapparthi, if we were disciplined, the love that Swami showered on us was indescribable. If we were undisciplined, He wouldn't even look at our faces, and that was miserable. He would just come; He would walk in front of us, but not give even a look towards us. And then when we would cry, "Swami, please!" He would say, "Rats and rabbits, cats and dogs; you are breaking the discipline." So, for Swami's sake we were ready to do anything.

Swami was very particular about not going from room to room because that encourages gossip. It was Swami again who instructed us to take note of small things like putting bindi and wearing bangles. This made us very conscious about wearing them. Late in the night, some girls would sit and talk, and later Swami would come and point out at those girls and tell them, "You both were sitting and talking late at night, don't do that." That is the care Swami showed us. We lived every moment consciously.

In the room we lived like one family. When we joined as juniors, the seniors took much care of us. In those days, we had only two cots in a room and the juniors were given preference. Seniors were so loving that they would do everything for the juniors, and the juniors never felt homesick. So, when we became seniors, we also tried to live up to the expectations of Swami.

Every time we came to Puttapparthi, we felt that Swami was only for us. Believe me, from the time I came from Sri Lanka and joined here soon after my X Std., even during my holidays, I never went home. This became my home forever. Until today, I have not gone home. What made me stay here, leaving my parents and my family, having known nobody in India? Though at that time Swami wouldn't allow everybody to stay back in Parthi, we were

lucky. Since we were from Sri Lanka, and at that time war was going on there, Swami personally gave us permission to stay in Parthi during the holidays and that was the best time because we would have close interactions with Swami.

Although Swami gives you everything, He is a hard task master. He trains us personally for our own good. During holidays, when we stayed back, we were never kept free even for a moment. Those small rooms near where we assemble before Darshan now, were shops earlier. We had a general store, a fruit stall, and a clothes shop. So we had to work there. In those days, there were no sevadals. Swami's students managed everything. Whenever we came to Parthi during functions, we were divided into small groups and these groups had to go for vegetable cutting, chapatti rolling, cleaning, plate washing, and canteen duty.

We were happy doing it because we knew that that was what Swami wanted us to do. Sometimes during the festivals, around 2 o'clock, auntie would come and wake us up and ask us to come and cut the vegetables. We were always ready. So this is how things went on that time. When we would do these things, Swami would observe us like a proud mother. He would tell everybody, "These are my children; these are my girls. They know everything." With so much of pride He would tell everybody, "My girls know everything. They can do everything."

So we also wanted to measure up to that and we did it. Sometimes, during festivals, the serving would start at 10-10:30 AM and it would go on until 4 PM. We never felt tired. In those days, we had to carry buckets of food, sambar and rice; carry them literally. So Jayamma Ma'am would always select the strongest. Though I was very thin in those days, I was considered the strongest. So from 10:30 in the morning to 4 in the evening, we served and sometimes we even missed Darshan. But we never felt sad because Swami told us that Swami's work was more important. You have to do that first.

During holidays, they would keep a place for us in front of the public. So one day it so happened, Swami was about to come. We were busy cutting

vegetables when somebody said, “Swami is coming.” So we quickly came running and went and sat in the front row, just before Swami came. So may be some devotees felt bad that they come so early in the morning, yet they get a faraway place (for Darshan), while these girls, Swami’s students, come in the last moment like maharanis, and occupy the front row. Of course, they did not know that we were doing work there. Somebody must have complained.

In such situations, Swami is like Rama. He immediately takes action. So Swami came the next day and He told the volunteer in-charge, “Don’t keep place for my students.” And we were heart broken, “Swami, what did we do? We came late because we were doing some work. It’s not because we were lazy or something.”

But then, how can we tell Swami that? So Swami removed our reserved seating for Darshan. So we said, “Fine. You don’t want to see our faces? We will see Yours, but we will sit at the back.” You know, you fight with Swami in these cases. All these walls were not there then, and the parapet walls were very low. So we stood behind them. We would come, just before Darshan and after the vegetable cutting, stand there behind, have Swami’s Darshan and then go back. After a few days, Swami Himself called the in-charge and asked him, “Where are my girls? Why are they not coming for Darshan?”

Swami knew who all were staying back during the holidays. Someone came running to us, and he asked, “Swami said you all are not going for Darshan, what happened?” We replied, “Sir, we are going for Darshan. Our places were removed, so we’re standing at the back instead of going in the front. After having Swami’s Darshan, we are going back.” This volunteer felt bad and he said, “No, no. You shouldn’t be doing that. You must go and sit for Darshan.” We said, “Okay fine.” We went, but there was no place and we were late. So we decided that we would sit behind the coconut trees that were there those days. So we hid ourselves one behind each coconut tree. Swami came, but it was Bhajan time, Darshan was over and hardly any people were there. And you won’t believe, He peeped behind each coconut tree and gave a naughty smile as if to say, “Are you angry with me? I know you are!” These small things were beautiful. And then, when Swami smiles like that, all of us just melt.

Swami would make it a point to teach us small things like how we should be and how we should dress. Once, one of my friends had just come from Anantapur, so we rushed and sat in the Darshan lines. She was sitting in the front line and she happened to have two plaits. Swami was so angry with her. He asked, "What is this? You are dressing up like a film star! I don't like such things." So like this, Swami would personally guide us in detail doe many such things.

There are a lot of personal things in which Swami has helped me a lot. One such problem was related to visa because we are from Sri Lanka. Every year we would have the visa problem. That was a perennial problem for us until recently. Once I got a letter from the Indian Government ordering me to leave the country immediately. I had just completed my degree. I didn't know what to do and waiting for Swami to tell me what to do further. At that time I get a letter saying, "Leave the country." When I got the letter, I went for Darshan, even though it was quite late, because I was upset. I could manage to sit in the fourth row in the ex-students' block, next to the patients' block. Swami came straight and I thought Swami was going to tell me something. So, I stretched the letter. He didn't look at me. Instead, He looked at the foreigner lady, sitting next to me and said, "What happened to your visa?" I couldn't hear what she replied. Swami said, "Don't worry, everything will be alright." And He didn't even look at me and went off.

They told me that within a week I had to leave the country. I was furious and I said, "Swami, they come only for a few days and you take so much care of them, and we are here throughout the year and you don't even bother." I was in a bad mood. It was a Saturday, there was a Sunday in between and then Monday I had to go to the SP's office.

Sunday came, Swami didn't look at me, and Monday morning I had to go. Otherwise, the police would start searching for me. So Monday morning, I just prayed to Swami and told Him, "I don't know what you're going to do but You have to take care." I told Him and I went there. To my utter horror, there the SP was in a real foul mood and the clerk who usually handles the

foreigners' division said, "Madam, today he's going on leave, so there are a lot of pending cases, he's looking into those and he's in a very bad mood. I don't want to come in with you; you go alone if you want to meet him."

I went there and stood outside his room; he was throwing the files. And if we have to ask for extension, we have to show evidence of what we are doing in India. In my case, that would be a Study Certificate. I didn't have that because I had just completed my degree. So I didn't know what to do. I just prayed to Swami.

He looked at me; he continued with his work and then finally he said, "Please come in." I went in. I had just written a letter saying that I had just completed my degree and am planning to do something further. He looked at my letter and you won't believe it, even though up until that moment he was in a foul mood, his expression changed. He said, "Oh! So what are you planning to do?" I said, "I'm planning to do my Post graduation. I've just completed graduation, I need some time." He said, "Don't worry, I'll consider your case."

Immediately, he called up the clerk in-charge and he said, "Give her six months' time." He asked me, "So Ma'am, is it enough for you? Six months? After that you just tell me." Swami had told that foreigner lady, "Don't worry, your problem will be solved." I had only heard it. It's not necessary that Swami comes and talks to you directly. He does things in a very different way. I've been here for thirty-five odd years and very rarely has Swami talked to me personally. But then the number of things Swami does — this is a very small thing — He personally takes care. You don't have to tell Him, He does things for you.

I joined as the first batch of the B.Ed. programme. I didn't expect that I would pursue a B.Ed. degree because I was a Commerce graduate and for Commerce girls, B.Ed. was not allowed. As it was the first batch, we just applied and we got in. I had also simultaneously applied for an M.B.A. at Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur. We were waiting for the results. So even when I joined B.Ed., I had thought that once the M.B.A. programme

commences, I would quit the B.Ed. and go join the M.B.A. programme because B.Ed. would be of no use to me.

But then, things happen according to Swami's wish. That one year of B.Ed. was really heavenly. We had a makeshift hostel at the Brindavan Campus. Swami came to us even before we joined the hostel and said, "In Brindavan, the old hostel was kept closed, and so it is very dirty, and it has to be cleaned. So you old girls go early, clean up the place, so that when the new girls come, they will be happy. And then I will also come. You go, clean up the place, then Swami will come. Then we'll all be happy there together." See how He used to think of the new girls also.

So we went ahead of time and Prof. Madhu Kapani also came. We cleaned up the whole place. Sethi Sir and Sharma Sir were all wonderful Sirs. That one year, it was really nice there. Swami came and whenever we used to say, "Swami, please come to the hostel." You know what Swami would say? He would say, "It is not hostel. Home, home!" So Swami never wanted us to call hostel a hostel. He said, "Make it a home." It is we who have to do that. Nobody else can do it. When we are living there, we students, we have to make it a home. Then only we'll be happy. B.Ed. was a wonderful time because even there we learnt a lot. When Swami came to visit us, He was so free with us that He brought whatever things we required.

The hostel was filled with mosquitoes because it was kept closed. We told Swami about the mosquitoes because at night the walls would be filled with mosquitoes. So Swami said, "*Mesh arrange chestanu* - I will arrange for a mesh." He just said it and you won't believe, His word was enough. From that day onwards, we never had any mosquitoes. So like this, Swami's one word was enough. He didn't have to get it done, really.

During class hours, we used to have a lot of discussions regarding spiritual matters. We had a discussion in one of the sessions on whether, when it comes to Swami, love or discipline is more important. If you are not disciplined, you miss the chances with Swami. In the other hand, your love (for Him)

makes you forget discipline. Whenever we had discussions like this, that very evening, when we went for Darshans in Trayee, Swami would take up the same topic. It was as if Swami was sitting there and listening to our classes. So every minute we felt, Swami was there with us.

Mind you, even today, Swami is there. There's no difference between that time and this time. Even now we feel, working at Eswaramma School, it is not an easy thing to work with these children. Even today, we feel Swami's presence. After we finished our B.Ed., out of the blue Swami came and asked us, "How many of you have finished B.Ed.?" We raised our hands and then Swami said, "Are you all ready to go to Vizag?"

Imagine, we have never left Puttaparthi and He's coming and asking us, "Are you all ready to go to Vizag? *Naa school akkada undi, meeru veltaara?*" We never had a second thought. We said, "Swami, whatever you say." He said, "Okay, *attla unte, vellandi. Letter istaanu, vellandi.*" We were not so happy but we had to obey Swami's commands. So, that's how we went to Vizag. And there, twenty-two years He kept us. Each time we would come, we would plead with Him, but He would say "No. Be there." He was very firm. Once my friend got very angry (there were five of us). She said, "Swami, *ee saari vellamu.*" One look from Him and she said, "*Veltamu, Swami.*" But throughout our stay there, He took care of us.

In 2010, we lost all hope when Swami was withdrawing; He was not taking personal care, and then one day Chakravarthi Sir called us out of the blue and told the Vizag Administration, "Send them back to Puttaparthi." And we were so happy that after we came we had one year of Swami's physical stay. It was beautiful. Now, after we have joined Eswaramma School, it is Swami who is taking care, because all these children have a village background, and they can't speak a word of English. The first day when a teacher came to teach them Vedas, He said, "*Aayatanavan*" and they said, "*Atavanvan.*" They just couldn't learn it, and we were confused as to how to teach these children. If they are how they are today, it is only because of Swami's Grace. So remember, Swami is always there with you.

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I have lived with my Baba for over 40 years now. Right from the age of 18, I have physically lived with him. Baba is my Guide, Guru and God and I want to share the best of my experiences with Him. You may have come across this statement of Baba: Don't walk in front of Me. I may not follow. Don't walk behind Me. I may not lead. Just walk besides Me and be My friend.

I pondered over this many a time. When you think of Him as Guru, a teacher, then there is a barrier. There is distance, there is fear. That distance between the teacher and the taught cannot be bridged whenever we feel God is a Teacher. Then, when you think of Him as God, there are even more barriers, because God means much more fear. God is omnipresent, omniscient, He knows everything, He knows my past, present and future. There is no secret between God and me. So, again there is a barrier. But the best part is, if you treat God as a friend, then there is closeness, understanding and love.

Usually, in your life, whenever you are in trouble, you don't approach your parents or your own brother. You usually approach a friend and express yourself. So, if you befriend God, imagine how much of yourself you can express to Him? You can pour out your agony, turmoil, tensions, etc. He is there to absorb everything as a sponge. He gives you relief. That is why, you must treat God as your friend.

There are three aspects to God.

First aspect – Guidance.

I was born in Chennai and did my schooling there. Half way through my intermediate education there in Mathematics, Biology, Physics. Chemistry, I developed an illness. I would get recurring chest pains that were severe and unbearable.

I would come to Prasanthi Nilayam right from my childhood. My grandparents came to Bhagawan in 1948. Right from my birth, I was introduced to Bhagawan as my God and Guru. Whenever I visited Puttapparthi, it was a

very sacred and holy pilgrimage. From my childhood I read a number of discourses delivered by Bhagawan Baba. Baba says, “How you live is not very important. How you die is very important.” All the spiritual disciplines are needed to train you for that last moment when it is very necessary to utter sacred words in your last moments. The last moments of your life refines or defines the next birth. This I have heard many number of times.

So, when my pain was very severe and I thought that I am going to die, this message would flash in my head. I thought that I am going to die and all the important teachings of Bhagawan Baba came to my mind and I wanted to see Baba. So, I was looking at the picture of Baba and I told my father, “I am going.” Everything became dark, I was sweating; the left side of my body was totally paralyzed. Swami had materialized a photograph for my father. So, my father brought it and put it on my chest. The moment he put it on my chest, the very next second, I was back to life in a flash and that darkness was gone and I could see people around me.

They took me to a doctor and after the check-ups, the doctor said that I had a heart-attack. My father asked, “He is a very young lad. How can he get a heart-attack?” The doctor said, “One in 10,000 cases, this can happen.” The doctor gave me a medication and a big list of do’s and don’ts; and I was prescribed bed rest for six months. So, I could not complete my intermediate studies.

We all decided to visit Puttaparthi and we landed in Prasanthi Nilayam. Whenever you seek help, Baba will test you. When you don’t want anything, He will stand in front of you. When you desperately ask for something, He will see through you and not you. If you have a letter in your hand, He will take letters from the people around you but your letter will remain safely in your hand. This mischievous Lord did this not just for one day but for almost three months; in a different way though. He would take letters from my parents, but no reply. You apply apply apply...but no reply.

Suddenly, after three months, Swami called us for interview. We had a big checklist to ask Swami. Meanwhile, I lost interest in studies and started to look for some job advertisements. In the interview room, Swami asked some questions and then He said, “*Nuvvu chaduvuko.* (You study).” I said, “No. Swami. I don’t want to study. I am applying for jobs.” Swami sternly said, “*Aye... Swami cheppinatlu vinu, Nee manchi ke cheputunnanu* (Listen to what Swami says. I am telling it for your own good).” I said, “Will you give me a seat in your college? Then only I will study.” In this manner, some arguments took place between me and Bhagawan and finally Swami said, “Ok. Ok. You apply.”

I completed an application for the Brindavan campus. There also...apply apply, but no reply. So, I went to Brindavan to enquire about my application. When they enquired about when I applied, the application number etc., they realized that I have applied to ‘Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba’ and not to ‘Sri Sathya Sai Junior College’. Thus, they did not receive the application. Deadline was next day. So, I was wondering what to do. I was told to come the next day by a person named Amarnath. So, the following day, which was the last day of submitting the application, I went to the office. This person, Amarnath was desperately waiting for me. Amarnath told me, “Fifteen minutes after you left, your application arrived. Warden has sent it. Baba gave to the warden and the warden had sent it to us.” I was told to meet the Principal. When I went, Prof. Narendra and Prof. Nanjundaiah were seated there. I was asked to take the H.E.C.A as they found that I was weak in Chemistry. That is how I ended up taking the H.E.C.A.

Swami once asked, “I am going to start a University at Prasanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi. How many of you are interested in joining?” Very promptly I raised my hand. Finally, after my intermediate, about eighteen of us came from Brindavan and joined here as first batch students. Being first batch students, we had full benefits. We used to get all the attention.

So, when I joined the B.Com. programme, for the first one and half years, the degree was issued by Sri Venkateswara University. At the time, the

Institute was in the process of obtaining permission for being a Deemed to be University. My second one and half year certificates were: Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (Deemed to be University).

In those days, student accommodation was inside the Mandir (at Prasanthi Nilayam). I used to take care of some responsibilities related to the mess and mess bills. The current hostel building was under construction. The College building was also under construction. One day, out of the blue, Swami said, "Today is a good day. Why don't we do a house warming ceremony?" I was in class and the warden had sent a word for me. The warden and I ran to the only provision shop available in those days and bought the provisions required for the house warming ceremony. That morning, Dr. Chenna Reddy came to Puttaparthi. Swami told him, "I am going to hostel. You also come with Me." So, Dr. Chenna Reddy was our guest that day and he was not doing well. Swami was showing everything to Dr. Chenna Reddy and Swami asked him, "Why are you looking dull?" Dr. Chenna Reddy replied, "Swami, from the past two days, I am having a high fever."

Swami, the Divine doctor, created three tablets and gave it to him and told him to take them with hot milk. Even Swami was working with all of us. Swami came down to that level. You and me, tomorrow if we become a boss, we expect our bag to be carried by a servant or assistant. Where will be see such a great personally coming down to that level. This is what we have to learn. That is what is the guidance! That is what shaped my life. Whatever Baba did, I tried to do in my life. Irrespective of your status, you must do your best for the other person. That is what I have learned in this place.

In those days, when the hostel was empty during vacation time, including Swami vacating Prasanthi Nilayam, two souls would remain here: Surya Narayana and Venkatachalam. Venkatachalam sacrificed his life. Once when he came here, sitting in the devotees' line, Swami picked him up and told him, "Go to hostel and start serving." That's all. From that moment, he never went even to see his relatives or close people. He is all the time here. Only if Swami calls, he would go to Kodaikanal. Otherwise, he is committed to this

place. He dedicated his life in service. Same is the case with Surya Narayana. Where will you find such dedicated people? This is the place where the best of the things have happened. I was also in the hostel committee and we used to cook every Thursday for Bhagawan, and take it to His room in a carrier.

Why would Swami always say, “My students are my property?” I would like to share one incident. Dr. Bhagawantham, a scientist, was the first translator of Swami’s Discourses after Kasturi Garu. His son, Ramakrishna was the first Campus Director when the University started. I too worked under him. In those days, the Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality would be for one full month and the theme would be Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavatam, World Religion, etc. Swami would invite top people who are authoritative in their respective fields. Even Balavikas, pre-sevadal people from every district would join us for the Summer Course. There was no shortage of anything. Every evening, Swami would summarize the days lectures and talks in a tangible way to the audience and the person who spoke on that particular topic earlier during the day would be totally floored and would fall at Bhagawan’s Lotus feet. Swami beautifully attracts everyone. That is why Swami says, “Come. Experience. Enjoy.” Swami never forces anyone. You should get convinced. No need to listen to other people.

I will share an incident during the Summer Course. We boys were given a lot of responsibilities. Nearly a thousand people would attend. So, we had to roll a thousand chapatis. Swami would say, “Every day you are only giving items like upma for breakfast. Tomorrow make puris” We were totally finished. Minimum three puris per person Swami would say. So, we had to make 3000 puris. Whatever Swami says we had to do. We had to cut 40 Kg. of each vegetable. Now, imagine cutting those many onions. We don’t need eye drops. Eyes are always clear and fresh. Apart from these duties, we had to attend classes! How? Morning, we would get up at 3 AM, take a bath and start cutting vegetables. Then only breakfast could be ready on time. For lunch, we would chop vegetables after dinner the previous night. Then room duties. Oh my God, everything was done with big planning. Only boys used to do all the work and Swami always wanted only boys to do the work. But, that we enjoyed.

The Anantapur Campus students wanted an opportunity. So, the warden comes to Swami and requests for an opportunity for the girls to do some service. Swami did not relent and said that boys are doing very well. She tried requesting for 4-5 days, but Swami did not relent. Then she resorted to another method. The next day, she came to Swami. Swami asked, "How is the food?" She said, "Food is good Swami. But, chapatis are not good. They are not rolled properly; all are odd shapes, some are fried and some are not fried properly.... Swami, we will roll the chapatis."

So, Swami was cornered. Swami told the Boys Hostel warden, "There are complaints about the chapatis that they are not rolled properly. Tell the boys but don't say that I have said so. Because, they will feel bad if they come to know that I am complaining. If you are complaining means there is no problem." See here the love of Swami towards the students.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, from the other side of the wall, we heard the conversation and we are not supposed to react. So, we don't know. Then, warden called us and he rolled us like chapatis. All of us felt very bad. We finished our dinner and were sitting together. Suddenly I got an idea. I said, "The problem is that the chapatis are not in proper shape. So, we will take a tiffin box and press the tiffin box. Then the chapatis will be in perfect round shape. Extra atta can be removed. Little extra work but does not matter."

Everyone liked the idea. We cannot do this without the warden's permission. So, we went to him and said, "Sir, tomorrow onwards everybody will be happy with the chapatis. Please give us permission to go out and buy five tiffin boxes. We will have the tiffin box and its lid. Using those, we will press with the box for uniform thickness and press with the lid for perfect shape." The warden too liked the idea. He gave permission and the money to get the boxes. We told the warden not to tell about this idea to anyone.

The next day, Swami wanted to see for Himself because of the complaint on the previous day about chapatis. He entered with some other VIPs with Him. After asking a few questions about the curry and sambar, He asked about

chapatis and He himself took a chapati from the basket. He said, "It is soft and perfectly round." He checked many of the baskets and found all to be soft and ly round. He called warden and said, "Hey, who said that our boys do not roll chapatis well? See, how good they are." After watching this, I was full of joy and pride. I cannot express that joy. It can only be experienced. Swami was like a child going to every table telling, "My boys have prepared this. See how nicely they made." That day evening, Swami called the warden (of Anantapur campus) and asked, "How were the chapatis today? Not proper no? Not in shape no?" She said, "No Swami. Very nice, Swami" Then Swami said, "Even your girls cannot roll chapatis so perfectly like My boys."

Swami has a special love and corner for His boys. You know why? We are ready to do for anything at any time. There is no second thought. If there is trouble, He gives you intuition. All that we have to do is, to capitalize on that. We have to execute it. Then see the joy on His face. What more is required? We don't have to do meditation or yoga asanas, etc. If you please God, your life is sanctified. So, that was the opportunity for us those days. So, that is why Swami always says, "My students are my property."

Next aspect – Guru.

Guru is the one who dispels darkness and shows the path. He is the one who tells what is right and what is wrong. This is what we always think when we think of a guru. There are various types of gurus. There are some gurus in society, living in the society, they close their eyes, and concentrate on themselves. If anyone with some problems approaches him, they give some advice. They are some who are selfish and do not bother for others. There are some types of gurus who shun the world and run to the forests and hunt for God. After enquiring, and after lot of struggle, he gets the answer and he does not get back to society and settles there happily.

In today's modern world, we have plenty of commercial gurus. There are three major industries today. Food industry, Education and Spirituality. Many politicians invest in the Food and Education category and earn money. In every nook and corner, you find one Swamiji. All these Swamijis, when

they start, what they do? They are supposed to remove ignorance. But these commercial gurus use ignorance and innocence and capitalize on that. What is business? Your weakness is my business.

But then there is another guru. He lives in the society. He says, society is a *saagara*. He takes a boat and tells everybody - every common man irrespective of religion - and caste, "Get into My boat and I will help you to sail into this *saagara*, this samsara of life. I will protect you." This is how He attracted and collected everybody and we all are in that big ship. We are protected and He is showing us what is right and what is wrong with the help of all various activities that you all are doing here. You will get to know many things in life because of all this. Finally, you will reach and unravel the mystery of life. He is the only Guru who lived in society, saved society and we all are part of it.

He is none other than our Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He did such a beautiful job. You and me, we cannot convince our father or mother or brother or friend in petty issues. This personality (Baba), the entire world came here. Without going outside of India. Why and How? That is true divinity. That is true Guru. There is no welcome needed. Everyone comes here and enjoys. Everyone came here irrespective of caste, religion, languages, to have a glimpse of Him. He attracted everyone and gave them love. Can this be possible for an ordinary man? That is why He is Divine. We are ordinary mortals. He is extraordinary. He has something. That is why He is known as Jagat Guru.

I will narrate a small incident. Living with God is education. Every Sunday, all campus children would sit in Sai Kulwant Hall. One Sunday, during Darshan, Swami called one tiny tot and asked him, "What is your name?" That boy answered so and so. Then Swami asked, "How many brothers do you have?" This boy said, "I have two brothers." Then Swami asked, "Where are they?" "They are in Delhi," answered the boy. Then Swami said, "Who are these people who are living here?" The boy had no answer. And then Swami told, "These are your real brothers. Your blood brothers are in Delhi. But here you are living with them, eating with them, studying with them, everything

with them. These are your real brothers.” Then Swami asked, “Who are your brothers?” He replied, “Swami, all are my brothers.” Everybody was very happy.

That was the lesson that day for all of us. Next Sunday, our mischievous Lord summons the same fellow and asked many questions like, Have you had breakfast, etc., and finally asked him, “How many wives do you have?” That tiny tot thought about the previous Sunday and answered, “Swami, all are my wives.” Everybody around laughed. Immediately Swami turned towards us and said, “That is the mistake that you have committed. That heart is innocent. He does not know what wife means. Correct? Why are you laughing? Because of something different in your mind. Some ulterior motive. Your mind is polluted. His mind is pure. I love that kind of mind. I want that kind of heart. I want that kind of devotee.”

Third Sunday, again the same boy was called and Swami asked some normal questions to make him comfortable and finally asked, “How many friends do you have?” He thought about the previous Sunday’s experiences and he finally answered, “Swami, all are my friends.” Swami said, “No. All can be your brothers but definitely not your friends. If you say that they all are your friends, then how long they all are going to stay with you? After their education, each one will be in their own direction. Do you know who is your real friend? God is your real friend. He remains all the way through. Worldly friends are like frogs. Where ever there is water, frogs will come. When there is no water, frogs vanish. Similarly, when you have power, position and money, everyone will say hello. The moment you are stripped off everything, none will be there even to say good bye.” It was a beautiful lesson to all of us. Using these analogies, the Jagat Guru can teach you the highest philosophy in the simplest manner.

During our days, after morning Darshan, we used to stand near East Prasanthi and go to college in line. Mr. Craxi, the then Italian Prime Minister was a very staunch devotee of Baba. He was the donor of the Primary School building. One day Mr. Craxi and his brother got a Mercedes Benz car for

Swami. He came and gave the car to Swami and said, “Swami, this is my gift.” Swami asked, “Why? I don’t need cars. I have enough cars.” He pleaded and pestered Swami to accept the car. Every day He used to pester Swami. After a week or so, just to make him happy, Swami called Radhakrishna, Swami’s driver, and told him to take the car.

Swami looked at the boys and said, “Go.” Swami was basically asking the boys to get into the car. Then there was big mad rush to get into the car. Three guys sat in front with the driver and four fellows sat at the back. It was congested, with little space for Swami to sit in the car. Swami also sat and the car went away. After fifteen minutes, the car came back empty. Only Swami was there, but the boys were missing. Swami said, “Oh, you are wondering where boys had gone? I dropped them to the college and came. You guys have to walk.” So, we started.

The next day, we all were sitting for Darshan and Swami would come and offer a ride to the boys. So, this became a routine. There was a lot of competition among the students and Swami enjoyed the whole game. This went on for four days. I was a disciplined boy and never ran to get into the car. I know that Swami wouldn’t like it. So, I used to sit quietly. Five days passed. Everybody was getting second and third chances as well. I thought, “What is the use of discipline? Swami is giving an opportunity and I am sitting here?” So, the next day, I too ran but could not get a chance due to the competition from other boys. This continued for two days. The following day, I decided to sit in the car by hook or crook. So, I ran and got into the car back seat as fifth guy – half inside and half outside. So, I was not totally in. Swami sat on the other side and said, “Hey, get inside.” But it was difficult for me to get in. Finally, Swami said, “Ok. You get down. I will take you another day.” So, listening to Baba’s words, I got down.

The next day, I came neatly dressed and was sitting there to be called by Bhagawan Baba to get into the car based on what He told me the previous day. Swami came and again as usual gave one small gesture and everybody started running and got into the car and I was sitting there. So, I lost the

opportunity again and Swami did not even look at me. I felt that Swami simply wanted me to get out of the car the other day and he played a game with me and did not even look at me today. Then I decided not to make a dash for the car. The following day was the last day as after that, the car was damaged and it had to be shipped back to Italy, and the episode was closed.

I finished my studies. I completed my M.Com. I applied for research. Just then, I was told that there was a vacancy at Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School. I thought to myself that I would teach if Swami tells me to teach. Swami called me and said, "Will you go and teach at the Higher Secondary School?" I said, "Swami, whatever you say, I will do." That was how I got into the Higher Secondary School.

Then one day, one of my colleagues was sick and I borrowed a colleague's bicycle and went to Shesha Sai bakery (the only bakery here that time) and got some buns and a coffee to give my sick colleague who was down with high fever. The previous day it had rained. While riding the bicycle with all these items, I slipped near the slope at the arch and fell down. The bicycle pedal hit my leg. An English teacher came and helped me. When I got up, I saw a white bone on my leg for the first time. Within a few seconds, it was badly bleeding and I fainted. When I opened my eyes later, I was in hospital with a bandage with a ligament tear and a hairline fracture

In those days, Swami used to scold like anything if He came to know that somebody was riding a bicycle. I was also a Tabla player. Many people informed Swami about my condition. I asked the doctor, "Did Swami feel bad about what had happened?" I was told that Swami did not say anything and that I was given a Vibhuti packet. I was advised three weeks rest. These three weeks, Venkatachalam Sir and Suryanarayana Sir were with me all the time. Swami used to come every day and bless Sai Gita (Swami's elephant) on the opposite side of the road and bless me on this side of the road. They would assist me in getting to the road side for Swami's Darshan. This would happen every day.

One day, it was the Sri Krishna Janmashtami festival and Swami said, “Why don’t you come for programmes?” I said, “Yes, Swami. I will come.” Somehow, I started and one VIP helped me while coming to the Mandir. While returning, I thought I will go by rickshaw organized by some boys. Every year after Janmashtami celebrations in the morning, Swami would go to Gokulam and bless all the families there. That day, I thought of having an additional Darshan and so, I stayed back there. Swami finished His lunch and opened the door. He saw me sitting there. He asked, “You did not go back to hostel?” I said, “No Swami. I will go.” Swami asked, “How will you go?” I said, “Swami, rickshaw will come and I will go.” Swami said, “No, No, No, get into my car.”

With the help of some sevadal, I got into Swami’s car. Swami watched me getting inside the car and then Swami came and sat. It was an air-conditioned car and not much crowd inside the car. It was very cozy. Only me and the Lord next to me in the back seat. It was a very blissful experience. Slowly the car went to the Gokulam. Swami said, “You stay back here. I will come.” After ten minutes, He came back and I was driven to the hostel. All the boys were there and Swami told me to get down. All the boys including the warden prayed to Swami to come inside the hostel. Swami said, “No. No. I will not come. I came to drop this boy only.” I got down and was sent to the sick ward room in the hostel. It took 4-5 years for what Swami had said long time ago to materialize: Get down now. I will take you later.

My dear brothers, Swami’s words will never ever fail. It is up to you how you want to hold on to Him. It is up to you how you trust Him. The more you trust, He is with you. But the only question is, you cannot question divinity about why, when, where, etc. That is His will and wish. You have to be ready to accept whenever He gives. That is the beauty of this Lord.

We should always have good balance between mind and heart. So, if you train your mind and think positively, sound becomes music, movement becomes dance, smile becomes laughter, mind becomes meditation, and life becomes

celebrations. Everything is here. You just have to tune to Him and everything is fine.

Third aspect – Bhagawan Baba as God.

Love is God and God is love. Swami's love is something very unique. Every time and in every situation, He is different. His love is never the same. Swami always says that you are God. He makes a very profound statement: I separated Myself from Myself to enjoy Myself. This is true. Every discourse Swami starts His address with the term: Embodiments of Love. We see other people based on power, position, etc. but God, sees Himself in others. That is why He is Divine. That is what He wants from all of us. He wants us to change our attitude. Be equal to love. That is why He says, "Love all. Serve all. See yourself in others." This is the simplest spirituality. You don't have to do anything more. You see yourself in others and everything is fine. So, in this context, I want to share couple of incidents.

Swami used to go to Chennai. We had a small house with a garden where garden with a Jasmine flower plant. Swami likes Jasmine. My mother would make a small garland out of Jasmine flowers. She would wrap it in newspaper and we would take it for Swami. In Chennai, in Alwarpet, Swami would come to Eshwar's house and give Darshan. So, we used to stand there. Wherever we are, Swami used to call us and ask for that Jasmine garland and take it while going.

Eshwar told us that Swami would take that the garland to His room and by the following day, all the flowers would be scattered here and there in His room. "Where do you get these flowers from?" asked Eshwar. I said, "We don't buy it. We get it from our home." Eshwar tells that Swami loves these flowers and He is always having them in His hand. We felt very happy to learn this and did this routine even more religiously.

One day, when we were on the way, our scooter gave trouble. So, as we were very eager to reach, we took a bus and went there. Unfortunately for us, that day, Swami had already been invited by somebody to dinner. So, we waited.

We thought that Swami would be back by night 9 or 9:30. In those days, in Chennai, the last bus would be at 9:30 PM. But Swami did not come. We were waiting outside the compound and Swami came at about 10:45 PM.

He saw us at the entrance and His face became red. He got down from the car and scolded us, "You fools. Small children are there in your family. Why are you waiting? Why did not you go home?" My father, full of fear said, "Swami, flowers." Swami said, "Even if you could not have given them to me today, you could have given them tomorrow. Why you have to wait?" My father said, "No Swami. We wanted give and then go." Swami angrily said, "How will you go now?" My father said, "We will go Swami." "If you act like this, from tomorrow onwards I don't want your flowers. Don't do this," said Swami. Finally, Swami took the flowers and went off. We all started walking back home. Near Alwarpet circle, we tried our luck to get any means of transportation available at that late hour. Nothing was there and we kept walking.

Suddenly, we saw a car racing towards us and it stopped. The driver was an old man with a full beard. The driver asked, "Where are you going?" We answered him. As he was also going that way, he offered to drop us home. After some thought, we all finally got in. The driver drove very fast and in five minutes or so, he dropped us. We got down and my father wanted to give him some money. The driver did not take any money as he said it was on his way. Saying so, he went away.

The next day my father got his scooter repaired and we went for Darshan. Swami came and as usual He called us. We went and gave flowers to Swami. Swami asked, "How did you go yesterday?" We said, "Swami, somebody..." Swami said, "Shut up. I went to my room with the flowers. When I saw the flowers, I remembered you. Then I saw you people standing near that circle and searching for some vehicle. Nothing came. For your sake, I had to go to the local mechanic shop, pick up a car that came for door repair. Picked you all, dropped you and came back and left the car in the garage. Don't do this next time."

He chided us and walked off. We were shocked. People around us did not understand. We knew what had happened and who that old man with the beard was last night. He was none other than Swami. Swami can do anything, provided that you trust Him.

Next aspect – Love my uncertainty.

Very interesting one. When you are with God, you must take everything equally - name and fame, pain and pleasure, etc. One day during Darshan time, a singer was sitting there. Swami went to him and asked, “When did you come.” Today, Swami,” he answered. “Can you give a performance this evening?” asked Swami. “Swami, I came only for Darshan. I don’t have my accompaniments,” said that person. “Don’t worry. My boys are there. I will arrange. Today evening you perform,” said Swami. He agreed.

One harmonium, one Tabla, everything was organized. They all practiced. During Darshan, Swami came and saw me. He asked, “Have you all come?” I said, “Yes. Swami.” Swami was very happy and He was like a kid full of excitement. When He went inside the Bhajan hall and saw the lady singer, He was immediately very different. I sensed something wrong. He went straight to that lady and asked some questions normally.

He turned back, walked straight towards me and said, “Hey, go and tell that lady to change her saree. She is wearing a black coloured saree. Tell her to change it to another colour.” I asked, “Swami, how should I tell her?” Swami said, “You tell her (meaning: don’t use My name) I am giving ten minutes time. I will go to interview room and come back in ten minutes.”

What should I do? How can I go to her and tell that you are wearing black color saree, which is not proper, so go and change it? And we cannot use Swami’s name. We were all full of tension. I cannot go and tell that lady. I thought this is my last day in the Bhajan hall. If I tell that lady, they will kick me out of the Bhajan hall. Instead, it is better if Swami kicks me out of the Bhajan hall. I just kept quiet.

After twelve minutes, the interview door opened. Swami from inside whispered to me, “Did you tell her?” I just smiled at Him without any expression. When you surrender to God, He will take care of you. Only when you surrender, there is a ray of hope. When all this was happening, next to Swami’s chair, in the interview room, I saw four silk sarees. Immediately, I ran into the interview room. Swami asked, “What happened?” I said, “Swami, are these sarees for that lady?” Swami said, “Yes. We will give them after the programme.” I said, “Swami, why not we give her sarees now?” Swami asked, “Why?” I said, “Swami, in that way, I can give and tell her to change the saree. Give me five minutes’ time Swami, I will do the job.” Swami permitted.

Immediately, I took those sarees and ran to that lady and said, “Madam, Swami is very happy with you and He had send these sarees. Why don’t you select one color?” She also felt very happy that Swami had send the sarees. She selected one color and she had put it in her lap. I told her, “Madam, Swami has surprised you. Generally, He gives this after the programme. Why don’t you also surprise Him by wearing this saree for the programme?” She asked about how it would be possible as her room is in Round House 3.

There is small room where the Aarti plate and other things are kept. So, I organized that room for her to change her saree. She went in and within three minutes, she was ready. After five minutes, our Lord came and saw me. I gave a positive look. He entered the Bhajan hall, acted very surprised as if He didn’t know anything, and said “Arey, when did you change your dress?” She said, “Swami, You only gave it.” Swami replied, “Very happy. Very happy.”

Swami told me, “Your brain is working very well. Good idea.” I said, “What my idea Swami? You literally squeezed me. It is all Your Grace” and I took namaskar.

Love my uncertainty. At any point of time, God will always test you. It is very difficult to withstand His pressure. But you can survive provided you surrender. That is what I learnt.

You don't know why you have been chosen. There are so many people who crave to come to this place. They cannot enter. There are some people, who want to come but cannot come. There are some people who don't want to come but they come. We do not know why they are called. There are some people who get the letter but they don't turn up. There are some who stay one or two days and walk out. Why it happens? Nobody knows.

Swami says, "Without My permission nobody can enter My portals." If you all are here, it is all because He wanted you to be here. He loves you that's why you are here. His blessings and grace should fall on you all the time. Love Him, surrender to Him and He will take care.

Sri Mallikeshwaran

Manager, Sri Sathya Sai Students and Staff Welfare Society,
Senior Boys Hostel, Prasanthi Nilayam



I will start with this beautiful prayer poem composed by Swami and given to Sri Kasturi:

I firmly believe there is none kinder than You.
Tell me, is this not the reason why I am at Your lotus feet.
I firmly believe You respond quick when I do pray and plead.
Tell me, is this not the reason why I am crying aloud for You.
I firmly believe You are ever beside me to guide my steps always.
Tell me, is this not the reason why I am yours through day and night.
I firmly believe that You can never say No whenever I ask from You.
Tell me, is this the reason why I long for that glance from You...Why this dire delay to offer boons.
However long you make me wait and wait, I will not leave.
I will be standing still until Your loving eyes do turn on me.

My talk is going to be based on this prayer and the incidents or experiences that took place in my life and what I have observed.

First stanza: I firmly believe there is none kinder than You. Tell me, is this not the reason why I am at Your lotus feet.

First incident: Halwa sweet. Swami's hands always give. They never take or ask for anything. So, in the Mandir, there were a lot of dhotis and sarees to be distributed to all the people. During the old days, all the work was done only by the students. At the time, two sarees would be together and we had to tear it in the middle and separate them. All these materials used to be in the room near the Krishna statue in the Mandir and Swami used to stay in the room above the interview room. When we were working, suddenly He would come there. We used to do all the things that a normal teenager would do. We joked, we played, etc.

We would keep one fellow on guard to inform us if Swami was coming so that we can do the work more seriously. It is not that Swami does not know,

but physically, Swami acts as if He does not know. That is what I am going to share. So, from morning onwards, we would work. Although we had just a few hours of work, we would work leisurely for more hours, in an attempt to get more chances with Swami.

Once, at about 7:30, Swami was coming down. The student looking out (the guard) gave us an indication and I did not observe his indication but I was already seriously working that time. Fifteen minutes prior to this, I was joking around, pulling sarees from the gunny bags and saying ‘Sairam Sairam...’ I was tired and said ‘Sairam’ in that mood.

Swami came and said, “Oh...Very tired? All of you come.” So, all of us went and got Halwa sweet. All got one but I got two for doing that five minutes of ‘sincere work’ that He had seen physically. In spite of knowing everything about us, He is very kind. After all, we all are His children.

Second incident: Swami’s sandals.

Brindavan is most wonderful place on earth. So wonderful, that once upon a time, we hated having to come to Puttaparthi when we were students there. Because, in Brindavan, at five in the morning, we would get His first Darshan. We used to always say that in Brindavan Swami is like Lord Krishna whereas in Puttaparthi, He is like Lord Shiva. Shiva is not attached to anything. He is always in Yoga, even though He gives lots of boons. The joy part comes only with Krishna. In Brindavan, there used to be one wonderful practice. Whenever Swami goes to Gokulam in those days, some of us would run inside, take His sandals and put it on Swami’s feet because except the portico, all other places are full of mud and stones. So, we don’t want Swami to get hurt. Sometimes He would take and on other occasions, He wouldn’t. It would depend if we had *prapti* or not.

These kind of incidents would take place. So, one day, He went without wearing His sandals. I did not notice that Swami was not wearing sandals. While returning, he was two feet away from reaching the concrete and seeing Swami’s feet, I felt very bad and it got reflected in my face. Swami noticed

that. Within two steps, He would reach the portico, but He waited. He said, “Hey, go and get the sandals.” There is no need for Him to wear slippers because only few more steps to take but seeing the expression on our faces, His kind heart would melt. After using the sandals and taking that one step to reach the portico, He told to remove the sandals. That is the love and affection of Swami.

Third incident: Answer to a complaining VIP.

Over the five years that I studied at Brindavan, I hardly used to go to the college. Once, when Swami was not present in Brindavan, I thought, I would go to classes. It was my second year and the teacher asked me, “What College have you come from?” In those days, anyone could switch from one college to another. He said this jokingly, although he knew me.

Once we became a University (Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning) and Swami the Chancellor, He became very strict and all students had to attend classes compulsorily. Previously, He was not so strict. Our purpose of going to Brindavan and studying there was only for Swami and not for studies. So, one day a VIP, who was visiting, saw us standing there and started complaining to Swami, “Swami, these boys don’t have discipline. College is going on and all these boys are crowding around you. They are bringing a bad name to You.”

We all had palpitations. Swami says, “Love my uncertainty.” In any particular situation, nobody can guess how He is going to react. So, we were slightly worried about what is going to happen to us. Swami listened to his complaints patiently and He turned, His face became red. Swami told him, “Your son goes to the first show for any new film standing in line. So, is your son disciplined or my boys. My boys had come only for Me and not for studies. You keep your mouth shut.” So, next day onwards, it became ‘official’ bunking.

This happened in Puttaparthi. Swami was coming to the Institute Auditorium to give a talk. After His discourses, He generally sings a Bhajan and that time, Hari Bhajana Bina, was his favourite Bhajan. I was slightly disappointed as

I was listening to the same Bhajan every time. Swami came out of His room and that day, luckily, I was standing alone. Swami was about to go and I said, “Swami, Bhajana Bina Bhajan is boring. Sing some other old beautiful Bhajan, Swami.” “Hey, shut your mouth,” said Swami. Swami went and I too followed Him. After He finished his talk, the first Bhajan he sang was, ‘Hey Shiva Shankara...’ Then, ‘Chita chora yashoda...’ He sang 4-5 old Bhajans in a row. I was very happy. He then sang the last Bhajan, ‘Hari Bhajana Bina...’ See, He is the Divine supreme. Whatever He says, people are ready to do anything. I am an insignificant fellow and He listens to our prayers so spontaneously and then sings not just one old Bhajan, but 4-5 and then finally ‘Hari Bhajana Bina...’ as well.

Next stanza: “I firmly believe You respond quick when I do pray and plead. Tell me, is this not the reason why I am crying aloud for You.”

My memories on this. Sweet rice incident.

In Brindavan, I had the greatest privilege of sleeping in the Mandir. One day, suddenly when I got up at 5 AM, instead of thinking of God first after waking up, I somehow had a strong desire of having rice and milk together. I have the habit of telling Swami everything, regardless of whether it actually happens or not. So, I said to Swami that I would like to have milk and rice today.

In those days, in hostel, we never used to get those things, especially at five in the morning! I brushed my teeth and I was waiting. Just opposite to the main bungalow of Swami, there were many animals and a boy, who was taking care of them. Until that moment, I never knew that milk rice is given to deer. That fellow comes in at 5:45 AM and says, “Same quantity I always put. I don’t know how today it is somehow in excess, and I don’t want to waste such thick milk and rice. Why not we both have some?” I prayed for this to Swami at 5 AM and at 5:50 AM, I got wonderful hot milk rice. Swami responds so spontaneously.

Second incident – Rama Brahmam.

He was the care taker of Brindavan and Swami's fields. He was the in charge of Gokulam as well. He was illiterate but had a noble heart. We can never find a person like him. If Swami tells him to do something, without any reservations, He just does it. That's it. No other thoughts or bother. There are very few people like that. He has got another wonderful quality. He would go and plead with Swami about 'out of form' boys, that Swami would be ignoring (for whatever reasons) at a given point in time. He would say, "Swami. He is very good boy Swami. Please don't be like that Swami..."

The same Rama Brahman once got 'out of form'.

How? In those days, Swami would spend 250-300 days of the year in Brindavan. Swami came to Brindavan all of a sudden without prior notice to anyone. I was cleaning the Mandir and it was afternoon. Swami would allow 4-5 boys to sleep upstairs. Those boys graduated and as there is no post-graduation, they would go to a city College (in Bangalore) during the day and come back to the hostel and Swami permitted them to do that. Being a hot day, on that particular day, they were blissfully sleeping there. I did not know that they were sleeping. When Swami went up and saw those boys sleeping, Swami woke them up and sent them away.

Rama Brahman garu was in the fields taking care of crops. He came running when he realised that Swami had come. Rama Brahman used to be the first person to have Darshan in the morning and last person to have Swami's Darshan at night. He was about to go upstairs to see Swami. But Swami had sent at word asking him not to come upstairs.

Whenever Swami would come downstairs, He used to reprimand Rama Brahman. The reason was the four boys sleeping in the Mandir in the afternoon. The person who is supposed to take care of this building is also Rama Brahman. So, he had slipped from his duty. That's what Swami wanted to convey. Swami creates a situation like that. The four boys came and apologized to Rama Brahman. Swami would not interact with him.

This went on for ten days. Rama Brahman could not bear the agony. He

became wild. He sent a word to Swami through one teacher, "Tell Swami that I am packing off and going. I cannot stand this God." That was the most glorious day in my life. The most beautiful interaction between a true devotee and God.

Swami got the message. Swami sent a word to him to come upstairs. Rama Brahman's aged face (he was 75 years of age at that time) was so red that he could burst any time. He was in agony. Swami had neglected him for the first time in his life and that too for ten days.

He got the message from Swami to go upstairs. Now, Rama Brahman sent a message, "Ask whether I can come upstairs daily or not. Only then I will come. Or else I will go." We all were witnessing this whole drama. Swami sent a message, "Yes. Tell him that He can come." After receiving Swami's reply, Rama Brahman sent another message, "Ask Him whether I can have food with Him daily? Otherwise I am going off." One broader smile from the Lord and Swami said okay.

Bhagawan actually wanted to highlight the relation between a true devotee and God or how a true devotee should be.

After receiving the message from Swami, Rama Brahman again sent another message, "Ask whether I can do padaseva daily or not? Otherwise, I will not stay and I will go away." Swami finally sent a message, "Tell him that he can do whatever he wants to do." Finally, Rama Brahman went upstairs and reprimanded Swami. He said, "What do You think of Yourself? (A devotee saying this to the Lord!) What mistake have I done? You say that your love is a thousand mothers' love. Who are the ones who were sleeping here? Were they not your children? Am I the one who permitted them to sleep here? You only gave them permission to sleep here. Is this not their home? So, they can sleep whenever they want. (Here Rama Brahman did not blame the boys) What you did is a great mistake."

He was crying profusely. Swami was trying to pacify him. Rama Brahman

caught hold of Swami's feet. That day Swami created so much of Vibhuti and applied it on his back and said, "Whatever I do is for good," patting him and trying to pacify him. Then Swami looked at us with a wonderful smile and that smile taught was a lesson that we are supposed to learn. A devotee should never blame anyone even if he is in a difficult situation. He is the one who won the Lord. How? By winning the Lord's heart. We should have that type of devotion.

Rama Brahmam had high blood pressure and sugar. Here we have to see the humility of the Lord and He can go to any extent to serve His devotees. God is the only who actually does seva. He is the one who comes down to our level to help us. What we do as seva are the things that we are supposed to do. Swami was going to Ooty. He told me, "Take care of Rama Brahmam. I am going to Ooty for four days. He is having high sugar and blood pressure He is not well. At night, he needs to go to the toilet several times. So, take him."

I was a very light sleeper. There was a wonderful room called the safe room. Adjacent to the safe room there was a bedroom where Rama Brahmam garu used to sleep. I used to sleep in the safe room. On the first two nights, Rama Brahmam would just say, "Hey boy" and I would get up and take him to toilet, flush the toilet and then help him back to his bed. This happened 5-6 times each night.

On the third night, he called for me but I did not get up. He thought that he would walk to the bathroom on his own. So, he got up, but because of high blood pressure, he was unable to stand and was about to fall. I was sleeping blissfully. Swami, who was in Ooty, appeared there, took him to the toilet, made him lay down, and cleaned the toilet. Then they spoke for about half an hour. This occurred 2-3 times on the third night.

The following morning, he called me and said, "Yesterday Swami came. First, I called you. You did not come. When I got up, I was about to fall. Swami appeared and He took me to the bathroom." He is 75 years, with high blood pressure and sugar, so I thought it was his dream. I did not take it seriously.

On the fifth day, Swami came back. We opened the door. He came closer to me and said smilingly, “You made me wash the toilet.” I then realized that He can do anything for His devotees.

We had two interview rooms, the outside interview room and the inside. For families and groups, Swami would take people to the inside interview room. Otherwise, the outside interview room was used. In Brindavan, the inside interview room is quite posh. I would clean all the rooms. That day, the then governor of Karnataka, Mr. Govinda Narayan, was supposed to come at 4 PM. As it was an old bungalow, there wasn't much cement used during construction. Therefore, a lot of white termites used to be present. To kill the termite, kerosene was sprayed. So, I kept a bottle of kerosene as I saw some termite in the interview room.

By mistake, the kerosene bottle fell on the interview room floor. It was carpeted. It was a closed room and so, I opened all the windows and started cleaning the room. The Governor was expected to arrive in about an hour and a half. We all know how kerosene stinks. I thought that it was the last day of my job there. I was praying. What else to do. I did not know what to do. The clock kept ticking. At 3:30, I went inside the room and it was stinking very badly. The warden came and asked about what had happened. He told me to try something when he came to know about the kerosene. I prayed. There used to be a Vibhuti bag near Swami's chair. So, I took about 15 packets of Vibhuti and applied it all over the place.

Lord, please save me! After fifteen minutes, when I entered the room, nobody could know that we sprayed kerosene. No smell at all. That's how Swami takes care of you. After the governor's visit, I thought Swami was going to tell me something about kerosene. But Swami said, “The room is very neat and clean.” See, how Swami responds to our prayers.

Next stanza: I firmly believe You are ever beside me to guide my steps always. Tell me, is this not the reason why I am yours through day and night.”

My first winter vacation was in 1976. Swami always used to tell students not to go to cinemas watch television during their holidays. He told me the same. I went home and I never went to the cinema or watched TV. Besides, television sets came to Chennai only in 1975, that too black and white. I never watched any TV. I went to my brother's house one day evening.

In those days, if you wanted empty roads in Chennai, go out every Friday and every Sunday from 8 PM to 9PM, or Sundays from 5 to 9 PM. This is when you could watch a movie on TV and everyone would be glued to their television sets!

One Sunday, I went to my brother's house at 5 PM. I was about to return home. Just as I exited the door, they turned on the TV and the voice of Shivaji Ganesan could be heard. I just turned for few seconds, saw his face and immediately carried on home.

After the vacation, I came back to Brindavan. I was happy that I followed all Swami's instructions. I did not watch TV and go to the cinema. The first question Swami asked was, "Why did you watch TV?" I said, "No Swami. I did not watch TV." Swami said, "Half second you have seen Shivaji Ganesan no?" I remembered. He is always beside you, ever beside you. Then Swami patted me and said, "Good. You should be like that." He showed that He is omnipresent.

We used to play table tennis in Brindavan. I had a wonderful cut out of Swami made of cardboard. Whenever I am not physically with Swami, I used to talk to the cut out. I would offer breakfast to Swami and make him sleep on the small bed I made for Him. I used to share everything that happened to the cardboard Swami every day.

So, I went to a table tennis match. I lost. I went to my cardboard Swami and then told Him about it. Then, I went for Darshan. Swami said, "You lost in table tennis!" And then Swami said the exact score with which I lost that I shared with cardboard Swami. Then Swami asked a nice question, "Do you

like that cardboard Swami or this Swami?” I said, “Both, Swami.” Swami is omnipresent. He is always with you. It is very easy to stay with Swami. You can talk to him, share everything with Him, live with Him. Think of Him always. It will give so much of happiness.

It is not that Sathya Sai devotees do not have sufferings. I have faced enough. You will have suffering. But, with Him on your side, there is no suffering at all. So, live with Him, share with Him. Have direct communication with the Lord. Surely you will experience lot of things.

Next stanza: “I firmly believe that You can never say No whenever I ask from You. Tell me, is this the reason why I long for that glance from You. Shower your grace and Love on me.”

This incident occurred when I was in my final year. Swami had taken all of us to Ooty. We came back. I used to clean Trayee Brindavan. I was just standing outside when Swami suddenly came out at 3 that day. Normally he comes at 4:30. I was the only fellow who was standing. I said, “Swami, Swami...” He called me and asked, “What do you want?” “I always want to be at Your feet,” I replied. He is a great actor. His face became very pathetic. “What can I do? Your karma. You suffer like a dog. What can I do?” replied Swami. I said, “Swami, you only asked what I want. Now it is your responsibility to give it to me.” We used to be very free with Swami. Finally, Swami said, “Okay. Go. I will take care.”

Unfortunately, I had to leave and I was planning to come here at the age of 60. I thought Swami said that He would be available in the physical form until he is 96. Our calculations are different and His calculation is different. When I become 60, Swami would be 90 as per my calculation. I thought at least last six years I would spend here.

When I went to Chennai that’s what how I thought. I never planned to come to Puttaparthi again and settle down. But circumstances made me come here. Surely it was not in my karma to come back. But the word given by Swami,

‘Okay. I will take care’ - that made me come here. Without His love and Grace, surely, I would not have been here. Today all of us are here purely because of His love and Grace.

I want to now share some experiences about the safe room. The safe room was a place where there used to be a huge safe. The previous owner kept the safe and then built the room. He could not take the safe as it was very heavy. So, he left the safe when Swami bought that bungalow. So, that’s why it is known as the safe room. I used to sleep in that safe room. We used to massage Swami’s legs in that room turn by turn, and about fifty students would get that chance. It used to be full of joy with Swami in that room. All beautiful things used to happen in that room.

One day, the Karnataka State present of Sathya Sai Seva Organizations, Dr. Sundara Rao, had a doubt. Swami would get about 5 to 6 bags (each bag containing minimum of 1000 letters) of postal letters even in 1970s. In addition, he would collect hundreds of letters during Darshan. Swami had finished giving Darshan. He was sitting and a lot of envelopes were there on His lap. Dr. Sundara Rao was also allowed to come to the safe room. So, he came.

Swami asked, “What’s the news Sundara Rao?” He said, nothing Swami. Swami asked, “What did you have in mind when you got up?” Dr. Sundara Rao forgot about his doubt. Swami reminded him, “About letters.” Dr. Sundara Rao was shocked. He said, “Swami, you get thousands of letters. Do you read all those letters? This is the doubt I got.”

Swami very smilingly said, “Sundara Rao, from the time I announced my Avatarhood, the number of letters that have come, if I start reading those letters (at the time Swami was 53 years of age) I would have completed the letters that had arrived until I was only eighteen. And even that would be if I did nothing else but read letters! It is not possible for this human form to finish all that.”

Swami then suddenly picked up one letter which was very nicely sealed. He tore the envelope and gave the letter to Sundara Rao. The letter was in the hands of Sundara Rao but Swami started narrating the contents of the letter. Swami narrated the first ten lines which were general things narrated in the letter and asked, "Are these correct?" "Yes Swami," replied Sundara Rao. Then, He immediately said, "Give back the letter. Other things are personal."

Swami used to be very particular. We used to burn the letters. Then Swami said, "Sundara Rao, I am the one who is inspiring them to write. I am the one who is making you write. Then why take the letters? It gives a lot of satisfaction to the giver. Also, the people those who send feel very happy that they had sent the letters to Swami and that Swami would take care."

Swami taught us that He knows everything. We used to give letters every day. There may not be much in the letter. It can be as simple as, "Swami, how are you?" That's all. We used to give letters every day so that we get opportunity to touch him, take namaskar. Otherwise, we don't have any need to write letters. Only for our satisfaction.

I would like to share another incident that happened in Safe room. During the year I joined in 1976, Andhra Pradesh coastal districts faced a severe cyclone. Many places like Rajamundry, Kakinada, etc., literally got wiped out. I remember that during Swami's birthday celebrations in 1976, Swami said, "Don't give garlands. Give money so that it can help those people in need in the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh."

This is the first and only time that Swami asked for money openly. It was the month of November. Many sevadals went for service and did a great job. Swami came to Brindavan after Birthday celebrations. There was an old traditional Brahmin from Rajamundry who wanted to perform the thread ceremony of his son. But he had lost everything in the cyclone. So, he approached Dr. Sundara Rao and he needed 2000 rupees. He said that he doesn't want to ask anybody except Swami. He said, "I know that you go daily to Swami. Why don't you plead Him on my behalf?" Dr. Sundara Rao said,

“Sorry Sir. Swami does not like recommendations. I cannot do that. The only thing what I can do is, when I see Swami, I will pray for you from my heart.”

As said, he prayed to Swami from his heart to help the Brahmin. When Swami says, “My life is My message,” there are many things that we learn from Him. Whenever Swami gives money to somebody in envelopes, no one would know about it. Only Swami and the receiver would know. Otherwise, the receiver may feel inferior. So, Swami went out for Darshan. When he went out, he took one envelope. Nobody told Swami about that Brahmin. He went to that Brahmin and gave the envelope to him. None of us knew anything about it.

Swami then returned to the safe room. Dr. Sundara Rao was also present. Swami said, “What will happen if water is stagnant in the same place?” He replied, “Swami, it will stink. Worms will come and it would not be good.” “What happens if the same water is flowing?” asked Swami. “That particular place, it will always have fresh water,” replied Sundara Rao. Swami took one envelope and then said, “In the same way, money also.” If we keep on accumulating and locking it without doing any good thing, it is just like that bad water. You give money with a pure heart without any expectations and again money will come with many folds.

Swami asked, “What happened today?” Dr. Sundara Rao had forgotten about this old Brahmin and so he said, “Nothing Swami.” Then Swami said, “That old Brahmin, Rajamundry Brahmin.” Dr. Sundara Rao did not know what to say. He said, “Swami, he approached me about his need for 2000 rupees and for recommendation to ask you. I said no for recommendation and told him that I would pray for him.” Then Swami said that he had given him 2000 rupees. He then opened that letter that He was holding and said, “I gave twenty 100 rupees notes. When I gave, I did not expect anything. I got the same money back.” Some devotee had sent that money. Then He said, “See. Don’t keep on accumulating. Give to those who are in need. But give properly to whoever deserves the money. Don’t give for exhibition. Give with full love. Money will come back to you. This is my assurance.”

Sri H J Bhagia

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Co-travelers on the path of spirituality, I am glad to spend nearly 40 to 50 minutes with you. Reliving Swami's interactions and guidance is always joyful and it is a primary duty which Bhagawan has given to all of us to share his interactions with youngsters like you so that you can get the feel of Swami.

Once it so happened that Swami was to go to Brindavan in the morning. It was a Sunday and once Swami goes — in the month of February after Shivratri — He won't come back to Parthi for two to three months. One day (I remember it was 1993), it was known that in-between Bhajans, Swami would ask for Arati and go to Brindavan. The car was ready, Swami came for a round and after finishing Darshan, he called a couple of people for an interview and He came to me. With a very serious face, Swami rebuked me and said, "*Kya Bhagiya! Itna salary deta hai thousands of rupees, hundred rupees ka kaam nahi karta* (I give you all so much of salary worth thousands of rupees but you don't do work worth even hundreds of rupees worth)!"

So, everybody thought I had made some mistakes and I will be taken to task. He went in for an interview and in ten minutes, He came back in a totally different mood. In those days, Swami used to tie his dhoti with a belt so that if anybody pulled it, it would still be intact. He would walk very close to the devotees. When Swami came he was laughing, and His whole abdomen was shaking. I was enjoying this very rare sight of seeing Swami in that mood.

He came in that mood and said, "*Dekho Bhagiya! Hamara Telugu mein ek proverb hai. Ek hamara yahan Bramanapalli hai. Udhar ek hen gaya, vapas nahin aaya. Kahan gaya?* (In our Telugu there is a proverb that a hen went to Brahmanapalli, i.e., where Brahmins who are pure vegetarians stay, but it didn't come back. Where did it go?)" I also started laughing. Swami was saying this and laughing and enjoying this.

Whenever he cracks a joke there is always a deeper meaning because Swami in a letter himself has said S A I – See Always the Inner significance of

what he tells us. It is a joke that how can the Brahmins eat a hen. He said, “All of you say that you have come for devotion where is the devotion? You should show devotion in action. Thousands of rupees worth I give you pure love, I take care of all your problems. You people are not giving even a tea spoon of love to others. Not even 100 rupees worth in return!” We must share Bhagawan’s love selflessly with all.

When he talks about love, it is totally different. Swami gave a definition of love – what is Divine love? He said that Divine love is like a triangle. The three corners are selfless – always giving, giving and giving without expecting anything in return. It is unconditional love. The second corner is changeless. It does not change with time. In fact, I should be saying this in more detail tomorrow rather than today. It came out spontaneously. So, what is love is this what I have understood. The third apex is fearless. When you love a person, you cannot be scared of him. If a person does not do good or there is a deficiency – since you love him, you do not mind telling him. That is the pure love. That is what Swami expects from all of us.

On several occasions times He has appeared in foreign countries. I will share at least two incidences with you. In 1979, I was working for Royal Dutch Shell Group India in Thane, Mumbai and the principals were in The Netherlands. The Director was quite concerned. He wanted to stop wastage and cut down the cost of the company. So, he went through the files of all the supervisory staff. When my turn came for appraisal he said, “You have been doing very well for the last several years, your performance is so good, you have been getting double, triple increments, why are you not promoted? They have not written anything good about you. Tell me why?” I was as such very upset with the senior managers over there because of politics, it is a very common thing. When you go to the corporate world, you get lots of opportunities to practice the Bhagavad Gita. Keep on doing *Nishkamakarma*. Do not expect anything in return.

The reason for my superiors not writing good about me is that they said that I am too mild and not aggressive. They expected me to go and shout at the other departments as others do. But I said, “Other departments are also working for the same company. I cannot shout at them and they cannot leave their priority work and do my work.” Once I told my immediate boss, “You think it is important how many promotions we get? I said, how many employees share their personal things with me. I help them in whatever way I can. These are the feathers in my cap rather than how many promotions I have got in ten or twenty years.” I said, “How can many people become Managing Directors – only one. Nobody else can occupy this post when he is there. Then why should all of us fight?” He would not understand. I said we spend only eight hours a day in the company. The rest of the sixteen hours of the day are more important to me than these eight hours.” He then got irritated and put a remark that I am not willing to rise in the organization.

When this Managing Director came, he asked me as to why I have not been promoted. I retorted, “Sir I want to put this question back to you. You tell me – in spite of my good performance, why am I not promoted?” He was in a shock and asked for some time to find out and come back to me. So, he came back on 24 December 1978, on Christmas eve and said, “The first gift is that with immediate effect you are promoted. The second gift is that you are going to be sent abroad for two years, to The Netherlands, on an exchange basis and the third promotion is that when you come back after two years, you will be the Departmental Manager.” So, in one shot, three promotions! Then I realized, *deyney waala jab bhi deytaa hai, chappar phaad key detaa hai*, meaning, when God gives you, He decides to rip off the roof and bless you with everything.

Then a very interesting thing happened. He gave me one assignment which I had to finish before I go. He said, “In the past, the couple of people whom we sent abroad single have come back double. That is not a good sign for the company and therefore the assignment is that before you go abroad, you should get married. You go double. If you come back triple we have no objection.” I had got married and the day I was leaving, Swami had come to

Bombay, at Dharmakshetra. My in-laws took both of us for Darshan. I had a nice Darshan, took namaskar.

While travelling on the flight to The Netherlands, I told my wife, “Keep that Sai Baba with you, do not ask me to follow your Sai Baba. Your parents know Swami since 1963. I have nothing to do. For me my parents are God.”

We reached The Netherlands and were given a beautiful house with four bedrooms and a lawn. One day, my wife was offering Arati to Bhagawan. I had told her, “I do not believe in these things. I understand that as a husband it is my duty to stand by you. But I do not know any Arati. You do what you like.” She took a candle, a matchbox and she was doing Arati with the candle! She said, “That is the routine in our house.”

One day, it so happened that I was watching the candle which she had lit. The white candle became Swami in a white robe. The flame became Swami’s face giving me Abhaya hasta. Swami’s eyes were also blinking and He was smiling at me. I pinched myself, Is it a dream? I asked her, “Listen, am I in the wakeful state or a dream state? She said annoyingly, “Will you stop it? Let me finish Arati. Then I realised that I am still in the wakeful state.

Again, when I looked at the candle, one candle became 9 candles in a semi-elliptical form with nine Swamis, all of them smiling at me and I could not resist my temptation. I said, “Will you stop your Arati. Can’t you see your nine Swamis standing there?” She said, “Have you gone mad? She was not able to see what I was able to. A person with a scientific mind got puzzled. I asked her for any book on Swami. She said that she has not brought any books as I had warned her not to get them. But there was a book on Sai Baba - Man of Miracles. I read that thoroughly and realized what Swami is. That was the first time that Swami had shaken me and changed my concepts of life.

During that time there were many obstacles in the organization. I would tell my wife, “Tell your Sai Baba, what is He doing in the organization,

fellows don't appreciate my work? I work so sincerely and they expect I should communicate and be in touch. They have given barely three weeks of training." She did not say that she will tell Swami but the person who criticized me got transferred to another department and the new appointee appreciated the same work that I was doing. The new superior said, "Such a developing country you come from and what an intelligent approach you have!" There was a 180 degrees change in attitude. He was admiring me again and again. Then I came and told my wife, "Sai Baba is working!"

I started a consultancy firm after coming back to India. In 1984, somebody asked me if could provide consultancy services for the marketing of Alfanso mangoes in European markets. He offered me to be his representative. He agreed to arrange for my accommodation and a handsome salary. I liked the offer as he was giving me tickets, accommodation, food, everything. So I went there on April 24 1984. I landed at Heathrow Airport. This exporter's relatives received me and made me very comfortable.

After some research, I found Western International Market, a wholesale market in London, quite far off. For going there, I would get up early in the morning at 3:30 or 4:00 because I had to reach the market before 5:30 as the wholesale deals would conclude before 5:30 AM. I was interested in selling bulk. There was no luck and I was very tired. One day, I thought, let today be the last day of exploring the fruit market. So, I started with that. I used to catch one double-decker bus, then one underground train, then a second underground train and reach Heathrow Airport. From Heathrow Airport, I had to catch another double-decker bus and walk another twenty minutes to reach the Western International Market.

The temperature was almost zero. By the time I traveled all the way, I was not prepared for such extreme weather conditions. They told me it will be very pleasant, just a suit will be enough. I did not take any woolens. So, the moment I reached the point where I had to walk to the Western International Market that day, it started to not only raining but it was a hail storm. Big chunks of ice were hitting my head. I had no umbrella and it was coming like bullets

and I had no control from where it would hit me. My hands were shivering, my nails turned blue and I was not able to even speak properly.

It was subzero and I had no protection. Then I thought to myself: nobody knows anybody here. So, you can't just flag a car and ask them to give you a lift. Then an idea came to me. In my College days, at the National Cadet Corps (NCC) march past, we did left-right left-right...I thought to myself: I will do that, shouting not left-right but chanting Sai Ram, Sai Ram, Sai Ram.

So, I started marching very briskly to generate heat within me so that the outer temperature will not do anything. Sai Ram! Sai Ram! Sai Ram! I had hardly taken 10 to 15 steps and Swami Himself appeared physically and hugged me. He put his hand on my shoulder. So, I said Sai Ram! Sai Ram! Swami, looking at me, said Sai Ram! Sai Ram! In this manner, twenty minutes passed.

I reached the Western International Market. I was fully drenched in the ice-cold water. But when I looked at Swami, not even a drop of water on his hair or robe and he was barefooted. I put my briefcase down on the floor of the entrance of the market. I wanted to take my handkerchief and wipe my face so that I could hug Swami. The moment I put my briefcase down I saw Swami going away. I said – Swami! Swami! Swami! He disappeared in thin air.

Somebody patted me and said, “Indian? Crazy?” He looked at my condition. He realized I was feeling cold. He said, “What do you want?” I asked him, “Do you deal in Alphonso mangoes?” He said, “Yes, how many cartons do you need?” I said, “I do not need. I have come to sell. He was taken aback, “What? You have come to sell Alphonso mangoes here? Are you a merchant? A fruit merchant?” He took me to his office and made me comfortable there. His room was quite warm and heated up. He opened the fridge and asked me if I would like to have whisky or brandy. I turned it down. Then he asked about tea or coffee to which I said that I don't drink. He said in a humorous

tone, “You are not even a tea-totaller, you do not drink even tea?” He called his assistant and said, “A baby from India has come. Bring a glass of hot milk and give it to him.” So, she took the carton of milk to the kitchen, warmed it up and gave me. I ate a cheese roll, and warmed myself up.

He said, “Now show me the consignment.” At that time one of his assistants came and whispered something in his ear. He put him off saying, ‘you do not worry’. I told him that by a phone call, right from here, in a few days, the consignment will arrive – the first consignment. The consignee and I went to his office with some documents and bills. As I opened my briefcase, he saw the photo of Swami with the Abhaya hasta.

He was pleasantly surprised and asked me if I know this person. I said, He is Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, my God.” He said, “Now the riddle is solved, when I saw you I was attracted towards you and I brought you to my office. In spite of my assistants telling me not to entertain Indians as they are cheats, I believed you.” He added, “You know I am also Swami’s devotee. I am a mechanical engineer in this fruit business. I got married in 1978 in Brindavan. Swami performed our marriage and I have a daughter. I was surprised and said, “I am a chemical engineer in this fruit business, I got married in 1979 and even I have a daughter. So, in that way, the bond became stronger and stronger.

Then one day he said, “My wife wants to meet you, would you spend one evening with us? I accepted the proposal. A day prior to that my father-in-law came there to deliver lectures in Manchester. So, he came and landed and came to the place where I was put. Then he said, “Have you thought of taking something to his place when he has offered you evening tea. I said, “I don’t have anything, what can I give to people here, they are already living in a material world. Moreover, I did not carry anything from India.” Then he said, “Wait, I have got a white-robed photo of Swami. Take this when you go to their house.”

When I reached there, he introduced me to his wife and looking at me she

did Sai Ram and took me to her shrine. Then I said, “Madam! I have brought a very small gift for you.” Then she opened and saw the photo and started literally dancing. She said, “Oh! Swami has come! Swami has come! Swami has come!” I was pleasantly surprised. She said, “When we got married in 1978 in Brindavan, I told him to get me this very photo which I had seen there. He came back without the photo. I searched the whole of London, I never got this photo and today you have brought the same photo. So, Swami has come.” The bond became stronger and stronger and we did good business together as well.

The exporter’s relatives, the place where I was staying, gave me three days’ notice to vacate, as they were expecting some relatives. I was quite worried as they were taking care of my food in addition to my stay. Believe me, whatever amount they had given me in Pounds and Cents was getting over. I had only a travel pass and a few coins.

The morning I left, I was worried as to what would happen. I reached one place before the transaction actually started. Nothing happened and I was hungry. For 20 cents, I took peanuts, roasted peanuts. I ate that and in the neighbourhood there was some water, which I drank. A few coins were remaining. Before I left for London, my father-in-law had given the name and telephone number of one of his acquaintances in case of an emergency. I had a few coins. I put whatever was left with me in the public telephone. I dialed the number and I was praying to Swami. Somebody picked up.

By Bhagawan’s Grace, it was the person who I was supposed to contact. As soon as I announced myself, he said, “Are you running out of money, your rupees won’t work here. Do you need accommodation? I tell you that I have a four bedroom house. You can come and stay with me.” I said, “Do you mean that?” He got offended at my remark and asked me to wait and he will come and pick me up in a beige coloured Opal car.

On the very same day I collected my luggage and went to his house. He said, “Mr. Bhagiya, feel comfortable; your father-in-law was my wife’s teacher

several decades back. I have got an opportunity to pay back a little bit. You have to do a small favour to me. I have two daughters. One is in the third standard and the second is in the seventh. I do not know Mathematics. Can you help her a little bit?" I readily agreed. It was a beautiful stay. Everyday used to be a parayanam session. We literally enjoyed.

My father-in-law came to London on the 27th of May 1984 which happened to be his birthday. He suggested that we go to a house in south London where Vibhuti appears from Swami's photo. Since we were going to some shrine or temple, we purchased a box of *pedas*. In that house, from all the photos of Swami kumkum, chandan, amrit and Vibhuti were materializing. We were very happy to see the manifestations of Swami in his house. There used to be quite a crowd.

The traffic policeman objected as it was causing a traffic jam on the main road. When he came to know that a miracle is happening in this house he got the photo of Allah, and Vibhuti appeared on that photo as well. Then that traffic policeman became a devotee and used to monitor traffic on Thursdays and Sundays when the house was open to the public. My father-in-law told the residents of this house, "Today is my birthday, can I offer some *pedas* to Bhagawan, please?" They offered this box of sweets to Swami and when they got it back, there was Vibhuti on each *peda*. This miracle I have seen with my own eyes. These are the experiences with Swami in other lands. These were in the Netherlands and London.

I was also worked in Bahrain where only Mohammedans stay. I used to consider that I cannot get along well with Muslims. I do not know why, probably because of the subconscious mind of previous births. Swami put me in a work situation where except me, everyone else - my subordinates, my bosses, and the whole country were Muslims. So that barrier was also broken.

But at last when I wanted to come back to India, because of the ill-health of my daughter, my boss who was a rough and ill-tempered fellow said, "Let me see how you will go?" He gave a wrong picture of me to all my seniors. It was a government project and they had taken away all my Passport and other

documents and told me that the papers have gone to the Sheikh.

In the meantime, we had come to Prasanthi Nilayam and Bhagawan had told us to come back within a month. I made a statement (to myself), “The Sheikh of all Sheiks, Swami has told me to come back in a month’s time let me see which Sheikh comes in-between.” So, I made all preparations. Until the last date, they were not releasing my visa. They had taken my passport and visa. We were supposed to leave on 25th of October 1986. Until the 23rd, nothing had happened.

Out of the blue, the finance director of the company wanted to talk to me. I expected a problem coming my way. He came and surprisingly, gave me back my passport and visa. He said, “The Sheikh of this country is very happy with your work. Here is your ticket. I had already booked the tickets for coming here. He has booked a business class ticket for you and your family. Here is a voucher for transporting all your luggage. Wherever you want it will reach you, and he has a draft for the work bonus for all your worked here. Our Sheikh is very happy and he has asked me to convey to you that the doors of this country will always be open for you. The amount of work that you have done so sincerely among the local people, the Sheikh is very happy. He has made every enquiry about you.”

They had made a false allegation that I am a technical spy, learning everything and stealing it to India. But they had found out how, on the contrary, I had trained so many local people and saved them from various difficulties. Once you have understood what Swami is and tested Him and tasted Him, leave everything to Him.

I will conclude with one important point: Way back in the 1970’s, Swami said every individual is given a long rope of time and karma. When they use their discrimination, with that long rope they can tie themselves around my Lotus feet. They will always be secure. They will always be with Me and I will always protect them. But, if they do not use discrimination in the right direction and they go away from Me, because the rope is very long in terms of time and karma, they then have to hang themselves with the same rope.

Dr. Shailesh Srivastava

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As I stand here, so many thoughts cross my mind. I have to really think of how and where I should begin. In 1982, I joined the Brindavan Campus, as a student of first Pre-University Course (PUC). That's the equivalent of XI Std. I stayed in Brindavan for four years. In the third year of undergraduate studies, I shifted to Prasanthi Nilayam, because at the time, the Physics major was offered only in Prasanthi Nilayam. When I joined Brindavan for my XI Std., I was not at all interested (in Swami and God). I was quite an atheist. But a drastic change took place from day one at Brindavan and perhaps even a month or two prior to that.

I remember an incident involving one of my classmates in the X Std. He was a Bengali and had to go home for Durga Puja. Now I am telling you this just to make you aware that there can be such 180-degree changes in people. I think almost every year I would have changed the goal of my life; the worldly goals of life and I was very passionate about them. But the fact that it kept changing tells us that it is not the ultimate goal.

So, this boy told me that he was going for Durga Puja. I asked him, "Why Durga Puja? Why do you go? Why do you worship Mother Durga?" He retorted, "What do you mean?" He was a short boy and I was little taller than him. Moreover, he was my own classmate. He further said, "You see I believe in God although I said I don't." And then he added, "You know, actually I have also attended Bal Vikas for one or two years under pressure from my parents, especially my mother who kind of forced us." And then he said, "Then why do you go to Sathya Sai Baba?" I said, "I don't go, my parents insist that I go. That's why I go. I don't believe in all those things." I didn't know (back then) that 34 years later I would be standing and speaking about Sathya Sai Baba. That's how an individual can change; from one extreme to another, if I can call it so.

I was very fortunate to be at Swami's school. In our XI Std., we would all get up and ask Swami so many things and we didn't even know what we

were asking. We were just excited. Everybody was running around. So, we were also running around. The ambience itself was such that you ran around. Everybody was running with a pen and a photograph and we also ran. From the day I joined, I got changed. I was a non-vegetarian until the day I joined and from day one until today, I have been a vegetarian.

I studied in a school in Delhi where things were very different, that's all I can say. So that was the 180 degrees flip, not for a flop. Swami came and stood in front of me and I said, "Swami, interview - mother has come." Swami said, "Put the garland to me." I didn't have the courage at that time to go and garland Swami. So, I didn't do it. The next day, Swami came to me and said, "You mentioned an interview, call your father." I said, "Swami, mother has come." Swami said, "Alright, call your mother." Absolutely at ease, you know. He was always at ease. Swami said, "Call your father." There was no air of superiority, or divinity, He was absolutely human. I called my mother along with some others and stood outside the interview room. Then Swami called us inside, just the two of us. He didn't ask us to sit down, as the interview lasted for just two minutes. But in those two minutes, He reeled out so many things.

When it happens to you, it will shock you. When it doesn't happen, and you hear somebody, you will think - it's just a story, ah, who knows if it is true? Swami knows everything that happens in the family. We were strangers; it was the first visit for me, the first interview for both my mother and me.

Sathya Sai Baba was a stranger in that sense and He caught us off hand. Just a minute before, He was saying, "Call your father, Okay, not your father, call your mother," as if He was unaware and the next moment He knew everything. He created something and gave it to us. Then He looked at me and said, "How are you doing in your studies?" and before I could open my mouth He said, "Mind wavers here and thither, you don't concentrate. With concentration you can study well."

If you are a 100% student and if you are getting 99%, God will not be happy. If you are a 60% student and getting 55%, He will not be happy. Do to the best of your capacity and then leave it to God. So, a lot of things took place and it took me some time. I am being frank. It was not that I was in love with Swami on day one. I had made up my mind to change myself and I needed to put a lot of effort and I understood that I needed to put a lot of effort to get that. How do I get feeling for somebody who was a stranger to me until just a few months ago, and I was laughing about Him?

During the XII Std. winter vacations, I was going home for the first time after joining in XI Std. A brother from Delhi and I decided that since we were going, we would take Swami's permission. Swami was at Puttapparthi then and we were at Brindavan. So as everybody was leaving for home, both of us were excited and we took a train and reached Dharmavaram at 2 o'clock in the night. We slept at the railway station and then got up the next morning at 4:30 and reached Prasanthi Nilayam at 6 o'clock in the morning. We had to take Swami's permission and then go home.

As we stepped inside Prasanthi Nilayam, we saw Dr. Lakshmi Narasimham, who was then working in Brindavan, and had come to Prasanthi Nilayam. When he saw us, he said, "Hey, what are you both doing here?" We said, "Sir, we came for Swami's Darshan since we are going home." He said, "My God! Now it's going to be a problem for everybody. Has your warden not told you?" We asked, "What Sir?" He added, "No, no. Just yesterday Swami sent word that none of the Brindavan students should come to Prasanthi Nilayam; they should directly go home. So now if Swami sees you, the whole hostel, including the warden will get a scolding from Swami. It is better to stay afar for the sake of everybody. Don't go there inside for Darshan." We thought to ourselves, "Oh my God, we have come all the way just for that." Dr. Narasimham then gave us an idea, "See that East Prasanthi...you know where you all stay, there is window there, go there inside and then from the window you can take Swami's blessings and go."

We went and stood there and Swami gave Darshan. Door Darshan as they

say. After the Darshan, we were just waiting and the crowd was dispersing. Suddenly we saw Dr. Lakshmi Narasimham running towards East Prasanthi; he was coming quite fast. So, we became excited and when we came down the steps he told us, “Something very interesting happened; Swami is very kind. He called me for an interview and said, “See, two students have come from Brindavan. They are going home to Delhi, give them this prasadam (Swami gave us Vibhuti) and He has asked you to sit in front for Darshan.” Oh! We were in the seventh heaven. God knows how to take you to both extremes. The Gita says: The wise man knows how to take the push of the oncoming wave and the pull of the receding wave.

Swami trains us to reach level 1 but we only remain where we are. Even now it happens; we have not reached anywhere. I am not talking from a platform which is higher, it’s just higher because I have to stand and speak. Many of you may be more evolved, spiritually; we must never assume. But I am just sharing my own journey as it might throw some light to some individuals- and if not, I know that it’s going to transform me at least. So, if I speak, it affects me, so I am happy whenever I get this opportunity to speak.

So, we went and sat right in front. The thought in our mind was exactly what you would have thought, ‘Oh! Swami has asked us to sit in front.’ Of course, many of you don’t know how it would have been at that time, and you have not seen Swami. But naturally we were thinking: ‘Oh! So, an interview; we are going to get an interview.’ Because we went and sat right in front of the interview room, because Sir also wanted it to become clear for Swami that he had done his duty and the boys were sitting right there.

Swami came out of the interview room after sometime, looked through us and walked off. So, on the one hand, He had already shown His omniscience, given us enough and on the other, He said, “Okay, cool down; you just came for my Darshan and permission: both are over. I have given you Darshan and permission; I have given you Prasadam also; so, go home.” So that’s how things were. This was an introduction to just tell you that in the very beginning; in the first one or two years, Swami had already made an impact.

When we talk of experiences we may talk of miracles, we may talk of transformation, information, and variety of things. We have experienced all kinds of things. So, I would like to possibly tell you not just those kind of miracles which we experienced in the physical presence of Bhagawan, but also some of the things that happened without His physical presence. Because that is something to which we can all relate even at the present moment. How He responds, how He reacts to various things? So, before I go into that may be one or two small tit bits, here and there.

We were in Kodaikanal. We were coming back from a photograph session from the hill top and I was walking quite near Swami. There were two other school boys: one from XI class and the other one from VIII class.

Swami was walking right next to me: normal, absolutely normal, as a normal human being. We were about to get into the bus and He was getting into His car. Just next to the bus was a bougainvillea creeper. Swami suddenly turned to the bougainvillea creeper which has thorns in it. He started plucking the leaves. So, we wanted to help Swami pluck flowers but He had anyway plucked by then. A twig broke and there were no flowers. Interestingly there was a plum attached to the bougainvillea leaves. We were surprised: a plum on a bougainvillea creeper? And right in front of you it gets plucked out from the tree?

So, you would have seen that photograph in so many places, Swami standing with some plums in hand. Swami took that and gave it to these two school boys and said, "Teeko." He gave it to them. There were two plums there. So, these fellows plucked the plums and the twig was in one of the two boys' hand. I could see the fresh cut in the twig. Now I am speaking like a Physics person would speak. So, there was a fresh cut in the twig, a bougainvillea leaf and then there were these plums which went into these boys' mouths.

Naturally when you eat plums you take out the seed. So, after some time they kept on chewing. I said, "Swami has given, that's fine, you can remove the seed." Then these fellows say, "Sir, it has become chocolate." Ah, there is

another greater message in it, for those who like messages and for those who just like to see something happen, lots of things happen and they finish.

Just think about it, God can pluck plums from a bougainvillea creeper. He can give you fruits that are logically not supposed to be there. It's a thorny creeper. You are supposed to get thorny leaves and twigs and out of thorny actions. He can give you sweet fruits. Only God can do that; He can change Karma. And not just give you sweet fruits out of thorn creepers, He can remove the seeds also. Absolutely seedless, make it the sweetest possible. That's what Swami can do, and we have seen that happen.

When I joined Brindavan, the old bungalow was there. But this was after the Trayee had come up. So, I think I was in my third year Undergraduate. I was sitting right in front of the Trayee on the other side of the road, not towards the Trayee. Then Swami comes walking. He plucks a cactus leaf. You know cactus leaves are very thick, stout looking leaves. He plucked it out and walked forward, very gently...you know Swami glides. Behind me, Mr. Ratan Lal was standing. He was a very elderly devotee of Bhagawan and Swami looked at him. He was an M.A. in Philosophy and Swami looked at him and showed this leaf and said, "Ratanlal, is this Philosophy, is this Philosophy?"

Swami was holding the leaf on his open palm for those who are interested in rationality, it's correct. At some point of time we would break the rationality, but before we break it, let's be very rational. The devotee said, "If you say it is philosophy, then it must be philosophy." Swami said 'very good' and keeping the leaf on the palm just blew on it. There was no wave of the hand, no movement, no talk. He just said, "Very good, very good, good boy." For Swami even the old man was a good boy.

As Swami blew on this leaf, the leaf became a green coloured solid lingam. God also likes a pun. So, He changed the green to grey. That's not too difficult, correct? Green to grey: just one or two letters changing, He came forward, and gave it to him saying, "Put it around your neck." So, this old innocent man took the lingam and but he didn't like to tie it round his neck. So, he

took the lingam and was wondering what to do with it. It was a solid Lingam, so how would he put it around his neck. Swami was watching. Swami took it between his two fingers and blew. A hole came through the Lingam. Swami gave it back to Sri Ratan Lal and told him, “You can put it around your neck now.” He was very happy. So, these things used to happen with Swami in any moment. We do not know when it will happen. The people who have seen will tell you: anything and everything could happen.

Once, the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh had come and he was seated there. I don’t think any Chief Minister used to listen to Swami with as much attention. He came and sat there right in front of the interview room door and Swami said, “*Dunnapotu, akkada kurcho.*” He felt happy. How many people, and that too a Chief Minister, would feel happy if somebody called him *dunnapotu* (Male Buffalo)? But Swami had that capacity; He could just call you a *dunnapotu* and you would feel so happy, as if you have got a degree.

And Swami said, “What have you got to eat?” Somebody took out a box of a mixture, two, three types. Sometimes we get a salty and spicy mixture. Swami wanted to give it to everybody. There were almost thirty of us, and you know Swami’s hands: so precious. So many people will be wanting that touch. Swami looked at the mixture. What to do? And then He created a spoon, a spoon made out of shell. You know sea shell. He took the spoon and smiled. It was so natural for Him and we also got used to it. Something came out. That’s how Swami is.

It was 1984 and the drama was Surdas. For this drama, Swami used to call us to the interview room and tell us so many things. All these things used to be during the evenings when we returned from College. The previous night, I was speaking to some XII class boys (like a Parayanam) and suddenly I got a message from my mother. She said that my brother had met with a very serious accident. And this was way up in the Himalayas. He was going in a car and on the other side there was 1000-foot-deep ravine. Somebody else was driving the car and he was sitting next to the driver. I came to know all these things later. As the driver was negotiating the terrain road, suddenly he

noticed what was supposed to be a 90-degree curve. But then he realized that it was a U-turn, 180 degrees turn. He had already turned at 90 degrees and the vehicle was at a good speed. The vehicle headed for the 1000 feet stunt. My brother said, “You know Bhaiya, for the first time in my life I realized that I was going to die. There was nothing else, meaning there was no option. I could see that the next moment we were going down. So I shouted, “Bachao (save).” And he took hold of the steering and just turned it very sharply and as fortune would have it, there happened to be a very huge tree trunk there and the car went and rammed into the trunk and the entire windshield shattered and all the glass pieces and everything hit my brother’s eye and face. It did not go down the ravine and he described to me the sequence of events.

He was as atheist as I was, possibly up until this incident. In spite of the fact that I was studying here, he was not yet a believer. Then he told me that as he had been lying there — and it took him some time to return to consciousness — he realized that he could not see. Then he realized that there was blood all over his face and he was bleeding profusely. So, he knew that he was going to die in another half an hour or so. He narrated to me the sequence of events.

Just recently when I was telling this to another person, he told me: ‘One particular Swamiji told me that this is what happens when somebody is going to die. You have an automatic rewind and you go through your life.’ I was surprised, because I didn’t know this. So, he said that he started going through the whole thing; and was also thinking of what was going to happen once he died. He further told me that as he started thinking of mother, father, brother, he thought they would take care of themselves. He thought that my brother had anyway become a Sanyasi there and mother and father will somehow manage. But then he realised that he had just got married a year ago and that he had got a small, a few months old kid. And the moment the thought of his wife and child came to him, he instantly shouted that he did not want to die. He pleaded with God to save him.

But he knew that he was going to die. Just then, it so happened that suddenly a Maruti van came from nowhere. A Sardarji’s family was there in this van.

Then, two ladies and the Sardarji got down. And the moment these ladies saw my brother, they started shouting, “Oh, he is going to die.” That made him all the more nervous, bringing in to his mind the thought that he was finished. And then they tried to stop the bleeding; they tried so much but nothing worked. So finally, the Sardarji took out his turban and tied it all around my brother’s face and possibly, that may have done something. They quickly put him at the back of their van and started driving. Now my brother knew that, the nearest hospital was one and half hours away from this place down the plains. So, in his calculation, he just thought that there was no hope.

As life was already ebbing out of him, he then had another sequence of thoughts. The way he narrated to me the incident, I felt as if I was talking to an elevated soul. He said that he lost his senses one by one: the first thing to vanish was sight, although he could hear the rattle of the van, he could touch, he could feel, he could smell; the next thing to go was the hearing. I don’t remember what he told me about the smell. So I may not be giving you the perfect sequence. Sound went off, he could still feel touch and felt he was there. And you know what? After some time, even the touch went off. Then what was there? Sound went off; smell went off; touch went off; Taste - taste of blood - no taste, nothing remained. And he told me, “Bhaiya, everything went off, but I was still there though I could not see, I could not hear, I could not taste, I could not feel. But I just knew that I was still there. The next minute I realized that I was coming out of my body. And then something happened.”

So now I will shift over the scene to Prasanthi Nilayam. It was night time when I got this message. And I knew that by that time, Swami had already retired. My mother came and told me, “Go and tell Swami.” I said, “I can’t do anything at this time. I will go tomorrow morning.” So, I tried the next morning which was a Sunday morning. We had gone for Darshan and I had taken a letter. I was supposed to be in charge of the drama and song presentation. So, I was sitting with the music boys. And I knew that. It was interesting. Swami came around; looked at us; smiled like any other day, but

unlike any other day, for the first time He called us in the morning for an interview. Interviews had never happened in the mornings. He never called for a drama in the morning. But that day He called all of us. Some four or five of us went and I had my seat at the right foot of Swami. I had to play some tunes and sing songs and tell Swami about what had been done. So, Swami was very excited as usual for the drama.

And He looked at me and said, “Chesavu (what have you done)?” He is testing me, correct? Because now He has called me for the drama interview and checking whether this fellow was going to break down. So, I suddenly said, “Swami, I am fine. You know everything,” and kept sitting. And then Swami kept asking this one and that one and after some time, He was satisfied.

He looked at me and said, “Brother ka accident hua?” My God! My hair stood up. But still I was thinking rationally. So many other thoughts were crossing my mind. I was thought: OK, Swami would have taken the letter; mother who was sitting outside also wanted to give a letter; Its probable that Swami had been told of the accident, etc. But then Swami said, “Dekho, uska karma tha.”

The moment He said that it was his karma, I thought: Bad karma, okay, that’s the end of his life; if his karma was good, he would have been saved. And my mother had already told me that my brother had 180 stitches on his face and he might not survive. So, I wanted to say something to Swami. Just then Swami said, “Mother wants to go? Papam, mother no, mother’s heart; naturally it’s understandable. Let her go.” He didn’t ask me to go. And then Swami said, “Tumko nehi pata re, kitna stitches laga usko (you don’t know how many stitches he got).” I had my letter ready and I wanted to tell: Swami, 180 stitches. So, when Swami asked me, “kitna stitches laga, tumko pata hei?” Then even before I got up and said Swami told: 102. I got deflated little bit. Because I had the bigger number there, I wanted to say 180 but He said 102. So anyway I accepted it and just kept quiet. The interview got over; Swami gave me Vibhuti and told me to give it to my mother and on His way out He went to the ladies’ side where my mother was sitting and blessed her. He had

not talked to my mother while coming.

Now, coming back to my brother who said that he suddenly realized that as life was going out of his body, he heard a voice that said: What are you doing? Chant Gāyatrī Mantra. Let me tell you brothers, my brother and I had forcefully been going for Balvikas and we had learnt the Gāyatrī Mantra there. That was his only knowledge of Gāyatrī Mantra. He further said that he heard a voice, you know, he heard a voice, even without ears, without his mouth, he chanted ‘Om bhur bhuvah swaha...’ God knows where, may be in the mind. The moment he said, ‘Om bhur bhuvah...’, he could see something: the rear wind shield of the Maruti van had changed into Prasanthi Nilayam. Swami was standing and smiling with Abhaya hasta in the middle of it.

And he said, “I chanted the Gāyatrī Mantra. I chanted the Gāyatrī Mantra only three times and the moment the third one got over, the van stopped; we were at the hospital and all my senses came back, all at once. In fact he told me that the pain of having to have 180 stitches was also not felt. He said that after the first 20, 30, 40 stitches, the pain of the anaesthesia — they had to give injection and stitch — became more than the pain of the stitching. In one month’s time, he recovered.

He didn’t tell this to anybody; he was waiting to tell me this experience. Even though my mother had gone off to Delhi, he didn’t tell anything to her. When he came to Puttaparthi one month later, he had recovered. They had done plastic surgery on his face; he was almost fine. Just outside the Kulwant Hall, we were talking and I was telling him everything and I was so excited listening to his experience and tell him that see, Swami was sitting in the Interview room so innocently. Swami never told me that this is what had happened there as if He does not know anything.

Then I hesitated to tell what all had happened: what Swami had told about the stitches because I didn’t want his fresh faith to get any doubt because he felt that he had got 180 stitches but if I told that Swami had told 102 stitches, he might feel something. That was my monkey mind. And I don’t know why I asked him how many stitches he had.

Without any doubt, he said: 102. It was my turn to get nervous. The so called faithful one. I realized what Swami had done, so humanly He behaves and yet He can transform lives.

I will add another karmic...what you call...tag to this experience. It so happened that during my brother's Undergraduate studies in Kolkata, he had seen an accident on the road where somebody was lying in a pool of blood and nobody wanted to go and take up the case because you would have to meet the police and anything might happen. My brother and another classmate of his decided to take him to the hospital. They both picked up this fellow who was dying; took him to the hospital; did all the emergencies required; contacted the parents and saved his life. They also did whatever the police required.

It is said that when Draupadi was being disrobed, Krishna didn't respond immediately; He was looking at what deeds Draupadi had done before, to give her back. When Krishna bled, she tore her sari and tied it to the wound. You know, there should be something there. Swami says: 'Take one step towards me and I shall take a hundred.' Krishna looked at Draupadi whose sari was being pulled and offered a hundred fold, nay a thousand fold. In the case of my brother too, he had helped a stranger and Swami paid him back by saving him from the jaws of death. God, the compassionate One, in spite of all the other karmas which he claimed in the interview room and scared me, had already saved my brother. When he was talking to me, it was already one day over since this experience had taken place. So, these are things which shake us when they happen.

Let me tell you different kind of experiences. They are not directly physically related to Swami, but it helps us to relate to Swami. How He responds to small things! Take for example my Ph.D. It was the summer vacation in 1999. I was sitting at the Physics Lab at the Institute. That year, painting work was going on for Swami's 75th Birthday. Everybody had gone to Brindavan and was enjoying Swami's proximity there. I stayed back as I had been told to do research which I was never doing. I was always teaching in the school and during summer vacation, I would go to the Physics lab, repair some

instruments and feel happy. Since I was there anyway, I was also asked to just supervise the painting.

So, I was left in the lab with all the instruments covered with old newspapers. I was protecting the instruments and sitting there on one of the tables as the painters painted. As this happened, a stray thought crossed my mind. I said: 'Swami, you want me to do research and all people are sitting happily in Brindavan and enjoying your Darshan; I am sitting here supervising the painting job for your 75th Birthday. Who's going to do the research?' As I said this in my mind and I turned, my eyes fell on a journal, a research journal randomly lying there on the table there. I picked it up casually and opened a random page.

Believe me. Exactly one year later, when I was told to do research, actually my entire research came out of that paper. That one paper and three months, that's all it took to do my Ph.D. God had responded. You know Swami says: 'You do my work and I will do your work.' If I really tell you how my research was done, it's unthought-of, it doesn't happen this way. It actually happened only in three months. When it actually happened, I had not even finished. But my professor came and told me that if I wanted to get Ph.D., then we must call it a day and you have to inform the Administrative Office that you have finished. He asked me to show whatever I had done. I was wondering: 'I am still doing things. How can I tell him?' But he came and saw and I told him that I had done this, I had done that.

We were in hostel and it was already late at night. Still I told him that I was planning to do this and do that. He listened to everything I said and he said, "It's fine; it's more than enough; we will call it a day." I was very nervous. He told me that he was going to send an official letter to the Institute the next evening. Of course, I am somehow not justified in telling him that I had finished when I had not yet finished.

But one thought struck my mind: 'What if I don't finish!' The next evening when I was sitting in the Bhajan Hall, for the first time Swami suddenly called me to introduce some VIPs sitting on the other side of the portico. Swami

told them, “Shailesh has also finished his research, isn’t it?” I was so happy; I said, “Yes, Swami.” Then Swami said, “What!” I said, “Lasers.” Swami said, “Lasers” and did a motion with His hands...something like cutting, surgery.

Interestingly, the first paper that I published was on Lasers and those things are applicable for Laser surgery. I actually did not know. I did that work after Swami told me “Lasers.” In the next one month all that came out. So again, God is very willing to help us at any moment. I was in one of those holidays, working from 6 o’clock in the morning to 6 o’clock in the evening in the Physics lab repairing some lasers. I would return to the hostel and only one or two other teachers were there. That day when I returned to the hostel, my eyes were paining because of the continuous flashing of the 100 MW, a very high power laser beam. So, I was having a kind of headache.

You know under stress, under strain, we give way; our mind tends to give way and you know it suggests so many things. So, as I was walking into the hostel, I was so tired and I was telling myself: ‘Swami is not here, that He is in Brindavan and I am simply sitting here and working. Laser is not working properly and I am having a headache.’ I was walking towards the dining hall and as I neared the dining hall, I saw a television set right in front of me. I must tell you that it so happened that after my X Std., I had not touched a TV and this change had come about because somehow God wanted it to happen although I used to be glued to the TV, watching cricket and other things. I don’t know how it got left out.

So I had by now kind of lost touch with television for almost seventeen years. Suddenly, I looked at the TV and said, “I am going to see TV today.” It was like a big thing for me. So I said, “I am going to see TV today; what’s wrong?” Of course, nothing is wrong. But even as I was thinking of that, some other thought told me, “No, all these years anyway you have not seen. So, there is no need to do that now.” Then the other voice said, “No, why can’t I see?” So, I crept towards the TV. I did not know how to switch it on, because TVs had changed in the past seventeen years. I didn’t even know what a VCR was and what a TV was.

So, I just went towards the TV and felt something as if Swami was telling me from inside, ‘Why don’t you go and watch TV?’ You know sometimes Swami speaks to you in so many ways. It can be your imagination; but just strengthen that imagination. After all the world is an imagination. Then why can’t we make God as part of our imagination? If you really make it so, God will make the imagination a reality. That’s true, take it for granted, as a fact. For example, if you imagine Him to be your friend, imagine Him to be with you, He will make it in to some kind of reality. He will start speaking to you in your imagination and you will find those things really happening.

So, I went and hesitantly switched on the TV: should I or should I not? I switched it on and this is how it began: *Vakra tunda mahakaya*...I was shocked; I wondered what I had switched on. I wondered if I had switched on a video or something else and when the screen came, Swami appeared on the screen, blessing. I got the shock of my life. My hair stood up and then I saw the stage at the Poornachandra auditorium. Somebody was performing *Vakratunda mahakaya* at the Poornachandra auditorium. It was Bombay Jayashree and the programme was the Bharat Cultural Integration programme. Oh, so I must have put on the video. I didn’t know the difference between the VCR and TV.

So, I shouted, “Sir, come here, Swami’s video is there.” He said, “There is no video in that; it’s just a TV.” I said, “Swami is coming on the TV.” Everybody got excited and then we sat there and saw it for about half an hour. We had Swami’s Darshan. That’s the last time I switched on the TV; I have not switched it on or rather I didn’t get an opportunity to switch it on again. But, what I learnt there is that if you think of Him, then He makes everything; He changes everything into Himself. Lots of such experiences: I am particularly telling you this because these are the times when we need to connect with Him like this.

I will tell you another small, beautiful experience. I had just finished my M.Sc. and was staying at East Prasanthi. Swami was not talking to the boys for over two months. One day, Swami gave a discourse and I saw another student sitting in front of me. Just by seeing his emotion and devotion, I was

so overwhelmed that I cursed myself. I said, “Swami, when will I ever get those feelings? I can’t love you; I don’t have that in me; my heart is like a rock. I will never learn. When will I love you?” I just went in that kind of a state. I didn’t have any feeling for Him.

Then I went to the canteen and then outside. In those days there was a bakery just next to the canteen. I bought one bun and tea and sat down there eating the bun wrapped in an old piece of newspaper. While the thought that I can I never love Swami was going on in my mind, something written in big bold letters on the newspaper caught my attention: The home of your heart is a very wonderful place. Dream that you will love it and you will fall in love. Dream that you love and you will fall in love.

That’s how I took it and was naturally taken aback. My hair stood and I started crying, “Oh! Swami is so kind.” I turned that bun, lifted it just to see what it was. This is just to tell you that God can respond from any corner; it does not matter. That was an advertisement for a bathroom, the heart of your home! See, the so called bad world, which they apparently say is bad can give you spiritual realization. If you turn your vision towards God, start looking at Him, start searching for Him...the more you start looking for Him, searching for Him, the more He starts responding.

Any questions?

Such a wonderful boy! Nobody has asked me such a question. See how compassionate and thoughtful He is! He asked me, “What happened to the driver who was there in that car?” They all survived, my brother faced the brunt of it.

Dream that you will fall in love and you will fall in love. When I joined I didn’t know how to love Swami. When people used to run, I just ran and at some point in time, my intellect helped me. It said that I needed to get closer to Him. I needed to love Him because that’s it. I had already understood that somewhere intellectually, it was going to do me so much good. So, I started telling Swami, “I want you, I need you, I love you.” I said this everywhere, crying on the bed while sleeping, in front of others, under the blanket; and I

did that for quite a few years. I kept telling to myself: Swami, may be not in this birth; I am not fortunate enough to experience you; but may be in the next birth. Somewhere God responded. So, it takes time. For Swami says that even a thousand years of darkness in the room can be removed. All it requires is just one click of the light. So, don't worry that it will take another thousand years, but you need to make an effort to find out where the switch is. Move towards the switch and put it on.

How to know Swami is speaking through us? Yes, I have experimented with it in so many ways. That may help you, or it may not. It's different for each one of us. Swami's relationship with each one is unique, absolutely unique. Like the other day, Mr. Gopal Rao said, "Each is a perfect tree, a unique extraordinary person. So, everybody has his/her own ways and means." If ever you feel that this might be Swami's voice, this thought might be Swami's voice...if ever you get that feeling that may be this is Swami telling me to do this, just do it without doubting.

God is so compassionate; He knows everybody and everything. Therefore, He says, "*Bechara* (poor fellow), he thought that this was My voice and followed it, so let Me come to his rescue." He will somehow save you even if it was not His voice. The next time your confidence in His voice will become that much stronger. Each time you resist temptations and follow His voice, it becomes stronger and stronger and in the course of time, you know that this it is Swami's voice.

So, the method of knowing it is by practicing it: practice, practice, practice and you will automatically start feeling it. Jesus said, "Every time you resist a temptation, you gain power." What is power? Power is needed to even understand what Swami's voice is. So, if you have a temptation or a selfish desire, and if you can reduce the self-interest, the voice of God becomes stronger.

When you are outside, you have so much peer pressure, distractions and you have to manage all such things by yourself. People will be there telling you: Come on; why don't you smoke? why don't you drink? That's common

outside and many of you, especially the new comers, and not the old timers, might have been doing it just before the vacations. But all these things will happen. So, don't forget; when everything else is lost, don't forget the power of prayer. Never underestimate the power of prayer.

Just a few days ago, a boy rang me up from Delhi and said that he had got a job and he was in a room sharing it with another boy. But the boy offered him a bottle on the first day itself. When this boy refused to take alcohol, his roommate asked him whether he smoked this boy told that he didn't even eat non-vegetarian food. The other boy was shocked. He said, "What's wrong with you?" So, this boy rang me up and said, "Sir, it's becoming so difficult, how do I manage?" I didn't know what to say. But I know there is one last resort. If you are sincere, He helps in so many ways. This happened just five days ago. I told him, "Pray to Swami, what is there? After much difficulty, you've got this room. So, you cannot shift out now and why don't you pray to Swami? He will certainly do something."

The next day he rang me back saying that he had got an SMS from his roommate that the boy had got another job. He told that he had to leave the room and go to some other location. So, what I am trying to say is: When you are under pressure, when you are forced into a variety of circumstances, do not forget that He always exists. It is easy for you because you have prayed to Him, you have lived in His hostel and you have been His student. If you have that confidence and say 'Swami help me', He will help you, there is no doubt about it.

With these words, I pray to Swami that He keeps all of us connected to Him throughout our lives and until the last breath, that He keeps us ever working towards Him, to please Him and in the process make the world a better place to live in.

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The Divine Mother

Swami always says His love is equal to the love of a thousand mothers and every student has at some or the other point of time experienced this unusual and inexplicable level of compassion, love and empathy.

One day, a student was suffering from a terrible headache and when he was unable to bear it anymore, he sought Swami's intervention. Without any delay, Swami manifested a large piece of sugar candy and personally fed it to him, bit by bit, just like a mother and the student was cured of his ailment. On one occasion Swami cured the stomach ailment – an ulcer in my stomach after none of the prescribed medicines had worked for me.

Once I had to go to Hyderabad for a period of one month in order to complete my research work, and I had absolutely no money with me. At this hour of need, Swami understood my situation and without any communication from my side, Swami gave me enough money to meet my expenses and told me, "I am your Mother, don't hesitate to take what you need, from me. I have arranged everything."

The Antaryami

On the very first day as a student at Swami's college at Brindavan, I was called upon by Swami and given a chance to do *pada seva*. What Swami told me after that made me aware of Swami's universal awareness, His omniscience. Since I had done a lot of *pada seva* to my mother at home out of His immense love for her; Swami accepted my service and gave me a chance to do his *pada seva*. Swami is *Sulabhaprasanna*.

Another student had always craved for a protective talisman from Swami, and then, one day, Swami granted his wish by manifesting a medallion with Lord Hanuman on one side and *Rama Pattabhishekam* on the other. Swami

said, “Because of your faith in Lord Hanuman and your long term *sadhana* of chanting the *Hanuman Chalisa* every day since childhood, I have given you this medallion. Hanuman will always protect you.”

Once when Swami was in an interview with a few students, one among them was adamantly questioning Swami as to why He allowed close proximity to one particular student without any apparent reason. He claimed that he, too, was sincerely following all the hostel regulations and the prescribed routine. Swami told him, “I am the best doctor and I know which medicine should be given to each one of you. When I look at a student, I know his past, present and future. This student who has apparently not done anything to receive my proximity, has done a lot of meritorious deeds in his past lives and in the future he will be of great service to Sai. Your bank balance is nil. Yet you are talking to me. How do you explain this?” Still this adamant student persisted with his arguments. At the end of the session Swami created a chain for him and told him: “Your parents are presently praying before the Samadhi in Shirdi that you may receive my Grace. Their prayers have reached me and this is its fruition.” The boy crosschecked with his family members about Swami’s claim and found it to be true. This proves that Swami is the embodiment of the same Sai Baba of Shirdi.

Apadbandhavaya Namaha

My mother was doing seva in the South Indian Canteen and during a random visit, I found my mother in a terrible state. Her eyes were bleeding profusely because a sharp needle had pierced her eye. I reacted with understandable panic, when someone told me that Swami had arrived for his Darshan rounds in the Mandir. I rushed to Swami and as soon as I sat for Darshan, Swami came to me. I related the accident to Swami, and for a few moments Swami gazed at the me intensely, after which tears rolled down from Swami’s eyes. Swami said, “Nothing will happen to your mother, I have taken all the pain.” When I went back to my mother, I found no sign of any injury. The bleeding

had stopped. It seemed no needle had ever pierced her eye. This is how Swami helps his devotees in times of devastating difficulties.

I had the bad habit of overeating and had therefore put on a lot of weight. Once, I felt a burning sensation in my stomach, and after consulting some doctors, I came to know that I was suffering from a stomach ulcer and internal bleeding. I was even told him that I won't survive for long. I decided not to discuss this matter with anyone, especially with my mother. The very night I made the decision, I got a dream of Swami who commanded me to take 4-5 Bilva leaves on an empty stomach from a tree inside the Planetarium complex. During the next fifteen days, instead of having a few leaves, I ate off a 'branch' from the tree! On my next medical check-up, the tests showed no trace of any ulcer! If we courageously accept what life has in store for us, God will take care. This acceptance comes from faith.

Premaswaroopaya Namaha

There was one student whom Swami had told outright many a time not to continue at His Institute. Swami wanted him to join the Indian Air Force (IAF). The boy, however, did not want to leave Swami. To end his fears, Swami assured him of His constant presence in his life by saying: "In your eyes my form is there, in my eyes your form is there. Nobody can separate you and me. Wherever you go I will be with you." That boy is now serving as an officer of the IAF, at the Yelahanka Air Force base.

On another occasion, a student wrote a letter to Swami, indicating that he didn't want to live anymore; the reason for which was 'family problems'. After reading his letter, Swami walked to him right away and told him, "When I am right in front of you in My physical form, how can you even think of doing such a thing? Nothing will happen to you. I am always there for you. Live a long, happy, blissful and prosperous life." Saying so, Swami blessed him and created a chain for him.

Patriotism

Major General Cariappa used to visit Swami in Brindavan and Swami would ask his boys to shout Jai Hind. The Major's roar was so powerful, however, that it was louder than the chorus of the 300 boys shouting together. Swami loved it. Swami revealed that the Major had exceptional love for his motherland and that, as an army officer, he had led the Indian army right from the forefront during the 1965 China war and also during the encounter with Pakistan in 1971. Swami has always given instances of *Desha bhakti* by bringing forth illustrious battle heroes before His students to inspire them to love their motherland.

During my early days at Brindavan, Swami used to accept huge garlands of *Kanakambara* flowers from the boys, especially the birthday boys, who would run to Swami and then garland Him. Swami would wear the garland for a long time while giving Darshan and then return it to the boy.

Once it so happened that Swami manifested a plum fruit and then threw it to a boy along with the garland. The boy was overjoyed! Swami said, "For you I gave this small fruit, but for humanity I have given Myself." Swami had dedicated every moment of His earthly sojourn for the uplift of His students and devotees and in return Swami wants us to work for humanity, to take the truly global *Bharathiya* culture beyond the boundaries of our country.

We have got Swami as the re-embodiment of the same Shirdi Sai Avatar and as our Divine mother and father, who knows more than what we know about ourselves, who loves us more than anyone else, who stands by us in every difficulty, who is pleased by the smallest of pure intentions on our part; who inspires us to become better citizens of our country.

These Paranayam sessions act as faith boosters and deepen our faith in the supreme spiritual reality. They are moments of profound revelation. The sweetness of Swami's words are now the subject of our daily contemplation.

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With today's progressive technology and communication, we feel visiting Parthi is an easy task. It looks as though we only need to plan the trip and then book our tickets; but really, it is not so. In some cases, people who have never heard of a place called Puttaparthi have found themselves in Parthi. To put it in another way, visiting Parthi is not really in our hands.

My brother was suffering from polio and my family had consulted many doctors, without satisfactory results. They even took him to AIIMS, Delhi for better treatment and it was there that they come to know that his brother was suffering from myopathy, which had no remedies.

When the family was returning to their place in Madhya Pradesh from Delhi, they met a Punjabi gentleman in the train. He told the family about Baba and Puttaparthi. What a beautiful and unexpected entry! He has his own ways.

Even though my mother had placed Swami's photo in our altar, I did not believe in Swami. My mother had asked me as to when would I pray to Swami. I casually and confidently replied that I would pray only if the Jasmine creeper in our courtyard flowered that night. That plant had been in the courtyard of our home for six years and it had not flowered even once. So I was pretty sure that it would not flower and, that too, that very night. But I was wrong. Three flowers blossomed that night from the Jasmine creeper. He is the Master of the Universe. He can make wonders happen.

Later, Swami came in my dream and the dream itself was very different because in the dream, Swami was not the way he normally looks, but was wearing a 3-piece suit! In the dream, I told Swami about my brother and Swami asked me to bring my brother to Puttaparthi. He decides when to call.

When our family met Swami at Whitefield, Swami asked my father not to get angry about the condition of his ill son, and instead to love him as he

is His *prasadam*. Swami also told me that my brother had only some time remaining in this world. The family was happy for having met Swami, but was sad because they would lose one of their members. Exactly as Swami said, the brother passed away after some months. He is the all-knowing one.

After the death of my brother, my family again came to Parthi to have Swami's Darshan. They had to wait for a long time and it was then that Swami asked me to join His College. As commanded, I joined Swami's college after a year to pursue a degree. Surrender to Him and just follow His words.

When I was studying, I got an opportunity to cook for Swami. A group of students, including me, would make different dishes, four times a day, for Swami; and we students would very happy when we used to hear that Swami had partaken the food offered. This was a golden opportunity to get closer and serve Swami. He always gives you opportunities.

Swami loves His students and students have always been dear to Swami. Swami always looks to convert an opportunity into a lesson for the students. Once, a person staying with Swami suggested to me that it would be nice if flowers were placed on the dining table where Swami dined. With all eagerness, I went and plucked some flowers from the hostel garden, and placed them on the dining table. On seeing the flowers, Swami asked who had placed them on the table. I, assuming that would get a pat on his back from Swami, replied that I was the one.

To which, Swami replied: "Where did the flowers come from?"

"From the hostel, Swami," I replied.

"Who gave you the permission to get it from the hostel?" asked Swami.

"It's *Your* hostel Swami" I replied.

Swami said, "I am not interested in your flowers. Flowers look good in the garden. That is also my Mandir. If you want to offer flowers, buy them from

those who sell them to eke out a living.”What a great lesson and how relevant it is! He is at times a difficult task-master.

In this incident, Swami also shows his concern towards the common man. He is the Mother of all, and a mother does not discriminate among her children, and has concern for all.

Once when Swami was in a public meeting with the then chief minister of Karnataka, He referred to him as Prime Minister instead of Chief Minister. Within a month, the Chief Minister was catapulted to become the Prime Minister of India! All He speaks is truth and His words always come true.

At one point of time, Swami was ignoring me and not talking to me, I decided to leave Prasanthi Nilayam, without giving notice to anyone. This being the day of Guru Poornima, Swami was giving His discourse in the evening. Even as I reached the Ganesh temple at Prasanthi Nilayam, to exit the Mandir, Swami during the course of the discourse made a statement, “Just because I do not talk to people, they want to leave and go.” I heard this as I was moving out and was taken aback and immediately changed my mind. I retraced my steps towards my room in the ashram. The Lord will never let go of His devotees.

The relation Swami has with His students is really unique. He is the father, mother, brother, teacher, friend and everything to His students.

All the instances in Swami’s life and the experiences of His devotees are all interesting and exciting but they subtly contain a greater and deeper inner meaning in them. He is the embodiment of Love and His glance or smile can convert a stone heart into a cotton candy. His life is indeed a message. Every time Swami has done something, it has been for the welfare of all; He does not do anything to satisfy his own selfish drives, for He has none. He is the one who has everything, and yet has nothing.



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