

THE  
INDIA  
TODAY  
GROUP

# DIVINE GRACE

SATHYA SAI BABA

An **TODAY** **IMPACT** Presentation



# Sathya Sai Baba 1926 - 2011

The detractors say that 'sleight of hand' and 'magic tricks' won him followers. The devotees say that 'physical manifestations' earned him die-hard critics who were close-minded. The life and history of Sri Sathya Sai Baba reminds one of the proverbial fruit-laden tree. Some cast stones to pluck the fruits, others because it seems so tempting just to do it!

Critics do not accept him as a prophet. They ask – What religion or movement did he establish? He did not establish a particular faith, but in fact brought together humanity under the principles of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. He exhorted a Hindu to be a better Hindu, a Muslim to be a better Muslim and a Christian to be a better Christian. The symbol of his organisation has representations from major religions.

Everyone from Tibetan monks to Islamic scholars, Hindu pundits to Christian clergy, Sikh gurus to Buddhist preachers visited him and were received warmly. They were amazed at his deep understanding of their religious

tenets and often admired the insights he provided. The 'Vahini' series of books that he authored convey the greatest spiritual truths in easy and practical terms

The world applauds him for his massive social welfare projects - Drinking Water schemes, Super Specialty hospitals and free Higher Education. The critics

also acknowledge that fact while his followers parade it as a proof of his divinity. But both seem to miss the point. Sathya Sai Baba never believed that a few more buildings (however big or grand) would make the world a better place, as indeed a few ideas would transform mankind.

The schools and university were a result of the idea that education is a process of drawing out what is already latent in an individual. And that latent treasure is love, truth, right conduct, peace, understanding and compassion which he advocated all his life. The Sathya Sai Grama Seva or village service, wherein every student of the Sai University spends a fortnight going to villages distributing food and clothes, was instituted not so much to serve the poor but to instill the spirit and joy of service in the student. As the Founder Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, he advised the students to get a good name for themselves, their parents and their Alma Mater. He told them that he facilitated their getting a good education without a fee, simply because he was

convinced that education is everyone's birthright and that they need not feel grateful to him for this. But every student felt grateful to him not just because of the free education, but because of the love and faith he had in them. *"The students are my only property"*, he used to say and every student felt proud to be owned by him.

Again the hospitals and water projects were executed because he felt that water and medical care were also people's right. They should not be a costly purchase. Much has been written about these projects but very little has been said about how he wanted people to imbibe the spirit of service and love. He said, *"When a thorn pricks the foot, the hand automatically goes to remove it without creating an obligation for the foot to thank the hand. That is how service must be rendered."*

They also say that he surrounded himself with the rich, the famous and the powerful! Those indulging in such talk have perhaps not visited him. If his interactions with the poor, the suffering and the helpless are not known, it is

only because that was not considered as news and hence not reported. Sachin Tendulkar's visit to pay homage to him was splashed across the media in a variety of reports, but we did not read about the thousands of the lowly and the downtrodden, the homeless and the lost that stood in the queue for long hours to pay their last respects. Nor do they

talk about the massive housing project that he executed for the flood victims of Orissa or the Village Integrated Programmes that his followers implemented in the tribal regions of East and West Godavari in Andhra Pradesh.

And when it came to the question, *"Who are you? Are you God?"*, his reply always was, *"Find out who you are. You will realize that you too are God."* Godhood cannot be assumed merely by announcing it. People must accept it. If any of us ascend a pulpit and declare Godhood, how many followers will we draw? Starting as a poor boy in a drought-prone village that had not heard the sounds of a motor vehicle, today he has millions of followers world-wide. The village lad who threw away his history books has created history. But he always thrust Godhood back to the people, reminiscent of *"God you think, God you are; Dust you think, dust you are."*

The amazing stories of Baba's grace are such that even when he walked upon the earth, people scarcely believed him. Many came, saw, experienced and accepted him for





what he was. Some chose to stay in their own little coops, happy to heap scathing criticism. "Why explore something that is not possible?" seems to be the theorem. "When something is not logical, even if millions speak in about it, it must be false" is the corollary.

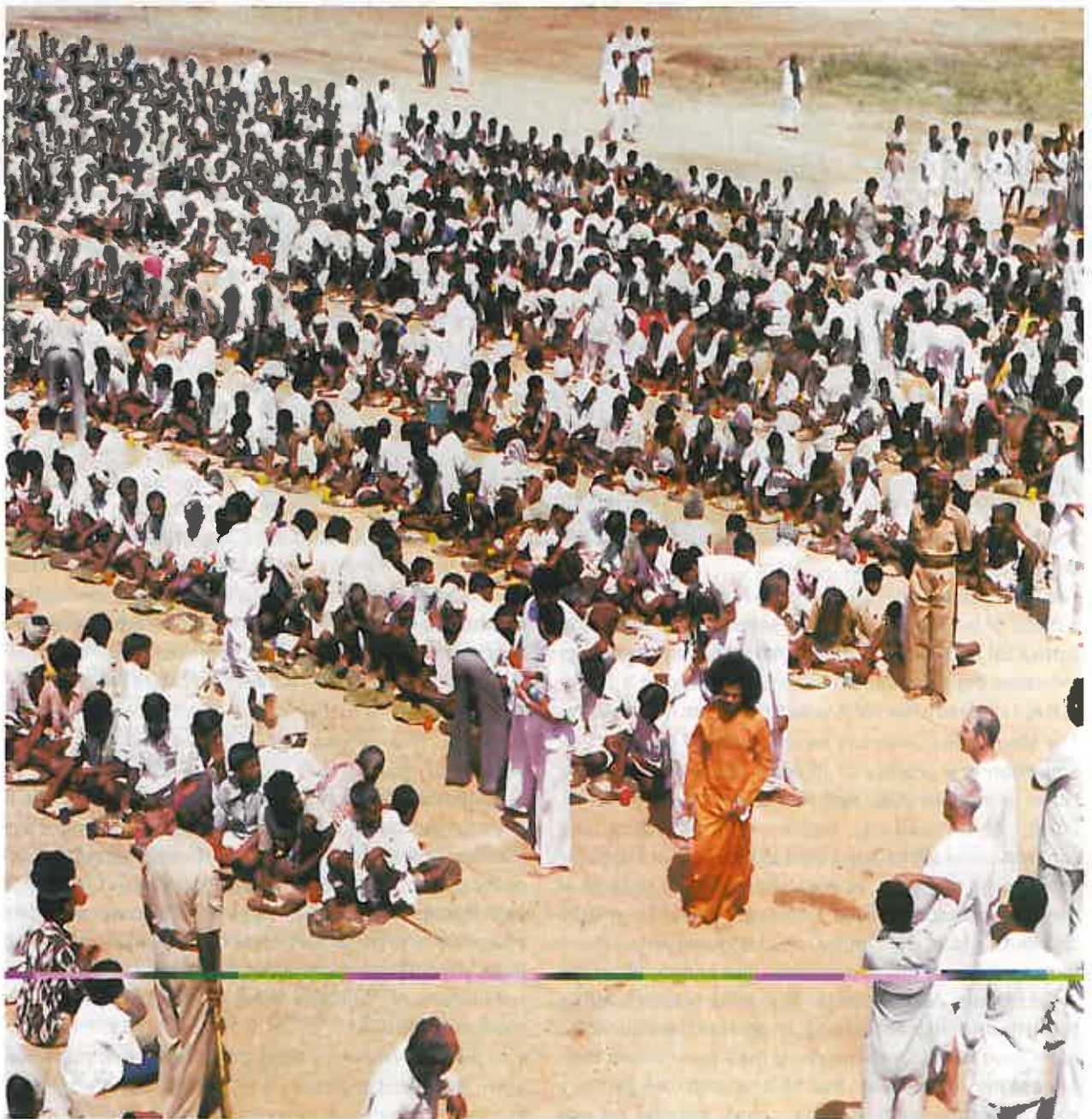
There is a lot of similarity between the detractor and devotee with respect to his or her passion, intensity and belief. However, there is one major difference. While the former quotes reports, newspapers and articles to emphasize the criticism, the latter only speaks of deep conviction born of personal experience! And that is the reason why one exhorts loudly to make a point while the other melts into silence when confronted. The rationale of the head never seems to gather enough momentum to overpower the conviction of the heart!

Baba himself has said, "For those who have experienced

*me no explanation is necessary. For those who have not experienced me no explanation is possible."*

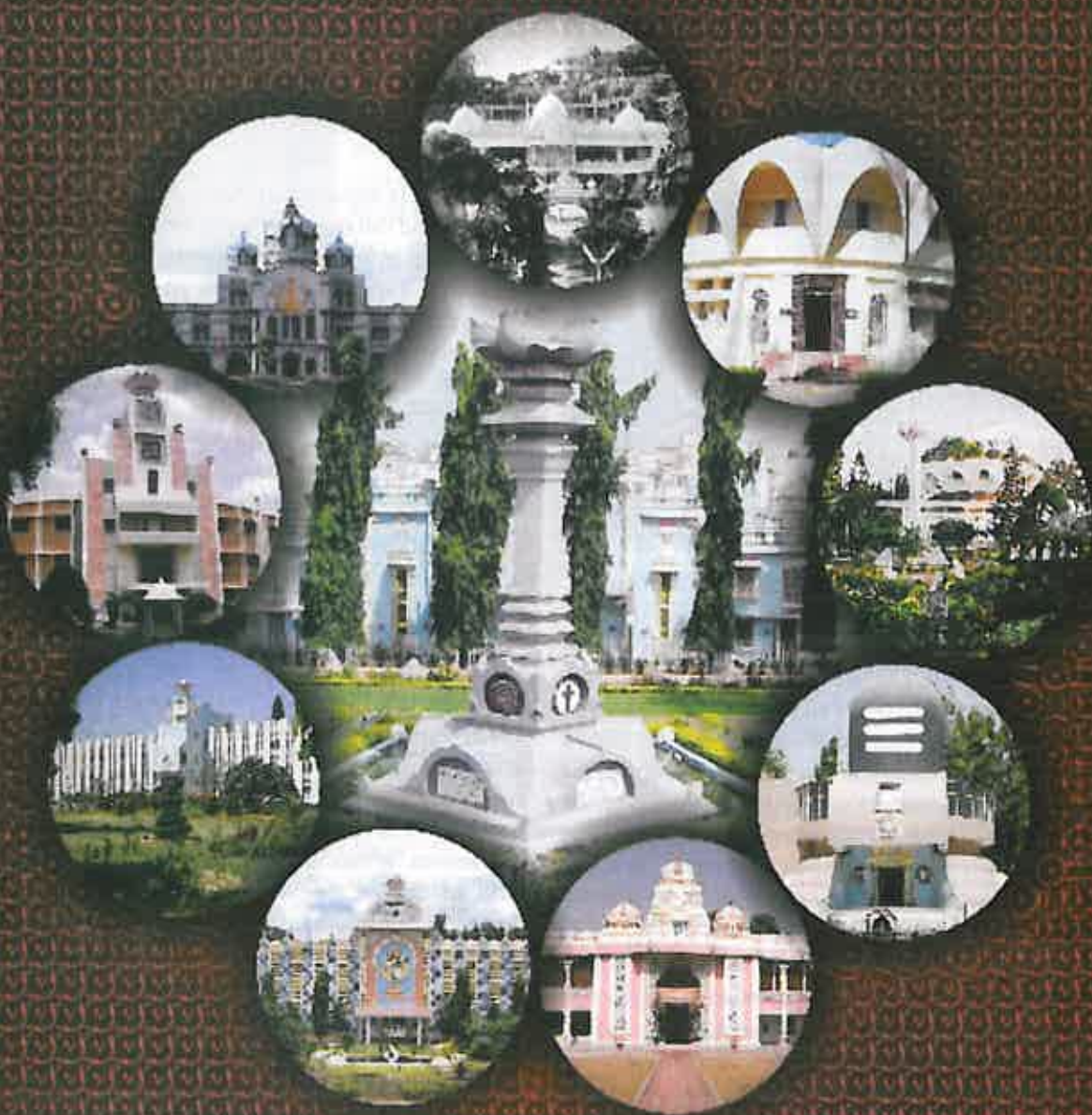
That is why those who have experienced him in their hearts believe that he lives on for he has said, "I am not the body". For them, he lives on forever and they receive guidance and help whenever they need. We are reminded of Albert Einstein who was scoffed at when, in 1905, he confirmed the particle theory of light through the photoelectric phenomenon which earned a Nobel Prize for him in 1921. Scientific experience evolved over the next two decades disproved this and established that light exhibits a wave-particle duality. And the experimental theory that light was only a particle was disproved.

When experiment clashes with experience, should we not go with experience? ■





# Life & Legacy



"I have come to light the lamp of love in your hearts, to see that it shines day by day with added lustre. I have not come to speak on behalf of any particular religion; nor have I come to collect followers for any doctrine. I have no plan to attract disciples or devotees into My fold or any fold. I have come to tell you of this Universal unitary faith, this Atmic principle, this path of love, this duty of love, this obligation to love."

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



# SRI SATHYA SAI BABA



## HIS STORY

were well-known for preserving classical traditions through theatre and drama. His grandfather, the venerable Kondama Raju had the whole version of the Lepakshi Ramayana, (a Telugu version in verse) on his finger tips. He also had the distinction of building a temple for Sathyabhama, the consort of Lord Krishna, following a dream-vision. Later on she became the village deity, Sathyamma.

Puttaparthi, (a distortion of Putta-varadhini or profusion of ant-hills) and the river Chitravati, which flowed beside it, are steeped in history and legend. Puttaparthi, in the district of Rayalaseema was a part of the erstwhile Vijayanagara kingdom of Krishnadevaraya. The neighbouring town, Bukkapatnam derives its name from one of its founders – Bukka Rayalu. However, over time, the warriors of this place turned away from war to the more spiritual pursuit of religious poetry and drama with the aim of preserving Bhakti and Dharma among the masses.

The original name of Puttaparthi was Gollapalli, veritably a land of milk and honey with cows and cowherds abounding in the area. According to a legend, due to a curse incurred by the killing of a mysterious serpent that drank the milk of one of the cows, the place lost its prosperity. With the cows dying of disease, it soon became infested with ant-hills and snakes. To atone for this, the village elders built the Venugopalaswami temple in the village with the very stone that killed the serpent, consecrated as the deity Krishna, and awaited their day of deliverance. Miraculously, as old-timers affirm, with the birth of Sathya, the anthills slowly disappeared and prosperity came back to the village.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba's birth was foretold by a family-ancestor called Venkavadhoota who was revered in those parts as well as in neighbouring Karnataka, as an Avadhoota, a seer who performed penance for the birth of a redeemer. On the day following his birth, i.e. on 24th November, 1926, Sri Aurobindo, the Savant of Pondicherry, is reported to have emerged out of a long meditation and declared to his followers about the 'descent of the supramental Krishna Consciousness into the terrestrial earth-realm' and withdrew into silence thereafter. There are also indications in the ancient palm-leaf manuscripts, Nadis, as well as in the quatrains of Nostradamus about the birth of such a one. There were several notable, inexplicable events associated with Sathya Sai's birth. His mother Easwamma recollected, how prior to her conception of him, a luminous ball of blue light descended from the heavens and entered her as she was filling water at the village well one day and rendered

**S**ri Sathya Sai Baba, addressed by his devotees as Swami or Baba or Bhagawan, was born on the 23rd of November, 1926, to a humble family in the heartland of rural South India, in the village of Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh. The target of both widespread adulation and some denigration during his lifetime, he has been a living God for his innumerable devotees spread across the globe. Often portrayed as a larger-than-life figure, he passed away on April 24, 2011, leaving behind grieving devotees and a vast socio-spiritual empire, with its headquarters at the Ashram established by him at Puttaparthi, called Prasanthi Nilayam.

India, where Sri Sathya Sai Baba lived, is an exotic land, a land of ritual and legend, of the mysterious and the fascinating, of the superstitious and the enlightened. Her people include the gullible and the cynical, the devout and the sceptic. Her customs are a blend of the old and the new, the ancient and the modern. Born in this country of contradictions, Sathya Sai Baba, who attained the stature of a legend in his life-time, had very humble origins. His story has parallels with the lives of other spiritual personages, who rose to fame from obscure beginnings. So what was so special about this village boy and what catapulted him and this tiny, rural hamlet of his birth to a spot on the world map? What were those factors that today has the SAI name being revered and the mantra 'Sai Ram', being chanted all over the world?

Sathya Sai Baba was born as Sathyanarayana Raju, to Pedda Venkappa Raju and Easwamma, as their fourth child. He was born in the clan of the 'Ratnakara Rajus', who



Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Parents 1950s

her unconscious, denoting that his birth was Pravesha (entrance) and not Prasava (normal conception); and of how the baby was born immediately after she partook of the Prasadam of the Satyanarayan Vrata observed by her mother-in-law,

Lakshamma. Musical instruments in the house used to be played by unknown hands at night and a serpent cradled the new-born babe in its swaddling clothes to slide away quietly and peacefully, when discovered by the wonder-struck family.

Sathya, as he was called, was a precocious and charming little boy. He played and frolicked with his friends on the banks of the Chitravati river and helped at home with household chores like fetching water and cooking vegetarian food for his grandfather! He had extraordinary compassion for the poor and needy, bringing every beggar home to the justified exasperation of his family. He attended school in the nearby town of Bukkapatnam due to lack of such facilities in his village and even became a Boy Scout leader. Then there were certain other special aspects to him – like forming a Pandhari Bhajan group of the children of the village, taking an active part in the historical and epic dramas enacted by his artistic family, composing ditties on social and moral issues and making the village lads sing them aloud, to the consternation of the elders. He kept away from non-vegetarian food like his saintly grandfather and avoided all places and events smacking of violence like village cock-fights or bullock-cart races.

All this finally earned him the appellation 'Brahmajnani' (knower of God) from the innocent villagers and 'Guru' (spiritual master) from his play-mates, who looked upon him with awe. There were also those glimmers of a 'something else' in him, which was revealed years later by his friends, when the world started coming to him. These contemporaries recall with pride how he would mysteriously materialise objects out of thin air or pluck off-season fruits from a now-famous tree called the Kalpavriksha, on the edge of the Chitravati river. During times of acute water-shortage, he would ask them to dig at some random spot and to their delighted astonishment, fresh water would gush out to slake their thirst. He would

also recite Sanskrit Shlokas melodiously, with no one around to teach them to him. However, these events would be weaved in with their normal lives, the explanation being that the village goddess, Sathyamma was responsible for them, and she would stop all

these if it were to be revealed outside that circle of children.

This even tenor of his life was however soon going to change and be replaced by something undreamt of by his family or well-wishers.

The event happened at Uravakonda, where he had been sent for high school studies under his brother's guardianship. The day was a Monday, the 20th of October, 1940. It was on this day, that little Sathya cast away his school books in an instantaneous, irrevocable gesture of detachment and called out, "I am no longer your Sathya, I AM SAI". Addressing his sister-in-law, who saw a blinding halo of light around him, he affirmed, "I am going; I no longer belong to you; Maya has gone; My devotees are calling Me; My work is waiting."

He refused to go back home and moved to the garden of the Inspector of Excise, Sri Anjaneyulu. There, sitting on a boulder, amidst trees, he sang his first Bhajan, "Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam; Dustara Bhava Saagara Taranam" (Oh mind! To cross the turbulent ocean of life, surrender at the feet of the Divine preceptor and sing His glory).

A photographer on the scene clicked a photo of young Sathya, with a small boulder intruding into the picture. When developed, the boulder had turned into the form of Shirdi Sai Baba, the saint of Shirdi, Maharashtra, then relatively unknown in remote Andhra (erstwhile Madras Presidency).

Prior to this there were some indications of the approaching storm as coming events cast their shadow. On March 8, 1940, there was the 'scorpion-bite' episode (later refuted by Baba), after which his personality underwent a complete change and convinced the people around him that he was possessed by a spirit. His 'symptoms' included: long periods of silence, sudden bursts of clairvoyance and clairaudience, learned discourses on the highest Vedantic truths, alternate laughing and weeping and so on. To cure him, the worried



Declaration as Sai Baba 1940



family tried many remedies, including inflicting torturous procedures by a Tantric. The young Sathya bore everything, including the excruciating pain of the exorcist in total calmness. As he explained later: "I wanted to make known that I am Divine, impervious to human suffering, pain or joy. Even after seeing all that fortitude and that miracle of a little boy passing unscathed through all that terror, you are not convinced that I am Baba. Then, how would you have reacted if I had just made the announcement one fine day?"

On the 23rd of May, 1940, Sathya called his family around him and materialised flowers and sugar-candy by a mere wave of his hand and distributed it to the gathering crowd of neighbours, curious onlookers and then his enraged father. The father took it all to be a trick and wanted the chapter to be closed. He armed himself with a heavy stick and threatened Sathya, "Are you a God or a ghost or a madcap?" Sathya replied: "I am SAI BABA. I belong to the Apasthamba Suthra; I am of the Bharadwaja Gotra; I have come to ward off your troubles. Worship Me on Thursdays. Your Venkavadhoota (an ancestral sage) prayed that I be born in your family, so I came. Keep your minds and houses pure."

This was the beginning of his spiritual mission, which as he

explained in a historic letter to his brother in 1947, was the moral and spiritual upliftment of the masses, with a focus on nurturing and caring for the poorest of the poor in society. He was determined that no power would stop him in achieving what he had set out to do and neither would criticism deter him from this sacred task.

From then on, till April 24, 2011, Baba relentlessly and selflessly worked for the welfare of humanity, through all means and ways available to him. His most important task was the transformation of mankind, so that they realised their innate Divinity. Miracles and materialisations, for which he was famous, were merely the means to this end of elevating the collective consciousness of people, after grabbing their attention away from worldly ways. Even the colossal social service projects undertaken under his vision and guidance had this aim. They not only reached out to the poor and the needy, but also called for the active participation of his devotees in practicing the values he preached, through service and self-transformation.

The following pages are illustrative of his vision and mission. After the timeline, which will provide a snapshot of his life, we will elaborate his legacy – Prasanthi Nilayam and all that he created in a span of a little more than half a century. ■

#### Letters written by Baba

Dear students!

Be like the star which never wavers from the crescent but is fixed in steady faith. When the sun is over your head, there will be no shadow. So too when faith is steady in your heart, it should not cast any shadow of doubt.

Do not take ill of others; take only of the good in them; all are good; if you see bad in them, it is because there is bad in you; if you do not like someone, do not mix with him.

Grace is the sunlight which will ripen the fruit; Sadhana is the sap which rises from earth. Both are needed by the tree in order that it may yield fruit.

With Blessings  
Baba.

Prasanthi Nilayam

16-12-79

My Dear! Have you got any spiritual hunger?

Spiritual hunger is the ultimate meaning of every activity in life. The dissatisfaction and the restlessness that remain even after obtaining all the necessities of life show that everyone consciously or unconsciously, does suffer from spiritual hunger and it is not appeased until the spirit within is realised. With out this divine discontent there is no real progress.

World-peace is possible when all the people of the world wake up to the facts governing universal life and when there is a heart-to-heart feeling of goodness, love and oneness among the inhabitants of the world.

With Blessings  
Sri Sathya Sai Baba

# THE SATHYA SAI ERA

**LEELA: 1926-1942**



Prasanthi Nilayam under construction-1949

**1926**

November 23 – Birth of Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Srimati Easwaramma and Sri Pedda Venkappa Raju of Puttaparthi welcome the birth of their fourth child Sathya Narayana Raju.

**1938**

Twelve year old Sathya writes and directs the play, "Cheppinattu Chesthara?" (Do you act as you speak?) that reminded the village folk to do as they say.

**1940**

20th October – Avatar Declaration Day

Fourteen year old Sathya Narayana Raju reveals his Avataric identity as the reincarnation of the Sai Baba of Shirdi. He composes and teaches his first Bhajan, Manasa Bhaja Re Guru Charanam, Dustara Bhavasaagara Taranam (O mind, surrender at the feet of the Guru to cross the turbulent ocean of life)

**MAHIMA: 1942-1958**

**1945**

On Vaikuntha Ekadashi day, the first Mandir of Baba is inaugurated in Puttaparthi.

**1946**

Baba visits Ooty, Hyderabad and Tirupati, drawing many people to him, through his magnetic personality and his inspiring interactions with them..

**1947**

- Baba delivers his first-ever public speech in Karur, in Tamil Nadu, starting the tradition of instructing through his discourses. Baba delivered over a thousand public discourses over the next 63 years.

- Baba writes a landmark letter to his brother, Sri Seshama Raju, outlining the purpose of his incarnation and the tasks that he would achieve in the years ahead.

**1950**

On Baba's 25th birthday, Prasanthi Nilayam Mandir is inaugurated.

**1956**

Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital is inaugurated at Prasanthi Nilayam, making it the very first medical care facility in the entire region.

**1957**

- At the young age of 31, Baba presides over the 9th All India Divine Life Convention at Venkatagiri, Andhra Pradesh which is attended by spiritual leaders from across the country.

- Swami visits Mathura and Rishikesh with His entourage. He stays at the Ashram of Swami Sivananda for a week and cures him of his ailing health.

**UPADESHA: 1958-1974**

**1958**



Baba commences the publication of the Ashram's monthly magazine Sanathana Sarathi on the auspicious Shivaratri day to spread his message of universal love and selfless service across the country and overseas. Baba himself writes for the magazine every month uninterruptedly for a quarter of a century. These series of articles are later published as the Vahini series. Sanathana Sarathi continues to be published monthly in English, Telugu and over 25 others Indian and foreign languages.



1960

The first volume of Baba's biography Sathyam Sivam Sundaram by noted historian Prof. N. Kasturi is published, offering a well-researched and comprehensive account of Baba's life till then. Over the next 50 years, 6 more volumes of his biography are published covering his life from 1960 to 2001.

1961

- Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna is conducted during the Dassera Festival at Prasanthi Nilayam. Vedic scholars from across India discourse on the universality of the Sanathana Dharma as a harmonious way of life.

The 1st All India Conference of office bearers of all organisations bearing Baba's name is held at Madras in Baba's presence. Also present are delegates from Hong Kong, China, Japan, East Africa, Sri Lanka and Norway. The Sai movement acquires an international profile.

1968

- Baba inaugurates Dharmakshetra, the Sai headquarters at Andheri, Bombay. The event coincides with the First World Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations. The event is attended by Dr. K.M. Munshi, founder of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Sri Morarji Desai, Prime Minister of India (1977-79) among many others. Devotees from Ceylon, Singapore, Philippines, Kuwait, Dubai, Casablanca, Mombasa, Nairobi, Kampala, Hong Kong, Fiji, Tehran, Tokyo, West Indies, Peru, Brazil and the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of America attend.

- Baba goes on his first and only international tour to the East African countries of Uganda and Kenya.

- Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for women starts at Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, making it the first college of the Sai University network of campuses.

1969

Sri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for men starts at Brindavan, Whitefield, Bangalore. Sri Veerendra Patil, Chief Minister, Karnataka is the Chief Guest for the function.

1970

Baba cures himself of a burst appendix at the residence of Sri Nakul Sen, the Lieutenant Governor of Goa at the Raj Bhavan.

1971

- President of India, Sri V.V. Giri inaugurates the new complex of Sri Sathya Sai Women's College at Anantapur.

- World War II veteran from Australia – Howard Murphet pens the book 'Sai Baba: Man of Miracles' which is published by Macmillan Publishers. This book introduces Baba, his life, miracles and message to the western world.

1972

- Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust established for charitable social welfare projects.

([www.srisathyasai.org.in](http://www.srisathyasai.org.in))

- Summer Courses in Indian Culture and Spirituality are conducted by Baba at the Whitefield Sai College for over a 1,000 college students from across India for a



Sai with Kondama Raju

With Swami Sivananda-1957

- Baba visits Ayodhya, Kashi and Badrinath with his entourage and then Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Dr. B. Ramakrishna Rao.

1963

Baba cures himself of paralysis and cerebral thrombosis during the Guru Pournima festival and declares that he is the Shiva-Shakti Principle. He also declares for the first time about the triune Avatars of Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai and Prema Sai.

1967



At Badrinath Temple-1961

With V.V. Giri, Former President Of India-1971



With Army Officers in Kashmir - 1980

month. These continue every year till 1979 and after a gap of a decade again from 1990 onwards.

1974

- The Sathya Sai Baba Organisation of America officially starts with Dr. John Hislop as its President. This organisation soon emerges as the engine of the International Sai Movement.
- Sai Movement spreads to Japan and South America.
- Baba's Ashram in Hyderabad, Sivam, is inaugurated on Ugadi Day.

**VIDYA: 1975-1990**

1975

- Baba inaugurates the Sarva Dharma Stupa in Prasanthi Nilayam – symbolising the unity of world religions, on his 50th Birthday. 2nd World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations is held at Prasanthi Nilayam, attended by thousands.
- Sai Movement begins in Indonesia, Australia, Switzerland, Germany and other parts of Europe.

1976

- Smt. Eswaramma High School inaugurated in Puttaparthi.
- R. K. Karanjia, editor of 'Blitz', a popular news magazine from Bombay, publishes an extended interview with Baba on his miracles, message and Avatarhood, after a two and half hour long interaction with Baba at Puttaparthi.
- Dr. John Hislop's Book 'Conversations with Sai Baba' is published in California. This has been an introductory book to Baba's philosophy for most western devotees.

1979-80

- Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts, Science and Commerce for men established in Puttaparthi
- Baba consecrates the Shiva Temple at his birthplace in Puttaparthi on the occasion of his birthday
- Baba visits Kashmir for a fortnight with his entourage of students; meets Governor and Chief Minister Sheikh Abdullah.
- Sai centres set up in Peru, Guatemala, El Salvador, Australia, Argentina, Chile and Taiwan.

1981

- Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (Deemed University) is inaugurated in Prasanthi Nilayam on

November 22nd in the presence of then Chief Justice of India, Justice Y.V. Chandrachud and other dignitaries and heads of state. ([www.sssihl.edu.in](http://www.sssihl.edu.in))

- Sri Sathya Sai Primary and Higher Secondary School is inaugurated at Prasanthi Nilayam.
- Baba's Ashram in Chennai – Sundaram is inaugurated.
- Loraine Burrows starts Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (EHV) in Thailand.

1982

First Convocation of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning is held at Prasanthi Nilayam; renowned jurist Nani Palkhivala is the Chief Guest for the function. The Administrative Building of the Sai University is inaugurated at Prasanthi Nilayam.

1983

- All India Bal Vikas rally held at the Hill View Stadium at Prasanthi Nilayam. Nearly 10,000 students and teachers from all parts of India participate in the rally.
- Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publication Trust is established. The Trust takes up the task of publishing books on Baba's life, mission and message. ([www.sssbpt.org](http://www.sssbpt.org))

1985

- Sri Sathya Sai Space Theatre and Sri Sathya Sai Institute Central Library inaugurated at Prasanthi Nilayam.
- 60th Birthday celebrations and 4th World Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisations attended by lakhs of devotees at Prasanthi Nilayam. Functions held for a week at the newly constructed Shanti Vedika in the Hill View Stadium at Prasanthi Nilayam.

1986

Baba inaugurates the Sai Shruti Ashram at Kodaikanal

1987-88

Sri Sathya Sai Organisation formed in Puerto Rico and Uruguay.

**VAIDYA: 1990-2005**



Inauguration of Super Speciality Hospital at Puttaparthi-1991



1990

Sanathana Samskruthi - the Eternal Heritage Museum inaugurated at Prasanthi Nilayam; Baba inaugurates the 65 feet high statue of Hanuman on the top of the mountain in the Hill View Stadium at Prasanthi Nilayam; 65th Birthday Celebrations of Baba attended by lakhs of devotees at Prasanthi Nilayam. President of India R. Venkataraman is the Chief Guest for the Sai University Convocation.

1991

- The first Super Specialty Hospital, the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences - inaugurated in Prasanthigram by the then Prime Minister of India, Sri P.V. Narasimha Rao. (psg.ssihms.org.in)

- Sri Sathya Sai Airport inaugurated at Prasanthigram.

1992

The first Sathya Sai School outside India, established in a very poor community in Vila Isable in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It served as an inspiration and a model for the founding of other Sai Schools.

1993

Prime Minister of Mauritius – Aneerood Jugnauth is the Chief Guest for the Sai University Convocation.

1994

Prema Deep, Baba's Mandir at Muddenahalli in Karnataka state is inaugurated.

1995

- On the auspicious Guru Pournima day, the Sai Kulwant Hall is inaugurated in Prasanthi Nilayam to accommodate up to 20,000 devotees at a time for Baba's daily Darshan.

- Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Supply Project, Anantapur is dedicated to the people of India by then President of India, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma on the occasion of Baba's 70th Birthday celebrations

- Ladies Day Celebrations commence for the first time as a part of the Annual Birthday celebrations of Baba. This becomes an annual feature in the years to come.



1997

- First Sai World Youth Conference at Prasanthi Nilayam is attended by thousands of youth from nearly 100 countries.

- Unity Cup Cricket Match held between India XI vs. World XI at the new world-class cricket stadium in Prasanthi Nilayam. Prime Minister of India, Sri I. K. Gujral hoists the World Unity Flag during the inaugural function.

1999

- In recognition of Baba's contribution in addressing the drinking water problems of Rayalaseema, the Department of Posts, Govt. of India releases a special postage stamp.

- Baba visits New Delhi and inaugurates the Sri Sathya Sai International Centre for Human Values. Prime Minister Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee is the Chief Guest at the Inaugural Function.

2000

- Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music inaugurated in Prasanthi Nilayam.

- Chaitanya Jyoti Musuem – a tribute to Baba's life





With President of India  
Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma-1992



With President of Sri Lanka  
Chandrika Kumaratunga-2003



Baba with Oman leader-2005

With  
at 80th

and message is inaugurated on the occasion of the 75th Birthday celebrations.

- Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva Project launched by Baba for serving food and clothing to over 3,00,000 villagers in 150 neighbouring villages of Puttaparthi. This project becomes an annual service project for the students and staff of the Sai University.

- Sri Sathya Sai Prasanthi Nilayam Railway Station is inaugurated at Puttaparthi. Train services from major metropolitan cities commence.

2001

- A second Super Specialty Hospital is inaugurated by then Prime Minister of India, Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, at Whitefield, Bangalore. ([wfd.sssihms.org.in](http://wfd.sssihms.org.in))

- Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Supply Project launched in Medak and Mahbubnagar Districts of Andhra Pradesh

- Radio Sai Global Harmony launched from Prasanthi Nilayam to take Baba's message of love and harmony to the world 24/7 via internet, satellite radio, and the e-magazine Heart-to-Heart ([www.radiosai.org](http://www.radiosai.org))

- Baba inaugurates Shivalayam at Nandanvan, Chakur in Maharashtra and visits Latur and Nanded in the hinterland of Maharashtra after the devastating earthquakes in these regions.

2002

Baba announces the launching of the Chennai Water Project on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Super Specialty Hospital at Bangalore. The project becomes operational on 23.11.2004, in record time.

2003

- UGC Golden Jubilee Seminar on Ethics and Education held at Prasanthi Nilayam; renowned academicians and heads of many universities across India including the Chairman of the University Grants Commission participate in the proceedings in the

presence of Baba.

2004

- President of Sri Lanka, Chandrika Kumaratunga visits Baba at the Whitefield Ashram

- Baba announces the commencement of the water projects in East and West Godavari Projects. These become operational in over 150 villages by 2007.

#### SANATANA DHARMA STHAPANA: 2005 onwards

2005

- "Festival of Joy", All India Conference for Bal Vikas students held at Prasanthi Nilayam

- 8th World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations and an International Medical Conference held in Prasanthi Nilayam on the occasion of Baba's 80th Birthday Celebrations attended by lakhs of devotees.

2006

- On the auspicious Ugadi day, Baba shifts to his new residence—Yajur Mandir.

- Sri Sathya Sai International Centre for Sports, an Olympic-standards Indoor Stadium, and the Silver Jubilee Commemorative Building of the Sai University inaugurated by then President of India, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.

- Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation started.

- Ati Rudra Maha Yajna conducted at Prasanthi Nilayam by Baba for universal peace and welfare; installation of the Sayeeswara Lingam in the Prasanthi Mandir.

2007

- Ati Rudra Maha Yajna conducted in Chennai in the presence of Baba; installation of Sai Sundareshwara Lingam at Sundaram; many Central and State Ministers, Chief Ministers and Governors pay their homage to Baba at a special function organised at the Nehru Stadium in Chennai.



With Prime Minister Manmohan Singh-2010



Felicitation for the





- Over 6,000 youth from 85 countries attend the 3rd Sai World Youth Conference in Prasanthi Nilayam. 2008

- Sri Sathya Sai World Conference on Education in Human Values held in Prasanthi Nilayam.

- Sahasra Poornachandra Darshana Yajna is conducted for three days at Prasanthi Nilayam; participated by spiritual leaders from all parts of India and by thousands of devotees in the Hill View Stadium 2009

- Sri Sathya Sai International Centre for Medical Services established with its main hub in Los Angeles, USA.

- A high profile conference on Ethics and the World of Finance held at the Sai University where India's leading bankers and financial experts participate; Baba addresses the valedictory function of the Conference.

- Baba inaugurates Sri Sathya Sai Panduranga Kshetra at Hadshi, Maharashtra and visits Mumbai; gathered for his Darshan are the political establishment, sportspersons, corporate leaders and multitudes during his short stay.

2010

- Baba inaugurates Sai Ananda Vilas at Shimla and visits Delhi; queuing up for his Darshan are central ministers, former heads of state, corporate leaders and his devotees during a week-long stay, the last visit outside Prasanthi Nilayam.

- The 9th World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai organisations held in Prasanthi Nilayam

- President of India Smt. Pratibha Patil is the Chief Guest at the Ladies Day Function at Prasanthi Nilayam.

- Baba gives his last public discourse on the occasion of the 29th Convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning at Prasanthi Nilayam in the presence of the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh and

other dignitaries.

- 85th year of Baba's Divine Advent celebrated across India and 125 countries; week-long celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam attended by lakhs of devotees.

- Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini Project, aimed at bringing quality education to the rural schools through technology inaugurated on November 23rd.

2011

March 1

Baba releases a special volume on the eve of the Maha Shivaratri festival – a compilation on his life and journeys over the past 8 decades titled – *Sri Sathya Sai Digvijayam* (1926 – 2005). This is the last book released by him.

March 28

Sri Sathya Sai Baba hospitalized.

April 24

Sri Sathya Sai Baba makes the transition from the form to the formless.

Over the next 3 days over half a million people pay their last respects to Baba at Prasanthi Nilayam. The Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh; UPA chairman Smt. Sonia Gandhi; Former Deputy Prime Minister L. K. Advani; Chief Minister and Governor of Andhra Pradesh; many heads of state, central and state ministers, corporate leaders, bureaucrats, spiritual leaders, sportsmen, musicians and eminent people from all parts of the country are among the lakhs of people who visited Prasanthi Nilayam on the solemn occasion.

April 27

Baba's physical form laid to rest at the sanctum sanctorum in the Sai Kulwant Hall with state honours and a multi-faith ceremony at the very spot where he used to sit daily and grant Darshan to thousands of devotees.

July 15

Sacred Maha Samadhi unveiled on Guru Pournima day at Prasanthi Nilayam.





# The Ashram And Its Environs

**Y**ou yourself will see the full glory unfolding in the coming years", wrote Baba to his brother Seshama Raju in a letter in 1947. True to his words, the change is there for the world to see. The sleepy ant-hill infested Puttavardhini is now a bustling 'Glocal' township.

Every man and woman walking the streets of Puttaparthi has a story to tell, an experience to share, a burden to shed, and a search to exhaust. The imageries are diverse, and options unlimited. You can meditate under the Kalpavriksha, or pursue international commerce. Along its alleys you will find a visitor en route Tirupati doing his rounds of the pilgrimage centres of the country, or a seeker of Truth from Mauritius; a saffron-clad ascetic from the Himalayas roaming the narrow streets, or a Vedantin from California reveling

in silence and solitude; a vagabond wandering aimlessly, or a humdrum family touring in awe. Puttaparthi is truly an international community.

But where Puttaparthi ends, Prasanthi Nilayam begins. Beyond the din and roar of the bustling town, on the other side of the imposing Gopuram gate, there awaits an opportunity to open up and immerse yourself in a new life. Enter the Ashram, enter the township of Prashanti Nilayam, and you enter a new world altogether. Baba said that it is not just an Ashram but also a workshop, where you are shaped, forged and transformed. How much you are transformed depends completely on yourself.

What does this workshop contain? What is its layout? What are its assets? ■



Yajur Mandiram Complex, Prasanthi Nilayam



# Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram

*The Haven Of Highest Peace*



Sanctum Sanctorum, Sai Kulwant Hall

**E**stablished by Baba on his 25th Birthday on November 23, 1950, the Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram has grown in stages over the past 6 decades. From minimal facilities for devotees of Baba staying full time at Prasanthi Nilayam to the full-fledged township that it is today, the Ashram at Puttaparthi has come a long way. In the 1950s, people visiting Baba from different parts of India, especially during the festival occasions, would get their own cooking facilities, sleep under the trees and visit the Chitravati river for their morning ablutions. Today the Ashram has three canteens catering to the south Indian, north Indian and western palates. Electricity came to Puttaparthi in the early 1960s and the first telephone connection came in mid 1960s. Slowly there was an increase in the number of people staying at the Ashram permanently and hence permanent accommodation facilities were first provided from the 1970s. Today, the Ashram has over 50 buildings providing accommodation to devotees coming in from all parts of India and the world, sometimes numbering over a hundred thousand on festival occasions. The charges for these are nominal, varying between Rs. 35 to Rs. 150 per room per day. Besides these, there are sheds which have been constructed for people who may not be able to afford even these rates and can stay by paying Rs. 5 per day per person. Over the past six decades, the Ashram has seen many structural changes, yet the philosophical foundations on which Baba built the Ashram remain intact. And hence, even today, nowhere in the Ashram is there a hundi or a money collection facility, as is common in Hindu and other religious shrines and Ashrams. Anyone desirous of donating money has the facility of depositing the same in the State Bank of India branch within the Ashram premises.

The Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram and its associated establishments within the Ashram premises got the status of a township by the Govt. of Andhra Pradesh in 1972. While the floating population keeps varying on weekly

basis, the permanent population of the Ashram in between 10,000 to 15,000 residents. The Ashram is self-sufficient on most counts. It has full-fledged food facilities ranging from Rs. 6 for a full meal to special meals available for foreigners not accustomed to Indian tastes. The Ashram has a full-fledged shopping centre for items of daily necessity, a book store providing extensive Sai literature (through print, audio and visual media), and libraries, reading rooms, auditoriums, convention halls, digital studio, accommodation for state guests, and an extensive security system manned by Seva Dals all through the year. The Ashram is in close proximity with the Sathya Sai Airport, the Prasanthi Nilayam Railway Station and the Puttaparthi Bus Depot. The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (Deemed University) and the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences are a part of the larger Sai community at Prasanthi Nilayam. The Sathya Sai Space Theatre (inaugurated in 1985 on Baba's 60th Birthday) the Sanathana Samskruti World Heritage Museum on Unity of World Religions (inaugurated in 1990 on Baba's 65th Birthday) and the Chaitanya Jyoti Museum on Baba's Life, Message and Mission (inaugurated in 2000 on Baba's 75th Birthday) are special locations for all those visiting Puttaparthi. However, the center of attraction is Baba's Mandir and Darshan Hall where he used to give Darshan for over 60 years, and the sanctum sanctorum of which now houses his Maha Samadhi. The schedule of the Ashram always revolved around Baba.

For 43 years, Baba lived in the Prasanthi Nilayam Mandir (upstairs) in a very simple facility. The size of his room is said to have been 8 feet by 10 feet with simple furniture including a study table, a cupboard and a wooden cot. It was only in 2006, at the insistence of his devotees that



Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram Gopuram

Baba shifted to the Yajur Mandir complex. The highlight of the Ashram schedule was the Darshan that Baba would give those gathered twice a day, every single day, for over 6 decades. Darshans were followed by personal interactions with select devotees (chosen by him from those gathered for Darshan), wherein he would respond to their queries – spiritual, personal and professional. Both sessions of the day would end with 30 minutes of Bhajans in Baba's presence. These included collective singing of various names of Gods belonging to all religions and faiths. Since Baba's Maha Samadhi, the Darshan has been substituted by Darshan of the Maha Samadhi. After the completion of the Bhajan sessions (both in the morning and the evening), all gathered have the opportunity of going near the Maha Samadhi in orderly lines and even touch the Maha Samadhi and make floral offerings and submit personal letters in a special basket.

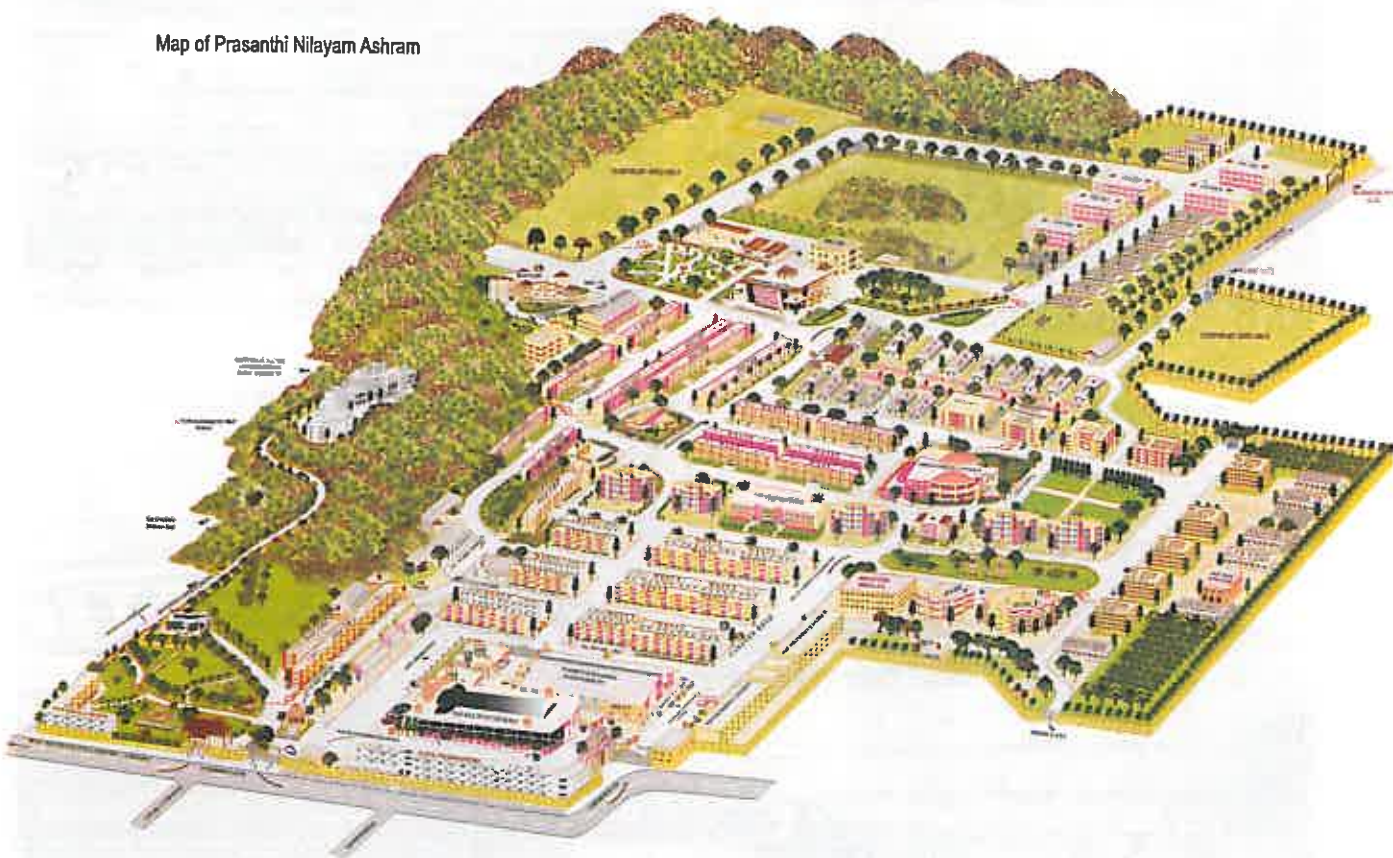
The Ashram is run by a number of honorary workers belonging to various walks of life, who have settled at the Ashram after their retirement, to offer their services to Baba. Along with them are a number of former students of Baba who are highly qualified (some of them have completed their MBA and MTech from the Sai University)

and are serving in providing crucial services in the Ashram in various capacities. Over 4000 people are thus engaged in performing several functions.

It can be said that for over 60 years, Baba personally supervised, guided and nurtured the Ashram and the spiritual aspirants who stayed there. The Ashram at Prasanthi Nilayam, which is the headquarters of the Sai Mission, has always been a unique element of the Sai Mission. It is from here that Baba started all his landmark initiatives. A unique blend of the ancient and the modern, the Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram is a haven of peace (as its name suggests) and an experience of staying therein would further validate this claim of devotees and members of its community.

Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram is thus a world in itself, a world where till recently the physical form of Baba resided. Similar Ashrams have been established by Baba at a dozen locations (including most metropolitan cities) across the country. The objective of all these is to provide spiritual aspirants and Baba's devotees an opportunity to stay in an ambience to further their spiritual progress and work towards the ideal of 'Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God' propounded by Baba. ■

Map of Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram





# Sathya Sai Ashrams Estab



Prasanthi Nilayam-1950  
Puttaparthi



Dharmakshetra-1968  
Mumbai



Brindavan - 1984  
Bengaluru



Sai Sruthi - 1986  
Kodaikanal



Nandanvanam - 2001  
Chakur, Maharashtra



# *Lished By Baba Across India*



Sivam - 1974  
Hyderabad



Sundaram - 1981  
Chennai



Prema Deep - 1994  
Muddenahalli, Karnataka



Sri Sathya Sai International Centre - 1999  
New Delhi



Pandurang Kshetra - 2009  
Hadshi, Maharashtra



Anand Vilas - 2010  
Shimla



# Radio Sai

**B**aba's 86th birth anniversary on the November 23, 2011, was a poignant experience for millions of his followers. It was the very first time they were celebrating this day in the physical absence of Baba. During the week-long festivities, apart from the nearly hundred thousand devotees that came in person to the ashram, millions more participated virtually, in real time, thanks to the live feed provided. Radio Sai effectively emerged as Prasanthi Nilayam's digital connection to the rest of the world.

It all began in September 2001, when after a meeting with Baba, World Space founder Dr. Noah Samara offered to dedicate a free channel to air Baba's message around the globe. Soon World Space satellites were beaming programmes from Prasanthi Nilayam over Asia and Africa. Next to follow was the digital portal [www.radiosai.org](http://www.radiosai.org) allowing the Americas and rest of the world to log on to programmes round the clock via the internet. On the 29th of August 2002, Baba personally inaugurated the state-of-the-art Prashanti Digital Studio located next to the Ashram's Information Technology Centre. Since 2008, a modern and well-equipped Video Recording Studio is being used for recording interviews and musical programmes by top musicians from India and abroad.

Both the studio and Radio Sai office remain dedicated to categorizing, archiving and disseminating Baba's message of love and harmony, via various media such as video, audio, internet, radio and print. Apart from providing live feed on major Ashram celebrations and events, Radio Sai studios also produce special video programmes for

*Prasanthi Nilayam on Air* broadcast via TV channels, generate audio content for its 24x7 digital radio channel available on World Space Digital radio sets as well as online at [www.radiosai.org](http://www.radiosai.org). To extend its reach, Radio Sai has also made available its services on Airtel mobile phones and downloadable Apple Apps.

Within a decade, Radio Sai has developed 6 dedicated channels available over the internet. All Radio Sai online services are offered absolutely free of cost to its subscribers. These include its popular e-journal 'Heart2Heart' as well as the daily dose of inspirational messages dispensed through the daily 'Sai Inspires' thought for the day.

A keen ear to its vibrant feedback line has kept Radio Sai programming dynamic and up to speed with evolving technology. Experiences of students and devotees, stories of Sai movement and service activities in different countries, patient profiles from Sai hospitals as well as detailed accounts of events and festivals held in the ashram have the highest hit rates.

For ten years now, Radio Sai has been a lifeline for many Baba devotees from all parts of the world, connecting them to Prashanthi Nilayam. When Uday Sane, a sailor wrote to Radio Sai, "I work in a ship and am presently sailing across the Arabian Sea. During my navigational watch-out at sea, I have Mother Sai with me, literally talking to me through Radio Sai", he was only echoing the sentiments of hundreds of other listeners from afar who felt that thanks to Radio Sai, they continuously felt Baba's inspiration. ■

## Sanathana Sarathi

*Magazine for the devout*



**W**hen Baba was staying at a devotee's place in Wilson Gardens, Bengaluru, Kasturi, then a Professor at the Mysore University, went to meet him. Baba spotted Prof. Kasturi, went towards him, and without any preamble instructed him, "Now, you have to work at Puttaparthi. A monthly magazine will start soon." Baba continued, "Guess what is it going to be named?" Kasturi confessed that he could not decipher Baba's will. On further insistence, though, he hesitatingly gave a few names: 'The Godward Path, Karma Dharma, Premayoga'. But Baba waved aside all these titles and announced that he had decided the name already. The magazine would be named 'Sanathana Sarathi'. Thus was born the magazine that has remained the mouthpiece of Baba for the last 52 years. Kasturi was the first editor and remained so from 1958 to 1987.

The first issue of the magazine was printed at a press in

Dharmavaram. Later when Baba visited Bengaluru, he himself went to the Vichara Darpana Press on the Avenue Road along with Kasturi and bought a foot-operated treadle printing machine. Baba also bought a case each of Telugu and English types and the other necessary equipment to set up a printing press at Prasanthi Nilayam.

Initially, Baba was writing a series on Upanishads. After dispatching the magazine on the 16th of each month, Kasturi would go to Baba for the next part of the series. Choosing the Upanishads himself, Baba would ask Kasturi to wait for a while in his room and proceed along the verandah with a notebook and pen, towards the room where there stood a table with a chair by its side and nothing else besides. On one such occasion, Baba was supposed to write on the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the most voluminous of the ten major Upanishads. Kasturi recalls, "I am certain that Baba had never read it or consulted others who could talk on it. And there was no copy available anywhere within miles. But forty minutes after he moved out with the pen and the notebook as his sole possessions, I could descend the eighteen steps from his room with a ten-page dissertation on the truths this Upanishad enshrined!"

Baba wrote continuously for this magazine for 25 years. This must be a record of sorts for spiritual journalism!

Of the many institutions built by Baba, people often consider the educational institutions, hospitals and the water projects as the foremost. But should the criteria not be 'social value added' to society but 'spiritual value added', Sanathana Sarathi (literally meaning the Eternal Charioteer and figuratively referring to God within) will

probably be among the foremost in the list.

Today, Sanathana Sarathi is published in almost all Indian languages. While the English and Telugu editions are published from Prasanthi Nilayam, other languages are published from the respective regions in India. The international editions of Sanathana Sarathi are published in Chinese, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian and Spanish from the respective country headquarters. We are unlikely to find another spiritual magazine which has such a large number of subscribers in all parts of the world and which is being published every month in so many languages of the world. The uniqueness of the magazine is that it is purely focused on Baba and his universal message; the magazine is devoid of any commercial motive, carries no advertisements, and for decades has had an annual subscription fee of just Rs. 20. Sanathana Sarathi is an example for world media of how a magazine can disseminate elevating and inspiring literature without focusing on commercial considerations. Establishment of a separate Publications Trust or Division had been a natural development. The present Publications Division complex is located at the foot of a green hillock on the west side of the Ashram. The present multilevel publication division also has a large Book Centre with over a thousand titles on Baba's Life and Message on its stands, published in more than 40 languages. There is also a Library cum Reading Room forming an important wing of the Publications Division. The Library has about 22,000 books written in 55 languages across the world on various religious, spiritual and ethical matters. ■

## Sai Alumni

### *The Leaders Of Tomorrow*



*"This University will confer on its alumni the courage and confidence, the knowledge and the skill, to shape their careers by their own efforts, standing on their own feet and relying on their own strength."*

- Sathya Sai Baba

8 October 1981, Prasanthi Nilayam

The unique aspect of being an alumnus of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, and allied educational institutions established by Baba, is the strong links that students form, not just amongst themselves, but also with the Institutions set up by Baba. These include the University, various Trusts, Ashram, Hospitals, Service Organisations and various other projects that have evolved over the years. Several alumni, as a mark of gratitude and dedication to their Alma Mater and their Guru, have chosen to stay back and serve in the Institutions set up by Baba. More than 300 alumni, both men and women, are currently serving in Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and allied educational institutions, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences and allied medical institutions, and Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and allied institutions affiliated with Baba's Ashram at Puttaparthi and Brindavan (Bengaluru).

While majority of the alumni reside in India, many of them (close to 26% according to a recent survey conducted by





the Institute) are spread across the globe. The alumni are engaged in varying professions that include the large corporates, education and health sector, administrative services and the government, entertainment, media, etc. Many of them have become entrepreneurs and have started their own businesses, NGOs and other establishments. The story of their success on the professional front is evident by the extensive positive feedback that the Institute receives from the employers and by the frequent testimonials that are given by the heads of the Institutions where the alumni have made an impact. *"Sai Students",* notes Mr. Venu Srinivasan, CMD, TVS Motor Company Ltd., *"have a sense of simplicity and humility about them. It could be mistaken for the lack of aggression or passion, but it is untrue. There is a sense of detachment; hence, they do not feel the necessity to wear their hearts on the sleeve. They have a passion to work hard, and that is the training given by Baba."*

One quality that is common to all these alumni across all professions is their passion to serve society. As Mr. N.T Arun Kumar, MD (India and China), UBS Ltd. and Former CEO of Dun & Bradstreet TransUnion Pvt. Ltd. observes, *"Sai students work professionally as rendering a service as against pursuing a professional ambition. Versatility, adaptability and service orientation are three qualities that are unique in Sai students not just in India, but globally. Almost 10 percent of our workforce comprises of students from the Sri Sathya Sai University. They can hit the ground running and are able to do various roles, straddle different responsibilities without too much induction or training. The ease with which they adapt to the office environment and culture is remarkable."*

Over 10,000 men and women have graduated from the portals of the Institute since its inception. Many of them are occupying leading positions in Government, Business and Society. Many alumni join the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations in their respective towns and cities and

participate in service activities. Others plan service activities as a part of their weekend schedule. It is not uncommon to find alumni of the Institute, after a hectic work week, spending their holidays and weekends participating in village service activities, free medical camps, serving food to the poor, coaching academically weak children, teaching the blind, attending to the elderly in old age homes, entertaining children in orphanages, visiting patients in the hospitals, visiting prisons to interact with the prisoners, and many more. Some select alumni have stretched themselves further to organise large-scale group-based service activities, either in the organisations they work in or privately. Some others have started their own service organisations or NGOs too. A few examples that stand out are the 'iDo' initiative for corporate social responsibility started at D&B TransUnion Analytics and Decision Centre, Chennai; United Care Development Services (UCDS), a not-for-profit company that brings a post-pay and result-based approach to development finance in the areas of Education, Health and Energy & Environmental services for the poor; SAI SEVA (Serve And Inspire Sustained Employment for Village Advancement), a pioneering Rural BPO started in Puttaparthi; and 'Sai Anandam' a home for destitute children started in Barang near Bhubaneswar, Odisha; and 'You See', an NGO focusing primarily on imparting education to the impoverished.

The performance of the University alumni in their respective professions and institutions and in their social and family life is evidence of the success of the experiment of values-based integral education offered at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, over the last 3 decades. The lessons learnt by the students in this University are not confined to the period of their stay here. They carry these lessons and the message to the rest of the world. This is the expectation of the Founder Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Baba from each of the students graduating from this University. ■

# Seva Dal

## *Baba's Army Of Love*

**T**hey will fold their hands and request you to stay in the queue. They will stay awake all night guarding your premises. They will help the infirm cross the path in the Ashram. They will clean the vessels in the canteen. The skillful among them will drive a garbage van. Some will oversee plumbing work in your bathroom, while some will clean the lavatories. And all this with love in their heart and a smile on their face. At their homes they could be farmers, doctors, truck-drivers, professors, bankers, government officers, carpenters, laborers, or corporate executives; they could be from Sikkim, from Kerala, from Punjab or from anywhere across India. They could belong

Baba, the sight of 'Sai Ram'-wishing scarf-clad Seva Dal is a refreshing sight in a world filled with object materialism. Be it in the Mandir, the canteen, or the Super Specialty Hospitals, one cannot but admire these men and women drawn from all walks of life and from all over India rendering Seva with expectation of virtually nothing from those who get served by them. This 'Love Army' created by Baba five decades back, stands out as a spiritual essay in Human Management.

How does one become a part of this 'Love Army'? The very basis of metamorphism of a normal person into a Sri



to any religion – Muslims, Christians, Hindus or Sikhs. These are the ubiquitous Seva Dal volunteers who keep Prashanti Nilayam ticking.

Mr. Vijayaraghavan is an international banker and a technocrat. When he returned to Chennai, he got an opportunity for Seva (selfless service) for ten days at Prasanthi Nilayam – Baba's Ashram at Puttaparthi. At the end of this period, his following observation succinctly sums up the impact the Seva activity had on him. *"I returned to Chennai after ten days of an exceptional journey – no personal goals, no achievements to record, no competition to contend, but just to serve and to experience the unlimited energy such a mental attitude unleashes."*

To anyone who visits Prasanthi Nilayam, the abode of

Sathya Sai Seva Dal is Sri Sathya Sai Samiti, the very foundation of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. Inspired by other Seva Dals, a person first becomes a member of a Samiti nearby. Regardless of his status, he is treated as equal among all the members. As a new comer he gets attracted by the love shown to him by one and all in the Samiti irrespective of their social standing, financial status or educational credentials. There is no membership fee. The process of training begins here. There are about 1,50,000 such Seva Dal volunteers, in addition to 75,000 registered youth in the country. These volunteers are trained and briefed before the 21 State Sai Associations allocate them for different activities.

There are two aspects to Sathya Sai Seva activities – the





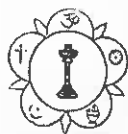
first is the yearly volunteer service 'Prashanti Seva' rendered by the Seva Dal at Prasanthi Nilayam, and the second is the service rendered by them throughout the year in their respective hometowns. The yearly voluntary service of 10-30 days each time for each State is an opportunity for service that these 2,25,000 men and women look forward to. About 1500 such men and women are the sentinels of service everyday at Prasanthi Nilayam. They travel to-and-fro to Prasanthi Nilayam at their own expense.

The array of opportunities that Sri Sathya Sai Organisations make available to its members is remarkable. Regular 'Narayana Seva' (feeding the hungry), medical camps, geriatric service, special service at cancer and leprosy wards, antenatal care in slum areas, organizing scribes for the visually challenged, maintaining order, during festivals, educating street urchins, both pre and post-operative assistance to cataract surgery, blood donation camps and organising blood donors, distribution of prosthetics and tricycles to physically challenged, skill training to women from weaker sections of society, planning and running skill schools for the rural youth, conducting cattle camps for the rural live stock, providing drinking water, and sanitation facilities for small rural hamlets are some of the noteworthy avenues for Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal. The crown-jewel of all these is the Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme (SSSVIP). SSSVIP gives the Seva Dal members the rare opportunity of serving the rural poor through systematic and integrated approach in the areas of Agricare, Educare, Medicare, Sociocare and Spiritual care.

What motivates these people? What makes a Seva Dal to get up on an early morning of a Sunday, travel 50-100 km in the dust, walk miles in the scorching sun, just to serve poor villagers? It is nothing but the smile on the face of the beneficiaries that gives the volunteers the much-needed energy to come again the next Sunday.

Today, especially in the physical absence of Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal stands tall representing the human face of Baba's mission. This 'Love Army' is a practical demonstration of Baba's often repeated advice, 'Love All, Serve All'. ■





**Bhagawan Sri Satguru Sai Baba**

Prasanthi Nilayam P.O. Anantapur Dist. S.P.

We shall be judged not by the creed we profess or the label we wear on the slogans we shout but by the work, the industry, the sacrifice, the honesty and purity of character. Realise the heaven within you and all at once all the desires are fulfilled, all the misery and suffering is put an end to. Feel your self above the body and its environments above the mind and its motives, above the thought of success or fear. The great cause of suffering in the world is that people do not look within. They rely on outside forces.

With Love

Sri Satguru Sai Baba

30-9-80



**Bhagawan Sri Satguru Sai Baba**

PRASANTHI NILAYAM P.O.  
ANANTAPUR DIST. S.P.  
PHONE NO. 130

30-8-78

After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in castles and in heavens, at last you come back. Completing the circle from where you started, to your own soul and find that He, for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were looking as the mystery of all mysteries, shrouded in the clouds in nearest of the near, is your own self. The reality of your life, body and soul. That is your own nature. Accept it, manifest it. It is truth and truth alone, that is one's real friend. Abide by truth, tread the path of righteousness and not an hair of your body will ever be injured. Meditation is nothing else but rising above desires. Renunciation is the power of battling against evil forces and holding the mind in check.

With Love and Blessings

Sri Satguru Sai Baba



BHAGAWAN SRI SATGURU SAI BABA



PRASANTHI NILAYAM P.O.  
ANANTAPUR DIST.  
TELEPHONE NO. 130

BRINDAVAN  
WHITFIELD  
TELEPHONE NO. 12  
Date

### Message

You as body, mind or soul are a dream but what you really are is existence, knowledge. Bless. You are the God of this universe. You are creating the whole universe and drawing it in. To gain the infinite universal individuality the miserable little prison individuality must go. There is no crying or any negative condition. It is seeing of all in all we see.

It is the heart that reaches the goal, follow the heart. A pure heart seeks beyond the intellect. It gets inspired.

Whatever we do reacts upon us. If we do good, we shall have happiness and if evil, unhappiness within you is the real happiness, within you is the mighty ocean of nectar divine. Seek it within you, feel it, feel it, it is here, the self, it is not the body, the mind, the intellect, the brain. It is not the desire of the desiring. It is not the object of desire. Follow all these, you lose. All these are simply manifestations. You appear as the smiling flower, as the twinkling stars. What is there in the world which can make you desire anything?

With Blessings and

Love

Sri Satguru Sai Baba



**Bhagawan Sri Satguru Sai Baba**

PRASANTHI NILAYAM P.O.  
ANANTAPUR DIST. S.P.  
PHONE NO. 130

My Dear! The time will come when the whole of this dream will vanish. To everyone of us there must come a time when the whole universe will be found to have been a mere dream, when we shall find that the soul is infinitely better than its surroundings. In this struggle through what we call environments, there will come a time when we shall find that these environments were almost zero in comparison with the power of the soul. It is only a question of time, and time is nothing in the infinite. It is a drop in the ocean. We can afford to wait and be calm.

With Blessings

(Baba) Sri Satguru Sai Baba



# An Era Of Love And Service

**T**he greatest humanitarian known in recent times, Sathya Sai Baba practiced and taught the gospel of pure love expressed as selfless service for over eight decades.

A 20-year-old boy, from a little known village called Puttaparthi, wrote a letter to his elder brother on 25th May, 1947. It read: *"I have a task: To foster all mankind and ensure for all people lives full of Ananda (Bliss). I have a vow: To lead all who stray away from the straight path, back again into goodness and save them. I am attached to a task I love: To remove the suffering of the poor and grant them what they lack."*

The words were far beyond his years, and the resolve far from ordinary. Indeed, as time revealed, these were the words of a leader who was born to serve the helpless, a being who guided millions on the path of selfless service, and a teacher whose love and compassion were boundless. He was to be the greatest humanitarian to walk on earth. No project was impossible, no task was daunting, no cost too high for Sathya Sai Baba when it came to benefitting the underprivileged and the helpless.

Over the last 65 years, Baba has done what no one can ever do in one lifetime: free hospitals, free schools and colleges, and safe drinking water for millions. He rebuilt innumerable lives shattered by calamities, and above all united people across all faiths, cultures, countries and classes with the universal bonds of love, and tolerance.

How did Baba achieve what many governments had been unable to? How were tasks like free healthcare that seem impossible even to developed countries so simple for Baba? And above all, how did a village lad who threw away his history books create history? A simple answer to all these questions is: Baba's selfless and pure love.

Baba has said: *"I am beyond both praise and blame, pain and pleasure. I have no anger. I have one thing, and that is Love. I love even those who*

*criticise me or malign me. I do not consider anybody as my enemy. Everybody belongs to me. I love everyone as a mother loves her children. Mine is not the love of one mother but the love of a thousand mothers. It is by the power of my Love that I put everybody on the right path..."*

It is this pure love that distinguishes Baba's projects and institutions from others. The Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, started by Baba over 50 years ago, today stands for service with love, discipline with dignity, charity without publicity, relief beyond costs, and help without distinction.

Contrary to most religious beliefs and texts on the role of service, Baba has advocated it as the highest form of worship. Service, devoid of publicity and expectation of results, is dearest to God and confers everlasting joy, Baba has said. Hence, Baba's followers wait for every opportunity to serve those in need. As Baba himself did, all the service projects undertaken by Baba's volunteers are with the only aim of serving the one divinity within all of us.

*"Once the Truth of the Indwelling Spirit is recognised, there dawns the awareness that the world is one family. One is then filled with Divine Love which becomes the driving force for all of one's actions..."*, Baba has said.

Amidst all the greed, selfishness, and apathy around us today, Baba's teachings serve as lighthouses of hope and his service projects sanctuaries of goodness.

That young lad of Puttaparthi had no ancestral wealth, no powerful family or high education titles. His only wealth was his inexhaustible reservoir of pure love for all, especially for the poor, the destitute and the neglected. It was this pure love that drew millions from around the world to his small village and galvanised them to give their best to the society.

How is this torch of selfless service burning? Will his followers keep it burning bright to eternity?

The following pages examine this panorama.

# Degrees For Living, Values For Life

**S**athya Sai education, a beacon of hope in a world riddled with intolerance, by churning out students who aren't just market-ready but life-ready

There is no lack of schools and colleges across the world today. As the world gets closer, many youngsters even travel across continents and countries in pursuit of top-ranking universities and heavy-duty degrees, only to compete for high-profile jobs and grab fat pay cheques.

However, if these jobs and high salaries are indeed the objective of education, why are more and more youngsters becoming prone to stress, anxiety, fear and an all-consuming confusion? They are not happy as they would like to be. Dissatisfaction has become their way of life, and most of them do not mind 'crossing the line' in search of the ever-eluding happiness. Surely, something has been amiss.

## The Missing Link

The importance of human values has never been more desperately felt. Headlines across the world scream of violence, hatred, corruption, fraud and the latest, economic crisis. Products from even these high-profile educational institutions -- that extract high fee in exchange for high-paying careers -- seem to have no answers to today's ever-increasing list of maladies.

Fortunately, there seems to be a way out. Baba has given a solution leading out of this crisis and also set up a role model more than four decades ago.

"Education is not the tiring acquisition about objects and men. It is the perception, inside oneself, of the Immortal Spirit, that it is the source of joy, of peace and of courage."

As the Founder Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (Deemed University), Baba defined real education as, *"That which promotes unity, equality and peaceful co-existence with fellow human beings. It flows from the heart."* He further stated, *"Education is not for a mere living, it is for life; a fuller life, a more meaningful, and a more worthwhile life. This is termed as 'Educare'."* Therefore, *"Educare should be pursued along with worldly knowledge."*



Sai University Convocation at Prasanthi Nilayam



Silver Jubilee Convocation of the Sai University

Based on the philosophy of Educare, and the sound pedagogy of integral education, this learning system draws its life breath from the five cardinal values of Truth, Peace, Love, Right Conduct and Nonviolence. This new model of education has visibly achieved where the modern education system has miserably failed -- in inculcating the values of compassion, morality, social responsibility and co-existence in the youth.

Baba also set up a prototype for the world to follow by establishing a University, schools and also a non-formal value-education programme for children. What has further set the system apart is its no-tuition fee policy -- which means no admission fee, no laboratory fee, no library fee, no sports fee, no examination fee -- across the board from elementary school to Ph.D. level programmes. It was the start of an educational revolution.

## A New Era in Education

Baba first established a women's college in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, in 1968; then a college for men in Whitefield, Bangalore, in 1969; and yet another college for men was opened in Puttaparthi in 1979. In 1981, Baba brought, with the due approval from the UGC, all the three Colleges under the umbrella of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute for Higher Learning recognised as a Deemed University.

A new campus offering similar programmes is underway at Muddenahalli, Karnataka. Besides this, Baba also started a Music College and several elementary and secondary schools.

A non-profit and autonomous institution, which charges no fees, the Sai University has an open admission policy, completely based on merit and an entrance examination. No consideration whatsoever is assigned to caste, creed,



income, region, religion, or language.

While free education is in itself a laudable achievement, what is of greater significance is the unceasing personal attention that Baba gave to the students, literally from the day he founded his very first college. For these students, Baba is their inspiration and their Master, who taught them by example.

Baba stated that education, besides cultivating students' intelligence, should help them to develop a personality where, as per Tennyson there is, "self-reverence, self-knowledge and self-control", and where Vignan (science) and Pragnan (spirituality) are cultivated as part of an integral process. Baba's system of integral education

derives from his general philosophy of life as a whole. Its watchwords are Satya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema – fulfillment of the quest of individual through Truth, confirmation of human will in Right Action, resolution of the welter of human emotions through Peace and the awakening of the soul through Love.

The UGC's NAAC Committee during its visit to the University in 2002 stated: *"This Institute stands out as a crest jewel among the university education system in the country and this model is worthy of emulation by the institutes of higher learning in the country and elsewhere, so that these benefits would be reaped fast and on the widest possible scale."* The peer team accredited the





*"Four hundred eighteen graduates from the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning are going to be ready to enter the world today. Also during the last twenty five years, over 8,500 graduates from this Institute have joined many organisations in various parts of the country and the world. What is the uniqueness of these graduates? For me, indeed, it is the birth of a truth that the graduates of this institute with the education edifice grounded in the value system of this divine campus will always shine as lifelong learners."*

**-Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam, Former President of India**



*"I have not seen anywhere else such sublimity of atmosphere. There is something special about the intangible atmosphere of this place. There is a refinement and a soothing power about the campus. The Institute breathes an air of inner calm which is altogether unique. Every teacher seems to know intuitively that the Institute of Higher Learning is also a venue of Higher behaviour and a seat of Higher understanding."*

**-R.Venkataraman, Former President of India**

University at the highest level (A++) among the Indian universities. The high rating continued in 2011 when the NAAC team accredited the University with a 3.63 CGPA in four point scale.

The University stresses on an integrated personality development – where sports, cultural activities, and community service are also given high priority. Every year, all the teachers and students participate in a 10-day village service programme, where they visit villages, interact with the rural population, and distribute food and clothing. The students say that the joy experienced while serving the needy impels them to continue similar philanthropic activities long after they graduate. The many community projects led by active bands of Sai alumni the world over stand testimony to their ability to bloom wherever planted.

#### **A Global Movement**

A typical day at the Sai School in Zambia's Ndola region: Students from different corners of the city troop in for a morning Assembly at 7 am. This is followed by prayer conducted with local songs to the rhythm and beat of the local drums. Students then disperse to a 40 minute class on education in human values. Then their day begins.

Based on Baba's philosophy of achieving a holistic human personality, this school has been transforming the lives of street children, school dropouts, slow learners and other



underprivileged children. Founded in 1990, the school has been called 'the miracle school' for achieving 100% pass percentage for the last 20 years. Most former students have gained reputable status in society because of their integrity in the various fields they have adopted.

The school has also received formal international recognition: the Business Initiative Directions Award, a prestigious international award at the 22nd International World Quality Commitment Convention in Paris, in 2005, and the International Star Award for excellence in education in Geneva, Switzerland.

Currently, there are over 99 Sathya Sai Schools in India and 41 Sathya Sai Schools overseas. They have carved a niche in their communities by integrating universal human values of Sai education within the framework of the local academic curriculum. Presently, the Sathya Sai education model is being implemented in more than 90 countries. Known as exemplars of academic excellence and character education, these schools are being studied as models by various governments seeking to bring character education into public schooling. In fact, the education ministries of Mauritius and Thailand have already adopted the Sathya Sai System of Education for its schools.

The appeal of the programme is evident in the enthusiasm with which educators around the world are embracing it, making the Sathya Sai model of education a prototype worthy of emulation as an effective solution for today's crisis in education.

#### **Starting Young**

Apart from the schools and colleges across India, the Sri

*"The Sri Sathya Sai Educare Programme must be implemented in the very fundamentals of the education policy of the country."*

**- Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Former Prime Minister of India**





Sathya Sai Organisations (Indian and International), conducts Sathya Sai Education (SSE) programmes – a non-formal yet a very effective mode of education – across the world. Started in 1969, SSE or Bal Vikas is the brainchild of Sathya Sai Baba, whose broad-based vision of education was beyond mere eradication of illiteracy or acquisition of degrees. In India alone, the programme has benefitted at least a million children and over 15,000 Sai Centres run this programme which has trained over 10 million children. The programme is now embraced by 81 countries, which have 24 Teacher Training Institutes called the Institutes of Sathya Sai Education.

In Oman, the Ministry of Education and the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science have collaborated with the local SSE programme to hold regular events for children based on human values. Students from hundreds of schools, both private and government ones, come together to participate in competitions like essay writing and poster making.

Justice V. Ramasubramanian, Counsel, Madras High Court says: *"The Bal Vikas enabled me develop artistic and cultural talents. The values imbibed in the classes have*



*"As Government, we fully support the underlying principle on which Sathya Sai Schools operate, namely human values based education that prepares pupils for life, qualifying them as valuable assets to the society that they are entering."*

**-Kadar Asmal, Minister of Education, South Africa**

*helped me achieve success in life even while understanding that the object of such success is to render service to society. What I am today is what Bal Vikas made of me in my formative years."*

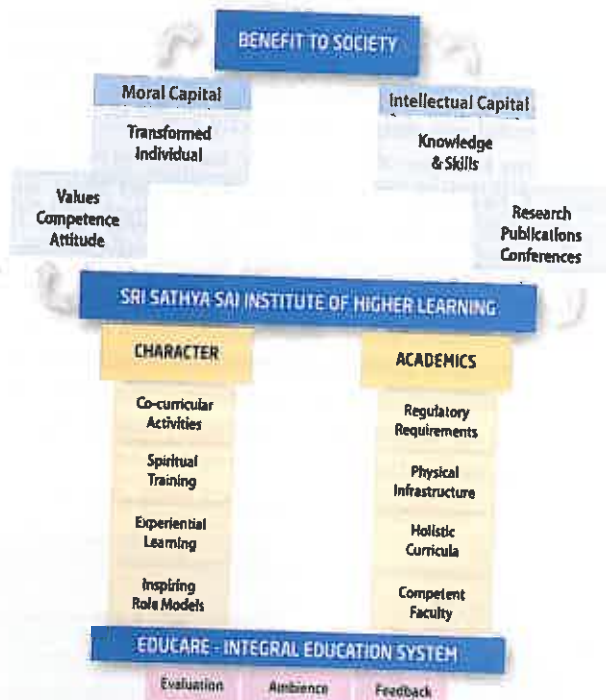
While academic lessons learnt in school help in honing one's IQ, SSE complements it rightfully by helping develop the learner's EQ or ethics quotient. *"The strong grounding in ethics, lessons in good manners and human values at a young age as a Bal Vikas student have left a deep and positive impact on my personality,"* shares Mr. Narayan Sethuraman, Managing Director of South-India based W.S. Industries.

The high achievement by the students has attracted the attention of educators and policy makers. Today SSE is being incorporated by many public and private schools. Two important compilations: 'Global Overview of Sri Sathya Sai Education' and 'Sri Sathya Sai System of Integral Education: An Overview' provide valuable insights into the unique system of education at Sai Schools and the Sai University.

### Lighting the way ahead

The Sathya Sai System of Education proposes that all answers lie within, and works towards awakening that spirit within. For this, the starting point is the classroom. Baba's dictum, *"Education is for life, not merely for a living"* holds solutions to all the present-day problems including religious fanaticism, violence, greed, economic crisis and moral crisis.

The search for the 'new educational order' seems to be over, finally. For decades now, Baba has been silently lighting the way to truth, triumph and transformation, giving its beneficiaries a valuable edge in life. ■



The Sathya Sai System of Integral Education

*"This is a distinctive school that is successful in achieving its aims. It provides a secure spiritual environment in which pupils can learn and make good progress. Pupil's personal development is a very strong feature of the school and it is conspicuously successful in promoting its philosophy."*

**-Report by an Inspector of OFSTED (UK)**

# Healing With Love, At No Cost



**R**ooted in Baba's teaching of 'Help Ever, Hurt Never', the Sathya Sai Healthcare System is propelled by the currency of unconditional love.

Can you imagine entering a hospital or even a general practitioner's clinic without a wallet? You may find it impossible, but many have already done so when they entered a unique healthcare system in South India, the Sathya Sai Healthcare System. In a remote corner in South India, Sathya Sai Baba had quietly achieved this impossible over 40 years ago.

The trigger for this medical revolution came when Baba's mother, Easwamma, expressed a concern about the paucity of medical services in her village. The dutiful son first established a general hospital in 1954 in Puttaparthi for the local villagers, who did not have even a basic facility then. This has now expanded into a network of general hospitals, super-specialty hospitals, mobile medical hospitals, medical camps, virtual hospitals and charitable beds in city hospitals, all at no-cost to the patients.

A huge number of leading doctors and specialists from all over the world volunteer to serve in Baba's hospitals, just to experience the joy of selfless service. As one of the doctors at the hospital explained, "The entire outlook of doctors and staff here is different. At the outset Baba had shown us the ideal of a doctor." Baba's instructions were clear, "Look upon the patients as your own kith and kin, as

*your special guests and as your closest friend; and attend to them lovingly and with unflinching care. I call upon you to maintain this attitude in every situation'. We have since then been following Baba's guidelines to the letter and spirit."* Till date, Baba's super specialty hospitals have treated more than 3 million patients. But the treatment is not just physical. Baba's love heals the soul, and that is where the difference lies.

## The Revolution Expands

On November 23, 1990, on his 65th birthday, Baba surprised everyone by announcing that he would be building a super specialty hospital in Puttaparthi providing advanced medical treatment free of cost for the poor and the forgotten. True to Baba's word, a sprawling 153,000-sq ft hospital was inaugurated exactly a year later by the then Prime Minister of India, Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao. Thus began a new era of healthcare. Baba said after the inauguration of the hospital, "People spend lakhs of rupees to get heart surgery done abroad. What is the plight of the poor? Who looks after them? Recognising this fact, we have launched this big hospital project. Whether it is heart bypass or a kidney operation, a lung operation or brain surgery, everything will be done free." Ten years after its success, its, even larger, sister facility was opened in Whitefield, Bengaluru, in 2001.

Today, these hospitals hold a cumulative capacity of more



Inauguration Function of the Super Speciality Hospital at Bengaluru - 2001





*"Health care is not just medical care. Medical care is one of the components of what you all are doing. Actually health care is medical care, education and nutrition. Health care happens only when all these three are combined...You are doing all the three... An anti-ballistic missile has been launched by Baba against poverty: through education, water and healthcare".*

**-Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, Former President of India**

than 500 beds, 19 operating rooms, 11 ICUs, 4 Cardiac Cath Labs, and specialty departments of cardiac sciences, urology, ophthalmology, orthopedics, gastroenterology, plastic surgery and neurosciences. Till March 2011, the Puttaparthi and Whitefield super specialty hospitals had conducted over 95,000 cardiac surgeries, over 56,000 urology and plastic surgeries, 55,000 eye surgeries, nearly 13,000 neurological surgeries and over 6,000 orthopedic surgeries since inception. The hospitals have also provided free consultation to lakhs of patients every year. The hospitals are supported by an inspired staff of 1,500 people that includes doctors, nurses, paramedical staff, nutritionists, and several other support services. At any given time, there are about 500 volunteers, from India and all over the world, serving in various capacities in these hospitals.

Economically challenged patients from all over the country visit the hospitals and the entire treatment, including the diagnosis, the procedure, stay in the wards (including the ICU), all medicines, and food, is free. In fact, the hospitals have no bill-collection counters.

What distinguishes the Sathya Sai hospitals from others is that the aim here is not to merely treat the diseases but to heal the patient. A patient who underwent an open-heart surgery at the Puttaparthi hospital said, *"There is no other place where I have seen such integrity, sincerity, and duty consciousness. I doubt if it can be found anywhere else in the world. Such high standards of honesty, and loving concern for the patients, I have never seen anywhere else."*

#### **Virtual Healthcare**

Seventy-year-old Govindan, a rag picker in Chennai, was rapidly losing eyesight. On some days, unable to see, he would just lie down on the road out of exhaustion. On one such day, a Sai devotee spotted him and got him admitted at a local hospital that provided the Sathya Sai virtual healthcare. Govindan was fortunate, as he soon regained his eyesight and resumed his work.

In a discourse to doctors in 1995, Baba said, *"You may receive fees from the rich patients, but treat the poor free. Dedicate at least one day in a week to render free medical service to people, irrespective of creed or nationality. Such service will give you spontaneous joy and enable you to experience the Divine."*

Responding to Baba's call, a private hospital in Chennai immediately allotted four beds for free treatment under the Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare Project – a project where private hospitals allot a specific number of beds for free treatment of needy patients. In 2007, 63 more hospitals in the city joined the project, thus transforming a part of their hospitals into Sathya Sai health centres. Today, the hospitals offer more than 90 beds cumulatively in Chennai. This unique initiative involves no additional cost of construction, and is being expanded to other parts of the Tamil Nadu as well.

The Sathya Sai healthcare has virtually healed many such Govindans, who had been unable to travel all the way to Puttaparthi or Bangalore for free quality healthcare.

#### **Medical Camps**

Sathya Sai Organisations across the world are also deeply committed to the cause of free healthcare to all needy and



Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Puttaparthi



poor patients. They operate their own medical centres and nursing homes providing health screening, health education, consultation, medicines, tests and acute care and ongoing treatment free of cost to needy patients. In addition, dental clinics have also been set up in some countries.

In order to reach out to those in the remote areas, the Organisations hold regular medical camps in rural and remote areas under the Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme. International Sathya Sai Organisations in developed countries also hold similar medical camps to aid those without health insurance covers or social assistance.

In 2009, the Sri Sathya Sai International Centre for Medical Services was established with its main hub in Los Angeles, USA. A consortium of international surgeons, physicians, pharmacists, nurses and medical technicians, it runs world class international medical camps around the globe completely free of charge. Today, it has grown into a vast global system delivering free healthcare around the world.

#### Healthcare on Wheels

Lakshmi Amma, a daily wage worker in Andhra Pradesh, had suffered a ligament tear and even a few steps caused excruciating pain. Though her village was just an hour's drive away from Puttaparthi, she could not visit the hospital due to the pain and could not afford the expenses needed for travel. Lakshmi Amma is just one of the many millions in our country who do not have any access to medical centres or cannot even afford the long distances to the nearest one.

Baba came to their aid by bringing hospitals to their



doorsteps. Taking healthcare to a new level, Baba launched the Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital services in Andhra Pradesh on March 2006. A unique healthcare outreach initiative, the mobile hospital service does the noble job of serving medical care to desolated communities.

This grassroots organisation was started in Andhra Pradesh, and has now expanded to other states. The mobile clinic with its team of 500 doctors, from 12 different medical fields, and volunteers visit several villages offering medical, dental, and surgical services. The hospital operates from the 1st to 12th of every month, travelling to 12 nodal points or base villages, to each of which are attached 6 villages. Seventy two villages are thus serviced by the Mobile Hospital, though in practice patients are drawn from nearly 400 villages.

The hospital, a diagnostic bus, comes equipped with an ultra-sonogram, X-ray plant with automatic processor, pharmacy and a laboratory that can perform most of the pathological and bio-chemical investigations. Additionally, patients who need urgent care, advanced medical needs, and further follow-up are promptly referred to the local Sri Sathya Sai hospitals for continued treatment.

As directed by Baba, the beneficiaries are also provided nutritious meals. This ongoing programme serves several thousand villagers, satiating their hunger alongside providing healthcare. The initiative has treated 95,000 patients and benefitted nearly 400 villages in Andhra Pradesh until March this year. Following Andhra Pradesh,



*"The vision, compassion and professionalism of yourself and the members of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences is, and remains, an inspiration for all of us. It makes us all feel good to be human and be a small part of such a wonderful dedication to our fellow man."*

**-Mr. David F. Moxam**

President and CEO, Authentix, Inc., Texas, USA





*"I have been to several hospitals of repute in various parts of the world, but I have not seen anywhere so magnificent a medical institution as Sri Bhagawan Baba's Institute. Another instance of his divine gift to our people."*

**-Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India**

the state of Maharashtra too has a fleet of 29 such mobile hospitals that serve remote and neglected areas.

The impact of the service has been phenomenal. They have also created a huge wave of awareness on major health issues, which is slowly getting translated into changed habits for entire communities. The spiritual component of the service has strengthened community bonds and demonstrated how practicing human values leads to positive health and happiness.

As Dr. K. Narasimhan, Director, Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital Project said, *"This service is yet another of Bhagawan Baba's loving and innovative initiatives that is proving to be a silent vehicle for not only providing holistic health but also for percolating the ideals which he has set for the human race."*

### **Nets of Protection**

All they needed was a net to protect them from death. But even this was out of reach.

Disease prevention has been a major focus of the Sai Organisation in all its medical work. Sai Organisations in Africa, Indonesia, Laos and India have distributed mosquito nets impregnated with insecticide in malaria endemic areas. Over 85,000 nets have been distributed in Kenya alone, reducing the incidence of malaria by more than 50 percent. Also, mass immunization, environmental hygiene and education in healthy living through lifestyle changes are an integral part of such preventive health programmes.

Africa carries up to 90% of the global malaria burden, one of the biggest health concerns in the recent years. Over a million children die from the disease every year in sub-Saharan Africa, while 34,000 of them are from Kenya itself. One of the countries where malaria is endemic, Kenya sees over 8.2 million malaria cases each year.

In 2005, the Sathya Sai Organisation in Africa collaborated with the government of Kenya to distribute insecticide-treated nets free of charge to the most vulnerable communities. They distributed the 'Sai Nets' directly to the users, cutting out middlemen, emphasized on the spread of preventive awareness, and held periodic follow-ups and checks.

A joint study done by the Kenya Health Department and University of Nairobi revealed that the number of malaria incidences had dropped by over 50% in areas where Sai Nets were distributed. Since the success of the first project, the Malaria Control Programme of Kenya has requested the volunteers to undertake many such distribution projects in all major malaria-endemic regions of the country.

*"Since independence, nobody has come to help us in this way,"* said the chief of Nyangama Division in Kenya's Nyanza province, one of the places where the Sai Organisation distributed the nets.

### **Medicine of Pure Love**

It is a popular belief that without money, no quality service can be done. However, Baba stated that while money was



Lepers being treated by the Sai Volunteers



Baba visiting patients at the Super Speciality Hospital



needed, it was not the criteria – pure Love is. Baba has laid down four guiding principles for his healthcare initiatives: medical care must be provided free of charge, medical care must be administered with love and care, every patient must be given the best available treatment, and finally, as Baba puts it, “*treat the patient and not merely the disease*”. Each of Baba's institutions, in India or abroad, work on these guidelines, and running through all these initiatives is the common thread of free, loving service,

with no expectations.

Thanks to the gentle nudge from Mother Easwamma 55 years ago, today, the saga of pure love continues to unfold every day in Baba's hospitals, serving as ideal models for the health concerns of an unequal society. Healthcare elsewhere in the world has been a major policy challenge. Baba's solution is to translate spirituality to social activism.. ■



*“One of the most impressive and unique hospital facilities I have ever seen. It performs patient care and treatment as it should be.”*

**-Ratan Tata, Chairman, Tata Group of Companies**







## No Payment

I am Zeenath. My husband Ashraf is a porter in a bus stand in a small town in Kerala. I have a son who is dumb and he is on treatment. We were shattered with grief when we were told that my last child, 2 years old, has a heart disease. We went from pillar to post, through various hospitals but could not afford the treatment that was suggested.

It was then that we heard of 'Sai Hospital' in Whitefield, Bengaluru, where all treatments are free. We went to this Hospital, but were denied entry inside, by the watchman because we did not have our Electoral Identity card. We waited for sometime not knowing what to do. Then suddenly a lady came

out of the Hospital, took my son in her arms, kissed him and took us inside. The rest is a saga of Love.

My son underwent surgery without us having to spend a single paisa. Now the Sathya Sai Rehabilitation Programme is looking after him, and we don't spend any money for his continued treatment. All our other needs are also being looked into, by the loving District Coordinator of this programme. My husband is now an active volunteer in the Sai Rehabilitation Programme. Though we are very poor, we are doing our best to help others like us who need help. After all that is what Sai teaches. My son who had the surgery is now three and a half years old and he always tells everyone that Baba saved his life.

## Baba is My Lord

By the grace of God I underwent the operation of Angioplasty on 12th September 2008 at the Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital, Puttaparthi. Today, because of the rehabilitation programme of the Sathya Sai Organization, I am living happily.

Born and brought up as a Roman Catholic, I firmly believe that this is my new 2nd birth, because the Bible says, *"The Lord removed my stone heart and in its place, placed a tender heart and made me a new*

*being."*

Let me explain. From 1995, I have been a heart patient and have suffered a lot. Since we could not afford any treatment, my husband and my son were miserable and sad. I prayed to the Lord, *"I don't want any further treatment and therefore please help me."*

The Lord heard my prayers and I reached the abode of Sai. Lord Sai blessed me. And I am well. I offer a million Pranams to my Lord Sai.

## 7-year-old gets new life

Seven-year-old Sujan's parents were wrought with anxiety. Their son was dying due to a hole in his heart and they could do little to save him. Sujan's father, a taxi driver in Karnataka, even after his best efforts could not manage to save money they required for a heart surgery. Then a stranger suggested the Sri Sathya Institute of Medical Sciences, a super specialty hospital in Bengaluru, where needy patients were given free treatment. With the little hope they had, Sujan's parents took him to the Whitefield-based hospital. To their surprise, contrary to other doctors,

the doctor here asked them not to hasten with the surgery and instead gave medicines for preliminary cure. Two years later, the hospital asked the parents to get their child admitted for a free-of-cost surgery using the latest technology – an open heart surgery by just implanting a closure device worth US\$ 5,000.

Sujan's father Sumanth said, *"We are very happy; we have no money, how much can a taxi driver earn and how much more can we save? This is really God sent for us. This hospital saved lakhs of rupees for us and gave our son a new life... Swami has solved all my problems at one go."*

## A Medical Breakthrough

Forty-one-year-old truck driver Gopal from Tamil Nadu's Salem district had been suffering from an undiagnosed pain in his loins. Even after undergoing four surgeries, dozens of tests and CT scans, no doctor was able to explain the cause. Above all, it had been a financial drain. Having already spent Rs 2.5 lakh on treatments, Gopal, father to three children, could not afford to spend any more from his monthly income of Rs 8,000.

On a friend's persuasion, Gopal came to the Puttaparthi super specialty hospital in July 2009. Tests were done once again, this time at no cost, and urologists found blockages in both his kidneys regions. It was a rare case, the doctors said, and a challenging one too.

The doctors first performed Ureterocalicostomy on

the right kidney in October 2009, followed by his left kidney in January 2010. Ureterocalicostomy is a surgical procedure where the ureters that drain urine into the bladder are cut below the block and reattached directly to the kidneys so that urine can flow directly from the bottom of the kidneys into the bladder by-passing the blocks.

Urologist Dr. Prashant Kulkarni of the hospital said, *"Though it is not an uncommon procedure, we have not found any case report of a bilateral Ureterocalicostomy, i.e., the problem being there on both the kidneys. That makes Gopal's case truly unique."* Both the surgeries were successful. Gopal was discharged in February 2010 and has been leading a normal life since then. *"As soon as I entered the hospital, I could feel faith and confidence rising in me. I was sure I would be all right,"* he said. ■



Baba with a patient in the ICU ward at the Super Speciality Hospital



# Water:

## *Transforming Lives & Landscapes*

**B**aba's unprecedented water projects have not only rescued millions of neglected people, but are also serving as a universal model for authorities to follow.

For over hundred years, every day, the people of Rayalaseema region had walked long distances just to procure a few pots of drinking water every day. The arid region, comprising of Anantapur, Bellary, Kadapa and Kurnool districts, hardly received rainfall and people depended on the fluorine-saturated bore-well water for daily use that caused severe bone deformities and dental fluorosis.

Their pleas for help had fallen on deaf years. No government had understood their agony, until Baba stepped in.



In November 1994, Baba asked the government to solve the water woes of the people and assured all help. However, when the government paid no heed as earlier, Baba declared that he would take up the project himself.

The highlights of Baba's projects are swiftness and efficiency in action and timely completion of projects. Once Baba had announced, the Sathya Sai Central Trust moved fast to bring safe drinking water to as many people as possible in as many villages as possible, in the shortest possible time, no matter the cost.

A year later, the then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao was in Puttaparthi on 18 November, 1995, to declare the Summer Storage Tank Scheme in Anantapur open. Expressing deep admiration, Rao said that having served earlier as a minister in Andhra Pradesh with special responsibility for Anantapur district, he was familiar with the obstacles in the region and yet, Baba had accomplished a massive drinking water project under one year, something no government had ever done.

Eighteen months after Baba's first announcement, safe drinking water flowed out of water taps in 730 villages of the parched district of Anantapur, a district that had suffered 11 famines in the past. The Sri Sathya Sai Water Project had provided water to over a million people who

had lived all their lives at the edge of drought and despair.

Nearly 5,020 km of pipeline was laid across 1,500 villages to provide pure drinking water to 10 million people – the scale of the Sathya Sai Water Projects is unprecedented. However, for a glimpse into the actual impact of the projects, one must go beyond the domain of numbers, into the lives of those who can now dream of a future – a future of dignity, security, and assurance.

Subba Lakshmi, a 38-year-old widow and a working mother of three school-going children lives in Nagireddy Palli, a small village of 250 families in Anantapur district. She said, "Earlier, I used to travel three to four kilometers in the morning and evening to fetch two vessels of water. I forced my daughter to drop out of the school and help me with household activities. Now, water is available just outside my house." She has readmitted her daughter back to school after two years and has also revived her late husband's weaving business to generate more income for her family.

### **Showers of Compassion**

Baba then followed this with a drinking water scheme for Medak and Mehaboobnagar districts, in November 2000, benefitting over 320 villages.

In April 2002, Baba initiated the complete overhaul of the Kandaleru-Poondi canal to make drinking water available to the people of Chennai city. Originally constructed to carry Krishna waters to the city, the project had earlier failed due to the many leakages and erosions in the canal's



pipeline. Following Baba's command, the central trust once again jumped into action: the reservoir was renovated to hold more water even during dry seasons; the canal was widened and lined with a special film to prevent leakages. Since November 2004, Chennai residents have been receiving potable water from the taps in their homes, all through the year.

Immediately after the completion of this renovation, Baba commenced the Godavari drinking water scheme to quench the thirst of the neglected tribal population in the region. The project was completed in May 2006 and benefitted over 500 villages.

An interesting incident took place during the construction of this project. While on a survey in the forested areas of East and West Godavari districts, the project engineers came across a group of Naxalites, who threatened the team to return. However, on hearing Baba's intention, they were overjoyed and even suggested where the pipes could be laid. The gratitude that these men, who normally live beyond the pale of law, showed for Baba and his mission demonstrates the life-transforming power of service to humanity.

The four Herculean water projects were executed in a span of 12 years (1994-2006) totally benefitting over 10 million people, equivalent to the entire population of Belgium. All the projects, after a year of management by Baba, were handed over to the respective state governments. Surely, no ordinary mortal could have ever achieved such a task, even in an entire lifetime.



Sathya Sai Water Supply Project, Anantapur

### Global Impact

Baba's philosophy that every individual has equal right to essential resources has inspired many international agencies to raise the water project as a role model.

As part of its efforts to combat the serious water shortage in Africa and parts of Asia, the United Nations adopted a 'Human Values-based Water Education Approach' proposed by the International Sathya Sai Organisation. This initiative imparts vital information on water conservation, sanitation, and hygiene.

Over the years, the Sathya Sai Organisation has completed water projects in El Salvador in Central America providing safe drinking water for about 2,000 families. The Sai Centre of Yogyakarta, Indonesia has built 90 wells to provide clean water to more than 300 families in the community of



The Telugu Ganga canal before the Sai Water Project

Gunung Kidul where the wells are called 'Yayasan Sri Sathya Sai Baba'.

Presenting the Sathya Sai Water Project at the third world water forum at Osaka, a spokesman described it as not just a case study, but a story and that too a love story. At the fourth world water forum in Mexico, the Project was adjudged as one of the 10 best local action programmes in the world contributing to the millennium development goals set by the United Nations.

In October 2011, the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, University of Singapore, adopted the Anantapur Water Project as a case study on the beneficial role of public-private partnership in alleviating poverty. The project is being taught to students as a case study in Public Policy and Managerial Motivation at leading business schools across the world.

The power of Baba's unconditional love seems to have transformed the barren land of Rayalaseema.

The water tap is now a minute's walk from Subba Lakshmi's house. She can draw water to her heart's content. The income from her husband's weaving business is enough to support her small family. With time to spare, she can now afford the small pleasures of life – like standing on the threshold of her house watching her children play.

She can do little about the fluorosis-stricken elders in her village, but she sleeps in peace, assured that her children will at least have a future to dream about, to live for. ■



The Sai Ganga Canal after the Water Project



# Nature's Fury, God's Mercy

**B**e it an earthquake, flood or famine, Sai Volunteers are on the forefront to help the needy, driven by Baba's teaching of 'Love All, Serve All'.

Natural calamities are unkind, as lives, communities and societies built over hundreds of years are wiped in one swipe. Be it a flood, earthquake, hurricane, or famine, the resultant devastation is huge and widespread.

The Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, led and guided by Baba, has always been on the forefront of every major disaster relief programme across the world. Inspired by Baba's message of 'Service to man is service to God', thousands of volunteers from India and overseas are ever ready for the call to serve, and often the first to reach and help the afflicted. As in other projects, the hallmarks of all relief

tools, etc., are also provided to help the people return to their normal lives.

The organisation has also trained many of its volunteers in a specialised course of disaster management skills, the highlight of the training being service with love. The course has been so effective that the Tamil Nadu police department too has enrolled its officers to learn the skills.

Following are some of the recent projects undertaken in India and overseas.

## Recent Projects in India

### Sikkim Earthquake

A 6.9-magnitude earthquake hit the Nepal-Sikkim border on September 18, 2011, killing 111 people with most of them in Northeast India. This northeastern state suffered



works conducted by the organisation are: no publicity whatsoever, a high level of discipline, service with love and compassion with the belief of 'Brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God', and all projects are taken up selflessly, absolutely free of cost.

In the past, the volunteers have rendered large-scale service during the Gujarat earthquake, Tsunami in Tamil Nadu, floods in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra, to name a few. Internationally, the organisation has provided prompt relief during Tsunami in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, earthquake relief in El Salvador, Indonesia, Peru and flood relief in Myanmar and Mexico. This forms only a fraction of disaster relief projects taken up by the organisation.

In a broad overview, every relief team includes members from medical and paramedical fields, apart from volunteers trained in disaster management skills. Physicians provide first aid, treatment of acute and chronic conditions, and eye care. Also, grief counseling is given to the affected individuals. Volunteers provide victims with food, safe drinking water, shelters, sanitation, clothes, blankets, utensils and other basic necessities. At the community level, the volunteers rebuild houses, reestablish schools and provide school supplies. Tools of trade such as sewing machines, bicycles, woodworking

the maximum loss as power and water supplies were disrupted, two buildings collapsed, and the National Highway 31, which connects the state to rest of India, was damaged.

A 13-member team from the Sathya Sai Organisation, Sikkim, set up a relief camp in the affected site of Dzongu in North District. After a detailed survey, the team built temporary toilets for the refugees, repaired and cleaned the nearest drinking water source and built a temporary pipeline for the villagers. They also distributed food packets, clothes and other necessities for an extended period. Volunteers from Gangtok cleared debris from Nandok village in East District where landslides had damaged many houses. They also helped the villagers to rebuild the houses in the area.

### Odisha Floods

Odisha witnessed one of the worst floods in 40 years in September 2008. Out of 30 districts of Odisha, 18 were severely affected by the floods. In this time of calamity, Sathya Sai workers worked day and night to save, feed and console flood victims. Relief in the form of dry food, cooked food, tarpaulins, drinking water, clothes, medicines, and other articles of daily need was provided to hundreds of thousands affected by the floods.

Within four months of the tragedy, the Sri Sathya Sai Seva



Organisation built 699 homes in Odisha's 16 worst affected villages free of cost. It has also adopted these villages under its Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme to ensure the villagers' physical, psychological and spiritual well-being.

#### **Bihar Floods**

The Indian state of Bihar too faced one of the worst floods it had ever seen the same year. In August 2008, the Kosi River floods killed over 1,000 people and left at least 2.3 million people homeless. The waters had washed away 800 villages in 13 districts and 247,000 acres of farmland. Sai Volunteers from Supaul, the worst affected district in the floods, rushed to the affected areas on motorbikes to rescue people. They returned with stocks of essential food items and distributed to over 2,000 people on the first day.



The spirited volunteers ventured deep into the flooded areas, where even government agencies had refused to enter.

#### **Chennai Floods**

Many areas of Chennai and its suburbs were inundated with flood waters in the aftermath of Cyclone Nisha in November 2008. Many low-lying areas and slums in Kancheepuram and Thanjavur districts were flooded due to incessant rains. The Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Tamil Nadu promptly reached the affected places to provide food packets and drinking water. A total of 1,522 volunteers participated in this service and distributed more than 10,000 food packets every day for three days to the victims.

In the past, the organisation has also done yeoman service during many other disasters, including the



Sai Volunteers distributing relief items at Sikkim





Sai Volunteers engaged in reconstruction activities in Sikkim



Sai Volunteers engaged in reconstruction activities in Sikkim

earthquake, Latur earthquake, Tsunami in Tamil Nadu among many others.

### Recent Overseas Projects

#### Japan Earthquake

An earthquake and a Tsunami devastated Japan in March 2011, leaving 11,000 dead and 17,000 missing. Over 1,90,000 people lost their homes and took refuge in temporary shelters. Responding to calls of help, the Sathya Sai Organisation in Japan acted immediately. Physicians were sent to join the medical fraternity to facilitate pre-cremation medical processing of the rising number of corpses in Miyagi Prefecture. Several truckloads of lifeline goods and food supplies were directly delivered to the survivors.

#### Indonesia Earthquake / Volcano Eruption

Indonesia suffered a spate of calamities in 2010. There were two earthquakes of 7.6 and 6.2 magnitudes in Padang, west Sumatra, on 30th September, followed by an earthquake and Tsunami in Mentawai Island on 25th October and series of eruptions of Mount Merapi in October and November 2010.

Sathya Sai volunteers in the country provided baby food, baby sanitary items, utensils, blankets, mattresses, hygiene kits, local clothing and other essential items to the evacuees. Porridge was served round the clock in Muntilan area. Up to date, the Sai Council of Indonesia has



constructed 31 houses for old people without any income or family. The volunteers, in association with the local council, rebuilt the water supply system that had burst during the quake.

In Mentawai, the Sai Council dispatched volunteers by helicopter and land transport to the flooded areas. Medical services and other essential supplies were provided in temporary shelters to the evacuees, which included children and mothers. Relief works are still on in the country.

#### Haiti Earthquake

Volunteers of the Sai Organisation worked round the clock to provide relief and rehabilitation to the victims of the massive earthquake that struck the Republic of Haiti on January 12, 2010. Between January 19 and August 2010 they provided free medical treatment to over 44,000 people, served more than 1,60,000 hot meals, supplied thousands of gallons of potable water, built homes and cleaned roadways for Haitians.


The work that began seven days after the earthquake in the midst of widespread destruction continues to this day with the discipline, determination and dedication that has become the hallmark of Sai volunteers.

#### East Africa Famine

Presently, Somalia, Ethiopia and northern Kenya are experiencing the worst drought in 60 years. There has been no rain in the region for over three years, affecting over 13.3 million people in the region.

The Sathya Sai Organisation of Kenya is preparing to help these afflicted people. On September 11, 2011, a team of professionals and volunteers went to Kyuso district to evaluate and execute planned distribution of supplies.

In the past, Sathya Sai Organisations across the world have also provided large-scale help during all disasters across the world. Some of them are the 2009 war in Sri Lanka, Tsunami relief in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, Peru earthquake in 2007, the 2003 floods in Russia, Indonesian earthquakes, the 2008 earthquake in China, Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita in the US in 2005. ■




Bhagawan  
**Sri Satya Sai Baba**

BHAGAWAN  
WHITEFIELD  
BANGALORE 56  
DATE: 21-4-71

My Dear! Accept my blessings and love  
Religion is not a dogmatic faith, but the  
necessary conduct implicit in the movement  
towards perfection. Therefore, religions do not  
really contradict one another. All religions are  
the different forms taken in practical life by  
the one aspiration for perfection working through  
different temperaments. In this sense, no true  
freedom is possible without freedom in the light  
of religion.

Religion is the attitude of reverence which  
human beings have towards the Supreme being,  
based on the relationship that exists between  
them and the Supreme being. This reverence  
may take different forms in different persons  
because of the differences in the conceptions of  
the relation that is between man and the  
Supreme being.

With Blessings  
Sri Satya Sai Baba  
Camp "Brindavan"  
Purugalore




TEL NO 30  
BHAGAWAN  
WHITEFIELD 560 57  
TEL NO 36  
PRAKASHANALAYAM P  
BANGALORE DT 560 56

Bhagawan Sri Satya Sai Baba

My dear! Accept my blessings and love  
Each one from ego takes his birth and clad in  
ego dies and comes and goes, gives and  
receives and earns and spends, and deals  
in lies or speaks the truth, in ego all the  
while. Heaven and hell and incarnations.  
All these from ego are not free. Those who  
do away with their ego attain salvation.  
The Lord is ever true, and higher than the  
highest is, but you must crush your ego  
and realize Him, He is in you, with you  
and around you, be happy.

With Love and Blessings  
Sri Satya Sai Baba  
( Baba )



Bhagawan  
**Sri Satya Sai Baba**

Camp "Brindavan"  
Near white field station  
Bangalore Dt.  
PRAKASHANALAYAM  
PHONE NO. 30, WHITEFIELD  
& BANGALORE DT.  
DATE 24-5-71

My dear Hislop! I am very happy  
I received your lovely letter yesterday, now how  
is your health? don't worry about that; your lovely  
God is always with you, in you, around you.  
Hislop! from some days your sister-in-law is with  
me (at Brindavan) she is very happy daily doing  
Bhajan and Dhyana japa also with her.

My dear! all are our fellow passengers, our loved  
ones all life, plants, animals, not only my child  
but our brother brute, our brother plant, not only our  
brother the good, but our brother the evil, our brother  
the spiritual and our brother the wicked. They are  
all going to the same god goal, all are in the same  
stream, each is hurrying towards that infinite freedom.

Hislop! the moments of realization are those when  
all thoughts of worldly relations, worldly connec-  
tions, worldly ties, worldly property, worldly desires,  
worldly needs, are all melted into God, into truth.

My dear one! every being that is in the universe has  
the potentiality of transcending the senses, even the  
little worm will one day transcend the senses and  
reach God. No life will be a failure.

BHAGAWAN SRI SATYA SAIBABA  
PRAKASHANALAYAM

on  
24-7-71

My dear Hislop! I received your letter  
I am very happy how is your health? and practice  
Hislop! the secret of perfect health lies in keeping the  
mind always cheerful, never worried, never  
hurried, never borne down by any fear, thought or  
anxiety.

have all your attachments severed from every  
object and concentrate yourself on one thing. The  
one fact; one truth, your divinity, immediately  
on the spot you gain realization.

nothing is done in a day, religion can not be  
swallowed in the form of a pill, it requires hard  
and constant practice. The mind can be conquered  
only by slow and steady practice.

Hislop! moderation in temper is virtue.  
moderation in principle is a vice, impurity is a ne-  
cessary impurity which the real nature of  
man has been hidden.

my dear! you are the embodiment of God, fill yourselves  
with the thought of your almightiness, your majesty and  
your glory. spin the gales of wisdom. Enter the abode  
bliss. Rest in peace forever.

top: How is your Mrs. Give my blessings to her and all  
family. I am always in you with you  
Love Baba



# Tributes



"Love as Thought is Truth;  
Love in Action is Righteousness;  
Love as Feeling is Peace;  
Love as Understanding is Non-violence."

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

# Sathya Sai Baba

## A Non-devotee's Perspective

BY BILL AITKEN



*Bill Aitken (William McKay Aitken) is a Scottish born, naturalised Indian travel writer. He is the author of a number of books about India, its mountains and its spiritual core.*

The experience of the sacred as opposed to the idea of the holy can only be subjectively essayed. Like the afflatus of love, either you are possessed and emotionally enlarged by those numinous descents bigger than yourself or you aren't. In our egalitarian and scoffing age these indiscriminate settlements of grace on some individuals and not upon others seem unfair but that's how the mystery of our individuality plays out. This may explain why a sacred personage like Sri Sathya Sai Baba invites both excessive admiration by some and inordinate dislike by others. While those of open heart are bowled over by the wonder of the compassion he releases and recognize in his radiant aura evidence of the Godhead standing before them, others whose minds are preoccupied with attitudes hardened by negative thought processes see only an imposter made of straw on whom they can project with fury all their accumulated frustrations.

Much superficial comment has been made about Sathya Sai and the most persistent has been "Sai Baba is only for the rich." In fact, Sathya Sai was born in desperately poor circumstances and his life to the end followed an austere regime in his native Rayalaseema village, economically amongst the most backward areas in the land. From the age of fourteen the saint's mission would be vilified by the sensationalist press and a scurrilous internet campaign masterminded by a handful of foreign apostate devotees with a neurotic "hate India" agenda. After all, the more laden with riches the passing caravan is, the louder the dogs will bark.

By a miracle of personal and economic transformation Sathya Sai in an impossible rags-to- inner riches story emerged as a teacher of international consequence whose USP of amazing grace put Puttaparthi on the religious map of the world and made him to many, a signifier of mankind's evolutionary potential. Before I had Darshan of Sathya Sai in his village setting I heard him talk in a Delhi auditorium in 1972. There he sounded like any other conventional religious teacher but in Puttaparthi where the audience was largely Telugu farmers he was something

else. The rapt expression of love on every rural face gave me the feeling I had found the treasure at the end of the rainbow. At that moment I was convinced the tiny figure of Sathya Sai towards whom every tender gaze pointed possessed the key to unlocking the treasures of the universe, that inner wealth nothing in the three worlds can take away from us.

Having travelled overland from the UK in search of the key, making enquiries from teachers of different faiths along the way, at last I was confronted by an electrifying presence who had the staggering Siddhi to not just turn on individuals but the multitude. From that moment Sathya Sai's incandescent impact on my soul would be of a match to a blowtorch. He reminded me of Christ and the woman who was made whole by touching the hem of his garment, and the Buddha ready to sacrifice his body to a tigress to feed her starving cubs. As a mere student of religion I was graced to sample the effulgence of the spiritual goal embodied in the most unlikely of vehicles, a Deccan ryot. (It should be noted that the writer is not a devotee of Sathya Sai) I had already found my guru, a most joyous person whose honesty of purpose and intellectual freedom answered my deepest needs. Sathya Sai was a bonus that came my way when my guru farmed me out for my further inner education to a woman who was a close follower of Baba and indeed one of his favourite disciples. Baba loved her because she understood that divinity never distances itself from humanity whereas humanity for the most part is fearful of getting too close to divinity.

Many see in the remarkable material achievements of Sathya Sai – his educational, medical and development works - a sign of his unique contribution to human kind. These are but reflections of his more astounding gifts, namely to elicit the finest from the most ordinary of candidates, and an unlimited capacity to arouse love wherever he went and amongst whomsoever he chanced to meet.

This Rayalaseema peasant's overwhelming innate grace, the like of which walks our planet but rarely and few are privileged to behold has been without question the most beautiful spiritual sight vouchsafed to those who made the long journey to Puttaparthi. Such saintly beings even when they leave their bodies do not cease their compassionate ministrations, but remain available to those who seek their help. After forty years of his blessings I have come to regard Sathya Sai as probably the most astounding spiritual being in religious history not because of what I have read but because of what I continue to feel at his Darshan, the intoxicating mood of real selfhood, that most liberating of mortal ecstasies. ■



# The Baba And Neo-Mayos

BY S. GURUMURTHY



*Swaminathan Gurumurthy, a popular writer and journalist in India, is a corporate adviser of high standing, and a chartered accountant by profession.*

To his faithful millions, he was God; to his disbelievers he was a fake; to his detractors he was a fraud; to the cynical he was a suspect. Yet, to Karunanidhi, a professed atheist, he was a God-Saint. This sums up the public discourse on Sathya Sai Baba who passed away in April this year. But most, particularly outside his faithful lot, seem to have missed out the dimension of the great soul hidden beyond adulations and abuses — the unparalleled humanist. Here is that Baba not so well known. Many men and women of high learning, achievements and wealth in India and outside were not just attracted to him. They revered him as the Divine Incarnate.

It was his charisma that built a matchless organisation manned by hundreds of thousands of volunteers drawn from the highest echelons to the lowest strata of society. The number of volunteers registered to render from menial to clerical service exceeded six lakhs.

Baba's entire work rests on this devoted cadre. A serving IAS officer would give up his job and join him as his clerk; a young IT professional would forgo his fortune, start cleaning the Bhajan hall; a businessman heading a billion dollar firm would leave his business and look after one of Baba's projects. A count of less than 1/6 of the total volunteers (91,753 to be precise) shows this telling break-up — doctors 3,173; engineers 9,760; lawyers/chartered accountants 3,521; professors and teachers 18,226; farmers and workers 41,295; industrialists 11,350; bankers 3,606; judges 71; legislators 167; journalists 261. Any more testimony needed for his charisma, organising skill and leadership?

His trusts have a corpus of several hundreds of crores of rupees. But never did he ask for donations; and he never hesitated to reject the wrong donors. Donors recount how Baba accepted their offerings after making them wait for months to test their sincerity to give. He kept all the money he received in trust for the poor and the needy in his times and in future. Even the 'undeposited' cash and gold in his personal chamber — the Yajur Mandir — made their way to the trusts after him.

His work for education, poor and medical relief is unmatched by any charity in the world. Take two

unbelievable illustrations first: Anantapur district in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh was known for water scarcity and water salinity and fluorides. The government did nothing for 50 years to address this basic problem, even after Andhra Pradesh got a chief minister from the same district. Unable to bear the suffering of the poor, Baba decided to do in 18 months what the government could not in 50 years, namely to provide potable drinking water to the whole district of Anantapur — yes the whole district! He declared in November 1995, "Today it is 'Raalaseema' (rocky region). It must be transformed into 'Ratnalaseema' (land that glitters like diamond)". In just 18 months it was done!

See what a massive work it was. Laying of some 2,000 kilometres — yes 2,000 — of water pipelines; building 43 sumps of 1 to 25 lakh litres capacity; constructing 18 balancing reservoirs of 3 to 10 lakh litres capacity — where? — on top of hillocks; erecting 270 overhead reservoirs of the capacity of 40,000 to 3 lakh litres; installing 1,500-plus concrete pre-cast cisterns of 2,500 litres capacity, each attached with four taps for the villagers to draw water. Result, drinking water became available to the poorest of the poor in 750 villages in the district.

The 9th Planning Commission document gratefully recorded: The Sathya Sai Charity "has set up an unparalleled initiative of implementing on their own, without any state's budgetary support, a massive water supply project...to benefit 731 scarcity and fluoride/salinity affected villages and a few towns in Anantapur district in a time frame of 18 months." Baba's trusts repeated this work in fluoride-affected Medak and Mehboobnagar districts; provided water supply to some 4.5 lakh poor in 179 villages in Medak, and some 3.5 lakh poor in 141 villages in Mehboobnagar. In the three districts, more than 1,000 villages and 20 lakh people benefited.

Not just in Andhra. Seeing the poor people in Chennai suffer for want of water, Baba declared on January 19, 2002: "The rich can buy water sold by tanker services. And what will the poor do? I have decided to work towards bringing drinking water to Madras, no matter how difficult and how costly the task is". His central trust took up the construction of 63 kilometres stretch of the 150 km canal in the Telugu Ganga scheme that had been left incomplete. The result was: 3 lakh hectares of agricultural land got irrigation in Nellore and Chittoor districts and the city of Chennai, Krishna water. These projects cost over Rs. 500 crore. The specialty hospitals in Puttaparthi and Bengaluru have, just to mention a few activities, treated over a million outpatients; performed over 7 lakh cardiac

and neuro diagnostic tests, over 35,000 cardiac and neuro surgeries, as many cath procedures, over 40,000 eye surgeries; a million lab and blood tests. Yet the most critical department in any hospital, the billing department, is absent in both hospitals. The entire service is free. If these services had been charged it would have meant a bill of over couple of thousand crores. Baba's trusts also run world class, but totally free, educational institutions, cultural centres and a music college.

But after Baba passed away, what is the public discourse

about? Not about the ongoing work for relief of poverty, suffering and education. Not about the lakhs of volunteers Baba has enlisted for work. But about what filth some relatives of Baba, whom he had kept away, had said against those who Baba had trusted to carry on his work; and about some Rs. 35 lakhs, meant for constructing the Samadhi of Baba, which the police had seized which became sensational news. Recall Katherine Mayo, gutter inspector, as Mahatma Gandhi called her? ■

## Our Guiding Light

BY DR. SAMUEL SANDWEISS



Baba with Sandweiss and family

*Dr. Samuel Sandweiss is a practising psychiatrist and writer from San Diego, California, USA. Dr. Sandweiss was one of the early westerners to visit India to see Sathya Sai Baba. He has written, among others, an insightful book on Baba, 'Sai Baba: The Holy man and Psychiatrist' that records his experiences with Baba in the 1970s.*

**O**mnipresence, being at all places at all times, when ascribed to a human being is something quite extraordinary.

Most people would consider it science fiction; science in general considers it impossible. I caution the reader to understand that this word is not being used lightly in this brief article and not to dismiss it as fanciful hero worship, imagination, or wishful thinking. Credible people worldwide from all dimensions of social, economic, geographic, educational, religious backgrounds have experienced Sathya Sai Baba's omnipresence. If his omnipresence is a reality, as others and I assert, it is the most astounding finding of our time with profound implications for our world community.

I became aware of Sathya Sai Baba's loving omnipresence at the time of my first trip to him in May 1972. I was a young psychiatrist troubled by impermanence and wondering about the limit of man's potential. I had just landed in Mumbai, and was leaving an apartment on the outskirts of Mumbai to see Sai Baba for the first time at a

stadium in the city. Just as I left the apartment, one of millions in this huge city of over 17 millions, Sai Baba arrived at this very same small apartment building – an event I found totally incomprehensible, beyond the possibility of chance occurrence. He had come to me just exactly at the time

I was going to see him. My scientific mind reeled as I witnessed his consciousness being beyond time and place, for how could he have fashioned this unbelievable timely meeting without command over time and place! What an extraordinary gift to receive – a concrete sign of Atmic reality.

Since then I have witnessed daily experiences of Sai Baba's loving omnipresence in my life and have described many extraordinary miracles in the three books I have written about him, 'Sai Baba: The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist', 'Spirit and the Mind', and 'With Love Man Is God'.

A clear sign that Sai's loving omnipresence is real – is the power that he has to inspire men and women from all facets of life to draw together in unison to create institutions in society that benefit us all – that bring health and happiness to us all. It is his omnipresence and love working through his devotees that inspires the creation of wonderful free health, education, clean water, and community service projects, as well as spiritual centres in the thousands – not only in India, but around the world as well. Make no mistake, his devotees do really experience him being an omnipresent guiding, protecting, loving presence that inspires them to do this work.

Out of our love for him, for instance, our family has hosted a Sathya Sai Baba Center in our home in San Diego, California, U.S.A. for over 38 years, and has delighted and grown in its devotional, educational, and service activities. Respected people from all over the world have come to share Swami's love with us. This precious influence prompts us to lead a Dharmic life, and our family has grown in unity and peace because of his sacred touch.

The flow of ancient wisdom that has come from Sathya Sai Baba, who never had a formal education past the age of 14, is almost incomprehensible. If one goes to the international Sathya Sai Baba Organisation website (<http://www.sathyasai.org>) to the search engine found



there, and types in almost any spiritual item or term, you'll find references to numerous discourses which reveal multiple facets of the subject in the most profound and simple way. You will be amazed at how this level of understanding comes from such a single individual without a formal education. It is truly one of Sai Baba's most remarkable miracles.

Sai Baba teaches what we all experience – that our minds divide, compare, contrast, and often confuse – emphasizing differences and sometimes prompting conflict and even war. He assures us, however, that love has the power to raise us up beyond our differences to that rarefied region of oneness where we can experience our inter-connectivity and oneness as a family of humanity. In this place of oneness we experience being brothers and sisters, and are inspired by the power of love to serve and protect each other. This holy vision of oneness is a precious gift that can promote world peace.

Sathya Sai Baba's message, as I understand it, is one that

embraces all people and all world religions and traditions that promote basic human values that prompt us to love and serve each other. He tells us that when we act with selfless love, we can bring heaven to earth. He encourages us all to engage more seriously and intensely in our own traditions and religions that promote the welfare of all. As I understand it, his mission is to make us healthy and whole – to light the lamp of love in each of us so that this divine spark becomes a blazing light that can bring world peace.

I consider Sathya Sai Baba to be the embodiment of the Vedas, a unique teacher speaking lovingly about Sanathana Dharma in a way that brings us together at this troubled time.

He inspires us to be instruments of a light that leads us out of the darkness and into a beautiful world where all the peoples of all the worlds are happy. In my view Sathya Sai Baba represents a pure expression of the sacred soul of Mother India; and his teachings, an answer to the darkness and suffering of our times. ■

## A Legacy Of Love

By DR. ANIL NANDA



Dr. Anil Nanda is Professor and Chairman, Department of Neurosurgery, LSU Health Sciences Center - Shreveport, Louisiana, USA.

In the summer of 1973, my mother coerced me to flee the blistering heat of New Delhi for a course on Indian Culture and Spirituality in Bangalore. Being an agnostic and somewhat skeptical, I meandered my way on a train journey all the way to Whitefield, a quiet charming suburb of Bangalore. It was there that I encountered Bhagawan Baba for the first time and was introduced to an enlightening retreat that explained the differences between Advaita and Vishishtadvaita and the rapturous poetry of Surdas describing the devotion of the Gopis or the fact that the cost of one B-52 Bomber at the height of the Vietnam war could wipe out leprosy in India. It was a remarkable introduction and one that had a seminal impact on my life. That summer we learned about Shankaracharya's genius and why the rules of grammar were not important to an old man sitting in the corner of Benares, but it was a spiritual education that instilled a sense of human values into my DNA and helped me plod along. Never will I forget those days in Bangalore, those great lectures, and the wonderful discourses by Baba that had a lifelong impact.

Baba's divinity was something that came with time as my

skepticism dissolved. I always remember the time when my grandmother, bedridden and crippled with rheumatoid arthritis, saw Baba for the first time, and recognized him from a dream that she had had during a personal crisis that had happened over forty years ago. The next day, Baba walked up to her and said, "Didn't I come in your dreams over forty years ago?" So it was instances like that that crystallized my faith.

More than anything else, he was an immense catalyst for internal change, for life to search for that inner serenity and a call to action. An action to do good, to see good, to be good and to believe in a higher power. As a physician, I found that the work that I do has always been guided by that sense of humility and gratitude that "but for the grace of God it could be me." I think the 16th century surgeon Ambrose Pare put it best when he said: "Je le pansai, Dieu le guerit" meaning "I did the dressing, God did the healing." And so the divide between science and faith a chasm that is sometimes difficult to bridge can only be crossed by Baba's epic commandment of "Love all and serve all."

History will judge that as improbable as this story seems; a little boy in a remote part of Andhra Pradesh built up a billion dollar spiritual kingdom that brought good, helped people, educated them, provided water, and gave healthcare to a large section of population that had nowhere to go and all along igniting a thirst for spiritual transformation. ■

# He Taught Me The Essence Of Christianity!

BY Fr. Charles Ogada



Swami and Fr Charles-Christmas-2006

Father Charles Ogada was born in Uturu, Nigeria. He is a Roman Catholic priest and is the founder of the Spiritan Self Awareness Initiative, a humanitarian organisation involved in Self-Awareness through community development. He is the author of the book, 'The I Am Principle: the Christ Within'.

**S**topped! Yes, everything stopped and came to a standstill. My world finally collapsed. Like the gap between two breaths I was lost in an emptiness which left me breathless. Neither alive nor dead I was caught in a contradiction beyond my comprehension. Although my body was cold and my mind numb, I could still feel an inflated sensation as if I was floating outside the body. Then I realised what it was -- it was futility. The search for God had led me nowhere. Like a body severed from its life breath, my soul had been pining in vain for the eternal Source of its being.

This happened during the ninth year of my studies in a Catholic theological seminary. I ran to my professors and inquired whether they had found the remedy for my soul's malady, but none had the God solution. Instead they told me to pray. But I could not. Stripped of every concept, I was made to stand without a stand! It was during this critical time that Sai Baba came into my life, like a lamp that lit my

steps to Self awareness. It happened like this. There was this professor who taught us a course in comparative religion. He was an elderly priest who seemed to be different from the ordinary. During a lecture he mentioned the name 'Sai Baba' as an example of a living avatar. As I heard that name, something very strange happened within me. It was as if the scales covering my inner "I" suddenly fell off and I could see some dim flickers of my Self radiance. For the first time, I was able to breathe – it was a soul breath!

Then Swami came to me in a dream. He was pure Light robed in radiant red. With a circular wave of his hand, he created a whirl of energy which drew me to himself like a divine magnet. He hugged me and like a river merged in the ocean, "I" dissolved in his Love! Beyond words and concepts, he revealed to me the Truth of myself – *"I am He. He is me. We are one"*. When I woke up from that dream, I was born again. That was the beginning of my God awakening. I Am the One I Am looking for. I Am God. And all I have to do is to awaken and manifest my inherent divinity.

But why was this Truth hidden from me? No one taught us that the Christ is within each and every one of us and that we could rise to this Christhood as Jesus did. We were led to believe that the 'Christ' is a personal prerogative of Jesus even when Jesus himself preached the contrary. Jesus once said to his followers, *"The things I have done, you can do, and greater things than these you can do"* (John 14:12). On another occasion, when the religious authorities accused him of making himself equal to God, he said to them, *"I am God, but you too are God"* (Cf John 10:34).

Sai Baba taught me how to be like Jesus; how to awaken the 'Christ Within' and how to manifest this power as a transforming energy in the world. For me, this is the greatest message of Sai Baba, a message which all the avatars and great masters have preached and lived. The awakening of our inherent divinity is the key to our global transformation – the dawn of the golden age. This awakening should be the focus of world religions today and Sai Baba has given us the key. ■



# The Story Of

## 'Jodi Adi Palli Somappa'

BY SUDHA RAGHUNATHAN



Baba with tiny Geetasudha

Sudha Raghunathan is one of India's leading Carnatic vocalists, with over 200 music CD releases to her credit. She has participated in global music festivals and has done innovations with fusion music. She has been conferred the Padma Shri by the Govt. of India.

**M**iracles certainly happen – I can vouch for that. After all, I am a living example of one such astonishing act of the grace of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Let me go on rewind mode and narrate that incident due to which, I am breathing and singing my way through life today.

It was the 25th of November, 1958. I was a little child, blissfully unaware of what this big world had in store for me. As related by my father SRV to me, after one of our visits to Puttaparthi, while returning to Bangalore by car, I suddenly became stiff and turned blue and practically lifeless. The vehicle stopped, crowds gathered and suddenly there appeared an old man who commanded the distraught parents *"Give the child here."* He mumbled some Mantras, sprinkled the sacred Vibhuti, smearing some on the baby's forehead. The lifeless child suddenly cried out to everyone's relieved amazement. When questioned, he gave his name as Jodi Adipalli Somappa and melted away into the crowd. While this incident happened on the afternoon of 25th November, on the Puttaparthi-

Bangalore road, that evening at 5:30 pm, Baba told some of the devotees gathered around him at Prasanthi Nilayam exactly what had occurred – the details of manifesting himself as an old man to reinfuse life into me.

This dramatic tale of 'death' and 're-birth', was the explanation for Baba's sudden trance earlier in the afternoon. He had left his body at Puttaparthi and hurried to the place of emergency to save me, Geetha Sudha. He narrated further, *"SRV offered me one rupee, which I refused. He then gave an orange that I myself had given him as Prasad here. I accepted it, and then threw it away after I drew away the evil power that was dogging the child, into it."*

Bhagawan has a million names and forms but that I regained 'life' on the lap of Jodi Adipalli Somappa is a treasured thought that I cherish every day, with utmost gratitude. Today, as every Sai devotee will know, this name figures in the *Sri Sathya Sai Ashtotara Namavali (Om Sri Sai Jodi Adipalli Somappaya Namaha)* as one of the 108 names of Baba. It was Baba who christened me Geetha Sudha and performed the 'Aksharabhyasam' (initiation into learning) for me. What more can I ask for?

To me, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has been my friend first. Because while I sat on his lap playing with his curly hair, fiddling with the silk sleeve of his attire or slept curled up at his feet, I was a mere toddler whom he nurtured with the food of love. Every incident is still vivid and fresh in my memory. At the age of 3, I used to recite the Sri Venkatesa Suprabhatam and sing Bhajans such as *'Bhajo Maname Sadha Sai Ram Nam'* and *'Sai Baba Geeta Sudha Madhuram Madhuram Anandam'* and receive medals from him in appreciation. As I grew up, I came to realise the rare good fortune to have constantly received his precious blessing.

Incidents, guidance and advice from him have been aplenty in the journey of my life and I pause to wonder if ever at any point of time I would do justice in penning them in black and white. I have felt the impact of the amazing love of Sai many a time in times of difficulty or doubt and made a complete U-turn in my course of action, through his subtle guidance. Just saying Sai at least a 100 times a day, strengthens me, equips me to face the challenges of the day and assures me of success at the end of it all. Baba's gospel of pure unconditional love and compassion for humanity at large compelled me to start the Samudhaaya Foundation, an NGO by means of which I reach out to help underprivileged children in the areas of health care and providing infrastructure.

When I sang a concert in his Divine presence on November



Sri Sathya Sai Baba and Sudha Raghunathan

19, 2010 on the occasion of his 85th birthday, little did I realize that I would not see him in his physical form again. But for some inexplicable reason, my heart was heavier than ever before and when he presented me a clock and

whispered his blessings. It was as though he was assuring me, *"I'm with you every second."*

True to his word, he is, to this second. ■

## A Sweet Reminiscence

BY SUNIL GAVASKAR

A former captain of the Indian cricket team, Sunil Manohar Gavaskar is regarded as one of the greatest 'opening batsmen' in cricket history. He was the first to score 10,000 runs in Test cricket. He has been conferred the Padma Bhushan by the Govt. of India.

**T**his November 23rd was Sri Sathya Sai Baba's 86th birthday. He was not there in person but we know that he will always be with us. His physical presence is sorely missed and it is quite inconceivable that life could proceed without him. Yet, as his devotees, we also know that he is all around us and is guiding us in his own unobtrusive way as he has done throughout our lives.

His entry into my life was not unobtrusive. The day I made an unexpected comeback to the Mumbai Ranji Trophy team was the most momentous day in my life. I was in the reserves and not expecting to play. A sudden injury to skipper Ajit Wadekar meant that I was drafted into the 'playing eleven'. I had not carried my leg-guards since I knew I was not playing but after reaching the ground I was told that I was in. So I called my mother and asked her to

bring my leg-guards. She took a taxi and came to the ground by which time the match had started and I was batting with Wadekar's leg-guards. The previous occasion that my parents had come to see me bat I had got out for a duck! Not wishing to tempt fate, my mother left after delivering the pads at the reception. She went back and as mothers are wont to do, started praying for my success at which point she saw a vision on the kitchen wall and heard a voice saying that all would be well and that she should not worry.

She again left the house to get a poster of the vision that she had seen. She went to the regular corner shop that had posters of the various Hindu deities but could not find the one of whose vision she had. She went to some other shops without much luck in getting the poster and then came back to the first shopkeeper who said he had never heard or seen a poster as described by her. She pleaded with him to look again at the pile of posters he had and lo and behold! There was a poster of the one exactly as in her vision, right at the bottom of the heap.

The vendor gave it to her saying that there was no charge since he had not ordered the poster and did not know how





Sri Sathya Sai Baba with Sunil Gavaskar & G Vishwanath

It had got there. From that day we became devotees of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. However the first time that I got the chance to see him came during the rest day of the test match in Chennai in 1978. That pitch was the fastest I had ever played on and India was chasing a small target for a win but had lost a few wickets. Gundappa Viswanath who had cracked an incredible hundred in the first innings was still at the crease. The West Indian skipper Alvin Kallicharran also had come to get Darshan along with a couple of other Indian cricketers.

I will never forget my first sight of Swami. He looked as if he was gliding on air as he walked towards the congregation of devotees with a smile on his face and the hand raised in Aashirwad. When we fortunately got the private Darshan we were overwhelmed and after we came out of the room 'Kalli' teased me by saying that since he had spoken more to him than to me his team was going to win the next day. I countered by saying that the real reason was his being the lone West Indian player there, but we would surely win the next day. This is exactly what happened with Viswanath playing another capital innings and taking us through, in a tense close finish.

That first close Darshan made me want more but it did not happen till I went to Puttaparthi. It was just before Bakri-Id and Swami took me in his car to the school and asked me to

speak on Bakri-Id. I was aghast as I did not know enough to do justice to the topic but he smiled and just waved me to the podium. Till this date I don't know what I spoke. Recently however, I met a student of that time who said it was one of the best information about Bakri-Id that he had heard. Quite clearly it wasn't me who spoke but Swami who did so and at the end of it he smiled and said, 'See, it wasn't difficult, no?'

That also brings me to Swami's teachings which were inclusive and not divisive at all. For him it mattered not if you were a Hindu, a Catholic, Sikh, Muslim or even a non-believer. He wanted you to serve all and love all. He wanted more of hands that work than lips that pray. He encouraged us to do at least one good deed every day and it could be as small as helping an elderly person cross the road.

The educational institutions that he has created, the super specialty hospitals and the water works in drought hit districts of Andhra Pradesh are chronicled extensively and I will not add to it. If we follow his teachings with the desire for the wellbeing of all that he has striven to imbibe in his devotees, a future of love and peace where everyone will strive to be a better human being and serve humanity will be ours.

Swami we will always love you. ■

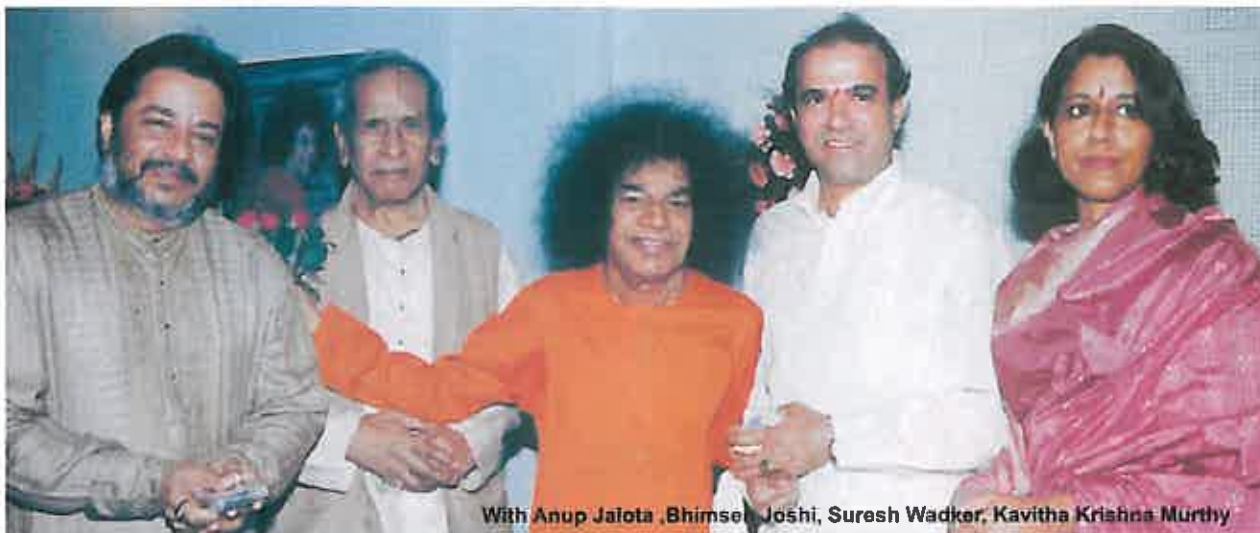
## The Divine Musician

BY ANUP JALOTA

Anup Jalota, popularly known as 'Bhajan Samrat' is a singer and musician, who primarily sings Bhajans and Ghazals. He has released over 200 albums and has a record number of 100 certified gold and platinum discs.

**M**y first interaction with Baba was in Lucknow, 40 years ago when I was barely 10 years old. Baba was visiting the Governor of Uttar Pradesh. Since my father was the state's Raj Gayak, he was invited to sing before Baba, and I accompanied him. Baba blessed us and invited my father to Puttaparthi, and thus began my family's association with Baba, which strengthened with every passing day.

I remember the day when Baba asked Shri Manoj Kumar, the actor-director from Mumbai, to give me a singing



With Anup Jalota, Bhimsen Joshi, Suresh Wadkar, Kavitha Krishna Murthy

break in the movie 'Shirdi Ke Sai Baba'. Thus began my musical journey.

Baba himself was a very melodious singer and on a couple of occasions, he sang along with me and also guided me musically. Once, Baba called me to spend a few days with him at his Ooty Ashram where I got a lot of opportunities to sing along with him. I can never forget the meal that Baba himself served to some of his favourite musicians like Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Pandit Shivkumar Sharma, Yesudas, myself and a few others. This kind of gesture by Baba charged our batteries, initiating and motivating us in the world of Divine music.

Once, I was given the job of recording the Bhagavad Gita by the Venus Music Company. The Bhagavad Gita is a very deep subject and I wished to know more about it. So I went to Puttaparthi to meet Baba regarding this. Baba explained the meaning of this holy book in such a simple manner that

I had no difficulty in recording this book into a musical form thereafter. He told me that the first Shloka of Bhagavad Gita starts with the word 'Dharma' (righteous duty) and the last 700th Shloka ends with the word 'Mama (my)'. 'Mama Dharma', is the real essence of Bhagavad Gita, as summed up by Baba.

Many a time Baba asked me to teach music to the students of his school and to guide them in the correct manner. To me, Baba was never a 'body'. For months I would not be able to see him but I felt that I had a connection with him all the time.

We have not seen Shri Shirdi Sai Baba but we still feel connected to him. In the same way, now millions of people will not be able to see Shri Sathya Sai Baba, but the connection will always be there. He will always be present in our hearts, dreams and thoughts and his vibrations will guide us undoubtedly forever. ■

## An Encounter Of Love

BY MEERA H. SANYAL

*A banker for the past 26 years, Meera Sanyal is currently the Chairperson & Country Executive for the RBS (Royal Bank of Scotland) group. She headed MIRA, a think tank that suggested innovative measures for liberalisation in India and takes an active part in Corporate Social Responsibility activities and environmental issues.*

I first saw Baba as a child at one of his public discourses in Mumbai. Though we were standing at a great distance, the memory remained imprinted in my mind. In my mind's eye, when I prayed to God it was often Baba's image that floated before me. It was therefore wonderful to be invited to the World Conference on Ethics and Finance at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning at Prasanthi Nilayam in 2009 and have the unique honour

and privilege of meeting Baba face to face and receive his blessings.

At that time my father was critically ill. As I went to receive Baba's blessings, I prayed for my father's recovery. While leaving, one of the devotees gifted me a copy of the Bhagavad Gita which I started reading on the flight home. On arrival in Mumbai, I went straight to my parents' home. That night I continued to read the Gita aloud to my father. After we had finished, my father blessed me and said that this had been most timely. Two days later, he passed away peacefully. I was not by his side when he passed away, but to this day I feel his presence around me. In this way I feel we were both blessed by Baba.

What impacted me most from my association with Baba was his amazing Love. The net outcome of the experience of meeting him was that when and where the expected did not happen, the lesson of love and fortitude was not lost.

During my visit to Puttaparthi, I had the opportunity to





Meera Sanyal with Baba during the Ethics Conference at the Sai University

visit both the educational institutions and Baba's Super Speciality hospital. Both institutions were remarkable for their focus on excellence. The hospital stands out in my mind as the finest medical institution I have seen anywhere in the world - not just for its technical excellence and track record, but for the compassion and love with

which patients, irrespective of their socio- economic status, are treated absolutely free of cost.

I believe the Sai Mission can be a beacon of hope in our country with its mission of service and love, especially for those who are most disadvantaged. ■

## The Loving Presence

BY V.S.DAS

*Vishwavir Saran Das is Senior Executive Director, Reserve Bank of India. He is also the Appellate Authority under the Right to Information Act.*

India has, through centuries, been blessed with several spiritual leaders whose mission was to promote love, righteousness, peace and harmony in society. Among them was Sri Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparthi whose life and message inspired millions of people throughout the world to turn God-ward and to lead more purposeful and moral lives.

My association with Baba evolved over four decades. I first noticed his picture in 1971 in a friend's house at Allahabad. I still recall the strong attraction that I felt towards the picture. My friend presented me Howard Murphet's book on the life and teachings of Baba titled, 'Man of Miracles'. The book made a deep impact on my mind and I believe, was instrumental in developing my faith in his divinity.

I had my first glimpse of Baba in December 1977 when I specially travelled to Bangalore to have his Darshan. On reaching his ashram in Whitefield, I was informed that he was in Bombay and this left me very disappointed. However, it also enhanced my yearning to see him. During this visit I was staying in my cousin's house. My cousin was returning from a foreign trip via Bombay and his family

asked me to accompany them to the airport to receive him. So there we were, waiting for my cousin's flight to arrive. The flight landed punctually and, to my utter delight, the first passenger to alight was none other than Baba himself.

As he gracefully descended the plane's ladder I folded my hands and silently thanked him with moist eyes for fulfilling my earnest desire to have his Darshan. As his car passed us, he looked towards us and raised his hand in blessing. Even though this was from a considerable distance, I still remember the strange chill it sent down my spine.

My long posting in Bombay from 1982 to 1993 brought me in close touch with the Sai Organisation and I became involved in various Sai activities. During this period, my mother, sisters and their husbands became intense devotees of Baba. They used to visit Puttaparthi frequently and were blessed with interviews. During one of my visits to Prasanthi Nilayam, Baba materialised Vibhuti (holy ash) and placed it in my palm. A few days later, we were blessed with Vibhuti appearing on his pictures in our house for a number of days.

I would like to recount an incident, which is etched firmly in my memory. In 1991, I visited Paris and on arriving at my hotel discovered that I had lost my passport, air ticket and



VS Das speaking at the conference on Ethics & Finance

wallet containing all my money. It was a truly traumatic experience, but I prayed to Baba for his help. It occurred to me that there was a branch of a particular Indian bank there. I called them from the hotel desk and they kindly sent one of their officers to the hotel to help me out. The gentleman was very calm and reassuring. He offered to take me to various places such as the Indian Embassy, airline office, but I suggested that we go back to the airport where there was some possibility of retrieving my lost valuables. The idea did not appeal to my banker friend who thought the chances of success were slim.

The airport complex was huge and such incidents of theft were quite common. My inner voice was, however, prodding me to go there. So, we headed for the airport and I just closed my eyes and kept on chanting: 'Aum Sai Ram'. As we approached the airport, I identified the building and the gate from where I had exited without much difficulty, which my friend found very surprising. We went to the Lost & Found desk. "Sir, is this yours?" asked a smiling lady holding up my passport and pouch. I found all my documents and money intact. My joy and relief knew no bounds and the help I received from Baba in response to my prayer overwhelmed me.

The most memorable event in my life took place in August 2009 when the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning organized a Conference on 'Ethics in the World of Finance' at Puttaparthi. The Conference was inaugurated by Baba. The delegates comprised CEOs and senior executives from a number of leading banks, financial institutions and regulatory bodies. I also had the honour of being invited as a panelist in one of the panel discussions. My wife, daughter and my granddaughter accompanied me. We were all Baba's guests during the three days stay at Puttaparthi and never before had we experienced such a caring host.

On 29th August, at a grand public function organized in Sai

Kulwant Hall, delegates shared the dais with him. Baba conveyed a message through his assistant asking me whether I would like to speak. This caught me unaware and my instant reaction was one of sheer trepidation. Speaking in his presence before a gathering of almost 10,000 devotees seemed quite a formidable task. I simply went up to him, touched his feet and said: "Baba, You speak through me today". He smiled and asked me to proceed. And I spoke from my heart on Ethics and Finance, relating it to Baba's teachings.

The best day of my life was August 30, the day on which we were departing from Puttaparthi. It was the day when he granted us the first interview. Just as the Bhajans were about to end, Baba made his entry. I was seated in the verandah and he stopped near me and asked me to call my wife and other family members. He blessed us and materialised a chain and pendant for my little granddaughter, which he lovingly placed around her neck. Then he ushered us into his interview room. I had longed for this moment for three and a half decades and the half an hour that we spent with him were simply heavenly and difficult to describe.

The bonding between the Divine Mother and her children was instant. He reassured us saying: "I will always be with you wherever you are, inside you, behind you, beside you". Baba is no longer with us in his physical form and yet he is always with us. I believe that my family members and I have received Baba's Divine Grace and Protection all these years.

Baba's teachings are timeless and universal and cannot be covered in entirety in this article. Their underlying principle is the principle of Love. Baba often said that the essence of all his teachings is contained in the simple yet powerful tenets – "Love All, Serve All; Help Ever, Hurt Never". Indeed, this message of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is one which has had the greatest impact on me and which I will strive to imbibe. ■



# My Guide

BY CHARU SINHA

Charu Sinha, IPS, is the DIG of Police, Anantapur Range in Andhra Pradesh, India. Previously, she was the Joint-Director of Anti-Corruption Bureau

and the first woman SP of East Godavari area of AP. In 2005, she was selected for the UN Mission to Kosovo.



**W**e all face a difficult time making important decisions and sometimes everyday decisions too seem to be quite a task. Be it our personal or professional life, when it comes to decisions affecting us, our near and dear ones, or larger groups, the dilemma of decision making can throw us into an analysis-paralysis mode. This often delays necessary action. My experiences as a law enforcement officer require everyday responsible and prompt decisions, often affecting several lives and one wrong decision could create havoc. Baba then held my hand and walked the whole way with me.

My first posting in 1999 was as Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) at Pulivendula, in Cuddapah district of Andhra Pradesh. It was an area known for factional politics, having witnessed bloodbath due to long standing feuds between families. Here, the men of each family kept killing their rivals by hacking or using country made bombs on each other, leading to some of the most ghastly killings ever witnessed.

Women would not tie their hair into a bun till the death of their husband/father/son was avenged. Investigating a faction murder was even more difficult as no witness would come forward to speak even if he/she had witnessed the brutal killing. So where could one gather evidence to charge the case and ensure a trial? I would take time to weigh the pros and cons of each case and then decide what to do. Seemingly simple cases were actually very complicated where witnesses were planted, evidence was planted and we had to crack it despite all resistance

and non-cooperation from the public. From their perspective, the public felt that they were justified, as after all, they were only settling scores and the deceased deserved the end they got. I took decisions but slowly, after a lot of pondering over. I was afraid of making mistakes by sending the wrong people to jail or leaving the actual culprits scot-free. Decision making was a nightmare for me.

My next posting was in 2001 as Officer on Special Duty, Operations in Medak district, Andhra Pradesh. Here the task was to conduct anti-extremist operations and achieve results in the field. I was still slow in planning operations, filtering and acting upon intelligence and would often be taken for a ride by informants and my own over-smart subordinates. As a result, I was extremely wary in deciding what to do and what not to do.

It was at this point that Baba started saying that I needed to improve my decision making. He said I was slow and needed to be fast (He would snap his fingers to indicate speed). And I would wonder how. Then one day I was faced with a question of life and death when my special parties were out combing the forest for extremists and militants who had gone on a rampage, blasting 5 different factories in different parts of the district. I wasn't sure whether they would come back alive as the extremists had set up landmines to target the police. After we unsuccessfully searched the forests for days together, suddenly, on their own, the 10 militants we had identified and were looking for, came and surrendered before the police station! My

parties were safe too.

Then Baba said very clearly: *"Why are you afraid of taking decisions? Know that I am always with you. Know that whatever decision you take will never be wrong. If the decision is correct, then fine, even if it is not correct, I will ensure that the decision does not go wrong. So go ahead and just take the decision."* This was the strongest reassurance one can ever receive, and coming from the Lord of the Universe all my fears melted away. It was an important and practical lesson on self-confidence.

Since then there has been no turning back, pondering, dillydallying, delaying etc. I take just a few seconds now to take the most difficult personal or professional decisions and the confidence with which I can do that now, comes only from Baba and I am amazed at myself sometimes. I know that Baba is doing the thinking and taking the decision and not me. I only have to set myself aside (my mind-ego-personality-body complex) and let HIM work through me. This new self-confidence exudes not from my ego-personality but the Swami in me, my divine self.

Be it in matters of personal or professional choices, I have learnt that when we surrender the thinking process, the decision and its outcome to Swami, when we realize that he is the thinker and doer and not we, then nothing can

prevent us from going ahead full throttle.

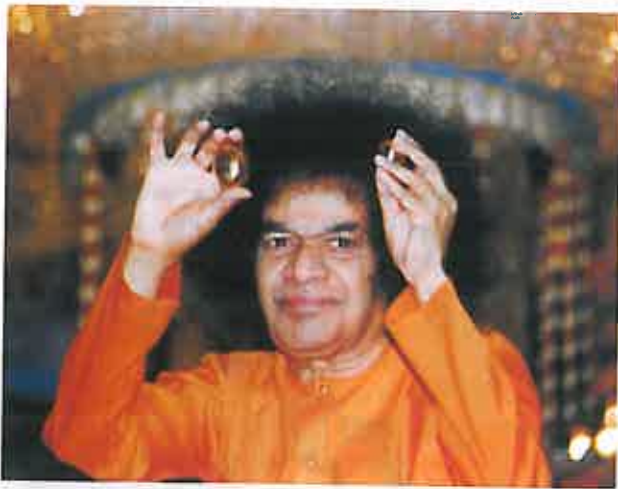
On the other hand, every time we delay decision making, it is because we are relying on the mind, thinking ourselves to be very intelligent and smart and trusting our mind to make the decision better than anyone else. These mind-centric assumptions are flawed as they are rooted in our ego-personalities and not in our divine confidence.

Often I find people struggling to decide which school to enrol their children in, what subjects to guide them to take, what careers to choose, how to deal with a boss, how to decide on a life partner and the numerous day to day decisions. I now understand that it is their mind that thinks it is the doer and hence generates so much dilemma and confusion.

If only we can leave the thinking, planning, weighing, analyzing, etc. to God, life would be much easier. Now, whatever the situation may be, whatever decisions I may have to take, I know that Baba is with me, holding my hand. I need to take the first baby step and I know HE will take me all the way, whichever way HE wants me to tread. I move ahead in life now armed with this spiritual/divine confidence. There is no better guide than him, who I believe to be the Lord of the universe. Of this truth, I am utterly assured. Thank you Swami. ■

## Sai Leela

BY B.J.K. Tampi, IPS  
earth."



B.J.K. Tampi, IPS, has held different positions in his long career including that of SP of Chamba Valley in Himachal Pradesh. He retired as the Director General of Police, Tripura.

I read about Sri Sathya Sai Baba for the first time in 1959 in an article by M.V. Kamath, Editor of the Illustrated Weekly of India. I saw him for the first time in May 1968 at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay where a World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations was being held. There he joked that men in worldly life are free to choose their wives, but no one can choose the mother. Then he stated, *"But I chose the mother for my advent on*

In later years, I understood the meaning of his advent or Avatar – and that his mission was the restoration of spiritual values; not the establishment of a new sect based on formal conversions. All his life Baba taught people that religion has to serve the prime purpose of leading individuals to spirituality. Innumerable individuals all over the world have experienced the presence in themselves of an active Universal Consciousness with the name and form of Sai. A little reflection has shown them the error in condemning beliefs and experiences other than one's own.

Baba's 'miracles' were proof of the Universal Consciousness that he embodied. I have derived many lessons from reflecting upon my own experiences of his miracles. In the 1960s, I used to read every year about the Shiva Linga materialised by him during the Shivaratri festival. By and by, I started wishing that he would present me with one of those Shiva Lingas. I had no doubt in my mind that I was a devotee par excellence deserving such a gift! Swami had created Vibhuti for me in Goa in October 1968. But I went to Prasanthi Nilayam for the first time ever only in 1978. I learned on arrival there that there would be no Shivaratri observance and Baba had left there a few days before. I had to return to Agartala disappointed, without Darshan, yet with certain spiritual experiences.

In later years, Baba had stopped the creation of Shiva Linga



and I forgot all about my old wish. Then in March 1987, I went to Prasanthi Nilayam. Most unexpectedly Baba selected me among others for the cherished interview. In the interview room I watched as Swami created various articles – a Japamala for a lady from Delhi; an image of Vishnu in gold for a very old devotee who was overwhelmed; a chain for a handicapped girl and mother; Vibhuti for a few others. Then suddenly he turned to me and remarked, *"Your health is not good."* (Actually I had been having a stomach upset since that morning). Then he asked me to extend my palm, moved his hand two or three times in circles and dropped a Shiva Linga (the size of a grape) into my open palm. It was only later that night that I remembered my old forgotten wish to get a Shiva Linga from Baba. And he had fulfilled my wish on my 49th birthday! I do not require more evidence that Baba knew every thought (word and deed) of the devotee even if all our wishes may not be fulfilled.

The Shiva Linga story does not end there. A few years ago I started regretting that I had missed actually seeing the emergence of the Shiva Linga from Swami's Udarā (abdomen). As if in answer to my unspoken prayers, Baba resumed the manifestation of Shiva Linga from within him, most unexpectedly, on Shivaratri day, 1999; in 2002 and 2003 I was there at Puttaparthi to witness 'Lingodbhavam'. This is how Baba has shown me that he has come with a purely spiritual purpose – by fulfilling my purely spiritual wishes.

As far as I remember, I prayed only once to Baba for help in solving a specific criminal case. It happened when I was the Superintendent of Police, Chamba District, Himachal Pradesh. In June 1971, I had gone to Goa to give evidence in the Sessions Court and returned a week later to find the whole town agitated over the theft of a magnificent idol of Lord Vishnu from a very old temple in the town. There were public demonstrations every day. I prayed to Baba in his photograph at my residence to bring the image back to the temple. The investigating Sub-Inspector had collected some clues pointing to criminals from U.P. I felt prompted to telephone the SP, CID, Delhi Police. That call was crucial and the Delhi CID officers located the accused in U.P. To cut a long story short, the image was recovered from Bombay airport, minutes before being loaded, after Customs clearance for export to the West. The whole town had turned up to receive the image back.

The image was considered so priceless that the case was discussed in the Lok Sabha and the Antiques and Art-Treasurers Act (No.52 of 1972) was passed as a result. I still remember the day a large procession led by the Municipal Chairman, Chamba, had come to my office demanding effective investigation and I had coolly assured him, on the

strength of my daily prayers to Baba, that the image would be brought back. This case was a miracle for me. I believe that by dint of such experiences Baba was communicating the core concept of the Veda, the Upanishad and the Gita that the Divine is present everywhere in all beings, like oxygen in our atmosphere and that constant remembrance of God will procure Divine assistance in practical life. I have learnt from Baba that all religions are means to persuade individual men and women to practise the process of realising themselves as the Divine.

He did not condemn atheists because, *'Any person with a spark of Love in him is a theist, whether he goes to a temple or a church or not'*. (Discourse by Baba on 24.5.1967). Those who proclaim only one name and form for God and condemn openly or secretly the use of other names and forms may be performing a religious duty laid down by their own historical and geographical circumstances, but they are necessarily to be tolerated by us, for it is the most irreligious and unspiritual thing to try to imitate them.

When the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation was launched, Bhagawan Baba had stated that it was not just another organisation competing for conversions from one religion to another. He made it clear that it was a spiritual organisation bound to help and co-operate with other organisations having a loving and unselfish universal attitude (Discourse by Baba on 21.4.1967). I believe that Bhagawan Baba's Mission was to draw the attention of humanity towards the Divine that is its own inherent nature. He said he would drop the body not a day sooner than willed already. We stand to gain by reflecting upon his life and his teachings and realising that we are still in touch with him and he, with us. ■



# The Fountainhead Of Faith

BY K.V. KAMATH



*Kundapur Vaman Kamath is the non-executive Chairman of the Board of Directors of Infosys Ltd. and the ICICI Bank. Previously associated with the Asian Development Bank, he has been a co-chair of the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos. He has been conferred the Padma Bhushan by the Govt. of India.*

I had always looked at what Baba had done - from a distance, never having had the opportunity to interact with him. The conference on 'Ethics and the World of Finance' that was held in Puttaparthi gave me an opportunity to see, feel and understand what Baba was doing.

The first impression that you have when you go Puttaparthi and stay in the facilities is one of care and affection. You then realise that this is all voluntary and the people who are caring for you are all there because of their faith irrespective of their status in life. Ordinarily, you will not expect people to volunteer with an open heart, but that is what we see in Puttaparthi. You also sense the general air of calm and peace that is there all around as if it was an extension of what he thought and did.

The conference on Ethics was very timely because it came post the critical global events that took place in 2008. The root cause of the crisis can be attributed to the deficit of ethics and excess of greed. The purpose of the conference was to see how this root cause could be addressed. The conference was very well organised.

During the conference we had the opportunity to see and meet Baba. That itself was an experience. You see a very large number of people, all of whom are overflowing with faith, assembling to see Baba. What inspired me is that it was across denominations. When you see Baba, you are enveloped by the faith and that is what struck me when I saw him. Very few people have the ability to hold and embrace all with love and faith. And he was reaching out to all who had assembled there. The message that comes out really is very simple: 'Look within you and you will find what you are seeking'. That, for me, was a true miracle - of giving you that ability to have faith in yourself. That transcends a whole lot of other experiences that one may have. With the result, you come out a much better person in terms of your ability to look at things in context, the

ability to have unflinching faith in the outcomes.

To me, that single experience with Baba was a fountain of faith. The interesting part was that everybody believed that they had a personal equation with Baba. I felt it, my wife felt it, I'm sure all the 50,000 people sitting there felt it. That is something very unique and distinctive about the whole experience that we had. I carried away with me this deep feeling that - love, compassion, ethics; all flow from the single feeling at the apex, namely faith.

While I visited the school and college and the various facilities, I did not have the opportunity to see the hospital, but my wife did. I had an occasion to hear about it. Virtually, what was described to me was a miracle. I have had the opportunity to meet the doctors who were volunteering there, doctors were from across faiths. One also ponders on what are miracles. To me, that question was more important than the miracles various people talked about. For example the miracle of bringing water to Chennai. Faith, devotion and concentration on the task, and timely execution made this impossible task possible. I think this is a lesson that can be replicated. And I would think that he would be most happy if he sees what he did being replicated in many many areas across the country. Why is it that we are not able to do it? What holds us back? Once you channelize energy, time is not a constraint, time just collapses. That is part of the miracle. Everyone needs to really get down to action in its truest sense for the common good. Finally the greatest miracle is transformation of the heart.

It was an amazing experience, to see Baba, and feel the faith. To say you have met him is not right. Baba is to be felt. It was universal. There were a set of bankers there and all felt the same way. It was the same the second time that I met Baba in Mumbai in 2009. You sense the love and affection that permeates the room and carry the faith in your heart. ■





*The sons of successful business people from Malaysia, Ong Sai Keet and his brother have been instrumental in arranging the Buddhist Mantra Offering for World Peace with Tibetan Buddhist monks during Chinese New Year at Prasanthi Nilayam for nearly a decade.*

**A**s with many testimonies of Bhagawan, ours too, begins with a miracle. It was time for our mother to sell her car.

She was the youngest woman, in Singapore, to have purchased the flagship sedan of BMW out of her own resources. But luck with buying the car unfortunately did not extend to selling it. Neither did her reputation for deadly negotiation of whole marble quarries and multimillion dollar industrial equipment, help. We recall as young children how she articulated her growing concern over a lack of a buyer for her car, but not the case of running a factory which gave her sleepless nights!

But one day, when we returned home from school, we were quite surprised at how quickly the sale transaction was settled, and even more so at the agent's second call later in the afternoon. "Mrs. Ong, we oversold the car and the buyer is very unhappy. Could we have our money back?" Mother, being mother, flatly refused.

We later discovered she had, several days earlier, issued a challenge in her heart to the man with the curly hair and orange garment. It occurred after she oddly decided to visit the Sri Sathya Sai Centre in Singapore en route to our school. We still have no idea if the fateful visit was curiosity or divine providence. The businesswoman in her was obviously not convinced of his Divinity, despite hearing what people there had to say. Her challenge to him was, 'If you truly are God, sell my car and I will go to India'. And

that is how our journey with Sai began with a car.

As for our father, Bhagawan greeted him on their initial meeting with - 'Ah, Hong Kong'. It was a play on our family name. Our father used it regularly in introduction to others who might not be familiar with oriental names. Yet, how did Bhagawan know?

For us, holidays were spent in India. The youngsters loved it; the elders dreaded it. It meant freedom and cooling coconuts, or enduring car-sickness for hours on pitch-dark country roads. Through the decade, we had each accumulated over fifty trips to Bharat to see our loving Sai, and with passport stamps to prove it.

It is a wonder how the two brothers, alike in dignity, but separate in disposition were transformed by this slight, charismatic man in India. Highly-realised gurus can teach and advise us on our path, but none have been able to transform the lives of so many ever so subtly as Bhagawan has done. Only he can literally and confidently assert 'I will change your fate' without repercussion.

The younger one of us had speech difficulties as a child, and neither doctor nor therapist had answers or solutions. Whenever he spoke, nobody could understand what he was saying. But all Bhagawan said was 'I know, I know', and it was healed. This young man has been eloquently hosting the annual Buddhist Mantra Offering for World Peace in front of twenty thousand people at Puttaparthi for the past nine years, and on many occasions, Swami has commented: "How well the boy speaks".

We, in our few years of life, have met people cured of cancer, saved from horrid accidents, and even a delightful professor brought back to life. We ourselves have experienced countless moments of coincidence in the most trying of circumstances, manifestations of powdered foot prints half a world away, or of objects from his hand. But even as children, we comprehend that it is an

oversight, to focus purely on miracles, whichever side of the supernatural coin one may be. It is a tremendous blessing indeed, to be on the receiving end, but we too often allow ourselves to equate proof of miracle with divinity.

The biggest gift Sathya Sai gave to us was not materialised objects, but our lives and ourselves. It is one thing to say in abstract that we need to delve deeper and know who we are, but another to feel and see it as unadulterated truth. Though our journey with Bhagawan has taken us through Hinduism, made us better Buddhists, and more conscious of Christianity and Islam, the simple values he teaches are the essence of every religion. How many of us can truly say, that we *"Love All, Serve All"*?

He taught us Satya, Dharma, Prema, Shanti and Ahimsa, and as lovingly as any parent would do. However, he was instructive when need be. When he asked the older of us 'Why should you want to become a doctor', the latter replied, 'To serve you Swami'. Immediate he chided, 'No, to serve humanity'.

Just as he had directed the first to medical school, likewise, he said that the second should aspire to architecture. Come to think of it, he knew exactly the right moment to tell us what course our life should take. But underpinning his uncanny sense of time was always a straightforward wish for us to help others. He understands that working long hours as a doctor requires passion, while building Buddhist Stupas is more than just a fascination with

structural engineering and aesthetics. Everything he instructs is in accordance with our capabilities and innermost desires.

Leaving the spirituality aside, two hospitals with internationally acclaimed doctors, providing medication and open-heart surgery for free, is no small gift to humanity. Neither is a water project supplying water to a million poor.

Untrammelled by adulthood, we attest that we have only seen him giving, giving and giving. We struggle, in all honesty, to give you an instance where he has taken, except for letters, prayers and tears. Likewise, for all the tremendous charity achieved over the years, we have never seen the Sathya Sai Organisation solicit for funds. It just keeps giving and serving.

Bhagawan has a season for everything. One of the last things he said to us two brothers was while pointing to a plastic bag with the Sathya Sai crest on it that wrote, *"Hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray"*. Swami said, *"Remember, your duty is to Love All Serve All"*. He chose those words, which echoed a Buddhist maxim, when we were with thirty-six other Tibetan Buddhist monks.

We consider ourselves fortunate to be a part of his story. The media may attempt to remove his miracles from our memory, or his words from our ears, but they will never be able to undo his work on our hearts.

We are inseparable. ■

## Making Man Divine

BY K. JAYAKUMAR

A popular Malayalam poet, lyricist and scriptwriter, K. Jayakumar, IAS, is currently, the Addl. Chief Secretary, (Home), Govt. of Kerala. He is also the Chief Commissioner of the Travancore Devaswom Board.

When I first visited Prasanthi Nilayam some 20 years ago, I had known about Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba only as a remote benevolent presence. I went there to offer a musical album I had written on Swami. When I glimpsed the saffron hue of his attire from a distance, I remember vividly how my heart quivered. It was a feeling which I cannot compare with anything that had happened in my life till then and ever since. How could anyone cause such an excitement in the first Darshan from a distance? Thereafter I have been a regular visitor along with my wife. It would be more appropriate to say that ever since that first glimpse, Sri Sathya Sai Baba had allowed us to live with him always. Rather he was with us in our joys and anxieties. Almost

instantly he became our parent, relative and companion. We became believers in an extraordinary power of love and compassion as embodied in the benevolent form of Swami. Silently, firmly and mysteriously he comforted us by asking, 'Why fear when I am near?'

I have experienced how, in this awareness, fear has gone away from my life. He often reminded us that God is inside, outside, behind and around us. He reiterated and demonstrated beyond doubt that divinity protects. Once we truly believe in this assurance of protection, fear ceases to have a place in our lives. Decisions taken in fearlessness alter the very quality of life. Ever since Swami entered our lives, we began to experience this palpable sense of protection. Like the feeling of self assurance a child feels while clutching the finger of its father. In his discourses and actions Swami always demonstrated how we can equip ourselves to receive this grace. The less complicated our minds, the more direct and clear would be his messages. We only have to believe and listen in silence, after shutting out the habitual chatter of the mind and its conditioned thoughts. He heard every thought of





ours. When in doubt he always provides the answers. The subtle communication that Swami establishes with his devotees is beyond explanation and often beyond comprehension. It just has to be experienced firsthand.

Through his exalted thoughts, words and deeds, Swami emphasized that Divinity was not an abstraction and it manifests not by distancing from life and people but by being with them. All religions and spiritual paths essentially seek to establish this bond of man with man and of man with the Infinite. Love is the only beacon of light to guide us through the maze of doubts and confusion. And love he gave in abundance. For him there was no higher spirituality than anchoring one's life in Prema and Shanti. Every human being is potentially divine not by becoming superhuman and eschewing emotions, but by purifying the emotions in the crucible of love and compassion.

He was a living embodiment of these qualities and he did not allow negative emotions to sully our minds. When I had the opportunity of meeting him in the interview room after he had bestowed upon me the privilege of a public address on an Onam day celebration, I asked him if my talk suffered from any mistakes. He gently chided me by saying, *"Don't ever doubt yourself."* Before we left the room he said in an affectionate voice and patting on my back, *"Be happy, live happily"*. Simple words but laden with insight. I realized that true happiness presupposes an ego-less state, striving to attain which makes life progressively simpler, transparent, and beautiful. Looking back I recognize how this dictum has salvaged me from the pitfall of melancholy.

He was a powerhouse generating spiritual energy of

infinite voltage. The step-down transformers of our minds and their limited capacities always received the deserving grace and guidance. He has influenced and moulded different people differently. The Bhakta, the Karma Yogi and the Jnani received the exact guidance that was acceptable to them. Even the agnostic found his answers. In him we could experience that vastness of Divinity as expressed in the intensity of a superhuman love and compassion.

Sitting before him for a personal interview would make it clear that the form that one sees in the large assembly at Prasanthi Nilayam is not the only Swami. One is humbled in the presence of an all-seeing, all-knowing power that holds you in a spell of the laser beam of kindness. It is a kindness that leaves a deep mark in our very being. Ineffable changes and emotional mutations take place. In the smithy of his golden silence and poignant glance, our ordinary lives become sacred. This new-found sacredness and responsibility would silently yet invariably transform us. This is the greatest miracle Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has done to me and my wife and to millions of people all the world over. It is a transformation that words cannot capture, science cannot decipher and even poetry cannot convey.

His physical form has merged with nature. But as the planet would increasingly crave for love, peace and compassion, his man-making and divinizing mission would only gain momentum by the internal force of love and the initial charge of truth. Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba symbolizes these very human values that would make man Divine. ■

# The Omniscient Sai

BY KUNAL GANJAWALA



*A well known play-back singer in Hindi and Kannada, Kunal Ganjawala has also been part of*

*talent-search music shows on Indian television.*

In the year 1990 a college friend spoke to me about Sri Sathya Sai Baba and she asked me to come to her house to witness the beauty of one of the many manifestations of his grace and love. I could not believe my eyes when I saw pictures of not just Hindu deities covered in Vibhuti (holy ash) but also those of Jesus, the holy Kaaba, Zarathustra, Buddha, Mahavir and Guru Nanak to name a few.

I had my first Darshan of Bhagawan Baba in the year 1993-94 by which time I had been a witness to many a miracle, some being people getting cured of various ailments by Vibhuti Prasadam and Amrit which used to come from Baba's photographs at my friend's house. The biggest miracle however, was how my heart and my being were completely transformed when I had my first Darshan in Mumbai at the Nehru Auditorium. It was the moment that changed my life forever.

In the year 2008, me and my wife Smt. Gayatri Ganjawalla, were asked to perform a Bhajan concert in front of Swami for the Ashadhi Ekadashi celebrations at Puttaparthi. What no one knew except for my family members was that it was my deep yearning that I should be married by none other than Swami himself. I had always yearned for that when I read about Swami performing the weddings of some devotees. But this did not happen.. At my wedding, we had kept a photograph of Swami and prayed that he oversee the wedding. I still continued to yearn for it in my heart, though I was now married!

However, on Ashadhi Ekadashi, in the middle of our Bhajan programme, Swami materialised a Mangalsutra for my

wife and a ring for me and got us spiritually married in the Sai Kulwant Hall! He made sure that when my wife was putting the ring on my finger, he himself held out my wedding finger. He even corrected me when I put out the wrong finger and said "wedding finger"! It didn't strike me at that time, but later on I realised how Swami had fulfilled my deepest yearning.

My wife and I believe that if we trust in Swami and leave everything to him, no harm can come upon us and neither can any task that is undertaken be in jeopardy. We try hard not to expect results, as he has always said to leave the fruits to him. We are both in a profession filled with ups and down and also in a career that can be very materialistic. It is only through his teachings that we can keep ourselves grounded.

Another wonderful learning has been to try and retain always our sense of humor and be lighthearted because nothing is too serious. All is willed and we are only spokes in the wheel of time, but we have to play our roles sincerely! When we are confused about how to deal with the pressures of the glamour and glitz in the entertainment world we remind ourselves that we are here to do "our job". We are in this profession because God willed it and wanted to us to do it. And if this be true, then we should do it to the best of our ability. We all have a place in this world and we should enjoy the place given to us as a privilege granted to us.

Baba has made it possible for us to actually rise above the religious dogmatic views of life which organized religion often shackles us in and has enabled us to understand the



deeper feelings of love, tolerance and acceptance.

Swami has reinforced all that many religious faiths have taught over centuries. He has made us understand all over again, how the road to liberation and happiness, is love and freedom from excess baggage. He has also taught us all this in the way of a 'working person'. By this I mean, he has made people who are living in the world of business

and commerce and householders understand, how, it is possible to live a life, which is high in values and which is spiritually charged. He has shown me and my wife a way to become free, free from fear and feel loved and ensconced as though in the warm embrace of an ever-loving mother. ■

## The Divine Touch In Latin America

BY LEONARDO P. GUTTER



**F**or the last 30 years, I have had the privilege to travel to almost every country in South (Latin) America and be a witness to the omnipresence of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

In Latin America our religion and traditions are very different from the ones in India. The concept of an avatar (the divine manifesting in a human form) is alien to our culture. Nevertheless, I have seen people of different levels of education, social status, and professions including those who were not on the spiritual path earlier, being drawn to Baba, once having heard and known about him. When they learn about the message and work of Sai, they begin a process of self transformation, by becoming better human beings and start to share their time, energy, knowledge and efforts to help those in need, in their societies.

All of them in one way or another have changed their ways of living, feeling and thinking to a more positive tone. Today, millions of people all over Latin America sense the Divinity of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in their hearts.

As a result, there are Sai centres in every country of Latin America, in almost every city, from Mexico in the north, to the southern country of Argentina, close to the South Pole. Very few people from Latin America were able to travel to Prasanthi Nilayam to have the Darshan of Sai, due to scarce economic resources that prevail in most of our countries. But Swami has appeared to the devotees in dreams, interacted through visions, created manifestations and reached out in many ways that have made countless Latin Americans experience the Divine Presence, protection, care and guidance in their lives.

This is the most wonderful miracle of Bhagawan. His Divine Love is at work, spreading to every nook and corner of

*A psychologist by profession, Mr. Leonardo Pablo Gutter is from Argentina, South America. For the last 18 years, Mr. Gutter has represented some of the largest American, European and Japanese TV and cinema studios in Latin America.*

Latin American countries.

In Cuba for instance, no one has travelled to India, but there are 108 Sai groups on that island. There is no religious freedom in that country, but thousands of Sai devotees meet to express their love for Sai. When the government decided to close down spiritual organisations like the Sathya Sai Organisation, the Secret Police that was sent to spy on Baba devotees ended up becoming Sai devotees!

Many years ago there was a young teenager, named Flores, seated in the Darshan lines, when Bhagawan approached him and told him that he was going to become a leader of his country. Years later he was elected as the President of El Salvador!

In Ecuador, Sai devotees started to do service to a community of natives that live in the middle of the jungle, hundreds of kilometres away from civilization. Today the 300 hundred children of this community meet once a week to sing Bhajans to express their devotion to Bhagawan.

These are but a few of the numerous instances that have happened from that part of the world. At the present moment there are 23 countries in Latin America where the Sai Organisation is present in one way or the other.

### Early Days of the Sai Wave

It was in the year 1980, that I first started to attend the earliest Sai meetings in Buenos Aires, Argentina. At that time I was still in another spiritual organisation, holding the position of vice-president but after having experienced the Divinity of Baba, I felt I had to make a choice. I felt that I had to serve Swami because I recognized in him the Avatar of this age. I then decided, one night, during my first visit to Prasanthi Nilayam to write down in a piece of paper my resignation to the position I held in the other organisation as an office bearer,

so as to be able to surrender myself completely to Bhagawan. I wrote out my resignation and left the paper in the room.

Next morning when I went for the Darshan, Baba came out early, he came directly to where I was, looked at me and told me: "Yes, this afternoon I will give you an interview. This was my first trip and after 40 days of being there, I finally got what we most desired, a personal audience with Baba. In the afternoon when Swami came out, from the verandah itself, without even stepping down from there, he looked at me, (without the need to look for me) at the exact spot where I was sitting, and loudly called out, "You!" I stood up immediately, ran to him and asked, "Yes Swami?", and he uttered that most wonderful word, "Go." I then asked him whether the rest of the Argentinean group could go with me and he agreed and we all went in.

During the interview, suddenly Swami looked at me and told me whatever was going on in my mind since the morning, all my doubts about him finding me, calling me and everything. He then approached me and whispered in my ear, words that I will forever treasure in my heart. He said: "I will never disappoint my devotees".

My second trip to India in the same year happened this way. In July, I received a proposal to go to Ecuador on a business trip, with all expenses covered. After a month, I was all set to return to Argentina, when a friend invited me to go to a concert with him. At the end of the concert, as we were leaving the theatre, he met a person for whom he was preparing an advertising campaign. They started to talk and some moments later this person, a very important industrialist from Ecuador, a former ambassador, invited my friend and me for lunch to his house, the following day. I had no interest, but I agreed to go there just to oblige my friend.

During lunch time that Sunday, without any preparation or planning, I spoke to our host all that I knew on a single topic: I spoke about Baba. Minutes later our host told me: "Listen, do you mind accompanying me to India to see Sai Baba?" I said: "Of course, I don't mind at all!" So he clarified: "Alright then, there is a travel agency I know, I will buy two tickets and we go to India".

I was very happy but I thought this was just a joke. The next day was Monday, I was in my hotel waiting to return to Argentina, but suddenly I thought: what if it is not a joke. So I decided to check with the travel agency and behold, our host had already bought two tickets to India as promised. By September the 2nd, I was back in the Divine Presence of Baba in India.

The person that invited me to go to Puttaparthi with him was not on the spiritual path, but I learned on my way to India that he had a tumour in his palate. He had undergone surgery in the United States but was still very ill. He had very little time left to live and after hearing about Swami and his Divine Powers he decided to take a chance. That is

how he came here. After nine days of being there, one day while waiting for Darshan he felt that Swami had come, and standing in front of him, asked him to open his mouth. Baba then put his hand into his mouth, took something out, and told him: "You are cured" Overwhelmed, this rich and worldly man started to weep like a baby; Baba was not physically present, but he had this vivid experience.

A couple of days later we went back to Ecuador and when he went to a doctor, he found out that he was completely cured. Then he went to another specialist, the one who had unsuccessfully operated on him, but there was no trace of the cancer. The cancer was cancelled! Out of the love and gratitude he developed for Swami, he published a magazine recounting his experiences and distributed ten thousand copies all over Ecuador.

Perhaps there is this question as to how in far away South America, Baba and his message can have so many followers. Let me give you the example of Cuba.

One day a stewardess approached me, and asked me if I had a photograph of Baba. She wanted to give it to a person she knew in Cuba, a Hatha Yoga teacher. At her request I gave her a photograph of Baba. She took it and gave it to the Hatha Yoga teacher. Sometime later, Vibhuti (sacred ash) started to materialize in the photograph. One day, a student of this professor of Yoga, who had to go through a heart surgery. The day before this, the instructor gave him a little of the Vibhuti that had materialized in the photograph. Next day, when the student went through the tests prior to the surgery, it was discovered that the problem did not exist anymore.

Word spread of the miracle, and in a very short period of time numerous people wanted to know about Baba and his message. Within three years there were 108 Sai groups all over the island of Cuba, with people attending in secret under a repressive regime. This is one of the ways how Baba touches the hearts of so many people all over the world.

Another time I was invited to a very popular and important TV programme in Argentina to speak about Bhagawan, to share my thoughts on his message and work. The anchor of the programme was so interested that the interview lasted longer than the time that they had planned. At the end of the programme I gave that man a packet of Vibhuti that Baba had materialized in Puttaparthi. The next morning I received a call from that same anchor, who presented one of the most important radio programmes in Argentina at that time, and he wanted to interview me by phone. He asked me if I would speak a little more about Swami to the listeners of his radio programme.

I agreed and when he started to interview me for the radio programme, he suddenly said that he wanted to share with the listeners of his programme a story about a lady who was very sick. He then narrated how this lady was in the intensive care unit of the hospital, approaching the



last moments of her life, when she received a little of the Vibhuti that Baba had materialized. She ate this Vibhuti, started to recover suddenly and within a couple of hours left the intensive care unit, to the amazement of all the doctors there. Everybody had expected her to die. After that incident, the anchor continued to ask me for thirty minutes without interruptions questions about Baba, his work and his message. After the interview was over, he revealed to me that the lady to whom he had referred to was his own aunt to whom he had given the Vibhuti the previous night. Being very moved by the power of the holy ash, he had called me again to talk about Baba on his radio programme!

Baba is always ready and active; his devotees need to do the same.

Some years ago, I was preparing for a trip to India, and three days prior to my departure, I had an accident and my nose was broken. The doctor of the clinic that attended me told me that it would take 30 to 40 days for the bone of my nose to be healed. Although the pain was unbearable, I

decided to travel to India anyway. On the flight I caught a cold and one can imagine the excruciating pain I had to bear, to blow the nose that was broken.

The same day I reached the ashram, I had the good fortune to be called to an interview by Baba. I had not told anyone of my accident. In the middle of the interview, while Baba was talking to the group he suddenly stretched his hand and without looking at me, he caught hold of my nose and started to shake it from one side to the other, for 15 to 20 seconds. I felt no pain, but wondered whether he was going to take my nose out of my face! When finally he released my nose, I noticed that my nose was completely healed, the bone fused and the cold was gone.

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is not only healing broken noses but more importantly he is healing the hearts and minds of millions of people.

The best of the Sai Mission is yet to be unfolded in front of our eyes and the fame and glory of the Sai Avatar, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba will continue to shine more and more each day. ■

## The Embodiment Of Love

BY SONJA VENTURI



*Sonja Venturi from Italy is a lawyer for civil and criminal law. She is also a singer, musician and song-writer. She has recorded albums of Bhajans sung in Western style with other international musicians from Italy and UK.*

consider my life blessed ever since I was given the opportunity to meet Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, my Guru and Master. It is he who has given meaning to every instant of my existence in this world, he who has loved me truly and whom I will love infinitely and forever.

Swami revealed himself to me at a difficult time during my youth, when I had just finished university and was starting my job as a lawyer. The impact with the world of 'adults'

was proving very hard for me. I was unable to find peace of mind and I had health problems. I felt empty inside, I could see no future ahead. While I was in hospital I felt a strong inner call wherein I understood that my problem was not physical illness; it was not the body, the problem was within me.

At that point of my life the Lord designed to make me meet an elderly devotee of his, who revealed to me the Divine instrument who would bring me back to him. Baba started manifesting his presence in my life through dreams, instructions, advice and I was miraculously healed, in both body and spirit. Soon after that I returned to work and it was the beginning of a new life for me. I had discovered that I was not alone and that everything had a meaning.

Although he had supported me to become a lawyer, a profession which I have been practising until now for nearly 20 years, Baba had many gifts in store for me, including a very special one – music. By his Divine design he made a singer of me!

I discovered sung prayer as the most natural way of communicating and offering my emotions up to God, overcoming through singing all the difficulties and pain, renunciations and transformations. I started singing Bhajans and the voice suddenly arrived – a gift, his gift, as he confirmed to me later on. On the Holy Christmas of 2010 I had the great privilege and honour of singing for Baba at Prasanthi Nilayam.

On this special occasion Swami, the Divine Mother who makes all wishes come true, allowed me to offer up with my singing all the love I felt in my heart. I will never forget the powerful current of Love that he radiated and I felt carried away by a flood stream of that love. He was all things, immensity, the greatest joy a heart can hold, the joy of being loved by him and the joy of having the opportunity of loving him, loving all things through him, knowing that we are alive because in the love of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba comes to life the best part of ourselves.

Baba guides me directly and in detail, all the aspects of my life. It was so in the interviews, it is so in my dreams, by miraculously appearing to me at home. He is the Teacher and the Mother. He likes to joke and play and together we have had many laughs, especially about me.

When my second Bhajan CD was released, I had the opportunity of sending Swami the first copy for his blessing. This was possible due to my group leader Mr. Luigi Ferrante, (a politician, writer and film producer from Italy). He is a devotee much loved by Baba, who delivered my CD directly into Swami's hands, at his home. I gave to Mr. Ferrante an extra copy; hoping that Swami could give the blessing of his signature on this copy for me. The Master was direct in making me understand that such a desire was rather childish; I understood the lesson and shed tears of contrition.

On the day of my departure Mr. Ferrante told me that he

had something for me from Swami. He was holding my CD in his hands and he told me that Swami had wanted to take another look at it. He had opened it, leafing through the booklet, and had told Mr. Ferrante to give it back to me, before I left Puttaparthi. Baba explained that it was charged with his Energy and Blessing and instructed me to keep it near the other CDs before distributing them. Grateful and happy, I opened the CD, leafed through the booklet and put it in my hand luggage. Two hours later, during the journey, I received a phone text message from Mr. Ferrante, who was with Swami at that time, saying, "Swami wants to know if you liked the joke!" I immediately thought of the CD and took it out of my hand luggage. Divine reality had exceeded all imagination; the CD was full of Vibhuti, his signature! My happiness was absolutely boundless. Swami had first made me the gift of a spiritual lesson and then, in his infinite Love, had offered me more than I would have ever dared to ask.

Swami is 'love in action' and his mission, his great works are for me an inspiration and a model. With a group of devoted friends, with his blessing, we have been engaged for many years now, in voluntary aid activities and humanitarian missions in places hit by disasters and famine. My music too supports humanitarian aid work and, in particular, the wonderful social works of Swami, which are a tangible sign of his compassion and love for all humanity. Swami's work continues today as intensely as ever.

One day I asked Swami to explain to me who he really was. He replied that he has no form and that all names and forms are his, but no-one can ever understand this.

In an interview he told us that the following day (the day of our departure), we would be going together to Puttaparthi. We stared at him in surprise, because at the time we were at Prasanthi Nilayam. He smiled sweetly and pointing to his heart he said to us, "Your Baba is here in your heart. It will be like Prasanthi now, do not worry, I will make you happy, I will make you happy".

During my life I have discovered the meaning of happiness because of Bhagawan, if I have known love it is because I have met Bhagawan. Every instant lived in his Love has sanctified this earthly birth of mine and has endowed it with fullness and meaning.

Since my first interview, he proved that he knew every detail of my past, present and future life. When he looked at me saying – happy, happy, happy – I felt an explosion of love in my heart. Everything was complete, time no longer existed, I no longer had any needs. I was where I was supposed to be and at the right time. This is the love of Bhagawan, an instant with him that changes your life forever.

Baba is the embodiment and the essence of the highest form of Love, the Love that is truly God. All the good there is in me belongs to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. ■



# I Was A Sceptic

Pandit Shivkumar Sharma,



*Originally a vocalist, Pandit Shivkumar Sharma is the master instrumentalist of the Santoor. Winner of several International awards, he was conferred the Padma Shri by the Govt. of India in 1991 and the Padma Vibhushan in 2001.*

**T**o begin with, I was not a believer in Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I was one of the sceptics who used to argue about Baba's, omnipresence and omniscience. My first encounter with Baba around 1970 changed that perspective totally. It turned in to a lifelong relationship.

The first thing I noticed about Baba was His unconditional Love, comparable only to a mother's love. Prashanti Nilayam is the only place where Bhajans are sung in praise of Ram, Rahim, Guru Nanak, Jesus Christ and Zorashtra. Baba travelled only once out of India, but his followers came from countries of all the continents. Mr. R. K. Karanjia, Editor of the tabloid Blitz interviewed him with the motive of 'Exposing Baba' and came back from Puttaparthi totally transformed. Many have criticized him without taking the trouble of visiting him. But, like the sun giving its sunlight unconditionally, Baba never differentiated between saints and sinners. Baba never sought publicity from any mode of media for what he was doing for the humanity – like the super speciality hospitals in Prashanti Nilayam and Bengaluru where there are no cash counters; and education from Class 1 to MBA. Education too is not bookish knowledge but a values-based, modern and scientific education which is missing in most places in the world today. Hundreds of villages in Andhra Pradesh where government could not provide drinking water, are now getting water. A water project was

also undertaken for the city of Chennai.

I would like to narrate my personal experience about Baba's omnipresence. Once, my son Rahul Sharma, who is a well known santoor player in his own right and a devotee of Baba, and I had gone to Dubai for a concert. One day prior to the concert, we were going to a sand safari in Dubai. The car in which Rahul was travelling met with an accident and was totally smashed. During the accident, Rahul touched the ring Baba had materialised for him and shouted "Baba, Baba". Everyone was dumbfounded to see Rahul coming out unscathed and unharmed. When this accident happened, Baba told some people who were sitting in distant Puttaparthi that Shiv Kumar Sharma's son has met with an accident and that he had saved him. After returning to India, we went to Puttaparthi. Baba called us for an interview and narrated the whole episode of the accident as if he was giving a live commentary on the television.

During my concert tours in different countries, I have met people of various nationalities speaking different languages who are devotees of Baba. Whenever I enquired how they came to know about Sri Sathya Sai Baba living as they were far away from India, invariably I got the answer that their contact with Baba was established through dreams. Immediately afterwards these people would come across some book of Baba and realize that this was not a mere dream. This would result in their quest to know more about Baba and ultimately bringing them to Puttaparthi, a remote village in India. I have spoken to such people in Japan, in Scandinavia, in America, in Russia, in South America, in Greece. It totally amazes me, as Baba never went out of India to preach or propagate his mission, and never sought the help of any media to reach out. Yet people from all over the world came all the way to this tiny village of Puttaparthi. For me, this is the biggest evidence of Baba's omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience.

Now people ask who is going to carry out Baba's legacy because he has not left any successor. I feel this is an ignorant question by people who have not experienced Baba's grace. Baba is not a Guru who trained disciples to take over his throne. He was an incarnation like Shirdi Sai Baba. Nobody knows who was Shirdi Sai Baba's Guru and he did not leave any disciple to take his place. Although he is not physically here, he is very much present in spirit. His mission will be carried out according to his plans. This is not merely my belief but a conviction borne out of my lifetime experiences with Baba. ■



राष्ट्रपति  
भारत गणराज्य  
PRESIDENT  
REPUBLIC OF INDIA

April 24, 2011

Dear Dr. Chakraborty,

I am deeply saddened to know about the passing away of Sri Satya Sai Baba.

Sri Satya Sai Baba was known for his philanthropic activities, including development of irrigation projects and construction of schools and hospitals. He was a true advocate of women's empowerment. His commitment to their upliftment was evident, when he opened a college for women and other educational institutions. The divine soul shall always guide and inspire us to work for the progress of the country, and the welfare of the poorest sections of society and women.

Please accept my heartfelt condolences and convey them to the devotees of the Satya Sai Sansthan. I pray to the Almighty to give them the strength and courage to bear this irreparable loss.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

*Pratibha Patil*  
(Pratibha Devisingh Patil)

Dr. Chakraborty,  
Secretary, Satya Sai Central Trust,  
Prashanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi,  
Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh



प्रधान मंत्री  
Prime Minister  
MESSAGE

I learnt of the passing away of Sri Satya Saibaba with deep and profound sadness. Sri Satya Saibaba was a spiritual leader who inspired millions to lead a moral and meaningful life even as they followed the religion of their choice. His teachings were rooted in the universal ideals of truth, right conduct, peace, love and non-violence.

Sri Satya Saibaba as a preacher of the highest human values was an iconic figure for over five decades. He endeared himself to the people through various institutions, with headquarters at Prashanthi Nilayam, that promoted egalitarian values, education and public health. He believed that it is the duty of every person to ensure that all people have access to the basic requirements for sustenance of life. Sri Satya Saibaba was an inspiration to people of all faiths.

The passing away of Sri Satya Saibaba is an irreparable loss to all and the nation deeply mourns his passing away. I express my sincere condolences to the millions of his followers, disciples and well wishers.

*Manmohan Singh*  
(Manmohan Singh)

New Delhi  
24 April, 2011



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இலங்கை சனநாயக சனநாயக  
President of Sri Lanka

Message of Condolence

I am deeply saddened by the death of Sri Satya Sai Baba, the great spiritual leader of our time, and share the grief of the millions of his devotees in Sri Lanka and abroad. The message he brought to his devotees in Sri Lanka will be remembered with gratitude.

Sri Satya Sai Baba took the message of patience, peace and goodwill to his followers and gave spiritual leadership that sought to make people lead an ethical, moral and purposeful life. His inspiration moved people in his own country and abroad to seek spiritualism and observe the tenets of religion, irrespective of the faith that they followed, with a message to ensure coexistence among those who followed different religions, always avoiding criticism or condemnation of any faith.

His belief in human values led Sri Satya Sai Baba to launch and complete great institutions for education and public health. He had a concern to ensure that all people had access to the basic needs for human sustenance. This is shown in his compassion extended to the sick and weak, and the relief he brought to those who suffer in his homeland and abroad.

The enlightening message of spiritualism of Sri Satya Sai Baba, transcended race, religion, community and national borders, and was accepted by millions in Sri Lanka, largely due to the influence of Buddhists and Hindus who provide the core values of our culture, and the traditions of a united-religious society.

While the world has never lost a great spiritual leader, whose words and actions kindled a flame of abiding love among his devotees, his inspiration shall remain among his followers worldwide, as a strong influence to strengthen human values in all societies, and help in spreading the message of love and compassion that he brought to all his teaching and work.

May he attain the eternal bliss of Moksha!

*Mahinda Rajapaksa*  
Mahinda Rajapaksa

April 25, 2011



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இலங்கை சனநாயக சனநாயக சனநாயக  
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka



Office of the President

State House, Mauritius

25 April 2011

The Secretary  
Sri Satya Sai Trust  
Prashanthi Nilayam  
Puttaparthi  
Anantapur District  
Andhra Pradesh 515134  
Republic of India

Dear Sir,

We were deeply grieved to learn of the demise of Sri Satya Sai Baba, the man who has conquered the heart of millions the world over. From his birth place in the village of Puttaparthi, he rose to be a world renowned figure.

In this moment of sorrow, the President of the Republic of Mauritius and Lady Sargni Jugnauth wish to convey their heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathy to members of the bereaved family of the Sri Satya Sai organization.

Sri Satya Sai Baba was greatly revered the world over for his teachings and message of peace and love. He will continue to be in the heart of millions as his message cuts across the barriers of communities. He had inspired millions to lead a moral and meaningful life.

Here in Mauritius, the Sri Satya Sai Baba movement has gained in importance, with an ever increasing number of devotees. We mourn with you the loss of this great spiritual leader.

Yours faithfully,

*M. Gunpath*  
M. Gunpath  
Secretary to the President



M. K. Narayanan  
GOVERNOR OF WEST BENGAL



RAJ BHAVAN  
KOLKATA 700 062

Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, one of India's greatest servants, has attained Mahasamadhi. This is a sad day for all humanity and a great loss to mankind. He brought hope and succour to millions of people in India and across the world. And his was a life of sacrifice for the betterment of humanity. At a time when the world is undergoing a series of tragedies and problems, the demise of such a godly person like Sri Sathya Sai Baba is a loss to our civilization.

*M. K. Narayanan*  
25/4/2011  
M K Narayanan

April 25, 2011

बाल्मीकि प्रसाद सिंह  
BALMIKI PRASAD SINGH



राज भवन, शिबिकम  
GOVERNOR OF SIKKIM

राज भवन  
गंगटोक-737103  
(शिबिकम)  
RAJ BHAVAN  
GANGTOK-737103  
(SIKKIM)

SKM GOV PERS 2011/  
April, 2011

Dear Shri Chakravarty,

On behalf of the Government and the people of Sikkim please accept our heartfelt condolences on the passing away of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

As you are aware, I had the privilege of knowing Sri Ram and receiving his blessings. This is a huge loss. India is indeed poorer with his departure.

At this sad moment, I am with you and other devotees of the Ashram. I know his mission of service has an eternity of a rare kind.

In passing away of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the world has lost a divine and an enlightened soul who inspired millions of people with his message of love, tolerance and compassion. Sri Baba brought relief and happiness to countless needy people both through his preachings as well as by missions that go to provide education, medical service, drinking water and other services. The millions of devotees spread over in our country as well as abroad are testimony as his preachings have touched their hearts and encouraged them to live compassionate lives. For man's divine nature itself is at the centre of His mission and message.

We join you in praying for and remembering the Great Soul.

Yours sincerely,

*B.P. Singh*  
B.P. Singh

Shri K. Chakravarty, IAS (Retd.)  
Secretary  
Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust  
Prasanthi Nilayam  
Anantapur Dist  
Andhra Pradesh - 515 134



हरियाणा राज भवन,  
चण्डीगढ़ - 160019

HARYANA RAJ BHAVAN,  
CHANDIGARH - 160019

No. HRB-PSG-2011 / 571  
April 27, 2011

Dear Shri Chakravarti Ji,

I am shocked to learn about the sad and sudden demise of Revered Sri Sathya Sai Baba Ji. Sai Baba was one of the great saints of India, who dedicated his entire life to philanthropy. His passing away is a great loss to the country as well as the rest of the world. He will be remembered for his noble deeds. May God give strength to the million of his followers to face this tragedy!

My family joins me in conveying our heartfelt condolences to all followers of Sri Sathya Sai Baba Ji.

May his noble soul rest in peace!

Yours sincerely,  
*Jagannath Pahadia*  
Jagannath Pahadia

Shri K. Chakravarti,  
Secretary  
Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust,  
Puttaparti, District Anantapur,  
Andhra Pradesh.

Rameshwar Thakur



RAJ BHAVAN  
BHOPALE-462 001

24<sup>th</sup> April, 2011

Dear Shri K. Chakravarti,

I express my deep sorrow at the sad demise of Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparti. Sri Baba is symbol of love, passion and affection. His services to humanity in various forms are unparalleled and unsurpassed. Sri Baba is strength and ray of hope for countless miserables and for those in despair. Sri Baba bestowed blessings on me and my family members many times in a personal cherished memory for me. Though Baba is not physically among us but his deep concern for the welfare of the poor and downtrodden will always be remembered. His spiritual teachings will show path to the millions of his followers, disciples and well wishers.

Om Shanti, Om Shanti,

Yours sincerely,

*Rameshwar Thakur*  
Rameshwar Thakur  
& Rameshwar Thakur

Shri K. Chakravarti,  
Secretary,  
Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust  
Prasanthi Nilayam  
Anantapur Dt. - 515134  
Andhra Pradesh  
Fax: 08555-287990



रक्षा मंत्री  
भारत

MINISTER OF DEFENCE  
INDIA

D.O. No. 01/03/ 24/2011

April 25, 2011

Dear **Shri K.Chakravarty**,

I am deeply grieved to learn of the passing away of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Sai Baba's life and ideals are a message of love, peace, harmony and universal brotherhood. Baba was revered by people belonging to different religious faiths and from all walks of life.

He touched and changed the lives of millions of people the world over. He initiated several measures to provide education, health care, water supply and succour to the poor. His inspiring words - "There is only one religion, the religion of Love, there is only one caste - the caste of Humanity" show us the ideals that we all must live and work for.

I am sure that Sri Sathya Sai Baba will continue to live in the hearts of the multitude of his devotees. May His ideals continue to show humanity the way forward and provide solace for generations to come.

I once again express my heartfelt condolences at the passing away of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

*(A.K Antony)*

**Shri K. Chakravarty**,  
Secretary,  
Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust,  
Prasanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi,  
Anantpur Distt  
Andhra Pradesh - 515134

Office : 104, South Block, New Delhi-110011, Ph. : 23018288, 23019292 Fax : 23016403  
Head : 8, Kasturba Medical Marg, New Delhi - 110011, Ph. : 23013011, Fax : 23013012



April 25, 2011

Ratan N Tata  
" Tata Group "

Dear Mr. Chakravarty,

I am currently in the United States and I am deeply grieved to hear about the very sad passing away of Swami Sri Satya Sai Baba yesterday.

Swami Sri Satya Sai Baba has touched the souls of millions of people - rich and poor. He has worked selflessly to enhance the livelihoods and to benefit communities and the downtrodden. He has treated everyone alike and he leaves behind a legacy of high values, goodness and kindness. Those of us who had the privilege of knowing him have been awed by his presence and the good he has done for so, so many.

He will be dearly missed and the greatest tribute that all of us can give to his memory is to continue, in the best form we can, the good, the vision and the enormous sensitivity that the great man did in his lifetime. His memory will live on for generations to come.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

*Ratan N Tata*

Ratan N Tata

Mr. K. Chakravarty, IAS (Retd.)  
Secretary  
Sri Satya Sai Central Trust  
Prasanthi Nilayam  
Anantapur District 515 134  
Andhra Pradesh

TATA SONS LIMITED

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Regd. No. 9911997



Nobel Laureate  
**MOTHER TERESA CHARITABLE TRUST**

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A. Xavier, M.Com.,  
Trustee

C. Vijayakumar  
Trustee

27.04.2011

To  
The Trustees  
Sathya Sai Central Trust  
Prasanthi Nilayam  
Anantapur Dt., A.P. - 515 134  
India

Dear Sir,

We deeply mourn the demise of the great saint Sathya Sai Babaji who has a permanent place in heart of lakhs of poor and downtrodden people in India and also other countries.

Let his soul rest in peace. Let his bescon of service continue ever more which will be the real tribute to the great saint.

Regards

*(Signature)*  
GK Dhas

Managing Trustee

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**SWAMI TEJOMAYANANDA**

3

8 May 2011

To

Trustees of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and Members of the Sai family

Prasanthi Nilayam

Anantpur District

Andhra Pradesh 515 314

Hari Om!

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, as he was known, is one of the great spiritual luminaries of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even after his Mahasamadhi, his life and teachings will continue to inspire and influence people to live a noble life. The monumental work that he initiated and achieved is indeed exemplary.

In Chinmaya Mission we have many fond memories of our Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda relating his many meetings with Bhagawan, and the love and regard they shared for each other. We pay our reverential homage to Him.

Om Om Om

*(Signature)*

CENTRAL CHINMAYA MISSION TRUST SAHDEEPANY SADHANALAYA, BAKI VISHAR ROAD, MUMBAI - 400 072, INDIA  
Tel: 91-22-2657 2367 • Fax: 91-22-2657 3045 • Email: cmta@chinmayamission.com • Website: www.chinmayamission.com



# A Lighthouse for Mankind

BY Prof. ALBERT FERRER

Associated with the Dept. of Philosophy in the University of Paris-Sorbonne, Dr. Albert Ferrer is a former member of Cambridge University and Lecturer at the University of Barcelona.



**T**he mission of this unique Master of masters, highly revered in India and all around the world as a Divine incarnation, has always promoted the unity of mankind and the transformation of the human being towards higher states of consciousness, recalling the message of great spiritual masters of the past from all the traditions. Nonetheless, the teachings of this unique Master from the modern age have specially stressed the importance of education and that the foundation of education should lie in human values. While recognizing the value of worldly knowledge, the intellect, science and academic training, Sai Baba stressed on the human and spiritual grounds of education from the inner depths – the Atman, (soul) that is Brahman in the language of Vedantic philosophy. The teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba on education, remind us of the Socratic pedagogy or the writings of modern Idealism and Romanticism. Even more directly, they can bring back to our memory the dialogues of the Upanishads with their profound relationship between teacher and pupil. However, what is really unique in the educational philosophy of Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the intimate link between the academic and the spiritual domains, merging intellectual/ scientific training and spiritual inquiry.

What Sri Sathya Sai Baba puts forward for the 21st century is not a monastic path, but rather, a lay spirituality incarnated here and now, rooted in this world in order to serve from love and compassion. It is amazing to realize that this great Master of our time has been training for decades, entire generations of managers, administrators, computer engineers, scientists, educators and scholars, trying to bring the spiritual dimension, an ethical vision and human values into all the spheres of modern life at the very heart of the industrial, urban and technological

world.

We should still add that intercultural and inter-religious dialogue lies at the core of his illuminating teachings; while he has promoted the unity of mankind and the brotherhood of all traditions, races and cultures, he has also proposed that the East learns from the West and the West from the East. In this horizon, he has suggested the fruitful interaction between the best academic training from Europe and the West and the most profound spiritual inquiry into the deepest reality and the self from India and the East, remembering at the same time the mystical traditions from the West and the academic/ scientific schools from the East. In Taoist terms, the yin would be in the yang and the yang in the yin.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba has not trained Sanyasins or monks, but ordinary men and women capable of addressing their own transformation in order to transform the world around them from a real change within. As we said, the Master has fostered a lay spirituality incarnated here and now at the core of the modern world, to contribute to build a better world silently and authentically.

In this fundamental task, His message can be summarized in only two words: love and service. Only genuine love can produce a real change in us and around us, not a volatile feeling or emotion, but that profound state of being that anybody will recognise as unconditional love. When our whole being is imbued with this love, our whole life is selfless service to our fellow beings, in cosmic solidarity with all and everything, in the unity underlying diversity. This service, like this love - is our true nature, our birthright. To actualise what we are potentially, constitutes the core of the process of transformation or spiritual path. This has been the most fundamental teaching of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, his infinite gift to Humanity.

Many people talk about social service today. But in Sathya Sai Baba's vision, Seva (service to others) is regarded as a service to the Divine, and more precisely, to the Divine in those whom we help. Service is inseparable from love and compassion. It is putting into practice the Divine love lying in us and in everyone. By helping our fellow beings at the material level, we should also help them to realize their own divinity. The human dignity of those whom we help is as important as the help itself.

Moreover, the Master has warned us not to speak too much and publicize the service we provide, but rather to watch how it works in our own process of transformation. Service should be done without thought of self or ego. In Sri Sathya Sai Baba's words, selfless service removes the impurity of the ego, and hence, constitutes a royal path to God. If we do not grasp it, we just overlook the purpose of life. The spirit in which we help is as important as the service we give. Service to others from love and

compassion brings us to God, which means the Divine within ourselves and within everyone.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba has set the example himself. In many images or films recorded through so many years, we can see a younger Master walking among the most humble or destitute, and giving them food, covers, etc. Not only Sri Sathya Sai Baba has put forward a clear teaching, but he has also inspired a huge organization to put the message into practice, and even more, he has served himself the most needed at the physical level, becoming a living example of coherence between thought, word and deed. On behalf of millions of overseas devotees, we want to say

## Sai, My Saviour

BY BOLIN BARDOLOI



*Bolin Bordoloi worked with TATA Tea Ltd. at Guwahati, Assam, retiring as General Manager. He has initiated many social work activities for unemployed youth in Bodo-dominated lower Assam.*

**M**any people of many countries have heard of Sri Sathya Sai Baba - 'The Man of Miracles'. Many of them have come to see Baba and ascertain whether the facts related in Mr. Howard Murphet's book, 'Sai Baba: A Man of Miracles' are correct. Many have come to test, even with electronic devices, but their attempts proved futile, and they returned becoming devotees instead, convinced about the miraculous powers of Baba. Many foreigners have come to Puttaparthi after reading the above mentioned book. Over the years the devotees had swelled to such an extent that during Christmas, there were more foreigners than Indians in Prasanthi Nilayam.

"Who is Sai Baba?" He claimed to be the re-incarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba, who died in 1918 at Shirdi, and had forecast the birth of this Sai Baba, who was born on the 23rd of November, 1926. His original name was Sathya Narayana Raju. Born of poor parents, he had to sew his own clothes with the help of a thorn. He had to wade across the Chitravati river to go to school at Bukkapatnam, as there were no schools then at Puttaparthi. Baba had narrated experiences of his hard childhood days to his students who were overcome with emotion and listened with rapt attention as he spoke for hours together.

Baba's claim as an Avatar could not be accepted and digested by many people, except his close devotees. One such person asked Baba: "Are you God?", and prompt came the reply, "Yes, I am God." Then he added, "You are also God, but you do not know you are God. I know I am God". Baba referred to our Divine origin, that is, we are all sparks of the same Divinity, but we have forgotten our 'Divine Origin'. Therefore he came down to earth to remind us.

to India and the world that through his vast organization, Sri Sathya Sai Baba has performed the greatest social service ever provided in modern history by private agents. At the same time, we know so many human beings all around the globe who have transformed themselves towards better human beings through his illuminating teachings and infinite love. This is the true Guru: the one who helps others to transform themselves while serving humanity. Sri Sathya Sai Baba will remain for centuries to come as a dazzling lighthouse guiding mankind towards higher states of consciousness and a new world. ■

How could this poor boy having studied only up to Class VII, attract people from all over the world? Could it be that people were attracted only by the miracles he performed? What about the scientists? Late R. R. Diwakar, the Former Governor of Bihar once wrote, "Baba himself is a miracle. A school drop-out from class VIII, he could quote off-hand from the Vedas".

Late Dr. Bhagavantam, Former Chief Scientific Advisor to the Defense Ministry, Govt. of India, used to translate Baba's discourses for many years. Baba quoted passages from the Vedas, and being a scientist, Dr. Bhagavantam was not very proficient in Sanskrit. When he fumbled for the appropriate words, Baba used to whisper the appropriate words in his ear. But Dr. Bhagavantam had doubts whether Baba quoted the lines or passages of the Vedas correctly, and whether these were appropriate for the subject on which Baba was speaking. So one day he approached Shri Kamavadhani, who was conferred the title of 'Veda Samrat' by Sanskrit scholars, because of his proficiency in the study of the Vedas, to ask if Baba had quoted correctly, and if it was appropriate for the occasion. Shri Kamavadhani got annoyed and told Dr. Bhagavantam, "Don't you feel ashamed to ask me this, after being with Baba for so many years? I myself go to him often to understand certain passages of the Vedas". Dr. Bhagavantam confessed this to a gathering of students, teachers and devotees in the Poornachandra Hall. He admitted how foolish he had been to doubt the 'scholarship' of Baba, who not just discussed with experts, but even advised and guided them.

Once, a group of overseas devotees, were in an interview with Baba. After his usual query "Emi Samacharam?" (What news?) and talking for some time, Baba produced a baby monkey which started to grow and became a full-grown one while in Baba's hands! He jumped from shoulder to shoulder, much to the consternation of the devotees and ultimately landed on the window sill of the room. Baba asked one of the ladies to give him the two bananas she had kept in her handbag. The lady protested that she was not carrying any bananas. But to her horror she found two bananas instead of her sandals in her handbag! Baba asked her to give the



bananas to the monkey, which it ate and ultimately vanished into thin air! At first the overseas devotees were tight-lipped about their experience inside the interview room, but gradually they could not resist the temptation to make known their experience of this miracle to their friends and relatives at home.

In their own country Christians of different orders do not celebrate Christmas together. But in Prasanthi Nilayam, they all join together and unitedly chalk out the programme for celebration. What is it that attracts so many to Sai Baba from different countries, religions and faiths? Baba himself gave the answer: *"It is love and love alone."*

My first interaction with Baba was in 1975 when my late mother Smt. Surabala Bordoloi and my elder brothers, who were regular visitors to Puttaparthi to receive the Divine Grace and Blessings of Bhagawan. When I received Baba's Divine Sparsh (touch) for the first time my joy and Ananda reached the skies, and gave me my life's greatest euphoric satisfaction. The next visit was after my marriage to my wife, Lonie, in May, 1976. We were graced with an 'Interview' with my mother. It was a feeling beyond our imagination to gain Baba's Padanamaskar and meet him at such close quarters. He was very approachable and we felt completely at ease with him as a person. But he was also Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to us and we felt His Omniscience, Godliness and the warmth of his aura in the interview room. Baba blessed our children when they were born and their education in Baba's school laid the foundation for ethics and good character.

I would like to end with a personal experience, away from

his physical presence, that occurred to me in 1993. While I was heading the Tata Tea office in Guwahati, I was abducted by an insurgent (tribal) group of the North-East, for ransom, and kept in captivity for 330 days. The insurgents demanded a huge ransom for my release from Tata Tea Ltd. During those long and harrowing days in captivity I made attempts to befriend my perpetrators and understand why they chose the path of violence. They confided to me some of their long-drawn grievances against the apathy of the Assam Govt., and the arrogance of the local people, in general, towards them. Throughout this period, I never for a moment stopped praying to the Almighty and to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in particular, for inner strength and patience. On the other side, my octogenarian mother and elder sister, late Smt. Lily Baruah were doing all they could, going from pillar to post to establish contact with members of the insurgent group, of which I came to know through the newspapers and radio. This would give me renewed hope and confidence of my release. Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba had given assurance and strength to my mother who had always been a devotee of his, and told her not to despair, and said, *"Aapka Beta Wapas Ayega"* (your son will return to you). He also conveyed to them, that this episode was God's test for me whether I would emerge victorious in this struggle against insurgency, abduction and extortion that was ruining the society and the state.

Today, Sai Baba may be physically not present, but he will always be in our hearts. His blessing hand will always be upon us and lead us on to do good on this earth as human beings. ■

## Love Beyond Miracles

BY DR.V. MOHAN

*Dr. Mohan is the Chairman and Chief Diabetologist, Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre, Chennai.*

**A**lthough I had seen Swami even when I was a child, it was only in 1992 that I had the good fortune of being called by Swami to enter his fold as a devotee. This joyful turning point in my life came almost suddenly, during the first visit my late wife Dr. Rema and I made to Swami's Ashram at Whitefield, near Bangalore. Swami always says, *"If you take one step towards me, I shall take a hundred steps towards you."*

True enough, ever since that momentous day, our lives have never been the same, for we began to experience Swami and his miracles almost on a daily basis. However, we soon came to realise that Swami's greatest miracle is how he transforms people with the power of his Infinite Divine Love. That love has achieved things that no man, or indeed, even any Avatar has ever achieved during his lifetime. Indeed it is his unconditional love for humanity that has led to his establishing innumerable schools, colleges and universities that provide something that, to my knowledge, has never been done anywhere in the world by any single individual – complete free education



to thousands of students right from the kindergarten level to the most advanced degrees in computers, science, humanities or management including Ph.D.s and MBAs. His numerous free hospitals or 'temples of healing' as they are called, provide free treatment to tens of thousands of poor people. These range from free coronary bypass surgeries, to orthopedic procedures, to eye surgeries, and treatment for neurological and kidney disorders. Billions of rupees have been spent by Swami to treat countless patients with no distinction of caste, creed or religion. As a

practicing medical doctor and a scientist, I have been amazed and privileged, to witness true medical miracles such as cancers which were cured, or 'cancelled' as Swami so lovingly puts it.

I have also seen seemingly incurable cases of multiple myeloma, multiple sclerosis, incurable skin conditions, hopeless cases of advanced diabetic foot infections and numerous other illnesses completely cured by his grace - another manifestation of Swami's boundless love. One patient I want to write about was a middle aged man who had undergone a rectal surgery and had very severe pain post operatively. On the first day, he had been given very powerful narcotic analgesics like Pethidine and Fortwin but still could not sleep because of the pain. The next night I was doing my ward rounds when he held my hand and begged me to relieve him of his pain and help him get a good night's sleep. I did not know what to do as I had already given him the most powerful drugs the previous night and they did not seem to have had any effect at all on him. I asked him to close his eyes and prayed to Swami to relieve him of his pain submitting to him that this was now beyond me, and only Swami's divine intervention could help the patient. A few minutes after I left the room, the patient went into deep sleep. The nurse went later to give him the same medicines given the previous day, but as he was fast asleep, she did not give him any pain killers. The patient slept till 7.00 am the next day and was amazed to hear that he had not been given any medicines at all! He then asked me what I had done when I had asked him to close his eyes the previous night. I confessed to him that I had prayed to Baba to relieve him of his pain. On hearing this, the patient said *"Doctor, Baba is God. How else can He relieve me instantly of pain when even powerful narcotic drugs could not do so?"*

The second instance was my own mother who had undergone a hip replacement surgery. Being an asthmatic she had been given an epidural anesthesia through the spinal route. Unfortunately on the night of the surgery, the epidural cannula slipped out and she was in excruciating pain. As she had undergone hip replacement surgery, she

could not be turned on the side. I did the only thing I could, under the circumstances. I prayed hard to Swami and gave her some of his Vibhuthi. Within a few minutes, she miraculously went back to sleep without any pain killers being given and soon made a complete recovery. I can narrate any number of such instances of "cures" I have witnessed in my patients due to Swami's grace but space constraints do not permit me to further elaborate on this topic.

Nothing is impossible for Swami who is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, and has all the attributes of a living God. Indeed, we should consider ourselves extremely fortunate to have been in Bhagawan's Divine presence in our life time and to be under Swami's constant protection. Whatever little we have achieved in life, is entirely due to Swami's endless Grace.

Swami's teachings are extremely simple, practical and direct. His profound words 'Love All, Serve All' and 'Help Ever, Hurt Never' are perhaps the quintessence of all his teachings. How glorious, how wonderful indeed, are his words. We humans, with all our weaknesses and foibles, find it so difficult to follow even these simple commands in our daily lives. How many of us can honestly say that we love all including our 'enemies' or those who oppose us or criticise us? More often than not, we hurt people knowingly or unknowingly with our words or our actions. Swami had recently changed his earlier statement of 'My life is My message' to 'Your life is My message'. He has therefore placed the onus on us to try to practice at least a small part of his teachings. If even a small percentage of his pure, selfless love percolates down to society, it would change the whole world. There is no doubt that Baba will continue to inspire us irrespective of whether his physical form is present or not. All the wonderful work started by him will definitely continue. All of us in the organisation have been personally taught by him and it is now our duty to continue his service to society with renewed enthusiasm. Baba's mission will only intensify from here on. ■

## The Infinite Golden Aura of Sai Baba

BY DR. R.N. SHUKLA

Dr. R.N. Shukla, Director (Retd.) National Chemical Laboratory, Pune, is the Chairman of a number of organisations in areas connected

Once, a few decades ago, several internationally acclaimed Indian Scientists, associated with ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation), wished to meet Baba after a conference at Bangalore. I had the good fortune to accompany them to Puttaparthi. Next day in the morning, a special meeting was arranged for the five of us, scientists, in Baba's sitting room. Baba spoke to us elaborating on ancient space-science and research in the culture of India, Bharatiya Samskruti. He mentioned about the contributions made by Maharshi Vishwamitra, Rishi Bharadwaja and others. He also spoke about the Gurukul traditions of ancient India, citing the famous

Rishi-Gurukuls of Sandipani, Mahamuni Agastya and others, along with the specialty discipline of each. As we were leaving, Baba blessed the scientists by gifting each of



with Human Energy Research, Aura research, Astro Physics and Complementary Medicine Research.



us with astrally procured and materialized diamond pearl rings, emerald pendants and so on. Everybody got overwhelmed by Baba's gifts and the depth of his discourse on ancient scientific developments.

Dr. V.G. Bhide, one of the scientists, was blessed with an emerald ring. All of a sudden he approached Baba, with his emerald ring in his palm and prayed thus, "Baba you have blessed me by this ring, created astrally, for which, I am very happy and convinced. But Baba, for my curiosity, can you kindly make this ring disappear now?" Baba just gave a broad smile and said, "Dr. Bhide, I have personally done nothing at all! But as your meeting with me is over now, we must disperse!" We all came out of the hall somewhat unhappily. But suddenly I got a thought and I turned to Dr. Bhide and asked him to open his palm containing the emerald ring. There was no trace of the ring! It had vanished! This was a practical lesson taught to us scientists not to suspect and question those realised beings who have taken human form and descended amongst us purely to shower their grace and love on all mankind.

#### Baba's Aura

In July 1991, I had a chance to go to Bangalore. My wife was anxious for Baba's blessing. I was also invited to deliver some lectures at the University in Prasanthi Nilayam. We decided to go by the Kurla express from Mumbai, get down at Dharmavaram from where Prasanthi Nilayam is about 80 kms away. But both of us slept through and missed getting down at Dharmavaram. We woke up only when the train reached Bangalore. We were a bit perturbed at this. However, to our great happiness, our co-passengers in the train told us that Baba was at Bangalore and we could see him the next day morning at nearby Whitefield. What a blessing!

Next day, we had Baba's Darshan and Pada-sparshan. The Vibhuti he gave us had the cheerful fragrance of the night queen flowers (Ratrani). But this was during the day! Both of us were totally awestruck by this experience. I was then requested to give a talk before devotees, in the College Auditorium, along with two others. Baba told each of us to talk on particular topics for 40 minutes. Baba said, "Dr. Shukla, you talk on Cosmic Energy, Dr. Philips on terrestrial Chemistry and Dr. Chu on the Baba Biography, a book written by Dr Chu. General discussions will follow in the end". I insisted on being permitted to study and read Baba's Aura, which he allowed after some initial reluctance. Aura is the human Bio-energy picture, a normal electromagnetic current voltage measurement done through social meters. Presently, Aura detection is done by PIP Camera (Poly Phase Contrast Photograph).

Using an accurate multimeter, I read 5 volts and 8 amperes as voltage and electric current readings, as Baba's Aura. This was recorded thrice and the readings were the same. Baba then laughed and asked me whether I was satisfied with the readings, and asked me to take the readings again. I took another set of readings. The multimeter hands initially refused to move, but suddenly clicked to record infinity voltage and amperes readings! Baba could increase his own internal energy and convert his human bio-energy into small tiny nano-gold particles that emerged out of his skin as 'Shining lustrous golden Aura' as measured later by our PIP Camera. This recording was done not just by us but also by the Japanese, German and Dutch scientists present in our group. We were all so startled! But Baba told us jokingly that we should merge in Baba, and become B.A.B.A – double graduates of Baba's Spiritual University – Being, Awareness, Bliss, Atma! ■

## The Mission Must Go On ...

BY DR. JAMES THOMAS



Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Dr.D.Y. Patil University, Nerul, Mumbai, Prof. James Thomas has been closely associated with several medical universities in India

and abroad, like AFMC, Pune, CMC, Vellore, St. Stephens Hospital, Delhi.

I was chairing a session at the International Conference of Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery at Puttaparthi where I had the Darshan of Sri Sathya Sai Baba sitting less than two feet away from me. His serene face was very captivating and had a tranquilizing effect on me.

Baba did not speak a word, yet much was conveyed to those gathered there and later at the General Prayer Hall, in that "There is only one religion, the religion of love; only one language, the language of the heart; and only one caste, the caste of humanity." Our Founder Chancellor Dr. D. Y. Patil, Governor of Tripura, Chancellor Shri Vijay Patil, and Dr. Ajinkya Patil, Pro-Chancellor finds this so appealing that Dr. Ajinkya begins his speech every time with this sentence.

The atmosphere of service at Baba's hospital was heartening with volunteers quietly going about doing their assigned work. The person who drove me around in the campus was a senior officer in the government who had waited many months for his turn to come to do two weeks of free service or Seva. Dr Ashok Seth, Cardiologist from Delhi, sitting next to me had a broad smile on his face for being there on his birthday to receive the proximity and blessings of Bhagawan.

I was touched by Bhagawan's efforts to bring clean water

supply to many regions. The state-of-the-art equipment in the hospital came out of generous donations from devotees from as far as Argentina in South America. The amount and variety of heart surgeries done including cases of small children have been amazing with good results and a large waiting list.

The impact on me was, how a single life can influence and inspire so many around the world, with no let up even when the physical presence is no more. Baba has inspired many to life-long service to the needy and those less privileged. You are not asked to pay for the good rendered, and this is captivating. By comparison, how little we are doing for the benefit of many and how much more we can

do and need to do if only we care to plan on a long term basis.

The Sai mission needs to stay on course. The prayer assemblies bring much needed succour for those in fear and sadness. The educational institutions need to go on and grow and innovative areas of art, humanities and music need be encouraged just as Baba did. The medical service needs to continue with super specialised care made accessible to all seeking it. The hospital needs periodic updating of equipments and services.

The Sai mission can also associate and cooperate with other religious and social groups to forge unity, peace and harmony in the country. ■

## Sai Baba: Man Of Diverse Miracles

BY Alan H Gradman, MD

opportunity to see Swami in his present body. The high point of the Conference was Swami's visit to the symposium. He sat only two seats away from me. I felt particularly fortunate. He remained for several of the lectures and as he always did listened with laser-like intensity to every detail of the events in progress. The elevated mood of all present persisted throughout the remainder of the programme.

That evening I sat in the Sai Kulwant Hall, where Swami regularly gave Darshan. Sitting next to me was a cardiothoracic surgeon from one of India's leading hospitals. He was not a Sai Baba devotee and had never before visited Puttaparthi. He had been invited to speak at the Conference on the basis of his expertise in cardiac surgery, not his religious interests. I found it significant that he had given his lecture during Swami's visit to the symposium, and his was, in fact, the only lecture which Swami attended in its entirety. It seemed that he had been bestowed a great honor and I assumed that he was a special person.

We chatted amicably prior to the start of the evening programme. He was interested in where I came from and how I came to Puttaparthi. I gave him a brief history of my journey to Sai Baba. After some time, he turned to me and asked: "What are all these people doing here?" I didn't understand the question and asked repeatedly for clarification. What he wanted to know was why thousands of people from all over India and the world had assembled in this remote village, and were reverentially seated, in many cases, at distances so great that Swami must have been barely visible. I looked carefully at his facial features, trying to ascertain his ethnic origins—perhaps he wasn't Indian or Hindu, perhaps he did not come from this culture. I questioned him gently, not wishing to offend by presuming to know more about his native traditions than he did. "Are you Hindu" I asked him. "Yes," he replied. I looked at him and gave the answer that came immediately to mind: "They come for Darshan."



*An active investigator in the areas of hypertension and heart failure, Dr. Alan Gradman has been active in the American College of Cardiology and has previously served as Governor for Western Pennsylvania Hospital. He is currently Professor of Medicine, Temple University School of Medicine, Pennsylvania, USA.*

I arrived in Puttaparthi on October 24, 2010 to attend the International Conference on Cardiovascular Diseases sponsored by the Sathya Sai Institute for Higher Medical Sciences. It was my 10th trip to India and although I did not know it at the time, it would be my last



Yes, they came for Darshan, just as I came for Darshan. The word Darshan was never part of my vocabulary growing up. I had never heard the word before coming to India in 2002. I learnt its meaning through direct experience. The first time I saw Baba, I was captivated by his graceful walk, his perfect timing in keeping a musical beat, and the enigmatic movements of his hands which seemed to express depths of meaning with every gesture. His gaze could stop my thoughts, and did so on numerous occasions. I witnessed his touch communicating love and support to countless children and adults, men and women, Indians and foreigners. His materializations changed people's view of reality as they did mine, and instilled in them a direct knowledge of the principle that anything is possible, and that there are higher laws of nature which science does not even begin to comprehend. Darshan drew them in, the promise of Darshan made them return though the journey was difficult and the accommodations rudimentary. Darshan transformed their lives in some indefinable but very real and positive way.

I do not know whether the surgeon sitting to my left experienced these feelings. Certainly, not everyone did. As an outsider, it seemed to me that there were two India's – the modern country with westernized values and aspirations, and the traditional India with its unique worldview and deeply held beliefs that have made it the 'Guru to the world' for millennia. Baba stands at the interface of these two worlds. He understood the necessity of modernization and was a leader in bringing modern services to rural India through such activities as clean water projects, hospitals, schools for women, universities, etc. He taught his students and devotees to take risks, to excel in the skills of modern industrialized society, to master technology and not fear it. But he criticized unceasingly those who would discard India's traditional values, and insisted instead that these values form the foundation of a modern, prosperous society. To me it was characteristic that Swami honoured the secular surgeon at the same time exposing him to the greatness of traditional Indian values.

As a physician, I volunteered at the Super Specialty Hospital during each of my visits to the Ashram. My task involved teaching cardiology fellows. The 'business model' of the hospital was different from anything I had encountered during my medical career. Although emphasizing that healing was possible through spiritual means alone, Swami stressed on the importance of making modern medical care available to everyone. During my interview with Baba in 2002, he explained to me that all of the care at the hospital was free. In his discourses, he emphasised that medicine was a profession that required a spirit of Seva and personalised attention to every patient as a unique individual. He rejected economic models of health care delivery. This spirit was clearly evident in the cardiology trainees I encountered. Swami indicated that the benefits of his approach were

not restricted to the patients, but were primarily beneficial to the physician and other caregivers. He stated, "*Disinterested service will ennoble man and raise his stature. It endows man with the intelligence and the skills required to refine human nature,*" meaning the nature of the doctor not the patient.

The atmosphere at the Super Specialty Hospital reflects the unique perspective of its Founder. Shoes are removed in the catheterization laboratory as they are in a place of worship. Selfless service happens every day among the doctors, nurses, technicians and other members of the staff. A mobile hospital is dispatched to remote villages that lack access to healthcare services. The spirit of the place enters visiting doctors from abroad and from the big cities of 'modern' India. The high purpose of medicine seems restored in a world where the main topic of conversation is patient welfare, rather than costs, budgets, bonuses and vacations. It is possible to remember why one chose to become a doctor in the first place. And the Super Specialty Hospital is not a rudimentary rural facility. It is a tertiary care hospital delivering state-of-the-art care that is comparable to the best in the world. Obviously, the money has to come from somewhere and this model is not universally applicable. Nevertheless, it illustrates again, as Baba never failed to do, what is possible through well-directed human effort. Perhaps this approach is the answer to the widespread dissatisfaction which infects modern medicine despite its remarkable achievements.

Baba approached many social issues other than medicine. His discourses cover the full range of human experience. He always stressed the critical importance of education in proper values, love, and selfless service. He had a remarkable ability to bridge differences between cultures, nationalities, and belief systems. He drew people in by accepting them where they stood and emphasizing higher possibilities in their lives. He encouraged devotees to follow their own religion, and not to mimic others. He put into practice the ancient Vedic injunction, "*Truth is one, though the sages describe it in various ways.*"

Those of us who have been touched directly by Baba feel a profound void in our lives with his passing. When a serious family problem arose two years ago, my first reaction was to go to India and give Baba a letter asking for his assistance. I always felt that he would 'be there for me,' as we say in the United States. We all long for Darshan. Yet, we recognise that Baba's message is timeless, that the fascination he engendered and the rings he materialized were only tools for bringing us to him and to his message. We realize that he has already given us everything we really need.

It is difficult to predict the exact future of Baba's teachings. Certainly, his influence on India and the world has been profound, both in terms of practical accomplishments such as schools and hospitals and, more importantly, in presenting the timeless wisdom of ancient India in an innovative fashion capable of speaking to the world of the

# A Beneficiary's Story

SULEIMAN, from Kothamangalam, Kerala, is a beneficiary of the Super Specialty Hospital at Puttaparthi.

He narrates the following experience:

*"In July 2001, I had a heart attack. As per the advice of many, I went to the Sri Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospital at Puttaparthi. I was examined soon after reaching the hospital and was asked to come back after taking medicines for one year. The medicines cost me Rs. 700 per month. I am a manual labourer and I could not afford the cost. Therefore, I could take medicines only for three months.*

*One year later, when it was time for me to go to the hospital, I was so ill, I could not even walk. Somehow, I managed to reach Puttaparthi. I took part in the Bhajans and tearfully prayed to Swami to cure me. In the hospital after further tests I was told that I had three 'blocks' in my heart and I should undergo a 'By-Pass surgery'.*

*My son and I were stunned to silence as we were not prepared either financially or emotionally. My son was very scared about surgery. We asked the doctor if there were any other means of treatment. The answer was in the negative. But then the doctor thought for a while and asked us to return the next day. I went back to Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram and prayed to Swami with full heart, to show me a way.*

*The next morning in the hospital the doctor told us that he would try 'Angioplasty' first, and only if it fails I need to undergo the major surgery. This came as a great relief to me and I underwent Angioplasty the next day. While in the ward, the nurse told me that Swami was coming to visit the hospital and everybody was busy preparing for his visit.*

*Swami, the most benevolent and the most merciful one entered the ward, spreading the Divine fragrance of his grace. I was in my bed with folded hands. Swami came to me, held my palms with his Divine hands and said, "Be courageous, you have no problem, you can be discharged tomorrow itself. As he predicted, I was discharged the next day. By his electrifying Divine touch, my sufferings of many months just vanished. The story does not end here. One year later when we went for review check up at the hospital, the doctors, after the tests told me that not only had all the blocks been removed, but also, my heart had returned to its total normal condition! The doctor also said that it was totally Baba's Grace that has made this possible".*

(The patient who was previously taking 24 tablets per day now takes just two a day, without spending any money, and believes this is totally the effect of Baba's blessings).

21st century. He transformed many lives for the better, including mine.

We look forward to the coming of Prema Sai, the third of the Sai Baba incarnations, and hope to receive his Darshan. We try our best to use his wisdom and example as a practical guide in our lives. It is always 'down to earth,' devoid of useless sentimentality and exaggerated expectations. It is advice that is accessible to everyone. I have always been inspired by this statement: *"Social service does not mean merely going out into the streets and cleaning them. Whatever work you are engaged in, to do your duties efficiently and with diligence and devotion*

*is also Seva. Those in authority who discharge their functions well enough to justify the salary they are receiving are also rendering real service."*

If everyone just followed this dictum, the world would be a much better place. It is my fervent hope that we can move beyond our sense of loss, and forward into the life that Baba encouraged us to pursue—practical accomplishments based not upon the mindless pursuit of materialism which can never satisfy, but upon high ethical and moral values—restoring the Dharma to India and the world. ■

## My Inner View of Baba

BY MICHAEL W. CONGLETON, M.D., Ph.D

*Mike Congleton is a physician, physicist and a psychiatrist. A former Commander in the U.S. Navy Medical Corp, he has helped develop and implement Medical Information Systems for hospitals, clinics, and medical treatment facilities.*

I was blessed to hear about Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for the first time in 1978 at a small bookstore in Houston, Texas, and my first trip with my wife and son to have the Darshan of Swami was in 1984. In 1987 I traveled to Brindavan, Whitefield and I was blessed to have several interviews with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Sai Baba had just arrived from Kodaikanal, and the crowds were very small. Even if you were the last in line to go, you





those items for me. After I sat down in front of him, he said, "You worry too much! You worry about your family, and you worry about your job. You worry about the past, and you worry about the future. I will worry about all those for you. You worry about the present." And then he pointed his fingers towards himself and swept them up and down as he said: "The Omnipresent!" He continued, "I am with you. I am around you. I will always be with you." He then looked at the items I was carrying and picked up the quartz egg. He said, "This isn't a Shiva Lingam. I will make you a real Shiva Lingam tomorrow, be ready!" He told me other things of a personal nature, and then we went back to the main interview room. He continued seeing others, and when he was finished, he gave Vibhuti to everybody. He carried a small basket full of Vibhuti packets and handed each person a handful of packets. I was the last person leaving the room, and I noticed that someone had dropped a packet of the Vibhuti. As I reached down to pick it up, he laughed and said: "You want some more?" I turned around and said: "Sure!" So he gave me another big handful of Vibhuti packets. I brought these packets home with me and shared them with the members at the Sai Centre. I then left the interview room with everyone else, and later that night, I was wondering: 'What did Swami mean when he said 'be ready'?

had great seating anyway! When Swami came out for Darshan, I felt like I was being totally ignored, and I noticed people had notes and letters that they were offering to Swami. Many times, Swami accepted these letters. So inspired, I wrote a little poem in which I asked Swami for an interview. As Swami was giving Darshan the next day, He walked up to me, took my letter and said: "Go!"

I was sitting more towards the front on the men's side of the room, right across from a couple of twins – Indian ladies – and he walked over and stood in front of me. Swami then looked at two ladies who were twins sitting across the aisle from me, and they did not say a word as they looked at him. He shook his head back and forth and said: "Five minutes of happiness and 23 hours fifty-five minutes of pain and suffering!" Then he swept his hand through the air, and materialized an Indian rosary – a Japamala! He held the Mala at the very top, and it looped down under his two hands. He pulled a little bit at the top of the Mala, and it split into two Malas! It was like peeling a banana. He was splitting it apart, one Mala was going up, and two Malas were coming out – and click, click, click – then there were two identical Malas, one for each of the twins!

He also materialised a watch for one of the students there, and I learned the significance of watch later – W-A-T-C-H - watch your Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character, and Heart.

Swami invited each person or family into a separate room for a private interview. He came out and told me, "You're next," and I followed him into the private interview room. I was carrying a Japamala and a quartz egg with me that was shaped like a Shiva Lingam, and I wanted Swami to bless

I had been staying in a room at someone's home right across the street from the main ashram gate, and that evening I wanted to be alone to think about my interview with Swami. Suddenly, there was a knock at my door, and when I opened the door, a lady with an English accent said: "We just got here from Australia. Can my son stay with you?" I wasn't really that anxious to have a guest that night, however, I thought about her request and said: "Sure! Why not?" She left to go get her son, and 15 minutes later there was another knock on the door. I had expected her son to be small and about ten years old. Instead, her son was the size of a football player over six feet tall and weighing over 200 pounds. He was wearing a cowboy hat, cowboy boots, and cowboy clothes. He was an Australian cowboy! I looked up at him and said: "You're welcome to stay here, come on in." He looked at the small size of my room and said: "Thanks, but I think I'll just sleep out here on the porch!" The next morning, as I was leaving for Darshan, he was still asleep on the porch. I woke him up and said: "We need to go over for Darshan; Swami is coming out very soon." And I left to go to Darshan.

I was lucky to get a seat on the front line in the Darshan area, and I was sitting there, anxious about what Swami had meant when he said: 'Be ready.' At that time, you could carry a camera into the Darshan area, and I thought that Swami might do something, so I asked someone sitting near me to take a picture if anything happened. As Swami passed by me during Darshan, he once again said: "Go!" So I went to the waiting area outside his residence. As I turned the corner to join the other devotees in the waiting area who had been picked for an interview, I saw the Australian cowboy and his mother standing there with

the other devotees. Swami had also picked them out for an interview. Everyone went into the interview room, and Swami said something to them immediately. He called them back for a private interview, and when they came back out, he motioned for me to come forward and give him that quartz egg I had been carrying. He took the quartz egg, held it up for everyone to see, and asked the group: "What is this?" Nobody answered him. He then said: "This is glass; it's only glass. I am going to make a real Shiva Lingam." He put the quartz egg into the palm of his right hand and held his hand palm up, for everyone to see. He gently blew on it three times without moving his hand. It transformed from a reticulated quartz egg into a solid black Shiva lingam!

He held it up and said: "This is a real Shiva Lingam." He

then said "It is made of the five elements." He then stopped and looked at me asking, "Who does this belong to?" I looked up to him with my hands in prayer position and said: "To You, Swami." He smiled, nodded yes, and pulled a silk handkerchief out of my pocket. He wrapped the Shiva lingam in the silk handkerchief and put it in my shirt pocket. He then told me to "Put it in water every night, drink that water, it will help calm your mind." Over the years, I have traveled back to Prasanthi Nilayam many times to be near Swami's physical form. I was blessed to have many interviews.

Now, our beloved Swami has left his physical body, but he will never leave us. He told me, "I am with you, I am around you, and I will always be with you." This is true for me, and I believe it is true for all. ■

## At The Feet Of The Nadabrahman

BY MALLADI Brothers



*The Malladi brothers, Sreeram Prasad and Ravikumar are a Carnatic music vocalist duo, who have performed extensively in India and abroad. They possess a large repertoire of classical compositions.*

Without love in the heart, one cannot attain Jnana, sings Tyagaraja. All the Mahayogis who have attained Atmajnana have within them a fathomless ocean of mercy and love. Raga is in Anuragam. A heart which has love for Ragam is Anuragam. This Anuraga Ganga which flows through Yogis is what makes millions of devotees bear fruit, through their love. There are but a few yogis who have been endowed with this spiritual power - Raga Yogi Tyagaraja Swami, and in our generation, Prema Yogi Sathya Sai. With Prema, Tyaga, Satya and Shanti as his instruments, he sowed the seeds for a million banyan trees dedicated to the service of mankind.

Bhagawan Sathya Sai believed in Nadavinmamedevata (he who knows the essence of Nada is God). He used to patronize traditional classical musicians. Music in general is a harbinger of happiness. But music derived from great gurus is blissful. Bhagawan Sathya Sai proved time and again that dedicated musicians have a special place in his

heart, whether they were South or North Indian or foreigners. During the last 6 years of his Avatar, Swami immensely adored our music and fulfilled our life's purpose by listening to our music many times.

It was on April 28, 2007 that we had our first Darshan of Swami in Kodaikanal. Till that time, we had heard about Swami but had not met him personally. We flew from Madras to Madurai, and had a Darshan of Madurai Meenakshi and Sundareswara before we went to Kodaikanal.

I was bothered by a bad throat on the 27th. It was Divine intervention of sorts as we did not have a Darshan of Swami until the next morning when he came to inaugurate a new building. He was seated next to a Ganapati Vighram. We thought it befitting of the occasion to start with Rara Mayinti Daka (O Lord, do come to my dwelling). Swami, after listening to us sing the Pallavi, joined us in singing the Anupallavi and Charanam. We were supposed to leave on the evening of the same day. Swami asked us to stay back, and sing for him once again in the evening. This is significant because it became a trend in the years that followed to sing twice on every occasion we had a Darshan of Swami in Puttaparthi.

As we worked on rescheduling our return tickets, we received from Swami a song list for the evening. The list comprised of Aparama Bhakti, Endaro Mahanubhavulu, O Rama Nee Nama, and a Meera bhajan. The unbelievable experience of sitting so close to Swami's feet that evening would be the first of many such divine experiences that would follow. We had never been to Puttaparthi. It had been our belief all along that Swami would call for us the day he wanted us to sing for him.

Swami, taking note of our Tamil-style dhotis asked us in Tamil for our names, and where we hailed from. During



our rendition in the evening, we sang the Pallavi and Anupallavi of Aparama Bhakti and proceeded to the last Charanam, "Kapi Varidhi", when Swami interrupted and asked us to sing "Lakshmi Devi Valachuna", one of the rarer Charanams of the song. When we started singing the Charanam Swami had wanted us to, he joined in the singing. When we sang the slokam "Go Dhuli Dhusarita Komala Gopavesham", he was moved to tears. We then rendered the Meera bhajan, which too he sang with us. He then asked us, if the students of the Music College were singing well. We immediately offered to teach his students some Kritis of Bhadrachala Ramadasu and Tyagaraju. He asked us to come again to Puttaparthi, and stay for a few days. He wanted us to commit to a date – and when we said that it was his will, he bid us to come there for the festival of Guru Purnima. I (Sreeram) had a dream about 15 years before 2007 that we were singing in front of Swami. I had not even been to the Sai Center in Vijayawada till then. That dream came true at Kodaikanal.

On the morning of Guru Purnima, we were brimming with excitement to sing before Swami. There were others who were telling us that there was a strong possibility that Swami would not call us to sing. I (Sreeram) was very optimistic, however, that Swami would call us; that we would see him and sing for him. That morning, at 4 am, I had a dream. I only heard my name being called out in Swami's voice. I was convinced when I woke up with his voice in my ears, that we would have his Divine Darshan that day.

There is generally a programme drawn up for Guru Purnima celebrations in Puttaparthi. Sai Kulwant Hall, where the celebrations take place, is almost akin to a Deva Sabha where the majestic Amarendra graces Devas with his presence and blessings. When Swami came on to the dais, he saw us seated in the midst of thousands of other devotees. He called out to us, and said "Nalla Padungo" (sing well, in Tamil), and all other programmes for the day were cancelled. He said, after the morning's concert, "Come again in the evening". It was then that we first told Swami that we were disciples of Sri Nedunuri Krishnamurthy Garu, and grand-disciples of Dr Sripada Pinakapani Garu, and he acknowledged that he knew them. Dr. Pinakapani is 99. Way back in the 1960-70s, Swami created Amrutam on the banks of the River Chitravati. Dr. Pinakapani was one among those who received nectar from Swami directly. Swami remembered Pani Garu vividly and spoke to us as if he had known us forever.

We sang again in the evening – Sangita Jnanamu, Brocheva Revarura, O Nama Nee Namam and other Kritis. Swami had a deep liking for Bhakti-laden music endowed with Bhasha Jnanam, Manodharma and an affinity towards

Telugu verses (Padyam) by Jandyala Papaiyya Sastri and other Telugu poets. We were blessed profusely with the unexpected showers of blessings. Our life's purpose had been fulfilled on that day. We prayed to him to bless us with more Bhakti and Nada Siddhi. His blessing was – "Noorellu Tsakkaga Padataru" (may you continue to sing for a hundred years, in Telugu). Swami then blessed our entire family to take pictures with him and blessed us – leaving everybody astounded as it was an unprecedented gesture of grace. The 4 years of constant contact with Swami gave us memorable singing opportunities in his presence. When we sang verses on Easwaramma, Swami's mother, he appeared to be moved.

Swami had a special liking for our father's music and his Bhakti-filled renditions that were reminiscent of the style of Voleti Venkateswarulu, our father's Guru. He inquired after our father's age and even commented on the quality and timbre of his voice. We understood the depth of his Divinity when he sensed that we were in Puttaparthi once, though not for a concert. It was almost unbelievable when Swami assured us that our mother would recover from a head injury – unasked for. A heart problem that my son was diagnosed with, my sister's son's stomach ailment – Swami's Divine heart knew it all. When he blessed our family with saris and dhotis, he remembered to send a sari for my (Sreeram's) expecting wife.

In 2010, on the day of Guru Purnima, we performed in the evening for 2 hours. During that month, Swami did not give Darshans in the morning. However, he asked us to come once again the next morning at 8. It was almost as if he came that morning only to listen to us.

We were in the Madurai Meenakshi temple when news reached us of Swami's passing. Our tryst with Swami had begun there. As we journeyed to Puttaparthi, we realised how difficult it would be to try to express what he meant to us through any means other than our music.

Sai Rama Bhakti Samrajyam

Eelagani Vivarimpa Lenu

Chala Svanubhava Vedyame

An experience that cannot be described to another; something that one can only be experienced within the Self. Baba is a personification of love to the entire world. Because Swami knows the essence of music, he is Nada in itself (Nadanandaswarupam). Whoever takes a dip in this pure ocean of Nadam will realise that Swami is always with them in their hearts. Swami may not be with us today physically, but his heart will always know of the Antarangam of the hearts of singers who sing with love. He will be with us to protect the worlds that have originated from Omkaram. ■

# The Benevolent Care-Giver

BY SURESH WADKAR



*Suresh Wadkar is a playback singer who has sung in both Hindi and Marathi films and has also sung numerous devotional songs in various languages. He also runs music schools in Mumbai and New Jersey.*

It was in 1967 that I first heard about Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, through my Guruji Acharya Jialal Vasant. I was very young then and just followed my Guruji's instructions of singing for Sri Sathya Sai Baba at a foreign consulate's house. I was very amused when Baba came straight to all the children singing instead of going to the dais decorated for him. More to my amusement, he started telling the children what their names are and what they do, instead of asking them! Though I was amused, I was too young to acknowledge Baba as 'The All Knower'.

In May 1970, Bhagawan came to Dharmakshetra (those were the days when he used to be in Mumbai every summer) and went to Sri. P. K. Sawant's house and as soon as he entered, he asked "Where is Suresh?" Though I was present somewhere behind I was completely shocked as till then I had never spoken to Baba and was wondering how he knew my name! Though my monkey mind kept doubting who this Baba was, something changed in me that day.

In the year 1982-83 Swami came to Dharmakshetra, and I was sitting in front to sing for him. Baba came straight to me and asked me to come to Puttaparthi. I had never imagined I would ever go to Puttaparthi in my life. After the first visit, I was totally into Baba and made umpteen trips to see him at Puttaparthi. During the 70th Birthday celebrations of Bhagawan Baba a whole team of musicians were present in Puttaparthi. That was the first time I rendered "Om Kara Swaroopa Sadguru Raya, Tuja Namu" in front of Baba which became a favourite of his, and subsequently I sang it several times. After the Birthday celebrations, we all were sitting for Darshan and while everyone (Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, Smt. Kavita Krishnamurthy, Pandit Amjad Ali Khan

and his wife, Padma and Prem Vasantji) were called inside the interview room, I was left out! After a plea from Padma to Baba, I was also summoned inside. My late coming proved to be lucky as I got to sit very close to Baba's feet. I saw in such close quarters all the manifestations made by Baba for everyone present in the room, again except me! One thing particularly amazing was Baba creating a sweet that was oval in shape and giving it only to Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharmaji and his son. Later, I was told that this sweet was made only in the Kashmir region and since Panditji belonged to Kashmir, Baba created the delicacy for him!

Once while at Whitefield, Bhagawan Baba showered my Guruji and me with lot of love and affection after we sang Bhajans in his personal chamber. After singing, Baba gave Guruji gifts to be distributed to all the children in his singing academy. One interesting anecdote in this trip was about our local driver in Bangalore. Though he was driving us to see Baba at Whitefield he himself did not believe in Swami. The driver always believed that Sri Sathya Sai Baba was a trickster and had things hidden beneath his long sleeves! One evening, it happened such that the driver was also present in the Darshan lines. Baba came straight to us, rolled up his sleeves and created Vibhuti and gave some to the driver too. Needless to say, the driver fell flat at Baba's feet!

Then came a point in my life, when I was detected with a severe heart problem and I was instructed to undergo a heart by-pass surgery immediately. Confused and scared about the impending surgery, I went to Baba in the month of September. As fate would have it, Baba never glanced at me for the first 3 days. Dejected further I continued to sit for his Darshan and finally one evening I got a message that Baba would see me the next morning! My joy knew no bounds when Baba, spoke to me and said "No Operation". He further instructed to me to come back to Puttaparthi on November 19th. When I landed again on November 19th I enjoyed the birthday celebrations. Finally, on November 30th Bhagawan called me and Dr. Voleti Choudhary who had come with a special delegation of doctors from USA and instructed Dr. Voleti to operate on me first! It came as a rude shock as exactly 2 months back Baba had told me "No Operation". Little did I realize that it was his Divine plan that allowed me to enjoy the 2 months without any tension. Moreover, Baba was waiting for the special team of Doctors to come during November and operate on me! Such was his encompassing love! In his overflowing love, Baba created a ring containing precious gems for me before the operation as a reassurance that he is always with me.

The experience of getting operated in the wonderful hospital at Puttaparthi was very touching in many ways. To see hundreds of nurses, doctors and volunteers treating thousands of patients freely everyday was something



unbelievable! From the time I was admitted till the time I got discharged not a single paisa was charged. Not only that, I was given free medicines for the next 15 days after discharge too! My healing was so fast that I sang with a Tanpura in the hospital from the 4th day itself! After getting discharged, Baba blessed me profusely with a long and happy life and promised that he would get me married in the next year. I left Parthi with a healed but heavy heart that was further beautified by a chain and pendant with Baba's picture which he created for me.

I have no doubt in my mind that Swami's Mission will go on

for years to come! Apart from the millions of tiny miracles he has done, the biggest according to me is getting water to more than 1,400 villages in Andhra Pradesh! If the Trustees carry out this mammoth work with even an iota of the same love that Baba had, I am sure it will go on. It is the responsibility of the devotees to carry out his work throughout the world. I am very happy that we are allowed to touch the Samadhi since the intensity of a Master's power is experienced through touch. For a devotee the connection is strengthened, when he touches the Maha Samadhi, the seat of the Lord! ■

## Sai Baba As I Experienced Him

BY WILLIAM M. HARVEY, Ph.D



*Dr. Harvey is a clinical and social psychologist from USA*

The title for this article was to be 'Sri Sathya Sai Baba As I Knew Him'. However, it would be inaccurate and even misleading to suggest that I knew him, despite having interacted with him over a span of nearly 35 years. Knowing a person implies some degree of understanding of him or her. It suggests that we could predict what actions the person might take under certain circumstances. The Sai mystique was far beyond my ability to comprehend his majesty. For me, being in the presence of Sri Sathya Sai Baba was never an essentially cognitive event. Rather, the only mental awareness I ever had was of marvel and joy.

I first became aware of Sri Sathya Sai Baba while attending a weekend workshop designed to explore and expand one's mental powers. The leader cited Baba as being the 'highest soul on the planet' and the possessor of all the mental powers we were studying. Subsequently, I came across a book (Man of Miracles by Howard Murphet) that told Baba's life story. Reading it seemed to transform me in some way and produced the strong feeling that 'I know that what I am reading is true'.

Prior to this, I enjoyed a reputation as a respected social scientist with a logical positivist orientation, and part of me remained quite skeptical. However, an inexplicable series of uncommon occurrences and improbable coincidences began happening, all connected to Sai Baba in some way. Finally, I concluded that there was but one thing to do: Go to India and see for myself.

Three days after my arrival at Prasanthi Nilayam, he called me for an interview during which he showed full knowledge of intimate details about my life. My faith in him grew more intense, especially when it appeared that he was guiding and guarding me through a variety of potentially dangerous situations.

Over the years Sri Sathya Sai Baba has not only shown me the futility of worrying, he has helped me put this dictum into practice. On more than one occasion I went to him in order to verbalize a fear that some untoward event was about to descend upon me. In each instance he kindly and calmly advised me not to worry. Needless to say, when the 'hour of doom' struck, all went well.

The thing that is most salient about his message is its universality, that is, the riveting relevance his teachings about morality, happiness, and conflict-resolution have, for all countries of the world. The models of free health-care, free high quality education, and the provision of essential human needs such as fresh drinking water can be applied in first- as well as third-world countries.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba's teachings contain a workable blueprint for addressing all of the ills of the planet. And central to them all is that the world will become better as we, as individuals, become better. In other words, it is not a matter of how to get others to change their ways of behaving. Rather, the focus must be turned to ourselves. It is we who must avoid the taking of moral shortcuts, we who must decline to accept bribes, and we who must cease to point blame.

As we do these things, without waiting for others to lead the way, we gradually begin to "see good" all around us.

Is it easy to do? Yes, if we are willing to be patient and persistent in our effort. Most of the time we sabotage ourselves by allowing doubt to arise. Time and again Baba assures us that we can always gain victory over negative and fearful thoughts simply by the fervent repetition of one of the names of God, any name that appeals to us.

The question naturally arises, how much different will things be now that Sri Sathya Sai Baba has left His physical body? Is there any reason to continue visiting Prasanthi Nilayam?

God will be realized by turning within. We can, and should, do this on a regular basis in our own homes. However, if the external environment is particularly suited to 'jump-start' or 're-charge' one's spiritual battery, we may find 'going inward' easier and more effective.

I can imagine no place like the 'Abode of Highest Peace' (as Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Ashram is known) for producing the

ideal setting to facilitate immersion into our most basic spiritual reality. I predict that in the months and years ahead even more aspirants will make the pilgrimage to Prasanthi than ever before, even if some of them choose to stay for shorter periods of time. Still, the future of the Ashram seems certain. It will continue to be an important destination for those seeking spiritual growth. ■

## My Bhagawan

BY JUSTICE K. SREEDHARAN

*Justice K. Sreedharan is a former Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana, and was Lokayukta of Kerala. He also served as President, Central Board of Customs, Excise, and Gold Control Appellate Tribunal.*

In 1967 when Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba visited Kerala we had a glimpse of the Divine from a distance while he was giving a discourse to the gathering. That made an impact on us, though many contrary opinions were being circulated by people. Since many were getting mental peace from him, I was convinced that I should not join those who criticized him.

In 1991, Mathrubhoomi Publications brought out a special magazine in connection with Bhagawan's birthday. That contained many articles written by eminent personalities about their experiences with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. On reading them my wife developed an urge to visit Puttapparthi and to personality experience Baba there. Since I was working as Judge of the High Court of Kerala at Ernakulam, we chose a long weekend for the trip to Puttapparthi. Sivarathri being an important festival and likely to be crowded, I suggested we must avoid that weekend. But my wife insisted on our visiting the ashram during Sivarathri itself. Thus, we reached Puttapparthi on Friday noon by about 4 pm and we were seated in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Bhagawan appeared on the stage through the entrance in the middle. That sight was so beautiful and arresting that it left an unforgettable impression in the mind.

We wanted to purchase a flat at Ernakulam. We could raise the required amount only by disposing of a property at Kollam which had a tenant who was running a tea shop there for more than 40 years. Though he was agreeable to shift from that property he went on avoiding the same by some excuse or other. As last it transpired that he would not vacate and without getting the property vacant no one else would offer to buy it. On further persuasion the tenant came forward with a proposal that he would purchase the land himself. This proposal led me to believe that the purchase of the flat at Ernakulam would not materialize in the immediate future. Any legal action to get the occupant evicted would take years, if not decades. Being a judge of the High court I was certain of that fact. To get over this difficulty we would need to seek the divine intervention of Bhagawan.



When Bhagawan called me for my first interview, he narrated to me all details about all the members of our family. But I could not convey this specific concern to Bhagawan. On return I was approached by the tenant stating that he would purchase the property. It so happened that he gave me the amount required for purchase of the flat – not a pie less, not a pie more. Within a month of registration of sale deed the tenant passed away leaving a large number of claimants to his estate. On account of the Divine intervention, our transaction was concluded smoothly just before the sad event.

Our son's marriage was to be solemnized on 5th November 1995. To give the invitation card and for getting the Mangalasutra blessed by Bhagawan we went to Prasanthi Nilayam. While I was sitting in the verandah, Bhagawan came near me and blessed the Mangalasutra. In the excitement I forgot to hand over the invitation card and Bhagawan went into his room with devotees for interview. Sai, the Divine Benefactor of our family was about to close the door. Then he saw me in tears, came near me and snatched off the invitation card from my hand. The marriage ceremony was solemnized with Divine Blessings. Flower garlands placed on Bhagawan's photos elongated two to three folds suggesting his Presence.

Our son-in-law in Hong Kong had a dream about an accident to the car in which he was travelling. The dream was so vivid that he could notice all details of the accident. Next day the dream materialised and the taxi in which he was travelling hit against the median of the road. The car was completely damaged. But our son-in-law escaped even without a bruise. Few months thereafter, when all of



us visited Prasanthi Nilayam, Bhagawan called us for interview. After the interview when we were about to leave the room he asked our son-in-law about the warning in the dream relating to the car accident. This shows that Bhagawan is always with us to protect us from calamities.

After retirement from High Court we stayed at the Ashram. Bhagawan allowed my wife to work as Gynecologist in the General Hospital at Puttaparthi. Later on, he sent me to work as President of Customs, Excise and Gold Control

Appellate Tribunal at Delhi and thereafter as Lokayukta in Kerala. Bhagawan told me that those assignments are for discharging his duties and that he would take care of my health. He set to rest any reservations that I had.

The Cosmic Sai is continuing to bless us. The absence of Bhagawan's physical presence has not reduced his protective role in any manner. He is now more powerful and omnipresent to guide us and answers all our prayers as before. ■

## Physician Par Excellence

BY DR. NARENDRANATH REDDY, MD

*A practicing internist-endocrinologist in Southern California for over 30 years, Dr. Reddy is a Fellow of the American College of Physicians and the American College of Endocrinologists and is on the teaching faculty at the Keck School of Medicine, University of Southern California.*

**B**hagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the very embodiment of Love, came to remind man of his Divine origin and through spiritual renaissance and transformation help man realise the supreme goal of human birth: that he is not the body, the mind or the intellect; but he is the Atma. Sathya Sai Baba encourages transformation starting at the individual level expanding to the societal level and ultimately reaching the global level. His love, teachings and life are the single most potent force behind such spiritual transformation.

Baba drew people to him in diverse ways. Many of these people have been drawn to Bhagawan Baba through his Divine miracles. These miracles are expressions of his pure Divine love. I would like to share with you some of the many miracles that happened in my own family. My mother, who lives with us in Los Angeles, California, has multiple medical problems like diabetes, arthritis and hypertension. In December 2008, she was found unresponsive and was in a coma. She was rushed to the nearest hospital by an ambulance. After examining my mother at the hospital, the neurologist, who is a friend of mine, told me that her condition was very critical and that she had to be admitted in the intensive care unit. After admission, there were six consultants who came to see her, and all of them felt that she may not survive and even if she improved, she may have a major disability. I sent a message to Swami praying for help and lo and behold, within 24 hours she woke up in the intensive care and she said "Sai Ram". She improved rapidly and to the surprise of all the doctors concerned, she was discharged from the hospital in one week without any residual damage. She was able to walk and talk, and her memory was not affected. This is all the sign of his Divine grace.

In 1996, at the age of 75, my father who was living in Prasanthi Nilayam had acute and severe back pain and he



was severely incapacitated. In desperation, my mother summoned me to come and help them in this critical situation. I immediately started from Los Angeles and came to Bangalore where my father was brought by ambulance from Puttaparthi. An MRI of the spine showed two huge disc protrusions impinging on the nerves causing excruciating pain. We consulted an orthopedic surgeon, a neuro-radiologist and a neurosurgeon. They all recommended that he should go through surgery right away to relieve the pressure on the nerves. When I asked Swami, he advised us to cancel the surgery. He gave us the best medicine, Vibhuti from his Divine hands, and instructed us to rub it on my father's back. Needless to say, the pain improved remarkably and he was able to function well without any neurological deficit.

There are miracles galore, even after his Maha Samadhi. He guides, protects, counsels, comforts, cares, cures, and inspires. When we come into his fold and experience these miracles, or Chamatkar, we must move forward to the next stage of Samskar, that is transformation. Swami says, transformation is most important and we need to practice what he teaches us. This transformation manifests as love in action. We should do loving service remembering that service to man is service to God.

Swami has given many discourses to healthcare professionals on the principles of Ideal Health Care. His healthcare mission involves thousands of healthcare

professionals around the world who espouse his philosophy and work under his direction so that:

- State-of-the-art healthcare is made available to all people
- Healthcare is delivered free of charge
- Healthcare is delivered with love and compassion
- Healthcare includes treatment of the body, mind, and spirit
- Disease prevention is a primary focus

These principles together provide a framework for the

delivery of ideal healthcare and large-scale relief projects.

How blessed and fortunate we are to be born as contemporaries of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Inspired by Sai Baba's message and living example of selfless love, millions of devotees throughout the world have embarked on a path of self-transformation and realisation of their innate divinity through love, right-conduct, peace, truth and non-violence. He is the Light that is guiding humanity from chaos, despair, hatred and despondency to joy, peace, bliss and the dawn of the 'Golden Age'. ■

## My Inspiring Moments With Baba

BY Prof. S.P.THYAGARAJAN



Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras, Prof. S.P. Thyagarajan is currently the Pro-Chancellor (Research), Sri Ramachandra University, Porur, Chennai.

**N**eil Armstrong, the astronaut of Apollo 11, when he successfully stepped onto the surface of moon, has stated, "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." I had the same feeling, when I visited Prasanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi in 1998 and had the Darshan of Bhagawan Baba after the serene Bhajan session in the morning. I was called to guide in setting up virology laboratory at the Super Specialty Hospital. When I was introduced to him, Swami smiled, gave Vibhuti from his 'empty' hand and blessed me saying, 'Do Service'. At that time, I did not realise what Swami meant by this.

During those days, I used to recollect Swami's definition of teachers which says, "Today there are three kinds of teachers. The first type consists of teachers who revel in 'complaints'. They are the teachers with grouses of one kind or other. The second type consists of teachers who 'explain'. They merely explain what the students have to learn. To the third type, belong teachers who 'inspire'. This category of teachers arouses the enthusiasm of students and inspires them to take deep interest in their studies. Such teachers are becoming rare these days".

The six virtues of education delineated by Swami have guided me in all the programmes developed by me. Swami says, "Education consists in cultivation of the following six qualities – good thoughts, good actions, adherence to truth, devotion, discipline and discharge of one's duties. When you have acquired the friendship of these six virtues, your life will become purposeful and satisfying". Based on these guidelines, I fully understood what Swami meant by the concept of 'Educare' instead of mere education through colleges and universities in our country.

Another significant and memorable meeting with Swami was when I was working as a UGC nominee in the search committee of the University for selecting a panel of experts for consideration by Swami for appointment of Vice-Chancellor for the Sai University. We were able to be with Bhagawan Baba for about one and half hours. Swami graciously over-saw that a sumptuous lunch was served to us and parallely talked on many aspects of education the totality of which he repeatedly called as 'Educare'. Essentially all his explanations were to convey that "Learning to earn income is not a great thing. Learning how to live worthily as a human being is what is essential". He also said, "All the evils that we witness in the world today stem from a perverted system of education. The so called educated persons have no control over their senses".

In the course of the meeting, I started explaining to Swami our proposal to strengthen research at Sri Sathya Sai University and Sri Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospital. Dr. Venkatraman and I described to Baba our plans for sophisticated equipment infrastructure and so on. After a patient hearing, Swami said that any research planned should help and be useful for the betterment of the poor people and villages. He reiterated that research should help to provide safe water and healthy food. After this heartening conversation, I fully understood the road map of research that needs to be undertaken by Universities. Swami says, "In the field of science today, there is great emphasis on research and discovery. But unless the results of research are applied in practice, it will be an expensive futility. If all the time is spent on research when is it to find useful application in practice?"

From then on, my involvement with Sathya Sai University intensified. I was nominated as a member of its Board of Management and continued for a second term. The High Court of Madras nominated me as a member of the Justice Balasubramaniam Committee to manage the 'Sathya Sai Mandali Temple' at Guindy, Chennai.

Then came the most heart breaking day when Swami left his physical form. While we were trying to come out of the shock, I was made a member of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (Deemed to be University) Trust. I now fully realize that it is our bounden duty to see that the



often-made statement of Swami about Sri Sathya Sai University comes true with in a shortest time frame.

Swami's vision was, "In future you will find this university attaining and reaching greater heights and in fact it will be the leader for the whole country. People may think in their own way, but the University is bound to be illustrious and glorious. It will also give wider opportunities to people to know their own talents, their own skills. You are thinking of this University merely from the academic point of view of academic excellence and textual information. However, this is not merely an educational institution. This University will proceed further as to reach the heights of Educare and enjoy and share with the people the

*profundity, the depth and the insight of the self, the Atma. While education is external, merely limited to writing and reading, underlying it is the undercurrent, the fundamental principle of Educare. Very soon you will realise this in this University".*

I fully believe that India has to adopt and adapt 'Educare' in all spheres of education to build a value and character-based nation. To effectively achieve this target set by Baba, all Sathya Sai devotees have to converge by their thoughts and deeds towards this goal. This is all the more essential, especially when Swami is not available to us in his physical form but will keep inspiring us through his divine form. ■

## The Swami In Our Hearts



*Indian Chess Grandmaster and the current World Chess Champion, Vishwanathan Anand is ranked among the best chess players in the world. A recipient of*

*the Chess Oscars and the Padma Vibhushan, Anand is also the Global Ambassador for Vidyasagar, an NGO for cerebral palsy.*

BY VISHWANATHAN ANAND

much ease as possible. Every morning she would listen to the Aarthi song and Paramam Pavitram Baba Vibhuti on her iPod. The match itself was very tense and it came down to the last game. Strangely before the last game a few minutes before we left, a fan came on Internet 'chat' and told Aruna, thinking it was me, "Sai Ram, you will win". Aruna silently thought this was a sign but never mentioned it to me. After the match she said we have to go to Parthi and thank Baba. He gave us the courage to go through this whole experience.

We used to visit Sundaram often and listen to Bhajans. This I found most relaxing. The most impressive thing for me was the dedication, discipline and commitment the volunteers show. Just love can make people do such wonderful things. We visited Puttaparthi on July 27, 2010. We were keen to experience Puttaparthi rather than try and see how close we could get to Baba. In fact when someone asked if they could help. But we simply said Baba knows we are there.

The evening Bhajan was magical and Baba's presence was indeed special. We witnessed him giving a necklace to a group of singers. I was amazed at the discipline during the Bhajans and the simplicity and cleanliness in Puttaparthi. We visited the hospital and I was awestruck at the highly advanced technology that was used to reach out to the most needy. Again the volunteers did a magnificent job ensuring very high standards are maintained. The attention to patients and the care given would exceed even the swankiest corporate hospitals. All this without accepting a single rupee in return! Their devotion to service I am sure, will not be depleted without the physical presence of Swami.

We returned from Puttaparthi and within a week we realised we were going to be parents. Strangely, we had never prayed or given it a thought. Similarly, just before Aruna was to deliver, Baba was admitted to the hospital. Four days before Aruna gave birth we were told that Vibhuti was coming from the Baba pictures at Sundaram. It was quite late at night and Aruna was due for her delivery

In 2007, we moved into our new home. We were told that the closest landmark from our home was Sai Sundaram. Curious to see what Sai Sundaram was, we would take walks to the temple or listen to the Bhajans from our veranda. In 2009, my father-in-law was very critical in hospital and had taken a turn for the worse. On that appointed day a relative came to our home with Vibhuti that had been distributed after the Bhajan. Within minutes we got a call from the hospital asking us to rush there as the situation had become critical. My wife, Aruna during those tense days would visit Sundaram every day. I was travelling abroad. One day during Bhajan she had tears in her eyes and a member who volunteered there called her and gave her some Vibhuti and a special photo. Every day she would take the photo to the ICU and keep it near her father. My father-in-law recovered and had a long journey to becoming completely alright. As a thanksgiving the family went to Puttaparthi.

Aruna said when she saw Baba, she had just tears in her eyes, she didn't feel the need to ask him for anything or give a letter, she felt Baba had seen her and spoken to her.

A year later, I was to defend my world championship title in Sofia. Very strangely the volcanic ash made it difficult to travel and put my participation in jeopardy. Aruna would remain calm and managed to see that we travelled with as

any moment. We stood in the presence and returned home. Aruna mentioned the child whatever it is, would be Sai something. That night Aruna dreamt of a baby boy. In a few days we had Sai Akhil. Baba passed away when Akhil was a few weeks old. We took Akhil to Sundaram first,

when he could be taken out. People have seen great miracles from Baba, spoken to him. Some refer to him as a friend or family mem

ber. For us Baba is in our hearts, he is the inner voice that doesn't need to speak, but can be heard when we seek for it.

## The Four Pillars of Divine Wisdom

BY Shripad Zarpkar



Dr. Shripad Zarpkar was a Professor and Principal of Siddharth College of Commerce, Mumbai. He is a well-known writer on spiritual topics.

Sociocare, Agricare and Rural Development.

He created an infrastructure for human development on four pillars:

1. **Chamatkar:** Ordinarily Chamatkar is considered as a miracle for which there is no scientific explanation. That is because; science is limited to matter and energy. Beyond the realm of science, there is consciousness and supreme Love (also called Divinity) which cannot be codified in laws. Baba's creations were manifestations of that consciousness and supreme love to plant faith in divinity in the mind of the beneficiary.

2. **Sanskar:** Sanskars are human values (virtues) intended to transform, transmute, reconstruct and reform the mankind. Chamatkar leads to Sanskar.

3. **Paropkar:** Paropkar means obliging and helping others in distress.

4. **Sakshatkar:** The expansion of Love through Paropkar makes a person aware of the cosmic Love exhibited in himself and in everyone around. This is Sakshatkar or realisation of Self as universal identity.

Baba's philosophy is worldly and does not require rigorous rituals, intellectual inferences, physical fits and logical laws. It can be summed up in four simple aphorisms:

1. Be Good, See Good, Do Good
2. Daiva Preeti (Love for God), Paap Bheeti (Fear of Sin), Sangh Neeti (Morality of the Community)
3. Help Ever, Hurt Never
4. Love All, Serve All

All these are synonymous. They lead to Chamatkar, Sanskar, Paropkar and Sakshatkar respectively, which ultimately grant happiness, joy, peace and bliss respectively.

The greatest homage we can pay to him is to spend every moment practicing these precepts. ■

## The Omnipresent Sai

BY Dr. S.K. Upadhyaya

An ophthalmologist by profession, Dr. Upadhyaya from UK, has conducted innumerable free medical camps in India and abroad, restoring vision to thousands of poor people through surgery. He has received training under Prof. Eric Arnott, who is credited to have

propelled European ophthalmology into modern cataract surgery.

I first came face to face with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in 1982 and it was only then that I realised, that unbeknown to me, he had been guiding and guarding me throughout my life. He saved my life during my posting





in Ladakh where I was serving as an army officer (1970-72) and again in Bhopal (M.P) when I was involved in a serious accident returning from an Eye camp. In fact I had blamed him in my ignorance for an accident in 1974. It became clear to me only later, that the white powder I was covered with when they brought me to the hospital was the ever protecting Vibhuti.

During Swami's 60th birthday he blessed me to participate in a Medical Camp. As a young surgeon from England I had some concerns about the condition of the clinic in the camp and some of the instruments there. Swami read my mind and when we returned from the camp, he granted us an audience, where he told me to wait and watch – the highest technology in the medical field would be available here. This was 1985. Who would have dreamed about the Sai Super Speciality Hospital then? Only he knows his future plans, for it was inaugurated in 1991!

My journey to serve at various Sai medical initiatives began and I got involved in international camps. Swami gave us very clear instructions about conducting his medical camps:

- Serve the poor in remote parts with great care, respect and love, like your own parents
- Provide the best technology and expertise but do not look for publicity and propaganda
- Do not challenge local authorities but extend a helping hand
- Stay locally, avoid expensive hotels, saving time and money (Seva is Sadhana).
- Buy medicines locally so that once the camp is over, availability is not a problem and this helps the local economy (only Swami can think about such detailed

follow-up plans)

- Documentation must be handed over to the hosts and do not be a burden to them.

These camps are very popular and have been going strong all over the world for more than 27 years in Africa, Russia, Siberia, Ukraine, Sri Lanka, Guyana (South America) and India. During disasters like tsunami, earthquakes, cyclone and floods Sai's work is greatly appreciated for continuous and long-term support by governments and communities across the globe. Many miracles happened during the camps like medicine and materials appearing from nowhere and during an interview with Swami he confirmed that he is the source and force behind everything.

It is Swami's blessing that my teacher and mentor took me as his partner in Harley Street at a very early stage of my career. His name is Professor Eric Arnott - a world famous surgeon and pioneer in the field of ophthalmology who introduced Phaco Tech to Europe and India. The combination of intraocular implants and Phacoemulsification was the ultimate answer to Aphakia. He helped me during the Bhopal Gas Disaster with very expensive instruments and with conducting the much needed medical relief work. Since I had kept Swami's picture in my chamber, he used to talk to me about Swami. I was keen to take my mentor and teacher to our Great Universal Teacher. Given his success, he made sure people accepted his terms. Whenever he was invited for any conference, the organiser had to arrange five star hotel accommodations with swimming pools and First class air travel... nothing but the best.

When the opportunity to train doctors in the Sai Super Speciality Hospital in Phaco Tech presented itself, I asked Swami if I could bring Professor Arnott to Prasanthi Nilayam. Swami agreed and blessed me. When I broke the news to him, he was delighted and preparations started. The biggest problem was accommodation at Puttaparthi. He was planning to stay in Bangalore and to travel up and down every day. I told him this was not practical as the distance was too much. There were no five star hotels with swimming pools here, but, I told him, there was a pool of love in Prasanthi Nilayam. He was not amused.

I told him not to worry, as Swami would take care of everything. Things started moving fast and on the scheduled day of departure Professor came with his wife and nurse hoping to travel in First class. When he found out that I had booked them in economy class, he was very upset and gave me his American express card to get them in First or business class. I tried my level best but due to the travel arrangements of another important delegation it was impossible to do so. I started chanting Swami's name hoping for a divine intervention. Suddenly, there was an announcement for Dr. Arnott to contact the customer service desk. To my utter surprise all three of them were promoted to First class (but not me!) without any extra

payment.

When we arrived at Bombay (Mumbai now) there was a grand reception for him, two air hostesses garlanded him. We were all amazed. We finally arrived in Puttaparthi at about 4 pm. Swami was already out in the hall so we had to leave the car outside and were rushed to the veranda. As the professor was in his three-piece suit, everyone looked at him with surprise. He was looking for a chair not realizing that every one sits on the floor, no matter what their merit or status. Dr. Safaya, Director of the Sai Super Specialty Hospital realizing my predicament offered him a place by the pillar so that he could be a bit more comfortable. The Professor had never sat on the floor before. Omniscient Swami did not take long to resolve his misery. He came straight to us and asked us to go into the interview room.

Swami asked Dr. Arnott how the journey was and a few other details. We both looked into each other's eyes and I realized it was all his drama -- the promotion to first class and the reception in Mumbai. Swami like a caring mother asked Professor to stretch his legs. The Professor is a tall man, his legs were almost reaching Swami's chair. Swami materialized a ring for a Russian boy but tossed it over to the Professor and asked him if he knew what the symbol on the ring was. Professor replied he was not very sure but he had seen it on my notebook. Swami explained to him that in the West people think the world started with the big bang but in fact it really started with the primordial pranava sound Aum. Swami asked him to repeat Aum after him. The moment he repeated Aum his legs folded in, hands joined in Pranam posture and his eyes closed. He looked to be in a different world and in absolute bliss in just 3 seconds.

Swami looked at me and told me in Hindi not to worry anymore and that he would stay in the Ashram. I fell at the feet of the all knowing and omnipresent Sai. When we came out, the Professor told me not to worry about accommodation; that they would stay in the Ashram. He then asked the driver to keep the drinks and cigarettes that he was carrying in his baggage, probably the best tip the driver ever got!

Once his task and surgical sessions were over, he wanted to travel to Ooty. But that same night, at a hotel in Bangalore, both he and his wife had Swami's vision and decided to return to Puttaparthi and were blessed with another interview, along with me. Swami materialized a green ring for the Professor and a chain with a cross for his wife. Swami told him "You are a kind man. Now work for mankind". There was a total transformation in him. After that, he travelled to many villages to serve the poor and needy, not worried about rain or shine. He even discharged himself soon after his surgery to keep his word and serve at a camp. When I asked him about his health, he replied "why fear when He is there to protect?"

When he was approached by a local vicar for contribution for the renovation of his local church, the Professor simply said his family was happy to take up the entire project. When asked if he would like to have a family plaque put up, he asked them to just engrave the words 'Love All Serve All' on the stained-glass church windows. On the day of Thanksgiving he thanked Swami for making him a better Christian.

Another incident of Swami's omnipresence was during a medical camp in Guyana (West Indies). During the camp, one of the volunteers brought a desperate man with his 8 year old daughter who had disfigurement of one eye due to Phthisis (shrinkage due to TB). Her friends at school and in the village taunted and laughed at her plight so she stopped going to school and mixing with other children. The worried father prayed and prayed for help and tried locally but no help was in sight. He started losing his faith in God. Then he was approached by a Sai volunteer and invited to the medical camp.

I examined the child and found that it was possible to fit a cosmetic prosthetic device and improve her look. Hearing this his face lit up but when I told him that unfortunately I did not have the device with me and even if I had, it may not match with the other eye or fit properly because it was a made-to-measure device, he became very sad and almost started crying and lamenting, "I know there is no one to help us and even God has turned away from us".

I was moved and could only pray to our dear Lord Sai to help him to have faith and allow me to take the picture so I could order the right device. Reluctantly he allowed me to do so. I reached into my bag for the camera and as I was taking the camera out, a small box fell on the floor, I picked it up. I did not remember seeing it earlier (I used the same bag and camera almost every day). I opened the box and could not believe my eyes - there was a prosthetic device - just the right size, for the correct side of the face and matching with her other eye! This could not be a coincidence because everything we carry is carefully documented for customs clearance. I thanked Swami for his timely help yet again.

The rest was simple. The prosthetic device was fitted and when I handed over the mirror to the little girl, she smiled and tears were rolling down from the father's eyes. He knelt down in the clinic and said, "Ya Allah forgive me, I lost faith in you", then he grabbed my hand and wanted to thank me. I pointed him to Swami's picture and told him that he should thank Swami for his fast Divine Delivery System. He bowed down in front of Swami's picture and said, "Thank you for restoring my faith in God again".

Following the value of right conduct, being honest to patients, avoiding rash actions or harsh words has brought so much love and peace that I have come to realise the actual meaning of Baba's words - 'Work is Worship'. ■



# Sathya Sai Baba: My Inspiration to Serve

BY Hari Ranjan Rao IAS



Hari Ranjan Rao, IAS, is presently, Secretary, Office of the Chief Minister, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. He has held several administrative positions, including that of District Collector, Rewa, Madhya Pradesh.

I am really blessed to have been in the fold of Sri Sathya Sai Baba or Swami, as we fondly called him. I distinctly remember my childhood days when my parents would regularly attend Sai Bhajans and other service activities and I would enthusiastically tug along, to be a part of the team. My real understanding of his vision and mission developed when I started attending Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas classes. These classes essentially inculcate human values, respect for all religions and expose children to the richness of Indian culture and spirituality. My mother was the Bal Vikas teacher, who would teach us about various scriptures, their essence of universal love and brotherhood in a very lucid and interesting manner. I participated in innumerable number of dramas, mostly written by my mother, based on teachings of Swami and depicting stories from lives of great saints. As a child, helping elderly people during eye-camps, participating in Narayan Seva (food for needy persons) instilled a sense of pride and gratitude, which I cherish to this date.

My parents ensured that the upbringing of their three sons was accompanied with the inculcation of a strong value system. We regularly visited Prasanthi Nilayam to have the Darshan of Baba and get rejuvenated with spiritual energy to discharge our daily mundane duties with dedication. My parents' staunch devotion and complete surrender was rewarded by frequent experiences of Swami's omnipotence. My mother had so many experiences of divine intervention in her life, that she has penned them down to be converted in a book.

Once I got into Indian Administrative Service, I soon realised that it is a golden opportunity to serve humanity and realise Swami's quote, "Service to man is service to

God". Fortunately my job provided ample avenues, where one can make significant contributions to changing lives and bringing smiles on millions of faces.

One such experience presented itself to me, in the field of sanitation, when I was the Collector of Rewa, an otherwise backward district of Madhya Pradesh with very high incidence of open defecation. By Swami's grace, I had a very committed team and we decided to meet this challenge with full commitment. We toured extensively in rural areas and organized road shows for the Sarpanch (Village Head), women and youth explaining to them the need to avoid open defecation, its dangers to human health and dignity. Construction of toilets was the firm message, as enough awareness would naturally lead everybody to such a conclusion. Miraculously our efforts started showing results with village leaders and women taking charge of the campaign. Today, after six years of the starting of the campaign, 236 Gram Panchayats have been declared Nirmal (open defecation free) by the Govt. of India, more than 200 Gram Panchayats are ready to be assessed for declaration as Nirmal, and rest of the Gram Panchayats have more than 50% coverage of toilets. Looking back I feel humbled and owe it to all to Swami's grace.

Today, as a father of two daughters, I firmly believe that insistence on Education in Human Values for children, as declared by Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is one of the strongest pillars that can guard humanity against moral degradation. Recent happenings all over the world clearly indicate that no society can claim the fruits of development and prosperity without a strong base of human values.

Teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and His Mission will continue to play its role in society for centuries. ■



# The Divine Alchemist

BY Dr. Valluvan Jeevanandam

Dr. Jeevanandam completed his education at Columbia University, New York. He served at Temple University Philadelphia for 6 years and then as Professor and Chief of Cardiac and Thoracic Surgery at the University of Chicago. He is one of the leading heart surgeons in the world in the area of transplantation and mechanical heart assist devices

**A** charlatan, a good Samaritan, a Guru, a seer, a phenomenon, a divine parent, God – these are a few epithets used by people to describe Sri Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparthi. I was one of the blessed ones. He played all these roles during my spiritual evolution and I had the incredible fortune of realising and enjoying time on this earth with this Supreme Being.

I first heard about Baba in 1975 when my aunt wanted me to meet him in Kodaikanal. I was on a precious 4 month vacation from the USA and the last thing I wanted to do was waste time with an obviously dubious person. What a missed opportunity! Over the next 18 years I grew up hungry for material wealth, shunning religion/spirituality/God and focused on individual fame and recognition. Through a series of events I became curious about Sai Baba and he allowed me to enter his fold through medicine. I was an invited speaker at the 2nd Cardiovascular Symposium in Puttaparthi and met Swami for the first time in 1994. He exuded an incredible combination of joy, love and caring. He would tell others about my success as a heart transplant surgeon, and then promptly chop down my ego by saying he alone possessed the ability to transform hearts. Well that is what he did to this humble disciple over the subsequent 17 years.

Each person's spiritual journey is different. Many dismiss Swami. Some see Swami and immediately know he is God. Some see an incredible aura. Honestly, my path was much longer. I initially saw Swami as a good Samaritan who built an incredible Super Specialty Hospital (SSSIHMS) where all treatment was free. The compassion, warmth and love of the people at the hospital made me think of charity work – something that would have been very far from my mind before Swami entered my life. Sai Baba had to work very hard to transform me. It started with materialisations. He would then show glimpses of his omnipotence and omnipresence. After many incredible situations, I finally believed. But Swami was ever the task master. He wanted more from me. He wanted me to change from the inside. He accomplished that by stopping personal interviews from 2006. Not getting personal attention was difficult. But I now realise he was helping me to find spirituality from inside myself – and not depending on his earthly body.

The first item he materialized for me was a diamond ring ('die-mind' as he would say). I had been sitting on the veranda reading about a devotee receiving a ring and



wondering what a special person that must have been to receive such a gift. Later that day during an interview Swami asked what I wanted. I replied, "Your Grace, Swami". He just laughed and said I would always have that. He materialised a ring and asked, "Is it like the one in the book?" Being a cardiac surgeon, I worried about losing the ring while operating, so I looped it around a chain and wore it as a necklace. The next year, Swami looked at my hand and asked me where the ring was. Only he could remember such a small detail among the millions of people he served. I showed him the necklace carrying the ring. He promptly materialized another ring and to this day I have two rings around my neck. Even during an interview 10 years later, he joked about the rings being close to my heart because I operate on the heart. Swami knew your every thought, emotion, and state of mind. He could see into the depths of my mind forced me to refine and purify my thoughts. Once I was helping on a case in the super specialty hospital and thought within myself that I could do the surgery within half the time the surgeon I was helping took. I took over the case. Everything went wrong and the case took twice as long. The next day Swami came to me, smiled, asked about the case and queried, "Double as fast or double as slow". What a wonderful way to wipe out my ego. To this day, I recall that incident when I feel my ego rising. Swami gave me a beautiful bracelet that I wore for 10 years. One day while sleeping at home it disappeared. We searched high and low but it was gone. A year later I went to Puttaparthi and was determined to ask Swami about it. Swami called me for an interview, held my hand and before I could ask said "Bangaru (a term of endearment in Telugu) – I took the bracelet back because it was not good for you". Only he could know what was on my mind. He was so caring and always protective.

Swami gave me direct advice only once – he told me to relocate to Chicago in 1998. It was difficult as with Swami's Grace we had developed the largest heart transplant program in the USA. He kept saying that Philadelphia was not good – although by all human parameters we were very successful. Anyway, I made a deal in my mind with Swami. If he really wanted me to go, he needed to help me finish my work by finding donor hearts for some of the very complicated patients on the list who had wanted me to do





their transplants. One by one they got transplanted. It was coming to my final days and a very special patient, an ophthalmologist, who was on a heart assist device, had still not got a heart. During our weekly Bhajans, I kept praying to Swami for a heart. Just then, I received a call from our transplant nurse. A heart was available but my patient was 16th on the list and had antibodies that precluded 50% of donors. Needless to say, and only Swami knows how, the heart became available for my patient and the usually difficult operation went flawlessly. Normally the heart takes 5 minutes to start beating in the recipient. This heart started immediately prompting a nurse to say, "Wow! It seems that God wanted him to have this heart". Well God did and even now 13 years later, the patient is fine. And to show how Swami completes the circle, the patient became a Sai devotee and started the retina programme in Swami's hospital.

There are innumerable other Sai incidences that I have experienced firsthand. He realised that this hard headed one needed a lot of attention to transform. Clearly my transformation is not complete, and it might not be so for many more lifetimes. However, it is only because of Swami that I have started to contain my ego, respect and listen to others, perform service and discover the beauty of God.

I know you will always be in my soul, but Swami, I will still miss your radiant eyes, your gentle touch, and your guidance and direction. Swami, I love you! ■

## A Visit To Sai Kingdom

*BY Maulana Wahiduddin Khan*



*A noted Islamic scholar and peace activist, Padma Bhusan awardee, Jenab Wahiduddin Khan, is the Founder, CPS International, and President, Islamic Center, New Delhi. He has translated the Quran into simple and contemporary English and has also written a commentary on the same.*

In July 2005, I received an invitation to an international conference at Puttaparthi, Sai Baba's seat. Due to its universality, Puttaparthi is an international village. There was a large gathering there. Representatives of all the major religions were present. My topic was: 'Islam and

Peace,' for which I was given thirty minutes. My chair on the stage was next to Sai Baba. When I had completed my speech on the given subject, Sai Baba moved his chair close to mine, and said in a happy mood: 'We have complete faith in the Quran.'

After the conference Sai Baba gave me a private audience. This was a unique honour for me. At that time in his room there were only two chairs, one for Sai Baba and the other for me. It was something of a one-sided conversation. I spoke very little. Sai Baba said, 'Main aap ko jaanta hoon. Muslim jagat mein aap ki jo maanyata hai us ka hum ko pata hai.' (I know you. I am aware of the respect and recognition you enjoy in the Muslim world.)

There are few Muslims living in Puttaparthi. There is a small mosque there, which Sai Baba had built for the Muslims.

In Puttaparthi I stayed in the guesthouse. The environment there was an introduction to nature. Although there was no loudspeaker to give the call for the morning prayer, the melodious chirping of the birds served as a natural muazzin, telling me that it was time for prayer.

Puttaparthi is not simply a village or a town. It is more than that. It is a kingdom, the kingdom of Sai Baba. You can find all the modern facilities there including schools, colleges, hospitals, etc. The hospital is equipped with modern facilities and here the poor are treated for free. Even heart surgery is done free of cost.

Sai Baba's mission is to promote peace and spirituality. Spirituality is the inner content of peace and peace is the external manifestation of spirituality. Sai Baba's kingdom is a true example of both.

I reached Puttaparthi on July 20, 2005 and left it on July 23, 2005. Those days were truly memorable in my life. I can say that for me it was a spiritual experience. I found in this peaceful society a living example of interfaith harmony. ■

## INTERVIEW WITH R.K. KARANJIA: AN EXCERPT

*Karanjia: India has been described as a rich country of poor people. We have the wealth of the whole world locked up in the bosom of our good earth. And yet the people remain economically poor and backward. Have you any solution to rehabilitate our economy?*

**Sathya Sai Baba:** Your analysis is correct. The solution to the problem you have posed lies in hard work and increased production on a cooperative basis. To achieve this, one has to rid people of the disease of individuality, greed and selfishness. Every individual must be taught to think and work in the broader concept of society and its needs. Once that is done, there will be less talk and more work.

Here again, it is the spiritual path that can save this country and the world from the wrongs of a materialistic order. What we need is a synthesis of the spiritual and material aspects of life. That will provide man with the social conscience and cooperative spirit imperative to the creation of national wealth and prosperity, through selfless and cooperative labour.

## Baba: My Lord And Master

*BY Air Chief Marshal NC Suri (Retd)*

saints over a period of more than ten thousand years, but never by one like Bhagawan Sathya Sai Baba, who in his present incarnation, emphasized the entire spectrum of his teaching on the concept of universality of faith. All those who came to him were revitalized in their respective system of faith. He did not advocate conversion to other systems of faith but helped in understanding the true precept of one's religion. He repeatedly highlighted that the core or subjective values of all religions were the same namely promotion of love, compassion, coexistence and harmony. The problem lay not in the contents of a religion but on how it was perceived, preached and practiced. He advocated using religion as a stepping stone to spirituality and a path to inner purity and not as an agent either to stratify or compartmentalize society. He ingrained in his devotees an orientation pertaining to:

"There is only one caste, the caste of humanity,

There is only one religion, the religion of love,

There is only one language, the language of the heart,

There is only one God who is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient"

Time and again, he articulated that he had come not to give a new religion but to install the Vedas in our heart. The reason for this is not difficult to comprehend as the Vedic concept emphasizes that cessation of all misery as the primary objective of human birth. Sai Baba in his discourses frequently cautioned on the danger of being a victim of one's five senses and the mind. This is, as happiness and sorrow, good and evil exist only in the mind. He advised that a life full of self-indulgence, lack of morals and ethics would adversely affect the mind and its



Air Chief Marshall Nirmal Chandra Suri is the recipient of PVSM, AVSM and VM. He was the Chief of Air Staff of the Indian Air Force, from 1991-93.

I deem it as the greatest Divine blessing to be able to share my perception of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on his mission and teachings based on my personal experience. As his ardent devotee for more than three decades and having surrendered to him at the turn of this century, I have no hesitation in stating unequivocally that in his human form he represented the infinite and all that is immanent in this cosmos and beyond. He is time and space; he is the past, present and the future; he is the personification of the Supreme Consciousness or Brahman, the Universal Consciousness. Thus to articulate on the magnitude of his power and Divinity with any degree of accuracy is beyond human comprehension and capability.

India has frequently been graced by Avatars, prophets and





conditioning. The relevance of this was underscored by the fact that even death would not alleviate the fallout of karma, which was inevitable in one's subsequent life. Thus in practical terms it implied, 'Right living in society; Values in action' and 'Pleasure and pain are the consequence of one's Karma' (Yad Bhavam, Tad Bhavati) are the quintessence of the Vedas.

I had no doubt in my mind that he was monitoring my activities on a daily basis. To substantiate this I would like to share just one of my many experiences. On my 75th birthday I was in London and bought a lottery ticket, which I placed under his silver Padukas (slippers). On my very next visit to Puttaparthi, Sai Baba called me for an interview, and as I was entering the interview room, he held my hand and said "Suri, you do not need money." I replied "Yes, Bhagawan" He immediately retorted, "Then why do you place lottery tickets under my Paduka?" This along with other similar experiences proved to me that he was omniscient.

Being a major beneficiary of his divine benevolence, I would like to state unequivocally that without my being aware, he has transformed me completely from a religious but worldly man to a person with a more spiritual orientation. He gave me a number of interviews, and after each session I found myself looking at life very differently. In the last few years, I began to see everyone as an embodiment of love, and since God is love, everyone is to be considered an embodiment of God. His repeated instructions that service to mankind is service to God

made a deep impression on me, consequently preventing me from being judgemental about others, but promoting love instead.

Since Sathya Sai Baba's teachings had spirituality as the central theme, he laid great importance to one rising from the lowest to the highest levels of consciousness. To achieve this, an understanding of both Sankhya yoga, the path of wisdom and Karma yoga, the path of action, were essential preludes. Though different in approach, both paths lead to union with God, ultimately.

These few teachings of Sathya Sai Baba are only to illustrate that his mission was to make us alive to the world in which we live, and the manner in which we must conduct ourselves for a better tomorrow. His thrust was to draw a balance between the materialistic aspects and the spiritual understanding. His teachings were on the practical plane and oriented to promoting universal acceptance of all faiths. This attracted millions of devotees of all ages the world over. Hundreds of books have been written on the miracles performed by him to highlight his Divine prowess. However, what most devotees have not comprehended was that by so doing he was actually transforming them and making them rise to higher levels of consciousness. This indeed was his greatest miracle as millions like me have unknowingly been transformed into better human beings.

Before his taking Maha Samadhi, his personal attention and guidance to his devotees were witnessed tangibly. But this continues even now in the form of instructions and guidance being given in dreams, creating a strong urge in one to listen to one's inner voice and inducing spiritual thoughts and ideas in one's mind. These are substantiated by the personal experiences of myself and many others.

I have in the last four years said prayers of nine different religions along with those of my own every morning, and all these prayers have always reached the One and only God who is born in my heart and lives in my mind. This God for me and a million others is Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. ■

## Baba, The Teacher

*By Beatrice Ananda Kasturi*



*Beatrice Ananda Kasturi hails from Germany and has been living in Puttaparthi for the last 25 years. She is a student of Vedic scriptures and Baba Literature.*

**A** teacher should never be judged by the conduct of his followers', a wise person once said.

A teacher shows us the way, explains the signposts, warns of the pitfalls and guides us around deep gorges and dangerous mountain-slopes... but he can't walk the path for us. That's where human effort, endurance and diligence come in. Gautama Buddha himself explained that only personal effort would bring us to the goal. In the Chinese Tao it is mentioned that the way to yourself is a roundabout throughout the whole world, but you reach

where you started...at your own Self. Sri Sathya Sai Baba mentioned that his ashram by name Prasanthi Nilayam is meant to kick-start Self-realization.

As many who drive a motorbike know, when you kick-start the bike a beautiful journey begins, a enjoyable drive taking in with our senses the passing scenery, the colorful sights along the way, the smell of the earth, the rain, the wind tussling the hair. Don't we all love to be in touch with the five elements, to get soaked in the first monsoon downpour, to smell the wet earth after a long summer draught? On a motorbike, cruising through the rain makes it an unforgettable experience. And that's what life is all about. Experience. We look for guidance from multiple sources. Even the daily quotes in a newspaper are inspiring, thought-provoking and guiding posts for our daily journey. Haven't we got sometimes a helpful glue out of a joke printed in the paper?!

Exactly...the teacher can appear in any form, guide us through any media and help us along the way to Self-realization. The world has been blessed by many such sacred wise people who incarnated on this beautiful planet earth. Not only that, India is known to be the chosen land of avatars, who incarnate when the world at large struggles to maintain righteous, peaceful living (dharma). Untold suffering, loneliness and pain, the innumerable prayers of people prompt the divine to appear for a short time to guide humanity back onto the path of dharmic living.

Sathya Sai Baba mentioned that the five Human Values, peace, righteousness, non-violence, love and truth as the pillars on which a wholesome and vibrant society could be built. But he never claimed it as a new Sai-religion. In fact, he emphasized the oneness of all religious teachings, the underlying truth in all, the self-same values shared all over the world by so many different kinds of movements: religious, spiritual, environmental or human oriented. Anyone who actually works for a better society and harmony among humanity is connected with these Five Human Values. They are mentioned in the ancient scriptures as Sanathana Dharma, the eternal righteousness, and these never change. They might be pushed into the background by our behaviors, but none of them could ever vanish. They are the very foundation of life on earth.

Sathya Sai Baba sometimes reminded in his many discourses that 'Nature is the best teacher'. Observing nature would naturally teach us about god, the dharma of life and of creation. We suggest you take time out tonight and watch the sunset, the multicolor splashed on the horizon, the first twinkling star in the night-sky. For a moment change your perspective, lie down on your belly,

watch it through the grass slightly moving in the evening breeze and feel, experience and realize that wonderful power which initiates every evening this spectacular show of nature. Ever wondered who is behind all this?

It has a hundred names and all forms, It has no form and no name....It is always there but not visible, at least not for the normal human eye. But change your vision, (if necessary hang upside down like you did as a child from a tree-branch); let the unknown touch your consciousness and feel its presence. It is called Consciousness, Life-force, Atma, Soul, Light, God, Higgs particle, Love and described in another thousand ways. It is what we really are, it is what makes the world go round. It is the creativity which prompts a human being to express itself, in whichever way. It is the true Teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in a nutshell: "I am God and so you are. I am I. I am life and love and light."

A teacher can only show us the way, a teacher can help us to come back to the path of righteousness and lovingly or sternly keep us on it. Sathya Sai Baba is such a teacher and if you sincerely study his direct writings known under the name of Vahini Series... you will start on a very interesting and rewarding journey. It is an inward journey, but it opens your consciousness to the beauty around you. God's creation appearing as people, animals, trees and flowers, music, arts and science. The list is endless, because God's creativity flows through all creation and that is what prompts us to act, express and share. Why not enjoy the very personal journey god has designed for each of us on this beautiful planet earth? Why not honor his gifts in the form of abundant nature? Why not live happily side by side with everyone, everywhere. Tell me one reason....why not?

We are all sharing one planet and its resources and by putting Sathya Sai Baba's Teachings into practice, most famously: "love all and serve all" and "help ever, hurt never" (which are vedic injunctions) we bring about a silent revolution, a change in the heart, a twinkle in the eye and a smile on someone's face. It is worth trying and the reward of such a code of conduct based on the five Human Values is a compassionate, joyful, enriching life for all. Let us begin today with one little act of kindness..

Remember: don't judge the teacher by the first unsure, faltering steps of his followers. We might do a hundred mistakes but we will try again and again. Sathya Sai Baba reminds us famously: "There is no perfection, only peace of mind" and all of us are in this adventure called life together, so lets experience it... and Be Happy! ■



## BOMBAY JAYASHREE

*Well-known Carnatic Music Vocalist and Playback Singer*

*"The sound of silence coming from a few hundred thousand people... sitting quietly, in reverence, with eyes focused on Swami... when you can even hear your own heart beat humbling you to believe that there is nothing to fear, nothing to worry....when the power of Divine love is like a sheath protecting you from everything ..That was the power of Swami's Darshan."*



## P. SUSEELA

*Renowned South Indian Playback Singer*

*"Bhagawan has blessed me with the opportunity to sing in his presence at numerous occasions, which I recall as the best moments of my 60 years long singing career. For me, the most endearing moment was when Swami would sit on the swing during "Uyyala Seva" and thoroughly enjoy the music of the Jhoola song".*



## HARIHARAN

*Renowned Ghazal singer and pioneer of Fusion Music in India*

*"After I met Baba in 2007 I was energized spiritually, creatively and physically. I started to reinvent myself positively. I got his message to spread love through music and he gave me the energy to do so. He gives me Darshan in my ring (an emerald ring gifted by him) every day."*



## RAMESHBHAI OZA

*Spiritual leader and exponent of Hindu religious scriptures*

*"What amazes me is how, even in places Baba has never visited, people gather in love and devotion, including those who have never had a Darshan, to do Bhajans, Satsang and Seva. I have seen the bliss generated by the consciousness of Baba's invisible Presence with them, and seeing all this, I am convinced that this 'Divine Revolution' of Baba will go on ceaselessly, without a break...My repeated salutations to this Divine Master".*



## PARWEEN SULTANA

*Eminent Hindustani Classical Singer from the Patiala Gharana*

*"After going and meeting Bhagawan Baba, we (my husband Ustad Dilshad Khan and I) became mentally strong, religiously devout and developed greater concentration in music and in our work. One has to follow the wonderful teachings of Swami. Basically we follow them, such as Work is Worship, Do your duty 100%, Love others, Sacrifice for others, understand others' difficulty and help them if possible. We serve music considering her as the Mother."*



## Dr. N. S. LAUD

*Dean and Chairman, Shushrusha Citizen's Co-operative Hospital Mumbai*

"Baba gave a practical demonstration of his vision of an enlightened India, by creating an environment where a young mind can seek knowledge or a sick person can receive care, at their door-steps. There are many saints who have established institutions. Here for the first time, somebody brought national and international surgeons with their expertise, to a rural setting and also inspired young doctors from urban India to work here."



## SHARAD SARIN

*Professor, XLRI, Jamshedpur*

"The experience of Prasanthi Nilayam and the Presence of Baba were mesmerizing. I vividly recall the chanting of 'Shlokas' by school children which had an electrifying impact on me. His 'societal' activities had impressed me a great deal, but without visiting personally, I could never have sensed the true contribution of Baba."

## ARUNA SAI RAM

*Eminent Carnatic Music Vocalist*

"My relationship with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was always at a very spiritual plane - a beautiful connection which has transformed me as a person and as a musician. When I recently performed at Puttaparthi for Guru Purnima during the unveiling of the sacred Maha Samadhi, I knew that I was destined to be connected with him at a spiritual level and indeed Baba was right when he said - "God is neither distant nor distinct from you."



## GUNIT CHADHA

*CEO, Deutsche Bank India*

"What stood out for me was Baba's tolerance and propagation of all religions. In Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram, you see traditions, symbols and idols from several religions. This shifts the focus away from religion into values common to all faiths and this makes one's faith in Sai Baba even stronger."





# Impact



## How Baba impacts other lives

Some of the most interesting stories about Baba revolve around his miracles. There are thousands of testimonies that show how the impossible happened through divine intervention. In these cases Baba not only effected a change, but also made sure that he made everyone aware of his tangible presence. Miracles, he has often said, are his visiting cards.

However, for every such 'visible' miracle that fits easily into a structure and form of an anecdote, there are thousands of 'invisible' miracles, small almost imperceptible changes that Swami fashions in the lives of devotees. They are miracles too. Their impact is as clear, the setting is as compelling, the denouement is as nail-biting, and the resolution as firm as any other miracle. Here the interaction between Swami and devotee is not necessarily at a physical plane but more at emotional, intellectual and spiritual planes.

Here are two such stories.

### Venu Srinivasan

When Venu Srinivasan, CEO of TVS Motor, one of India's top three manufacturers of two wheelers, wanted to take up a project to restore Nava Thirupathi, it was out of a sense of devotion to God. Srinivasan belongs to Vaishnavite community, worshippers of Lord Vishnu. In the south, A combination of age, lack of interest and scarcity of funds had removed the sheen of these temples and Srinivasan wanted to restore these houses of Gods to its former glory.

He wanted to take Baba's blessings before he began the project. However, everyone he spoke to said Swami is not likely to encourage a religious activity around a particular faith. Nevertheless, Srinivasan went to Baba, seeking his blessings. That came in full measure. Contrary to what everyone predicted, Baba told Srinivasan: "You have to do it. It's the duty of a Vaishnavite."





That simple blessing and permission to go ahead with a good work which his heart was set out for, would not only change the way Srinivasan looked at devotion and social service but also offer important insights into the nature of leadership and indeed the nature of life itself.

The temple renovation project started off well and made progress over the next three years. Meanwhile, Srinivasan saw his own heart undergo a transformation.

"In 1996, without uttering a single word, he made me realise, through a process of introspection that I have to look beyond temples. Temple is only a symbol of the society, and therefore the real service to the temple, and to God is only when you serve the area around the temples. So, we started working around the temple. Again, Baba didn't utter a word. But he made me realise that social service cannot be parochial. When you do social service, it cannot be just a service to one particular religion or community. It cannot have any barriers. It has to be for humanity in general. So, it evolved into service for everyone - Christians, Muslims, Hindus and so on.

So, what started as work on temples, expanded around temple, to other religions, and it has really become sarve dharma today - cutting across religion."

Many devotees find coming to Puttaparthi and being in the presence of Swami fulfilling. It's like a cup that has been empty all along getting filled to the brim, an unfinished circle rounding off, a much needed balance restored.

Srinivasan saw the balance restored in the opposite direction in the case of a friend who headed the social initiatives. He was not interested in religion, and he did not see Swami as divine. When Srinivasan brought him to Puttaparthi, Swami blessed him with a chain. His friend offered to give it to Srinivasan, for he didn't see much value in it for himself.

However, things started changing when he went home. When he told about his experience to his family members, his sister in law was amazed. "How blessed you are. Did Swami really give this with His own hand. You are indeed blessed," she said.

Now, this man goes to Puttaparthi every year, and talks to MBA students about corporate social responsibility. So, here is a man who was not religious, but who after seeing

Swami started going to temples, started having respect for religion and rituals. It was opposite of what happened to me. In my case, Swami made me realise that Bhakti alone is not enough, you have to serve the society. And in his case, he made him see that social service alone is not enough, love for God is also important," Srinivasan says.

The involvement in service also refined his views on leadership. "You cannot be a leader by commanding, you can be a leader only by serving. By serving, you inspire loyalty. By serving, your word has ten times weight than what comes out of authority and position. Ultimately serving God is serving man - only by loving all and serving all can you become a leader on a long term sustainable basis."

The most interesting thing is that all this didn't happen because of one miraculous incident or by explicit guidance. It happened gradually. Says Srinivasan,

"When I look back, there was no Aha moment. It was actually a slow process. He did not tell me anything directly, but he made me realise internally that social service is important. After I had realised it, after I understood the importance of social service, he told me one day, "Good boy". That's how he transforms people. Not by telling. But through a process of internal understanding. And we learn by looking at His life. His life is indeed His message," Srinivasan says.

#### Dana Gillespie

It was a pleasant evening at Vidya Giri stadium in Puttaparthi. The breeze was gentle, the bhajans from the loudspeaker was lilting - and the dark trees on the hills seemed to sway to both. Then, something unexpected happened. A lady came on stage. She was dressed in western clothes, which was by itself something odd, because almost always women who come on stage are dressed in Sarees. She took the microphone, and started something that seemed pretty odd in a place that was used only to traditional Indian music. For several seconds it seemed out of place. When the whole scene seemed to be dancing to a pleasant tune, this seemed to jolt people out of their relaxed mood. People looked at each other. There were quizzical look on their faces.

On stage Baba's Jhula continued to gently sway, and his face was as joyous and peaceful as ever. Seconds passed. The music from this lady continued to flow. Then even without anyone realising, something happened. The strange, foreign tunes struck a chord deep within their





hearts. Before long, they saw that it was as natural as the gentle breeze, the sturdy hills and the swaying trees. Many, for the first time, realised that music - even if it is from a foreign land, even if it is generally associated with worldly romance rather than divine love - has something universal about it, and it cuts across religion, class, creed, nationality and cultural backgrounds.

The singer that day was Dana Gillespie. Gillespie is one of the foremost Blues singers and a well known actor in UK. She played Mary Magdalene on stage in the first run of Jesus Christ Superstar in London's West End and appeared with Dudley Moore in the film version of "The Hound Of The Baskervilles". By the time she sang in Sai Baba's 70th birthday, she had already released a couple of Bhajan CDs, and assumed that she would sing a bajan on stage. But, Swami wanted her to sing Blues. At that time she was not sure how it would go with the audience, but then she had already learned her greatest lesson - that singing ultimately is a spiritual exercise.

Dana first heard about Swami the way millions of others first heard about Swami - through Howard Murphet's Man of Miracles. She read the book, and within a couple of weeks found herself on a flight to India to see Him. Swami ignored her then, and for 12 years after that.

Swami's protective hands and his influence on Dana went

back to much earlier. "Swami once told my mother that he has been watching over me long before I even came to know about him," Dana says. Swami's impact on her work was evident pretty soon.

The most visible way was her exploration of a new genre - bhajans. She brought out three Bhajan albums, under a pseudonym - Third Man, because she didn't want her fans who were so used to listening to Blues, pick up the album and get disappointed with new genre. Eventually, as her interest in Bhajans and Indian music became better known, she started releasing them in her own name.

That also coincided with a deeper awareness of love, of music and how it connects to audience. "The more I sang for him, the better I became at singing for different audiences," Dana says. Her music became deeper. Even when she was singing for an audience who thought she was singing about physical love - love between young couples - she was thinking of a higher, self less love. One of her songs had this line: If you take one step towards me, i will take a hundred towards you. The context was not spiritual, yet she was referring to Swami's love. That lifted the spirit of everyone in the audience. "It's easier to sing about love when you have tasted love, and I tasted love in many different ways, but divine love changes everything", Dana says. ■

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# THE WAY FORWARD



"Life is a Game, Play it;  
Life is a Song, Sing it;  
Life is a Dream, Realise it;  
Life is a Challenge, Meet it;  
Life is Love, Enjoy it."

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



## New initiatives...

**A**fter creating a network of service institutions, Baba maintained that his only property are his students and devotees. The statement is often seen as an expression of his love for them, and to some extent his detachment. But, more than anything else, it is a statement about what he saw as his real legacy - not just what he did during the 85 years he walked the earth- is the selfless service that will continue to happen in the decades to come through his devotees.

If the new initiatives, which can be broadly brought under three areas – education, health and integrated rural development, have any overarching theme, it is that these activities and their impact go far beyond Prasanthi Nilayam. In some ways there is nothing new in this. The Sai Organisation is spread wide and deep across India and the world, comprising of lakhs of Sai devotees from various professions and trade. Each one inspired by the personal example of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

In addition to that core foundation of universal love, the movement has witnessed an emergence of an institutional framework that connects, consolidates and integrates many of these service activities. This connection is a powerful force, for it brings in high efficiency, drive for excellence and professional expertise into the system. Being technology-driven, it is transmitted fast across different geographies. Ultimately, this results in quantum leap in scale, outreach and quality of service.

The timing has some significant lessons and important insights to offer. For ages, the best minds have been hard at work to figure out ways to build great organisations, great societies and great nations. They spent their time designing social structures, institutional set ups, rules and the like. They are important and the history shows that it is by no means easy. Many fail.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba took a refreshingly new approach to the whole issue. While he built institutions and systems, his focus was on something much greater, much more important, and something that is much more difficult to build and sustain – Pure, Selfless, Universal Love. Love is the cornerstone of the Sai mission. From some eternal spring in him, an ocean of love poured forth, love that drenched and burnt away the debris of doubt and despair. It spread silently and deeply but once it reached a critical mass, institutional framework and the systems became easy to achieve. That is the bigger lesson conveyed by the new initiatives being planned by the Sai Organisation and described in the following pages.

# Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini

*Aligning the Hand, the Head and the Heart*

**W**hatever one can rightly say about India, the *opposite is also true*", is an oft-quoted observation about the extreme inequities that exist in the world's largest democracy. Often measured in terms of income and wealth, the problem of inequality goes deeper to include basic health and education.

This paradox of extremes stands out the loudest in India's education index. While boasting of some of the best educational institutions in the world, a recent survey

Apart from the 99 fulltime Sathya Sai Schools in India, 41 Sathya Sai Schools globally follow this model of learning. Moreover, informal weekend classes in human values known as Bal Vikas or Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) are also run across 15,300 centres in India and in 81 foreign countries. This model of integral education has proven successful across the board. In India alone, a million Bal Vikas graduates are better citizens and socially responsible human beings due to this values education. The current global enrolment in the programme is about half a million.



confirms that a majority of Indian students receive sub-standard education. This debilitating handicap hits at the core of human potential, closing doors to opportunities to improve the quality of life.

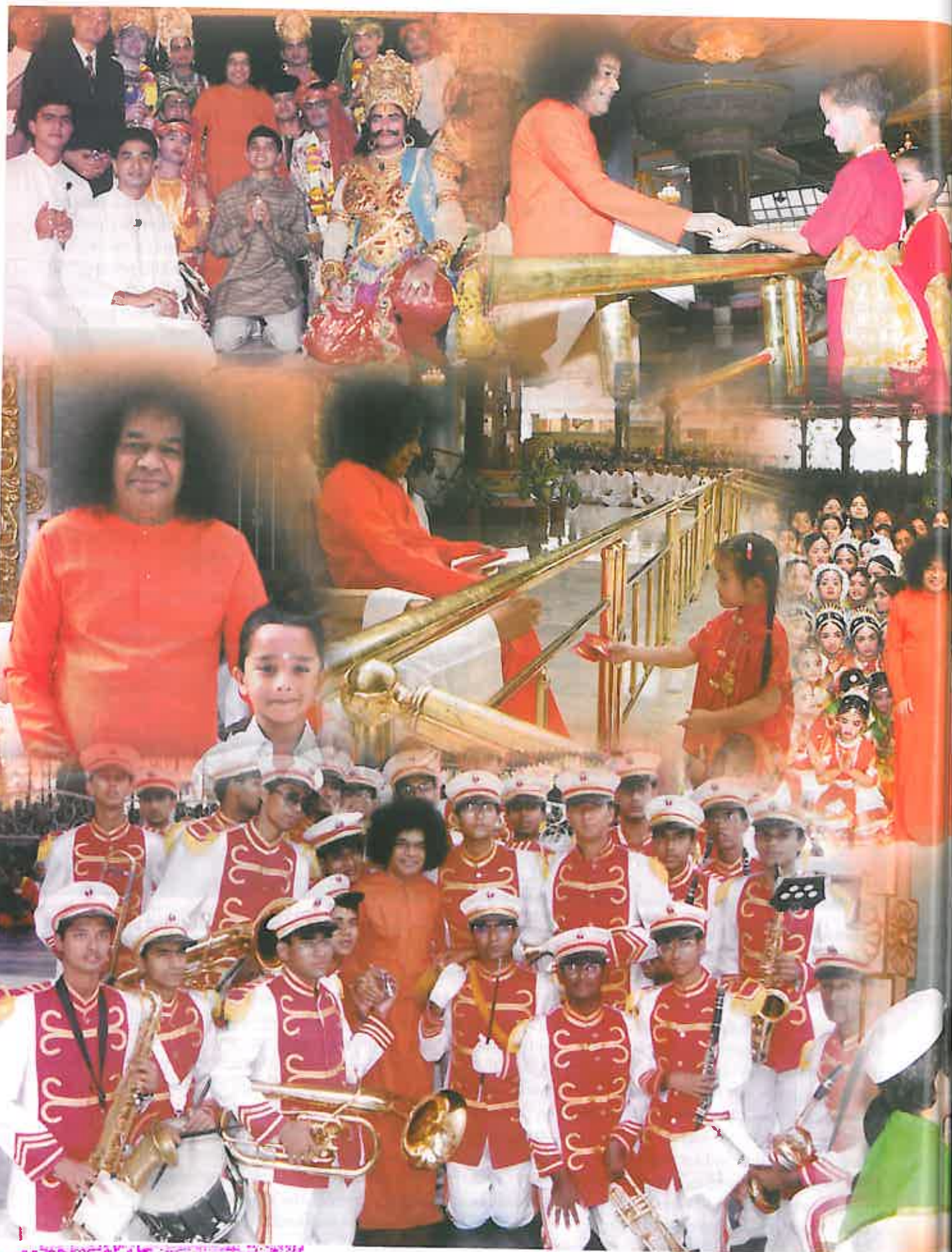
Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini aims to address this problem with an unprecedented thoroughness, meticulous planning and professional execution. Over the years, the Sai Organisation has built a network of schools and colleges with a unique vision – one that deploys the best teaching practices to weave secular curriculum with character education and cutting-edge technology. Today, this network includes a flourishing university with multiple campuses, schools and teacher training institutes across the length and breadth of the globe.

From India to Latin America, educators and policy pundits are grading the Sai Education model as outstanding.

At the time of his 85th birthday, Baba inaugurated the Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini so as to extend the same vision to the entire nation, thus leaving no child behind.

Using web-based tools to enhance the learning for children in rural and slum India, Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vahini brings together cutting-edge technology, values-based learning, secular curricula and teacher training under one umbrella. A partnership between the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, Tata Consultancy Services and school boards across the country, Vidya Vahini applies several different strategies to meet the educational needs of millions of Indian children deprived of this basic right.











It is programmed to achieve the aspects of cognitive thinking, motivation and empowered action by utilizing technology to deliver a synthesis of values-based education and curriculum. Methods of teaching include the articulation and expression of values in core subjects (cognitive thinking), the conscious involvement of teachers in exemplifying the values (motivation), and the all-inclusive participation of students in service-based projects (empowered action).

A concept that could not have been imagined earlier or elsewhere in the world, Vidya Vahini is a vision whose time has come, for it leverages the strengths of best teachers and their techniques from a vast pool of specially trained Sai teachers; multimedia experts for converting ideas into animations and IT experts for building and maintaining a collaborative platform. The deep reach of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation and its volunteer base is the ready-to-deploy bridge for overcoming the challenges of technology adoption even in the remotest of villages.

The Sai network is well-positioned to provide the much-needed support to students and teachers in distant areas by connecting them to their peers in well-endowed schools and subject experts. This approach empowers teachers working in disadvantaged or distant areas with rich and ready-to-use content and best teaching practices. In turn, this translates into class rooms with multimedia content for easy grasp of complex concepts and activity-based learning through practical, hands-on exercises. The joy of learning is back in the classroom of Indian villages!

The pilot project began at three schools in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Haryana. And the project rollout since its inauguration has been smoothly executed across 8 states, 18 schools and 7 education boards.

The Vidya Vahini team members are a strange lot. You sense a lot of passion when you talk to them. They are



almost evangelical when they talk about the project. Every member of this committed team feels intensely that they are just following Baba's call and this is their mission. Those who have seen Swami at work for a long time say that while others make plans, Sai Baba makes master plans. His own work on a project starts much before he even talks about it. After all, his centuries follow each other like a wild flower. ■

### ***Transformation at Darwa School***

Sri Sathya Sai Jagriti Vidya Mandir, Darwa offers free education to about 350 economically poor students. The teachers are drawn from the vicinity - some of them commute 12-15 km every day! They are not very highly paid, yet their enthusiasm is overwhelming. Most of them had not even heard of Sathya Sai Baba before they joined the school. These teachers were doing their best to inculcate values amongst the children. But for want of training they were unable to do so.

The implementation of the Vidya Vahini project in the school has brought a very significant change. The teachers are now getting regular guidance and knowledge from the project team and consequently more confident.

When the teachers were asked to train teachers in other adjoining schools in Patiala, Murthal and other places, they embarked upon the assignment very confidently. Improvements in their own teaching style have led to an overall increase in the quality and standards of education at the school.

The students too have blossomed under the scheme. Out of the 19 students who appeared in Class 10 examination under the Haryana Education Board, 13 secured State Merit positions, with two of these students having secured more than 94% marks. All the others obtained first class.

# Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme

## Meeting Millennium Development Goals



Over time, certain places tend to get associated with certain words—New York with energy, London with history, Berlin with wall, and Singapore with efficiency. It is the same with Prasanthi Nilayam. Depending on whom you ask, people will come up with words like peace, love and spirituality.

However, no other word defines Prasanthi Nilayam as well as 'integration'. Sathya Sai Baba brought people together; citizens from warring countries sat next to each other as brothers in the Mandir; all religions found place in the Prasanthi logo; science and spirituality comingled in his presence. The institutions there provide integral education. Baba went one step further two years ago. No more "Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu" (Let all the people of the world be happy). From now on it was going to be "Samastha Lokaha Sukhino Bhavantu" (Let all the worlds be happy). That was the change in prayer at Prasanthi Nilayam.

So, it came as no surprise, when on the day of Ugadi in 2007, Sathya Sai Baba, after speaking about the evolution of some of the service activities, turned his attention to the need for an integrated and holistic approach to serving villages. "Efforts should be made", he exhorted, "to develop the villages in all possible ways - the elders and the children, the rich and the poor. All should work in unity to make this project successful". The initiative that Baba embarked upon that day has developed into the Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme (SSSVIP).

So, what is new with SSSVIP?

It is the approach and scale. From looking at issues in silos—in terms of health, education, infrastructure, Sai workers

now look at a village as a system, where different elements interact and influence each other. The Sai Organisations of East Godavari district, for instance, work on eight core areas: education, healthcare, agriculture, infrastructure, employment, individual, social and spiritual needs. The beauty of this approach is that it covers everyone in the village – men, women and children of all ages; and the engagement tends to be long term rather than one off.

The activities undertaken in each of these areas are customised to suit the needs of the villagers. In education, for instance, the activities include conducting the Bal Vikas programme that focuses on inculcating basic values, adoption of primary schools with the aim of shaping them into model schools, improving school infrastructure and providing, and educating the adults of the village especially in areas of health and parenting. Similarly, in the sphere of healthcare the activities range from medical





surveys and electronic records to tertiary care.

#### The Technology Advantage

Baba has said that technology must bring knowledge to the people. Otherwise it is just 'trick'nology. Baba's call to translate information and bookish knowledge into a practical skill for improving the lives of the needy has resulted in a think (and act) tank that delivers ready-to-use solutions to Indian villages. The Technology Group Services (TGS), comprising 55 experts drawn from 23 states where Sai Organisation operates, pools technological solutions from around the world and implements these in villages. The aim is to enhance the quality of life of the poor villagers who have no access to such technology otherwise.

TGS started out by identifying eight core areas where technology could provide leverage and cater to specific needs of the villagers. These areas included water, sanitation, agro services for poor and small farmers, rain water harvesting, biogas and power systems, mini power systems, solar heating solutions, and alternative farming methods such as organic farming. The team at TGS was also aware that the solutions they suggest in these areas should be simple, cost-effective, operable, proven, manageable, and most importantly sustainable and self reliant so that the villagers can manage without external assistance.

To this end, the group members scouted for solutions in various places - research centers, laboratories, websites, manufacturers, equipment suppliers, industries, newspapers, subject-experts and from various voluntary rural developments centers of the state and central governments in India and abroad. This arduous exercise paid off. Over the past six years, TGS has developed and implemented a plethora of solutions that fit the needs of the villagers, including installation of water-treatment

plants, developing organic farming techniques, health care initiatives, construction of infrastructure, telemedicine, and e-learning for children and adults.

One of the biggest problems that villagers face is the risk of contracting Fluorosis – a disease caused by excessive fluoride in water, leading to physical deformity, and eventually complete disability. To eliminate Fluorosis, TGS has installed 25 water treatment plants that serve clean and fluoride-free drinking water to more than 35,000 people in Andhra Pradesh alone. Similar initiatives have been implemented in other states too including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The funds generated from these facilities are managed by the village core-committee teams, not only for operating the facility but also for undertaking welfare programmes in the villages. This operating financial model has been successfully working for the past five years.

A significant contribution of TGS has been in the area of agriculture. The group has helped villagers develop nearly 40,000 acres of organic farms in Tamil Nadu alone. In other places too, several agro solutions have been implemented, especially for enhanced paddy cultivation which has led to a three-fold increase in crop production.

TGS has also played a key role in transforming the way healthcare services are provided. The Telehealth Programme, currently under way, aims at connecting patients from different corners of the country to Baba's Super Specialty Hospital. Earlier, villagers had to necessarily travel long distances to access basic healthcare. Now one can consult a doctor without having to spend a day travelling. The programme is currently underway in Odisha and Paschim Banga, and as on 30th November 2011, Odisha alone has had 427 televisit patients in neurosurgery and 816 televisit patients for



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CTED A PROPER CONCRETE  
DRAINS IN NAGASANIPALLI.*





cardiology.

The potential of such programmes is immense, admit policy makers and observers. The plan is to start small, with periodic medical counseling from specialists at Bhubaneswar. Later, the proposal is to extend the concept from health counseling to agriculture counseling, enabling farmers from remote areas to connect to agricultural scientists and experts.

TGS has, over the years, developed a bridge between knowledge and need in villages through its technical council systems and cells developed in each center. In addition to pan-India programmes, TGS's state-wings have developed in-house solutions for meeting local needs. TGS Kerala for instance, has focused exclusively on animal health, farm and fodder production procedures, while TGS Odisha has given importance to construction of homes, toilets, agro-services and drinking water services. In several states the group has facilitated the development of small enterprises that can be managed from home by women. These enterprises include production of leaf plates, tailoring and garment production centers,

production of detergents, and incense sticks. These initiatives cover more than 400 villages each in their respective states.

Above all the group could develop a bridge between the knowledge and the need in villages through its technical council systems and cells developed in each center. In villages the group has initiated small enterprises that can be managed from home by women like production of leaf plates, tailoring and garment production centers, production of detergents, Agarbatti, etc.

A true measure of success of a good product or service is whether it has gone beyond its brief, and contributed more than its initial promise. The projects undertaken by TGS have generated tremendous interest and unity among the youth in the villages. All projects actively involve the villagers, right from the inception up till execution. After project completion, the villagers are handed over the responsibility to manage and maintain the program. This has created a sense of ownership, and a feeling of belongingness among the villagers. Working together for common welfare has led to a growing sense of harmony

*The organisation technology service has introduced Small size home industry to rise the income levels of Poor women folks - like leaf plates production honey comb paper products etc.*



20/06/20





In the Kanchipuram District of Tamil Nadu, the SSSVIP addressed the ecological and environmental concerns by planting thousands of drumsticks, papaya and curry leaf saplings for 700 families.

In 2004, the Sai volunteers of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand successfully implemented a hydro-electric project generating 5000 watts of Power at Pokhari.

Nine-year old Vignesh waves his thin arms in excitement and struggles to stand up and welcome the guests to his two-room house at Maagaral village in Tamil Nadu. Vignesh was a healthy child till he was seven months old. Constant epileptic seizures and lack of medical attention rendered him physically and speech disabled. Vignesh now has a new-found hope in a pair of calipers and the encouragement to walk daily with support. Volunteers of the SSSVIP talk and play with him on their visits to the village, and accompany him to the physiotherapy sessions arranged in Chennai.

and peace in the villages. Most importantly, however, these programmes have inculcated a measure of human values in these villagers, and that is the most important outcome of any welfare initiative.

Real Technical intervention takes place when good intentions, expert research and technological solutions come together to improve village life. For the broader public, TGS underscores the true meaning of technology: what takes knowledge to the society.

Today, those who visit Puttapparthi and its environs for the first time contrast it with the villages on the way, and marvel at the transformation that has taken place over a span of few years. It's nothing short of a miracle. The promise of SSSVIP is that this miracle can be replicated 6 lakh times over.

### **Beneficiaries of SSSVIP**

Elderly Yagatha was malnourished and living alone. She is now a beneficiary of 'Amirtha Kalasam', which ensures monthly groceries and toiletries to needy senior citizens.

Krishnaveni, a volunteer who visits the tribal settlements in East Godavari District every week, says "Earlier there were no roads, telephone or any other facility. The Seva Dal volunteers used to go by bike or jeep, travelling 2 to 5 hours to reach the villages. The tribal people were adopting shift cultivation, cutting down the forest trees to grow their produce. Along with the men, the village women and children also took to consuming toddy to beat hunger. The Seva Dals spent days and nights with them, gave them seeds to raise kitchen gardens, taught the children to have a bath every day, clip nails and comb their hair, worked with the teachers in the nearby school and organised medical camps. Now, the children in the 25 hamlets are completely cured of alcoholism and at least 50% of the women do not take toddy. The Government has been motivated to lay roads to all the hamlets. Even the existence of these settlements was not known to many prior to the water project".



# The Way Forward

**Professor A. Anantharaman**

*Prof. A. Anantharaman has been the CEO of a number of multinational companies in India and abroad and has taught in several business schools. Currently, he is a Professor at the School of Business Management of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. In addition, he also functions as the Media Coordinator of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.*



**N**o one can comprehend my glory, wherever he is and whatever his method of enquiry and however long his attempt!"

Thus wrote Baba to his brother in May 1947. Millions that came to see him and the thousands who came to serve him feel the same way. The limited cannot comprehend the unlimited, nor do the wayward understand the stable. Albert Einstein, the famous scientist was once asked whether he can explain divinity in scientific terms. He replied that it would be difficult. It would be like explaining Beethoven's ninth symphony in the form of an air pressure curve.

For different people there were different beginnings and different promptings. Paul Brunton came to India to find a master. He was told, "Pray every day to God that he will lead to you to the man in whom he is at present incarnated". He prayed and his search led him to Sathya Sai Baba. Howard Murphet, whose books on Baba were the first to reach the western world, was searching for 16 years, till one day, the Vibhuti smell emanating from the falling leaves at the Theosophical Society's Adyar Gardens at Chennai, sent him to Baba. Kasturi, Baba's biographer, heard the call even as he was crossing the backwaters of Ernakulam to go to Mysore.

Like countless others, I too heard the call. What appealed to me is his doctrine of what I would call pragmatic transcendentalism, a combination of the concept of Unity of Faith (*All roads lead to the same hilltop*) and Service (*Hands that help are holier than the lips that pray*) echoing the words of Rabindranath Tagore,

*"Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut?*

*Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!*

*He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking stones.*

*Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!"*

Hearing the call, I too came to serve and share my 30 years of corporate and academic experience in the west with the management students at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. But little did I realise that a day would come when I will be drawn into the vortex of what happened in the aftermath of the Maha Samadhi.

After April 24 this year, we suddenly found ourselves in a world where we had to deal with issues, which we never had to face before. Suddenly we heard words like stakeholders.

Not being just a spiritual organization, but a service organization with multi-campus educational institutions, multi-location hospitals and performing service organisations, we needed to engage with these stakeholders. We needed a new dynamics to deal with them, to talk to them. And the media was an important channel in that engagement.

A wag once said, "*Harmony seldom makes a headline*". In the days immediately succeeding the transition, some of the print and electronic media were all over us. They had no regard even for the grieving. By weaving innuendos, half-truths and downright lies cleverly, they sought to present a picture of mystery, deceit and suspense.

Part of the suspense came from the media's reported assessment of what they called "*Baba's wealth*". Various figures from 1,000 crores to 5,000 crores were touted. We tried explaining to them that the facetiously reported wealth consisted predominantly of equipment, facilities and real estate used for hospitals, schools and colleges where all services were offered free of cost. Therefore as per classic finance theories, which tell you that the value of an asset is the present value of future cash flow, these assets had no value, as they did not produce an income. But understanding simple finance did not appear to be the forte of the members of our Fourth Estate.

Much was also made of the articles and cash that were inventoried. I was present at most of these inventories. They were mostly articles of worship that the Ashram used in several festivals, offered by devotees to one whom they considered their Guru and God. Right next to one particular such item of value I also found an old ragdoll given by a devotee. Both were simply accepted with the same love with which they were given. Both had the same



value for Baba. All these items were inventoried in the presence of independent witnesses so that they could be taken into stock and the items put to use. In fact a well-known columnist asked at that time, "Can the political class today lay claim to the kind of honesty that the Padmanabha Dasas and the Baba trustees have shown?"

Unaccustomed as we were to the ways of the media who appeared, 'to separate the wheat from the chaff and then ensure that the chaff is printed'; this was a discipline we had to learn from scratch. Therefore our first job was to inform the public, and more importantly our own grieving and confused devotees, the facts as they happened simply and honestly.

Our next step was to ensure continuity. The Maha Samadhi happened at 7.40 am on April 24, 2011. Right from that moment, not a single regimen—from early morning Suprabhatam to evening Arati has been dropped at Prasanthi Nilayam. Every function and festival, even from different faiths is being celebrated as before. From dawn to dusk devotees throng to sing his glory. They continue to arrive and pray at the Maha Samadhi – from Turkey and Poland, from Punjab and Kerala, from Australia, America and South Africa. Our schools and University campuses reopened on time. Our hospitals continue their healing. For a grieving community, desolate at the loss of one who led from the front, this is heady performance.

The next step was consolidation. The wise men of the Trust, handpicked by Baba, co-opted four more eminent men to give broader scope for leadership and direction. A media office was set up for effective communication with the outside world. New systems and structures, which will cater for the different kind of devotees who will visit Prasanthi Nilayam as a pilgrimage centre, are being evolved. Our Trustees fully realise that they cannot act with the same grandeur as the Founder Trustee. But they will safeguard the assets that they have been asked to hold in trust; and will take and implement decisions that will effectively advance the objectives of the Trust. To ensure this, they have voluntarily signed a code of conduct.

And what of the future?

There will be a new campus of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, our fourth; at Muddenahalli, Karnataka. There will be new courses at our Anantapur campus. Plans are ready for a multidisciplinary centre for advanced research in cutting edge streams of pharmaceutical drug delivery and nanoscience. There will be a new cath lab and a new MRI facility for the Hospital. Medicare programme will be expanded to include more hospitals, nursing home and mobile hospitals. We will intensify our rural service, the village integration programme. Our volunteers across the world will be trained and render help in disaster

management. The youth in our 600000 strong Seva Organisation will shortly hold a two day retreat to introspect, review and plan the way forward for the next five years.

And we are rolling out a new initiative, Vidya Vahini that will transform the educational landscape of rural India. A partnership between the Sri Sathya Sai central Trust, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and the school boards in various states; this innovative national project will take web-based learning to village schools, a first ever attempt anywhere in the world.

All these and many more will be the new initiatives in the way forward.

And how would the physical absence of Baba affect us? We would be hypocritical if we say that it will not. He was the motivating force. He taught us. He guided us. He led us. Whom would we follow now?

The 30th Convocation of the Sai University was held on the 22nd November 2011. Baba was the Founder Chancellor who presided over the last 29 convocations of the University. We woke up that morning with a deep sense of something missing in our lives. We came to know that even the newly appointed Chancellor Justice P.N. Bhagwati was indisposed and would not be able to attend the function. No Chancellor, not even the recently appointed second Chancellor would be present. We were getting ready for a day of nostalgic grief.

Soon the Prashanti Nilayam Campus and Anantapur Campus bands of the Institute, in their colorful attire trooped in playing to the slow march tune of 'Sai Ram Sai Shyam'. The procession of the members of the Academic Council in their colorful robes followed. The Registrar dropped the ceremonial mace at its customary location. The Vice-Chancellor requested the Chancellor to declare the 30th convocation open.

Suddenly a voice rang out of the public address system: "I declare the convocation open".

It was Baba's recorded voice! It tugged at our heartstrings.

We got our answer – He will continue to lead us. And He will continue to guide us. All we need is to institutionalise his teaching.

The wound in our heart is too deep. It will not go away. But it will heal and become a scar. And the scar will refresh and regenerate. And provide renewal and continuity.

What then, will be the living legacy, of this loving legend? Our action hereafter will be that legacy. So far, his life was his message. Now our lives will be his message.

Generations to come, people will scarcely believe that such a one as this, ever walked the earth...

And His Mission will go on...



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