



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



SUMMER COURSE

in Indian Culture and Spirituality

2017





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

9-11 June 2017 | 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 9th to 11th June 2017 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. **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 *Mama Dharma: Message of the Gita* (2 Aug 1984) and *Karmanye Vadhikaraste* (13 Sep 1984). 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 through these intimate sessions.

This book chronologically represents the entire programme of the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality 2017. 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.



CONTENTS

SSSIHL Summer Course 2017





DAY 1 | 9 June 2017

WELCOME NOTE

Sri Sanjay Sahni | 10

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Sri K Chakravarthi | 13

BENEDICTORY MESSAGE

Bhagawan Baba | 27

EXCELLENCE IN ACTION

Sri Vijay Menon | 30

A RAINBOW OF SAI WISDOM

Quiz on Bhagawan Baba's Teachings | 48

OUR CULTURE, OUR STRENGTH

Sri Sounak Dey | 50

OUR BELOVED SWAMI

Sri D Sai Vamshi Krishna | 54

BHAGAWAN BABA ON EDUCATION

Prof. R Gangadhara Sastry | 60

DAY 2 | 10 June 2017

FACULTY PANEL DISCUSSION – WORK, WORSHIP & WISDOM

Moderator: Dr. Srinivas Srirangarajan | 65

PATHWAY TO LASTING SUCCESS- THE GOLDEN SAI WAY

Sri Pushkaraj Gumaste | 86

PERSPECTIVES ON THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Miss Aswathy Suresh Babu | 96

TYAGEINAIKE AMRUTATVA MANASHUHU

Sri Anand Vardhan K | 99

SAI, THE ESSENCE OF SWEETNESS

Dr. T Ravikumar | 104

DAY 3 | 11 June 2017

PANEL DISCUSSION – SAIENCE OF DIET AND HEALTH: ANCIENT WISDOM AND MODERN PERSPECTIVES

Moderator: Dr. (Miss) N Srividya | 112

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

Prof. S Siva Sankara Sai | 131

PARAYANAM SESSIONS - Experiences with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

ANANTAPUR Campus Sessions

Dr. (Mrs.) Dwaraka Rani Rao | 136

Prof. (Miss) N Niranjana | 149

PRASANTHI NILAYAM Campus Sessions

Sri Prem Anosh | 159

Prof. R Gangadhara Sastry | 178

BRINDAVAN Campus Sessions

Sri Sanjay Sahni | 202

MUDDENAHALLI Campus Sessions

Sri Amey Deshpande | 216

Dr. C N Sundaresan | 222





Welcome Note

Sri Sanjay Sahni

Controller of Examinations, SSSIHL

Adhyatma Vidya Vidyanaam - among all branches of knowledge, I am spiritual knowledge.

Thus declared the Lord in the Bhagavad Gita. The soul of the education is the education for the soul. Bhagawan's model of education is not a secular model of education. It is neither a spiritual model of education. It is a beautiful blend of the secular and the spiritual, like the two wings of a bird or the two wheels of a bicycle. We have been eyewitnesses of the passionate educationist that He was. *Abam Sathya Bodhaka* - I am the teacher of truth, He declared.

Throughout His interaction with students, faculty and the administrators of the University, we found that there was nothing too small which didn't attract His attention, or nothing too big where He had some suggestion to give to help us on the issues at hand. He was a hands-on Chancellor. Therefore, when we have this Summer Course. It is as much an exposure to all our students about the wonderful cultural and spiritual heritage of India as it is a tribute to Bhagawan's *utsaham* (enthusiasm) to mould His students as ideal citizens of the world.

Bertrand Russel, British philosopher and a Nobel Laureate in Literature, once said, "Man is a credulous animal, it is important that he should have good things to believe in, otherwise, he will be satisfied in believing bad things." Bharatiya samskriti, from ancient times, has given us everything that we need to be equipped with for life; and to provide it to the youth of the country, Bhagawan started His educational institutions and way back in 1972, He initiated the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality. It was an opportunity for the youth of the country to come and stay with Bhagawan, and imbibe His message by seeing Him and listening to Him.

I recall at this juncture, that wonderful morning, the inaugural day of the



Summer Course in the year 1990. That was the first time, Bhagawan initiated the Summer Course exclusively for students of the University. He was speaking at the college auditorium at Brindavan.

There was a professor in Economics, Prof. Bhanoji Rao, from the National University of Singapore, sitting in the audience. He was one of our guest speakers and an ardent devotee of Bhagawan. Listening to Bhagawan, a thought occurred to him. "Bhagawan, I have heard this message of yours so many times, why are you conveying this message again today to us?" The inaugural function got over and we all made a beeline to the hostel dining hall. It was a beautiful moment to dine with Bhagawan, both in the morning and in the evening. Prof. Bhanoji Rao and Late Sri G V Subba Rao were sitting on the table. He came up to them and without looking at either of them, He expressed, "Good things have to be told again and again, again and again, again and again." This is the message of every scripture of every religion. If you take the Vedas, the Bible or the Koran, there is so much of repetition because the scriptures are like a mother to us. The mother knows that the child is not going to be a receptor all round the clock, and so she keeps on repeating the message so that, when the child is receptive, that day the message will go straight to the heart.

The Summer Course brings to us so many intimate memories with Bhagawan. Way back in the seventies, there was a student who was selected to speak. This was one of the privileges given to the students. He went to the mike and out of sheer nervousness, he froze and was not able to speak even one word. Acutely embarrassed, he stood in the aisle of the auditorium when Bhagawan came for Darshan in the evening. As Swami was passing by, Bhagawan looked at him and said, "What happened this morning?" The boy replied, "I could not utter even one word!" Casually Bhagawan said, "A day will come when you will not stop speaking." Today that student is a Pro Vice-Chancellor of a University and he travels the length and breadth of the country training teachers of various colleges and schools so that they become better and more capable professionals. That is the blessing of Bhagawan.



I remember a morning session that was going on in the college. We generally keep a chair for Bhagawan to sit for such sessions. That day, Bhagawan came from behind and the student who was sitting near the central aisle suddenly felt that Swami wants to sit amongst us. Quickly he slipped down from his chair and sat on the floor and Lo and Behold, instead of going to the chair in the front, Swami sat off in the chair along with all those students. There was no aspect of a Summer Course where He didn't have a say, including the selection of the speakers who would speak during the Summer Course. Eminent people from all walks of life would come and address us. That has been a hallmark of all Summer Courses since that point of time.

I remember at this juncture, an ardent devotee of Bhagawan, Sri Ashok Singhal, a very patriotic gentleman who passed away recently, was speaking to students and was trying to inculcate in them the spirit of hard work. He said, "We live in times today where people think that without doing hard work, things will automatically flow to us. He took the bhajan of Mahatma Gandhi to drive home the point:

*Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram
Dugni Rozi Aadha Kaam*

In God's name give me double the salary for doing half the work.

I remember on one more occasion when Swami sent him to talk to us and he made a statement which I can never forget: If you can give your heart to Bhagawan, your education here is complete.

At this Summer Course, like any other Summer Course, there is a feast for the body, there is a feast for the mind and there is a feast for the soul. So, my request to all the students is to open your hearts and receive the wonderful blessings that Bhagawan has in store for each one of you.





Inaugural Address

Sri K Chakravarthi

Member-Secretary, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust

Our heritage is ancient, pervasive over *Bharatha Varshae Bharatha Khande*. Broadly there are three types of heritage. The first is material, the second is mental-intellectual and the third is spiritual. Our heritage is of a spiritual nature. We can characterize the modern western world as predominantly material, and the Greco–Roman world as predominantly mental-intellectual.

What do we mean by spiritual? Essentially, it means that we perceive the world as eternal. Eternal here refers to the Spirit; it is encased in matter. In other words, it is immanent in matter. The spirit evolves over time, by rebirth of the individual, and moves up the scale of being until in the mental man it enters the world of ideas and then ascends to the realm of conscious morality, otherwise known as dharma. The spiritual portion of the mind further enables man in his individual mental being to identify himself with Spiritual Consciousness, beyond mind. Such a conception constitutes the bedrock on which our philosophy, our art and literature, our concept of dharma or law of being is founded. We can therefore see that progress in this conception is not measured by increase in material well-being but a steady ascension to an exalted understanding of the spiritual and eternal. Sri Aurobindo says that it is this fidelity to the highest ideals, doubtless clouded by human short comings, which has made us, as a nation apart, in the human world.

Our nation has shown an amazing energy and this living energy of vital spiritual import has defined our existence. This has been the sole reason for being an immortal nation signified by force of survival and revival.

No doubt our country has been subjected to waves of conquests. But such conquest has not resulted in a cultural conquest. Through it all, there has been preservation of our distinct spirit and our conception of the total welfare of the human race. What we should constantly strive is the harmonization of the spirit, mind and the body.



One can understand the pervasive influence of reason and its expression, science, when we talk of progress and prosperity. Modern civilization has accepted it and is constantly endeavoring to bring it to realization. The art of life in that view consists of living life in an environment in which the pleasures of body and mind govern and dominate. As Sri Aurobindo elegantly puts it, “It is the formula of an intelligently mechanized civilization supporting a rational and utilitarian culture.”

Our culture has believed from the earliest time that human endeavour must result in enlarging human consciousness, that we should progress, not only in body and mind, but in the spirit and even more so, to grow into the full light of self-knowledge. It is our conviction that only in belief of the supremacy of spirit that we must seek our development in philosophy, science, religion, thought, art and society. A soul culture realized through spiritualized life, which exceeds body and mind, points towards a higher destiny.

No nation has been able to resist the influence of the spread of western rationalization, intellectualization and materialism. There is nothing wrong in that. We become aware of a certain attitude of mind which places before all else, the fulfillment of our material wants.

Although the scope of modernization is vast and vivid, spanning almost every facet of our life, we should not allow it to lead to an annihilation of our view of life rooted in spiritual reality. The spirit of our civilization is such that it will not lose its distinctness despite our absorption of such modernization in our daily lives. And our effort must be to preserve the intricate truth of our culture. What is immutable in being is strictly mutable in life – that is the essential nature of its manifested existence. Whether we allow that moment of manifested existence to exhibit harmony of life or compel it to reduce itself into a discordant note, depends on us.

The flood of new ideas is always upon us. It is the nature of the moving spirit of time. We can get swept away by such idea or absorb them without losing our intrinsic identity. In the long run, it would be preferable to allow active absorption of such ideas in the conscious realization of their being in turn

transmuted by our eternal nature and not pose passive or active resistance to those ideas.

It is also necessary that we do not allow such ideas to become disruptive forces. We should not allow them to constitute an outward attack, much less an inward explosion that will shatter Indian civilization. Everything we think and do must be informed by an inner vision. Otherwise, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, “A slow combustion and swift explosion are likely to be the end of our efforts.”

In our culture, philosophy is suffused with religion and religion is permeated by philosophy. Our philosophy is rendered dynamic by our religion and our religion is enlightened by our philosophy. Our culture subordinates reason to what Sri Aurobindo calls “supra rational spirituality” and subordinates life and action to something which is greater than life and action. We hold in high esteem the Rishi and consider him not merely as a seer of spiritual truth but as a wholesome influence on ethics, religion and society.

The western positivist mind has shown that there is a persistent tendency to posit science and spirituality as self-divided culture which has precluded them from self-search, self-analysis and self-perfection, which would have led to reconnecting spirit and reason.

There has been a general criticism from the western world that our approach is negative because it preaches the unreality of the world and hence a withdrawal from the world’s interests. Such a western view has been summarised by Sri Aurobindo in the following observation, “It is an elevating metaphysics tangled up with false notions of pessimism, asceticism, Karma and reincarnation – all of these ideas fatal to the supreme spiritual thing, volitional individuality.” Needless to say, such a view is exaggerated.

It is also good for us to remember that Indian philosophy is not a purely rational exercise in speculative logic; rather it is an organized theory of soul, thought and feeling based on intuitive perception. The inner principle of Hinduism has been “synthetic, acquisitive, and inclusive.”



The belief in the evolution of individual life meant the self-effort involved; This means one's action is meant to take one forward or backward from an ordinary existence to the last transcendence. Indian conception of life has been conscious of the role of the senses, but it has conceived life as beyond the senses, containing a power that can overcome desire and self-interest and is simply called Dharma. In the context of the life of man, Dharma refers to a rule of ideal living. In our evolution into a higher being, we have to recognize that there are gradations of spiritual and ethical ascension. And this will get reflected in who we are as members of society. And the social law provides for variations in capacity and temperament. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, "The man of knowledge, the man of power, the productive and acquisitive man, the priest, scholar, poet, artist, ruler, fighter, trader, tiller of the soil, craftsman, labourer, servant cannot usefully have the same training, cannot be shaped in the same pattern, cannot all follow the same way of living. All are not to be in the same tables of the law; for that would be a senseless geometric rigidity that would spoil the plastic truth of life."

The concept of Dharma has to be understood in different realms and context, and context—in the realm of heart—is seen as benevolence and beneficence, in the character, courage and heroism; in the mind, wisdom and intelligence and in inner being, love of God, a spiritual turn; and in social relations, the conduct towards father, son, husband, brother, friend, ruler or subject, master or servant, king or sage, etc.

Life was conceived in practical terms, from youth to old age and also belongingness to groups. No doubt belongingness to groups got stratified and had led to the chaos of castes which we are finding difficult to erase even now. The conception of life through stages was a practical one. It proceeds from the learning stages as a student, then entering into a strong active life as a grown-up man in pursuit of material plenty and prosperity, and then withdrawal into a comparative seclusion and finally into spiritual detachment from social life, thus riding out towards the sunset. This whole scheme is based on great efforts at achieving plentitude, and then a gradual slowing down and then a flattening out, thus marking growth, stability and disappearance. This scheme is conceived in physiological and psychological terms and as Sri Aurobindo



puts graphically, “Moving firmly between life and death, it saw beyond both and cut out a hundred high roads to immortality.”

This religio-spiritual culture has been given a name by people from beyond Bharata varsha as Hinduism. But we must note that it has no name given by our forefathers. In a way it is nameless; suffers from no dogma; it has no ecclesiastical authority; the scholars are mere interpreters of sastras and not religious law givers: it admits all beliefs including atheisms and agnosticism. Even a strong social structure like caste does not have authority to punish a man for beliefs or prevent a man from following a new spiritual leader. It only knows that which is of spirit is spirit, and that which is of flesh is flesh.

Indian religion is founded upon three basic ideas – first is the ideas expressed in the Vedas, namely One Existence to whom sages give different names, ‘*Ekam Sath vipra bahuda vadanthi*’ as often reminded by Bhagawan; the One without a second who is all that is and beyond all that is, as stated in the Upanishads. The second is the manifold ways of our approach to the Eternal and Infinite where all powers are manifestations of the One. The infinite creates and is Brahma; it preserves and is Vishnu; it destroys and is Shiva. The third is that the Divine can be met in each individual soul in its spiritual part because there is something in it that is related with one Divine existence. These three constitute the whole of Hindu religion.

The Divine in the Hindu tradition is not a mere sum of Knowledge, Love and Beauty (Sathyam, Shivam and Sundaram). Religion is considered as contributing to the exaltation of one’s personality and not as an addition to intellectual acquisition. We are given to understanding the order of reality from a stand point higher than itself: Thus, it is that physical world (Anna) is disclosed by biological (Prana); that of the biological by the psychological (Manas); that of psychological by the logical (Vijnana) and the logical by the spiritual (Ananda). It is therefore in the spiritual, one is likely to find the best clue to the understanding of the world.

In our religio-philosophical tradition, you would have found three terms in regular use, namely, Brahman, Atman and Eshwara. What does Brahman



connote? It connotes vastness, immensity and ultimacy, permeating all the Universe but eludes conceptual definition. Brahman is the word we give to the Eternal Being. It is the object of our metaphysical quest. What is it that becomes aware of that eternal in us? It is the soul in us that becomes aware of Brahman and it is most inward part of our being. It is because that Brahman is spiritual in us we consider that as Atman. It is the ground of our being and hence our reality consists in it.

Why is the concept of Eshwara brought in? He is brought in to explain the world of events and persons operating more freely in the realm of souls. Dr. Radhakrishnan says, "To bring out that God is both transcendent and immanent, that he is a presence as well as purpose, the conception of Eshwara is used."

Religion in India is a recognition that it cannot be compressed in any juridical system or reduced to any one single doctrine. Different creeds are considered as different paths to the almighty.

Another key concept in our religio-philosophical tradition is that of Karma, we become as we act. Action is compelled by desire, and a series of actions determine the course of life. What happens to life? It goes on evolving and such evolution of life proceeds until salvation is attained. Dr. Radhakrishnan observes, "Salvation is life eternal and has nothing to do with endless time. No adequate account of *mukti* can be given since it transcends the limitation with which human life is bound up." And he continues to say, "Salvation does not involve destruction of the world. It implies the disappearance of a false view of the world." It must be clear that the theory of karma should not be treated as leading to a pessimistic view of life.

It is said that, to the preacher, Hinduism is too philosophical to be a religion; and to the philosopher, Indian philosophy is not weighed in reason but in favour of intuition. To the westerners, Indian schools of thought appear as varieties of religion and not as systems of philosophy.



But in our tradition both streams of philosophy and religion had parallel development as can be seen from the commentaries on Bhagavata and the Brahma sutra. The commentaries on Bhagavata served to promote devotion in one's heart to the Deity while those on Brahma sutra enabled one to understand the nature of Reality. However, both have the same final objective, namely, help facilitate realizing the supreme end, namely, the release from cycle of birth and death.

The supreme quest is for spiritual freedom. Both philosophy and religion are meant to achieve this. Logical methods of enquiry were not considered sufficient to achieve this objective. Although adherence to moral principle was essential, yet one should go beyond to the region of transcendent experience from which morality draws its value. As Prof. T M P Mahadevan observes, "Philosophy aimed at an ideal which was both trans logical and supra moral." Thus, it is in our tradition that two streams of philosophy and religion have reciprocal influence. To quote Prof. T M P Mahadevan again, "From the side of religion, the conception of philosophy of mono theism was formulated...and from the side of philosophy, a monistic or non-dualistic view was enunciated by the ancient seers. These two currents, philosophic monotheism and spiritualistic monism have run together, each influencing and enriching the other."

From what we have seen so far as Indian religio-philosophical and cultural perspective, let us move on to cover something more specifically relating to Vedas, Upanishads, epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata including Bhagavad Gita.

The Vedic scriptures comprise four great works namely Rg Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharvana Veda. Each of these has three main divisions namely the Samhitas, Brahmanas and Aranyakas. There are four principal samhitas, namely, Rg veda samhita, Yajur veda samhita comprising Taittiriya samhita and Vajasaneyi samhita, Samaveda samhita and Atharvaveda samhita.

The Brahmanas contain descriptions of the sacrificial rites and modes of



performance. The Aranyakas are quite independent of Brahmanas. The Upanishads are mostly chapters of these Aranyakas
The main purpose of the Vedas is generally considered to be two:

The attainment of worldly welfare including heavenly enjoyments and the realization of the supreme spiritual beatitude (*nishcheyasa*) The Karmakanda and the Upanishads speak of the former, the Upanishads or Vedanta deal with the knowledge of the transcendental, the knowledge of Brahman, that is Brahavidya.

The central theme of Upanishads is to seek unity in the midst of diversity. The Mundaka Upanishad poses the question of what is that by knowing which everything in the Universe is known?

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in His Upanishad Vahini informs that the Upanishads are 1180 in number, but through the centuries many of them disappeared from human history and only 108 have now survived. Of these, Shankara has written commentaries for ten and therefore they have gained importance.

Generally, we speak of six systems of philosophy. They are Nyaya, Vaisesika, Sankhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta. These systems claim to derive their authority from the upanisads, but it is said only Vedanta is based wholly on them. The Brahmasutra of Badarayan seeks to collect and systematize the teachings of Upanishads. The aphorisms of Brahmasutras have been interpreted differently by different commentators. On the choice of and preoccupation with, monoism, dualism or qualified monoism. In general, the Upanishads tell us that there is no bliss in finite things, the infinite alone is bliss. I would like you to read Bhagawan's Upanishad Vahini to understand the profundity of the Upanishadic teachings.

I will take reluctant leave of the Upanishads for the present and move on to deal briefly with the great epics which define our daily life and which deal with the great Divine manifestations of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna.



The Ramayana deals with ideal types of characters representing all stages of human life and becoming epic heroes. This great epic has played a notable part in investing us with the idea of India and its unity. It has provided inspiration to countless generations. Dr. C P Ramaswami Iyer has noted that “Ramayana furnishes pictures of kings who led spiritual life and of ascetics who played a great part in affairs of nations. Difficult situations are pictured whose impact on several human souls is marvelously analysed. Dharma as the chief factor in shaping of human life is the underlying motive of the Ramayana and its many episodes.”

The Mahabharata likewise is a Dharma sastra. Dr. Vaidya states that the Mahabharata styles itself not only as the itihasa, akhyana and purana but also as kavya, Dharmasastra, Arthasastra, Kamasastra, nitisastra and mokshasastra and its encyclopedic character envisaged in the following line would make it embrace any number of other characteristics: “*Yad ibasti tad anyatra yad nibasti na tat kva cit,*” i.e. whatever is here may be found elsewhere; but what is not here cannot be found anywhere else. The Mahabharata is considered as fifth Veda for all people irrespective of caste, creed and gender.

There is an acute observation by Dr. Vaidya regarding the Mahabharata that deserves quoting. “There is a transcendental plane, which takes us beyond dharma and adharma, the war is fought not only in Kurukshetra but also in our own minds, this perpetual battle between the higher self and the lower self of man. We are face to face with the deep mysteries of life. The superman (Arjun) under the guidance of the Super-Self (Sri Krishna) emerges successful in the conflict, after he has destroyed with the sword of knowledge ignorance embodied in his desires and passions, symbolized by his relatives, teachers, elders and friends ranged on the other side. In this interpretation Sri Krishna is the Paramatman (Super Self) and Arjuna, the Jivatman (the individual Self), Dhrtarastra is a symbol of the vacillating ego-centric Self, while his sons symbolize in their aggregate the brood of ego-centric desires and passions. Vidura stands for Buddhi, the one-pointed reason and Bhishma is tradition, the time-bound element in human life and society. This metaphysical interpretation leads us to the deep meaning of the

Mahabharata.”

There is hardly anyone who would not have known about the Bhagavad Gita. It is regarded as one of the three main scriptures – the prastana trayas, as they are called, the other two being the Upanishads and the Brahmasutras. In it we find different systems of philosophy, ethics and religion suited for different temperaments.

The Gita is an episode in the Mahabharata. Throughout the discourse, Krishna points out the highest goal of life to Arjuna (and indeed to all mankind) which is: with the mind concentrated on yoga and with the attitude of evenness towards all things, he beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self “Alike in pleasure and pain, established in the self, regarding a clod of earth, a stone or gold alike, the same to the loved and unloved, steady, the same to censure and praise, to honor and disgrace and to friend and foe, relinquishing all undertakings – such a person is said to have transcended the gunas.” The proper course for a man to follow is, according to Lord Krishna, to take up the duties of life as they are and try to do them with highest motive, the attainment of the Lord.

Resignation to the Divine Will (Saranagati) constitutes an important element in the Gita, as when Lord Krishna says, “Take refuge in Him with all your heart; by His grace you will attain supreme peace and an eternal abode.”

One of the chief features of Bhagavad Gita is the portrayal of the Lord which is truly fascinating and breathtaking in its comprehensiveness. He is unattached and yet sustains all things. He is free from the gunas of nature and yet enjoys them. He has no movements and yet He is near. He is undivided and yet He is divided among beings. He is the sustainer of all creation. He is the all-knowing intelligence. He is Time, the destroyer of everything. The light of all lights; the brilliance of Sun, moon and fire is His. He is seated in the hearts of all creatures.

Though unborn, the God of righteousness embodies Himself wherever



there is a steady decline of righteousness, in order He may protect the good, destroy the evil doers and establish the rule of righteousness. From age to age He incarnates Himself for the good of mankind. All the beings are the same to Him and to none He is averse or partial. Those who worship Him are in Him and He is in Him.

The classical commentators of Bhagavad Gita are Adi Sankaracharya and Ramnujacarya, and others who come after them are Madhusudana sarasvati, Venkatanatha and Sridhara svamin.

Adi Sankaracharya continues with his central point in his commentary, namely, the identification of Jiva and Brahman and the illusoriness of the world. He has emphasized the conception of “duty for duty’s sake” because it releases man from earthly attraction. Along with this comes the life of spirit in devotion. In devotion, friendship and kinship are also exhibited. Devotion reveals the intimate relationship between the Divine and human and establishes man’s higher possibilities in the Divine order.

The Gita according to Sankara has place for three categories of existence as Ksara, Aksara and Purushottama. Ksara is the changing principles in the Universe. Aksara is the non-changing relational transcendental reality behind them and Purushottama is the intermediate principle between ksara and aksara which controls everything in the world and is the source of Spiritual Knowledge and bliss. But this is not the final stage of evolution according to Sankara which comes only with complete transcendence and he has thought of the Absolute as the highest pitch of realization because it removes the basis of personal knowledge and consciousness.

Ramanuja believes in the aspiration of being, through knowledge, power and love. According to him, all aspiring souls should relate themselves to ‘Mahalakshmi’ as a source of inspiration and as end of consummation of their evolution. True spiritual life is movement in the Divine in thought, feeling and activity.



To Ramanuja, surrender is the essence of spiritual life. Surrender gives the highest aspiration to Divine union. It invites the Divine into our being so that it becomes a Divine instrument. Surrender (Saranagati) has the greatest indrawn urge. As Mahendranath Sarkar puts it, "It becomes a piece of poetry harmonic in expression, beautiful in cadence, sweet and attractive in its activities."

Much as I would like to say about the post-Shankara and Ramanuja period, I am not able to do so because of time constraint. However, I will briefly mention about what has come to be known as spiritual renaissance in the 19th Century, especially in the second half of it. That was the time when Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj made quite an impact. And following thereafter was the extraordinary period which witnessed the dominant influence of the revered and venerable Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. His earnest desire and quest for seeing God in person and his extraordinary experiences in this regard are well documented. It is very difficult to comprehend the sage-like personality of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa who appeared to be lost in trance often and his own bold experiment with God and Goddess.

The period also witnessed a great and unifying personality in the spiritual domain of India, perhaps the world itself. I refer to Swami Vivekananda. There can be no more contrasting personalities than Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. The former was mild, frail and apparently above the world, and the latter was strong, magnetic (as was described by his contemporaries) and outward looking, not in the material sense but in the sense of actively engaging in great social service amongst the poor and lowly. One of the well documented events relates to the early exposure of Swami Vivekananda, I must say 'Narendranath' as he was known then, asked frankly and plainly Sri Ramakrishna, whether he has seen God. To which Sri Ramakrishna reportedly replied, "I see him, as well as I see you, and even more so." Such an unconditional statement seemed to have brought in an enormous change in the attitude of Narendranath, later known as Swami Vivekananda that he took Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa as his master. Swami Vivekananda seemed to have remarked that while Sri

Ramakrishna Paramahansa looked like a Bhakta, he was deep down a Jnani, he was the opposite. It is needless therefore for us to indulge in any argument whether one should seek the path of Bhakti or Jnana.

We had a very intriguing personality of Bhagawan in His manifestation as Shirdi Sai. Much of the life history of Shirdi Sai came to be known to us only through Bhagawan's discourses. The impact of Shirdi Sai has grown over the decades and now His influence is pervasive.

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed a continued the spiritual renaissance in India with the extraordinary presence of Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana Maharishi. Sri Aurobindo after his spiritual enlightenment confined himself to being within the four walls of his room. He has left us with his profuse writings on the development of supra mental consciousness. Sri Ramana Maharishi was given to speaking only a few words and observed long spells of silence. We have therefore extraordinary spiritual personalities who had shown different personality traits and indeed we cannot confine them to any specific types.

I would like to conclude this talk with a reference to Swami, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba whose presence in the second half of the 20th century and first decade of the 21st century has filled the world, as it were. It would be arrogant on my part or on the part of anyone else to comment or indulge in any critical evaluation because He is beyond any such appraisal. He was a teacher, a Guru, an exemplar; and he embodied perfection in His presence. No expression can be adequate except to revere Him as Divine manifestation. We have heard him in many discourses elucidating the foundations of Indian spiritual thoughts and expatiating on the extraordinary culture of Bharat. We see Him not only as a great teacher set on His mission to uplift humanity and take it to higher spiritual plane. He showed us the path of true spiritual growth by service to humanity. We see him insisting that the basic human needs of education and health must be provided free. And He has demonstrated that by establishing a university, schools and hospitals. Along with education and health service, He also considered provision of clean of drinking water to



people, especially in rural areas of India.

While setting up Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, He had told us that the Institute will not only impart secular education but also spiritual education, an education that will enable us to come to know that which will make all other knowledge accessible.

I do hope that you, who are students of Bhagawan's Institute, would make all efforts to make that goal realizable in your own life time. I earnestly ask you all to take to reading Bhagawan's Vahinis, because it has set forth in a language intelligible to us the great and profound truths about life, its purpose, meaning and goal. I am sure in the months to come, you would take this study seriously and grow within and set your life's goal in a perspective which will bring great joy, grow intellectually and spiritually. Wishing you all a fruitful stay at the Institute and witness your own growth in all spheres of activity, but most of all in an area of activity which would bring you close to Him.





Benedictory Message

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Revered Founder Chancellor, SSSIHL

That indeed is true spiritual education which secures universal peace, dispels narrow-mindedness, and fosters unity, harmony, and cooperation.

Students, Embodiments of Love!

It is the foremost duty of every student to transform every activity of his life into one of strength and beauty. In modern education there is no beauty, strength and love. Students should realise that their life span is fast melting away like ice, whether they care to improve or not.

Students of today are blind to the goal of life. Some students do not even feel the pain of not knowing the purpose of life. Only one in a hundred or one in a crore (ten million) strives to realise the essence of life. This striving is the stepping stone for the realization of the purpose of life. Many students and men feel that the acquisition of food, clothing, shelter, wealth, conveniences, and comforts constitute the very purpose of life. Life remains a tragedy as long as man labours under this kind of delusion.

The day he realises the purpose of life, he undergoes a total transformation, from *vedana* (agony) to *nirvedana* (freedom from pain). When one becomes conscious of light, acquires wisdom and realises the meaning of existence, one is transported from agony to ecstasy. Light here does not signify the light of the Sun, the Moon or the lamp but that of the heart. Wisdom does not refer to scientific wisdom, but enlightenment brought about by the transformation of the heart. What about existence? Awareness of one's own true reality is the proper meaning of



existence. The awareness of one's reality lies in the realization that one is not the body, the mind or the senses. True realization lies in understanding the fact that man is based on a transcendental principle that goes beyond the boundaries of matter.

This Summer Course is about Indian culture and spirituality. What is Indian culture? Indian culture is the harmonious synthesis of the ethical, the *dharmic* and the spiritual qualities. The eminent scholar Elliot, after sound investigation, defined culture as a "way of life." This definition is neither appropriate nor adequate, as it does not properly define the scope of life. It does not mention whether life refers to animal, human or subhuman. Culture lies in seeing unity in diversity, with a deep-seated faith in the unity of Life. We must nourish faith in the feeling of the caste of humanity and the culture of love. Here the culture of love does not refer to the bodily love that marks the relationship between the wife and the husband, between children and parents, and between friends. The son, though he loved his mother with all his heart, flings her body onto the burning pyre and consigns her to the flames without any mercy after death. How can such love be called true Love? All such relationships can at best be termed attachment and not Love.

Attachments come in the middle and pass off in the middle. But Love existed even before birth and will last after death. Attachments are like passing clouds that sail away quickly. There is no love between the husband and the wife before they are wedded. There is no love between the mother and the child before the birth of the child. Only Divine Love exists before birth and lasts after death. True Love is uncontaminated, unsoiled, unadulterated, unpolluted, eternal, perennial, pure and unsullied. It is only Divine Love that is not tainted by selfishness and self-interest. All other kinds of love are stained by selfishness. It is this faith in the glory of Love and Divinity that distinguishes Indian culture.



Culture is universal in its scope and significance. We should not claim and contend that Indian culture is superior to all the other cultures of the world. We should have firm faith in the injunction: All are one. Be alike to everyone.

Together we shall live.

Together we shall move.

Together we shall grow in splendour. Together we shall live in amity and harmony, without conflict and skirmish.

Students! In this Summer Course you have to go beyond the borders of the subjects that you study in your classrooms. You have to obtain, in this Summer Course, that wisdom which secures for you moral splendour and bliss.

Any amount of learning without Love for God is utter futility.

The foolish one, in spite of all learning, remains a fool forever.

The wicked one, despite all learning, never sheds his wickedness.

Learning promotes only logic but not pure Wisdom.

Of what use is learning if it does not bring you freedom from death?

You must seek such learning as confers immortality. What is Immortality? The removal of immortality is immortality. Human life, which is mortal, is bound to perish one day or the other. Hence we must strive for morality, which is imperishable. This moral splendour is the need of the country today. It is My earnest wish that our students should cultivate moral splendour and strive for the welfare and upliftment of the country at a time when selfishness and self-interest are so rampant.





Excellence in Action

Sri Vijay Menon

Faculty, IIM Kozhikode

As I sat there listening to Sri Chakarvarthi Sir talk, I got a thought about a wonderful episode in The Mahabharata which I had read in my childhood. Today I am absolutely convinced, after spending about 20-22 years at the Lotus feet of Swami, that it is the only way in which we can understand what we are trying to think about in the course of next three days in this Summer Course. This episode talks about the epic battle between two champions of the war. It talks about the intrepid Arjuna fighting the equally gallant Karna. In the later part of the war, Karna's chariot gets mired in the slush and Karna was trying to extricate, and Arjuna like a true Kshatriya, honours the conduct and tenets of war and abstains from action. This is one of the immortal scenes from the culture of this country.

There is a conversation which happens between them and this can change our life dramatically. Karna asks for some time from Arjuna to resume the battle and Arjuna was obedient. At this moment, we witness a bizarre behaviour of Krishna which has got a metaphysical meaning, when He categorically tells Arjuna to attack Karna. Krishna says, "Arjuna, attack him and finish off." Karna replies, "Arjuna, if you honour Dharma, you will give me time to rebound." Then the great Parthasarathi, one of the most iconic figures in the pantheon of Avatars of this country, Krishna utters, "O Karna, you are talking about Dharma, where was your concept of dharma when Draupadi was humiliated, where was your concept of dharma when the greed and avarice of Duryodhana made him splutter out indignities and you actually gave it moral cover. Where was your concept of Dharma when in every act malice you were an accomplice?" Then comes one line which can make us excellent in life, "The Dharma that you failed to uphold, that Dharma is going to take your life in the same fashion in which it was dishonoured."

Every action of ours has a consequence far beyond our knowledge. One beautiful author says: The Indian tradition teaches you that every action is an



action and every action has an action. The concept of excellence which you are trying to espouse, will reflect more in our behaviour and conduct than our philosophy. I want to narrate examples of a few people of this country who have exemplified and personified this quality, for all of us to understand the magnificence of this topic per se. When you talk about excellence, the last thing you should do is to talk about success.

It was around twelve months ago, in a company that I consult and adore and admire a lot in India; every time I talk about this company, I become proud Indian as you are talking about one of the most phenomenal organizations of the world today; an organization in which 83% of the workforce are the farmers of India. If you add the turnover of this company par excellence, it is a case study in itself, the turnover is more than the four big multinationals (in the food industry) - Nestle, Dannon, Craft foods and Pepsico. If you add all of them in India, it comes to rupees 13,000 crores and this one single cooperative society of the farmers of India, Amul, is rupees 28,000 crores.

When you talk about the excellence in action, I asked the same question to a person who was working at Amul for the last twenty-five years. He is a Bengali gentleman working in one of the milk dairies: How did you become such an excellent organization? The answer he gave may look very simple, but if you get into the depth of the answer, we would understand very quickly that ultimately when you talk about a subject like excellence, you can't divorce it from values, even in commerce. This Bengali gentleman said, "I handle the quality control department of one of the dairies of Amul. Once, a tanker of milk was being transported from a *mandi* to the district headquarters. At night, I get a phone call from the driver of the tanker, who said that he opened the lid of the tanker and inadvertently, an insect fell into it. He asked me what I have to do?"

The quality control inspector's answer was very simple: Discard the milk. When the Bengali gentleman reported this to his senior, the senior said, "In discarding the tanker of milk, you have honoured the contract we signed with every child of India." This Bengali gentleman turns towards me and puts a



counter question in all humility, “Can anyone beat an organization like this? I am talking about the modern and contemporary world, when an institution decides to embrace values and character, and this is what happens.”

There is one more example from this organization where every spiritual value gets manifest. One of the first companies in India to launch a brand of probiotic ice creams was Amul. When they did the launch of this wonderful ice cream known as Strawberry, sales sky rocketed to such an extent that newspapers started writing that this was the most phenomenal success stories in the food business in the last hundred years. There was a situation where dealers were asking for the product as not stock was left with them. But history also records in golden letters that after three months, Amul dairy had absolutely no hesitation in withdrawing Strawberry ice cream from the market. The founding fathers - Verghese Kurien, Tribhuvan Dasji Patel and H M Dalaya, the triumvirate decided to withdraw the product. The reason they quoted was: Strawberry is a product which is in short supply in this country and hence essence has to be used and not the actual strawberry. All the three looked at each other and decided in a couple of minutes to withdraw the product. The reason was they said, “We told the children of India is that it is authentic strawberry.” They got into another flavour - Elaichi, which was also very popular.

If an organization can decide to withdraw, in three seconds flat, one of its most successful products because it doesn't contain the promise they made to the customer, don't you think it applies to our individual context as well?

When you are students of Bhagawan's Institute, it becomes imperative to understand that the basis of everything today in life should be an unstinted focus on one simple word: character. As I stand before you and speak, one man's life inspires me significantly. I had the merit to accompanying this person to the north of Karnataka five years ago. Probably this man is India's one of the most celebrated legends in the last fifty years. Literature abounds in terms of his contribution in terms of matters of excellence in multifarious areas of life. You go to any part of India and meet a cross section of people



and ask them to tell you the name of a name that captured your imagination in the last twenty years, the lion's share of people will give the name of Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam.

When he went to North Karnataka to address four thousand youngsters in 2011, I accompanied him. After the programme, a question was asked to Dr. Kalam by a III Std. girl, "What is the basis of your excellence?" She was standing in front of one of the most iconic personalities. Dr. Kalam looks at her, smiles and the first word that came out of his mouth was illustrative of why he is an excellent person. He didn't say excuse me, I didn't get you etc. Instead, he said, "Amma, what can I do for you?" I was sitting next to him and was in awe that while talking to a III Std. girl how his intrinsic goodness has manifested. This is in the midst of scores of people wanting to talk to Dr. Kalam. This girl said, "Sir, I want to be like you. How can I do that?" He was dazed for a moment and then I understood why Bhagawan says that the basis and basics of life is to conquer ego. It is to extirpate and obliterate the self-importance and the pomposity of knowledge.

He said, "Amma, why you want to be like me, what is wrong in being you?" This girl's reply was even more beautiful. She said, "Sir you have reached the heights of achievement but still you exude so much of humility, how do you combine so much of success with so much of simplicity?" It's a very disarming question. Dr. Kalam's face was flushed with emotion. The joy that a grandfather gets when your granddaughter comes of age. He said, "Whatever, I have gained in life is because every single morning I get up, it could be during my bath, breakfast or in the middle of getting ready or on the way to office, I can't think of a single day in the last 55 years where I have not started this day with this question: To whose life would I add value today? I can't think of a single night when I retired to bed without having asked question the second time, whose life did I make different today?" He looked at this girl and said, "If you start practicing this from today, your life has to be a selfless contribution. Then you will become like me."

These days, it has become a fashion to speak about Dr. Kalam as an eloquent



speaker who could combine wit and wisdom in matters of public speaking. He was a great leader, an architect of everything India did in Defence, but there is one thing about Kalam which we tend to forget. One of his secretaries who was with him for twenty years wrote this after his death. It was not an obituary, but an assessment of one of the most iconic lives of India in terms of excellence: If you really want to understand what Dr. Kalam was like, please look at his last day at the Presidential palace. It was just hours before this man will demit his office in 2007 and become a commoner. Do you know who his last guest at Rashtrapati Bhavan was? It was a sadhu from the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) order, Swami Brahmavihari Das.

The expression of the Swamiji was that of sadness, as a great man had to demit office when the whole country was rooting for him. He said that he was sad that the country is not able to give this man another five years. They had a conversation which had a vedantic angle to it. Dr. Kalam asks Swamiji, "Have you seen the presidential palace of India, the official residence of the President." The Swamiji replied that he had seen only that small room where Dr. Kalam had meetings. Dr. Kalam said, "Me too, let us see it together." Out of the 596 rooms in the presidential palace, he opened only five. One for the visiting dignitaries, one his room, third reception room for the visiting presidents, fourth for his personal staff and fifth one was 2500 important books, of which 90% were on culture and values. When they got up, Dr. Kalam turned to the monk and said, "Let me show you what I am going to discard tomorrow."

Swami Brahmavihari Das said, "On the face of that man I found two things, "Unaffected by par and totally unconscious of the environment." He wrote a beautiful letter to Dr. Kalam where he said, "The whole of India knows that Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam came from humble beginnings, but I know that he went with humble belongings. Because apparently when they opened the trunk, there were six shirts, four trousers, two overcoats, a pair of shoes, a camera and a watch. No wonder, you are India's one of the most revered personalities.



I had met someone, who only knew the language Bahasa. I had the opportunity of going to a mountainous region of South East Asia which is known as the Punchak mountain region. When I was taking a hair pin bend in the mountain in a car at 3.45 AM, the person next to me said that there is one place in this mountain which is very close to your guru. He looked at me and said, “Do you want to see that place?” I got up from my semi-conscious state and told him to take me.

This was a Buddhist monastery where we have the greatest Buddhist monks living and this was his headquarters. He is called the father of Buddhism in South East Asia. This gentleman asked me to meet him and decide for myself about this monk. It was 4 AM and we saw an old and frail man talking to this man who took me. The language was very fast and incomprehensible. The man next to me said, “Don’t worry, he is speaking in Bahasa, I will translate.”

This man took me to the first floor of the monastery in the mountainous region which girdles three countries and is tucked away in one corner of Asia. He opened the door of the shrine and said in Bahasa, though I understood, “The ultimate temple of God, of the cosmos, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.” This was in May 2013. This was the abode of a man who is talked about as the last words of Buddhism in Asia. His name was Banthe Ashin Jinarakkhita Mahathera Sukong. He was the man who had the courage and conviction to tell everyone who met and said, “Sukong, it is my great merit to be near you.” He would just smile and say, “It was my punya to be in the midst of Bhagawan Baba.”

Years ago, this great Buddhist monk had gout and was incapacitated. It started affecting his vital organs and mobility was significantly hindered. In this state, a young boy in that country had the courage and initiative to go one of the great Buddhist sanyasis of this world and tell him, “If you don’t mind, can I give you something which can solve your problem?” The young boy offered him a packet of Vibhuti of Bhagawan Baba and said, “You apply this and eat it, everything will be alright. The monk said that he started applying and eating Vibhuti and in one week, he started walking, much to



the amazement, joy and felicity of his followers.

The first thing which he did was to call six of his monks and a Buddhist sanyasini to accompany him to go and thank God in Puttaparthi. They came and sat, and Swami called them for an interview. When they were about to squat on the ground, Swami, reserving a chair next to him in the interview room said, "Sukong, your place is not there but here." Can you imagine that the ultimate Godhead, the Maha Avatar telling Sukong that his place is next to Bhagawan. Sukong smiled and point to Baba's feet said, "My place is always here." Sukong sat on the floor and towards the end of the interview, Swami caught hold of the hands of this illustrious monk and said, "Promise me that you will come and meet me every year." Then Bhagawan gave him a beautiful statue of the Buddha to be kept in his monastery. The following year, when he came back, he got a second interview. Swami said, "I hope your body is happy now." The monk said, "Leg is perfectly fine." Swami replied, "Now hand is a problem, give me your hand now." Sukong flung his hand to Swami and Swami clasped it. Swami said, "Last year, it was the leg, this year it is the hand, but you always uphold dharma."

A beautiful theory of leadership says that a sustainable basis of excellence is the capital of morality.

If you remember the statement of Swami to Frank Barowanaski which is part of Sai folklore, when he came to Brindavan for Bhagawan's Darshan. Using a Kirlian camera, he sees the pink aura of Swami enveloping the entire ashram and the Whitefield railway station. This man was first astounded and then humbled. He decides to chronicle and record it. Swami asks him a question, "Why did I show it to you? Because you are a man of great love, you are experiencing this magnificent phenomenon which the cosmos has never witnessed."

If we are ready to explore the horizons of character, everything will happen to us. This stage has been uplifted by the mesmerizing rendition by one lady. This lady was clothed in one of the most beautiful traditions of India. She went to 64 countries, including the United Nations Convention Center, and



when she moved her lips, even before she started her rendition, the Russians gave her a standing applause. I am talking about Madurai Shanmukhavadvu Subbulakshmi or M S Subbulakshmi.

I will quote three simple examples from her life to present her to you as another icon of excellence. One day, Madras Corporation told M S Subbulakshmi that she was one of the living legends of India, and her name evokes universal admiration. They planned on naming a road on her name. She, without batting an eyelid, said, "I thank you and acknowledge your honour, but let me tell you, a couple of houses from me, there is an equally proficient Carnatic musician. D K Pattambal, and as she has lived on this lane a little longer, she deserves it more than me." There was no more conversation. When people say that M S Subbulakshmi was a great singer, then that is a very miniscule part of her personality. When she died, one of the great *rasikas* of India wrote an article which said that M S Subbulakshmi was the first musician in the Carnatic pantheon of India who understood that music is not an intellectual exercise. She was concerned about the meditative, contemplative potential of Carnatic music.

A journalist working on her biography asked her, "How did you become so excellent and successful?" He got eight audiences with her over a period of twelve months. Every time he would ask this question, she would give an evasive reply. Finally, he decided to be very clear and get a clear answer from her and said, "Madam, how you became so excellent?" She smiled and said, "If is not for me to tell you, go to my contemporaries probably of the same level of competence and ask them what they feel about me." When this journalist went and asked a lot of them, there was one line in common.

To me that one line is the most beautiful expression of Indian culture and spirituality. All of them consensually said, "In the entire body and mind of M S Subbulakshmi, there is not even a single speck of entity that is of a jealous nature." One word as an appellation was Anasuya bhava. One great singer said, "At the height of her fame being bestowed with the Bharat Ratna, how many times have I have seen her walking to the most junior bhajan



singers and asking them, “The way you uttered that note was beautiful, can you teach me?” When she received the Bharat Ratna, the public already started celebrating her achievement. In presence of her wonderful husband, Sadashivam, and one of the photographers present she said, “Why for me?”

When she met a journalist after she received the award she said, “Even now when I start a performance, I am jittery and apprehensive. People don’t know that still I am not a confident singer.” The journalist said, “Amma, what about Padma Bhushan, Padam Vibhushan, Sangeet Kalanidhi, Ramon Magsaysay award, Bharat Ratna” M S Subbulakshmi said, “You add all of it together what is it in front of a simple news that I got in a hospital in Adyar, that a young girl who had third degree burns, 72% burns, tottering in pain, asked the doctor to play M S Subbulakshmi’s Vishnu Sahasranamam and Bhaja Govindam. That one act is my Bharat Ratna.”

Once Dr. Kalam asked Pramukh Swamiji of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) order, “How to integrate spirituality and success?” His answer was: how can you separate the two? Bhagawan Baba taught me this very beautifully. I was an academic genius who wrote nine entrance exams and failed each one of them. It started with medical entrance exam and culminated with IAS entrance exam. Each entrance test of three hours, I used to finish in twenty minutes. The invigilator used to do an MRI scan much before I took the medical field test and would tell me that I am not allowed to leave the hall before 40 minutes from the start of the entrance test. I used to be very creative in the answer sheets, put a D-C-B-A....

One more thing about our family was that we will be judged by that brilliant cousin of ours or the omnipresent uncle. I had three such uncles. After failing to qualify for all the medical entrance exams, I finally enrolled for B.A. (Hons.) in Economics. That was the time when I came first for Swami’s Darshan and was captivated, probably due to my adversities and also due to the need of a radical re-calibration of my life. The next twelve years of my life were spent visiting a leprosy hospital. It is a dreaded disease with disfigured

hands and somber mood. I used to feel that by doing some service to the patients, I will make Swami happy and those 96 leprosy patients became an indispensable part of my life. After six years, someone suggested to me to write CAT for IIMs. I was made to feel that I was made for IIMs. When I took that test, I was not able to answer even one question in logical reasoning. Then I was made to believe that I am made for Delhi School of Economics but was not able to perform there too.

This is not even a speck of exaggeration. A man who could not stand in front of a group of people, in XII Std. extempore competition, I would go because somebody told me that all these have to be done to become confident and look at the embarrassment of a man not able to speak even for thirty seconds. Then I come to Whitefield and Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba calls me to His side, takes my hand and with his third finger, and softly touches my forehead and changed life forever. I still remember vividly that for a person for whom failure is a habit coupled with plummeting self-confidence, Swami started talking to me. When he was talking about career moves that I should embark on, I interjected Swami and asked, “Without *ahamkara* and jealousy, please give me an opportunity to always serve you.”

He smiled and clasped my right hand with His left hand, pressed it and said, “Wherever you are, you will get lot of opportunities to do lot of seva of Me.” Nothing more to achieve in life. Now when I look back at all the medical entrance exams, Bhagawan wanted me to understand that only thing that will ultimately work is Divine Grace.

I want to quote two very powerful examples of this in this context. The name of Swami Vivekananda evokes admiration. I call him one of the greatest emblems of excellence in this country. There was one man who was instrumental in sending Swami Vivekananda to Chicago. In the words of Swami Vivekananda - if you take away this man, you would not have had a Vivekananda. This man was from an aristocratic Brahmin family who felt pain and anguish seeing the sorry plight of our Motherland and the decline of Sanathana Dharma. He saw how the West was pulverizing this country's

hoary past and timeless culture.

That was too much for that youngster to take in Chennai. He closed his eyes and said, “O Muruga, tell me, who will deliver that word for my Motherland and culture that will shake the world. In 1893, a young man from Bidhan Sarani, Gormukh Mohan Mukherjee street, the gallant warrior of Vedanta, the roaring voice of Vedanta was in his parivrajaka phase, three years after Thakur Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa left his body. He reached Chennai and at the Madras Literary Society, he made a short speech. Those words were heard in India for the first time. This young man said that this is the voice which will shake the west. This young man walked up to the unknown Swami Vivekananda and said, “Swamiji, give me a promise. The Motherland is bleeding, dharma is being shaken to its roots, I can’t stand it. The voice of Rishis is being mocked. You have the right medha shakti, personality, intelligence and eloquence. Can you go to Chicago to the World Parliament of Religions?”

“Raja of Ramnad and Maharaja of Mysore also told me but where is the money, I am penniless monk,” said Swami Vivekananda. This man said that he will beg and bring it. He did it for us, he did it to protect and nurture dharma. He gave 500 rupees as the first instalment. Swamiji agreed, applied for the parliament and got accepted. In the meantime, due to some reason, Raja of Ramnad backed out on his financial help. Swami Vivekananda took it as a bad omen and thought of cancelling the trip. This young man was crestfallen when Swamiji give the money back and asks him to give it back to the houses he has taken them from.

Lord Krishna says that whenever there is only *glani* or decline and destruction, He will come to uphold Dharma. That night, Ramakrishna came in the dream of Naren, showed the ocean and said ‘Go’. The next morning when he woke up, a letter comes from the incarnation of Mother Bhavatarini, the holy Sharada Ma - Go my child, Thakur has told me, you have to go.

This young man arranges for some more money and goes to the Chennai



harbour to see him off. History says that Swami Vivekananda caught hold of the hands of this young man and both of them cried. At the Bombay harbour, where the Raja of Khetri came to see him off and gifted him that legendary robe, this young man was standing somewhere behind. Swamiji spotted him and rushed to embrace him and history says that they waved to each other till the ship crossed their line of sight.

Swamiji was scoffed and despised by people, because he was from a third world country. He writes his first letter to this man from Chicago which you can't read without crying. Swamiji says - If disease, cold or fatigue doesn't kill me, I will do it. I am left with only a little bit of money, but don't forget that until the last breath, I will fight for Dharma and perish. In case something happens, please pardon me.

The next paragraph is a sudden upsurge of emotion.

When the Parthasarathi is our Sarathi, nothing can go wrong. I will come back victorious. When this young man received the letter, he understood that nobody will give money as all were concerned about me and mine. He went to his wife and said that he wanted money and she gave every piece of gold on her body. He sold it and sent the money to Swami Vivekananda. Then Swamiji roared like a lion, came back and said to this young man, "The reason I did this is because your heartbeat for the motherland, your heartbeat for Dharma."

The name of this man was Alasingha Perumal. Ramakrishna Mission has published a beautifully researched biography of 320 pages on this man. What I felt after reading this book is that we do 10% and talk 90%. When Swami Vivekananda comes to know that Alasingha Perumal is dying, due to lack of money, he sends sister Nivedita and says, "Please go and give the money to him as he will not accept money from me." Alasingha Perumal says, "I am in big problem but don't give me money, as this money was my offering." This is the attitude that we should develop in life.

The other example is this 74-year-old person, who gets up at 4 o'clock in the morning and does arati of Ganesha in his house, who stands in front of Bhagawan Baba's portrait and tells him, "I will never let you down." What is he doing today? He restored an ancient temple of India on a 2 ½ acre plot, consecrated by Thotakacharya, a direct disciple of Adi Sankara. Near the temple pond, anti-social elements such as gambling and drinking were thriving. The ancient idol and the temple were in a dilapidated condition. The elderly gentleman goes to the temple every day to pray. Seeing him, a sanyasi in the temple requests this elderly devotee to help revive this temple. This is how the revival began. Now, 350 young girls come to this temple to learn Narayaneeyam.

When I went to take a session like this there, I could not speak, I was choked. When they were chanting the verses from Narayaneeyam, we felt ethereal. Added to that, every Sunday, 120 children of Lalitha Sahasranamam, Vishnu Sahasranamam, Aditya Hrudayam, Rudram and Bhaja Govindam groups come and chant and shake the whole place for a period of three hours. This devotee of Baba has done it. He has not got an interview of Swami...not even a word from Swami. He said that the closest he ever got in Darshan is the ninth row. If Bhagawan Baba would be on His chair, he would say, "This man fills me with inexpressible joy."

In this temple, the *bundi* is very small but he has written next to it on a vessel, 'Ceiling on Desires'. Next to it on the vessel is written - One fistful of rice, green gram and pulses. I am happy to tell you that two 22 families living below poverty line are eating nutritious food here because this temple prasadam. A project in any other place starts with lot of exultation but starts petering out after some time. This is a man whom Swami has not spoken to. To me, he is as great as Sukong. He started a beautiful concept of Jnana Danam - it is written that one can donate a book to the priest to be given to another pilgrim.

The first book which was given was Leela Kaivalya Vahini of Baba, the second book was Prasanottara Vahini, the third book was Shiv Shakti Swaroopa and



I am told that nine young Bal Vikas children decided to do their personal ceiling on desires and they are buying twelve copies of Loving God every month and donating them. This is a beautiful case study where the priest, in addition to, to the prasadam in banana leaf, taking a book and giving it to a pilgrim. This man turned to me and said something which is the greatest thing in excellence. He said, “I will prove that you came and you didn’t come in vain with my character, my action and my behaviour.” How many of us can really say that?

This temple doesn’t solicit contributions. If you want to do a service, you can do it voluntarily. The moment it crosses the required amount, it is returned. In this man, I see the ultimate purity that which Swami wanted us to uphold.

When Sachin Tendulkar went to Rambagh palace in Jaipur, the receptionist at the Taj Palace said, “Your guru had come here 43 years ago and delivered a discourse under a tree.” Hearing this, this young champion of India, in that blistering Rajasthan summer heat, goes from Rambagh Palace to that tree and touches it saying that it gave shelter to his guru. Some journalists follow him and seeing them he says, “You say that Sathya Sai Baba has left, but in every occasion of my life, he continues to come and guide me in my dreams. He can never go.”

One episode from his life will suffice to understand the genius of a man he is. Tendulkar was not just a great batsman. One of his colleagues said, “If you want to know how Tendulkar is, please look at what he did on the last day of his career.”

The Wankhede stadium in Mumbai was teeming multitudes as the whole of Mumbai wanted to give the Bandra boy the greatest farewell. This bhakta of Bhagawan Baba walked in to bat for the last time in his life after carrying the emotional burden of the country for 24 long years. The whole country wanted him to score a hundred but he got out for 74. I believe that the dressing room was happy, but also sad. Happy because India is going to win the match and sad because West Indies was facing an innings defeat and Sachin won’t get

another opportunity to bat.

On the fourth day morning, at 7:45, the first man to enter Wankhede stadium to report for net practice was Sachin Tendulkar. He was doing batting practice. People said, “What are you doing, you will never bat again?” He said, “I want to leave this game with the same *shraddha* with which I started.” At the age of 22, an ad guru in India calls him and asks him to do an ad which can make him earn crores of rupees. He had to hit a ball hanging from a slender rope. This he had to do with full aggression and ferocity after lifting the bat above his head like a club or ‘*gada*’. Sachin said, “I can’t do this work.” This 22-year-old boy who was becoming the cynosure of the cricket world walked close to him and said, “If I take this bat above my head and imagine it as a weapon and club and hit the ball with aggression and disrespect and denigrate it, I will become larger than the game of cricket. That is not good for my ego.” That is why he was a champion.

When people talk about excellence, I quote two lines of Bhagawan Baba from Satyam Shivam Sundaram, Volume 2. Swami said, “Skills are added, virtues are subtracted.” This was a discourse in Anantapur campus in the year 1968. He gave discourses in Anantapur campus in 1968, 1971, 1974 and 1981 and said, “I have established this campus for women, because I want to develop mothers who would teach the children of Bharat the importance of the other four mothers. Every work and word of mine reflects my concern for you.”

The thing that most important here, after Swami’s Mandir, is the book store. Buy Sathyam Shivam Sundaram, Sathya Sai Speaks, Loving God. Today, if I am standing in front of you and speaking two words, it is because of those books alone. Read them, reflect, and every word will hit you, make you think, excogitate and ponder the Himalayan heights of possibility. These books are a treasure to be kept in your houses, so not just reading but buy them. In 1968, he said that He wants to create students with subtle beauty. When it becomes subtle beauty, it becomes humility and becomes a remembrance, concern and culture. In 1974, Swami said that Draupadi had all this. When

Draupadi was in a spot of bother and was disrobed, the incident of a small piece of cloth which was wrapped on his finger by Draupadi flashed in front of Krishna's eyes. He thought - Now or Never - and a small piece of cloth became an endless saree.

In 1981, at the Anantapur Campus, He said, "There is no University like this in the entire cosmos, and you realize this not a gross level, but at a visceral level. When you grow up, you change people around you into goodness with two things. One is piety and second is purposefulness."

What is the difference between a normal person and an excellent person? One of the great things which Dr. Kalam did for the country was the Agni missile. India didn't have an inter-continental ballistic missile. Dr. Kalam knew about it in 1984 and went to President Dr. Venkataraman and said, "We have to be ready as we have got these neighbours." Finally, the go ahead came with a limited budget. When Dr. Kalam went to America to get the technology, Americans said that Indians were not good enough to get it and turned them down. Dr. Kalam said that it was a matter of his nation and that he will not rest till it is achieved. He put in six years of effort which is known as tapas in Vedanta. When the West came to know about it, they started putting pressure with economic embargoes, etc.

Dr. Kalam didn't buckle under this pressure. A station was set up at Chandipur by the sea. Twelve seconds into the launch of the missile, the computers get locked and show thermal emission failure. But fortunately, the missile was not lost and they were able to retrieve it. Dr. Kalam's boss told him, "I know the effort you undertook, success is just around the corner." This is how rishis think, this is not for ordinary human beings. After three months there was a second Agni launch. This time in ten seconds, the computer was locked and the message from the computer was that the control valve was leaking. This is an embarrassment which can't be expressed. His boss looks at all his managers and says, "Two months ago, we found out the defect in twelve seconds, today in ten seconds we found out the defect. India has already proven to the world that when it comes to the matters of testing and tracking, we are the best

in the world.” He looked at Kalam and said, “We are getting there.” Kalam turned and looked at his engineers and said, “Time for the final sprint.”

The night before the launch, the Defense Minister, the Defense Secretary and all the scientists were extremely tense. To release the tension, they decided to go for a walk along the Bay of Bengal. Bhagawan Baba always said that we should utter only positive things. Lord Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita, “Arjuna, rise up, so that you befit your status as a warrior.”

Dr. Kalam’s boss turns to him, looks at his watch and asks, “Kalam, what time is the launch tomorrow?”

Kalam replies, “7:05”

“When we succeed tomorrow, what should I give you?”

“We have already failed twice, say ‘if’ we succeed, Sir.”

“No Kalam, when we succeed tomorrow, what you want from me?”

Kalam broke down and replied, “Sir, give me 100,000 saplings, I want to plant them extensively. Whatever I want, India has given me and after all, what do I want?”

His boss said, “Kalam, success is assured; if all that you asked is the blessings of Pruthvi, Pruthvi will take care.” The next day at 7:05 AM, the button was pressed and India’s inter ballistic missile burst into the clouds of Odisha catapulting this country into the pantheon of the most powerful, self-sufficient countries in the world. The world looked at India dramatically differently from then on. In the middle of the great euphoria, one line came out of his mouth, “The question is not who will support India, the question is who will stop India.”

Once Gopal Krishna Goswami went to Swami Brahmananda and found him doing worship of Ramakrishna and chanting sacred hymns. Gopal Krishna Goswami says, “You are addressed as Raja Maharaj by Swami Vivekananda, and Ramakrishna says that you are his *manas putra*. Why do you need to do any worship or chanting?” Swami Brahmananda replies, “He gave me all the blessings when he was there, with my effort, I have to make it permanent.”



That is why, Sai literature is the path and the destination, and it is the past, present and future. When you go out of the University, try to become a Bal Vikas guru, collect ten children and teach them something, your life will become wonderful after that. Be service-minded and have a sense of sacrifice. Be extremely uncompromising in matters of Dharma. The whole world will come and tell you to cross the path of dharma and you will have the courage to say, "Without it, nothing!" Any temptations, tell Swami, "Swami, even if the whole world were to make fun of me it is fine but when it comes to the matters of culture, dharma and samskriti, I will be uncompromising." Long term gain is only from that position.





Quiz on Bhagawan Baba's Teachings

Dr. (Miss) P L Rani & Team

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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 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 **Baba's Bhagawan Baba's Leelas, Mahimas and Upadesha.**

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.





Our Culture, Our Strength

Sri Sounak Dey

Student, III B.B.A., SSSIHL

Culture is the way of life. It is how we have refined ourselves and the direction that we have given to our lives. And in India, Culture is all about God. Our life revolves around God. God is the only motivation, the sole inspiration and the goal. So, who is this God? Well I really don't know because God never came down to me and introduced Himself. But being a human being, I have known love and with this experience I can say that God is our love. We are Bharatiyas. Bha, signifying God. And Rath meaning in love. We are a people in love with God. And this simple qualification makes it possible for anyone in any part of the world to be a part of this truly universal culture. It doesn't matter which God you worship, it doesn't matter which religion you follow; if you have made God as the central focal point of your life, then you truly are a Bharatiya.

This quest for God, this search for God must begin within ourselves and not outside. Unfortunately, all our lives we have been told and trained to seek what lies beyond our reach, to explore the world around us and this is where we have gone wrong. We have totally missed out on the treasures that lie within ourselves. Indian culture works with this inward approach towards life. And upon this strong foundation stand the lofty ideals of advaita – the supreme oneness with God. The all pervasiveness of Divinity and complete detachment towards the body.

But if you are going to explain these things to a 20-year-old like me, then I would say that I have no reason to believe you. And why should I? Why should I believe in spirituality in the 21st century, when the internet and smartphones are working just perfectly for me? Maybe when you have lost everything that you ever had and everything that you had put your hopes upon... maybe then you find the right occasion to understand who you truly are and what you can do.



Years ago, when I was a 5th grade student in school, I had suffered from a bout of viral fever. And after the usual dose of antibiotics, the fever was gone. But what remained was going to change my life for ever. I got paralysed. A certain neurological disorder had wreaked havoc on my system. And after falling several times I just realized that I could not walk. Back then I used to be good football player and was just waiting for my chance to represent my district and even my state. But now, as my father carried me on his back to the hospital, tears streamed down my cheeks and I realized that these same pairs of legs which carried me so fast everywhere were now a burden upon someone. This was how I learnt not to trust my body always. Because this body, this mind and this intellect are bound by the limitation of time and space. Which truly transcends is the soul. And that is what we truly are.

The Sanskrit word for human being is *manav*. The syllable ‘ma’ refers to the word ‘not’ in English. And the ‘nav’ refers to ‘something that is new’. So, we human beings are ‘not-new’. And in our name lies the secret of our true transcendental identity.

The next thing I am going to speak about is something, the mere mention of which puts off even the most serious spiritual aspirant, and that is advaita – the supreme oneness with God. Because it is really difficult for most of us to even imagine that we and God can be at the same level or even better put, there is no God, there is just you.

Last year, during the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet, I was part of the drama that was performed right here in Sai Kulwant Hall. And I was playing the role of a saint named Totapuri. Now what this man had to do is, he has to go and initiate Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in the philosophy and ideals of advaita. He was to talk about the eternal reality of the atma. And how Sri Ramakrishna and his beloved Kali Ma are just one and the same thing. We had so many rehearsals. With time, I slowly picked up the art of stage movement, the expressions, the lispings. But every time I entered the stage. I could feel that there is something missing because it felt so artificial.



Anyway, D-Day arrived. 13th Jan 2017. Now this day was really important for me for two reasons. One was the obvious one – that we were going to stage a drama in the Divine presence. The 2nd and the lesser known reason is that my mother was going for an operation on the same day. The drama began and progressed scene by scene and soon it was time for me to enter the stage.

As I stood there waiting, in full costume, in the back stage, I prayed to God for one last time. I prayed so that he takes care of me and my acting and also for my mother since she was not well. And exactly at this point of time, suddenly a thought struck my mind and it worked like an instant revelation. Here I was praying like any other normal human being in the back stage and when the curtains open I have to go on stage and shout at Sri Ramakrishna: I am God. Even you are God. Please believe in me. Now forget about Sri Ramakrishna believing in me, even I couldn't believe my own words, because I could notice such a stark contrast between my on-stage and off-stage behaviour. Then and there I stopped praying, and for the first time in my life, I truly believed that I am God. That day, it was God who entered the stage and everything was so natural. There was a different energy in all the dialogues that I delivered. Everything fell into place. I got lost in my character. In fact, I was so comfortable in my character that I walked all the way from the Kulwant Hall to the dormitory in full costume. And this was how I unexpectedly had a very practical experience of what is advaita.

Then next that I want to talk about is something that we all have noticed. It's common in India for people to worship a tree, a rock, a mountain or even some of the animals as God. Because in India, everything is God. God lives in every heart and every home. But centuries of misinterpretation of the scriptures has lead into believing that a tree, a mere monkey, or a rock as God or God is them. This is like pushing a huge picture into a tiny frame, and this is where we have gone wrong.

Dear brothers and sisters, I am here to tell you that our culture is verily our religion – the Sanathana Dharma. Our culture is much larger and broader... the food we eat, the language we speak, the rituals we practice. Because these



rituals are only a means to achieve the ultimate end of the spiritual awakening. And Spiritual awakening brings love, the eternal, unsullied, unadulterated, unconditional love in our hearts.

And today's selfish world needs a lot of love. Love is something which the scientists have not yet formulated, the industries can't mass produce and all the explorers of the world can't find in any corner of the world. Because it is here, right here in the heart and has to be extended to each and everybody surrounding us. Our culture is our true strength, because it aims at transforming the heart.





Our Beloved Swami

Sri D Sai Vamshi Krishna

Student, B.Sc. (Hons.) in Physics, SSSIHL

When I think of Swami, there are only two words that come – Swami or Mother Sai. It never comes to Bhagawan or something larger than life like that, because when I was born, they showed me Swami’s photo and said – he is your God – that’s it. We were to believe it. And for us, God was not someone who was there in the heaven, thunder would roar or something. But God was someone whom we came to meet on Thursdays and Sundays. God was someone who gave us chocolates in this very Hall. God was someone who would come and smile at us and ask “What was breakfast today?”

So that was our concept of God and we were never scared. In fact, He was the focal point of our lives such that if there was something where Swami was not in it, something was wrong with that! I remember in my 5th standard - you’ll can read the words ‘East Prasanthi’ over there - I could not see them, but I could only make out. But I thought that was normal eyesight because I didn’t know any better. So, I thought for everyone, East Prasanthi looks blurred. So, it continued. Later, after some years, I could not make out what was being written on the blackboard. But I thought that the teacher is writing small, so maybe I should go front.

It was in my 8th standard, I was sitting a little bit back and I was not able to see Swami. I could see Swami, but He was blurred. I could not make out Swami’s eyes and face. That was the first time when I got scared and I went back and told my teacher. Sir, I think something is wrong. I think I have done some sin or something. I am not able to see Swami’s face. He was puzzled. So, he said, “Can you tell me what’s written over there?” So, I read. He asked what’s the colour I said its little bit blurred and dull. He said “Buddhu, go and get your eyes checked up.” And then I came to know that I had poor eyesight. I was having it for the past 4 or 5 years, but it never bothered me. I could not read what was written in the classroom. I could not read all those notice boards, but I was not bothered. But the day I realized I could not see Swami’s



face, then I realized that something had to be done about this.

In fact, I remember, as kids at the Sri Sathya Sai Primary School, I had this bucket list of wishes. Being part of the band, being part of the convocation dramas in front of Swami and a chance to give Swami a rose and do arati to Him. We had witnessed that on their birthdays, students would go to Swami, and after doing arati, they would give the rose to Him. Swami would take the rose and put it in their pocket, take out the letter from their pocket and sometimes, read it and talk to them for some time, interact with them and then He would tell them to take padanamaskar.

I felt that was the best birthday gift anyone could ever get. So, from my 4th standard, I had this desire that I wanted to join the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School and I want to get this chance. I used to imagine in fact, that because sometimes it was difficult for Swami to take out the envelope and put the rose in the same pocket, I planned to wear a Safari suit, so there will be two pockets and Swami can put the rose in one pocket and take the letter from the other.

And some people would do away with the envelope because Swami used to take the letter out from it. So, I planned this down to the minute details of how there would be no envelope and how I'll fold the letter, what I'll write in it, what will Swami's expression be, etc. If He asked me this question, what will I answer and then I thought Swami will pull my cheek or pat my cheek. I did all this detailed planning and I joined the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School.

In my 8th standard I came to know that the 10th standard boys and the 12th standard boys have this opportunity on virtue of having their board exams. I guess I was the only kid who was eagerly awaiting his board exams. I was praying to Swami...Swami let my 10th standard exams come fast. But in my 8th standard, Swami took Mahasamadhi and I just couldn't bear it. And as one of my teachers used to say, it was a handicap that we were not able to take the absence of His physical presence. I knew that Swami was there and yet there



was this little bit doubt that if Swami would be physically present, it would've been better. And so, I used to think in this manner, and whenever I used to think what would've happened if Swami was there right now physically, the first thought would come is this rose chance.

Swami, I've lived it and relived it so many times in my mind that can't you make it happen once physically? I've been praying for this opportunity since my 4th standard. Can't you give me one chance? I used to feel bad about it. So, this continued for many years and in my 2nd year Undergraduate, I was listening to one of my brothers talking about his experience of how he gave arati to Swami. And I was thinking about my own experience at that time, it suddenly hit me.

So, in Primary School, the 7th standard boys have this opportunity to give arati to Swami on festival days and it goes by behaviour. So, the best boys start first. So almost half the year was over and I had not yet got my chance. I said Swami I am not a bad boy, then why are you not giving me this chance? So, when my birthday came, it was during Dasara time and my chance was not there, but Headmistress aunty called me and said today is your birthday right? You go and give arati. A teacher said, aunty, the order has been fixed and the boys have been decided. She said, no, he is a very good boy and let him give arati because today is his birthday. So, the order was changed and I was fitted into the new order. So that day I went and I gave arati. I had put a letter, but in the tension that I have to give arati, the letter was still in my pocket. So, when Swami was going and I was going for blessings, Swami said, "Letter?" And He took it from my pocket. Usually we give it, but He took out from my pocket, and he said "Take namaskar." I did namaskar and He blessed me and went.

It was nine years later that as I sitting in Brindavan, nine years later that I realized that all these years I've been saying, Swami, you did not give me arati chance for my birthday, but He had already given me a chance in my 7th standard, nine years earlier. But then you know, humans that we are, I said, Swami maybe that was coincidence. But it was not. Because, of my 19



years of existence on this planet, that was the only year in which my birthday came during Dasara. In fact, I checked, 1990 to 2020, the only year that my birthday falls during Dasara, was in 2010, the year I was in 7th standard and I had a chance to give arati to Swami and that year Swami fulfilled my wish exactly the way I wanted – taking the letter from my pocket, blessing me, giving me padanamaskar.

And there is this one incident where I tried to put my logic first in front of Swami's plan. Of course, it was my logic which lost, but it was a beautiful experience.

It was in my 12th standard, that we had prepared for the gratitude programme and just before coming to the Mandir, I said, Swami I want a proof of your physical presence. And the first thought that I came to my mind was – a flower falling from Swami's chair. Then I said, Swami no flower. Flower is the old school drama. I used this word – in my mind I said, Swami, flower is the old school drama. If wind blows, a flower will fall. If I am taking blessing near the footstool a flower should fall. I want something radically different. And with these thought I came to Mandir.

So, our programme was over and we were sitting in bhajans and as I was sitting, I was thinking, Swami see for your sake we have put up this programme. All of us have come together and we have done so much, we've organized so much – why? Because of our gratitude for you – as if Swami needed our gratitude. I was telling Swami, see Swami this is our gratitude for you. How much we have prepared for your sake. I was beaming and smiling and then slowly, the brothers had come to give us gifts from Swami – what Swami had sent for us. And they came. I didn't know what happened that day. Why there was this diversion in course. Around eight students came. The first one went right, second one left, the next went that way this way. Every one missed me. I was the first student but I did not get a gift from Swami, and except for me, all the 150 students behind me the gift.

I felt so bad that I started crying. I said Swami, I might be leaving your



Institution after this and you are ignoring me. I said please, and started crying. But then, Swami did not forget – I was having the ego but a mother can never put down a child in front of others. So, for people sitting next to me they thought I was in a state of ecstasy, but really, I was crying as I was feeling bad that I had not got a gift from Swami and He was ignoring me. As I was crying, I turned back and at the exact farthest corner, a brother, a senior brother who was serving looked at me and showed thumbs up saying programme was good. I thought he is asking me what happened? So, I said I shook my head, no I did not get. This person was baffled. He thought I am telling him that the programme is good and this person is telling no it is not good. This confusion carried on for a few moments and by then, time everyone had got up and other people had left and had gone inside. And it took some time for that brother to realize that I did not get a gift.

So, all the teachers had already returned to their seats and so he just caught the last teacher and said, Sir, this boy did not get Swami's gift. And so, I was the sitting in the first row but I was the last person to get Swami's memento. And then I said, "Swami, if this is your way of showing your physical presence in a radically different way I don't it again. I am willing be believe that you are present."

But then this was not all. I was in the habituated. Now I was saying Thank you so much Swami. I'll never believe that I am the doer again. And I was praying, then came the prasadam. So, the person came, he bent the bowl and the prasadam fell down. And now I thought, see I was saying flower should not fall and the prasadam fell down. But then I am again a Science student, so it is just logical. So, I said no, he bent the bowl, right? It was so full that the prasadam fell down. But the thing is that the prasadam boys didn't fill the vessel. The ones that go for serving are always filled. But the ones which come for blessings are filled only three fourths keeping this very reason in mind that when they bend it (for blessings), it should not fall down. I kept imagining different scenarios using the Physics in my brain. And my final tact was to say, Swami maybe the person carrying it was clumsy. So, he had dropped it. But if he was clumsy, he would drop the entire vessel, may be half



the bowl or at least ten prasadam or something. But exactly one prasadam fell that too right in front of Swami's footstool, exactly in front of Swami's footstool and that person was in a state of nervousness that it was fallen in front of Swami. He picked it up, he gave me and went.

And that time I realized that Swami will never let you down. I realized that He was there and why this is unique because in fifteen years if you ask me, I've never seen a prasadam fall down in front of Swami. It might have fallen in the back, but in front of Swami, unacceptable. That was the first in my life that I saw prasadam fall. And Swami showed me something I wanted, something unique and different right?

Whatever happens, he will remain our Sarathi. And the moment He steps down as the Sarathi, the moment Krishna stepped down as Arjuna's Sarathi from the chariot, chariot burst into flames. He will always remain our Sarathi.

And I would myself like to believe that because I am the person who doubts the most. Swami, please bless me that I believe and everyone believes and feels Your presence and we know that You are always there with us here.





Bhagawan Baba on Education

Prof. R Gangadhara Sastry

Professor (Hon.) in Political Science, SSSIHL

I want to share a few thoughts about the profound philosophy of Bhagawan Baba in the field of education. As we all know, they are three chosen fields where Bhagawan contributed so extensively that it is considered as a record in world history. I am very confident when I say world history as the water project undertaken by Bhagawan is described as the best ever undertaken by any NGO or a Trust in the entire world or by any organization, including the United Nations. Some scholars commenting about this water project said, “In research, in recent times it was observed that the area which was fast moving towards becoming a desert was recognized as Anantapur District. Such a district appears very fertile today because of this great project undertaken by Bhagawan Baba on His own.”

When this water project was to be undertaken, Bhagawan Baba was giving a discourse in Poornachandra Auditorium in the presence of the then Prime minister Sri P V Narasimha Rao. In the discourse, He said to the Prime Minister, “You are from Andhra Pradesh and have a blessed opportunity to do something which is going to be remarkable because no one ever contemplated on something like this in the past 500 to 600 years. You have an opportunity to provide water to the people of Anantapur wherein people walk miles and miles for a glass of water.”

Then Swami in His infinite mercy mentioned to the Prime Minister, “If you want any financial assistance on this project, I am ready to give.” In the same discourse, Swami said that if it requires me to sell Prasanthi Nilayam and do it, I am ready for it. Bhagawan was always there to serve. Unfortunately, this concept of service is disappearing from the minds of the people and the so called educated would like to get served than to serve. As long as we don't understand the philosophy of education according to Swami or Bharat, we will be never able to sanctify our lives because the very purpose of education is to sanctify our lives.



Education has to grant you an excellent feature for which the summer courses in Indian Culture and Spirituality were designed. Swami emphasised on these two aspects of culture and spirituality. Bhagawan was one day interacting with a few of the teachers and somebody mentioned the word culture to Swami. Swami asked him immediately, “What do you mean by culture?” Generally, it was considered that it was better to maintain silence in front of Bhagawan because you will be caught on the wrong side. We prayed to Him to give us the meaning of culture. That was the first time, I heard a profound meaning of culture. I was baffled and at the same time, I was deeply touched and enlightened. I have gone through many definitions of culture by various sociologists but the one given by Bhagawan was so simple yet profound that I was enlightened. Swami said: Culture is concern for others.

The system of education grants us different kinds of knowledge but until and unless that knowledge is translated into wisdom, that knowledge is useless. All kinds of knowledge have to be translated into wisdom. Bhagawan always reminded us, “You are what you are because of the society. The society is contributing in so many ways for your own welfare. You are getting education in educational institutions set up by the society, you are getting treatment in hospitals funded by society. You are walking on roads which are a gift of the society. Everything is a gift of the society. What are you giving back to the society for all that what you are receiving? If you are not giving back anything to the society but love to exploit it, how do you call yourself educated?”

Bhagawan was deeply dissatisfied by the education that is being offered in modern-day society and decided to have a different kind of educational system. Someone told Him that it is not possible to start a University as we already have two universities - Sri Krishnadevaraya University at Anantapur and Sri Venkateswara University at Tirupati. When He inaugurated the University in 1980, He declared, “My University is going to be unique. In this University, there will be a completely different kind of education, where, in addition to secular knowledge, spiritual knowledge also will be imparted.”

Swami referred to education like a bird having two wings. A bird can never



fly without both the wings. If education is only secular in nature, that will mean that the bird has only one wing. One's knowledge will be incomplete and one can't understand one's responsibilities towards the society and hence has to be profoundly taught the spiritual significance of knowledge. Swami went to the extent in saying that spiritual education is more important than secular education. That has been proved beyond doubt by many, many people who appeared in this country, like Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ramana Maharishi, Shiridi Sai Baba. It is given to us since time immemorial in scriptures like Ramayana Mahabharata, Bhagawata.

Why is so much sanctity being attached to spiritual education? It is said that *Jantunaam nara janma durlabham*, i.e., Human birth is considered to be the most precious one on the planet. Out of 84 lakh species on the planet, 83,99,999 can't speak. This faculty of speech is conferred only on the human being. Human being is conferred with this beautiful trait of speech and discrimination. Bhagawan Baba went on giving lot of teachings to us teachers on this.

I would like to narrate a wonderful incident related to this. One day there was a message that a very powerful person was about to lose his majority in the state of Maharashtra. He sent a message to Swami to save him. There was a vote of confidence in the assembly and Bhagawan said that He will protect this politician. In the confidence vote, He won with a majority of one vote. He rushed to Puttaparthi along with his entire family. We were always waiting for Bhagawan's Darshan by 3.30 or 4.00 o'clock in the afternoon. Generally, He would emerge at 3.30, but that day, He didn't come out as He took the Chief Minister for an interview at 2.00 o'clock. It was a long interview and Swami came walking to us at 4.30. He looked at us and said, "Today, I came out to give Darshan very early to talk to this Chief Minister and his family."

One faculty member got up and said, "Swami I know this man, and his family has lot of problems. So, they have come here." Swami gave a very strange look to this faculty member and said, "Do you mean to say that people who



have lot of problems come to Puttaparthi to get their problems resolved.” The professor replied, “Yes Swami, they come here with their problems and when you bless them, their problems get resolved.” Swami looked at him and said, “According to you, if all people having problems will get them resolved after coming here, then this place should be flooded with people from all over the world.” He looked at the professor and continued, “Can you show me one person in this world who doesn’t have problems?” This professor was speechless.

Then Swami, in His infinite mercy said, “Today I want to reveal something special to all of you. I have not given the capacity to this illusory world which you are able to perceive with your senses to grant real happiness to you. You only get momentary happiness in this world. You think that this world will be able to give you permanent happiness and run after it like a mad person running after a mirage, thinking that there is water in it.” Then Swami said, “I have created another world where you will be blessed with the kind of bliss for which you always aspire. Turn inward, go within, meditate, don’t get agitated, be calm, quiet and satisfied with what you are.”

Swami used to always tell us in the veranda: Just shut up and sit down, you will be blessed with bliss. This is the kind of education Swami gave us.

I want to share a personal experience about a special trait of humility with all of you. After completing the water project and granting water to the parched villages of Anantapur district, after personally directing the L&T about the work and the project was inaugurated, the sarpanchs, village panchayat presidents, panchayat members and villagers came to express their gratitude to Swami. Swami finished his Darshan, came and stood in front of them and asked them a question, “Why all of you have come?” Most of them stood bent on their knees and said, “Swami, we are here to express our gratitude to you for blessing us with this wonderful gift of water. But for that, our life would have been miserable. Please accept our gratitude.” Swami looked at them and said, “What a blunder you are committing?” Swami continued, “I am feeling thirsty, I designed a project to quench my thirst, I am quenching my own



thirst today, do I thank myself, for you are all my own reflections.”

He identified himself with everybody. He identified Himself with a primary school boy, a professor, a great leader and everybody. He saw himself in everybody. He declared that I am nothing but the Universe.

He worked for the welfare of the entire Universe and taught us to work for the welfare of the entire Universe. He didn't just see how I can thank myself for quenching my thirst. He went one step ahead and said, “I don't want you to thank me for what I did, in fact, accept my thanks to all of you, because you gave me an opportunity to serve you all.” Swami added, “I pray to all of you to give me many more such opportunities like this, so that the purpose of the Avatar is sanctified.”

Would it ever be possible for us to get more educated than this? If you don't consider this as real education, probably the word education will have no meaning at all. The way Swami lived, the way Swami did things, the way Swami perceived the welfare of the Universe, the way Swami worked in a tireless manner without taking rest, tell me how to express our gratitude to Him? If we have some human quality in us, then we should serve Him all the time. Live for His mission, work for His mission, be worthy of His grace. Pray for only one thing - Swami, shower your Grace on all of us and see to it that we stick to your Lotus feet at every moment of our lives.

I pray to Swami to shower His blessings on all of us so that we follow His two dictums of Love All Serve All and Help Ever Hurt Never.





Faculty Panel Discussion – Work, Worship & Wisdom

Moderator: Dr. Srinivas Srirangarajan

Associate Professor, Management & Commerce and
Director, Brindavan Campus, SSSIHL

The Participants

- » Dr. (Miss) Sharada Subramanian (**SS**), Associate Professor of Philosophy and Deputy Warden, Anantapur Campus
- » Dr. N Sivakumar (**NSK**), Associate Professor and Associate Head, Dept. of Management & Commerce
- » Dr. Raghunatha Sharma (**RS**), Asst. Professor, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science
- » Dr. B Chandrasekhar (**BC**), Asst. Professor, Dept. of Management and Commerce

Moderator: The panel members will deliberate on a topic which is very relevant and is an integral part of our lives. Bhagawan says that every human being is destined to reach his or her goal, which is to discover one's inner self and understand one's true divinity. Given the various mindsets of people and different types of approaches - as Bhagawan says, that every human being has a unique relationship with God and a unique calling that is very customized for him or her. Our ancient sages and saints have categorized these into three broad roadways or pathways to our goal and these are called the path of work or Karma Yoga, the path of devotion or the Bhakti Yoga and the path of wisdom or Jnana Yoga. I request my panellists to first start to define or explain what these pathways are. What are the three royal pathways?

RS: Fundamentally every action is bound to give you some reflection which depends upon the kind of action done. Good action will give you a benefit and a bad action will cause harm to you. Karma Yoga says that through pure

action, you reap the benefits and offer the same to God and thereby attain salvation. The Path of worship or Bhakti Yoga is all about expressing our love to God in the form of prayer, Pooja or upasana; and the path of wisdom is about self-enquiry.

Moderator: Now I request Dr. Sharada to give her views on these three pathways.

SS: I would like to quote a conversation which Bhagawan had with students some time ago. Swami asked students in the Bhajan Hall, “What is Bhakti?” One of them said it is loving Swami. Swami said that this answer was correct. Another more boy boldly asked, “Swami, does Bhakti come first or faith?” Swami, using a day to day experience said, “When do you love your people, your mother, father, siblings? You do it only when you know that they are your mother, father and siblings etc. Therefore, faith is first, followed by love.” It is a circular argument because faith induces love and love strengthens faith.

BC: Swami gives an analogy regarding this of learning swimming. One has to get into the pool which is faith. One can't say that we will learn and then get into the pool

SS: Then the basic question which arises is how to love God? It is not an easy task because we all are part time devotees. We have devotion for Him on some occasions, and we are not bothered about it much on other occasions. This was a basic question which in the mind of Swami Vivekananda also.

NSK: Regarding part time devotees, Swami would say, “A company or organization will have part time employees and full time employees. However, it is the full-time employees who get all the benefits like the salary, bonus, allowances and the pension. On the other hand, the part time devotees come on a daily wage basis and don't get all the benefits.” Swami asked us to be full time devotees rather than part time devotees.

SS: Ramakrishna Paramahansa also answered this question very well. Swami



Vivekananda asked his master, “How do I dive deep into divinity and how can I really visualize God?” At that point of time, in front of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, there was a glass of juice and there was also a housefly which was just hovering around it. He made best use of the analogy and said, “As long as the fly hovers around it, it will not taste the real juice. It has to get into it and then only it will be able to taste the sweetness of the juice. This looks scary because once it gets into the glass, it has to lose itself. But this analogy conveys to us? We have to get into this in a proportionate way forgetting the fruits thereof, offering our anxiousness, worries etc. at the lotus feet of God.

NSK: I remember of an analogy of a fully bloomed lotus as Swami mentions. Swami says that frogs who are so near don't enjoy the nectar of the lotus but the honey bees come from far away, get into the lotus, enjoy the nectar and in the process, they even forget themselves.

SS: Hence, Bhakti in neither a path nor a destination, it is an existence by itself.

Moderator: As our panel members pointed out, Bhakti is love for God. Dr. Chandrasekhar, what are your views towards these three royal pathways towards God?

BC: When one looks at work, worship and wisdom, the three-pronged approach to the spiritual goal of life, I can understand this on many different levels. Let us start with a fundamental way of looking at it. I request you all to follow this train of thought. Work is fundamental action and the actions that we perform are largely driven by our samskaras, what we carry as tendencies or vasanas from our previous births. These manifest as the gunas of sattva, rajas and tamas. As most of us act identifying with the human form with our body and mind, thus is born the doer of the action. Once a doer is born, doership is its shadow. Once doership comes, it is very difficult to offer the fruits of the action and not aspire for the fruits thereof. Generally, we human beings aspire for the fruits and in the various successes that we achieve in life, there is a certain enlargement that we feel, although temporarily of



our sense of self. Hence, any success makes us feel good. There is a spirit in man which wants to explore, want to go to the moon, go to the Mars, climb Everest, acquire money, fame, wisdom. It is the innate nature of man which is manifesting in these pursuits. At times it is conscious and at times it is unconscious.

NSK: Actions can be totally unconscious like our breathing, heartbeat.

Moderator: Swami says that we are bound by our actions, and even if we don't do anything, we are doing action as breathing is an action. Thinking is also an action.

RS: The Bhagavad Gita says - *Karmanu Bandhena Manushya Loke* – the moment a person is born into this world, which is a field of activity, he is bound by the cycle of action.

BC: To continue, in all these pursuits, we are trying to expand who we are. As Lord Krishna, a devotee is classified in the initial stages as an Artharathi. But in this stage, it is not necessarily devotion as it should be. Devotion is love for God as all panellists have described earlier, but initially it is transaction with God and we are taking the help of a superpower to fulfill our wants and desires.

SS: I am reminded of a difference which Swami makes between a devotee and a worshipper. A worshipper is transactional based as he would like to worship for his desires to get fulfilled but a devotee is unconditionally devoted to God. Swami gives an example here. Ravana was a worshipper but Lord Hanuman was a devotee.

BC: Hence when one acts as a worshipper and has a sense of doership, there is this quest for expansion but there comes a point in each one of our lives where we understand that this quest for expansion is a quest for truth but seeking it outside is a deadlock. This is because we are seeking boundlessness, but we are seeking it in the outside world, which is essentially bound.



NSK: Swami says that Humankind has grown so much in science and technology that today we are able to explore the sun, moon and the outer space. But in spite of doing so much of exploration outside, the human kind has not been able to explore one inch inside.

BC: When this becomes an experiential understanding then our vision begins to turn from outward to inward and that is when instead of trying to expand our limited identification of body and mind, we begin to question that identification and ask the most pertinent question that a Jnana Yogi might ask - Who am I?

Moderator: As our panellists have said - the path of work or Karma Yoga is all about doing work as an offering to God, worship is love for God and wisdom is turning inward to discover the unlimited self within. What are your views, Dr. Sivakumar on these three pathways?

NSK: Work which has a noble intention behind it and has a societal benefit leads to worship as it will come out of respect for others. I define worship as respect for others. That work which has a social benefit as is done with respect for others ultimately leads to Jnana or wisdom. Swami defines Jnana as Advaita Darshanam Jnanam, i.e. seeing the unity of all creation.

At this point, a video was shown where an animal welfare organization rescued a dog that got stuck in a coal tar drum. It was removed after cutting the drum and the tar stuck to its body was slowly removed using vegetable oil.

NSK: As we see in the video, people who have a noble intention of helping the dog are doing a socially beneficial act and they have done it out of sheer concern for the dog that even a dog should not suffer. This act has given them the wisdom and they are able to relate to the dog and finally it is the hope which is most important in this world. This leads us to a matter of wisdom. I can see some aspects of the path of action here, I can also see some aspects of worship here and I can also see the path of wisdom here. Does it represent Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga or Jnana Yoga?



Moderator: This is the bane of all categorizations. This conflict begins - is it Karma, Bhakti or Jnana? So, this incident of saving the dog - is it Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga or Jnana Yoga?

SS: The rescue of the dog is nothing but pure love for God's creation. So, this is Bhakti Yoga as only love for God can issue forth such love for his creation. Here I am reminded of an anecdote from Dr. Abdul Kalam's life when he was working at DRDO. There was a proposal for the replacement of window shade which was broken and there was a cracked glass. Dr. Kalam refused it on the reason that the cracked glass can hurt a bird and also will not allow a bird to not perch on it. As humans, he felt, we should provide for all beings. So, I feel that the video is nothing but pure love which has issued out into this action and that is the only hope for humanity.

Moderator: Dr. Chandrasekhar, what is your take on this video?

BC: One can't miss the aspect of love here but this love comes with the feeling of being one with the dog. In this context, I am reminded of a story which Swami narrates about Lincoln when he was the President of the USA and when he was driving along the streets in his horse cart and sees a pig that had gotten into a gutter. The pig was struggling inside the gutter trying to free itself. On seeing this, promptly, the President asked the cart to be stopped, gets down and rushes to the gutter, gets down into it himself and helps the pig come out. Everybody is shocked and aghast at his gesture and asks him, "What made you do this? You could have commanded anyone of us to do this." Abraham Lincoln replied, "I didn't do this for the sake of the pig but I rather did to relieve myself of the pain that I felt in seeing the pig struggled there." Whenever we go on the road, we see some accidents happen, all our hearts go out to the person who is suffering but very few hands go to help the person. So, this aspect of oneness automatically springs forth the karma required to be done at that point of time.

RS: I do agree with both the panelists but this is a clear case of Karma Yoga. Swami says that just by chanting potato-chapati, potato-chapati,



potato-chapati you are not going to get it- *Kartavyam Yoga muchyate, Yogaha Karmashu Koushalam*- Perfection in work is yoga. Swami often quotes the anecdote of Anthony the violin maker in this regard. He used to make violins and took a long time quite to carefully make each violin, tune them and make them perfect. When people used to ask him why he was spending so much as it will not fetch him the profit for the work he has put in, he used to say, “I need to satisfy the good within me.” So, perfection in action is important.

NSK: In fact, Swami said that he used to make just one violin per year.

BC: Similar to the Anthony story, in the contemporary sense, is the Rolls Royce company. They make just 50-70 cars per year and they take pride that the cars are handmade individually with all the attention it deserves to ensure that there is perfection in every product that they make.

NSK: In spite of, the world moving to assembly line production where they can make a million cars per year, Rolls Royce is an outstanding example.

Moderator: Unless the worship or the wisdom aspect doesn't get translated into action, it would really mean nothing for us. Dr. Sivakumar, you brought in this contradiction, can you bring in some clarity now.

NSK: Let us discuss the facet of intention behind the action shown in the video. The animal welfare organization had the noble intention that even a dog should not suffer and that noble intention in turn provided them with the respect and as well as the wisdom to see that the dog has to be protected. In this regard, I am reminded of an incident that took place in Trayee Brindavan where Swami gave us an understanding that why intention behind action becomes very, very important. Let us see the video of a Chinna Katha where it brings home the lesson that the intention behind the action is some times more important than the action itself.

Chinna Katha Video: A painter was working on a Jesus painting on the outer wall of the church. After finishing the painting to have a full view of it, he went



dangerously close to the end of the tower and was at risk of a fatal fall. His assistant, to attract his attention, struck a red line on the painting. Seeing this the painter came back running towards his assistant and hence the painter was saved. When they approached the reverend of the church with this issue, the Reverend said that this particular red line is very special as it saved somebody's life.

NSK: I want to highlight here that the painting of Jesus has been defaced with that red line yet the Reverend at the church sees it very valuable because it has saved a life. Talking about intention behind an action, I remember, once we were all sitting in Trayee around Swami and in the audience was a Colonel from the Indian Army. Swami asked him to narrate his most memorable incident from the service in the Indian Army. He said, “This incident took place when I was posted on the Indian border. At a particular point of time, I saw an enemy soldier fully loaded with weapons walking towards me and he was ready to shoot me. I was very alert and before the enemy soldier could shoot me down, I shot him.”

After he finished the story, Swami asked him this simple question, “Did you shoot him only with the purpose of saving your life?” The Colonel replied in the affirmative and said that as he was alert, he was able to shoot the enemy before he could, and that saved his own life. Swami was not happy with this; His face became small. He turned to the students and explained the grandness of the intention behind the act. Swami said, “In this particular case, had this Colonel shot that same enemy soldier rather than thinking, I should save my life, instead, if he would have thought that the enemy soldier is intruding into our country and it is the soldier's responsibility to save and protect his country and with that intention if he had shot at the enemy, he would not have accumulated any karma. But he did this with a selfish intention of saving himself alone which has led to accumulating karma even though in both the cases the action would have been exactly the same.

Moderator: Swami gives three terms for this - vikarma, karma and akarma. If an action is done with ego and a selfish motive it is called vikarma, ordinary action remains karma and if it is done the way He said, i.e., for the sake of the



country, He says it transcends action and is called Akarma.

BC: When we talk about Karma Yoga, it is not just about not aspiring for rewards but also ensuring about the intention of our action.

Moderator: In worship, is the intention behind the worship important as it is in action?

SS: Intention is very important in worship too or it will just turn into a mere ritual. Here I am reminded of a beautiful episode which happened to the devotee of Adi Sankaracharya. This devotee came to Sankaracharya to get knowledge but somehow didn't have that kind of intelligence to pursue it. Since he came to Sankara and was at his lotus feet, he decided to do all the errands and personal chores of Adi Sankara as he had accepted Sankara as his guru. The disciples around Sankara started mocking at this devotee as he was not able to grasp some of the subtle lessons which Adi Sankaracharya was imparting. Once, when he was across the river and was washing Adi Sankara's clothes, suddenly the master called him and blessed him and from that moment onwards, he started singing in a particular meter which is very, very difficult, which was in Thotaka meter and the hymn was the Thotakastakam. Later on, he was called Thotakacharya. Hence the intention was more than enough to receive the knowledge from his guru.

Moderator: What about wisdom? Is the intention very important when you are talking about self-enquiry and the path of wisdom?

BC: Although self-enquiry on the face of it might look like a personal pursuit, the fruit of the self-enquiry is universal where we stop limiting ourselves to once individual self. Hence all good action springs forth from the cognizance of that oneness.

RS: To substantiate on this thought; once all the students were sitting in the Bhajan Hall in Prasanthi Nilayam and by rule we are not supposed to cross over to the ladies' side. Swami was on one occasion in the Bhajan Hall and



there was nobody on the ladies side except for an old devotee of Bhagawan. She was struggling to get up and there were 50-60 students on this side. Without hesitation, one student rushed that side and gave a helping hand to that old devotee. Swami said, “This intention is so pure, that is what matters when you are performing an action.”

Moderator: We have discussed the three pathways - Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and the Jnana Yoga and we have also seen what Bhagawan tells about it and how the intention behind each of these is important. We will try to now answer some queries which have come from the students.

Question: We are always taught to fear God as part of a distorted practice. How to transform this to love for God?

BC: Swami corrects that when He says it is love for God and fear of sin. So, it is a wrong understanding that we fear God. If we have love for God, then I feel our actions would be right and when our actions are right, there should not be a situation where we need to fear God.

NSK: I would like to substantiate this with a simple example which the students would appreciate. At home, the students will have a fear of their father, if they have done a mistake. In case, if they have done no mistakes then they will have only love for their parents. That is why Swami very clearly emphasizes that it is not fear for God but fear for sin. We fear God because by mistake, we have done some wrong actions and that wrong actions make us feel that we have to be afraid of God.

Moderator: The second question pertains to both Karma and Jnana. Karma says that Bhagawan is the real doer and wisdom says that try to understand that God is the real doer. So, if Bhagawan is the real doer, then why this concept of sin and virtues. If everything is good, then why do we categorize things as bad and good?

BC: If we are looking at things from that perspective that God is the doer of



everything then we must stick on to that perspective at all levels of reasoning. Suppose you are driving a car and going from point A to point B. What essentially takes you from point A to point B is petrol or fuel. A second person drives the same car, starts from point A and goes and bangs a wall and therefore loses his life. In this case, what primarily caused the consequence, primarily it is the fuel caused the movement here. When we say that God is the doer of all the actions, we are talking from the perspective of God being the primal energy which drives everything. But there is a sensible driver and there is an insensible driver. One person reaches from A to B and the other person crashes. Having crashed the car, we can't blame the fuel for crashing the car.

RS: Swami says that so far as you are below the senses, it is your duty to distinguish between a good act and a bad act and take advice from elders, scriptures and preceptors.

Question: We say these are the consequences of your past actions. Why should we suffer in this birth for the karma which we have done in the previous birth?

NSK: I want to give a small analogy in this regard. Swami says that if someone wants to remove a hard-hit nail from the wall, he tries fifteen to twenty times to pull out the nail. It gets loosened but it does not come out. In frustration he leaves, though he is a strong man. Soon after that, a child comes to that place sees the nail, puts his hand, pulls it and it comes out. The child feels that its efforts have made that nail come out. But truly, it has nothing to do with the child's effort, it has all been the efforts of that strong man who had done it much before the child. From our Indian culture's perspective, life is a continuum, hence we may be feeling that there may be one life followed by another life, from a Divine perspective they are all one. Therefore, whatever actions we do in one life time does have its reaction in another lifetime.

RS: We need not feel that we are suffering for the past births. Human being has infinite opportunities to escape from this cycle.

Question: If everything is destined, then why should we perform actions.

SS: In Indian philosophy, we never call it as Self, we call it journeying Self. It is only changing its vesture. Swami says, seeds are many, ground is the same, the water is the same but some seeds sprout early, some seeds sprout later. Each seed has its own potentiality and its own actuality so depending upon the action, whether it is a minor one or a major one, we feel the consequences immediately, and sometimes in the long run.

NSK: Swami says: What we meet in life is destiny and how we meet it is self-effort. Just to extrapolate it to students. Every one of you have got admitted to this Divine, Hallowed University, which is an extraordinary University but equally important is how we make use of this beautiful opportunity that has been bestowed upon us and that depends upon our self-effort.

Moderator: How can we be sure that all our actions are always selfless? Hence Karma Yoga is a tough path, how can you completely surrender to God, so Jnana marga is tough. Isn't Bhakti the easiest path?

BC: Swami says that in Kali Yuga, Bhakti is the easiest path. That is why the Bhajans that go on every day, is the main feature activity that happens in Prasanthi Nilayam. The main way with which we connect to Bhagawan is undeniably the sweetest and the easiest path. But one can't do away with the other. Bhakti, which is not tempered with wisdom, which is not complemented with action, is incomplete. As a beginner it is fine.

Moderator: Is it not a step-by-step process starting first with doing action in a selfless way and then evolving into a stage where you love God and finally you reach a stage where you discover your true Self? We have heard Bhagawan also giving several discourses and putting this in a hierarchy saying - first do karma, then move on to Bhakti and then to Jnana. There are some more discourses where Swami says that there is no difference, the trees and all are the same. Are these paths water tight silos, are these mutually exclusive pathways to God or is it that all the three are a permutation and combination



of one another?

SS: Swami's emphasis on all the three is circular. On one occasion, He will say, "You are doing so much of work but what is the use if you don't know your Self?" In the second breath He would say, "Sitting in a corner, meditating in an isolated place, keeping away from the society and not indulging in the societal work is not the right thing. One has been given the body to participate in the societal work, seva, our mind gets purified and with this pure mind, we are able to see things clearly." Pure mind here refers to selfless thoughts. If we say that work is all that I can do, worship and wisdom is not my cup of tea, then we are only boasting our ego. We try to identify our personality through the work we do, like I am a doctor, I am a teacher and not more than that. Sometimes, we are very passionate about our work and if there is some kind of an obstacle to the work, we break down. So, work is not the only thing, it has to be coupled with something else. It is very easy to perform certain rituals, it is very easy to do meditation in a lonely corner and not indulge in any kind of work. This leads us into lethargy. Swami says: Ability without nobility is dangerous and nobility without ability is equally useless.

RS: Swami gives a beautiful analogy from The Ramayana. Swami says that when Hanuman crossed over to Lanka in search of Mother Sita, he meets Vibhishana and knows about his devotion to Rama. He learns that Vibhishana is merely chanting Lord Rama's name and is not doing any work for Rama. Hanuman tells Vibhishana, "You have been chanting Lord Rama's name but what actions have you taken up to restore Mother Sita to Him? Rama Karya is as important as Rama Naama.

NSK: Swami gives a punchline in this regard- *Dil mein Raam Haat mein Kaam.*

BC: When I heard about the experience of Vibhishana, I was reminded of the contemporary example of our Sevadals. Many sevadals had duties posted in the back of the ashram, far away from Bhagawan's Darshan. They came



from far off places, taking ten days off for doing seva for Bhagawan never saw Him. Definitely, the Lord's grace is there on the person who does His work as much it is on the person who worships Him. So, all of these are intermingled.

NSK: I surely see the connection between all these three paths. I remember one incident which happened in Brindavan when we were students in the 1980s. A regular visitor to Brindavan on those days was Field Marshall Kariappa. He was also the Major General of the Indian Army. Swami would almost wait for his visits to Brindavan. In the 1980s, he was of the ripe age of around 90, but he would be totally erect and he would wait patiently, standing for Swami's Darshan for a few hours on many occasions. If he saw a student sitting a little hunched up, he would make it a point to tell the student to sit straight or stand straight. This was the perfection in him.

Swami would make him invariably make him talk and his talks were always infused with love for our country. He would give a wonderful talk on why students should work for our country. He would make it a point to end his talk by exhorting the students to raise their hands, pump it into the air and shout loudly - Jai Bharat Mata. If some students didn't do it properly, Swami used to call them in front and make them do it again. Swami taught us, in this simple action, that all the three paths are intertwined. Swami expected every student to do this perfectly. This is excellence in action i.e., *yogaha karmashu koushalam*. He developed in students, respect for our nation, which is worship. Thirdly, it also infused into the students the wisdom that they should work with for the growth and development of our country. So, all the three paths were just infused in one simple act of shouting - Jai Bharat Mata.

BC: Definitely, these are intermingled pathways and I want to highlight this with a story from the Yogic lore. There are three Yogis - a Jnana Yogi, a Bhakta Yogi and a Karma yogi going through a forest. Suddenly the clouds become dark and a thunder storm opens up and it becomes so strong that they have to find some shelter where they can be safe. The Bhakta who is aware of the presence of a temple rushed to take shelter in the temple, taking

the others with him. The Jnana yogi, who otherwise would not have visited a temple, on this occasion, to be protected from the rain, accompanies the bhakta. The temple is dilapidated and there is not much cover in the sanctum sanctorum. To protect themselves, they all go very close to the deity. The rain intensifies and they further closer to the deity and when the rain becomes very strong, they all sit down and together hug the deity. Just then God appears. They are all ecstatic but all of them have a question in their minds and God understands their question. The Jnana Yogi says, “In all my meditation and all my effort to know Who am I, you didn’t appear?” The Bhakta says, “In all the raptures of Bhakti and outpouring, you didn’t appear.” The Karma Yogi says, “In all my efforts of doing seva to people, you didn’t appear, why have you appeared now?” God replies, “At last, you three got together and therefore I appeared.”

Moderator: Are we saying that independently all these three paths are not going to be meaningful? Does it mean that we should have all these three?

RS: As one panel member put it - if we profess to follow only one path to the exclusion of all other paths, it creates ego in us and we may go off balance. There is a beautiful story in the Puranas. Narada meets a king who has become a fanatic about performing only Yagnas, aspiring for heaven. Narada gives him an advice, “You are going on performing Yagnas, now see what has happened.” He takes the king to hell where so many animals were waiting for taking up bodies to seek revenge. The king gets dismayed and says, “I have been thinking that by performing Yagna is the be all and end all of life. This shows that how important it is to see the inner significance in our actions, devotion or in our wisdom.

Moderator: Please give examples as we have been talking so much about the integration of the three. Can we have examples of people who have demonstrated the integration of these three?

SS: Adi Shankaracharya is the best example of the integration of all these three paths. All his life, he insisted on the Jnana Marga but it was he who

could write with his mature mind all kinds of devotional stotrams. Bhaja Govindam is one of the most beautiful stotrams, infused with devotion.

NSK: I would like to give an example from the corporate world. To understand the integration of work, worship and wisdom, we can refer to the activities of the Tata Group. They are perfect in their production. They have come out with special type of pulses which are not the polished ones found in the market. They produce it in such a way that all the nutrients are maintained. When Jamshedji Tata originally created this empire, he made a will in which he wrote that there should be adequate facilities for all employees. There must be enough playgrounds for the children. There should be enough facilities for the local community to thrive. That was the amount of respect he had for all people. If we see the Tata Group's motto, it says: We exist as a group not for just our own profits but to make India a developed country. So, they are able to integrate all these three aspects.

BC: There is an example from a corporate leader of the western world who has this understanding of the Eastern wisdom. I want to quote Mr. William George, erstwhile CEO of the Medtronic, a medical devices company and currently a faculty at Harvard Business School: We are all spiritual beings composed of minds, bodies and a spiritual side. To unleash the full potential of the body, mind and spirit, gives enormous power to the organization. It truly empowers the members of the organization and helps them devote their entire being to the ultimate purpose for which the organization exists, which is to serve others.

NSK: In this regard, something which strikes me is conditioning. How well we are able to condition ourselves to ensure that we will be able to relate to work, worship and wisdom. The relation between work, worship and wisdom is a matter of mental conditioning. If we can condition ourselves to be in a state of mind which says: whatever work I do will be perfect, whatever worship I do will be excellent and whenever I do self-enquiry, it will be serious and will be with full of sincere intention, you will be able to notice that all the three paths of work, worship and wisdom will automatically get



integrated.

RS: Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to tell his disciples: Develop devotion in your heart, you will be able to understand the Upanishads more easily.

Moderator: We have understood the path of karma, bhakti and jnana. In a true karma yogi, devotion will automatically arise in his heart. He is sensitive to other people and wisdom also dawns on him. The three are one at the same, though the starting point might be different. Predominantly someone would be a karma yogi, a bhakti yogi or a jnana yogi. We have several scriptures talk about it, all the masters talk about it but all that is on paper. The real challenge comes when we try to practice it. How to practice this in real life? What are the challenges which we face when we try to practice any one of them or try an amalgamation of the three? Today life is so hectic, from morning to night, we are working in companies, earning our bread and butter, where is the time for these yogas?

SS: This was one of the challenges which I often think about, as most of times our mind tricks us and then we get into excuses. We saw that we are so engrossed in work, where is the time for worship or even think of God mentally or even make some kind of a self-enquiry? There are some people who are so lazy that they say worship and meditation is very comforting and don't get into the work aspect of it, which makes me get into conflicts with others. There can be one more category where the people say that they had a wonderful morning as they meditated very well, did a lot of their work in a very peaceful way and had a devotional mood. But when they had go to the work place and see their colleagues, that disturbed their peace of mind. These are the tricks which the mind plays and these excuses our mind gives on a daily basis until and unless we are not consciously making a balance.

Balance means we need to apportion certain part of our time in our daily routine for all of that. Whenever we take up a job, we should get into the habit of self-enquiry. Whenever we are starting anything new, just pay obeisance to add a devotional aspect to it. Until we mentally make up and



get ready to apportion some time for this, these challenges will come up and these challenge come for most of us, but not for all of us.

Moderator: Why does Swami say that the hands that help are holier than the lips that pray?

RS: Let me elaborate with a personal anecdote. I was working on my Ph.D. and I was stuck, without finding a solution, for my problems and my thesis was not getting completed. At that time, I met Prof. Nanjundaiah garu after bhajans. He called me aside and told in a very stern voice, “Without Bhagawan’s Grace, you are not going to finish your Ph.D. Are you thinking that your effort and hard work is going to help you? Are you praying to Swami regularly?” Then I realized that I was not doing my regular prayer. From that day onwards, I started praying to Swami. On my way to the Institute, I would stop near Ganesha and pray to Him to bless me so that, the work of that particular day is done without any obstacles, and within a year, I submitted my thesis.

NSK: The schedule of the campus - the hostel, college and Mandir - has been so well conceived that there is a time for each one of these aspects. There is time for work, there is time for worship, and there is time for studies and time for introspection and get wiser. This schedule has been designed by Swami Himself. If we apply ourselves to this particular schedule with tremendous faith and sincerity, then I am sure we will be able to grow in a much more mature manner.

BC: I would like to add something to this faith and sincerity component. This is very important. If you observe, a lot of us take several half steps and therefore we find that we are not moving anywhere. Swami gives an example of somebody trying to dig a well to find water. He digs five feet doesn’t find water and then goes to another place and digs another couple of feet, goes to the third place and digs another five feet. Finally, he never finds water and destroys the entire land. On the contrary, if he would have continued and gone down to fifteen feet, he would have definitely found the water.



In a practical sense, as long as our intentions are sincere, whichever path we take, or take an amalgamation of all the paths, if we put our heart and soul into it, definitely we will start experiencing results. Swami's Chinna Katha about the Gopikas and Yadavas very beautiful illustrates this point.

Chinna Katha: The Gopikas tell Uddhava, who has been sent to Krishna to teach the lessons of wisdom to Gopikas, "Uddhava, we have only one mind, the way you have said, we don't have another mind to practice Yoga. We don't have a third mind to acquire Yogic powers. We don't have the fourth mind to please our husbands and mother-in-laws and other members of the family. If we had manifold minds, we would have given one to Yoga another to family life and so on but we have only one mind and that one mind is completely offered to Krishna. Hence go back with your Yogic learning, it is of no use to us. The best path is single-minded devotion. Having only one mind, we sometimes land into many troubles, if we had manifold minds, our troubles would be endless."

NSK: At a particular Annual Sports & Cultural Meet Prize Distribution Ceremony, Swami made a pun on these words. Prizes in Sanskrit are called 'Bahumati', Swami said that He was distributing 'Bahumati' but what He wants from all His students is 'Ekamati'. Bahumati means many minds and Swami wanted us to develop 'Ekamati' i.e. single-mindedness. Referring to the Chinna Katha, Swami said that the Gopikas have offered even that mind to Krishna. Swami said that whenever we do an activity, we should do it with a feeling of '*sarva karma bhagavat preethyartham*', whether it is at the hostel, institute, Mandir or even at the ground, students should continuously have the feeling that they are doing it to please Swami because Swami is the person closest to us. Automatically, our work will become perfect and will become worship and over a period of time we will become mature and well-mannered and wisdom will dawn upon us.

SS: Swami says that the Gopikas were merely not Bhaktas. They were the ones who surrendered to Lord Krishna. He says that there is a difference between a Bhakta and a person who surrenders. In the state of Bhakta, they is a sense of doership like the sugar and water. But in the state of surrender,



the sugar mixes up with water and becomes syrup. It can't be seen but can be tasted.

BC: Essentially, it boils down to the unison of work, worship and wisdom. In a passage in Prema Vahini, Swami has summed it up as this: There is no distinction between bhakti, karma and jnana. I will not agree that they are separate. I don't like to classify the one as the first, the other as the second and the next as the third. I will not accept a mixture of all the three or even a merger of the three. Karma is Bhakti and Bhakti is Jnana. Every single piece of Mysore Pak has the components of sweetness, weight and shape. It is not that there is sweetness in one part, weight in the other part and shape in yet another part. Sweetness, weight and shape pervades the entire sweet. The moment the Mysore Pak is kept in the mouth, the sweetness is recognized, the weight is reduced and the shape is modified all at the same time." This, Bhagawan says, is the unison of work, worship and wisdom.

Moderator: A lot has been deliberated and discussed in this panel discussion. Swami says we have to follow the process of Shravanam, Mananam and Nidhidhyasanam. We have to listen, analyze and then assimilate all that has been deliberated upon. I request some parting remarks from the panellists.

SS: The punch line would be: Work prepares, worship purifies and wisdom perfects.

RS: Treat work as an opportunity to practice your devotion. Action combined with devotion brings forth wisdom.

NSK: Swami says that His name SAI combines all the three paths: S is Service, i.e., Karma, A is Adoration, i.e., Bhakti and I is Illumination, i.e., Jnana.

BC: I wrote a short collection of thoughts, let me read it out:

In the sun that shines with all its splendour, work, worship and wisdom glow



resplendently

In the rose that speaks the language of fragrance silently, work, worship and wisdom bloom effortlessly

In the cow that nourishes all without any reservations, work, worship and wisdom reveal vividly

In every man who lives for the other as befits a human, work, worship and wisdom speak eloquently

And in our beloved Sai who loves us for no reason and in every season, work, worship and wisdom merge consciously.





Pathway to Lasting Success- The Golden Sai Way

Sri Pushkaraj Gumaste

Managing Director, Barclays Bank plc, Mumbai, India

It was twenty-five years ago, I was seated on the other side for a Summer Course, but the venue was Brindavan, sitting on the lawns, not knowing what Summer Course is all about. I did my Engineering at Mumbai University and some of you who studied outside before coming here will know that joining a college as a fresher gives you the jitters as the first month involves a good amount of ragging. That is the orientation that takes place at most universities.

Here, all of us are fortunate enough to have 'spiritual ragging'. Ragging which is completely different and welcome in all respects. At Brindavan, we would look forward for the next day to begin. That was the first thing that stuck me: This Summer Course is a different kind of welcome. There is not a single University in the world that have this kind of a sustained program to welcome all its students who are joining the new academic year.

For a pathway to lasting success, it is important how you define what is success. The Sri Sathya Sai system of Values-based Integral Education gives us the instruments to decide how we want to define success. Success is not something with a materialistic perspective. For us, the only meter of success is to see a smile on the lips of Mother Sai, our teachers and our parents. It was in March 1994, I just finished my M.B.A. and didn't want to go back to Mumbai. My aspiration and prayer was to stay here and do whatever He tells me to do. It was the last Sunday before Swami left for Brindavan. He called a few of us and asked us, "What are you going to do?" I told him that I wanted to stay here. He asked me to go back to Mumbai. I wanted to know why He wanted me to go back. Swami said, "You need to please your parents, they need you, go there, don't worry about Me."



It is really special when Bhagawan says, “Don’t worry about Me, I will take care of Myself. I was hell-bent on coming back here. I spent a month in Mumbai and came back. I landed in Brindavan on the 1st week of May. I remember Warden Sir calling me and telling me that Swami had noticed me in Brindavan and doesn’t want me to be there. In the evening, there was a discourse in Trayee Brindavan and I was allowed to sit in the second or third row. Bhagawan comes for the session and doesn’t look at me at all and starts His discourse by saying - Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava and He continued the discourse. He said that mother comes first followed by father, then guru, and finally God. Hence God was fourth in the order according to Bhagawan. After the discourse got over, one brother walked up to me and said, “Was this discourse only for you?” Swami also said that if you please your parents, I will be 100% happy. He was trying to convince me in a nice way like a loving parent and gave me padanamaskar. That was when my journey started.

Those two years at the University changed my life forever. When people talk about the physical proximity of Bhagawan, I chuckle, as I was in Mumbai for twenty-five years. I used to come very occasionally to have His physical Darshan.

As new students, you will hear many statements about the Omnipresence of Bhagawan, which seem a bit surprising to a rational and logical mind. But one thing which I have learnt after going out is that there is not a single sentence in Swami’s discourse which is not true. It is absolute truth and applied truth. If you ask me what encapsulates the Sri Sathya Sai system of Values-based Integral Education, it is ‘education is for life and not for mere living’. It takes a long time for us to understand what it means. But when I look around in my professional and personal world, there are a few distinguishing features and that are essentially based on the education system that we all went through. There is one more aspect which is emphasized, that you are chosen, you can’t come to Swami’s place without His will. One can’t come to Parthi by his own



wish and will. As a young, logical and rational individual, you question this premise. You say that you are free willed.

Let me narrate a few things from my life. Three weeks ago, I was on a whirlwind tour of the USA and I was practically skipping one city and time zone every day, meeting my American clients. My last visit was to Atlanta for a meeting with an American company. The CFO of that company was an Indian and is a devotee. While we were exchanging pleasantries, he asked me when I had visited Parthi last, and said, “Why don’t we plan to go to Parthi around 9th or 10th of June, as I will be coming to India at that time. Will you come?” One thing I have learnt is that Swami sends messages through anyone and everyone. You have to be open. If you are closed, you will miss the message. I readily agreed. I reach Mumbai on Wednesday and was extremely tired due to jetlag. My body clock was ten hours behind current Indian time. I reached the office and I get a call from the Registrar with a request to speak at the Summer Course on the 10th of June!

Hearing this, tears rolled down my eyes, as these things are coincidences where God chooses to be anonymous. We are not able to find the correlation and it has happened to all of us in different ways.

My parents wanted to enroll me to Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School in the VII Std. I didn’t want to come that time. I was a typical Mumbai kid, and didn’t want to go away from parents. In 1991, I wanted to come and got admitted, but could not join. In 1992, I was so angry that I wanted to join here and was not allowed to come, I decided not to apply. At that time, Swami comes to Mumbai and I get a chance to take Padanamaskar and He says, “Don’t forget that thing, else you will regret.” I didn’t understand Telugu at that point of time. The boy next to me understood and translated it for me. I knew what he was referring to. Eventually, I landed up here. He is not going to let go of anyone of us. We might try to run away but He will be there around us.

There were a lot of students in my batch who saw Swami for the first time



when they came here. They came for their studies at an educational institution, but Swami and the atmosphere here rubbed off on them and it completely changed their lives for the positive.

Transformation here starts in subtle but powerful ways. Let me give you an example. I was talking to some of my batch mates who saw Swami for the first time. We just had a class by Prof. Bhagia, probably in the first or second week after the start of the academic year. He spoke about Swami's Omnipresence during the lecture. We went back to hostel and many students were questioning this concept of Omnipresence. In the room at the dormitory, a few of the brothers were talking about nursery rhymes - Jack and Jill went up the hill, Mary had a little lamb, Ba Ba Black sheep, have you any wool, etc. Following this, we had to stand in line to go to Mandir for Darshan. There used to be a circle there and Swami would walk around the circle and go in. We were all sitting in the front and Bhagawan came for Darshan. As He came close to us, there were a lot of students from our I M.B.A. class who wanted to give letters to Swami. He hands were full of letters and gently He glided towards us and said, "No Sir, No Sir, both hands full." Only our group of students (from the dormitory) knew what was the connect and what He was trying to convey. This happens to our boys and girls even today, irrespective of where they may be.

There is a group of students who do conduct a lecture series known as Samarpan at Brindavan on a regular basis. Typically, alumni share their experiences with Bhagawan with the audience. Every single Samarpan session, including the speaker, the content of the talk, the date etc. is eventually decided by Bhagawan. We should be absolutely clear that there is someone who is looking after us at all points of time.

Pathway to Success - The Golden Sai way is only a description of the journey that we have all embarked upon. This is nothing but going through the Sri Sathya Sai system of Values-based Integral Education. The ecosystem in this place has a vital role. The hostel, for example, plays a major role. If I look back at my professional life, it is to a great extent honed by my hostel life. Patience



is something which doesn't come easy, but when you start living with ten or more people, you develop it. The aspect of teamwork and adjustment come so easily at the hostel. These are the things which you won't appreciate (while you are undergoing it) until you go out into the world and are employed.

What does an employer look for in the outside world? If I tell you the three aspects that an employer looks for, you will understand why I am so vociferously referring to the values you will develop through this system of education.

One: The biggest challenge for employers today are the millennials. Also known as Generation Y, millennials are defined as the generation typically born from the early 1980s to the late 1990s or early 2000s, therefore reaching adulthood in the 21st century. They will constitute the majority of the workforce in the next ten to twenty years. Their traits include confidence and tolerance, but also describes a sense of entitlement and instant gratification. "If I do well, I need someone to be right there to pat my back and say that I did well."

Two: Communication. The entire art of communication has been destroyed by the connectivity around the world. Today language (both written and verbal) is so poor because of mobile phones. You leave people alone and they don't know what to do. If you go in a lift, you will see how people engage with each other. Everybody has their neck down looking at their mobile phones. We have lost the ability to be present and communicate with people in front of us.

Our system addresses this problem. It encourages you to be contented with your own self. You don't need a gadget or any other person to be comfortable with yourself. The omnipresence of Bhagawan is a scary thought for anyone outside the Sai fold but it is a comforting fact for all of us. This doesn't mean that I don't make mistakes. I am a human, I also slip. But to have the comfort that my mother and father know exactly what is happening and they will guide me and will not abandon me gives a very different meaning to the life.



Three: The employers are worried about culture, attitude, honesty and integrity. Don't they sound very familiar to all of us? They are not worried about technical knowledge.

My Global CEO asked me about the risks to my business and I said there are only two risks: execution and talent. The organizations globally are in need of people with talent, who have high standards of integrity and who are team players. Everything else can be taught but these three things are ingrained in your basic culture. This is something which rubs on you unknowingly here.

There are times when I am feeling extremely egoistic and extremely proud and then Bhagawan comes in the form of my boss and asks me, "What have you done since the morning?" I want to tell him, "I have worked here for twenty-five years, still you want to know what have I done since the morning?" Suddenly it flashes that it is not my boss talking, this is someone else communicating. My ego gets deflated in just thirty seconds. You have to be consistent in absorbing what you are learning and open to signals as messages come in various ways and means.

In 1994, when we passed out, in an interview with Bhagawan, after enquiring our future plans, He went inside and got *murukku* (savoury, crunchy snack from the Tamil Nadu/Kerala) for us. We ate it and enjoyed it a lot. It leaves a lot of crumbs on your shirt and trousers while you eat it sitting down. Around 5.15 in the evening, in those days, flute used to be played just before bhajans, for a period of fifteen minutes. The Flute started and Swami asked us to get up and go. He stood up and we also stood up. As soon as we got up, we dusted off our dress and dropped the crumbs on the floor. Swami looked at us and said, "This is what you all do in life. Make trouble for yourself, get dirt on yourself, and the moment I point out something, you say it's not me and you shirk it away." The moment He said that, we bent and pushed all the crumbs under His chair. I feel this was Divinely choreographed by Bhagawan. He then said, "This is exactly what you do in life. When caught, you push it to God and seek His help to clean up the mess." We didn't know what to say and He said, "Don't worry, I will clean it, it is my job." He went inside,



brought a broom and cleaned it. He didn't allow us to clean it and said, "You have passed it on to me, it is my job to clean it now."

Even as a leader, when you are responsible and accountable for the business, we must try to do at least a small speck of what Bhagawan has done for us. In an organization, you are at a huge risk because you won't know every single fact. You have to depend on many people for information and trust them. Tomorrow, if things are not the way you wanted them to be, you are accountable. This is where basic trust comes in. The moment you show trust, you get trust. These examples will never abandon us because there is no education system in the world where the teaching staff are taking larger accountability for the student's success.

In my organization, there are students from all sorts of institutions and I have seen that in other institutions, if the professor goes at a particular pace, the students have to match that pace or they get left behind and dropped off. Here it is exactly the opposite, because I remember Bhagawan asking a teacher, "Why have your students not got good marks? You are responsible for this!" This noble intention of the teachers to support us is unique here. If I have a personal problem, I can go and share it with them, then they become more than teachers. They become your friends, counsellors and mentors. This is something which I have not seen in other educational systems. It is only in 1% of the universities out there where such a thing happens. It is up to you to take these cues. Coming to ethical dilemmas, Swami has addressed these for us on numerous occasions. For example, if you can't always oblige, speak obligingly. I am not talking about ethics in the form of not taking bribes, for example, because that is the bare minimum which any employer would expect from the people to be.

In the investment banking industry, if you read the press in the last ten years, the industry has been firing a lot of people. In the last four years, in India, 50% of the people employed in the investment banking industry have been fired. There are no jobs and people have to seek employment outside the industry. I have faced over the last three to four years, a similar situation, where I had to



layoff people. But the manner in which it was done and continues to be done today in our organization is dramatically different. In some Western firms, the firing is done in a very unemotional way. In financial firms in India, the person is called in India in a conference room and given a letter telling him that he is no more working there. The person is not allowed to go back to his desk and it is very inhuman. Their drawer is brought to them, they have to empty their personal things, take them and walk out without meeting anybody. There is no empathy. Empathy is something which you will learn here. This is what was happening globally but we changed it in our firm. We tried to inculcate the fact that they are human beings and there is a contract of trust and mutual respect with them and we made our CEO acknowledge it, and he allowed us to change the way we fire people. It is now done in a very human way.

What will you do with the person whom you let go? He has a family and the laying off is not always related to talent or skills but due to commercial reasons. We have also gone out of our way to look for a job for them outside and most of them have found jobs. In the last three years, 90% of the people whom I had to fire, I found jobs for them at other places. This is beyond the call of the duty. This essentially comes from the educational system here.

Challenges are thrown at you in the outside world. The kind of challenges we had twenty years ago and the ones we have now may be little different. The key thing is to always remember the parameter of your success and whom are you trying to please. If our foundation is based on the fact that whether this act of mine will please Bhagawan or not, then everything becomes very busy.

My erstwhile CEO used to say that the best way to know whether you are saying the right thing is, "In your communication with anyone, use this as an acid test, that if the communication is published on the front page of the following day's newspaper, will you be embarrassed; will your family be embarrassed?" That was a very professional way of keeping a check. We, from this Institute smiled, as for us the governor is different. We always weigh - what will Swami think about any action of ours? In our organization, i.e. Barclays,



our values are known as RISES: Respect, Integrity, Service, Excellence and Stewardship. These are some things which a Sai Student will always imbibe. It is not something to work towards. The world is moving there, it is looking for integrity, right attitude and teamwork. This educational institution takes this as a basic requirement of its education. This is not something which we are aware while being a student, but we realize once we go out.

The last thing which I want to touch upon is work life balance. The din of this balance is getting louder with the younger students. We had an example of a millennial boy who was a doctor and then did his M.B.A. and was working with us. He was very efficient in his work. Last month, he walks into my room and said that he is resigning. I asked him why. He said that he is burnt out. I asked him his age. He was just 22. I asked him, “How can you get burnt out at such a young age?” He said that he wants a better work life balance. I told him, “Look at me, I am 47, have been working for 24-25 years, I wake up at 5 AM, do my physical activity, I have a greater accountability to my business. I have a daughter who has grown up and demands attention. Have you ever seen me complain about work life balance? It is not physical, it is in the mind.”

What Swami says on this always comes to my mind: change of work is rest. It is very true. When you try certain things, you realize that it is not the physical energy. I feel much younger than so many of my colleagues from other institutes because of the mental energy I have. The teachers here look exactly the same, the way they were twenty-five years ago. That is the positive energy, having peace of mind and not being cluttered. My happiest time professionally is when I am on flights because that is the only place where people can't contact me and I am left to myself. Beyond a certain point, connection is not necessary. You need to find space for yourself. When I come back to Puttaparthi, I have tears in my eyes and people back at my place tease me: you are going to your in-law's place.

What does Bhagawan expect from us? I remember one incident that happened in Kodaikanal. We were going back to Sai Shruti after an outing



and we pleaded to Swami to come with us in the bus. After lot of pleadings, He stopped the car and came in the bus. He closed the curtains in the car and the bus so that people won't know that He was in the bus. We were following the car. As we came close to Sai Shruti all the devotees got up and started throwing garlands, breaking coconuts and touching the car. They didn't know that Bhagawan was in the bus. Swami started laughing and said, "Look what the devotees are doing. They think that I am there, it is My car, that is why they are ready to worship the car." Then He looked at us and said, "You all are also my Nandis, you don't realize that and don't ever forget that." You suddenly realize that the child who was laughing with you is God. Never ever forget the fact that we all are Nandis here. People will look at us differently, we are held to higher standards. But the good part is that the world is also looking for higher standards.

In of the episodes from the famous comedy show, Laurel and Hardy, they put up a performance which no one came to see. Finally, they put a board: Free Entry. Everyone came and the show went on. The show ended and the people clapped and then there was a board: Exit is Not Free. The Sri Sathya Sai education system is precisely that: Entry is free but exit is not free. It leaves you with the responsibility that will be with you throughout your life.





Perspectives on the Bhagavad Gita

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*Kavim puranam anushasbitaram, anor aniyeeamsam anusmarebhyah
sarvasya dhataram achintya rupam, aditya varnam tamasah parastat*

One should meditate upon the Supreme Being who is well aware of the past present and future; who lays down the code of conduct for all beings; who is subtler than the subtlest; who has unimaginable or indescribable form; who is the basis for all of this creation and who has the complexion of the effulgence of the sun, and is beyond darkness. I offer myself to that Divine Lord.

A very well-known spiritual leader once said, “Of all the songs of the great poem Mahabharata, there is none so rare and precious as the Bhagavad Gita, one of the ancient scriptures that till attracts the awe and adoration of all spiritual seekers all around the globe. This is because, despite having come across different kinds of civilizations and cultures, man and his true nature remain the same. The qualities such as rationality, emotional strength, a spiritual bent of mind and so on, that distinguishes man from other beings remains the same and the Gita is that eternal treasure which has and always will continue to guide man to reach to reach his true destination, which is nothing but to merge in the Divine.

The Gita takes us through a journey consisting of three stages. The first stage talks about you – ‘twam’, the individual which is most emphasized in one of the important Yogas of the Gita – The Karma Yoga. The second stage is all about experiencing Divinity and that is ‘tat’ – which is laid down in Bhakti Yoga. The last and final stage is ‘asi’ and in this stage, man realizes that he is no different from the Supreme Self and this is learnt through the path of Gyana Yoga.

Once this journey is complete, man will realize the profundity and magnanimity of the great dictum, Tat twam asi, That thou art. Moving on to



the first stage, man as an individual, doubts his own action. He wonders as to what the purpose of life is, and doubts whether his actions are in accordance with it. The solution for this is clearly mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita.

Karmanya eva adhikarste

Meaning, you have the right to perform your prescribed duty or action, but you should not aspire for the fruits of your action. Also do not consider yourself as the cause of the fruits of the action and never be attached to not doing any duty. Every being in this Universe has its own dharma. The *panchabutas* have its own set of guiding principles or dharma. The dharma of fire is light and combustion; without these two qualities fire never remains as fire. To make things easy, Swami has said, Love in action is Dharma. This is because when thoughts emanate from a mind having love as its basis, it will eventually result in right action, which is nothing but dharma. We should also note that, we should not be affected by the fruits of our actions. All the great personalities in the history of human civilization who have worked for the betterment of mankind had or have one common feature, and that is selflessness.

Now, moving on to the second stage, man is now more curious to know more about the Lord. He finds himself drenched in the glories of the Divine. I would like to humbly quote Bhagawan here: More than the adherence of karma, gyana or yoga, the follower of the path of Bhakti is considered fortunate and superior.

We have given different contexts for love, depending on whom we show our love to. For example, it is termed as respect or gratitude when shown to elders. Swami has said, “Bhakti is such a term used exclusively to describe the Love between the Lord and His devotee. To experience the Lord in pain and pleasure, in joy and sorrow and in everything around us, is the true sign of devotion. We should also note that we do not have any right to confer on ourselves the title of a devotee. It is the Lord who must acknowledge us as a devotee. Moving on the last and final stage - Gyana Yoga. It is an inner



discipline or quest to know one's own inner True Self. I am reminded of this beautiful analogy mentioned by Swami in one of discourses about life. Swami says, "Life is like an ice cube. It is crystal clear and solid, but it melts as time passes by." It is only the atma which is permanent. The rest all will perish in the course of time and the Lord expects each one of us to meditate upon this unchanging basis – the atma and not on the fluctuating world.

Ultimately, all that Swami wants from us is the total surrender. The Gita declares:

Sarvadharmā parityajya.....ma sucha

Abandon all varieties of dharma and just surrender on to me, I shall save you from all sinful reactions, do not fear.

One of the reasons why Lord Krishna chose to enlighten Arjuna (with the Bhagavad Gita) on the battlefield is because, despite being a great warrior, he chose to surrender completely to the Lord. And the Lord declared that once a devotee surrenders completely to him - *yogakshemam vahayamaham* - He promises to carry the burden of his welfare and that is all that we need.

Swami has unequivocally said, that it is enough if we practice at least one teachings of the Gita in our daily life. *Swalpam alpasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat* - followed, dharma, even to a small extent, will save him from terrifying fear.

Our beloved Bhagawan has made even the most complex verse from the Gita easy to comprehend so that each of us will understand them better. Now it is time for us to live a virtuous life and make him proud and Happy.





Tyageinaike Amrutatva Manashuhu

Sri Anand Vardhan K

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*Vaagartha viva sampririthau, vaagartha pratipaddhaye, jagathah pitarau vande
paarvathi parameshvarau*

With humility and love, I offer myself at thy Divine lotus feet Lord. Dearest Swami, respected elders, dear brothers and sisters, Sairam to one and all.

Na karmana, na prajaya, dhanena, tyagen eke amritatva manashu

Since time immemorial, this sacred hymn has been echoing in the sacred sanctuaries of every Indian household, temple and seat of scholarly learning. Since time immemorial this Vedic hymn has been that lighthouse out there for the voyager on the sea of life seeking the shores of eternity. Since time immemorial, this sacred land of Bharat stood as an exemplar to the truth that this hymn reflects, which goes like this:

You live your life for your own good, you just live one life
You live your life for the good of all, you live for lifetimes.

Kabir put this beautifully:

*Kabira jab hum paida hue, jag hanse hum roye
Esi karani kar chalo, ki hum hanse jag roye*

Neither action nor progeny can bestow the eternity which can be attained through sacrifice and sacrifice alone, brothers and sisters. Now what is sacrifice?

At this juncture I recollect a beautiful incident when a gentleman had the great good fortune to have a meal with Bhagawan, and when he was served cucumber or as we call it *khira*, he promptly rejected it, saying that he took



a vow for Kasi Vishwanatha that he would never touch cucumber again in his life. Pat comes the reply from Swami saying that it is not a sacrifice when you give up something that you dislike, for this man hated cucumber. Now I ask myself the question again: what is sacrifice? Only the heart could see the spirit of sacrifice ablaze when providence felt my necessity or destiny gifted me this glimpse.

It was during the journey back home three years ago from Brindavan for winter vacation, when minutes before boarding the train, I lost my friend's ticket. We still boarded the train in the hopes of finding a solution from the ticket examiner. Now this ticket examiner, God bless him, had a very unique and rare temperament, for the moment I presented my problem to him, he was very quick with an arrogant rebuke. Having been accustomed to a place where everyone treats each other with a cordial smile and warm friendship and concern, this behaviour or this attribute of the person seemed completely strange and shocking to me. But we had no other way out at that moment, we just had to ask him again and again. So, six times over the next four hours, I went to him and asked him as to what would be the right course of action now that I have lost the ticket of my friend? But this man had the ability to put anyone to shame right in front of public and his criticism and admonition had an escalating rate of response.

By the end of the sixth interaction with him, I felt shattered. For a fleeting moment I had this thought that I'd go back to my friend and tell him that this is not working out.

But then, I thought to myself: Let me do one thing, maybe I'll ask him one more time, but again I felt it would be of no use. Instead, I can tell him that my pocket was picked. Actually that is what had happened. I remember putting the ticket in my back pocket and two minutes later it was not there. So I can just go and tell this friend of mine that see, I have lost your ticket because my pocket was picked and walk away from him, leaving him stranded.

But, something within me didn't agree to do this. Something in me was

telling me that this is not I right. So I persisted, and went ahead two more times to the ticket examiner. I just faced the worst ever criticism and public humiliation that I had ever known, and by the eighth time, I was lost and broken. Somewhere in some compartment, in the middle of the night, my face and palm down on my knees, I heaved a sigh of huge despair and with that a cascade of thoughts...I asked Swami, why? Why me? Why now? Why at all?

And even as the whys were about to continue, I hear a voice of complete contrast, which shook me to the roots. A voice that was genuine and warm, a voice that was filled with innocent concern, asked me in Hindi, “Kya hua bhayya?” What happened brother? Now with all that had happened in the past four hours, all that negativity, all that harsh rebukes that I had faced from this gentleman, the ticket examiner, had just flipped and I was facing a warm person. With all that left in me I just mustered some courage and told him, in Hindi, that I lost my friend’s ticket. Immediately with lot of concern he said, “*To aapko some ki jagah nahi hai? Agle compartment mein mera ek seat hai, vah khali pada hai. Vahan ja kar so sakte ho* (Have you got a berth to sleep? The next compartment has a berth that is vacant. You can go there and sleep)”.

My mind could not digest, so immediately I said, “*Par lekin aap?* (What about you?)” Pat comes the reply, that his father has been suffering from severe cough and he had to take care of him at the moment and his mother has been sleeping next to him. And that was the moment I realised where the frustration in this person was coming from.

All I could make, in the darkness, was the silhouette of a man sitting on the ledge on which we generally eat our breakfast in trains between the two berths the low berths, on which his parents were sleeping. This man was clad in a thin, short dhoti. My mind could not take that positive response. I told him, “*Bhayya woh aapka seat hai, hum kaise so sakte hain?* (That is your berth, how can I take it?)” Without any hesitation, he said, “*Bhayya kehate ho mujhe, bhai ke liye to itna kar sakta hoon.* (You are calling me a brother, so I can do this much for a brother.)” Still, still my mind could not agree with



this, so I just said, in Hindi, “Actually, the ticket that I have lost was not my ticket, it was my friend’s.” Without any hesitation, he replied, “Woh bhi to mera bhai hi hai (He too is a brother of mine).” Now, to know a person and help him is one thing, but to help a stranger in need going out of your way, out of your comfort zone is something different altogether.

At the beginning, I called this incident a gift of destiny or providence, because no sooner did he make this statement, I was left in a stark silence with tears in my eyes, and immediately my friend comes and tells me that the ticket examiner is calling you. So I go to him. That very same ticket examiner who had critically rebuked me for the past four hours, now talks to me with all the love and concern and asks me what has happened. I am left wondering for the whole night: is this the same man that I had spoken to and what’s more, in the next five minutes I was back at my bed and my friend had got another seat and I was wondering what had happened. I was trying to sleep through the fuzzy feelings, having gone through this emotional roller coaster.

Until then, I thought sacrifice meant giving up your life for some greater good and attaining martyrdom or liberation. That interaction in that compartment showed me that the greatest folly in man is when he compartmentalizes his ideologies, his life. As Tagore put it, ‘into narrow domestic walls of I and mine.’

Now in this sacrificial ritual, after every *swahakara* or offering, there follows another line, which says: *idam na mama* - this too does not belong to me. Brothers and sisters, sacrifice is that state of living where one transcends the sense of doership and acts out the spontaneity of love.

Swami, in an interaction in the interview room with a few of his students and devotees asked, “Do you want to know what realization is?” Seeing the eagerness of the students and devotees, Swami continued, ‘Realization is seeing God in everyone.’

Well then, is it not true when Swami says that he has separated Himself



from Himself so that He could love Himself that He is seeing Himself in all of us? What made the Lord shed tears that day and accost in this land of *annapoorna*? Why should there be deaths out of hunger? What resulted in a torrential outpour of love, satiating the hunger of a million hearts as Grama Seva? What made the bestower of everything, who had the elements at his beck and call, declare that I am ready to give up my very own self for the sake of My devotees? Call it his duty brothers, call it his responsibility, but it is the expression of pure love that manifests as sacrifice.

To that love, ever residing in the hearts of those *tyagajivis*, who give up every breath of theirs for the welfare of others; to that love which walked on two feet turning every hollow heart into his hallowed reed; to that love, which resides in the heart of every devotee as the name Sai, I dedicate this talk with a prayer written by Rabindranath Tagore:

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.





Sai, the Essence of Sweetness

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Adaram madhuram, vadanam madhuram, nayanam madhuram, hasitam madhuram, hridayam madhuram, gamanam madhuram, Madhuradhipater akhilam madhurambaram

(MS Subbalakshmi's rendition of Sri Vallabhacharya's Madhurashtakam)

O Lord, your lips are sweet, your countenance is sweet, your walk is sweet, your smile is sweet, your heart is sweet, O Lord of sweetness, everything about you is sweet.

The scriptures describe the Lord as a mountain of sugar. And the aspirant as one absorbed in imbibing the sweetness of this mound of sugar, the mountain of sugar. Every interaction with Bhagawan was one of sweetness, one of *ananda*, and in the next few minutes I wish to share with you a few of my experiences of this beautiful Lord.

It was the year 1974, my first week at the Brindavan Campus at the Intermediate Class. Swami had come the previous morning from Prasanthi Nilayam and in the evening we had a session when Swami gave a discourse. The next morning, there is a small room called the 'Staircase Room' in which there was a staircase leading to Swami's dwelling. A few of us had got into this room and were awaiting the Lord's arrival. The beauty was, as Swami had to come down the stairs, it took a a bit of time, and He would see each one of us in the room. So, this was a prime location which all of us wanted. Somehow, a few of us got the chance that day, and as we were sitting, and as Swami was coming down, He looked at all of us and said, "*Neevu evuru* (Who are you?)" As he came, I got scared. I thought, maybe we are not supposed to come to this room. I was just a new student and maybe I made a mistake making a beeline to this room like everybody else.



He looked at the first boy and asked, “Who are you?” This boy said, “Swami I am Ramesh.” Swami said, “Adi kaadu (It is not that)” He asked the next boy, “Who are you?” “Swami I am the student of I B.A.” “Adi kaadu.” The third in row was me. My heart was thumping loud and Swami asked me “Who are you?” I blurted out, “Swami I am your child.” He just patted my hands, went to the next boy, who was a veteran and he figured out what is the answer Swami wanted. He said, yesterday Swami had given a discourse, and in that discourse Swami had said, “Don’t forget that 21,600 times your breath keeps on telling you So Hum, So Hum, You are that, you are that. Don’t forget.” So this boy was ready for the answer.

So, as soon as Swami asked, “Who are you?”, very confidently he said, “So Hum.” We were all petrified and at the same time, we cursed ourselves saying that it is such a simple thing. Swami told us this yesterday and we did not answer properly. Then Swami looked at all of us there and there was a mischievous smile on his lips.

“Hmm... So Hum?”

“Yes Swami, So Hum.”

“What does it mean?”

“Swami, you are that, you are God.”

“Oh!”

Then he looked at all of us and said, “I was just going out for Darshan, today, you go and give Darshan.”

Such a beautiful, such a mischievous Lord, and then came the lesson. The lesson was, in spirituality what is most important is practice. Swami said it is not just an intellectual acceptance of truth, but you must live the truth. He looked at this boy, who was now crestfallen and said, and when I asked you to go for Darshan, you should have said, “Yes, Swami” and if you had gone out like that, with that conviction, whom do you think the devotees would have seen? Me giving Darshan.” So that was the first lesson, the lesson taught in such sweetness.



Earlier I had studied at a school in Bangalore, at a high school with a hoary past. This school was over a hundred years old and people said this is a fantastic school you must go to this school because it has seen generations of students, generations of teachers, generations of headmasters and generations of staff. You must study at this school, they said. So I joined this school, and the interesting thing was, the school had French windows, huge windows without bars. It had a huge playground. Sometimes it would be used for circus and exhibitions – such huge ground. And across the road, beyond the ground were even three movie theatres and so this school was very famous for many things. The first day in class, the teacher took attendance and gave us an introduction to what we were in for, and, after the first period, came the real introduction. A few students — four of them specifically — came to us and said: hey look, we want to give you some advice.

They were too young to be teachers and too old to be our classmates. And so somebody asked, who are you? They stated, we are your classmates. One of them proudly said, we have been in VIII Std. for four years. So, they were doing their Ph.D. in VIII Std. itself. And then we looked at on another, they said, one piece of advice, if you want to learn anything don't sit in the four walls of this classroom you will not learn anything. If you want to learn English, go to that cinema where there are English films. If you want to learn Kannada, go to this cinema, if you want learn Hindi, go to the other cinema. If you go to these cinemas and sit there, you will get something, you will learn this language, that language. If you sit in the class what will you get some sleep. That's what they said.

And you know how such advice goes straight to the heart. So we all looked at them. At that moment, it didn't strike us that that was the very reason why they were in the class for four years, in the same class. But we took their advice to heart. From the next day, we give attendance in the class, jumped out through the French windows and went to the cinema. Six days in a week, seven movies, because we said, see Sunday is a holiday. If, as far as education in concerned, you can't waste your education, then we must not waste the 7th day. So Saturday morning and matinee shows, we saw both. And this life continued and we thought life would always be like this. At home, I was a



good boy and in the samithi, I was a Bal Vikas student, whites on Thursdays, whites and vibhuti and all that. Sometimes, the Bal Vikas teacher would tell the other students, you also should be like Ravi. And I would smile to myself.

This life continued for some time. One day we went to Brindavan. As we went to Brindavan, we were sitting for Darshan, my father and I. Swami came out for Darshan, looked at my father and said, go inside. Father was very excited, he got up and he pulled me up. I was actually having mixed feelings. Because, somebody had told me that getting an interview with Swami is a fantastic thing. I said, what is so fantastic? According to me, interview means you sit across a table, they ask you questions and you answer. So what is so fantastic? They said, in this interview, you don't ask questions, you don't give answers, Swami does both. He knows everything. So that was the reason for the mixed feelings. What if He knows everything? So, I went there and sat. Swami came after Darshan. I was the first in the row.

All of 13 years. First Swami patted me on my cheek and said, "Good boy." He looked at my father. I looked at my father. There were stars in his eyes. Swami said his son is a good boy, he was very happy. I was in the 17th heaven of bliss. Swami called me good and if Swami calls you good boy, everybody calls you a good boy. But that was not the real source of my happiness. It was the thought that even Swami does not know. That's what I thought. So I was very happy. The moment I thought that, Swami asked my father, "Where are the other samithi members?" "Swami they are sitting out." "Go and call them." So, he went and Swami called me. Good boy, He said. I gave the best smile possible. And He said, "Good boy?" What was a full stop, had become a question mark. And I, I really didn't want to show any emotion on face. And Swami said, "Where were you yesterday?" I gave the most obvious answer, I said, "Swami yesterday was Saturday, and I must have been in the class." Swami said, "Yes, you should've been in class, but where were you?" I kept quiet.

In Bal Vikas they teach you lots of useful values for life, lots of skills. One of them is silent sitting. And in those days, you didn't have this right to education act, right to information act. If somebody asked you a question,



you don't have to answer. Silence becomes golden. So I stood there. Swami said, "Shall I tell you?" And I am thinking, "Why not, if you know?" Swami said, "Yesterday, you were at the Ajanta theatre." Oh God. So He knows Ajanta theatre. "Last but one row." And Swami named the classmates with whom I was sitting. And then He said, "All three of you were watching *Kati Patang*. Rajesh Khanna, Asha Parekh. You want some more information?"

Why will I want any more information? Because, through the corner of my eyes, I saw my father coming. My entire worry was, this information shouldn't reach him. And I was very worried, what's going to happen. Swami would now tell my father. You know you think this fellow is a good boy, you know what he did yesterday and what he has been doing? And tell him the whole thing, and the result would be my father would fall at Swami's feet and say, Swami you are God and you know everything. And at home, it would be a day for me to remember. That's what I thought would happen. The moment my father came, Swami patted me on my cheek, and told my father, "Good boy." And then, He told, "He is a Good boy, but I told him he should have good company. Satsang."

This beautiful incident is etched in my heart, embedded in my heart and will be there until the very last moment of my life. It was not the time for information, it was the time for transformation. Swami called us for an interview and He spoke for a long time, about an hour and half or something. What did he say on that day, I do not know. All that kept on going on in my mind is, "Is there anybody who can be so sweet." He know knows everything about me. Nobody else knows, He knows everything about me at the same time, He wouldn't let me down. He must be God. If somebody has so much of omniscience and so much of love, He must be God. And that day I decided, I will adore him, I will worship him, I will serve him. And to this day, that sweet Lord has kept me in his sannidhi to experience the sweetness of His presence.

When I was studying at Brindavan, there was a student in my room who was extremely mischievous. In fact, he was so mischievous, that if anything happened in the hostel, he would run to the warden and say, Sir, I didn't do



it. Because the needle of suspicion always pointed at him. So, he'd say, I didn't do it. One day, we noticed that he was seriously sitting and writing some letter. Later on we came to know that he had decided that he should turn a new leaf and he was writing a letter to Swami. In that letter, he had listed all that he done in life, all the mistakes, he had listed them. And it was quite a few pages. He had written all that and later on we came to know and he said he posted it to Swami. His idea was, Swami I want to become good.

Swami says, "Those who stray away from the straight path, I'll bring them back to goodness, I'll bring them back to right path." So this boy knew that Swami was the only refuge and he wrote this letter. While sending this letter, he just thought of this one thing. Swami used to get thousands of letters and this boy had thought if Swami reads my letter, he is the Lord Shiva, all those acts of omission and commission will get burnt and then I can start a new leaf. That was the idea.

But then he thought: how do I know Swami has read my letter, so that is another prayer he tagged on to the letter. Didn't write it, but thought it... Swami give me some indication that you have read my letter. And so the letter went a few days later, suddenly somebody ran up to him and said, you father has come. My father? Yeah father has come.

So he went and did pranam to his father and said, "I am very surprised and I am so happy that you came, but very surprised." Father said, "Yes, I am also surprised. I didn't expect to come here. I was sent." He continued, "I went to Prasanthi Nilayam."

"Oh, you went to Swami's abode?"

"Yes. Swami gave me an interview."

"Oh really?"

"Yeah."

"In that interview, Swami told me everything about the letter you wrote."

This boy's heart stopped. "What did he say?"

"Swami told me A to Z about the letter. And he sent me to bang you."

This boy was crestfallen. He said Swami why did you have to do this? If I



wanted tell all this, if I wanted someone to tell all that I have done, why would I choose you, if I knew this is what you would do? If it was my father, I would've told him myself. And he was feeling very bad.

The father continued, "Swami said, tell that fellow, *buddhi ledu* (he doesn't have brains). Is this what he writes to Swami?" This boy is thinking, to whom else can we write all this? Who else is our refuge in this world? Father continues, "Swami said, *em emo rastadu, hostel chutney lo uppu ledu ante warden ki rayali, naka rayali?* (If there's no salt in the hostel chutney, should he write to Me? He should write to the warden.)"

Oh, what else did Swami say? Father said, "Does he have to say anything else. This is what He told me, he sent me particularly to tell you this. He said, tell him be careful about what he writes. Tell him that he should write to the warden if there is no salt in the chutney." How beautiful, how sweet can be our Lord, how kind He can be and how merciful is this Lord who takes the burden of all our sins, who takes all our waywardness and gives us only sweetness in return.

There was another boy, by name, Prashant, who came to Brindavan three to four years ago and he said, "Sir, I came back to see this place." He was coming back after about 10-12 years. And as we were looking at the Krishna fountain there, he suddenly said something which shocked me. He said, "This would never have happened, I would never have stayed in this place." I looked at him surprised, because, he would always be on time for Bhajan and he would always be in the front for parayanam. So I said, "How come Prashant?" He said, "You know Sir, today I confide something in you. One the first day I came to Brindavan, I had been at a metropolis, I had got used to bad habits and I used to smoke. And two of us from the same place, who were companions in this great act, we had got selected, we came to the hostel. On the first day, I looked at him and said, "Shall we go out." He said, "Why not?." Both of us went, smoked and came back.

On the second day, Prashant said he went to that person's place, and asked, "Hey, shall we go?" He said, "Did you not hear the warden? Last night the

warden told us, we shouldn't go out of the campus for anything. I am not coming." Then this boy said, "Then I am going. He said, hey, smoking is bad for health. It is a nice chance for us to give up smoking, isn't it?" There was a photo of Swami behind. Pointing to it, he said, "Let him tell know, I will stop." It was just a casual statement, and he went out. He finished smoking and came inside and then had his bath and came for Darshan/bhajan. One of the altar room boys went up to him and said, "Brother, what is your admission number?" When he told him, he said, "Ah, it's your chance to do arati today." So this boy got a chance to sit in the front.

Swami came, the bhajan got over. This boy got up and there was another boy who went and gave Swami a rose. Swami put the rose in the boy's pocket. Then this boy went. Swami lit the arati, gave this matchbox to that boy and said, "Don't smoke." This boy was petrified, so much that he started taking arati in the reverse direction. And Swami very sweetly stopped and said, not like that, it is like this. He was changing the direction of his life, and not just the arati. And he said, Sir, from that day, my life is filled with sweetness. What else will happen if you come into contact with this ocean of compassion, with this ocean of sweetness.

When I think of that incident in my life, I always think of two words which come in Lalithasahasranamam, Sarvajna, Santhakaruna. One side is infinite knowledge, omniscience, the other is causeless compassion. Swami has no reason to have compassion on us, but His compassion does not need a cause. That is the sweetness of this Lord. May we live our entire lives in His sannidhi and imbibe this sweetness into our lives and fill the world with ananda.





Faculty Panel Discussion –

Salence of Diet and Health: Ancient Wisdom and Modern Perspectives

Moderator: Dr. (Miss) N Srividya

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

The Participants

- » Dr. (Mrs.) D Jayashree (DJ), Managing Director, Ayurvedashramam Pvt. Ltd., Chennai
- » Mrs. Ira Rattan (IR), Founder, Pathya Prana (Nutritional Clinic), New Delhi
- » Dr. (Mrs.) Savitri Vasudev Baikampadi (SVB), Ayurveda Practitioner, Pune

Moderator: This panel discussion will be concentrating on food and food habits with a special emphasis on our ancient wisdom. Firstly, we will discuss the healthy food and diet, secondly, what is not healthy and thirdly about the various food habits that go along with the various foods eaten. This discussion is totally based on Swami's sayings and quotations. Ayurveda says: If diet is wrong, medicine is of no use, when diet is right, medicine is of no deed. This summarizes the importance of food. What is the importance of food for our spiritual growth? On many occasions, Bhagawan has given the importance of Annamaya kosha which effects all the remaining four koshas. He says that the grosser part of food is eliminated as waste, the lesser grosser part builds up our body and muscles, bones etc., but there is a subtler part which makes up our nerves and mind.

Hence, food makes up not only our physical health but also our mental and spiritual health. A popular quotation of Bhagawan is: As is the food so is the mind, as is the mind so is the thought, as is the thought so is the action. Action are very closely related to food because many times we want to think something but are not able to think and sometimes, we do certain actions



without our knowledge. There is a subtle impact of the food on our thought and action. Since the mind and body are closely connected, we can't afford to neglect it. Anna rasa or the essence of food is very important for our Atma rasa. Spiritual aspirants have to be extra careful about the quality of the food they consume. I request Mrs. Ira Rattan to tell us how the food and mind are related.

IR: *Yad Bhavam tad Bhavati* - as is the thought so is the action. Food constitutes cereals, grains, vegetables, water and fibre. The components of the food are carbohydrates, proteins etc. Is there more to food? Does food alter the brain signals? Can food cause diabetes? Can food cause obesity? Can it affect our heart, mind and the soul? Yes, it can. The food that we take in can either harm or help our body and mind. Whatever food you eat, it makes or breaks the mind via neurotransmitters through the parasympathetic and sympathetic system.

FATS- Fear Anger Threat and Shame. When a person is fat, he is in fear of peer pressure, i.e., how others are going to assess his body image. There is anger on himself. There is a threat of diseases to occur and there is a shame that he feels. This makes him eat more and causes obesity. The same thing happens in anorexia when a person goes into depression and doesn't eat food properly. To avoid all these conditions, we need to practice conscious eating.

Moderator: As madam has put it, our mood also affects the food we take and vice-versa. What kind of food we should consume? Let us find out what Bhagawan used to tell us about the different types of food. I request Dr. Savitri to elaborate on the different types of food mentioned in our ancient texts.

SVB: It is very rightly said that your food will determine your mood and that will determine your energy. According to the sastras, sattva means manas and also the essence of food. So, the essence of the food determines the sattva of



the human being. Rajas and tamas are the doshas. Originally a sattvic person is supposed to be in a blissful state. When sattvic food is consumed, it is absorbed in the gut, goes through the heart and circulates through the body as an essential nourishing nutrient to the organ system and to the tissues and to the basic fundamental element which is the cell. When such sattvic food enters the cell, it allows the cell to perform the normal function. The basic function of the cell is to generate energy which is like a power house. It synthesizes the proteins and transports the proteins. The sattvic food allows the cell to live its full life like the White Blood Cells (WBCs) have an average life span of a day and the platelets have a life span of 8-9 days. The Red Blood Cell (RBCs) have an average life span of 100-120 days. Similarly, other cells stay for a month. But there is another cell, which is the brain cell, the neurons or the memory. They live as long as the human being lives. Sattvic food allows the cells to live its full span of life.

Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita says:

*ayuh-sattva-balarogya- sukha-pritivivardhanah
rasyah snigdhab sthira brdya aharah sattvika-priyah*

Sattvic food increases the duration of life, purify one's existence and give strength, health, happiness and satisfaction. Such nourishing foods are sweet, juicy, fattening and palatable. The sweet milk, butter and ghee are sattvic foods. Coconuts, the bananas are also sattvic in nature.

Moderator: Swami says that all the fruits with black seeds have very sattvic in nature. Recent studies have shown that these fruits are rich in phytochemicals which modern herbal medicine talks about. So, studies have shown how fruits are helpful for humans. There was a notion that fruits are not recommended for diabetes but now many fruits are being recommended for diabetes, as the sugar in them — which is in the form of fructose — is not harmful when it is not purified. When it is purified, it becomes harmful. For diabetes, Swami has recommended two fruits, papaya which is not fully ripened, and Jamun. There is sufficient evidence that the presence of phytochemicals in these fruits controls the spike in sugar levels in the body and improves the insulin activity

by improving our body's response to insulin. Another fruit that has been recommended by Bhagawan but given a bad name by Western nutritional scientists is coconut. Of late, a lot of research has started on the health and nutritional benefits of coconut fruit in India and also in the Western world.

IR: Coconut has now become the functional or the super food of India. Coconut has medium chain triglycerides which are easily absorbable, are natural. It is very good for the skin. If we practice Oil pulling (a process or treatment in which detoxification and cleaning of teeth and gums take place) with coconut oil, which our ancient Ayurvedic tradition prescribes, unlike the modern-day toothpastes, it helps in removing dental problems. If rice is cooked using coconut oil or coconut milk, the coconut ingredient will delay the breaking down of carbohydrates which are inside the rice grain hence helps in reducing the glucose spikes in diabetic patients.

Moderator: In our culinary preparations, we garnish it with fresh coconuts

DJ: Latest research has shown that in Alzheimer's disease, coconut oil is very good.

SVB: The coconut which we use should be fresh coconut grate, it should not be something which is kept in the refrigerator as it will result in a loss of nutrient value of the coconut.

Moderator: Can we now have some points on the rajasic food?

SVB: As the name suggests, this type of food when taken, makes one feel like a Raja or a king. Rajasic food causes irritation of the taste buds. Excess of sour, salty and spicy food agitates the inner mucosal lining of the elementary canal. When the essence of this food circulates through the heart and other organs, it causes inflammation to the cells. The rajasic food has a direct negative impact on the brain cells. When it reaches the brain, it changes the structure of the brain and reduces the moisture present in the dendrites and the neurons. This causes the loss of memory, Alzheimer's and dementia. It

exactly coincides with what Lord Krishna has said in the Bhagavad Gita.

*krodhad bhavati sammohah sammohat smrti-vibhramah
smrti-bhramsad buddhi-naso buddhi-nasat pranasyati*

From anger, delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost, one falls down again into the material pool. Neurons in the human body grow till the age of 16 and then remain till the age of 70 and start degenerating after the age of 70. But eating rajasic food will damage these neurons prematurely. Tamasic food has the direct impact on the premature cell death.

*yata yamam gata rasam puti paryasitam ca yat
ucchistam api camedhyam bhojanam tamasa priyam*

Where the food has lost its nutrient value, food which is cooked three hours before partaking it, which is decayed, stale and had the contact of saliva. This type of food reduces the grasping power of the mind.

Moderator: There is another angle to the sattvic, rajasic and tamasic food. They are also referred to as acidic and alkaline foods. What are acidic and alkaline foods and their impact on us?

IR: The acidic foods are from the pH value of 0-7 and the alkaline foods have the pH value of 7-14. It is very interesting to note that the alkaline food is totally sattvic food. This has been found out by the modern science. Alkaline food does exactly what the sattvic food does. It helps and promotes health. All green leafy vegetables, all plant-based foods are alkaline foods. The green leafy vegetables have life. Anything that has life can give us life and anything that is dead can't give us life and will only produce more acid in the body. The Western world is only now recognizing millets as a super food. They are discarding wheat for millets. Millets like Ragi, Jowar and Bajra have a special property. These, on cooking, become more alkaline. This is a super property



of millets. Millets have a component known as Liganins, which are the most potent factors in preventing cancer.

Moderator: Incidentally, Bhagawan's favorite food was Ragi Mudda, a local food made out of Millets.

IR: One more super food is sprouts. We have to learn a lot from sprouts. Sprouts break the outer shells and germinate. We have to break our negative tendencies and should become stronger. Sprouts help in a healthy growth.

Moderator: The quantity of food taken is also important. Food has to be taken in moderation. When food is modified, i.e. the processed foods, even though they are greens, they become non-sattvic. Not only this, the quality of the food, the person who cooks the food and the one who serves or handles food also influences the quality of food positively or negatively. But in our hostels, the food cooked is always fresh, the cook who prepare the food are dedicated workers and the ones who serve are the teachers and the students who serve with lot of love. Hence all the three factors to preserve the sanctity of the food are taken care of.

IR: Milk is alkaline in nature but today's milk has lot of toxins added to it. There are many antibiotics which are given to the cow and also some injections are given to the cow to produce more milk. Please mix water which is a neutral medium with milk and then have it.

Moderator: Swami also used to say this, that milk is so rich in nutrients that only a diluted amount of it is enough. He used to jocularly say that already the milkman is diluting the milk for us. A study was done in Pune University in 2007 regarding these three types of food. The study was to ascertain the micronutrients, i.e. vitamins and minerals, in these three types of food. It was found that sattvic food has the maximum amount of micronutrient density. There was also a positive correlation between the intake of tamasic food and the anxiety score of the individual.



DJ: It is said that rice is a sattvic food but the rice has to be shelved for a year before consumption. If we eat rice before that, the cellulose in the rice which is difficult to digest and causes diabetes. So, ageing increases sattvic component of rice.

Moderator: What is this concept of Viruddhahara?

DJ: Foods which are opposite in nature should not be taken together. Curd and milk should not be taken together or we should not take curd which is not properly curdled. This type of intake causes skin disorders. It is a fashion these days to take hot Gulab Jamun with cold ice cream. These two opposite things should not be taken together, they don't gel well in the system. Honey and ghee are excellent food products individually but when we mix both of them, we have to take care of the proportion, viz. if honey is one part, ghee should be two parts. Both honey and ghee are catalysts. Whenever we take Ayurvedic medicines, we are advised to take it with honey or ghee as these two compounds increase their potency manifold times. When we do *abhishekam* in temples, you will notice that all these will be there - milk, curd, ghee, honey and banana. These are all contradictory things. These follow the theory of the vaccines. When we introduce the vaccine in the body, it starts the chain of antibody production. When we take this *panchamrutham* every day, it is getting that subtle push for immunization. This is like a dose of daily vaccination which, if we notice, is given in a small amount.

Moderator: There are many types of diets all over the world, but there was always one thing which Swami always emphasized and that is vegetarianism. Bhagawan was very categorical that one should eschew meat, fish and other non-vegetarian items, along with smoking and alcohol. Another aspect of vegetarian or non-vegetarian food is the ethical aspect. Swami says that although plants also have life, animals are endowed with the nervous system and the mind and they can feel pain. When they cry, that pain, those negative vibrations will harm the mind and the body of the person partaking that food. There is a perception that in the vegetarian diet there is a deficiency of protein which is found in abundance in the non-vegetarian diet. Where to



get that protein then?

Just to explain proteins - Amino acids comprise proteins. There are essential and non-essential amino acids. The body can't synthesize the essential ones, they have to be taken from the food. The non-essential ones can be made by the body.

IR: This is a common question, that how can vegetarians get their proteins. Cereals like wheat or rice are rich in amino acid methionine but are deficient in the amino acid lysine. Pulses, i.e. dal, kidney beans, rajma, channa are rich in lysine but are deficient in methionine. This is where we do a complementation when we have pulses and rice. The traditional pulses and rice diet is the perfect way to get the complete protein.

Moderator: This is true for every traditional foods like idli, dosa, Pongal. We already discussed about the acidic and the alkaline foods and there is a link between the acidic foods and the non-vegetarian foods. Can you elaborate on that?

IR: We don't have the teeth to eat meat. To digest an animal protein, we need hydrochloric acid in the stomach. It is of a limited quantity in a man. (The general perception is that the human being is an omnivore – he has canines and also medium-sized intestines unlike a carnivore and a herbivore.) The elephant which has such strong bones lives only on grass and the giraffe which runs so fast also eats only leaves. Moreover, when an animal is killed for our food, it secretes cortisol and adrenaline which creates all negative emotions in us like anger, hatred etc. when we eat their meat as food. Swami has always said that it not only pollutes the body but the mind also.

Moderator: The acidic food of the modern parlance is very similar to our rajasic food.

SVB: Human beings secrete an enzyme called tyline amylase, which digests the food right from the mouth, whereas animals don't have it. The hydrochloric

acid needed to digest meat is produced tenfold in animals than in the human body. As meat decomposes faster, the animals have smaller intestines whereas the humans have a twenty-foot-long small intestine and a five-foot-long large intestine. The human beings have sweat glands to perspire whereas the animals perspire only through the tongue.

Moderator: We have talked about the various types of food. Now let us see how to combine these foods, which is known as diet. Diet can be a cornerstone to maintain good health. To have a balanced diet, a food pyramid is prescribed. I didn't find a food pyramid for vegetarian diet in India, a land where vegetarianism has long survived. I have got one from the Arizona State University, USA. The base of the pyramid is what occupies your plate the maximum which is our staple food like rice, wheat, millets. Then in the next level comes the vegetables. In vegetables, as Bhagawan says, there should be equal emphasis on other vegetables and green leafy vegetables. This level also includes the fruits - the fresh ones and the dried ones. Next level is our source of protein i.e. the dals, legumes, beans as well as the dairy products. Finally, the tip of the pyramid are the oils and other sources of fat, which we need in little quantities. If you want to take these oils from the natural sources, the nuts and seeds. Groundnut is what we take here. These nuts and seeds are very safe due to the type of fatty acids present in them. These contain mono saturated, unsaturated and little quantities of saturated fatty acids.

DJ: In our shastras, it is said that if we chew a spoon of sesame seeds everyday, we get the necessary lubrication in the body. Sesame or *til* seeds are the highlight among the seeds.

Moderator: It is said - one man's food is another man's poison. We need to prescribe or take food based on age, gender, weight, body mass index, physical activity and also based upon diseases or illnesses. These are the basic guidelines which we need to follow. One more aspect is the aspect of thermogenesis. But today, let us dwell on the ancient Indian perspective on balanced diet. What are the guidelines which they follow when they prescribe a diet?



DJ: Our ancient rishis said that in Ayurveda which is one of the Upavedas, importance is given to the health and well-being of the body which is a vehicle for our journey to higher spiritual goals. The message was given to us in a very simple and easy to understand form. It was blended in the fabric of our life. Our day to day activities, the festivals, the food we eat, everything used to have a health aspect involved in it. They enquired - how will people understand what they should take for their well-being, as each body is different? This is like all the five fingers are different. They gave a formula which people can use for themselves. We all are aware that ether, fire, wind, water and earth are the five elements and everything else is a combination of these five elements.

The ancient sages knew that anyone will be aware about the traits and characteristics of these five elements. Hence, they formulated a way to explain these traits with respect to human body in a very simple way. These elements come to our body in pairs. Space (sky) and wind pair together to make vata, fire and water together is pitta, water and earth is kapha. Whatever food we eat can be classified into six tastes. This was done by the Maharishis, based on the five mahabhootas. The tastes are - madhura (sweet), amla (sour), lavana (salty), katu (bitter), tikta (pungent) and kashaya (astringent). The first three increase kapha in the body. The last three increase vata in the body and the middle three which have predominantly fire element increase pitta in the body. For example, if we have cold and cough then our grandmothers would make something with pepper. This is nothing but the opposite of cold, i.e. the last three. So, the body will demand something which is hot like a ginger tea, pepper, rasam, etc. But we have to carefully distinguish between need and a want. In case the body is having a cold and wants ginger tea then it is a want. But when you pass by a restaurant and you smell hot samosa or pakoras and are tempted to have it, then that is a desire which has to be avoided during cold and cough.

Moderator: This vata, pitta and kapha are the types of constitutions of the human being.



DJ: The ones who are bulkier and lazy are predominantly of the kapha quality. But they will have a good singing capability. Similarly, people who are lean are hyperactive, they will not sit even for some time at one place. They will be always on the move or will be fidgeting their fingers or legs. These are the vata type. The pitta type will be always irritable, angry but will be very good in art. Try to recognize yourself. Once you do that, reduce all the opposite things if they are in excess and all the similar things will increase. This is the simplest formula given by the rishis. The quantity of food we eat is one aspect and the digestion of the food eaten is another aspect which is very important.

Some parents come to my clinic and say that we give our children a very healthy breakfast. They give twenty badams, 15 pistas and a dozen cashew nuts to their children. This is very good but what if the food is not digested. It will create more harm than benefit. We are always concerned with what we eat but we never bother about how it is digested. Some knowledge about the digestive fire is very important. For example, if we keep a big vessel with water on a stove with a very mild flame, the water will never get heated up. This is the problem with some fat people when they complain that even by eating very little food, they are putting on lot of weight. This is because their flame is very mild and even a little bit of food is enough. If the flame is very strong, whatever food is taken in, will get burnt. This burnt food will stick to the gut, obstruct the passage and cause disease. Hence the flame should be optimum, neither too feeble nor too strong.

How to know that your digestive fire is working properly? You should feel hungry by the next meal. If you are not feeling hungry, then your digestion is low. If you feel hungry within one or two hours of taking food, then your digestion is very high. In such case you have to take solid food which takes longer time to digest. The guideline for your digestion process is the feeling of hunger in you.

Moderator: We have to recognize our agni capacity and accordingly eat our food. If it is less or more, we can adjust the intake of food to match our digestive capacity. There has been a lot of research in the last two decades

on gut health. This is the most happening field for research as it is able to give answers to many things. There are around one million nerve cells in the intestines or the gut, hence it can be considered as the second brain. Hence, we use the expression 'the gut feeling'. Digestion or lack of it has been mainly responsible in the onset of diseases. There is lot of research going on in probiotic foods, carbohydrates and soluble fiber. These foods are being promoted as they help in increasing the beneficial microorganisms in our gut and in turn help in digestion. There is one more study which has found out that taking animal protein increases the harmful bacteria in our gut whereas the plant protein increases the beneficial bacteria in our intestines. If we take up the case of saturated fats, they are found more in red meat and junk foods. These saturated fats also result in increase of harmful microorganisms in the gut.

IR: The longer the animal protein stays in the body, it becomes increasingly acidic.

Moderator: Is there any mention about the festival foods and their significance in our ancient texts?

DJ: As we already discussed the guidelines for digestion, the rishis wove it into the fabric of our lives with the help of seasons and our festivals. In winters, when the outside temperature is very less, our digestive fire can't escape and we end up feeling hungry. Hence in winters, we always feel like having something hot and solid.

When the month of January comes, we have seen quite a lot of winter and we tend to get a flowing nose and a cold feeling. At that time, Pongal comes. During Pongal or Sankranti, we have this preparation, Pongal which is made of green gram and rice with some turmeric, ginger and pepper. This is very easy to digest. The change of season is balanced by the food which we take.

In spring, the digestive fire is minimum. As the phlegm increases, we start having colds and skin diseases also occur. At this time, we have this strange



recipe of ugadi pachadi, which has neem leaves and jaggery. This Ugadi pachadi brings down the phlegm in the body as neem helps in reducing the skin disorders.

Then comes the season of summer, when we will have a lot of heat. When heat is high, we drink a lot of water and automatically solid food reduces, as the fire is very low. We need a lubricant for the body. When winter comes we apply some cream on our body but when summer comes, we apply internal lubricants like butter milk, tender coconut, juices etc.

The rainy season is one time when all the doshas of the body are vitiated. As there is rain, there is slush, water and contamination of what we eat and drink. Care has to be taken at this time. Hence listen to the body language, eat accordingly and take all the necessary precautions.

Moderator: In addition to age, gender, weight etc., these are some of the guidelines which we have to keep in mind for a much more balanced and healthier diet. We have to see the other side of the coin too. Let us go to the red zone from the green zone i.e., junk food. Junk food reduces the energy levels and you feel hungry very fast after eating them. It reduces one's concentration and hence has a lot of negative effects on the memory and brain. It causes various diseases and another very alarming aspect is about the obesity. These days people in the cities are reporting obesity and juvenile diabetes. Research shows that once fat cells get deposited during childhood it is very difficult to get rid of them. Hence to understand this, childhood nutrition is very important for us. Let us now understand the ill effects of the processed foods and how they cause the various diseases.

IR: Processed foods are possessed foods because we are possessive about them. They have lot of carbohydrates which take you to a comfort zone. When you go and take a bite of a chocolate, you are tempted to go again and again to eat it until it is completely finished. This is because these foods increase the neurotransmitter dopamine within us, which causes a craving. This also happens with sugar. Sugar is as addictive as cocaine. It follows a complete cycle. The more you have, the more you want to have it, as the glucose spike

goes up and then the sugar levels fall down. The moment the sugar levels fall down, you get irritable, nervous, tremors and you want to have the same high kind of feeling again. You go back to the fridge to have another piece of the chocolate.

How does it affect our body? Most of the processed foods contain trans fats which are hydrogenated fats; fats made outside any natural process. Even animal fats have very high cholesterol, plants do not have cholesterol but they have plant sterols. These cholesterols cause atherosclerosis, i.e., your arteries become full and with no exercise it is even more harmful. The one addicted to processed foods is always feeling negative emotions like depression, loneliness and he wants to get the comfort from these processed foods.

This practically leads to all the type of diseases right from fever to cancer. This is because it is an inflammation. The inflammation in the endothelial layer of the intestines prevents the food from going inside, absorbed properly and leads to many diseases. This inflammation causes all these diseases which comes from wrong kind of fats like trans fats, hydrogenated fats or sugar and excessive amount of salt. Salt is necessary for the functioning of the neurotransmitters of the body, but a bag of chips can be a disaster due to the inflammation in the body due to excess of salts in it.

SVB: It is quoted in our sastras that such junk foods disturb the blood vascular or the cardio-vascular system of the body.

Moderator: Swami also talks about the three whites - sugar, salt and refined white products. In foods, fairness is not good (except milk, which is white in colour). The more colourful the food is, the better it is for the body. Acidity is very high in the aerated soft drinks. This has high amounts of phosphoric acid, which is very bad for bone health, causes tooth decay, obesity and detrimental to reproductive health.

One more food is the instant noodles. When Maggi noodles were banned for some time, many mothers felt bad that it is difficult for them to send their

children to school. This shows how much the children have been addicted to the noodles. All the processed foods including noodles will be high in sodium. These are coated with a wax like preparation, so that they will not stick together. If you put the noodles in hot water without adding anything else, you will notice that some waxy substance will be floating in the water. There was a hue and cry and these noodles were banned due to the mono sodium glutamate found in them. This compound causes damage to the brain cells in the long run. If you want to make noodles, make it at home and don't buy instant noodles. The eateries in the South Asian countries make them in-house, they never buy these instant noodles. But most of the noodles are made of maida (white flour), which is again a negative aspect.

SVB: The maida which we use at home is made from wheat which is milled without the bran and then it is bleached with benzoic peroxide. We are using such chemically treated powders in our kitchens which are cancer causing and also produce diabetes.

IR: Thanks to Bharatiya culture, many machines are now coming out with pasta, noodles and lots of other stuff which are made up of millets.

SVB: Whatever junk food we eat, they promote ageing and degenerates our cells. There is also a concept of advanced glycation where a glucose gets attached to a protein and goes to a wrong place in the body and enhances the ageing process. In our shastras it is mentioned that turmeric and amla are two compounds which help in detaching the glucose from the protein. It is also proven by research that turmeric and amla can help in reducing diabetes.

IR: What does cancer feed on? It feeds on two primary things. Protein to grow and sugar as a fuel. If you take a cake it has the sugar which takes you closer to cancer. The sugar in fruits comes with a lot of fibre and is not detrimental to the body.

Moderator: How this shift from acidic to alkaline foods help in maintaining good health because most of us have become acidic and is the shift possible?



IR: If I give you an option of eating an apple or a piece of raw meat, what will you prefer? Obviously, the body, the senses and the gut feeling will spontaneously choose the apple. When you were in the womb, the mother directly fed you. She would go by her gut feeling for having the food of her choice whatever the doctors or the family members would have told her. She would put on the tongue whatever would be for the highest good for her baby. Today the mother is mother nature. Nature nurtures you, even if a dog is not fed meat for a long time and is made to eat alkaline food, it will relish it. If we take a meat diet, it occupies a very little space in the stomach and will take a long time to digest. This will lead to fermentation of the food and will cause a lot of diseases.

One patient had Polycystic Ovarian Disease (PCOD). I put her on an alkaline diet and she also followed whatever was told to her. After some time, I did an ultrasound and an X-Ray and we found that all her cysts were cleared and she didn't have the PCOD anymore. This PCOD is the basis of a tumour. We all are a Sai family. In awareness, we live unaware. We are here getting awareness of every food and the perfect diet, yet, the moment we walk out, we are unaware and many a time we go back to eating whatever we have been eating whether due to habit, peer pressure or our senses. I know of a lady who did the same thing in all awareness. These acidic foods led to cancer. When we go out, we should be conscious of every word that Bhagawan has told us in His discourses. Imbibe it into your heart. With Bhagawan's mercy, she is a cancer survivor and that is me and it only happened by His grace and mercy. Imbibe each and every word of Swami into your heart, mind and soul.

Moderator: One simple thumb rule is: if it is from a plant eat it, but if it is made in a plant (and hence processed), don't.

(A video was shown at this point)

Essence of the video: We have to sit in padmasana (lotus position) for having food. Food has to be eaten with the hand only. Food has to be eaten in complete silence. While having food one should not see T V or listen to



any radio etc. One has to concentrate only on the food and have no other thought. One you finish eating food, hands have to be washed and one has to sit in vajrasana for two minutes with pushan mudra. This helps in better digestion.

One more thing which Swami always emphasized is the purity of the food partaken.

DJ: There should be purity in the 3 Ps - patra, padartha and paak i.e. vessel, ingredients and people who are cooking. The person who is cooking should have pious thoughts as the thoughts and emotions of the cook get transmitted to the food. One important thing which Bhagawan has always emphasized is chanting the prayer before having food. We are what food we eat. It is not only about the food we eat but whatever we take from all our senses.

Moderator: But if we are not able to follow when we travel, Swami has given the sloka of the Bhagavad Gita to sanctify the food before we eat (what we commonly refer to as the Food Prayer):

*Brahmārpaṇam Brahma Havir Brahmāgnau Brahmañābutam,
Brahmaiva Tena Gantavyam Brahmakarmā Samādhinah
Aham Vaiśvānaro Bhuvā Prāṇinām Dehamāshritaha,
Prāṇāpāna Samāyuktah Pachāmyannam Chaturvidham.*

Can madam tell the benefits of ghee?

DJ: Ghee is supposed to be a fuel because as soon as ghee goes into our stomach it releases oxygen. It also has the capacity to get all the digestive enzymes from all the surrounding organs which makes the food very easy to digest. It is a very good carrier hence all the food which is digested is carried all over the body.

SVB: Ghee enhances the neurons. It enhances buddhi, smruti, medha and age. When it is cooked with green leafy vegetables it increases our grasping power.



Moderator: It is the only food stuff which breaks the blood brain barrier. Let us discuss the order of eating.

DJ: When the food is arranged, first we have to ghee and then sweet. Sweet doesn't mean barfi or payasam or any other sweet, it means rice, etc. which are carbohydrates. This has to be taken in the maximum quantity. Then comes sour and then comes salty. The pungent, bitter and astringent are always in small quantities. If you want to make a pyramid based on Vedic food, it has to be madhura or sweet at the bottom and follows the same order of sour, salt and the others and with a small amount of sweet. Sweet here means something like the groundnut barfi which takes care of the pallet and does the needful.

IR: Sweets always help in the secretion of happy hormones like serotonin. When we start with a sweet, the hydrochloric acid in our body increases. It actually prepares the body and the stomach to receive the food.

Moderator: The present trend is to have fruits after food but according to ancient tradition, fruits should be had separately.

DJ: Fruits should be eaten separately, never as an ending to a food. A fruit salad either be the first thing which you should have or you should have it separately. Fruit itself is quite heavy and if you are skipping a meal then fruit salad as a dinner or a breakfast is ideal.

Moderator: We should have two parts solid foods, one part liquid foods and one part should be left empty. According to Swami, you should be able to get up as easily as you sit down after finishing your food. Eating with our hands is very beneficial as there are lot of receptors in our hands which help us in connecting to the brain cells and communicating about what kind of food we eat, how we eat and also a lot of beneficial microorganisms in our body are benefited from it.

Eating on a banana leaf is again very beneficial due to the presence of lot of



polyphenols and the natural wax coating on the banana leaf is very useful.

(A video on benefits of banana leaf is shown)

It has polyphenols like AGCG which is also found in green tea. Polyphenols are antioxidants, which neutralize free radicals and prevent diseases. The food absorbs these polyphenols from the leaf so that one gets the benefit of the nutrition. The leaf also has anti-bacterial properties which kill all the germs in the food, thereby reducing the chances of you falling sick. Banana leaf has a wax coating which has a subtle but a distinct flavour. When hot food is placed on the leaf, the wax melts and lends its flavour to the food making it taste better. Banana leaves are also eco-friendly as they decompose in a very short time, unlike plastic, which takes a lot of time.

Moderator: Water should also be drunk only before or after food and a little bit if needed during a meal. There are multiple health benefits of drinking water from a copper vessel. Swami says that we don't consume food only through our mouths but all our five senses, hence it is important what we hear, see, etc.





Valedictory Address

Prof. S Siva Sankara Sai

Dean, Faculty of Sciences, SSSIHL

We had a wonderful two and a half days of sumptuous inputs to our minds and heart. It is now time to take stock of what we have learnt. But, before that, I would like to recall an incident that occurred at the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus hostel.

It was a Sunday in February 2002. The final year students prayed to Bhagawan to give them a message, as they would be leaving after their exams. Bhagawan graciously agreed to come to the Hostel and bless them. He came around 4 PM and spent over three and a half hours and blessed all the students and teachers. Students had arranged a variety of programmes, including a quiz on His teachings. Swami was very participative and would correct the Quizmaster with the right answers. It was such a beautiful interaction. This was followed by dinner with Him when Swami blessed all the serving students and the cooks and kitchen staff.

We were all moved. And as He was leaving, I felt it my duty, on behalf of all the students, to express our deep sense of gratitude to Bhagawan. As I went near Him to tell him this. What He said then was very pertinent, which I felt I would recall at this juncture. He said, “Tell the students to treasure this experience in their hearts. They should experience this joy by putting whatever I have told them into practice. Only then will it sanctify my coming to the Hostel.” Swami wanted our interactions with Him to be long lived.

So what are the take home lessons from this Summer Course?

In his introductory speech, the Controller of Examinations reminded us that our education will find fulfillment with offering our hearts full of love to Bhagawan. Swami often reiterated that good things must be repeated again and again.



Sri Chakravarthi reminded us the unique features of Bharatiya culture. Bhagawan in His Benedictory Address reminded us the importance of unity and the purpose of our life. He said that no amount of power, money and friends will give us peace of mind. Grace of God alone can confer everlasting peace.

In his electrifying speech, Sri Menon spoke to us about excellence in action using contemporary examples like Dr. K P J Abdul Kalam, the Buddhist monk that he met, Ms. M S Subbalakshmi, Dr. Verghese Kurien of Amul and Sachin Tendulkar and how they achieved greatness through practicing their values.

Then we had a beautiful and elevating Quiz on Baba's Bhagawan Baba's Leelas, Mahimas and Upadesha. We also had a panel discussion on the practical aspects of work, worship and wisdom. The panellists highlighted the amalgamation of the three paths of devotion – bhakti, karma and jnana.

Sri Pushkaraj Gumaste, an SSSIHL alumnus from Barclays, showed us that the pathway to lasting success is following the Sai way. He said his education here for just two years has made him what he is today. He mentioned that there is no entry fee to our University but the exit is not free. Why? Because, we have the responsibility of being a Sai student.

The ever dynamic Prasanthi Bhajan Group gave us Bhajan Antakshari. They connected us to our Lord and stressed the importance of singing Bhajans and Namasmarana.

The afternoons were filled with discussions and deliberations on the two important discourses of Bhagawan on Dharma and how we can implement them in our daily life here and now.

In the evening too we had wonderful speakers sharing their experiences of how they have understood Bhagawan and their experiences.



We had an insightful panel discussion, SAIence of Diet and Health: Ancient Wisdom and Modern Perspectives, concentrating on food and food habits with a special emphasis on our ancient wisdom – aahar and vihar. In the end, our young brothers from the Dept. of Music, SSSIHL elevated us and brought Bhagawan into our midst.

So it is up to us what we want to pick up from these two and a half days. In fact, I remember, once Bhagawan was telling us that Bharatiya culture is like an ocean. Swami's literature too is an ocean and it is up to us to pick up these gems.

Swami tells us that a salt merchant goes and harnesses the salt, sells it and makes money. A fish merchant does the same. Governments do the same with oil and gas. Diamond merchants also harness the oceans for their own wants.

So the ocean is there. It is up to us what we want to pick on. And these past two and a half days have given us plenty to choose from. If we want something on health, so much was on the table. If you want solutions on how to go towards God, we have those too.

Swami said that the borders of our country is guarded by our soldiers. But, you, the students, teachers and devotees, are the guardians of Indian culture and spirituality.

Before I conclude, I would like to recollect on incident that took place in Sai Kulwant Hall. There was a big contingent of Sai youth from Malaysia. They put up a wonderful presentation on Sai as Sadguru. Bhagawan was very happy and He blessed them profusely. Then an important conversation followed. Swami said, "You have accepted me as your Guru. But what will you give me as Guru Dakshina?"

Everyone was perplexed. The youth quickly recovered and said, "Swami, we will give you whatever You want, we will give our lives." Swami smiled and



said, “Yes, when you go to a Guru, it our custom to give Guru Dakshina. I don’t want your life as Guru Dakshina. I don’t want your money or gifts. I want only one thing from each of you: give up one bad quality which you have and give it to Me.”

This is the Lord. He doesn’t want anything from us except our bad qualities. So each of us must promise Bhagawan that we will follow whatever we have understood and experienced here. This is the greatest gift we can give Him for everything He does for us and has given us.

We thank everyone for making this Summer Course a successful reality, first and foremost Bhagawan, who inspired the event in the first place.





Paranayam Sessions

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



Dr. (Mrs.) Dwaraka Rani Rao

Professor (Hon.), Dept. of Physics, SSSIHL



Whenever an opportunity like this is given, especially one where we have to share Bhagawan's experiences, every moment is filled with nostalgic memories. Saturated with memories, latent emotions arise within one's heart. And as I stand here, I am half choked, missing His physical presence. But then, immediately I feel so much of His presence more than ever before because He is with us. Dearest Swami, You have always been with us then and now. And now we are conducting yet another Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality.

Before I start sharing experiences, for the benefit of our freshers — some hundreds of students who have come for the first time to the campus — let me briefly talk about the genesis of the College. There are some profound words that Bhagawan had spoken to us. As Sanjay Sahni Sir said in the morning, Swami said, "Good must be repeated again and again," and the speaker who spoke on excellence also spoke on the Anantapur Campus. So, I thought I will be failing my duty if I don't reiterate Swami's words and the vision He had for the women students of the Anantapur Campus, and at large.

So the story begins when Swami paid a visit to the local girls' high school at Anantapur, and seeing the plight of girls who could not go for further studies, Swami immediately decided that He will start a college exclusively for girls. This was His view fifty years ago, when higher education for women was not even heard of. His resolve was to setup a college dedicated to the girls of, not just Anantapur, but the entire country. And so it was in the year 1968, 22 July to be precise; an auspicious day because this was the seed that was sown by Bhagawan as the first educational institution in His grand Mission. Speaking on the occasion Swami said, and I quote, "This College will instil in the minds of students the ancient ideals of Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema."

You should understand why Swami started a Women's College, because as you know, if a girl is educated, the entire family is educated and in turn

the entire nation is educated and therefore the thrust on women's education. Swami went on to say in His discourse on inauguration day, that "Women are the bulwark of Indian culture and the guardians of Indian spiritual wealth. Women are the mothers of the coming generation and they are the teachers of that generation, especially during the first five years of a child's life. The responsibility of the mother is the greatest and the most crucial and therefore a woman is the foundation on which a peaceful and happy world is to be raised. When human beings are true, kind, compassionate, virtuous and pious, the world will have an era of peace and joy."

The college started with humble beginnings and I'm told it had hardly seventy students. Classes were held in some make shift sheds of the Govt. High School for girls, with just a few Pre-University Courses (PUC) in Arts and Science, and just one B.A degree course that was started, until Swami felt the need for new buildings.

Subsequently, on 7 November 1969, Swami laid the foundation stone for the present building in which we live. On this occasion, Swami had invited the Vice-President of India, and there was a big function, a Bhoomi pooja and all that. Swami gave a discourse in which He said, "My Sankalpa is to provide the youth with an education which, while cultivating their intelligence, will also purify the impulses and emotions and equip them with the physical and mental disciplines needed for drawing upon the springs of calmness and joy that lie in our own hearts. Their higher nature that has to be fostered and must be encouraged to blossom by means of study, prayer, sadhana, contact with sages and saints and spiritual heroes and variants of the land in order to place them on the path of Self-confidence, Self-satisfaction, self-sacrifice and Self-realization." These are the excerpts of Swami's discourse. We encourage you to go back and read or hear the full discourses to get the input of Bhagawan's vision.

Shortly afterwards, Bhagawan invited the then the President of the country, Sri V V Giri for the inauguration of the College buildings, the Hostel in which you stay, the Library building, the Main College building, the

Auditorium, and so on. And on this occasion, Swami reiterated that women must emerge from this College armed with deep-rooted virtues and firm faith in the ideals of women laid down in our sacred texts, only then can they, as mothers, mould their children as right, beautiful virtuous, strong citizens of the Bharath. These are a few excerpts (on His words and vision), but I am sure many teachers will share them with you, and much more, especially when we go back to the campus. It also depends on how much interest you show in these things and we will definitely make a strong attempt in this direction.

I actually consider myself fortunate for having been born into a family where my parents had already come into Swami's fold much before I was born. I tell my mother that the greatest property, the greatest gift that you have given us is to have shown God.

I want to narrate two incidents from my mother's life that date back to the year 1947. She was not yet married then. As a young girl of 16, she, along with an aunt who doesn't have a child in the family, (I used to call her grandmother, so, I am going to refer her as grandmother), first came for Swami's Darshan at a devotee's house in Bangalore. My grandmother, who missed a child was so grief stricken that she was attracted to this young lad of 21. Swami was just 21, but still wearing a white shirt and a dhoti, some crown of hair. But the attraction was so much that, since then, she never, ever left Bhagawan. They used to often visit, and not miss a single chance to have Swami's Darshan whenever Swami would visit Bangalore.

It had so happened that once my grandmother had an urge to come to Puttaparthi. Swami had not come to Bangalore for a long time. So, she told my mother, "Let us go to Puttaparthi and have Swami's Darshan." They went to take permission from my grandfather who is not very inclined towards Swami. And He categorically declined. He said, "What you are going for to such a small boy? What does He have?" And then instead, not to dishearten them, He said, "We may go to our family deity to Nanjangud, a place near Mysore and have the Darshan of the Lord Nanjundeswara." With



sadness in their minds, they said “Okay, at least we will have the Darshan of Nanjundeshwara and come.” So, they set forth and went to the bus stand. They waited for the Mysore bus to come, but they saw that a Penukonda bus honking at them. My grandmother emboldened herself and said, “Swami has sent this bus, let us get into the bus.” So, they boarded the Penukonda bus, and you can imagine, that with the roads we had back in the 1950s, it was a rickety ride, to say the least.

Today, we can reach Puttapparthi from Bangalore in three hours. Back then, it used to perhaps take almost a full day. You have to go to Penukonda, and then to Bukkapatanam. From Bukkapatanam, there is no bus. You had to hire a bullock cart, which will cross the river Chitravati and take you to Prasanthi Nilayam. The present Mandir was not yet there. Swami was staying at the Old Mandir. It is generally referred to by devotees as Paata Mandiram.

So, when the bullock cart with my grandmother and mother reached Puttapparthi, Swami was waiting there and He said, “Come, come, have you come for Nanjangud? Come, have the Darshan of Lord Nanjundeshwara and then He offered His feet so that they could take padanamaskar. They were stunned. There were no land phones in those days, let alone cell phones, for anyone to give information to Bhagawan. Bhagawan’s omnipresence, the all-knowing Lord at the young age of 21!

Another beautiful incident that my mother recollects is that in those days, Swami used to take the devotees to the river Chitravathi. Swami would sit in the sand, converse with the devotees, give them words of wisdom, have Bhajans and then bring them back. No electricity, no lamps...I remember this when I was a child. So one day, Swami said, “Let me take you all to the Kalpavriksha.” Kalpavriksha is a wish fulfilling tree and Swami could just materialize and pull out anything that you wanted from it. An apple, an orange, a mango, wild fruits, even ringlets, rings...whatever you could ask for. He asked my mother, the young girl, what she wished for. And she said Swami, I would like a *mysore pak* (sweet), and Swami lifted his hand and there came a *mysore pak*, warm, fresh filled with ghee. My mother says she

still feels the feeling of this warm *mysore pak*. Omnipotence, the All-powerful Lord.

Yet another incident: My mother was a witness to an operation at the old Mandir. In those days, there was no General Hospital, no Super Specialty Hospital, no doctors around. A devotee was very serious with tonsillitis, it had to be removed urgently. Swami created, with a whirl of his hands, the surgical instruments, showed it to all the devotees and sterilized it, in case anyone would say anything. And then He performed the operation in an inner room, took out the tonsils and brought it out and showed it to devotees. My mother is a witness to this. The Doctor of doctors, who now has Super Specialty Hospitals and General Hospitals for people like us.

In my childhood, when I spent twenty years between Jabalpur and Puttaparthi, we used to spend almost all our vacation time here in Puttaparthi. So many of the events in the family — naming of my siblings, *annaprasham*, *aksharabhyasam*, etc — we would bother Swami about, and He would patiently bless us with His presence and Blessings on these key occasions.

Eventually, in 1972 when I joined the erstwhile Sri Sathya Sai College for Women. The then principal, Ms. Mukherjee, sent me a telegram and on receiving the telegram. Suddenly, someone in the Department of Physics resigned and therefore I was called. It was the month of February and I landed straight at Anantapur. I had a senior colleague with me, Dr. Komalamba, and the two of us in the department would manage so many of the classes: Telugu medium, English medium, Intermediate, Degree courses, and what not. Well, I went to Parthi for Swami's Darshan, and I felt Swami would recognize me and ask, how I came and so on. But Swami had no inclination of talking with me.

The visits repeated and I posted a letter to my father saying that Swami has forgotten me and when he next visits Puttaparthi, he had to tell Swami that his daughter is working at Swami's college. Very soon, the summer vacation came and the first Summer Course was held at Brindavan (in the

year 1972), which I attended. As a speaker said this morning, it was a month-long Summer Course and it was fantastic. Swami would give us, apart from spiritual wisdom, mangoes, ice-creams, etc. to attract us, His children.

Throughout the Summer Course, Swami did not show any sign of recognition (of me). I was very sad. What was this? But I was stubborn and did not get up and say: Swami...I am here, I have joined your College. For some reason, I expected Swami should talk, right? Now what happened I went back? I am still cutting the story short. After the Summer Course, I went back to Jabalpur for the vacation and I cried to my father, "What is this? This time you come with me, tell Swami that I am at Anantapur."

The next day, a student of the Brindavan campus, who was also from Jabalpur, came to visit us and he happened to narrate what happened in Brindavan. Addressing my father and me, he said, "Uncle, Rani didi, you know, Swami spoke about you." I said, "What? About me? He didn't even speak to me."

He said, "No no, one day I was coming down to Swami's room from the steps and Swami stopped me and asked me, where are you from? And I replied, Swami, I am from Jabalpur."

"Oh, Jabalpur? The place where Bramareswar Rao stays," said Swami.

"Yes, Swami. He is the district president of our Samithi."

Swami said, "Oh, his daughter has studied at my College and she is now teaching there."

Then I said, "Swami...Yes, Rani didi is teaching at the college, but she didn't study at your college."

He said this because he knew very well that I had done my schooling and my B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees at Jabalpur. He continued, "Swami...Rani Didi did her M.Sc. from the Engineering College at Jabalpur, but she is teaching here."

Swami said, "No, No...she studied at my college." He couldn't argue with Swami and then Swami went on to narrate details about my grandmother, my other siblings and so on, and that conversation ended there. Now, when the student came back and told us all this, I just had tears in my eyes. I

said, Swami all the time that you didn't recognize me and there sitting in Brindavan, you are seeing me at Anantapur, although, I didn't understand why Swami said that I was His student.

And then I concluded that at the college that did my B.Sc., St. Aloysius College, was a college which runs on Swami's discipline. Students of modesty, character. It was a co-educational institution, but no boy, no girl did any kind of mischief, even with the boys. Such kind of high character building and integrity existed in those days. In those days, I used to think that for Swami, any college that follows His principles, is Swami's college, and I satisfied.

However, after three decades, I happen to become, in the worldly sense, Swami's student – a student of Anantapur campus, where I did my Ph.D. and got a degree from Bhagawan's hands. So, it was like foretelling that. Once again, down the timeline, we had many visits of Bhagawan. In fact, the year, my selection for interview was held, in July 1972, was the year Jayamma madam joined. Swami stayed in the campus for five full days. He used to go to the auditorium, library, hostel, roam about the entire college. So many teachers had experiences with Swami...Swami would enter the class, never entered my class, and so on.

In those days, the college was under the Sri Venkateshwara University and in that particular year, the examination results were very bad. There was some 30% pass or 40% pass. But our college always had, on average, 75% results: bad by today's standards, but very good in 1978. So, the then Principal, Ms. Hemalatha, she was very happy and proud of the students and this credible performance and she requested Bhagawan to bless the students. Bhagawan was equally happy and look what He said. He said, "Good, but I will look forward for cent percent success in examinations which assess character, virtue, sweetness of speech and behaviour, reverence towards elders and reverence to the culture of the land. I wish that the pupils of this college live so fully, love the homes in which they are born and bred in, and the homes they are in turn married to and the homes they themselves established, and that all may be happy on account of them." This is the kind of vision Swami

has for the girl students of this Institute.

Well, a number of moment are still fresh in my memory, Swami would sit in the college lawns, talk to the students, conduct bhajans, simply sing along with the students, sit in the library, the front part of which you now have a beautiful big picture of Swami. The library was half empty with not so many books. Anyone with any problem could go to Swami and whisper into His ears, as they won't like others to hear, and Swami would resolve the problems in some way or the other, by calling the warden or the principal.

I still remember a student had lost her father and the warden mention this to Swami as she was really grief stricken and wondered how her education would move on. Swami said, "Tell her not to worry. I will pay her fees." And, Swami would diligently send the fees. That was the love and care of Bhagawan. Not only here, but her sister also studied here and she had yet another sister. She asked Swami, "Swami can I bring my third sister also to your institution?" and Swami said, "Sure, Sure, I'll pay her fees also," and told her not to worry. That is the kind of care Swami took of his teachers and students.

Just last year, a teacher narrated a recent incident about her daughter. It so happened that she received a phone call from one of her friends saying that her daughter was very serious. She's rushed to Bangalore. I called the Registrar to tall him this. Everyone from this place is so caring. Somehow, they summoned the courage and sent word to Swami's room and immediately Swami sent vibhuti down giving instructions that the vibhuti packets must reach the teacher immediately.

Now coming to some personal interviews, do you all know that we have an interview room in Sai Kulwant Hall? It is located to the right of where we sit, on the ladies' side. In some of the personal interviews I had — on one occasion it was a family interview my brothers were there — suddenly Swami asks my brothers, "Can you chant the vedas?" My brothers nudged and crept and Swami replied, "Are you not ashamed being Bhratiyas? You are not being able to chant a single Veda." I thought it is my turn now. I was on the ladies'



side. Before Swami turned, I promised to Swami in my mind, Swami, this summer, I'll learn the rudram. Those were the days when we never had Veda chanting in Sai Kulwant Hall. They were chanted only during the Dasara celebrations and before the Grama Seva began. Veda chanting had not become popular back then. So that is why Swami Has his own plans and strategies for teaching us lessons.

Another incident in the interview room. In those days, I had to take care of my in-laws, who were old. I couldn't come to Puttaparthi frequently and I used to feel bad when I heard from my friends of the missed opportunities of getting the interviews that they got. But on one occasion, I was fortunate enough Swami had called us for an interview and I grabbed the chance to sitting right next to Swami. Swami would talk to us very casually, "Emi samachar (What is the news)?" And then, he told us to ask questions. So, I was feeling sad and happy at the same time because I was in His presence but couldn't always have His physical presence, so I said Swami I have this problem...I have my mother-in-law to take care of and I cannot come to have your Darshan. I feel bad Swami. You know what Swami said? "Don't feel bad, have Swami in your heart always. When you roll a chapatti, broaden your heart, when you cut vegetables, cut the ego away, when you sweep the house, clear your birth. Don't feel bad. Swami is always with you."

These were the words of wisdom that Swami gave us. On another occasion, it was an interview when Swami was giving to teachers and the teachers asked different questions and one of them asked Swami what is the best sadhana for us? Japam, bhajan? Swami said, "Whatever work you do, do it with your heart and soul in it. That is the best sadhana. Excellence in action. An eye for the taste, God is beauty."

On one occasion, we had the Annual Sports Meet Prize Distribution Ceremony, where Swami gave away the prizes. A couple of us were in-charge of the prize distribution. We were arranging the prizes up on the stage. You see the rose on the right of the screen? The boys' prizes were on the right side and the girls were on the left. We had to come as early as 5 o'clock to arrange



the prizes and then we had to see that everything was in perfect order, and clean. The prize distribution was at 7 AM.

As we were done, we turned around and suddenly saw Swami. My God! We didn't know whether to take padanamaskar or not? Swami gave us such a pleasant smile and said "Everything looks nice but the prizes are small." And then He took one particular trophy and as He was moving it to one another place and He said, so gently so softly, "Will it not look more beautiful here?" That is Swami No. 1 He has come to foresee the arrangements if everything is ready and I remember He would do this a number of times when He came to the campus for programmes. Rajeshwari Patel ma'am used to be the in-charge and Swami would come and walk across the lawn go to the auditorium check if all the arrangements are done, like the tablecloth, etc. and then come back to show how an administrator should be. He would personally oversee how the things were. All of you know that you will all have a gratitude programme at the end of your final year, right? Last year you gave it after April 15th. In those days, it used to be earlier and Swami would give words of wisdom to the outgoing batch, especially in regards to how one should behave when you pass out of the Institute. When you walk on the road, when you talk to your brother and talk to men, working in at a place, whether it is your home, whether it is your in-law's home or any other stuff. With so much of love, all the teachers and the students used to cry.

On one occasion, Swami taught me a big lesson. It was a hot summer afternoon. There was no Sai Kulwant Hall then. There was just the Prasanthi sand and Swami used to come out for Darshans at 3 o'clock and we used to make a big line in the hot sun on the sand. All eyes would be glued to Swami as He came out of the interview room and He came straight to me and asked me, "Where is your husband?" I replied, "Swami, He has gone to see his parents." Swami replied, "Can you not say my mother-in-law and my father-in-law? Mother-in-love and not law." I've taken care to share this experience with quite a few married girls, and when they come back to visit, many of them reported to me that this instruction of Swami saved their family from breaking down.



Lessons of surrender. We had a Telugu teacher, Lalithamba madam who used to stay alone and had completely dedicated her life to Bhagawan. She had all kinds of medical problems, including blood sugar. When she retired, she wanted to rest, but Swami said “No, you have to work in My Institute.” Regardless of her health, she had to come to the college and do her part of the work and Swami used to call her by the name Subalaxmi. So full was her surrender. She used to fall ill so often but the young teachers, who are always there to help the senior teachers, would take care of her.

On one occasion, she was so unwell that she had to be hospitalized at the local hospital. Doctors said that she needs to be sent to a better hospital. Swami had just made me the principal. It was 2007. I had Pushpa madam, Jayama madam as my seniors. We decided to shift her to Puttaparthi. The ambulance was arranged and some teachers joined her, assuring that they would take care of Lalitha madam. The van passed by the college and we all met her and wished her well. Before it reached Dharmavaram, we got a call from Chakravarty Sir that Swami had instructed that Lalitha madam’s ambulance must go to the Super Specialty Hospital in Whitefield, Bangalore. Our teachers were looking after madam but Swami felt that their workload was being affected. Swami instructed them to go back and requested Bhutia aunty and a few sevadals to personally take care of Lalitha madam. She was in the hospital for two months completely under the super vision of Bhagawan. Well, she passed away. Swami instructed to get her body to Puttaparthi and made all arrangements, including a sari for her burial, etc. Swami that evening comes to the Sai Kulwant Hall. All of us were there as one of our senior members was no more with us.

Swami makes all the enquiries “Has the sari reached her?” “How many people came?” She had one sister staying with her. Swami directly gave her the permission to stay in the ashram and still she lives here now. Fully surrender, God takes care of everyone.

Swami has a unique style of imparting education. We teachers use a blackboard and a chalk or a PowerPoint presentation, but Swami has a style of his own.



One lesson on caring and sharing. It was 2005 and Swami had arranged this function of Bhimaratha. This function was arranged to honour old couples over seventy years of age according to its tradition. All of us were called by Bhagawan to help in his function. As soon we come to Puttaparthi, Swami calls us for an hour-long interaction in the Mandir. He personally gave the instructions as to what to do in the function. Swami was going to distribute the gifts to the couples like gold studs, brass bangles and what not. He personally gave instructions to the students on how to open the jewelry and how to treat these old ladies with love; dress them up and bring them to the much-decorated Sai Kulwant Hall. A lesson imparted of love. One has to take care of old and aging people.

Well, if we have lessons of caring and loving on one side, we have lessons of daring on the other side. The Annual Sports and Cultural Meet is a platform where Swami highlights that for students, apart from caring they have to be courageous, bold, self-confident; and you see girls confidently climbing up high poles, doing stunts and motor bikes. Swami has given so much of courage with motor bikes and today we have a full-fledged team headed by Meera madam.

I'll close the talk, as time has come to slumber, by narrating another experience of Bhagawan. We had a teacher from Education department. She suddenly developed a heart pain and had come to Puttaparthi. It was so simple for us and any problem, we would go and tell Swami. That used to be the solution for us. That used to be the assurance. Dr. Chaudhary, who had come from US, was sitting in front of Swami. His ticket back to US was in halt for many days. Swami gives her instructions to perform an operation and cancel her trip. Dr. Chaudhary had to listen. As simple as this. Before her relatives came from Gujarat, she was already operated.

This incident was perhaps around 2009-2010. One, Viji akka, used to work in the office and she had a daughter. She came to my office and told me that she had a lump in her breast and should get checked immediately and I said, "Yes." So, we suggested her to Dr. Uma and she informed me that it's a



bad case, saying that we have to send her either to Bangalore or Hyderabad. Now this lady has to spend a large amount of money. After a discussion with my senior colleagues, we called Dr. Uma and asked her for a suggestion. She suggested Swami's mobile clinic which is headed by Dr. Narasimhan. I contacted him and he said that he can't diagnose anything over the phone and I asked him if we have to send her and he said "No, no madam, we will come to Parthi. I'll ask my doctor in Anantapur to check her."

Meanwhile, she goes to the General Hospital in Puttaparthi, and checks in. Though it is free of cost, it does not have an Oncology Department. Dr. Narasimhan brings the oncologist from Hyderabad and the operation is performed in Puttaparthi. He puts her into the minister's fund and the entire cost is free. Tell me now is Swami there or not? Everything was conducted as if Swami was sitting there. She is so indebted to Bhagawan. So dear children, Swami is so much with us. We only need eyes to see, words to listen and hearts to feel.



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In one of our staff interviews, Bhagawan told us that after the Krishna avatar, which is a Poorna Avatar, the next is this Sathya Sai avatar. Bhagawan has told the old devotees that, this avatar had not come before; nor is it going to come in the future. So just after the Krishna avatar, this is the Poorna Avatar, and on another occasion, before the 1990 Summer Course, Swami had called us for a private interview and in that interview Bhagawan had told us that you have not seen Krishna; you have not seen Rama then what do you speak about them? Speak about the avatar who is before you. So about that avatar I am going to speak today.

I came early to Bhagawan. And when we came in the 1960s, there were no facilities, we had to stay under the trees and there were no transportation facilities as such. A rickety bus used to come from Penukonda and then we have to travel up to Bukkapatnam and take a bullock cart from there. So, the first time when we came, on the way, many people discouraged us by saying, “Why are you coming here and that too you are coming by train. Swami will not give an interview. He will give an interview to only those people who come by car. Since, you have come by train, no interview at all.” So, I still remember we came and sat in the same auditorium and that time this massive building was not there.

One small shed used to be there. So if we don't get accommodation under the trees we have to take shelter in the shed. So we came and waited and two days passed, Swami didn't even look at us. So at night my brother became furious. “Simply we could have listened to those people and gone back. Why did we come here? He is meant only for rich class and not for us.” So the discussion went on and on like that, and in the morning, Swami called us and spoke to us for a long time giving all the inner secret details of the family. We were totally surprised and then after the interview, suddenly Swami turned to my brother and asked a question, “Did you come by a car?” So Swami left us to understand and analyse why he asked the question and we went on discussing aimlessly. Later, it struck us that it was our own people who passed the comment.

In 1975, Bhagawan called me and told me that this time you come to Anantapur. I will appoint you. So I came in 1975 to Anantapur. Swami, as he told me, conducted my job interview and he gave me a direct appointment. So, I settled in the hostel. In the beginning, Bhagawan used to call me bangaru, sometimes dunnapotta also. So I was immensely happy whenever Swami used to call bangaru. Then one of the old devotees told me that you don't know the seriousness of this, because Swami is like a goldsmith. Once the gold is given to the goldsmith, he is going to convert that gold into an ornament. So that is the purpose of calling you. Bangaru, get ready for that. So you may have to go under many tests which Bhagawan is going to give you. And that is why he calls you bangaru. So from that day he started the tests.

It so happened that I underwent so many tests given by Bhagawan which I am not going to touch upon. And the second thing Swami used to call me is dunnapotta. I asked what is the meaning of dunnapotta. They said, female buffalo. Then I thought he is giving me a befitting title, suitable for my personality – a female buffalo and it also means one who is drowned in ignorance. So later, I came to know that He is giving me a befitting title and I was happy for that also. I was the only one who could recognise my real status. Then, for the first time I really realized that He is the omnipresent Lord and he continued to show me instances of His omnipresence.

In 1976, we had a Summer Course in Ooty. I came a day early to Ooty and had Darshan that evening. He didn't even notice me. He went inside. It was 6 o'clock, and biting cold, so a thought crossed my mind. They say He is the omnipresent Lord. So, doesn't he know that I am standing in the biting cold. Just when the thought crossed, a sevadal came out and asked me who that teacher from Anantapur is. I said, "Me." "Swami is calling you," he replied. I went inside. Bhagawan was standing in the hall and He said "Ra." I went near. And then Swami told, "You know, outside it is too cold, too cold." I have sent the buses to Anantapur to bring the students; they will be reaching any time. You know because it is too cold I am getting hot dinner prepared for them. Just when Swami finished talking to me the buses arrived and Swami



said, “Chusava ochesaru (they have come). See hot dinner is also ready.” You have dinner with them and rest.

The second time I realized the omnipresence is during the same Ooty Summer Course. My colleague and I had been given some assignment. One day, we had gone for some work and by the time we came back, lunch was over and all the people had gone to take rest, so when we entered the hall, the hall was empty; only a few vessels were there. They knew two people still have to eat. We went and saw and to utter surprise of my colleague that day the sweet was poliga (sweet chapatti). And she was immensely happy. And she told us “see this is my favourite sweet, today I will eat only this. I will not eat anything else.” So she put two to three sweets in her plate and then I served other items, we came and sat and as we were bending down and eating she said, “You know, Swami must see my plate now.” Just then, we felt somebody is standing in front of us.

When we lifted our head and saw, Swami was standing and peeping into her plate. Then he asked in Telugu, “Dunnapotta anta tintava.” And like that He went on proving that He is acting at our mental level. He can read our minds and act according to that. Just now when I was eating in the canteen, this thought came to my mind. An experience where Swami showed that He is omnipresent.

On one occasion I had come to Parthi for my birthday. When I came, some people said, “You came at the wrong time because since four days, Bhagawan has not come towards the ladies side. For some reason he is unhappy with the ladies, so he is taking rounds only on the gents side. He is not coming to the ladies side.” Anyhow, I had already come. What else to do? So I thought, I’ll have Darshan and go back. My friend was also there with me. We went at 4 o’clock to the canteen. We both sat and thought that since Swami is not going to come to our side, let’s have leisurely the tea and go. Then while having tea, my friend said, “Since it is your birthday, why don’t you take something to Swami, and offer it.” I said, “No, no. it may be but if Swami doesn’t come on my side and if He is not going to take it from me, I am going to feel very bad.

I don't want to face that situation. If Swami is not going to talk to me, I am not going to face that situation," I said.

We came back after tea and sat for Darshans. Suddenly, that day Swami changed the route. He came on to the ladies side. He came to me and asked, "Emi samacharam (What is the news)?" I was taken aback. I never expected Bhagawan will come on our side and He has come and he is asking me "emi samacharam" and I was about to say, "Swami it is my birthday" and Swami said, "Anta telusu (I know everything), you both went to the canteen, sat in the canteen and she told you to offer something to Bhagawan today since it is your birthday. And you told her, no, no if today Swami is not going to talk to me, I will feel very bad and I don't want. Am I right?" "Yes Swami." Swami said "Since you feel that Swami does not talk to you, I will not talk to you." He said "Yad Bhavam tad Bhavati (What you think, that happens." So since you thought that Swami is not going to speak to you, He will not talk. I will not talk to you, He said. "No Swami, please Swami, pardon me Swami pardon me Swami." "No, no, no, no, no you said no you said no." So I kept quiet. Swami went away.

After fifteen days again we came for some festival. We were sitting and Swami passed by. He told Dr. Hemalata, our Principal "Chudu Hemalata ee ammayi antundi Swami nato matladarani, nenu matladanu (she feels that Swami is not talking so I am not going to talk to her)." And again I went on pleading with Bhagawan, "Sorry Swami, please sorry Swami." Swami said again "Yad Bhavam tad Bhavati." Once again he proved that He is the omnipresent Lord, who works at our mental level.

When Neil Armstrong, the first man to step on the moon, came to Prasanthi Nilayam, I heard that he went to the accommodation office and our accommodation people, in their own way, said "We don't know which Strong you are, so no accommodation." So, he was sitting with the public, I believe. So when Bhagawan went for Darshan, He saw him and asked, "Why are you sitting here?" Armstrong related the episode of accommodation. And Swami later gave him an interview. We may go to moon and now NASA has



prepared a satellite which is going to go to sun also. All that we can do, but as Bhagawan says “We cannot go even one inch inside.”

So Bhagawan has decided to transform me, and that’s why he brought me, the most ordinary teacher, fit for nothing, here and then started transforming me. So slowly, I started realising that he is watching me and I should be careful.

On another occasion, I was travelling at night. Swami has told us not to travel in the night. But when we have to go home, we forget everything. Swami’s words, everybody’s words we completely forget. Home will be there in front of us. So I also used to ignore that and travel at night. So once, it so happened I was coming from Hyderabad to Anantapur, and my friend had got a train reservation done. I came and sat in the compartment. Not even a single woman was there in the compartment. The compartment was full of men. And immediately they started playing the cards. And I was thinking what to do, she has already reserved. I can’t do anything, I was sitting. Suddenly before the train started, the Train Ticket Examiner (TTE) came to me and said, “Don’t you have any sense, you are sitting in the compartment full of men.” I said “What to do sir? I got the reservation to this compartment.” The TTE said “Don’t worry. Come. One of your colleagues is travelling in the same train, I will take you there.” And he took me to another compartment and said, “See I brought your colleague. Both of you can travel together.” So he made all the arrangements, changing seats, everything he did and then went back.

After that second TTE came. He said, “Your reservation is in that compartment, how is that you are here?” I said “What is this, Sir? Earlier, another TTE came and said that he had changed the whole thing and he has brought me here. He said, “No I am the first TTE. Somebody must have duped you like that. I said no, and even my friend went on arguing no it is TTE only who brought her and then we also had little chat with him. He did not believe that. He said that he was the only one today on duty. When I came to Anantapur campus, my parents were so worried as to how I

can manage there, not knowing the language and a different place, different climatic conditions and everything and that time Bhagawan gave a promise to my mother not to worry. He will take care of me as He has taken care of me by taking me from one compartment to another compartment.

On one occasion, on some Institute work, I was coming from Anantapur to Prasanthi Nilayam. On the way, I met with a major accident near Super Speciality Hospital. The accident took place in such a manner that the car stood upside down and then I was stuck inside the car and then the front shield of the car broke into pieces and the petrol started flowing from the car. Then I realized may be this is called an accident. So I did not think of Sairam or anything, I was thinking Oh! May be this is called an accident. So I got stuck up in such a manner that the driver escaped. I was inside the car. I put my hand through the window calling out for people to save me.

So one person came near and then he pulled me out of the car. I came out of the car and then I was so worried about the letters which had been given to me to be handed over to the Vice-Chancellor that I was not bothering about myself. I was asking where are the letters? Where are the letters? Somebody said, “Madam your own life is at stake why are you worrying so much about the letters.” I said, “More than my life, the letters are very important please.” In the evening, my colleagues came and told Swami about the accident and Swami explained what had happened. He said neither the car was good nor the driver was good nor the petrol was good. Tell her to bring a proper car from next time onwards. So that was bothering on my mind...why Swami said tell her to bring proper car from next time?

It struck me that this is because on an earlier occasion, when I was coming from the campus to the Institute, early in the morning, the car was sometimes going zig zag on the road. So, I thought may be the driver must be feeling sleepy. So I asked the driver, if he wanted to drink tea? He refused and continued. When we reached Prasanthi Nilayam and we had to go up the hill to the Administrative Building he suddenly went and hit the car to the wall and stopped. He said, “Madam, the car can't go up.” I said, “Why, you

came all the way from Anantapur and now you are saying that the car can't go up." And reluctantly, he admitted that the car does not have proper breaks. Then I asked him when did the break fail? "Madam, when we started only it failed." Then I realized why the car was going zig zag on the road.

My question is: who brought me safely from Anantapur to Prasanthi Nilayam? So, Swami kept His promise. I bought a car then I brought the key to be blessed by Bhagawan. My brother got the key blessed. You know Swami was holding the key for some time. I don't know what may be the reason and then He looked at my face and then He put his hand on the key and then smeared the key for some time. I don't know what may be the reason. After that we forgot about that then I started using that car.

On one occasion, when I was going home, which is only seven kilometres away, suddenly I was fast asleep in the car. But suddenly I got up I saw people surrounding my car, making so much of noise. So I did not understand. I said "What happened?" The driver was unable to speak. He was shivering and he was crying. "Madam accident." I said, "What accident?" The car was coming on the highway at more than a hundred kilometres per hour speed. I slept of at the back seat. And the driver closed his eyes for one second. It went and hit another car, that another car was completely smashed. In addition to that, he went and hit a bike and we don't know where the bike had gone. He could get the control over the car and the car stopped near a huge pit. After that I got up. So you can imagine when I realized may be I may belong to his dynasty - the Kumbhakarna's clan. I got up and saw nothing had happened. My car's front portion had gone but I was not aware of anything. Who controlled my sleep? Who made me not to be aware of that accident? If I would have seen that accident myself, what would have happened to me? I do not know.

Don't you believe at that point, when He says, "I'll take care" means He will take care. This accident took place not when Swami was there, in his absence, when his physical frame was not there. So here I learnt a lesson from Bhagawan that if you make a promise to anybody, keep up that promise at the cost of your life. Even today, Bhagawan is keeping up His promise. Although His physical form is not there He is taking care of me.



Another lesson he taught me is that of implicit obedience. When God or Guru tells you something, there is a meaning behind that, there will be some purpose behind that, and we have to have implicitly obey it. It so happened once when Swami had come to the campus. He told us the students and staff to assemble as He wanted to speak to us. So we are all curious as to what He was going to say.

In those days, I was the only one who had a tape recorder at the campus. I thought I should not miss this opportunity and quietly brought the tape recorder and kept it on the table of Bhagawan where He was supposed to speak. Swami looked at me and said, “Yenti Adhi What is this)?” He asked.

“Swami, tape recorder.”

“Telusu yenduku (I know it is tape recorder, why have you kept it)?”

“Swami to record.”

“No, no, no, remove that, remove that.” He said.

What I did was I removed the tape recorder and there was one more step to the table, I kept it below thinking that He wouldn't notice it there. So I had already tested the tape recorder from morning to make sure it works. I went on testing it because I should not miss recording of that speech because Swami said it is special and very important. Swami looked at me and gave me one smile and he continued the Discourse. I also went on watching from time to time whether recording is going on; the tape was moving.

After Swami left the campus, I happily brought that tape recorder to my room, and when I played it, nothing was there. The tape was empty, despite the recording! I tried and checked it repeatedly, until I realised that when He said no, it means no, that's all. So implicit obedience is essential. It is necessary, Swami taught me that you must obey when elders give a command. So that is another lesson I learnt. Like that, Swami went on teaching me.

Once it so happened that we used to talk too much. Swami tried various means to cut down our talking, but we went on and on and on. Swami started



tackling each teacher separately and especially hostel teachers, because, we have to be with the students day in and day out. We have to set an example for them. I used to see other teachers being tackled by Bhagawan so I thought better to escape from Swami. So every day, during Darshan time I used to sit in between the students, and then in middle of the students or at the end so that I used to feel that I could escape Swami's eye, as I didn't want to get a scolding from Him.

Dasara came, and heavy crowds flocked to Prasanthi Nilayam. When it was drawing to a close, I thought to myself: Thank God Dasara is coming to a close, I have now escaped. I went and sat next to Swami's sister, Venkamagaru right at the back. Not only did I sit, I was thinking that the crowd is so much, as if Swami is going to come and talk to me. Today if I escape, it's over. So I was happily sitting with Venkamagaru and she asked me why I was sitting with her? "No no, simply I'm sitting" I said.

Swami came for Darshan and said, "Koncham dhari ivvandi." He parted the crowds and made way, and came straight to me right at the back. "Emanukunnavu, crowdu atla osthadu anukunanava, kaavalanukuntae etlagna ostanu, choosava ippudu ochanukadha', He said. If Swami wants he can make any way. Didn't you see now how I made a way and came. And whatever dose I have to get, I got it. Because He came for that only, so, how can I miss it? So, if at all I talk less today, the entire credit must go to Bhagawan only because He completely controlled our talking.

So if I share some of the tests Bhagawan has given, you will be unable to digest it. That's why I don't want to touch upon those points. That is why the old devotees told us that, gold means he will put you to many tests, and as we have already come into His hands, we have to undergo that transformation.

So I came as an ordinary teacher, a very ordinary teacher, as I said, fit for nothing; the transformation He has brought about will turn that gold into an ornament. I do not know whether I have become an ornament or not. But, I have undergone sufficient tests given by Bhagawan. Now in one or two



national awards which I have got, in the certificate they have mentioned that, I am a model Guru. Who could get this? Who could get this certificate at a national level to me. Don't you feel that He did complete transformation?

Bhagawan used to tell us that, He can bring sky down, take the earth up, but more than all that, the most difficult task Swami had taken upon Himself transforming the human mind.

You can transform the human body. You know that Americans scientists have gone to the extent of attempting to create immortal bodies; they are doing research on that - where death will not touch them at all. But they have not ventured to transform the mind. That can be done only by the creator. Scientists are also created by Him. So only the creator can transform the mind and that is the most difficult task that Bhagawan has taken upon Himself.

Even today he is doing the same work and the Summer Course is the evidence of that. So my only prayer to Bhagawan is that, any number of janmas may be there, I want to be born when that Avatar comes. Get transformed by the Avatar. In the book Sathya Sai Anandadayi, it is written that Bhagawan had told the old devotees that after this avatar, the next avatar will be Prema Sai Avatar. And this Prema Sai Avatar is going to be there for next seventy five years. And after that for two thousand years there will not be any Avatar. So Swami used to tell them, "Why don't you work hard now, get rid of yourself. Get realization now. Why do you want to wait for those two thousand years when no Avatar is going to be there?"

So my only prayer is that, please Bhagawan, we have come to You and see that we are going to be out of that birth and death cycle and merge in You.



Sri Prem Anosh

Junior Technical Officer, Radiosai Global Harmony



A warm welcome to all the freshers. I know how it feels. Eighteen years ago, I was in your place. I will start with the little reflections of the first few days I spent at the hostel. I was a very hesitant entrant into the hostel. 31st of May, I joined the hostel in Brindavan. One day spent in the hostel and I was already telling myself that the day after when my parents are going back, I am also going back with them. I cannot take this. Two days passed and my parents were supposed to leave. Then I thought, I can manage to spend one semester and thought of not coming back when I go home for winter vacation. Then a week passed. I said, I can do one degree and I will not come back for Masters because you are so homesick and you are not used to so much of discipline. I still remember telling my mother that I cannot live in a place wearing whites all my life. Two weeks passed.

Swami was there. I distinctly remember Swami returned to Parthi on the 16th of June that year and we suddenly started missing Swami more than we missed anything else in our life. It took those two weeks to realize that this is where I need to spend rest of my life. It is still too early to say that. It is still a prayer in my case. That is what happens when this place starts getting into you. I am not saying that all of you here should become like that at the end of your studies. Different people react differently. But most of us realize that we are not here by accident or chance or by your own choice. The day we realize that, something different happens within us. What is important is to sustain that for the rest of our stay.

As I was introduced, we do lot of live programmes at Radiosai. One of the programs I am involved with is 'Afternoon Satsangs.' I do it with brother Aravind Balasubramanya. One of the satsangs which we did and which was popular and taken very well by all the listeners is - They came, They saw, and He conquered. This was all about devotees who landed up here hesitantly and then they realize that they were always meant to come here. A few days ago, someone showed me a person in the ashram and told me the story of this person. This person had a cab service with 3-4 cars and he would rent them

out. It so happened that someone booked a cab to drive down to Puttaparthi. And every time somebody takes a cab to Puttaparthi, he would wonder why these people go to all these Babas. Don't they have any other job? However, business is business. Rent the car and get the money. So, one day, somebody hired the cab and the driver did not turn up. So, the situation was such that he had to drive them to Parthi. So, he came and dropped them here. Having coming to Parthi, driving down for so many hours, he thought to himself, I may as well go and check out this Baba. So, he came and saw Swami. Nobody knows what happened in Darshan. He came out, took his cab, went back to his hometown, winds up his business and came back to Parthi. He is here for about twenty-five years now. So, one thing you realize that you are not here by chance or by accident. Whenever I think about this, I remember a beautiful and interesting story from a book called Periya Puranam.

There was a chap named Nambi. Probably, all of us fit into that character. Just a fun-loving young and good-looking man. So, he was also called as Nambi Sundaram because of his good looks. As he was very good looking, the king of that land adopts him and makes him his own son. So, he was brought up like a prince with all luxuries. Finally, the time came for his marriage. A princely wedding was arranged. When his wedding was about to take place, an ascetic walked in and stopped the proceedings. Everyone there was surprised. Holding a leaf parchment, with something written on it, the ascetic said, "This Sundaram is a bond slave of mine. So, he does not have right to get married." Sundaram got very perturbed. He got up and said, "You mad man. Where have you come from? I have not even seen you. How can I be you slave and where from has this document come?" Then the ascetic said, "Your great grand-father wrote a document to me. He said that he, his children and everybody in his lineage to be my bond slaves." I have proof here.

Sundaram tried all his ways and nothing worked out. Finally, they go to a court of all the elders in the village. They looked at the document and found out to be authentic. So, they said, "You are a bond slave of this old man (ascetic). You have to go after him and do whatever he asks you to do." Imagine the plight of Sundaram. Suddenly, he was snatched away from his cozy, colourful and comfortable life. He started going with the ascetic, all the while complaining and complaining. They walked and walked. Sundaram asked, "Where are you



taking me?” The ascetic replied, “I am taking you to my home.” “Where is your home?” asked Sundaram. “That’s the biggest home in that old town,” said the ascetic. So, they walked and walked and finally the ascetic showed the temple gopuram and said, “You can see my house.” Sundaram thought, “Oh my God! He is living in the temple and am the slave of this guy. So, I too have to live in this temple, eating prasadam every day!” As they walked into the temple, all the while Sundaram was complaining. Finally, Sundaram saw the ascetic walking directly into the sanctum sanctorum and merging with the lingam there. Suddenly Nambi Sundaram realized that God had come into his perfectly comfortable life, snatched away from there and said that I am His slave. Finally, Lord Shiva appears in front of him and says the whole story. He said, “You are one of My attendants in Kailasha. Because of a curse, you had to take birth as a human being. But, nevertheless, you are a great devotee. I asked you if there is anything that you want from Me before you go to Earth. Then you replied that when I see you getting lost in the world, I should come down and claim you as My own and take after Me. That’s what exactly I have done. You are mine.” Sundaram said, “What do I do now? I have spent all my youth in fun frolic. Now, You say that I am Your slave. What am I supposed to do?” Lord Shiva said, “Sing Songs in Praise of Me.” Sundaram said, “I don’t know poetry, I don’t know anything. What do I sing?” Then Lord Shiva replied, “Your first appellation when you saw Me was – ‘Mad man.’ Whatever name a devotee gives me, I embrace it with all acceptance. So, sing your first verse calling Me a ‘Mad man.’ That’s how Sundaram later becomes Sundara Murthy Nayinar, one of the great saints of southern India.

Whenever I listen to this story, I think that there is certain parallel in our lives. Swami walks into our perfectly comfortable lives and brings us, saying, “You belong to Me. Come.” But when we say that we came, we saw, and He conquered, what it really means that we were conquered by Him? I will come to this probably at the end of the talk. That is the most important thing that we have to work at. The beauty of the Lord or the sad thing of the Lord is, when the Lord comes in human form, He has to take all the trouble to keep telling us about who He is and who we are any number of times and to any number of devotees.

Many of you must have heard about the dramatic story of the first Pujari



of the old Mandir. Way back in 1943-1944, the first batch of devotees start coming from Bangalore. In those days, it used to take between 24 to 48 hours to reach Puttapparthi from Bangalore, compared to three hours these days. There were three ladies who wanted to come and see Swami. They went up to their father and said that they wanted to go and see Sai Baba. The first reaction of this man (father) was: "Who is He? What is His caste?" The father was a Brahmin and a staunch believer; he was chanting all these scriptures and mantras. The ladies said that Baba is a Kshatriya. Then the father said, "How dare you call me, who is a Brahmin, to come and bow down in front of a Kshatriya boy? I will not come. If you want to do this, you may take the journey." Then the ladies said, "You don't have to come as a devotee. Can you come as an escort?"

This is because it was very difficult to travel to Puttapparthi in those days. Finally, the father said Yes. All through the journey, the ladies had to listen to their father. He said that they had gone nuts, they are fools, etc. Finally, they reached Puttapparthi. When they entered the place where Swami was giving Darshan, father said, "Look! I will not come and step into His presence. I just came as an escort. When you are done, let me know and we will go back. I am not even going to look at Him." The three ladies went and joined the gathering and were doing bhajans. Swami was sitting inside. This man (father) was sitting on the rock, outside, very adamant.

Sometimes, curiosity gets the best out of us. He thought, "What is there in that boy that people are coming all the way here. Let me at least look at Him. Let me see what He is. Is he so attractive? Is He weird? Is He so unearthly?" He slowly walks up to the door and looks at Swami and falls in a dead faint! The three ladies were wondering what had happened to him. They came running to him. Swami casually looks up to this man and said to the ladies, "Don't worry. He will be fine. But he will be in this state for three days." These ladies had no clue. They were also not devotees. They just came to see Swami. For three days, Swami nursed that old man every few hours, putting Vibhuthi in his mouth and telling the ladies not to worry.

After three days, finally this old man woke up and sat on his bed. He called for his three daughters and he tells them, "Ok. Pack your bags and you may

leave. I am not coming with you. I am going to stay here for the rest of my life.” They asked him, “What happened?” Then the old man said, “I have spent fifty years of my life (his age was about 53 years at the time) in the worship of Lord Shiva. When I came to that door and looked inside, there I have seen the Lord in the chair sitting with crescent on His matted hair with snakes around His neck, the tiger skin tied around His waist. I saw my Lord Shiva sitting there. Am I foolish to leave Him and go now. I am not leaving this place forever.”

In fact, that time, he was still in service. He wrote a letter saying that he was retiring from his service and gave it to his daughters. Thereafter, he became to pujari of the Mandir. That is what happens when Swami decides to floor you. Not all of us have a dramatic welcome into Swami’s fold. But, some of us need it in latter as we keep forgetting. Not all of us always remember.

Many years ago, I was talking to an old devotee. This devotee had a huge car in the 1960s. Many times, Swami would travel around in his car. One day, they were going to a particular village. On the way, they stopped at Tirupati. This man who was driving the car and Prof. Kasturi and there was another devotee. They all came to Swami and said, “We all we go, have Darshan and come.” Swami said, “Darshan! But, you are with Me. What Darshan you want to go and have?” They said, “Swami, we have come all the way to Tirupathi. Should not we go and see Lord Venkateswara and come! Swami very casually, probably in an expression of disbelief said, “Lord Venkateswara is here. Where are you going to go and see Him?” They said, “Tirupathi Venkateswara.” Swami said, “Fine. I am not coming. You see and come.” They all went up the hill, walking, chanting “Govinda, Govinda,..” with all other devotees who were going to have the Darshan of Lord Venkateswara. They reached the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and all three of them were blank and looking at each other. Prof. Kasturi very softly asked the other two, “Any one of you able to see the idol?” None of the three could see the idol of Lord Venkateswara. They could see the lamps, prasadam, etc..., but not the idol! They understood the prank of Bhagawan Baba. They came back wonder struck. Silently they went to their respective rooms. Swami will not let it pass. He calls them and asked what had happened, whether they had good Darshan, etc. Prof. Kasturi said, “Yes Swami. Very good Darshan.” Swami



asked, “What did you see?” Then the other two men said, “What can we see when you decided not to show us?” Then they described that they had seen everything, except the idol. Then Swami, “Chepthe vinaru (If I say, you don’t listen). Venkateswara is here. But poor fellows, the desire had come know. Have Darshan and come.” They all said, “No Swami.” Swami said, “No. No. Once the desire comes, you have to go. Go!” This time, they went and had the Darshan of Lord Venkateswara and came back.

During the course of your stay here, if you are a fresher, this is a news to you. If you spent a few years here, it is not a news to you. A million times you will be told that you are very fortunate and that it is a great opportunity. We have no clue about what a blessing this is! We need to keep reminding ourselves who we are with.

One of the classic examples is that of Mr. R K Karanjia. He was a great journalist, who had interviewed some of the great names. He did not believe in Swami. He thought that Swami was making so much waves. So, he wrote many articles against Swami. Then somebody told him, “How can you be rationale if you write about somebody whom you have not examined yourself. So, go and see for yourself about who He is?” Finally Mr. Karanjia came to Puttaparthi and Swami called him for interview. In the first article that he wrote after that is, “God lives in India.” Swami is not here to stamp his authority that “I am God. Come and fall at My feet.” However, there is so much sweetness in the whole process that He does.

Many years ago, in the 1940’s a group of 3-4 youngsters thought, “This Sai Baba is doing all kinds of magic. We will expose Him. We will ask Him something which is so difficult to do, which will embarrass him.” With this idea, they came to Swami. Those days, Swami used to go to the Chitravati river quite often. So, they came to Swami and asked, “Swami, shall we go to Chitravati?” Swami said, “Fine. Let’s go.” At 9 o’clock at night, they set out and go to Chitravati. Walking slowly, Swami went to the area where dead bodies are buried (cremation ground). It was so dark. They were thinking that whenever Swami goes and picks up something from the Chitravati sands, Swami would have gone earlier and hide something there before hand. They all sat down, talking to one another. Then Swami said, “Tell me. What do you

want?” Saying so, Swami was giving options like “Do you want mysore pak or laddoo or masala dosa, etc.”

However, they already made up their mind. They wanted a Mango. Why? Because it was not the mango season. Swami said, “Fine. Choose the spot from where you want the mango.” One of the young men walked around and said, “Swami, can we dig here?” Swami said yes and he started digging there. He dug for about 2-3 minutes and complained that nothing was coming. Swami said, “No effort will be fruitful if you don’t do namasmarana. Chant God’s name.” So, he started chanting, “Sairam... Sairam...” They dug almost one feet and nothing was coming. Finally after digging some good distance inside, they touched something which was very cold and the guy screamed. Swami was rolling on the sands and laughing. He said, “You only asked for it.” The youngster said, “Swami, but we asked for mango. It is something different.” Swami said, “No. It is mango only.” He sent another youngster to go and see what was there. Even as this guy neared the pit, he could get the aroma of mango. He said, “Swami, it is a mango.” They got the mango out, which was so large and took it to Swami. By that time, Swami had knife in His hands. Nobody knew how it came. One of them said, “Swami, five of us here. How come one mango is sufficient for us to eat?” Saying that He will show how it would be sufficient, Swami started cutting the mango. He cut one half and gave it to one person. Then he turned it around and cut one half and gave it. Then again he turned it around and cut one half and gave it. He kept on doing it till they said, “Swami, please, enough.” It is not that Swami wants to show who He is or what He is. There is so much of joy and beauty in the whole process in what He does.

This is a story which happened in front of our eyes when I was a student. There was a classmate of mine. One day Swami was coming down Trayee Brindavan. This boy got up and was trying to say something to Swami. Swami ignored him and saying ‘Sit down, sit down’, He moved on. Later on, we came to know that this boy’s mother was very sick and he was very attached to his mother. He used to call his parents very often. In the past two weeks, when he was calling home, he was able to talk to his father and sister but not to his mother. He figured it out that something is happening. So he asked his father who continued to divert him by saying, ‘no she is away, she has gone to



the temple and so on.’ Then the boy used a very smart trick that worked. He said to his father that he could make out that something was wrong with his mother, and if they would tell him what it was, he could go and ask Swami about her. Swami may even give some prasadam for her.

It was then that his father told him that his mother was very unwell and was down with a stroke, bedridden and unable to speak or even sit up on her own. And the scene that we saw of this boy getting up and trying to tell something to Swami was about this news that he had got from home. And Swami apparently coldly, brushed him aside and walked away. Needless to say, the boy was distraught and heartbroken. I think he even tried a couple of times more but Swami’s response was pretty much the same.

Then a couple of days later, again in Trayee, Swami was walking down the hall to the jhula room when Swami stopped where this boy was seated. By then the boy had given up trying. Swami paused, looked at him and said, “She is fine!” He knelt down and gave Swami a quizzical expression and said, “Swami?” The Swami continued, “Your mother. She is fine. I saw her and came!” And before this boy could comprehend what he just heard, Swami had moved away. He then was eagerly waiting for the session to end so he could go and make a call home. That evening when he called, to his surprise his mother herself picked up the phone. But again she could not speak, but this time because she was choked up with emotions. Then her father took the phone from her and narrated what had happened. Swami had appeared by her bedside at their home in Odisha, materialised vibhuti for her, and cured her! And Swami was telling this boy, “She is fine! I visited her!”

Another fascinating incident I wish to recall was narrated by an elderly devotee to us. He came to Swami in the early 1960s and he was telling us about how he happened to come to Swami. He hailed from a very successful business family. He and his brother were heirs to a huge international business and a lot of wealth. But this man had a few nagging health issues and he was in his early 20s.

One day he happened to go to an astrologer who was quite renowned for his ability to read horoscopes precisely. This astrologer looked at this man’s



horoscope and said, “You will not live beyond 25 years. It clearly says so in the horoscope.” In fact, he was so confident that he told the man, “If you are alive one day beyond your 25th birthday, come and see me. I will give up my profession.” After that, this devotee met a lot of other astrologers who all apparently said something similar. And this news had kind of spread among his close friends and relatives. So one of those friends had heard about Swami. And with the hope that how wonderful it would be if this ‘Andhra Baba’ could save his friend, he pestered the man to come along with him and see Swami, who was then travelling in Tamil Nadu (the state where this businessman is from).

Eventually, the devotee sees Swami in the house of a devotee in a town called Surandai. There were very few people waiting for Swami, but most of them were big industrialists. They all recognised him and he joined them. When Swami came out for darshan, Swami looked at this man and He walked right up to him and said, “They are saying that you are going to die, isn’t it? Don’t worry. You will not die. I will take care of you.” To make a long story short, Swami materialised a talisman for him, later performed his marriage, and he witnessed a lot of other miracles, and so on. This person lived long and even his son went on to become Swami’s student. But what about the astrologer the man went to, who challenged him to come back to him he stayed alive beyond so and so date? Yes he did go to see him one day. The astrologer was shocked to see him. He said, “You are not supposed to be alive. Who did you go and see?” That was the first question he asked. “Who did you go to?” The devotee replied, “I went to Puttaparthi Sai Baba.” The astrologer who had never had any experience of Swami, who never came to Swami himself said, “Catch hold of Him. He is God! No one else could’ve saved your life. If He has made you live He must be God, catch hold of him and never let him go.”

The beauty is, there is not only joy and beauty but God is also mischievous. He always has that mischief in Him. He is always testing you. One of the recent articles that we uploaded on the Radiosai website is an interesting one, which is about one of our Diplomate of National Board (DNB) students at our hospital. She did her MBBS and wanted to join the Ophthalmology department for DNB studies. She thought that it would be a very wonderful opportunity if she could come here. She wrote the exam, which is generally



quite difficult. Typically, many doctors take one year to study for this exam. However, she had only three months' time to prepare for the exam. She became so obsessed with the idea of coming and joining our hospital. She prayed to Swami for the same. If she wants to come and join here, she had to clear the exam. She prayed to Swami very hard.

In her Samithi, there used to be 108 Sai Gayatri chantings. She used to attend that, praying to clear the DNB exam. As she started to prepare for the exam late (only three months prior to exam), she did some calculations about which rank she should get. She thought, "If I can manage to get the all India rank of around 2000, I can get this DNB seat." She studied hard and wrote the exam. She got the rank of 250, which was an amazing rank!! That was when she realized what Swami can do. Swami gives the desire to ask for Him, gives the desire to yearn for Him, and then gives you a blessing which will start playing on your mind. Now, with that 250 rank, she can get into the top most colleges in India easily. Now, whether she should join a top medical college or here? Swami means to say, "I can give you this, I can give you that also. Do you still want Me?" She went to the counselling and she was given two minutes to decide. On top of this, the members in the counseling said that the DNB course at SSSIHMS, Puttaparthi is still under re-accreditation. So, if she joins the course in SSSIHMS and if it does not get accreditation within a certain time span, she might lose her seat and she has to go back and write the exam again. She chose Swami and thought, "if anything goes wrong, that is fine. I am choosing You." She came here.

We have come, we have seen and probably we all got conquered. The story which I narrated earlier, about Sundaramurthy Nayinar, I think all of us are in different stages of that. Some of us still cursing Swami. Some of us have re-assigned to our fate. Some of us saying that what a good fortune it is. Probably we all are in that sequence and some day we will say "Wow! What a fortune this is!" But, whenever we wake up what are we supposed to do. After that what to do? That is the most important thing.

There is a beautiful story, which was a part of our drama. There was a man with only one ambition in his life, to buy a BMW car. He thought, "One day I should own a BMW." He worked hard, studied, got a good job, slogged



overtime, lead a frugal life, saved enough. Finally, he made enough money to buy a BMW car. He went to the store, bought the BMW car and came back home. Then he realized that he had not learnt how to drive a car. Next day, we went and sold it back. He owned it only for one night. So, if we don't know what to do with the opportunity which has come, probably we will be just be happy with the label, 'Sai Student'. Something needs to be done. To do what needs to be done, we need to ask ourselves, "Why on earth did Swami gave me so much of importance."

I still recall when we had the opportunity. Swami called us for an interview. That was the time when we all were waiting. Swami was sitting and we all were sitting around Swami. In the course of the dialogue, one of the boys said, "Swami, we don't want job. You can give whenever You want. We don't want any salary. At least talk to us. Why are you ignoring us?" We all were resonating with that idea. We were choking up and emotional. Swami had no emotion on His face. He was reading a letter and He was absolutely unmoved by our prayer. Very casually Swami said, "You have any idea how many worlds I have to take care of? Do you think that I have time to come and talk to you? Do you have any idea who I am?" What a great revelation that is! Everything belongs to Him. He is the one who created everything. He comes and keeps saying repeatedly, "My students are My only property." Why did He do that?

Once when Swami was talking to some students, Swami asked, "Boys, do you know why I spend so much of time with all of you? There are so many devotees, but I spend so much time with all of you. Do you know why I do that? Is it because, tomorrow you all will earn lot of money and come and take care of My hospitals, projects, etc.?" Swami said, "I don't need any money. Every time I spent for you, every resource I spent for you, whatever I have done for students,...All the time, My mind is on Loka kalyanam...the benefit this world is going to have because of the Avatar coming down and spending time with youngsters."

So, what we probably have to do, as the process of making best use of this opportunity and as a process of expressing our gratitude to Swami, is to fulfil this idea which Swami said - 'to do good to the world.' You don't have to do anything great. You have to take from here - three things. If you carry

that with you, be sure that all of this would happen. Once when Swami was describing Himself, Swami always say this: “I am pure Love.” Once Bhagia Sir was sharing with us, Swami defined what pure love is: There are three qualities for love. Selflessness, changelessness, and fearlessness.” If you want to carry anything from this place, you need to carry Swami’s love, that love should become what you really are, which means, you should become Selfless, Changeless and Fearless. Instead of that, if you think that you are going back with a B.Sc., B.A., etc., you would get these anywhere else as well. You don’t have to be here for those. You don’t have to be a Swami’s student for that.

Selfless. That is probably the main empowerment that you are going to walk out of here. I always see this. Every time, from the time we start our education at school level, our parents keep telling, “Study well. Otherwise, you have to look after buffaloes.” We are given the fear that if we don’t acquire knowledge, education you cannot grab from this pile which is there in the world. There is huge pile of resources. To grab enough, you need to educate yourself. That is what we have been told all the times. So, that becomes a huge burden, “I need to grab, I need to grab.” Swami gives a very beautiful Chinna Katha. The story of monkey catchers. To catch monkeys, they use a special pot which is wide in the bottom and a long neck. They put in it nicely roasted groundnuts. They take it to the forest and make a pit and bury it down so that only the top is open and they move away. These monkeys will come, they get the fragrance of the groundnuts. So, they will put their hand inside. The neck of the pot is thin enough to let their hand inside. But once they grab the groundnuts, the fist becomes big and cannot be pulled it out. There is no external trap to catch monkeys. You are just caught there because of your greediness. If the monkey let go off the groundnuts, it can easily pull its hand out. But, it is greedy. So, it is stuck there until the hunter comes and catches it. So, we are constantly given this idea that you have a pile of resources. Go and grab. We become like the monkeys.

One of the first things Swami teaches us is one of the greatest and empowering knowledge: “You can be happy even if you give.” Yes, you can be happy when you have enough. You can be happy when you are successful. Remember, you can be happy even when you give. Once you take that knowledge from here, suddenly become so free. I can find happiness anywhere. Once you realize

that you can be happy even by giving, imagine how free it makes you. That will come only when you become selfless. When you become selfless, you become the channel of Swami's miracle.

One of the most beautiful stories I have come across is about a young man from Kerala. It is documented in Sathyam Shivam Sundaram - Part 2. At the age of 15, a young boy leaves his house, goes to the city for his higher studies. He was brought up in a religious Christian family. So, he was always worshipping the Lord.

But finally, when he goes to the city, he gets into the company of communists. So, at the age of 17, he became a leader of one Maoist gangs. We know what the Maoists do. So, he was going around and looting rich people, attacking police stations, etc. He stopped believing in God. Finally, the law catches up with him. He was imprisoned and he was in a district jail. When he was in the solitude, he was thinking of all the things he had gone through. He was thinking about his childhood, the happy days he had when praying. Happy days when he was simple, innocent and a little child. Then all the others things he eventually did. He was totally confused with all of this. Finally, what happens was, a group of Swami devotees went to jail to do Bhajans. These type of service activities happens in Sai Seva Organizations across the globe. When the bhajans were going on, this man got mightily irritated.

First of all, he was disturbed and now these people are making so much noise calling God's name. In this way, he was getting irritated. After the bhajans got over, one of the members of that samithi comes and gives him an orange as a prasadam through the bars of the prison. He took the orange and threw it at the devotee with all his anger. Being hit very badly by the orange, this devotee who was a middle-aged person looked at this boy and smiles at him without any other reactions and walked away. Literally, that was the last blow for this 19-year-old boy: "How can somebody not react when he was hit like this? How can he be so calm? He did not even say a word. Did not even frown at me." That whole night he cried and cried. Finally, he made up his mind to change his ways.

That night, after years and years, he made a prayer to God. The prayer was,



“God, I want to sleep peacefully.” There was so much of disturbance in his mind that he could not sleep well for so many months. That night, he had a very sound sleep! When he woke up, he decided to change his ways. Good behaviour in the prison and he was finally released. He came out and took up some form of seva. He did not know anything about that samithi group and Swami. He did a lot of good work. Eventually, somebody told him about Swami and gave him a book of Swami. He read it and came to Swami. Swami called him for an interview. It was probably about 7-8 years after he was imprisoned. He was always feeling guilty that he was a bad person.

The first thing Swami told him in the interview was, “Remove the guilt from the consciousness. You are a good man.” It was like a huge burden was lifted off from his head. He came out of the interview room completely free and relaxed. He became a devotee of Swami. He would go around samithis and speaking about Swami and about his transformation. Finally, when he was at one gathering, he was giving a speech. After the speech, an old person walked up to him and said, “I am very honoured if you come home and have a cup of coffee.” He went with that old man. He was served a cup of coffee. Then the old man said, “Don’t you recognize me?” He said, “No.” Old man continued, “Do you remember the person at whom you throw that orange? That’s me.” The old man continued, “When I was hit by the orange, when I turned back in that jolt and looked at you, you were so young. My heart was full of compassion and the feeling of pity for you. I prayed to Swami that a young boy has got into wrong ways. I went home and cried in front of Swami’s altar and prayed to Him – ‘Why don’t you transform him? If you transform him, one day I will share a cup of coffee with him.’ Now, we are sharing a cup of coffee.” So, when you align yourself to what Swami expects of you, we have no idea what amount of power can flow through us. No credit to us. But, we have no idea what Swami can do through us.

One question, which one always asks, “All that is fine. But, where is Swami? Swami is not there now. We can’t see Swami.” I recall one of the devotees who had a lot of difficulty in accepting Swami’s divinity. This was in late 1950s. She was in Parthi and participating in all of the happenings. But, internally, there was this feeling, “How do I pray to Swami as God. It’s okay that He is



a saint. He is a guru. But, God?” One day, Swami met this lady alone. There was no one around. Very softly Swami asked her, “If it is a little difficult to know how to accept Swami as God?” She became so embarrassed. She said, “No Swami. It was not like that...” Swami said, “No. no. it is like that only. How can you accept Me as God? It is not easy. I am human like you. It is difficult. It is not easy.” Then Swami told, “But don’t stop at that confusion. Test Swami.” Then Swami said, “If you sit in front of me, I will read your mind. I will tell you things from your past. Some siddhas also can do that. But you test My omnipresence. You go back home. When there is a need, you call out for Swami and Swami will come. So, test Swami. Once I pass the test, don’t keep testing Me again and again. That role becomes mine. I will start testing you.” So, she had a beautiful experience. She called on Swami and Swami not only solved her problem but sitting in Venkatagiri Palace, Swami said, “That Pune lady is testing Me. I will give her the exam and come.”

Now you may ask, do things like this still happen? I am going to tell something that happened in Radiosai about a year ago. We do a programme called ‘Afternoon Satsang.’ We got some feedback from a lady from Burma. Few months before this email came from her, she had sent an email saying, “I am a pregnant. I am carrying my first child. I keep listening to Radiosai. I keep listening to Bhajans and discourses so that it all reaches my child. I am very grateful to all of you for all the work that you are doing.” It was a regular email of appreciation. Then came this second email. She introduced herself sometime back referring to the first email.

She said that she wanted to share one experience with all of us. The term of her pregnancy was over. She was admitted in hospital. She was about to deliver anytime. Finally, after delivering the baby, the doctors and nurses came to her and with a very sorry face they told her that she had delivered a still-born child. The child was born dead. This lady was distressed. Understand the pain of a mother. Both she and her husband were mourning the loss of their baby. Even as she was sitting there, she suddenly realized the previous night’s dream in which Swami had come.

This was what had happened in the dream: She was lying on the same bed and

the cradle (same cradle in which the dead baby was put) was there with the child. Swami walked into that room of the hospital. Swami picked up the child. When Swami picked up the child, the child was alive. Swami played with the little baby and Swami told her, “It’s a girl. Name her – Sai Shruti. It is My responsibility. I will take care of her.” Then Swami asked her, “Do you listen to Radiosai?” She replied, “Yes Swami. I listen to Radiosai.” Then Swami said, “There two of My students who speak on Radiosai.” Then Swami described the programme. He said, “One is elder fellow and one is younger fellow. The younger fellow cannot stop talking. The elder fellow talks if the younger fellow allows him to talk.” To give you the perspective, Aravind is younger to me, the more talkative one. We always get emails that Aravind talks much and does not allow Prem to talk. Swami said the same thing and Swami started laughing. Swami put the child in the cradle and walked away.

She remembered the dream. The interesting thing was, this lady never listened to my programme – the program which Aravind and I do. She listened to other programs but she never listened to this programme. So, she told her husband to tune into Radiosai. When he tuned into Radiosai, our program was going live. Aravind and I were speaking. She had no clue about the programme and its timings. They were listening to the programme. That day, we were speaking on the topic ‘Silence.’ They sat and listened to this whole thing for fifteen minutes. One of the statements we made during the course of the discussion was, “Sometimes, silence prepares us to accept what is to come.” The couple thought, “May be Swami is saying that this had to happen....” But this lady was thinking, “But Swami, how can it be? You walked into the room, you picked up the child, the child was alive. She was a girl and you named her. You said that you will take care of her. How can she be a still-born?” Suddenly they heard the baby crying! Husband went out of the room to see from where the cry was coming from. Because, the baby in his room was covered with cloth. The doctors have signed, stating that the baby is still-born. The husband ran to the cradle, opened the cloth and finds the baby crying. So, if you are still wondering whether Swami is still around, is Swami still doing what He was doing? Have absolutely no doubt about that. When you have that absolute doubt, the first thing as I said is, you will be selfless because you know that ‘that is what pleases Swami.’ You know that

if you want to please Swami, you have to be selfless.

When Swami says Changeless, it is very easy to be good in an environment like this. But we are not going to be in this same zone all your life. You will be implanted in different places. Will you be able to hold on to the values that you carry from here, wherever you are? It is changeless in that way. When will you be selfless and changeless? When you become fearless. Unless you are absolutely sure that Swami is behind me, covering my back. When you don't have that confidence, you cannot be selfless. You will be selfless and changeless till the circumstances test you. But when you are absolutely sure that Swami is there, nothing to worry, He is going to take care, then the fearlessness comes. When that fearlessness comes, you can take whatever when you pack your luggage when you finally leave this place. You will not leave this place only with a degree certificate. You will leave this place with Swami in your back-pack. That is the greatest thing that this place can give you.

I will end with another small incidence that happened at Radiosai. Swami wants from us not to be something extraordinary. We don't have to burden ourselves. You just have to reflect Swami. You just have to be there and become nothing and just reflect Swami. Even to reflect Swami, you have to be fearless. There is another programme which we do on radio. It is called 'The Radiosai Answering Booth.' We invite questions from listeners and we ask them not to ask philosophical questions. The questions should be about practical life and we would answer based on what Swami expects of us. One day I got an interesting question from a 75-year-old man.

He was a retired Colonel from the Army. He listed out the amount of properties he has with real figures about his house properties, FDs, gold, PFs, everything. All his children are well settled abroad. They don't mind taking the liquid property. But, they are not interested in immovable property. He asked, "What would Swami expect me to do in a situation like this?" I went back to a discourse where Swami gave a discourse to all businessmen. There Swami told us how to use the wealth you have gained or gathered. Swami gave a beautiful exposition of what to do with your wealth. He said, "Please



pay your taxes. You get so much of benefit from the society. You have to pay the taxes. Don't try to evade paying taxes. Keep some money away for the welfare of animals and birds as they need to be taken care of. Keep aside for comfortable living. With the remaining, do charity." Why do you want to write a will that: "After I am dead, let it go this orphanage, etc..." Swami says, "Why don't you do charity when you are still alive?" Then Swami said, "Don't simply go to temples and give money. Do charity. Help people." You don't have to go here and there. Do from wherever you are, around your place." If you can do by yourself, that is the best. I precisely told him what Swami says.

When I gave the answer in the radio show, he wrote back saying that he was very happy with the answer and he said that he was going to do what exactly was told. Then he said something which he did not mention in his first email. He said, "I am not a devotee of Swami. I have not seen Swami ever in my life, though I feel bad for it now. I went to a good friend of mine who is a devotee and told him about my problem. He promptly took me to Muddenahalli. They told me that there was a man who could listen to Swami and he would tell what Swami would want me to do. I told my problem and the answer I received was – 'I am doing this project. Why don't you give your money here?' I told them that I will think over it and come back. I came back and read about Swami's ashram, etc." Then he realized that there are some misunderstanding between the two camps, etc. He was still not sure and not taken any side. He was getting calls every day from Muddenahalli – 'Come. Give your money here.' Then finally, he came to know about Radiosai and about this programme. He wrote to us to know what the options are available in Puttaparthi. To his surprise, he did not find anywhere in the answer – 'Come and give it to the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.'

Why? Because he never told us that and Swami never wanted that. Why? Swami is always fearless. Swami always says, "In this land of Bharat, if you do good work, money will automatically come. You don't need to go and ask anybody." That is Swami's fearlessness. We have to reflect on what Swami stood for. Then that person said, "Now I know who represents real Swami."

You must have heard of Jim Sinclair, one of the Swami's devotees from



United States. When he came to Swami, he was one of the richest men in the world. To this man, Swami appears in his living room and Swami said, "Come to me." He had no idea of Swami. He eventually came to Puttapparthi. Swami called him for an interview. Sitting in front of Swami he said, "Is this the same man who never travelled to US, but appeared in my living room?" Swami told him, "I gave you everything. I gave you riches, a good family. But, you are not happy at all. You are all the time crying."

Then Swami looked at him and said, "Will you do something for me?" Swami could have taken full advantage of him and his riches. However, Swami said, "Will you be happy for me?" That is Swami. Swami embodied Selflessness, changelessness, and fearlessness. If you call Him, He will come.

Dana Gillespie, an English actress, singer and songwriter and a long-time Baba devotee, says that she went to a town in Uzbekistan, Samarkhand. It is a war-torn Muslim country. They went there to do a medical camp and they decided not to speak about Swami because it is a Muslim country. They thought of doing some good work and come back. Whoever asked about whom they were representing, they would give a small photo of Swami. After a few days, one elderly Muslim lady came and said, "You are all very beautiful and loving. Who sent you here?" Very hesitantly they took a picture of Swami and showed it to that lady. That lady who never travelled outside her Muslim country, looking at the picture said, "He is God." She said, "We know that he is God. He keeps coming to us." One of the little teenage boys who were running around playing football came and was peeping at them. Seeing Swami's picture, he said, "He plays soccer with us."

The opportunity to call Him and when He comes, He is always there. We only have to call. If we keep thinking, "Will Swami come if I call. Am I pure enough. Have I done enough meditation to call..." Just call. Make it a point - When you leave this place, you carry the conviction that Swami is with Me. With that you will get fearlessness, with that will come changelessness, with that will come selflessness which will give you a world of joy. Unfortunately, most of us don't realize it right now. We all want to have the comfort of money in the pocket.

Prof. R Gangadhara Sastry

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After finishing my M.A. with distinction from Andhra University in Political Science, I was looking for a job and attended a number of interviews at several colleges across Andhra Pradesh and I was immediately rejected. Colleges generally are communal in nature. What I mean by communal is, Brahmin colleges select only Brahmins, Christian colleges select only Christians, like the Kammass, Reddys, etc. Every community has got its own educational institution and prefers to take only their community people mostly. They also require recommendations and some sort of donations. As I hail from a middle-class community, my father being an upper primary school head master, and having five children, getting us educated was on its own a very big burden to him. So, with a rural background, no reputation, no recommendation, no money, nothing, I have only my brain to offer. If anybody is ready to accept it, it is okay. Otherwise, walk out. Whenever I went to attend an interview, I was shocked to see that the people who were called for interviews were treated like cattle. They don't provide water, no proper place to wait, etc. Only your name will be called and you have to go inside. The interview for selection procedure is not exactly a selection procedure but we used to describe it as a rejection procedure. You will be called inside and the first question would be: "What is your name? So, you are here to teach political science."

Then one person from a corner asked, "Can you tell me under which article of constitution the President of India can suspend a Prime Minister, in case he needs to? You have to mention the article." Obviously, you can mention the article. He says that, "Can you tell me in which year and on which date and at what time, the atom bomb was dropped in Hiroshima?" So, you don't answer that question. Then he will ask, "Do you know, in the South African forest, such and such animal lives in which corner?" It is better for you to pack up and walk out saying – "Thank you."

That was the dirty situation that I was undergoing and whenever I went back home like that, my father was almost in tears. He said, "I give you so much money to take it, you never prepare for the interview, you go there and never

get selected. What is all this?” I could not convince my father that it was the kind of world in which we were living and currently living too. Because, most of the times, highly competent and efficient people don't get selected at all.

That was the condition. I was not getting any job. I was really worried. My father was getting sick. I waited, waited and waited. One morning, I saw an advertisement in the newspaper for a lean vacancy at Andhra Loyola college, Vijayawada, a prestigious college in Andhra Pradesh. Lean vacancy means, sometimes, when a wants to professor improve his qualification, he goes on leave to he is allowed to go to University, study, get a doctorate and come back. So, during those periods, college selects somebody in that position and you are appointed for one year. After that, they again renew. When the professor is back, you have to vacate the position. That kind of position was advertised for Loyola college.

Just then, I joined Andhra University for research. My professor said, why don't you apply and try. So, I applied. When I was rejected by ordinary, useless colleges, I was trying to get into the most reputed college. You can understand the audacity. I applied and suddenly there was a call letter. I had to go there to give a model lecture, followed by an interview. When I went there, I saw some fifty people waiting to give model lecture on that day. Like that, they were conducting model lectures for 2-3 days. So, almost 250-300 people applied for that lean vacancy. Many of them had even ten years of experience at private colleges and they are also waiting to get into a college like Loyola.

I was literally in jitters when I saw all of them with such experience. However, I thought of trying. There was person in Vijayawada working at a high school, who was a classmate of my eldest brother. There was a rift in their family in my village between him and his father. His father went to the police station and complained against him. The police sub-inspector was about to arrest him in my village. My father happened to be a village head-man. So, every police officer has to take my father's permission to take any act in my village first. When the police officer came about that person, my father said, “You cannot touch him. You better go.” Had the police arrested him, he would

have lost his job and his life would have been in danger. Now, that person is in Vijayawada. For all the help my father done to him at that time, he told me to come and he said, "I will see what I can be able to do." He was taking a lot of tuition classes at his home. So I went there, and he said, "You have to take a model class tomorrow. Now, what I want you to do is, teach me a model lecture now here. I will be your student." To that day, I had never given any lecture to anybody before. In those days, the education system was different at all universities. Science students were all taught basic and fundamental all arts courses in first and second year undergraduate classes. All arts students were taught all basic science courses in the first two years. So, your knowledge was comprehensive. So, he knew political science. I went on teaching one particular topic. He went on correcting me. That training went on until 2 AM in the morning. Then he told me how to actually present in the class.

The next day, when I went to give model lecture, he followed me to Loyola college. When I went on to the dais to teach, the principal of Loyola college, Father Francis was there, the head of the department was there, and one lecturer was there who was one year senior to me at the University. All of them were sitting. It was a boys college and the boys of Loyola college were extremely sharp. When I started teaching them, say for example "A state should have territory, boundaries are fixed..." One boy raised his hand and put a question, "Sir, you are talking about territory. That is fine. Can you tell me to what extent into the oceans, a state has got right into a territorial waters?" It was really a shocking question.

Fortunately, by Bhagawan's grace I was preparing for IAS those days. I had already appeared for the IAS exam once. So, everything was on my fingertips. So, I told him, "I am already shocked for such a question. I never expected an intermediate boy to ask such question. It is twelve nautical miles from the territorial boundary into the sea that every state enjoys the rights on territorial waters. But, if you want to know the latest information, kindly refer to tomorrow's Hindu paper because today, some discussions are going on to extent that to eighteen nautical miles." I was giving such answers to them that probably nobody expected, including the principal and the HoD.

Finally, they said that I could go. And as I was leaving, an elderly person called me. He was the HoD of the Political Science department who was sitting in the class. He said, "I want to reveal an official secret to you. I don't know why. I feel like revealing it to you. Among all the people who gave model lectures, you are the only one who got an 'O' grade. Now, you have to face the interview. If you can come of the interview with flying colours, you will get the job."

The next day, the interview was conducted. About 80-90 fellows were called for interview. I was called in the evening. My interview lasted about forty minutes. They asked me lot of questions. It was grueling. One question was, "Did you ever went to Bombay?" I said, "Yes, once, when I was sixteen." He asked, "Did you go through any of the significance places there? Name some." I said, "Aquarium, Juhu beach, gate way of India, Elephanta Caves, etc." He said, "Stop. Stop. Suppose I ask you to get me the best picture of the place that you have seen, which one do you choose?" I said, "Juhu beach." He said, "I hate it." Then I said, "Then it must the Gateway of India area." Then he said, "Ya. I like it." This is the way we conduct interviews in which the questions are irrelevant and demolished the future of many people in our country.

After the interviews, they announced that you two people can wait and others can go. One was me and the other was a former student of Loyola college who studied there for five years. They wanted to take him somehow. The panel consisted of government representatives. They pinned down the management and said that they had to give me a job. That day I was selected and was asked to join Loyola college. I was on cloud nine. I went back home and told my father.

Something surprising happened when I was working at Loyola college. The appointment was given to me for two years (1977-1979) and maybe they would have extended it for one more year. But an accidental thing happened in my life in 1979. One fine morning my father called me when I was at the college and said, "How are you? Next month your marriage is fixed and you have to come." I said, "I am fine. But, what marriage? how did you fix the

marriage?” Father replied, “It is fixed. Shut up. Come.” I thought my life is going to be ruined because I was not going to have a job; my appointment is over. Without proper job, if I get married, it is ridiculous. But I could not question my father. That was how my father did everything. And that is how we accepted their decisions also. So, in February of 1979, my marriage was decided and on 31st March, my job was going to be terminated. So, I told my would-to-be wife about the same. Until 31st March, no problem and for the three months of the summer, they gave the salary and from 1st of June, I did not have any job. I did not know what to do.

I was waiting for advertisements and suddenly in the month of April, there was only one advertisement from Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College, Prasanthi Nilayam and from Sri Sathya Sai Junior College, Prasanthi Nilayam. Both advertisements were there. One was for Political Science lecturer and the other was for Civics lecturer for intermediate level. I applied for both the posts. I never knew about Prasanthi Nilayam and did not know where it was located and I did not know who was Bhagawan Baba. I had no knowledge of anything about the Anantapur side of Andhra Pradesh.

I was waiting and suddenly one fine morning I got an interview call letter saying that I should apply for an interview at Whitefield. I did not know where Whitefield was. Somebody told me that Whitefield is near Bangalore. So, I have to go to Chennai and from there to Whitefield. So, it was such a long journey those days. “For lecturer post, do I have to go all way there. Why to spend so much of money in travelling such a long distance?” I thought. Moreover, apparently this Bhagawan Baba looked like a great soul for me and I thought, “He must be having His own candidates for Political Science post. Why should I go?” So, I did not want to go.

In those days, my father-in-law suddenly became a devotee of Swami and they had also never visited Parthi. He started seeing Swami in his house. He was a reputed lawyer in West Godavari district. He was reading Swami’s books. Suddenly he said Swami came and asked for chair to sit. Nobody believed him. No one else could see Swami. Everyone said that that he has

hallucination. He called me and said, “Come here immediately.” When I went there, he said, “I will tell you how to go to Prasanthi Nilayam. I will book a ticket for you. You go there.” I said, “Is it necessary? Why such a long distance? There must be some great devotee of Him and only they will be selected. Why should I waste my money?” He said, “No. You are going.” I said, “Let me see how I will go.” I have the habit of not listening to anyone in the world. I am on my own all the time. I don’t listen to anybody until I am convinced. I am so sure about my own behaviour. Only out of respect I accept my father’s decisions. Otherwise I would have walked out of the marriage mandal on that day.

I did not want to dishonour him because of the Indian tradition in which I have great faith. So, there was a fight between me and my father-in-law about going to Parthi. I went back to my home town. Next day, there was a big cyclone in Andhra Pradesh because of which train tracks got washed off and all trains got cancelled. So, it was celebration for me and I will not be able to travel. I thought, “See... God is with me. I will not travel.” They have already booked my tickets. Just two days before my interview date, there was an announcement that the track was restored and my train will be running as per the schedule. My father-in-law got the news and told me to go. All my hefty brother-in-laws forcefully took me to the station and I was sent to Whitefield.

They had full faith in Baba even though they have not seen Him. When I saw the train coming, I was shocked. It was heavy rush of passengers in the train. I asked, “How can I get into this train which is flooded with passengers?” They said, “Don’t worry, your berth is reserved.” So, I was forcefully sent in that train and there was a heavy rush of passengers. I thought, “It is very cruel. I am going to get down in the next station and will go back.” I struggled to get out of train in the next station and I failed. I could not come out. I was squeezed. I don’t know where my briefcase was there. There was that much rush. With great difficulty I could locate my briefcase when I reached Guntur. I got down at Guntur station. There was no power in the train and no power in the station. It was very dark. One lady suddenly banged the door

and asked for help in opening the door. She said, "Son, please help me in bringing my luggage down." I asked, "Then is that seat going to be vacant." She said, "Yes." Immediately I occupied that seat and the lights came.

I finally reached Bangalore. Somebody took me to Whitefield. When I saw the college there, I got the first shock of my life. I have never seen a college building like that in my life. I thought, "This is a college! Am I going to teach in a college like this! No way." But, having gone there I thought of facing the interview just like that. I saw hundreds and hundreds of people with scarfs talking about Swami said this, Swami said that, etc. I asked, "Who is this Swami?" I asked, "Don't you have your own brains. Whatever Swami says, you simply do?" They said, "Yes." I was not able to understand that logic at all at that point of time. I was taken to a college building and they me a room where all people were sitting who were called for interviews for different subjects, like, English, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Political Science, etc... Total about 100-150 people were sitting there.

Interviews were going on and the interviews were conducted by nothing other than, Dr. S. Bhagawantam, who himself was a great scientist and who was translating Bhagawan's speeches those days. He was a scientific advisor to Govt. of India. He was a great stalwart and a great devotee. My shape was completely different at that time. I had a big moustache and big hair, bell bottom pants, cigarettes, matchboxes, etc. Somebody got introduced to me and I was talking to him. I told him, "Just wait. I need to smoke. I will come back after some time." I was not allowed to smoke there. In all other college campuses where I went, I was allowed to smoke. So, I went outside the compound wall, took a cup of coffee, happily smoked and came inside. When I came inside, people there rushed to me and said, "You lost a wonderful opportunity." I asked what that was. They said, "Bhagawan Baba gave Darshan." I said, "Nothing is lost." I thought, "It does not make any difference to me."

Interviews were running behind schedule. Time was around 12 and interviews were going on. Suddenly one sevadal came running and said, "All those who



have come for interviews, are going to be given lunch at the college hostel. So, you all are asked to go there.” I was shocked really, I went to so many colleges for interviews and nobody bothered to give even water. Here, lunch is being provided. So, I went there, to the hostel dining hall. Mats were arranged, food was arranged. Boys were standing in whites and sevadals too. Everybody was in absolute silence. All that was quite disturbing to me. I am not used to such silence also. So, we all were served and I was about to eat. Somebody said, “Wait.” I asked, “Why?” He said, “Brahmarpanam.” Prayer was done. We had our food and then came back. Interview got over. Somebody said, “All those who came for interviews, for them seats are reserved in the auditorium in the front rows. Bhagawan Baba is going to give a Discourse.” Believe me or not, the whole campus was flooded with people. There was no place to park even a cycle. I thought, “Is this person so great???” My return reservation ticket was booked. So, I said, “I won’t go and sit inside. I have to go.” I thought, “Let me see in future if I am going to get a chance. Then we will see. Until then – bye.”

Thinking thus, I was walking out. I reached the main gate of Brindavan campus and suddenly people started running madly saying, “Swami is coming. Swami is coming.” Then I thought, “Ok. Now let me see who this Swami is.” So, I stopped at the main gate at the Brindavan college. A car zoomed past by my side and went to the portico. Swami got down and lifted His hand and started waving. From the main gate I saw Him. I thought, “Oh, You are Baba...” I did namaskar like this, being highly spiritual from my childhood. I am devotee of Lord Shiva and visit Shiva temple every day. I did the namaskar and thought, “If I get the job, I am going to have Darshan next time. Otherwise, Sairam.” And I walked out. I went away. April, May, June – three months I got salary from Loyola college. On July 1st, I received an order letter from Prasanthi Nilayam saying that, “You have got selected. Come and join as a lecturer here.” That was really surprising.

In fact, during the interview, the first question Dr. Bhagawantham asked me was, “Are you a devotee of Sathya Sai Baba.” I said, “I am not.” Then he asked, “Are you not scared that you will not be selected, if you say so?” I said, “On the contrary I feel that I will be selected.” He asked, “How.” “For speaking

truth,” I said. “Have you ever seen Him,” he asked. I said, “I never saw Him.” Next question, “Do you know Prasanthi Nilayam?” I said, “No.” “Why are you leaving Loyola college?” I said, “I am not leaving. They are going to throw me out.” He asked, “Why?” I said, “It was a lean vacancy.” He asked, “Did you apply for junior lecturer post?” I said, “Of course I applied.” He asked, “Suppose I select you as a junior lecturer and ask B.A. classes to be taught, will you join.” I said, “Yes.” He asked, “Why?” I replied, “A permanent lecturer post is better than a temporary lecturer post.” Then we had lot of discussion on Nuclear Non-proliferation treaty, Defence of India, Nuclear weapons of India, India’s foreign policy, etc. After that I was selected. Only five people were selected. Two people with M.A., Ph.D.; two people from M.A., M.Phil. I was the only one with M.A. and two years of experience at Loyola College.

I came here. I did not know how to come to here (Puttaparthi). When I got the appointment order, my father-in-law called me and said, “You go to Puttaparthi. There is one school there, Eswaramma High School. It’s Head Master is Ammana Shastry. He will take care of you.” Ammana Shastry was from my father-in-law’s place. My father-in-law and Ammana Shastry were very close friends.

I did not know how to come here. First to Guntur, from there to Dronachalam, then to Guntakal, then to Dharmavaram, then to Kothacheruvu and finally to Puttaparthi and then faint here after coming! It was such a terrible journey. Finally, I got down from the bus at Eswaramma High School with my little luggage and sent a message to Ammana Shastry Garu saying, “I am Gangadhara Shastry, son-in-law of so and so from Tanuku. Landed here. Now, please tell me what to do.” Ammana Shastry came out to see me and he fainted seeing me. I was looking like a creature escaped from a zoo, with moustache, big hair, bellbottom pant, colour shirts, etc. He said, “If I take you to verandah, I will be beheaded. Do you know that.” He called some 5-6 teachers and asked them to take me to a barber shop to get me a nice haircut, remove/trim my moustache and then make me wear a light colour pant and shirt. After giving such instructions, he went to Ganesha temple and was waiting there for me. I was literally forced to get my hair cut, etc... and took

me to Ganesha Temple. There I was introduced to the first Principal of our degree college in Puttaparthi, Mr. Amarendra. Amarendra was such a great scholar in English and Telugu. He was a principal of a college in Guntur and he was a great devotee who used to translate Bhagawan's speeches. Bhagawan used to say, after Amarendra's translation, "Amarendra, Your translation is musical."

So, they took me to Mandir and introduced me to Amarendra and said, "This fellow is here to be a Political Science lecturer." Amarendra Sir said, "You follow me." In the Mandir, there were thousands of people were sitting. It was all crowded and there was so much of silence. I asked Amarendra, "Why people are not talking?" Amarendra said, "You don't talk." I said, "Sir, but I want to know." He replied, "You will know slowly. It will take time for you." I walked silently behind him and I was taken to the VIP verandah opposite to Swami's interview room door. Amarendra Sir asked me to sit behind him and I sat. The most shocking experience of my life was the first encounter with Bhagawan Baba. There was silence. Baba was inside. Half-an-hour, 45 minutes passed. Nothing was happening. Simply people were sitting like that. In those days, not even a book was allowed in the verandah those days. So, we could not read any book also. People just have to sit there and meditate. That was the rule introduced by Baba those days. Don't talk to anybody and don't touch anybody. Very serious discipline. I was sitting and the door was opened. I saw Bhagawan Baba for the first time, coming out of the interview room. Baba looked at somebody and made a gesture – come. I did not know whom He called. But I saw Amarendra getting up and rushing to Baba like a dart and was sitting on his knees, shivering. They both spoke something silently. I could not contain myself. I did not know what was happening. I was thoroughly disturbed inside. I was waiting. Amarendra came back and sat again. I thought, "Let me see what this tamasha is going on."

Swami then went to the left side of Mandir. He went to ladies' side, gents side and then to the verandah. On the verandah, He was talking to somebody and I could not listen to what they were talking. Everything was in whispers only. I thought, "Oh... This is a very strange world." Swami went there. Some people

followed Him inside. And then people got up. Amarendra got up and told me also to get up. I asked, "What is this?" He said, "This is called Darshan." I asked, "Is that Sathya Sai Baba?" He said, "Swami." I asked, "Swami? Oh. He is also called as Swami." Then he said, "I want to talk to you." I said, "Fine. Talk." He said, "Not here. Let us go out." So, we went to Krishna's statue on the gents' side. Amarendra said, "Bhagawan Baba spoke to me. He told me to take your joining report, not tomorrow, i.e., 7th of July, but on 14th of this month." I thought, "If that is the case, I would have come on 13th of July instead of coming here rushing all the way today, thinking that I should join tomorrow." I asked, "Am I going to get fresh appointment order?" He said, "No." I asked, "Then how can you say that I should join on 14th?" He replied, "Baba said." I asked, "Baba said. Is that an order?" He replied, "Yes. His word is the order." I said, "You are mad. It cannot be like that. There should be a written order." He said, "No. His word is an order. You be here. Tomorrow Swami will talk to you." I asked, "How do you know?" He replied, "Swami is talking to all those who were selected as lecturers every day. He already spoke to 2-3 people who have already arrived here. You are the 4th one. Tomorrow morning, Swami will call and talk to you. We will take your joining report on 14th. So, you wait."

Then I said to Amarendra, "If He calls for interview, you go. I am going home." Amarendra asked, "Why are you going home?" I said, "I will again come on 13th." He said, "Okay. I will wait." I said so and went away to home. I went away thinking that I could bring my wife. Because, once I join, she cannot travel alone all the way. So, I went home. My wife came out and asked, "Did you lose your job?" I said, "No. I am told to join on 14th. So, we will be there on 13th." So, both of us came and we put our luggage in Ammana Shastry's house. I went and sat in verandah on the 13th. I believed that, on the 8th, Swami would have called for me and Amarendra would have said, "Probably, he would have gone away." Outside there was a Janaki Ramaiah quarters. Ammana Shastry was having his accommodation there with 3-4 rooms in that. My luggage was there.

I was sitting in verandah and first shock of my life was, Swami came straight

out of interview room and stood in front of me and said, “When did you come?” I stood up and looking into His eyes, I said, “This morning I came Sir!” “Is that so Sir,” Baba asked. I said, “Yes Sir.” Then Baba asked, “Where have you been put up Sir?” I thought I should explain Him the whole story. So, I looked at Him and said, “Do you know Eswaramma High School?” Poor Swami, being incarnation of tolerance, looked at me and said, “Yes. I know Eswaramma High School.” Everybody around was listening to our conversation and I was speaking loudly. Then I asked, “Do you know Ammana Shastry, the head master of that High School?” Swami replied, “Yes, I know Ammana Shastry also.” I did not know that the School belongs to Swami and Ammana Shastry was appointed by Him. Then I said, “Ammana Shastry and my father-in-law were close friends at Tanuku. So, my father-in-law asked me to keep my luggage in Ammana Shastry’s house. Do you know where his house is?” Then I explained His about where his house is and said, “My luggage is in his house.”

Swami started laughing so much that almost tears started rolling his eyes. He contained Himself and said, “If I provide you accommodation inside, are you ready to come inside?” I looked at Him and asked, “What is inside?” Swami explained that inside means inside Prasanthi Nilayam and outside means Puttaparthi. Swami said, “I want to give you accommodation inside.” I said, “Accommodation is required know. I am with my wife and luggage. I need it. That would be a great favour. Kindly help me with accommodation.”

Then he turned towards Dasavatharam gate and gave one gesture. There was an extraordinarily great soul standing at Dasavatharam gate, Mr. Kutumba Rao. He is a very great devotee of Swami. You must read his history. Kutumba Rao came running like a dart. I thought, “Why is this fellow also running like Amarendra?” He was also sitting on his knees and he was also shivering. Swami told him, “East Prasanthi C-11, give it to him. He is married and he has got a lot of luggage. Immediately send coolies and get his luggage shifted. Arrange for his breakfast and food there itself from canteen until he settles. Take care of him.” In the verandah, strangely, everyone is looking at me. Kutumba Rao told Swami, “Swami, the owner of C-11 is going to come

in two days.” Swami replied, “You can send him to the shed.” I got a shock, thinking, “The owner is going to be sent to a shed? We generally put cattle in sheds, no?” I did not understand the concept of shed.

Coolies came, luggage got shifted to C-11. Believe me friends, something very strange happened on the day I saw Him. I did not know what happened to me, I felt in tremendously Love with Him. Something from inside was saying, “He is your destination. He is everything. Don’t leave Him. Hang on to Him. Be a friend to Him. Completely dedicate yourself to Him. Live in His presence all your life.” When I looked at Him on that day, it was a miraculous personality. It was something. I did not know that He was so great, so disciplined, and it is so tough to live with Him, etc. It took time for me to understand all those other aspects.

But the first sight was ‘Live in His presence.’ I was living there, coming to college and teaching. Unfortunately, I was smoking. I was a chain smoker. I used to go out to smoke and come back and sit in the verandah. Swami would come and speak to me both mornings and evenings for fifteen minutes, regularly for 6-7 years. Whenever He was speaking to me, He would give a gesture which means, “I know that you are a smoker.” In Swami’s institution, smoking is completely forbidden. If you are smoking, you are out next minute. Probably to put me out of smoking, one day Swami sent a very great devotee to the University campus and he was sitting in the teacher’s room. By that time, the college building was built.

Somebody came to me to the classroom with a message, “Sir, somebody is waiting for you and he wants to see you.” After my class got over, I came down and saw one sanyasi sitting there. I knew him even before I came to Puttaparthi because, he is from Rajahmundry. In Rajahmundry, he has got his own institution called Jiva Karunyananda Sangha. He is Karunyananda Swami. I did not know that he was a devotee of Swami and that he was living in Puttaparthi. He said, “Are you Gangadhara Shastri?” He called me and said, “You are a lecturer is Swami’s college no? Why are you smoking bidis, chuttas, then?” I said, “I don’t smoke bidis, chuttas. I smoke cigarettes.” He



said, "All are same. If you want to continue here, you better stop it. Otherwise, you will be thrown out." I looked at him and said, "Who are you to say that? Are you financing my cigarettes? This is my personal job. It is my personal life. Please don't waste my time. Mind your job. Pack up." Saying so, I walked out.

Later on, I came to know that he went and told Swami, "Swami, this fellow looks like a goonda also. He doesn't know how to talk to people also. He asked me to pack up." Swami told Karunyananda, "Sometimes you need to learn some lessons from such fellows also. This is good for your spiritual progress." This went on for one full year. Everyday Swami was talking to me and it was March 1980 (I joined in 1979). I was trying my best not to smoke but I could not stop. I was feeling guilty. I was ashamed that I was smoking. Whenever Swami was giving Discourses every alternative day to students and teachers, he was stressing two important points, "Teachers who are smoking, how can they ask their students not to smoke? You maintain moustache. What is so great about your moustache? Even cockroaches have got a moustache. By posing moustaches, are you posing as a great? etc."

One day in March 1980, Swami came to me. I was sitting at the edge of verandah. He said, "Get up." I tried million times not to smoke but I could not. And moreover, it was harming me a lot. Every winter, smoking put me in trouble because a lot of phlegm got accumulated in my chest and it does not come out. So, cough. Even then, I was smoking. It is such a dirty addiction. I got used to get a of course penicillin injections every winter to get that phlegm out of my body. When Swami told me to get up, I got up. Then Swami started whispering into my ears. He said, "In your family, whoever is taken to smoking, will certainly die because, it does not suit you. It does not suit anybody in fact, particularly you and members in your family. Now you have to stop. Otherwise, you will die. I don't know whether you know or not, your father used to smoke. He was afflicted with TB and was put in hospital. He was about to die and I protected him." I started scratching my head thinking, "My father didn't know Swami at all. He never saw Swami and Baba is saying that He has protected my father. I don't know that my



father was a smoker. By the time I was born, my father was not smoking. I never saw him smoking. What is Baba talking all about?" I thought, "I will try. Let me see." Baba turned back after taking two steps and patted my back two times saying, "You will stop smoking." Believe me or not my friends, from next moment onwards, I never smoked. I don't know what happened. I did not put any effort. I did not feel like touching a cigarette. Even today, it is shocking to me.

When I went to see my father during the summer, I asked him, "Did you ever smoke?" He told, "Yes. I was in hospital. I used to smoke bidis, cigars, etc.." Believe me or not, every day, Swami would come and reveal something or the other secret about my family or myself. He looked at me one day and said, "How are you feeling here?" I did not want to speak the truth. I said, "I am okay." He said, "I know that you are not okay. You don't love this place. You don't like this place. You don't want to stay here. You want to stay in a town, in a city. You want to be a big officer. You want to hold big positions and all that. I know everything." Then Swami tells me, "I know everything so I am telling. Go on trying. Continue with your feelings. Whatever efforts you put in, you are not going to go out of this place. You are brought here by Me for a purpose. You will live here and you will die here serving Me. This is guarantee." I thought, "What is He talking. I am sure that I am going away and He is saying that He will not allow me to go."

In fact, I tried. I wanted to write government post examinations at Anantapur. I wanted to go. There was a big downpour and I could not cross Dharmavaram. I went up to Dharmavaram. Due to the downpour, the bus stopped. It rained for nearly two hours. The exam was supposed to start at 10 o'clock. The rain stopped at 10:30. So, I came back. So many miracles after miracles happened. He calls me and tells me, "You have to do your M.Phil., you have to do your Ph.D." I said, "Swami, I am not interested in doing Ph.D." Swami said, "I know that you don't want to do. But, suppose I want you to do for Me?" I said, "For You means, I have to do." "Then do M.Phil. also," said Baba. If you don't accept what He wants you to do, you will be punished to do much more. But, the service attitude of Swami, His concern for everybody, the way He used

to love people around, the way He showered His grace on people who were coming to Prasanthi Nilayam, I tell you that it is humanly impossible for any person to do it. It is possible only for the Divine. The Divine grace showered on me was so much. So many miracles happened.

One day, when my wife conceived, I went to Swami and said, “Swami, she is on the family way.” Swami said, “Yes. I know. You will be blessed with a daughter.” I thought, even before delivery, He is predicting. She was progressing and in the 7th month, one fine morning Swami came to me and said, “Do you know that your wife is going through the 7th month?” I said, “Swami, I don’t know.” Swami said, “You don’t know anything. Your father does not come. Your mother does not come. Your father-in-law does not come. No one from your family is here. You both are alone. We have to take care of everything of you. What is the delivery of you wife?” I said, “I don’t know.” There was a small hospital on the top of the hill and Dr. Alreja, a very great doctor who had the Darshan of Lord Hanuman. He was the Jaslok hospital Superintendent and he was called by Swami. He came here. Swami told him to serve here.

Swami told me, “Bangaru, I have a small hospital here with not many facilities. So, we have to send your wife for delivery to your house. I said, “Okay Swami.” Then Swami only took the responsibility of sending her. He called Kutumba Rao Sir and said, “See, Gangadhar’s wife has to go to Tanuku, West Godavari district. Find out who all are there from Tanuku in Prasanthi Nilayam right now. Take their names and submit to Me. I will fix up a person who will have to in a responsible manner take her and drop her there.” So, a list was submitted to Swami and Swami fixed up a person. In the evening, Swami told me, “See, I have got some people. They will take your wife. Very securely she will be dropped at your father-in-law’s place. However, do you want to go?” I said, “Yes Swami, I want to go.” Swami said, “Not necessary. Sit down.” He asked me like that for 2-3 days and He Himself says, “Not necessary. Sit down.”

On the day of the journey, in the morning, Swami came to me and said,



“Do you want to go?” I said, “Yes Swami.” Then He said, “Ok. Go up to Dharmavaram. Put her in train and come back.” So, I went to Dharmavaram and came back. When the child was born, I got a telegram. One day before Swami said, “Tomorrow morning, your daughter will be born.” I showed the telegram to Swami and Swami from a distance, on the sand while giving Darshan, said, “What telegram? I gave you telegram yesterday.” He asked, “Do you want to go and see your daughter?” I replied, “Yes.” “Not necessary,” said Swami. For five months he asked me the same question and replied, “Not. Necessary.”

In the fifth month when he asked me the same question, I said, “Swami, whatever you say?” Then Swami said, “Go tomorrow. Get your wife and daughter to Parthi.” He went away and walked few steps back and said, “I forgot to tell you something. When you go there to bring your wife and daughter, there will some pressure on you to perform naming function. You will not undertake any function like that. You will not name your daughter.” I thought, “What is this?” He looked at me and said, “I will name her.” I gave a strange look to Swami because I was not used to Swami’s ways. Swami asked, “Why are you looking at Me like that?” I said, “Nothing Swami.” Swami read my mind and said, “Hey! I know. Naming ceremony is a grand function in Brahmin’s homes. So, you are thinking that great function will be there, all people will be there and you will be missing all that. Here, while going through Darshans, Swami will give some name and walk out. Is it not?” I said, “Not like that Swami.” Swami said, “That is truth. Accept it.” I said, “Probably, Yes Swami.” Then Swami said, “Okay. Let me reveal a secret to you. Take a look at the devotees on the gents’ side. Take a look on the ladies’ side. There are so many people right now sitting both the sides, waiting for the past ten years, fifteen years, twenty years for Me to name them. They are waiting for their children to be given a name by Me. To date, I did not name them. You know what they call their children? ‘Sairam’ because no name is given to them. They are begging for the past fifteen years. I have not named them and I don’t know whether I will name them at all. You are giving a strange look when I offer you to name your daughter!” I said, “Swami, I am not aware of all this.” He said, “Go and bring them.”

When I went to my house, my wife came from my in-law's place to my native place. I saw my daughter for the first time when she was five months old. My father came out and told, "Are you contemplating on the naming function?" See how Swami helped me. Every minute helped me. I was just surviving on my salary that time and my salary was very meagre and I did not want to ask my father for any money and my father was also not in a position to afford. I said, "No dad. I am not planning anything like that." Then my father went inside the house, came out with a silver plate which he got made it for me and said, "In case, if you are planning to name your daughter, take this silver plate and sell it in the market. With that money, you can go ahead with the naming function of you daughter. Because, I cannot finance it." Then it struck me. Swami knows the condition of my father and He did not want me to go through that humiliation. He wanted to save me from that humiliation. At the same time, He wanted me to enjoy the grace of my daughter named by Bhagawan Baba. See how He picks you up from the dust and puts you on a high pedestal. I was really enlightened on that day in my village in the presence of my father and told, "Dad. You don't know. Bhagawan Baba told me to get my daughter to Parthi and He promised me to name her. So, I am not going to have any function." I went to my in-law's place. They were stinking rich. They said, "We will have that function." I said, "You cannot have that function because Swami commanded and I am not going to disobey His command." This happened in less than one year's time. I have fallen in love with Swami so much that I told to myself, "I will live and die only for Swami." This is the end of it. That's all.

Even today, my daughter buys a ticket every year for me to go to the US. She scolds me over the phone. She is there from the past dozen years. She says, "Do you think that you are born only to serve Swami? Don't you have any love for your children? Don't you know that you have to spend some time for your children?" I have to bluntly tell my daughter, "Yes. I am sorry. I am not here to spend any time with you. I am here only to serve my Lord Swami." Because, I am whatever I am today either physically, financially, mentally, psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, in all respects whatever I am, just because of Swami. So, I have to serve Him only.

Swami always insisted on one thing which caught my attention. That is, Discipline. Swami loved discipline like anything. He is 'Parama Shanthi Priya Ram.' You look to Him, He will do everything for you. I was talkative. I don't talk at all now-a-days unless it is absolutely necessary. Sometimes it goes to an extent that my wife grumbles at me. My first daughter shouts at me from Bangalore. Second daughter shouts at me from America. They say, "I don't have any concern for my family." I say, "Why should I have any concern when Bhagawan Baba has concern for all of you. He is taking care." Because, Swami told me, "You serve my children, I will serve your family."

Until 2-3 years back, there were days, where I used to take half a dozen classes every day, until a ban was imposed by our Registrar. Many of my students are IAS officers today. They went to JNU and did M.A. in Political Science. They all are in very good positions. I have great passion for teaching by the grace of Swami. Swami said, "Teach, teach." On the top of it, my subject is political science. In political science, you are exposed to the lives of very great leaders who ruled India. Not only in the past, even in the modern times. You need to read the independence history. If you read the independence movement of India, you will be completely changed. What kind of people fought for independence and how they sacrificed their lives. When Mahatma Gandhi gave a call to farmers that they peacefully agitate, farmers used to stand in files in fours. British people go there and stand with guns pointed at them. Mahatma Gandhi says, "Walk. Let them shoot." First four walk, they were shot. Then second four walk, they were shot, etc. So, you become desperate and stop shooting. Our poor and illiterate farmers stood in front of them with their bare chests. After killing so many farmers, Gandhiji asked them a question, "After killing so many people, are you going to rule burial ground here or what? How many will you kill? Kill. We will see." So, peacefully agitated.

Rajendra Prasad, the first president of India. You will be shocked when you read what all he talked in the constituent assembly. A poor man from a poor farmer's family from Bihar is a top-class IAS officer. He went to Mahatma Gandhi and said, "Swami. Give me an opportunity to serve in the Sabarmathi

Ashram.” Gandhi was a bit like our Swami. Swami never give an opportunity without a testing. He tests you like anything before giving an opportunity. Mahatma Gandhi said, “Come after a month. We will see.” After one month, Rajendra Prasad went. Then Gandhi said, “I am little busy. Come after a month.” Again, after one month, Rajendra Prasad went. Gandhi said, “Today, there is a meeting there. So, come after one month.” For twelve months, Gandhi made him run like that again and again and again. Perseverance. The deep desire to serve the country. I am not going to leave you. You have to give this opportunity. Finally, after twelve months, Gandhiji said, “Oh. You want to serve the country. Fantastic. I am giving a place in the ashram. I want you to do some service first before getting into National service.” Rajendra Prasad said, “Yes sir.” One part of Sabarmathi Ashram, there were lepers. Mahatma Gandhi used to take care of Lepers, lean their wounds, put bandages, etc. There was a park in Sabaramathi Ashram. Gandhiji told Rajendra Prasad, “There are toilets used by these lepers. I want you to clean their toilets every day and see to it that their toilets are kept clean.”

Rajendra Prasad was doing the cleaning and Gandhiji was watching. For six months, Rajendra Prasad did it religiously every day. After six months Gandhiji called him and said, “I am thoroughly satisfied with your dedication and commitment. Now you can get into National service. Join the Congress party and offer your services.” When we got independence, he called Nehru and said, “Rajendra Prasad will be the President of this country.” Thus, Rajendra Prasad became the President of India and he drew Rs. 1/- per month as his salary. Literally, he did not take any salary.

Balagangadhar Tilak. Implicated in a case, he was thrown out of India by the British. As long as he was in India, British will not be able to rule. So, they got him implicated in a case and threw him out of India, in Mandalay jail. When he was in jail, he suffered all his life. You will cry when you read his life history. When he was in Mandalay jail, where he was ill-treated by British, he got a telegram from his brother-in-law about his wife’s death. He wrote a letter back to his brother-in-law saying, “I am used to shocks. Generally speaking, no shocks can shake me. But, this is one shock which

I am completely shaken. I was never by her side after our marriage. I was spending all my time serving the country. I wanted to be by her side at least at her death bed. I am not there. I feel so sad. Kindly do two things for me. She has got some jewellery on her body. Collect all the jewellery and keep it ready by the time I come back. I want to sell it and utilize that money for the freedom struggle. Tell my children that when I lost my parents, I was much younger than them. Let them not be shaken.” Such National leaders who were patriotic, who never aspired for anything. That is the history of India.

Here, we have Swami. As a boy, he took sanyasi. One fine morning he called Eswaramma and said, “See me (Swami was wearing ochre robe)” Eswaramma was shocked and asked, “Swami, what is this?” Swami replied, “I belong to the world. I don’t belong to anybody.” Ever since then, He is working for others. You don’t know how much He used to do. If hostel children are sick, He used to send doctors for treatment and send them prasadam. “What do they want?” “Swami, they want some good chairs.” Swami would order chairs. He gets a model chair to His interview room first and He sits on the chair to see whether it is comfortable for a student to sit, whether the plank is ok or not, can they be able to write their exam by putting the paper, etc. He checks the chair and sends the chairs to the campus. Computers, Teachers tables, etc. High standards are set and fantastic facilities are created personally by Swami. VC, Registrar, Controller, every day they were called and He used to talk to them. University programs are modelled on the philosophy of Swami. Swami mandated that Awareness courses should be there. He personally designed the daily routine and schedule at the hostel schedule. Everything is designed by Swami.

Try to understand one thing. Your hostel, your education, University, schools and all that are one part. What about world councils, state councils, Sathya Sai Organizations all over the world, Bal Vikas programs, Central Trust activities, publications, Sadhana Trust, hundreds and hundreds of organizations. Swami was conducting everything by Himself without anybody’s help. He comes out every day and spends time with students and everybody as if nothing is happening. Only the Divine can do that. What is that He expected from us?



Only one thing. He wanted from all of us: Gratitude. Be grateful to Him. Don't ditch Him. He cannot take it. He is love incarnation. He is pure love. He declared that He loves gratitude not in words alone, but He practiced it.

One day we were sitting on the verandah for Darshan. Suddenly, Swami emerged from the room at 10 o'clock. He rushed out. Generally during that time, He does not come out. He asked for the car immediately. He got into the car and went away all of a sudden. We all were waiting thinking that He has gone out on some work. After an hour or so, we got a message that Swami was dashing towards Bangalore. We came to know later that a devotee in Bangalore who was very close to Swami, has suffered a serious heart attack, and he was in hospital. Swami wanted to see him, give him prasadam, and bless him. He went straight to the hospital, sat beside him, gave prasadam. That devotee asked, "Swami, you came all the way from Puttaparthi like this?" Swami said, "You are offering so much service to Me. I should have that minimum gratitude to see you when you are suffering. Is it not? I have to express my gratitude." He was there and got him operated. He is very good health today. In the same way, when a lady devotee got a heart attack and got admitted to a hospital in Bombay, Swami immediately called a student, gave him prasadam and tickets and everything and said, "Rush immediately to hospital, give this prasadam and come back. She is so important to me."

There are so many such instances where Bhagawan Baba said that one has to be grateful. He showed how to be grateful. He practiced all these values, to be truthful, to be honest, to be disciplined, etc. He was committed to work and serve the society and to such an extent that you should perish in the idea of service. Let me be destroyed in serving the society. No personal interest at all. Why? You are what you are because of society. You are because of parents, because of Swami, teachers, so many people in society. What can I do for society?

There is a very famous statement. The American president, John F Kennedy, while addressing the nation on his inauguration on 20 January, 1961 said, "Ask not what the country has given you. Ask yourself what you have given

to the country.” Never ask what the country has given you. It is a deception. The country only gave you everything. Ask yourself what you have given to the country. Swami always loved those who served the country without any expectations. One day, Swami was talking about a very confidential topic, salaries. He said, “I know that I don’t give you fantastic salaries. You know why? I reason is, in Puttaparthi the standard of living is very normal. So, you don’t require a heavy salary. You don’t go to theatres, restaurants, everywhere. You are living in a simple manner. Your medical attention is taken care by Me. All your functions I celebrate. What is that you want? Whatever minimum is required, I am giving.”

Another important revelation He made on that day was, “Where does all this money come from? From the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust. Where from is the Central Trust getting money? From devotees. Devotees give Me money out of their great devotion and love to Me. I should spend that money in the most useful manner. I cannot waste even a single paisa. If I waste even a single paisa, I will be ditching them and going against their faith. So, I don’t want to do that. It is a pious money to be utilized. It is not My money. I don’t have an account. It is devotees’ money. I am a trustee. I am a caretaker. I have to use it extremely carefully.”

Everything is Swami’s. This building, books, etc. Now, let us think how we have to deal with all these things. How should we maintain the furniture? How should we be really deserving of His grace? We have to show that gratitude to Swami. We have to maintain that discipline, which is very much liked by Swami. Be disciplined. Follow all the rules and regulations. All these rules are not to burden you or bother you. All these are for your welfare.

One day, Swami asked me one question. I was shocked. Swami looked at me and said, “I started the college. I got all teachers and students here. And what is that I am asking you to do? I ask you to get up early morning. Is it a crime? Do omkaram and suprabhatam. Is that wrong? I ask you to go to college, attend classes and study, happily play, eat food and sleep. Am I burdening your shoulders with big boulders? Am I asking you to cut wood in the forest?



Am I asking you to do which is really tough to do for all of you? I am not asking you to do anything tough. I am just asking you to do the minimum things. Get up early, study, follow the rules and regulations, make a good and bright future for yourself. If you think that I am wrong, now tell Me. 24 hours a day I am aspiring, working, to try and give a good life to you by giving all possible facilities which are not available anywhere, in any of the institutions. Understand. Please understand.”

My dear friends, He was pleading with us. Why? We are so stupid that we never understood His love. We never understood His mission. We never understood His dedication. We never understood His philosophy. If we understand, today we will make a commitment that we will make Him proud by our stay here and here after.



Sri Sanjay Sahni

Controller of Examinations, SSSIHL



For the last four decades there are many hats which I have worn but the most precious role or profile that I consider I have is that I was Swami's student. I might have shared it with some of your senior brothers. But there are others here, first year students, who may not have heard it. So, some things may be repetitive. And I think now my students can tell whatever I have to tell. I need not tell. But still the requests keep coming to me – please you must also tell. And we cannot avoid it. Because I remember once Swami was speaking to us in Trayee. And He asked the students this question – how will you show your gratitude to me? And as we have all learnt in His presence best way to answer is to keep quiet. And then you will get the best answer because the answer will be from his lips. Then this is what Swami explained. He said. “In my presence, you would have experienced many sacred thoughts, many sacred feelings. To share the sacred thoughts and sacred feelings with others, that is your gratitude to me.

So therefore, I feel that every Sai student has this bounden responsibility that when he is studying at the University or in Swami's schools he or she should take every opportunity to gather more and more about Bhagawan. Because no matter what you think of Him, wherever you go in the world people will ask you, “Oh, you are a Sai student? Please tell us something about Swami.” And therefore when Mr. Vijay Menon was saying this morning, “My dear students I beseech you, please read Satyam Shivam Sundaram, please read Loving God – autobiography of Swami's first biographer – Kasturiji.” Now I thought it is a very precious advice. Because the more you read it is an endless story. God's story cannot be a full stop. In my own life and I have not gone out much of my life has been spent in Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan. But whatever I have experienced, I had a chance to walk with people in every stratum of society. From Prime Ministers, Presidents to Chief Ministers to farmers, labourers. Every stratum of society. And in my own association with many people this is what I discovered that one person who will always remain unique in my life, with the unique impact of my inner psyche is Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

One day, Ravikumar Sir will recall, Swami was speaking to students in Trayee Brindavan and he was in His benevolence personified. He made an incredible statement. He said, “In the whole world, I will not get teachers as I have in my University.” And we were aghast. He would ask somebody or the other to speak in His presence. Students, teachers, elders. The next day he called me to speak and I thought I must set the record straight. And this is what I said to students in the course of that talk: Yesterday Swami you said that in the whole world you will not get teachers like this. If you scan the world you will get many more teachers – much more competent and devoted than us but if we search the whole Universe where will we get another Sai Baba? Not possible.

It was a time when students had just returned from vacation and, as you are aware, these are young minds, the kind of discipline we may have cultivated in the campus when the warden is not around, teachers are not around. In those days Swami is not apparently looking at you. So, we would take some liberties. So, when students would come back they would get royal treatment from Swami. What was the royal treatment? He will not talk to them, he will not look at them and after a few days they will start feeling bad. So that was the time and nobody knew how it has to be resolved, when it is going to be resolved. One student had stayed back during the vacation. So, one of the teachers prodded him: You must ask Swami...because he stayed back during the vacation Swami had given him some chance to do seva. He would call him to the Mandir, He would give him some opportunities. So, one of the teachers prodded him you must ask Swami...please Swami, talk to the boys.

So it was evening Darshan. In those days, students would sit on that pavement road opposite Trayee Mandir. This boy was inside. Swami opens the door and He came to that landing below where there is a flight of steps by which he would climb down Trayee. He is behind and Swami is with him and the students are seated on the road. The boy took courage and he whispered to Swami, “Swami, students are feeling very sad. You are not looking at them, not talking to them!” And then Swami said, “Have I come only for them? And He looked up into the sky, and you know those trees opposite Trayee



residence, not so tall. Swami looked up into the sky and he said, “Do you know at this point of time, how many Devas and Devis are there in the sky waiting for my Darshan. And do you know what is their prayer to me? They are praying, “Swami! will you permit us to be your Sai student for one day?”

So it is very, very big blessing in our life. Just like you I also came decades ago thinking we will get a degree at the University, whether it is a B.Sc., B.Com, M.Sc., M.Com, etc. We come with that kind of aspiration but that is not why Swami has called us. He has called us here for a different purpose. And remember, my dear students, once we step into Swami’s fold, the future of each one of you is not going to be decided by anybody. It is in Swami’s hands.

He can give you anything and everything. Believe it. I can speak from my own experience and I will share some of my experiences in this regard. And He is giving. I will share with you instances of two students. One of the boys just passed out of Brindavan this April, Yogeshwar by name. He was doing his B.Com. Honours. After completing his undergraduation, he was debating whether to do an M.B.A or to do something alternative. And I also came to know of it and his classmates said Sir, he is coming for M.B.A.. Then he wrote the entrance, he got selected and on June 1st with two of his classmates who had not joined Parthi, he came and met me in my office. So, I was very surprised. I said, “I thought you were supposed to be joining college today. How come you are here?” He said, “Sir I have opted to join Asoka University in Delhi. It is a very special kind of program, a Liberal Arts program.” He wanted to pursue this for ten months and wanted to take up some activity in NGO’s and things like that.

I said, “If that was so, why did you apply for the M.B.A.? You could have foregone that seat and somebody else could have the chance. He said, Sir, for the first time when I applied I got selected, I was very eager to get that and Swami me the blessing but then when the time came to pay the fees, you have to pay eight lakhs rupees.” He froze, hearing that amount. And he said, “Sorry Sir, I cannot join you. So, they came back to him and they said, “Oh you cannot pay that amount. Do not worry. We will waive some fees for you.



You can pay two and a half lakh rupees.” Again, he looked at his own family situation and he said, “No, I do not think I will be able to afford it.” So he sent word that he will not be able to join them. One thing about that University is once they select you, at least for monetary reasons, they do not want him to discontinue. They said, “We will award you a young India fellowship. Your entire fees at this University is waived.”

Step out of your college, take one step out of your college and ask somebody for 500 rupees including your father. He will ask you, “For what do you want 500 rupees?” Here is a boy, eight and a half lakh rupees pocket money...come on. You want to do that, enjoy!

The Grace of Swami for His students is amazing! One week before that, it was the last week of May, I was returning from the canteen after dinner and suddenly I bumped into a student whom I was seeing after 22 years. You know there is one beautiful privilege I enjoyed staying in Prasanthi Nilayam. A lot of my time today gets engaged by alumni of our University, of all campuses. Time with current students is a little less. But you know, 33 years I was in hostel. So, I cannot regret that Swami gave me anything less. But coming to Prasanthi Nilayam, every week I meet so many of them. Listening to their stories is so amazing. I was meeting this boy after 22 years. He is in a very senior position with the Times of India group which you know is a media house. They have a large galaxy of publications. He heads their revenue assurance. He was just telling me, the last financial year, his personal target which he achieved was rupees 5400 crores. He has earned this money for his group. And the next year’s target is rupees 5600 crores. When I heard that I said, this is that boy, who after Accounts class would come and say, can I get half a mark here Sir? Can I get one mark there Sir? I tell you my dear students, Swami’s Grace...do not worry about your future.

Everything is in Swami’s hands. I learnt it very powerfully one day, when I was a student. In those days, very minimal athletics was just starting, sports meet was slowly evolving. On the cultural side we had only two competitions – one was Quiz and the other was the elocution. And elocution competition



was very, very tricky. It used to be impromptu. You are given five minutes to speak. There is a bowl on the table you pick up a chit at the end of his talk you have to go and speak I picked up I opened a chit and my heart sank because the line read: To see the world in a grain of sand. I thought to myself- who is the crazy person who designed such a topic and in that we have to see the world. Can there be something so incongruous than that. and I felt so dejected hearing the topic, thinking now that's the end. Today is going to be the ultimate in my humiliation.

Therefore, the entire student-teachers community and one of my senior brother says I will tell you some points. He was whispering into my ear, I was half understanding, half not understanding and the next they said, "And now the next speaker is so and so." Until today I do not remember what I spoke. All that I knew at the end of the talk, it was a terrible disaster. So, I went back, totally dejected, totally demoralized, and sat in the last row of the auditorium. And suddenly I heard this voice and I had similar experiences earlier so I was able to recognize Swami's voice and he said, "How did you speak today?" "It is the worst talk I have ever given in my life." And then Swami said, "Witness my sankalpa." That is all. So, all the students finished and the jury went into discussion and now it was time for them to announce the results and they said, "In the third position we have so and so, in the second position we have so and so, in the first position we have Sanjay Sahni." That was the verdict of the jury.

The next day, in the presence of my all classmates, there is nothing to hide, our Professor, Arun Sir said, "Sanjay, what happened to you yesterday in the elocution competition?" Now I did not know what he was thinking. But I knew I had made a terrible disaster, the result came like that. I said, "Sir I was not in a proper frame of mind. Then my English teacher said, "I also thought something like that must have happened to you. But I do not know what happened to the jury."

That day I realized the power of Swami's Sankalpa. Even if you are in a terrible mess, if there is one person who can bail you out in the most terrible tsunami



of your life, it is Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Even if there is the whole world against you but if God is with you, then everything is with you. That was the most powerful message that we get from Arjuna's life. Swami used to describe it so picturesquely. The war is about to begin and both Pandavas and Kauravas are planning to seek the assistance of Krishna. So Duryodhana is coming rushing to the presence of Krishna and from the Pandavas' side, Arjuna is coming. Duryodhana reaches first. Satyaki is at the entrance of the bedroom of Sri Krishna. And Sri Krishna knows that these people are coming. He starts pretending that he is asleep. So, he is lying down on the bed. And because they are family members, they have immediate access, and Duryodhana is allowed to enter the bedroom, where he finds that Krishna is sleeping. So, what can he do? So, there is one chair next to Krishna's bed. He goes and sits on the chair. A few minutes later, Arjuna arrives and when he arrives, Satyaki is looking at him with menacing eyes. Idiot of the highest order. Could you not have come five minutes earlier? Already Duryodhana has gone and whatever Grace or permissions they have already appropriated. Krishna is acting. He is pretending to sleep.

So Duryodhana is waiting and Arjuna enters the bedroom and bows to Sri Krishna. Both brothers see each other. But then Arjuna bows to Sri Krishna and he goes at the feet and he is waiting. There is only one chair and it is occupied and they are waiting for Krishna to get up. After a few minutes Krishna gets up and Arjuna is right in front of him. So, he looks at him and says - Krishna greets him. When did you come? How are you? How is mother Kunti? And all this time Duryodhana is burning. How come that I came first and he is talking to him. So, he wants to attract his attention. So, Duryodhana hits upon a small human strategy. He starts coughing. You know I am trying to simulate as much as Swami used to dramatize when he told all these stories. Krishna realizes there is somebody else also in the room. He looks and says - O Duryodhana! When did you come? How are you? So after the courtesies are over, he says, "Come on! Tell me! What can I do for you?" Duryodhana starts. "Krishna you know, the war is imminent. I have come here to seek your support. And he looks at Aarjuna. And Arjuna says, "I have also come for the same thing."



Now this is a *dharmasankat*. Two rival parties are coming together and asking for your help. Whom shall you help. But the Lord has a beautiful strategy. There is no problem in the world that He cannot resolve.

It is one thing we learned of Swami. Our first Vice-Chancellor Prof. V K Gokak used to say, “You know there is a particular issue and we are looking at solutions to that problem. We have identified five or six solutions, possible solutions, but we always feel that none of the six solutions are okay. Then we go to Swami and put the problem to him. And He comes up with the seventh solution which none of us had thought of! He was like that. I believe, one gentleman, Swami called him for an interview. He said, “Swami! I want to divorce my wife! I want your permission.” People would come to Swami with anything and everything. Swami just asked him a question, “Bangaru all your property is in the name of your wife. If you divorce, what will happen to you?” Then this man said, “Swami I have engaged a lawyer. Even my lawyer did not give me this advice.” There was a small fellow with a crooked nose. You can imagine, at your age if you have a crooked nose and a little hair starts falling, you know how uncomfortable you feel.

I remember, two and a half years ago, I had invited Dr. Sundaresh, our Director of the Super Hospital at Whitefield. This is for the benefit of our undergraduate students. There was a question answer session at the end of his talk during the Moral Class. One boy got up and asked, “Sir, I want to ask a question. Why do young people lose hair?” So, the whole student community gave a thunderous applause, for the question. Because everybody wants to know. Then Dr. Sundaresh said, “I do not know the answer to your question, but I will tell you a joke. It is said that when the follicles of the hair , as they are going into the brain, when they touch the grey matter, the hair becomes grey. When it touches vacuum the hair falls off.”

Swami was a phenomenon where you could go to Him and he had a solution for every problem.

So back to the story.



When Duryodhana and Arjuna go to Sri Krishna, Sri Krishna says, “Because both of you all have come do this. On the one hand, is my entire army, a very heroic army; ferocious and courageous. And on the other hand, is Myself – unarmed. I will not raise a weapon in war.” And then he says, “The first choice I would like to give to Arjuna.” Immediately there is a protest from Duryodhana. He says, “How can you do that? I was the first person to come.”

But you cannot bargain with the Lord. He said, “It is true that you were the first person to come but when I opened my eyes, the first person I saw was Arjuna. More than that, he is a younger brother to you. Even from the point of view of age, the younger brother has the right to ask first, and I have a duty to oblige him first.” Duryodhana thought that all his strategies are going to go in vain. And he asks Arjuna, “Arjuna! What do you want?” Arjuna says, “Lord! I choose you!” And the moment he says this, my Lord, you know, the heart of Duryodhana has leapt to the ninth heaven. He said to himself: What a fool. Here is Krishna, unarmed, could not even raise one finger in the war.

When Krishna turned to him, saying - Duryodhana! What about you - he does not want to show that he is so happy. He says, “What else is left for me. I have to take your army only.” So Duryodhana, the moment he is satisfied, disappears. And the moment they become alone, Krishna scolds Arjuna. “Arjuna ! What is this? Fool! Why did you make this mistake? I told you I am not going to fight in the war. I am useless.” Arjuna says, “Lord! I will fight the war. I do not want you to do so. You just be my charioteer. You do not have to raise weapon against anybody.”

It was a momentous decision I tell you. The Mahabharata destiny was decided. The war was not fought when Bhishma fell or Drona fell or Karna fell. The war was not decided at that point of time. The war was decided the day Arjuna chose Sri Krishna. So, life is a choice.

I remember when we were final undergraduate students. In those days, when you are in the final year, you had the privilege of praying to Bhagawan: Bhagawan please speak to our class. So, the final Undergraduate boys were asking, Postgraduate boys were also asking. One fine day Swami said, both



the classes, all of you come. So, third Undergraduate boys came, second Undergraduate boys came...all in that small interview room, if you have ever seen. They saw the interview room, last year boys had seen. It is such a small room, of course there is a small inner room also and both the rooms together. Can you believe there were 83 students in those two small rooms? It used to be called a rubber room. As many people go in, that many people get accommodated. But how they get accommodated people will see persons going in and coming out.

So, in the course of that interview, Swami was giving us the message for life. He said, "See, life is like a beam balance. In one hand is the world and in the other hand is God and you have to make the choice - which beam balance you want to go up...you want to increase in your worldly attainments or do you want to raise your spiritual attunement? And you know how the beam balance works? If one pan goes up, the other pan automatically comes down. So, make your choice. So, life is going to throw these challenges at you."

Swami also gave a beautiful analogy. He said, "You know, the world, and your aspirations in the world, are like the coconut tree, the fruits hanging on a coconut tree. If you want those fruits - there are two ways of doing it. One is you can climb up the tree and you will get the coconut fruit. The other is that the coconut tree has a shadow, so you can follow the shadow and you will find that you can get the fruit as well. These are two approaches which you can adopt. But between the two — this is the important message which Swami gave us — remember that if you are following the shadow, in the end, you will only get the shadow fruit. But if you climb the tree you will get, not only the real fruit but you will also get the shadow fruit. Just as you climb the tree, your shadow is also climbing the tree and your shadow will eventually catch up with the shadow fruit. So, life in the world is like that shadow and attainments in the world are like the shadow fruit. But if you seek God, you will get God and you will also get everything else in life. So therefore, learn to make the proper choices. When we make the right choices in life, we will find that the whole life will move in different directions."

In the morning Chakravarthi Sir spoke to you all. I will share with you one



experience of his. He was the collector of Anantapur district. As the chief administrator representing the government, he would come to Prasanthi Nilayam. In those days, Swami would come out for Darshan early, at 6:30 AM or 7 AM. And he would be sitting right in front of the interview room. The moment Swami opens the door and he sees Chakravarthi Sir, the collector sitting, the first thing He would do before He talks to anybody would be to call him, talk to him, send him off and then out and give Darshan to devotees. Now you may ask, why is Swami giving so much importance to him? That is not the reason. He represents the people, he has got responsibilities in his administrative office. So, Swami did not want to delay him. He would have Darshan, Swami would send him. And in time he will be back in his office to do his daily duties.

So, one day he had come. Swami was with the students in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Some drama rehearsal was going on. It was Jesus or some student's drama was going on. And Chakravarthi Sir sends message to Swami: I have come. And then Swami sent word to him that he was busy watching the rehearsal of the students. If he wants he can go and come back again. But Chakravarthi Sir again sent word: I will wait. And this message was going up and down so many times and finally after the whole rehearsal was over, Swami got up, blessed the students, went to the Mandir was still waiting and then Swami called him talked to him and sent him.

When he came to Prasanthi Nilayam on his next visit, one of the elderly devotees said to him, "Sir I want to share something with you. Last time when you came to Parthi, I happened to be with Swami in the auditorium. When the rehearsal was going on and apparently you were waiting for him and He sent message to you that you could get back because Swami is busy. And you said you will be waiting for Him. But when this message was going up and down, at one moment, Swami turned to us and said, "Chakravarthi has come here today. If he goes back, without meeting me today, his life will take a particular turn. If he stays, and waits until I come and meet him, his life will take a different turn."

Chakravarthi Sir was in the Indian administrative service at the peak of his career, and one fine day...it was his prayer to Swami. One fine day, Swami said, "Come!" He gave up his career in the IAS and became the first Registrar of the University. If I were to introduce him I think I will say that here is a man, who had the proud privilege of recruiting for this University its future Registrars, Controllers, HoDs, Professors - all who mean something in running this whole University. So, life is all about choices - make the right choices in life - that is very important. Now, that does not mean that we have to give up our aspiration for the world. Not at all. Whatever aspiration you have for the world, align it with God. If you take that desire of yours and offer it to Swami, He can make something beautiful out of it. And what he can make out of it, you yourself would not have even imagined it in your wildest dreams. How Swami draws each one of us here is something amazing. When we come here, the kind of experiences which we have again are amazing.

I remember the first day here. At that point of time, the last building, you know the building next to the Poornachandra Auditorium are called West Prasanthi. So, the last building at that point of time was West Prasanthi 4. So, it was my first day and I went to the hostel with my admit card and the warden asked - what is your name? I said this is my name and he looked at his list. He said - your name is not in my list. I said - my God! But this is my admit card sir. The letter from the Registrar. What had happened at that point of time was that it was the first batch, as Sir said. So, a lot of things were still evolving. So, they took a decision in the University that everybody has to submit their 12th Class mark statement and only then the college will start. And they said that classes will be on July 1st.

Now my results. I was studying in Bengal at that point of time and my results were to be announced in August. Even in the interview I said - Sir I will not be able to submit my 12 class marks statements because it is going to come only in latter half of August. Sir even the IIT's, the IIM's, they also conduct their own entrance exam. They select based on their entrance exam. So please kindly, you have conducted your own entrance exam, so please take me on the basis of the entrance. I will not be able to give the marks statement on time.



And I was with my grandparents in Delhi, praying Swami – will I get a seat, will I get a seat? And finally, I had already booked my train journey to come to Parthi thinking that I am going to join. In the last post (on the day of my train booking), the selection letter arrived. We boarded the train and I came.

Here I arrive at the warden's office and he says, "You are not there in my list." I said what happened. When he read the admit call letter he said, "Okay, you come in the evening." I left our luggage with a friend of mine who had already joined. And my father had a confirmed railway reservation. He said, "I will not be able to be there." I said, "Do not worry. I will come on my own." The warden had asked me to come in the evening...so my father left and I was all alone. In those days Puttaparthi did not have auto rickshaws, did not have cycle rickshaws, pushcarts, nothing was there. Some porters were there. I did not know where they were there. So, I had my holdall at my friend's house here at West Prasanthi. So, I picked up my holdall and after the evening bhajan I was carrying it to the hostel.

So, carrying my bedding I reached the bus stand and it was so heavy. And I put it down and I was huffing and puffing trying to catch my breath and two small boys come up to me, white and white – and they ask me - brother are you coming to the hostel? Can we help you? I looked at them. They were half my height. In those days, VII Std. boys used to stay in the Senior Hostel. They were half my height. And I thought, how can I, at my age take help from these kids? But I was already panting and from bus stand if you have to reach the senior boys hostel you can imagine the distance. So, my need got the better of me and I said, "Okay! Both of you catch one end and I shall catch the other end," and we started moving and we reached the first gate of the college. And then two XII Std. boys came and they forcibly took the bedding from those two boys and said, "Aye! This is not for you to do. This is for us to do. You all are too small." And they forcibly took the bedding from those two boys and with the help of them I reached – I entered the portals of the Prasanthi Nilayam hostel. Jesus said in His message to His disciples - I loved you and served you, now you must love and serve each other same way.

I recall at this juncture an anecdote that happened in England. Now there is this famous English Channel, the water body between England and France. And there are many ace swimmers who have swum the English Channel and celebrated their achievement. So, they were travelling in a boat and this ace champion was also there and suddenly somebody fell overboard into the water and people started shouting somebody has fallen overboard and people were screaming and this ace champion was also there on board. Suddenly somebody recognized him and said – Aye! Are you not so and so? The man who had held a record a number of times of having crossed the English Channel. He acknowledged that he was. By that time, the man who could not swim had jumped into the water and brought him out and put him on board. So, this person asks him, “You are an ace champion. How come that this person who had fallen in the water, you did not do anything for him? And this man said, “We were not introduced to each other.” So, at that point of time I asked myself – when those 7th class kids came and helped me to carry my holdall, who introduced those kids to me? That is why when you enter Brindavan Hostel, there is this beautiful plate. It says: The home is a place where each lives for the other and all live for God. You have come into that beautiful ambience of the Lord.

I remember once Ravikumar Sir was in Kodaikanal and Swami narrated the story. Sir used to be in-charge, in those days, of admitting new students to the hostel. So, he introduced this practice when new students come. He will ask senior boys to help them because parents cannot go the rooms of boys. In fact, in 2010 when the NAAC committee came, Ruchir Sir was making the presentation for the Dept. of Commerce when suddenly one of the professors asked him, “Do you have ragging in your campus?” So I said, “Sir in our University, when the freshers join the campus the senior most boys carry their luggage for them to their rooms. And the professor said, “I am deeply touched!”

For all the things that they asked questions, when they gave their rating, 3.63 on a scale of 4 was the NAAC rating for our University. With that rating at that point of time at that time Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was one of the higher ranked universities in India, according to NAAC. What



makes it that? As Professor Sherali from Delhi was told – our senior most students carry the luggage of our junior most students. All these small little acts is what makes our University verily a Heaven on Earth.

I started speaking to you about gratitude. So, let me end with this. It is said - to speak gratitude is pleasant and generous. To enact gratitude is noble. But to live gratitude is to verily touch heaven. It is that heaven on earth that Bhagawan has created. Whether it is Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan, Anantapur, Muddenahalli...and it is for us to experience that heaven. I remember once the new year had just started. Swami said, "Tell the students every inch of their campus is permeated with my Divine vibrations. Every day I am here in Prasanthi Nilayam I express my gratitude to Swami. What a blessing it is for you to be in the Divine presence. And do not think that some of the experiences that I have had you cannot have. You will have different experiences.

A few months ago, there was a first Undergraduate boy here. He came out of the Mandir and he was talking to me for some time and then he said, "Sir! I find Sai Kulwant Hall awesome!" You know this is our students lingo nowadays. I said, "Why do you find Sai Kulwant Hall awesome?" "That photograph of Swami behind the Mahasamadhi, I find it awesome." My antenna went up a few more notches and I said, "Why do you find it awesome?" Then he said, "Sir! Whenever I look at that photograph, sometimes Swami smiles at me through the photograph, sometimes he winks at me through the photograph. So, I find it awesome!"

My dear students, especially freshers who have joined the University this year, this is an awesome place, make the best of your opportunity.



Sri Amey Deshpande

Doctoral Research Scholar, Dept. of Management & Commerce, SSSIHL



I will start with a story that was narrated in Swami's presence and how Swami had given a beautiful insight to it.

There once lived a rich gentleman in Rajasthan; he had three sons and all his property consisted of 19 camels. When this man was on his deathbed, he called his three sons and told them that he had decided to bequeath his property to them and saying so he passed away. The man had left a will behind, so they took it out and found that the father wanted:

Half of the camels to be taken by the first son

One-fourth of the camels to be taken by the second son and

One-fifth of the camels for the third son

Naturally the brothers quarrelled amongst each other as to who should get how much, because the fractions that their father divided his property into were absurd. The confusion was finally solved by a wise man who stumbled upon these brothers. In order to help them he gave away his own camel so that their division could be proper. Hence the brothers now had twenty camels, half of which i.e., ten were taken by the eldest son, one fourth of twenty i.e., five were taken by the second son and one fifth of twenty which is four were taken by the youngest son. Then the wise man took his own camel and left them pretty content with their fortunes.

After the story was narrated in Swami's presence, all the listeners marvelled at the division but Swami corrected them by saying that it was a story of unison. The one camel which was added gave meaning to the rest of the camels and in our lives that one camel is equivalent to God and the addition of God in one's life will give meaning to all his fortunes, else they have no value.

A brother who used to help clean the interview room for Swami, was very interested in cameras and photography. One day, Swami asked this boy to open a box and to his astonishment he saw a brand new SLR camera. Swami

then asked this boy to assemble the parts and the boy did so as he had learned it by then. He presented the assembled camera to Swami with its lens facing Bhagawan and Bhagawan fiddled with its parts asking if what he was doing was correct and somehow, He pressed the “click” button and the flash went off thus taking a picture. Swami presumed that he had spoiled the camera and asked the boy to keep it and take photographs of only nature. The boy very obediently did so and a few days later, he sent the reel to Bangalore in order to get it developed. When the boy received the developed photographs, he was horrified as all the pictures were off focus and therefore blurred, except one which the Divine hands had clicked in the very beginning.

Through this incident the boy learnt a very important lesson in life and also shared that lesson - If the focus of your life is God then everything will be clear and if the focus of your life is the world then everything is going to be a blur!

In this Institute of Higher Learning, the first three letters i.e. SSS, are the most important and most often we tend to write ‘SSS Institute of Higher Learning’, ‘SSS Institute of Higher Medical Sciences’, etc. and in doing so we forget that this ‘SSS’ is what really gives meaning to the rest of the words that follow. I once had written the abbreviations only and Swami reprimanded me saying I was lazy to even write “Sri Sathya Sai.” We all put in a lot of effort in doing “*naama likhita japam*” but we use abbreviations where we have an opportunity to take His name. Therefore, we must focus on the ‘SSS’ rather than the rest. The lives of Sathya Sai students have always revolved around Him, which is an acronym for the following:

H= Hostel

I= Institute, and

M= Mandir

Swami had further explained that *shravanam* which means listening, happens in the Institute, *mananam* or contemplation is done in the Mandir, and finally *nidhidhasanam* which is digesting or assimilation, is done in the Hostel.



The Hostel, Institute and Mandir are the three aspects of one's personality which are:

Who you think you are? The Body

Who others think you are? The Mind

Who you really are. The True Self

One day Swami visited the Sri Sathya Sai Hill View stadium and was explaining to the boys the importance of physical fitness. Incidentally, there was a student there who was thinking to himself that Swami should rather talk about 'atma' and spirituality and leave the fitness aspect to the young boys. To this, Swami immediately asked him what he was thinking and challenged him for an arm wrestling match. That was certainly a sight to see: God vs man. The boy agreed to it but he wanted to be soft with Swami thinking that Swami's frail physique was to be handled gently, but to his astonishment Swami's hand was like a rock and it wouldn't move even a micro meter!

Meanwhile, Swami was talking to other boys and also asked the Warden if he was providing the students with enough food. Swami then asked the boy to use both hands, the boy complied but he couldn't move Swami's hand even a nano meter. Swami asked three other students to help the boy, but His hand wouldn't move at all. Finally, Swami said enough and revealed to them the secret of His strength which was nothing but purity, from top to toe. He had never thought, spoken or done harm to anyone and through this purity, He derived all His strength and everyone is qualified to discover that strength. "I am God and so are you, it's just that I know it and you do not" was always the crux of Swami's teachings. This is why Swami called everyone "*Prema Swaroopalara*" because he believed that He was the embodiment of love and so is everyone else.

What are the two most fundamental and well-known teachings of Swami?
'Love All Serve All, Help Ever Hurt Never'.

The most important word in Love All Serve All is 'All. We should love



everybody including the people who hate us. We should not be confined to loving only 'our' things. As Swami says, "the purpose of education is not collection of facts but the concentration of mind." Education nowadays is just teaching the students to mug and cram things in our mind. The collection of facts is not a big deal nowadays as Google caters to all our needs and wishes. There is no point in cramming minds with facts when they can be known with a swipe. Swami had foreseen this 35 years ago even before Google was an idea. The only thing which can make us click in life is concentration of mind. I read an article which said that considering the level of automation happening in the world right now, in some 10-15 years' time, humankind may have nothing left to do. Tweets on Twitter, and half the posts on Facebook are auto-generated. A time will come when we will stop believing the person in front of us, because we will be unsure if he is real or generated by machines. Machine generated posts can actually influence our thoughts. Education gives us knowledge but does not teach us how to use that knowledge.

Through technology, we have been able to condense a 10-hour job into a 1 minute job. It is all through the knowledge that education has given us. But, does education tell us what to do with the remaining 9 hours 59 minutes? This idleness of mind is the root cause of terrorism and anti-social activities. Hence, concentration of mind is most essential.

In the Hostel, we get physical strength, and in the Institute, we learn how to concentrate the mind. This is what education should be. The definition of education that UNESCO gives is: learning to learn is education. Degrees are of no real use as the most a degree can do is take us to the doorsteps of a job. But how we live in society depends on our character and values, and this was what Swami wants us to learn. Look at some of our Radiosai brothers, they have no connection with the degrees they did and the job they are doing now. But still, they live a comfortable life with a well-paying job and a respectable name in the society. Mere collection of facts is not the point of education.

Years ago, while inaugurating the hostel stores, Swami held a boy's nose with his toes, when the latter bent to take *Padanamaskar*. The other boys were



fuming at the poor boy because they thought he was taking an extra-long *namaskar*, but actually, it was Swami holding the boy down. This is the love and sweetness of Swami. He could actually make everyone feel a personal connect to Him. We could literally cry, laugh, shout and lean upon Swami, and Swami would always be there for us.

The Hostel, Institute and Mandir are not just buildings, as a bit of one thing can be found in the other. Rather, we should take it time-wise.

One brother had a longing in his heart to serve Swami in any way. One day, when Swami came for Darshan, this brother found a bee in the path of Swami and tried to move it aside. Instead, the bee went into his leg, and stung him. Just then, Swami came and stood in front of this brother, and was talking to someone else. Adhering to discipline, this brother could neither shout loud nor could make any movements. Face clenched tight, he was waiting for Swami to move from there so that he could relieve himself from the pain and the bee. After about five minutes, Swami turned towards the boy and asked whether he really wanted to serve Swami now. He gave this experience as a proof that Swami notices even our littlest of thoughts.

All subsequent generations who have had a chance to stay with Swami, regard their previous generation as luckier because they were closer than the present generation. That's not all. The present generation also tell the subsequent generations that they were unlucky as Swami had moved far away. This is the irony of it.

Each of us feel that we love Swami more than anyone else, and that Swami loves each one of us more than anyone else. None of us would accept that somebody else loves Swami more than we do, or that Swami loves somebody else more than us. Hence, though generations have passed, the love which we have for Swami, and the love that Swami has for us has remained unchanged. Each generation has just felt and experienced it in a different way.

During Swami's visits to Kodaikanal, He used to give some boys a chance



to hold his hand as support when He walked by. One day, Swami gestured that the boy presently holding His hand was very fortunate, to which all the other boys agreed. But then, Swami contradicted him and said that holding Swami's hand is not as important as the 'yearning' to hold Swami's hand. All the great sages and devotees who had yearned for the Lord's form, were more fortunate than the ones now holding Swami's hand. In fact, of the devotees who were bestowed with physical proximity with the Lord, none of them attained Moksha or Liberation. For example, the Pandavas had physical proximity to Lord Krishna but didn't get liberation, while Parikshit got liberation while he never had physical proximity with Lord Krishna. Hearing the glory of the Lord is more important than the Lord himself! Therefore, Tulsidas got Liberation, but we have not heard about the liberation of Vibhishana or Sugriva.

Swami would get emotional on hearing to Meerabai's songs, or Thyagaraja's renditions. I used to think that Swami had committed a mistake by coming as an Avatar when none of these great devotees were alive. At least, He could have granted them their wish of seeing His Divine form and would have been pleased to listen to their heartfelt compositions in person. But then it dawned on me that Swami had intended people to understand that they would be making a mistake if they did not aspire to become like these great devotees, even after enjoying His physical proximity, which those great devotees did not have.

We will be more unfortunate if we do not make use of the lessons we learnt in the Divine proximity. Like Swami says, seek that, seeking which, we never would have to seek anything else. Seeking that bond with Swami is the master key to all the locks of the world. This bond is only heart to heart and not a physical bond. Let us pray to Swami that we never lose that connect with Him.

Dr. C N Sundaresan

Associate Professor, Dept. of Chemistry, SSSIHL



I would like to start by reciting a poem which was written by Swami to a devotee in Kolkata forty years back.

*There was no one to know who I am
Till I created the world at my pleasure; with one word
Immediately mountains rose up, rivers started running
Earth below and the sky above
Oceans, seas, lands and watersheds
Sun, moon and desert sands
Sprang up from no where
To prove my existence
Came all forms of beings
Speaking, hearing, flying
And all powers were bestowed upon them
Under my orders.
And the first place was granted to man-kind.
Come one! Come all!
Let us not be ungrateful called
Let us love him, love him and serve him.....Baba*

The greatest Good Fortune

The greatest fortune for us is to be born, live and walk in the era when God walked the earth and to be born in this holy land of Bharat. Fortunate were we, as Swami used to spend most of his time with His students.

Passion for Cricket

I had a passion for cricket and I wanted to become a test cricketer. But God had different plans. As an adolescent boy, I got into depression and used to miss the bhajan sessions regularly. I had a chance to participate in the Karnataka Summer Cricket Coaching Camp, when I was in the 10th standard. I was so addicted to cricket that in spite of seeing the benefits that a Sai student would get, I decided against it and rejected the seat in

Brindavan Campus (then Pre-University) and went on to join my former alma-mater, so that I could pursue my dream of becoming a cricketer.

When I went back to my alma mater, out of the blue, I came across a compilation of Swami's discourses on *Bhaja Govindam* given during the summer course of 1973 which transformed me completely. All my desires subsided and I became detached to worldly things. Nothing attracted me. Even my madness for cricket reduced. During this time, Swami guarded me from all sorts of bad company, my depression vanished and I became calm and peaceful.

I then decided to join Swami's college (Brindavan Campus) for my graduation.

The lesson thus drawn was that come whatever may God is always with you and will protect you. Face the challenges with courage.

A lazy sleepy boy

One morning in Brindavan, it so happened that Swami noticed that one boy had not gone for suprabhatam. Swami tickled him with His toe three times in a playful mood. The boy got disturbed and when he opened his eyes, he was in for a surprise, as Swami was standing there and he was blessed with padanamaskar!

Oranges

Once Swami had distributed oranges to the boys. There were only 30 oranges, but the number of boys was more than 40. But still, Swami went on to distribute the oranges and no shortage was felt! The best part was that each of the students relished the orange thinking that it had been created by Swami!

God's delays are not His denials

One day Swami came and asked the students as to who among us would want to participate in a drama performance. All the students present there, including me, raised our hands in expectation. However, unfortunately I did



not get selected for acting in the '*Bhaja Govindam*' drama put up in 1977. I was dejected. So, I started concentrating on drama costumes and sets.

Years later, I got selected to act in the same '*Bhaja Govindam*' drama in 1988 and have had the opportunity to perform in the Divine presence on several occasions since then.

In 1977, students used to prepare food in the hostel for Swami, and had the opportunity to serve Swami personally and they also had the unique chance of dining with Swami. Just two days before I was due to get this chance, Swami was upset with the students and we were not allowed to continue with the chance.

After fourteen long years, when I was looking after the dietary department in Brindavan, I got the chance of preparing food and sending it to Swami daily. This is how Swami blessed me with that lost chance!

During the 1970s, students used to collect rare photographs of Swami from devotees. These photographs were however very difficult to get. In 1993, I accompanied Swami to Kodaikanal. Swami gave disposable cameras to all the students to take photos. After the tour, Swami praised me for taking good photos although my photos did not come out well. It was then that Swami sowed the seed of photography in my mind. In 1999, I became the sole photographer of Swami in Trayee Brindavan. Whenever any VIP visited, be it ministers, prime ministers or presidents of various countries, I was the only person allowed to take photos of Swami with the dignitaries. This was how an old wish of mine was fulfilled by Swami.

Afghanistan

In 1979, Swami asked one of my classmates to go to Kabul (Afghanistan) to visit his father who was working there as a senior diplomat. That was the time when Afghanistan was in war and there was turmoil in the country. As soon as the boy landed in Kabul airport, he was shocked to see that the airport was guarded with soldiers. The boy was stranded in the airport as he did not have proper documents. The boy's father's friend recognized the boy and took him to his home. The boy's father then took him to a meeting. After knowing that

Swami had sent the boy, those in power said, “Since the light has sent you to Kabul for two weeks, we need not worry about the country. He will take care. Everything will be alright.” It seemed like they were adoring Swami way back in 1979! The flight in which the boy arrived in Kabul was the first flight and the flight in which he left was the last flight connecting Afghanistan to India during that period. Swami had planned everything for the boy’s journey.

Swami never lets his students down

When I was the photographer in Brindavan, Swami jovially told me not to look at women through the camera lens. This was imprinted in my mind. Once, Ms. P Susheela, the famous classical vocalist and her team offered a music programme in Sai Ramesh hall at Brindavan. After the programme, Swami asked me to take a group photo of Swami with the members of the music party. I wanted to take the photo as fast as possible so that Swami would not pass any remarks. In the process, the photos were taken slightly out of focus. The next day when I gave the photos to Swami, Swami said “Sunderasan, you wouldn’t have taken these photos.” Swami did not hurt me and yet He conveyed the necessary message.

Drama

It was the convocation drama in the year 1999. Swami took the drama very close to His heart and told the students to start practice in the month of October itself. Swami had instructed me to get drama costumes from Bangalore. He brought the best costumes available in Bangalore at a high daily rent. When the costumes were shown, Swami said that the costumes were not good and told me to return them. Swami then asked devotees from Anantapur to get some costumes. Not satisfied with those costumes, Swami asked devotees from Dharmavaram to get the costumes. Not satisfied with those too, Swami finally again told me to get the same costumes but for a much lower rent. Through this experience Swami taught me the importance of spending money judiciously.

Kaliyug Nataraj

For the same drama, Swami asked the dancers to show their progress in the dance item. Then Swami himself lifted His robe a little and showed them how to position the legs and explained the difference between Kuchipudi and



Bharatanatyam. Swami also showed some movements which were captured and relished solely by the students present over there!

His ever protecting Hands

It was in 1990. I was a professor at the Prasanthi Nilayam campus of SSSIHL. One evening, I was sitting with the students in the Prasanthi Mandir, when Swami signalled to the students to come forward. All the students rushed and fell on me, while trying to move forward towards Swami. That day Swami casually said that “Pleasure is an interval between two pains.”

The next day, my colleague and I were supposed to go to Bangalore to fill chemistry lab cylinders and buy some chemicals. Our plan was to finish the work and return by 4 PM so that we would not miss Swami’s Darshan. But, the next day, by the time we finished our work, it was already 7 PM. It was an eclipse day and it was very dark. I went home to handover some video cassettes to my mother. While leaving, unusually my mother applied vibhuti on my forehead. All the cylinders and chemicals were kept in a metal box in the van. The driver was driving fast on the highway that night. At one point he overtook two trucks and on seeing one more truck approaching from the opposite direction, the driver tried to quickly manoeuvre the vehicle which suddenly took a 180 degree turn. The van turned thrice in the air and fell. The driver had jumped out before the van lost control and only me and my colleague were there in the van. I fell from the van in slow motion like an astronaut falling on the moon. I sustained only a small scratch on my head, while three cylinders fell on my colleague’s back.

In the middle of the night, we saw a car going to Puttaparthi. The person in the car stopped and beckoned us to sit in his car. We reached Puttaparthi and my colleague was admitted to the General Hospital. The next morning when we went to Swami to thank Him, Swami narrated the whole incident and told us that it was He who protected them from the accident and said “Pleasure is an interval between two pains.” Later, when they recovered the van, they were shocked to see that not even a glass bottle had broken in the terrible accident!



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