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"There can be no match for the
accomplishments of the elders after
they cross the age of 60 or 70. Their
intellectual acumen and divine
qualities can show a new path to
mankind. When you realise their
great qualities, it will bring about
transformation in your own life."

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RECOGNISE THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF ELDERS

Man does not remember God in happy times. He remembers Him only when he is in difficulties, and blames Him for all his sorrows as if God has caused them.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

THE ELDERLY COUPLES WHO participated in the Bheema Ratha Santhi function today experienced great joy. But it is also

Bheema was the son of Vayu (wind god). Wind is all-pervasive, all powerful and is present everywhere. Thus, many divine qualities characterised Bheema. People



The world can benefit a lot from elderly people. None can estimate the immense spiritual power they possess. The ancient Rishis of India were the embodiments of this great spiritual power. The noble thoughts propounded by them are most valuable. They made marvellous plans for the blissful future of man. The objective behind holding this function is to recognise the great spiritual power of these elders so that the youngsters are inspired to follow the ideals set by them.



necessary to understand the inner meaning of this ceremony. The name Bheema does not signify mere physical strength though Bheema could perform any mighty task with success.

generally tend to recognise merely the physical strength of Bheema, ignoring his immense mental and intellectual potentialities.




Inner Significance of Bheema Ratha Santhi


There are certain traditional rules for the performance of Bheema Ratha Santhi ceremony. But there is no age restriction as such for it. Normally, married couples celebrate the Shastyabdha Poorthi ceremony to invoke the grace of God for peaceful and happy married life when the husband attains the age of 60 years. But attaining the age of 70 years is considered highly significant and auspicious. It is celebrated as Bheema Ratha Santhi. Similarly, reaching the age of 80, 90 or 100 years is an occasion for the celebration of Bheema Ratha Santhi. But due to the effect of Kali Age, the youngsters today do not understand and appreciate the importance of these holy occasions, and neglect their parents when they cross the age of 60 years. They think that their parents have no place in the house and they should live like Sannyasins (renunciants). This is a serious mistake. On the other hand, they should take greater care of their parents when they attain the age of 60 years and above.

Many people presume that those beyond the age of 70 years are useless and a burden on the family and society. But this is not true. In fact, the enthusiasm, dynamism and mental strength increase after a person crosses 70 years. It is only after attaining the age of 70 years that man's will power and Atmic strength develop in full measure. Prior to that, he behaves like ordinary human beings and does not strive to set an example to others. But after the age of 70 years, man's mental faculties and divine power blossom to the highest extent and prompt him to set new goals in





The elders are endowed with exalted and noble thoughts. They set highly valuable ideals to the youngsters. Unable to understand the value of their thoughts, the youngsters disregard them and do not pay any heed to them. It is to be noted with admiration how the elders brought up their children in a proper way with concern and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, today we grudge even one square meal a day to them. This is highly deplorable.



life. Consequently, such elderly persons ponder and explore new secrets of life. The divine power possessed by these elderly persons is not seen in the youth. It manifests in many ways in their actions. Today, we find several youngsters talking ill of their parents and making fun of them. This is a grave mistake. Instead, if one analyses carefully their actions, one will find that every action of the elders is purposeful and divine in nature. If the youth of today wish to learn how they should face the challenges of life, they should live with their parents and imbibe their noble qualities by constantly observing them. In fact, there can be no match for the accomplishments of the elders after they cross the age of 60 or 70. Their intellectual acumen and divine qualities can show a new path to mankind. When you realise their great qualities, it will bring about transformation in your own life.


Ancient Rishis were the Embodiments of Great Spiritual Powers

Embodiments of Love!


People today neglect the elders considering them of little worth. This is not correct. In fact, the energy and will power of the elders are not to be found in the youth. When you wish to undertake a new task, you should seek the guidance of the elders to achieve success in it. The age of 60 years is considered as the age of retirement from service. But man's full potential develops at this age only. Retired scientists are highly valuable to society. None can match their intelligence and acumen for new inventions. But their services are not being properly utilised for the benefit of society. Thus, immense potential of the elders remains unutilised. In fact, man is unable to recognise the qualities of his fellow human beings. The term Manava means a person in whom the quality of humanness blossoms in its fullness. The elders are endowed with exalted and noble thoughts. They set highly valuable ideals to the youngsters. Unable to understand the value of their thoughts, the youngsters disregard them and do not pay any heed to them.

It is to be noted with admiration how the elders brought up their children in a proper way with concern and enthusiasm. Unfortunately, today we grudge even one square meal a day to them. This is highly deplorable. What you give to elders will come back to you tenfold. The world can benefit a lot from elderly people. None can estimate the immense spiritual power they possess. The ancient Rishis of India were the embodiments of this great





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spiritual power. The noble thoughts propounded by them are most valuable. They made marvellous plans for the blissful future of man. The objective behind holding this function is to recognise the great spiritual power of these elders so that the youngsters are inspired to follow the ideals set by them. Our ancients investigated the noble ideals of the great saints and sages and propagated them to the whole world. They realised the greatness of these Rishis. Even the kings and nobles derived great benefit from the great wisdom of the Rishis by seeking their advice regularly. The great treatises on spiritual and temporal matters composed by these great Rishis of yore are a subject of study and enquiry even today. Unfortunately, modern youth are not able to understand even a


fraction of the great truths expounded in those treatises and lack the spiritual wisdom attained by ancient saints and sages. Therefore, we should promote the performance of this great ancient tradition of Bheema Ratha Santhi from now onwards. It has great significance and value for the

highly intelligent and could answer this question herself. She was the embodiment of truth and righteousness. She was ready to make any sacrifice for the sake of her husbands. She symbolised the power of the Atma. So, Bheema kept silent and allowed Draupadi to explain the principle of the Self.





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coming generations. It signifies the nourishment and nurture of the quality of humanness through spiritually elevating and noble endeavours.

Draupadi Symbolised the Power of the Atma

Once when Bheema and Draupadi were sitting together on the bank of a river, Draupadi asked Bheema, "Where does the Atma dwell?" Draupadi was

The Atma is the primordial principle of divine power. Though it uses the vesture of the body, it is neither the body nor the mind nor the Buddhi (intellect) nor Chitta (mind stuff) nor Ahamkara (ego sense). When you go closer to a jasmine plant, you experience the fragrance of jasmine flowers. Do you think the fragrance is coming from the flowers?

No, no. It is caused by the divine power given by God to jasmine flower. Divine mysteries are beyond the



comprehension of man. Draupadi revealed such divine mysteries which were not known to anybody. We should therefore try to understand the greatness of Draupadi.

She taught many tenets of Dharma to Arjuna also. During the Mahabharata war, after the gruesome massacre of the young Pandava children, Arjuna tracked down Aswatthama, the perpetrator of the atrocity and dragged him before Draupadi. Instead of cursing the evil doer, she persuaded Arjuna not to kill Aswatthama who was the son of her husbands' most revered Guru.

Oh Partha! It is not righteous to kill a person who is afraid or has lost courage, who is asleep or intoxicated, who seeks refuge or is a female. You should not kill Aswatthama, for he is your preceptor's son. (Telugu Poem)

Draupadi further pleaded with Arjuna to forgive Aswatthama for his heinous act. Arjuna replied, "You are preventing me from keeping up my vow." To this, Draupadi said, "Tonsuring his head and removing the crown jewel from his head is equivalent to killing him." As per Draupadi's advice and as a token of punishment, Arjuna shaved off his head with his sword and took the crown jewel.

In ancient times, the Rishis were not shaving off their hair since their hair was endowed with sacredness and power. Once Draupadi was alone as her husbands had gone out. She took out one strand of hair from her head and dropped it in water, chanting some Mantras. That single hair with the potency of Mantras could bind all the hills around. Later on, a number of Rishis came together and enquired as to how a single hair could bind all the hills around. They concluded

that it was the strength of the hair of Draupadi and her will power that could perform this stupendous task. It is difficult to comprehend such latent divine phenomena. Unfortunately, today man is unable to realise his innate divinity. Though born as a human, he is forgetting the very quality of humanness. He is cultivating demonic qualities.

Avatars Manifest their Divinity in many Ways

Dear Students!

Get rid of demonic qualities and develop humanness. Only then can you rise to the level of divinity. Always remember three things – unity, purity and divinity. Unity implies the oneness of human race. Where there is unity in humanity, divinity will manifest there. Avatars manifest their divinity in many mysterious ways.

Once I stayed in Goa in the Raj Bhavan when Nakul Sen was the Lt. Governor of Goa. His wife's name was Indu. I slept in the front hall of the Raj Bhavan. Nakul Sen and his wife slept in their bedroom. There was a window in their bedroom from where they could see what was happening in the front hall. After I slept, Nakul Sen's wife saw through the window a brilliant light emerging from My body. Unable to bear the effulgence of that brilliant light, she tried to wake up her husband. Nakul Sen would not like to be disturbed at that hour. He admonished her not to disturb him. But she insisted that her husband should wake up and witness that brilliant light emanating from Swami's navel. At last, Nakul Sen woke up and had the divine Darshan of that effulgence.

In the early years of the Advent of this Avatar, a great devotee by name



Karanam Subbamma used to serve Swami. Her devotion to Swami was unparalleled. In those days, caste differences were widely prevalent and were observed strictly in Puttaparthi. Especially, the Brahmins used to keep distance from the Harijans. Since Subbamma was an orthodox Brahmin, she used to observe these practices meticulously. One day, I informed Subbamma that I would be visiting the Harijanwada (colony of Harijans). Subbamma felt very unhappy and tried to dissuade Me from going to that place, saying, "Oh Swami! Why should You visit that place?" I asked her, "Why should I not go? Why should I not eat the food offered by the Harijans? I will certainly go there." So saying, I started for the Harijanwada. However, as she was a great devotee of Swami and was very much attached to Me, she followed Me. The people living in the Harijanwada were very poor. They had no amenities in their house. They spread an old cloth on the floor and requested Me to sit. After eating the food, I felt drowsy and fell asleep. Thereafter, a big sound emanated from My navel. The people in the house were fear-stricken and ran out on hearing that loud sound. Thus, the Divine power manifests from the bodies of the Avatars in many different ways. Similar is the mysterious power of the hair. That is why the ancient sages had long hair.

Long ago, when I went to some African countries on tour, the devotees there presented Me with an iron brush. However, I had no necessity for it. If ever I put the brush in My hair, it would get stuck. My hair is so thick and strong. This body is nearly 80 years old. Still, the hair on

My head is very strong. Even if one tries to pull out one hair, it is not possible. It is full of immense power. This is the mystery behind the hair of divine personalities and ancient Rishis. In fact, every individual has certain divine powers, which he should try to nurture. One should enquire within and know the reality. Today the youth are not making any effort to protect their God-given energy. They are frittering away their energy in ever so many ways. They waste a lot of energy daily with the result that they become prematurely old. I am now nearing 80 years. Can you say I look like an 80-year-old man? No, not at all. I do not have even a single white hair even at this age (*loud applause*). Especially, the head is the seat of all power. That is why you see an effulgent halo around the head of divine personalities. Hence, one should carefully protect one's head.

Embodiments of Divine Atma!

You are all men and women of noble qualities and are strong in body and mind. But, unfortunately, you are wasting your energy in vain pursuits. You become weak by wasting your energy. When I clench My fist, not even ten persons can open it. Divine power is immeasurable and beyond description. All of you should try to realise your innate divinity and enjoy eternal bliss. The divine power latent in a human being has no limits. Whether it is fine arts like music or any other human endeavour, when it is suffused with divine power, it reaches great heights. Offer your talent to God and sanctify your life.

– **From Bhagavan's Divine Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 10th February 2005.**





A view of grand function of "Bheema Ratha Santhi 2005" in Sai Kulwant Hall.

THERE was virtually a downpour of heavenly bliss in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam when Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba performed the spiritual marriages of 275 elderly couples in a unique function named "Bheema Ratha Santhi" on 10th February 2005. More than 100 of these couples were from Puttaparthi and other nearby villages. A few days before the function, Bhagavan sent a team of doctors to check the health of these elderly couples in villages to ensure their active participation in the function. He also directed the organisers to provide wheelchairs to those elderly couples who had difficulty in walking.

On 9th February 2005, i.e., one day before the function, Bhagavan distributed wedding clothes and gold and silver ornaments to the elderly couples which they were to wear on the day of the function. Sai Kulwant Hall, the venue of the function, was beautifully bedecked for the occasion. There were beautiful

banners with writing "Bheema Ratha Santhi 2005" on all corners of the Hall which was decorated with bright colour festoons and other decorations. The dais was specially decorated with garlands and bouquets of flowers. Elegant enclosures were made in the Hall for seating each couple separately with low level railings on which silk curtains were fixed. Two chairs were placed in each enclosure for the couples, and a table was provided on which the entire Puja material with a photograph of Bhagavan was placed for the performance of the ceremonies. Mango leaves and plantain saplings tied to the enclosures invested the place with auspiciousness and gave the entire Sai Kulwant Hall the look of a vast wedding hall.

On the morning of 10th February 2005, the couples dressed in their wedding garments assembled in Sri Pedda Venkama Raju Kalyana Mandapam in Puttaparthi village, from where they were to come in a procession to Sai



Kulwant Hall, the venue of Bheema Ratha Santhi 2005 function. This unique procession of 275 elderly couples in their finest wedding garments started from the Kalyana Mandapam exactly at 8.00 a.m. At the head of the procession were the Veda chanting students of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. Then came the brass band and Nadaswaram troupe of the Anantapur Campus of the Institute. They were followed by a group of folk dancers in their tribal finery, who enlivened the occasion by their folk dance. This magnificent procession meandered its way through the main bazaar of Puttaparthi. Huge crowds of villagers came out of their houses to see this unique procession. This grand procession entered Sai Kulwant Hall at 8.30 a.m. As the folk dancers took the centre of the Hall for their performance, the organisers conducted the couples to their seats in a very orderly manner. All the while, Bhagavan blissfully stood at the portico of the Mandir watching the couples in their wedding finery and kept showering His divine blessings on them.

The ceremonies for the performance of spiritual wedding of the couples started with the worship of Lord Ganesh. As the Vedic priests chanted the Mantras, the couples performed the worship according to the instructions given by the priests. Each couple was accompanied by a student of Anantapur Campus to help them in the performance of the rituals. The students had received instructions from Bhagavan Himself on the previous evening regarding their duties during the function. Bhagavan had taken care of such meticulous details so that the function had all its traditional flavour and the ingredients of a marriage function. After the worship

of Lord Ganesh, the sacred ceremony of Raksha Bandhan (sacred protective thread) was performed in which the couples tied the sacred thread on each other's wrist amidst chanting of Vedic Mantras. After Raksha Bandhan, the couples took the vow to stand by each other in attaining the goals of life – Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Usually, in marriage the couples take the vow for the first three goals, but in the spiritual marriage the priests instructed the couples to repeat the vow for Moksha also as directed by Bhagavan. This made everybody realise what sacredness was attached to this spiritual marriage. The next ceremony was to put jaggery mixed with cumin seeds on each other's head with chanting of Mantras.

The sacred moment of tying the Mangal Sutra by the husband around the neck of the wife was drawing near. Ocean of compassion that Bhagavan is, He Himself went to each and every couple and handed over the Mangal Sutra to the husbands with His blessings. Before this ceremony of tying of Mangal Sutra, the couples were instructed to perform Lakshmi Narayana worship, silver idols of which were given to them. Before tying the Mangal Sutra they chanted the sacred Mantras as instructed by the chief priest to worship the Mangal Sutra. The auspicious moment came at 10.05 a.m. when the husbands tied the Mangal Sutra around the neck of their wives with the accompaniment of band and Nadaswaram music and chanting of Vedic Mantras. After this, the couples poured yellow rice on each other's head. Everybody was delighted to see this ritual. Bhagavan Himself came to some of the couples and blessed them by sprinkling Akshatas (sacred



rice) on them. After this, the couples exchanged garlands. The grand function of Bheema Ratha Santhi concluded at 10.30 a.m. with chanting of benediction Mantras by the priests.

During the performance of these ceremonies, there was virtually a shower of precious gifts from Bhagavan which the organisers and senior devotees gave to the couples. The couples, their relatives and all devotees were offered a sumptuous and grand wedding feast after the celebration of the marriage. Dinner on the previous night was also offered to the couples earlier.

By far, this was one of the grandest and finest functions organised at Prasanthi Nilayam. No effort was spared by the organisers to make it a most glorious event of Bhagavan's 80th Birthday celebrations. The hearts of the elderly couples were inundated with gratitude for their Beloved Swami under whose Divine guidance this unprecedented and unique function was organised.

This grand function had some very special features. The main feature of this function was that the Avatar of Kali Age Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Himself gave Mangal Sutras to each couple and showered His blessings on them to achieve not only the goals of Dharma, Artha and Kama but Moksha also. Elsewhere marriages are performed in a ritualistic manner, but these spiritual marriages were performed not only for the peace and happiness of the couples but for their spiritual growth and redemption also. Another uniqueness of this function was that it was celebrated for Loka Kalyana (peace



An elderly village couple after the performance of the ceremonies. There were more than 100 couples from villages who participated in the Bheema Ratha Santhi function.

and happiness of the world). It was directed towards establishing world peace and unity of all religions through collective prayers at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan.

The grand finale of this function came in the afternoon with the Divine Discourse given by Bhagavan when He explained the significance of this function and emphasised the need to revere and respect the elders. (Full text of Bhagavan's Discourse has been given in this issue elsewhere.) To add further joy to this occasion, renowned Carnatic musician Padma Shri Smt. Sudha Raghunathan enthralled the devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall with her delightful devotional music. Besides classical Ragas, she presented soul-stirring Bhajans to the delight of all. Bhagavan blessed the artiste and materialised a gold chain with a locket for her. The music programme which started at 5.20 p.m. after the Divine Discourse of Bhagavan came to a close at 6.05 p.m. with offer of Arati to Bhagavan.



DO NAMASMARANA UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

You struggle hard in life merely for the sake of filling your belly. You acquire many forms of knowledge from various fields. But you are not able to enjoy total bliss. So, take refuge in God and contemplate on Him. He will certainly show you the right path.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

WHETHER ONE IS A PAUPER OR a millionaire, intake of food is natural to every human being. But, having attained the sacred human birth, it is unbecoming of man to spend his entire life merely for the sake of filling his belly. Why don't you spend a few moments in contemplation of God instead of spending your entire lifetime in pursuit of physical comforts? There are, of course, a few people in this land of Bharat who sanctify their time in contemplation of God. But a vast majority of people are wasting their human birth in vain pursuits.

Do not Crave for Fleeting Pleasures

Embodiments of Love!

It is not only in Srikakulam district but in many other places all over India that people are struggling to eke out their livelihood. In spite of straining hard, they are unable to attain peace, happiness and comfort. Only those who are spending their time in contemplation of God are able to experience peace and happiness. People suffer because they spend all their time and energy in mundane pursuits. They are not able to enjoy mental peace and physical comforts in full measure. The

body is like a water bubble. It is nothing but a bundle of bones. Mind is like a mad monkey. It is a mistake to strive for the pleasure of the transient body and wavering mind. It is, of course, the duty of every human being to make efforts to keep the body healthy, so that he is not dependent



Namasmarana is the only wealth that lasts forever. Therefore, undertake this Sadhana as a lifelong activity. Whether your voice is good or not, continue to sing the glory of God at least in your heart. Thereby, you will acquire merit that will protect you throughout your life. If you do this Sadhana, God will always help you in all your endeavours, be they physical, moral, worldly, religious or spiritual.



on others. But many people spend their entire life in pursuit of physical comforts and pleasures. There are only a few who are centred on eternal peace and happiness. Human birth is meant to



experience divinity and not to crave for fleeting pleasures. Human body is a divine gift. Instead of making its proper use for adoring God, it is being put to improper use. Do not be under the mistaken notion that body is meant for eating and enjoying physical pleasures only. Certain duties have been assigned to man by performing which he will be able to experience happiness at the level of the body, mind, senses and spirit. One should enquire what the purpose of human birth is. The goal of man's life is liberation.

This body is a den of dirt, and prone to diseases; it is subject to change from time to time; it cannot cross the ocean of Samsara (worldliness).

(Telugu Poem)

The body should be used as an instrument to rise from the level of humanness to divinity. Human life is redeemed only when we experience divinity. There are many people who are making efforts in this direction. But only a few are able to realise the truth and achieve the goal. One may undertake any type of activities but one should always aspire to attain peace of mind. Without peace of mind, every endeavour of man will only add to his restlessness.

Embodiments of Love!

You are really fortunate to have come here all the way from



Srikakulam in spite of your financial constraints and various other difficulties. Swami is very well aware that all of you have come here to experience divine bliss. You



Love is the only wealth that does not diminish. It is the property of God. Therefore, cultivate pure and selfless love. God's love will always follow you wherever you are and will protect you at all times. Do not ever consider that money alone constitutes your wealth. In fact, love is your real wealth. The wealth of love always grows; it never diminishes. Only those who realise the principle of love will be able to understand this truth.



were feeling sad that Swami did not talk to you even after two days of your stay here. In fact, last night you were all praying intensely. In response to your sincere prayers, I have decided to address you this morning. It is not My intention

to satisfy you with mere words. I am ready to extend all the help required to fulfil your aspirations (*loud applause*). Many of you are facing problems due to shortage of water. Some of you do not have even proper food to eat. Food and water are very essential for everyone. Do not give room to worry and anxiety. God is not stone-hearted. His heart is filled with compassion. He will certainly take care of your needs. Swami's concern for you is hundred times more than that you have for yourself. You need not worry at all. Develop the feeling that difficulties and suffering are for your own good. Even insurmountable difficulties will vanish like thin mist when you have firm conviction. Hence, do not be unduly perturbed about your problems. Difficulties come and go. Not only poor people, even a millionaire cannot escape from difficulties. Swami blesses you all that you will be out of your difficulties soon.

Chant the Divine Name Constantly

Consult the elders of your villages and take the help of those who are willing to cooperate with you. I will see to it that there is plenty of water available in the mountainous area of Srikakulam district. Do not be depressed or bogged down by small problems. Having put on the vesture of human body, one cannot escape from difficulties. The physical body may undergo difficulties but you should see to it that your mind rests in peace. Mind is the basis of happiness for everyone. All physical comforts will be of little use without peace of mind. Only through contemplation of God can you attain peace of mind and not by any other means. Hence, chant



Even when you are undergoing difficulties, always think that they are meant to bring you happiness.

Every human being undergoes difficulties only to enjoy happiness later. However, he does not realise this during the period of suffering. But in course of time, when suffering ends and happy days arrive, he would realise the truth. Hence, always remember the truth that sorrows and difficulties are precursors of happy days ahead. In fact, real happiness comes out of difficulties only.



the Name of God incessantly unmindful of the difficulties that come in your way. It is because of contemplation of God's Name that you have been able to experience peace in spite of the innumerable difficulties you faced. God is the refuge of the poor and the forlorn. He is always with them through all the vicissitudes of life. Do not think that God is in some distant land. God is by your side always. In fact, He is present in the inner recesses of your heart. Never think that God is away from you at any point of time. Neither friends nor relatives can come to your rescue. God is your sole refuge. He will protect you under all circumstances. In spite of numerous difficulties, the Bharatiyas never swerved from the Godward path. If Bharat occupies a pivotal position among all

nations, it is only because of Bharatiyas' unwavering devotion to God. There are many affluent countries where people lead a luxurious life, but they do not have peace of mind. It is the good fortune of the Bharatiyas that they are able to enjoy peace of mind. Their devotion to God is responsible for this. It is the culture of Bharat that has been protecting the Bharatiyas in all respects since ancient times. The glory and grandeur of this culture is beyond all description. One who has peace of mind will have moral strength. Hence, chant the Divine Name constantly.

Yesterday you went round the entire village of Puttaparthi singing the glory of God; thereafter, you entered the portals of Prasanthi Nilayam and experienced peace. It is not possible to experience peace by any other means. Hence, never forget God. Sanctify your time by chanting His Name. Contemplation of God should be man's constant endeavour. There may be some jealous people who will try to dissuade you from chanting God's Name. They may say, "What is the use of chanting God's Name? It will not help you to eke out your livelihood. You have to work hard for your survival. So, stop chanting God's Name." Do not pay heed to such narrow-minded people. Never forget God's Name. You may not be aware, people all over the world are facing hardships. They are suffering from physical ailments and mental agitation. Only the Bharatiyas are able to enjoy peace of mind because of their devotion to God. There is no happiness greater than experiencing peace of mind.

Difficulties are Precursors of Happy Days Ahead

Mental peace can be obtained only by constant contemplation of

God. This cannot be purchased from the market. It is only by constant contemplation of God that mental worries can be overcome. This is the experience of people all over the world.

To be born is a worry, to be on the earth is a worry; world is a cause of worry and death too; entire childhood is a worry and so is the old age; life is a worry, failure is a worry; all actions and difficulties cause worry; even happiness too is a mysterious worry. (Telugu Poem)

Only contemplation of God will remove all types of worries. This is the royal path for man to achieve freedom from worries. Adopting any other path in place of this sacred and noble path will only land you in worries and troubles. March forward on this divine and glorious path. All your actions should bring you peace and happiness, not troubles and tribulations. Even when you are undergoing difficulties, always think that they are meant to bring you happiness. Every human being undergoes difficulties only to enjoy happiness later. However, he does not realise this during the period of suffering. But in course of time, when suffering ends and happy days arrive, he would realise the truth. Hence, always remember the truth that sorrows and difficulties are precursors of happy days ahead. In fact, real happiness comes out of difficulties only.

Embodiments of Love!

You are the repository of unlimited love. The more you share it with others, the more it grows; it never diminishes. Supposing, you go up a hill and sing the glory of God. The divine vibrations



will spread to a large area and the people hearing it even at a distance will feel happy and peaceful. Children also feel happy when they listen to music. Music casts its charm on animals too. Even the heart of a stone-hearted person will melt by Namasankirtan. The history of India is replete with instances which establish the efficacy of Namasankirtan as a mean to attain peace and bliss.



Having put on the vesture of the human body, one cannot escape from difficulties. The physical body may undergo difficulties but you should see to it that your mind rests in peace. Mind is the basis of happiness for everyone. All physical comforts will be of little use without peace of mind. Only through contemplation of God can you attain peace of mind and not by any other means. Hence, chant the Name of God incessantly unmindful of the difficulties that come in your way.



Suppose you are digging a pit. When the soil is taken out from it and stacked by its side, it forms a mound. The soil that is dug out of the pit and the soil that is piled up next to the pit are the same. When you redeposit the piled up soil in the pit, it gets covered up. This is what you have to realise today. You need not feel sorry, "Oh! I have fallen into this pit of sorrows and difficulties. How can I

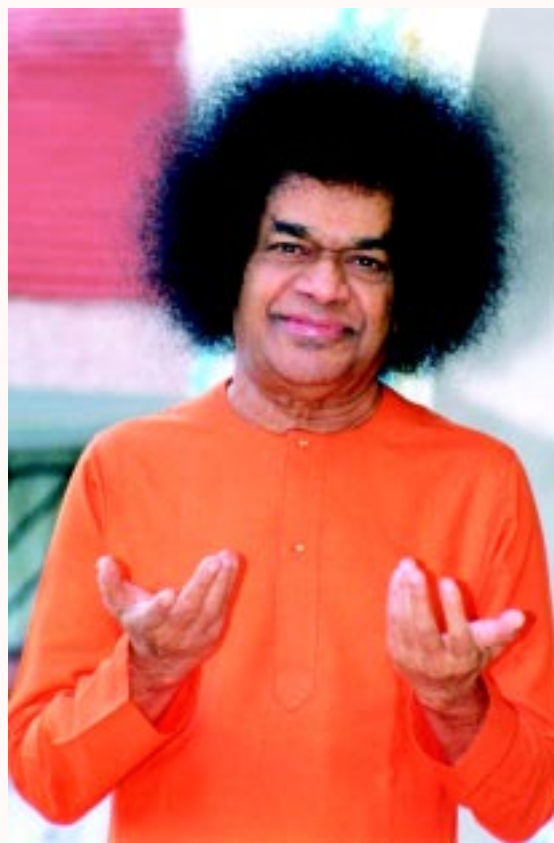


come out of this? How am I to bear this?" Fill by your devotion to God the soil of happiness into the pit of suffering. It is only by your devotion that you can overcome your difficulties.

Love is your True Wealth

Embodiments of Love!

You have come here because of your love and devotion to Swami. Go back to your



places with the same feelings of love and devotion. After reaching home, continue to experience the same bliss that you have experienced in the presence of Swami. Then, you will forget all your difficulties and worries. Happiness and sorrow come in our life to develop in us the spirit of equanimity.



Pleasure and pain, good and bad coexist, none can separate them. You cannot find pleasure or pain, good or bad to the exclusion of the other. Pleasure results when difficulties fructify. (Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Love is the only wealth that does not diminish. It is the property of God. Therefore, cultivate pure and selfless love. God's love will always follow you wherever you are and will protect you at all times. Do not ever consider that money alone constitutes your wealth. In fact, love is your real wealth. The wealth of love always grows; it never diminishes. Only those who realise the principle of love will be able to understand this truth. You have given joy to all by the Namasankirtan you have done yesterday in the streets of Puttaparthi. Continue this Namasankirtan wherever you are throughout your life. Especially, when your spirits are down with sorrow, sing full-throated the glory of God. Never feel diffident to sing the glory of God, thinking that others may make fun of you. Irrespective of what others may think or say against you, continue this sacred activity of Namasankirtan. You will then be charged with divine power.

Develop Divine Love

Embodiments of Love!

I am very happy that you are all gathered here. I bless you that you always have joy, happiness, comfort and peace. Today 5000 devotees from your place have come here to share the happiness of Swami's proximity. All of you, please go to the canteen and partake of Swami's Prasadam

happily. Swami's Prasadam will become Akshaya (inexhaustible) and cause Kshaya (end) of all your sorrows and difficulties. Everything that is granted by Swami is suffused with love. Whatever is granted by Swami is always free. God will never have monetary considerations. Wherever any service activity is associated with money, it becomes tainted. The entire property of Swami consists of love only. This divine love should become your very life-breath. All your past Karmas will be washed away if only you cultivate this pure love.

Embodiments of Love!

Having come here from such a long distance, fill your hearts with love. Some time ago, there was a singer by name Saluru Rajeswara Rao. He used to visit Swami regularly. He remained absorbed so much in music that he would sing while walking in streets, unmindful of what others thought of him. Today his son has come here to present devotional songs in the presence of Swami. Devotional songs fill the hearts of people with overwhelming joy. Rajeswara Rao used to sing a particular song on Sri Krishna melodiously "*Challagaalilo Yamunathatipai Shyama Sundaruni Murali ...*" (Shyama Sundara is melodiously playing His flute on the banks of the Yamuna, while the cool breeze is blowing). His voice as well as his feelings were sweet. Both Rajeswara Rao and another devotee Adi Naryana Rao used to come here regularly. They composed "Sai Katha" and sang those songs melodiously. The lives of such pure-hearted devotees are sanctified,



wherever they may be. Those who sell their God-given talents can never be truly happy. Rajeswara Rao and Adi Narayana never made business out of their musical talents. They sang with love and devotion and experienced bliss. Such devotees, whether dead or alive, attain eternal glory. There was another well-known devotee by name Ghantasala Venkateswara Rao. He underwent many difficulties. But he was always devoted to Swami. Whenever he was in a difficult situation, he used to sing, "Oh God! Won't You pull me out of these difficulties?" Even when he was sick and was hospitalised, he used to sing lying in the hospital bed, "Oh! Lord! How long have I to suffer this agony! Won't You relieve me of this pain?" Once I went to the hospital to see him. I consoled him saying, "My dear Ghantasala! Never think of these difficulties and suffering. These things happen to test your faith in God. You should come out successful in this test by constant Namasmarana."

A devotee who is constantly engaged in Namasmarana under all circumstances will become immortal. Namasmarana is the only wealth that lasts forever. Therefore, undertake this Sadhana as a lifelong activity. Whether your voice is good or not, continue to sing the glory of God at least in your heart. Thereby, you will acquire merit that will protect you throughout your life. If you do this Sadhana, God will always help you in all your endeavours, be they physical, moral, worldly, religious or spiritual. Always pray to God before eating your food. By doing so, the food will be sanctified and its

essence will be assimilated in your body. Your heart will also be purified. That is why, our ancestors prayed thus before partaking of food:

*Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir
Brahmagnou Brahmanahutam
Brahmaiva Thena Ganthavyam
Brahma Karma Samadhina.*

(Brahman is the ladle as well as the oblation. He is the sacrificial fire as also the sacrificer. And finally, Brahman is the goal of one who is engaged in the act of sacrifice.)

When you pray in this manner before you partake of your food, God immediately responds thus:

*Aham Vaishvanaro Bhutva
Praninam Dehamasrita
Pranapana Samayukta
Pachamyannam Chaturvidham.*

(I am present in all beings in the form of digestive fire. United with the Prana (exhalation) and Apana (inhalation), It is I who consume the four kinds of food.)

The prayer thus made invokes an immediate response from God. That is reaction, reflection and resound. Therefore, constantly engage yourself in Namasmarana which will confer bliss on you.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin ...")

– From Bhagavan's Address to Srikakulam devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 23rd August 2004.



CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

A Drama on the Unity of Religions

The Bal Vikas students of Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh presented a beautiful dance drama on the theme of unity of religions in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on the afternoon of 4th February 2005.



A scene from the drama presented by the Bal Vikas students of Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam.

As the story unfolds, a sacred mountain is shown symbolically to represent Divinity. The followers of each religion claim it as their place of worship and fight among themselves until the revelation comes to them through a beautiful song, "Manava Jati, Prema Matamu, Sai Daivam ..." which conveys the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba: There is only one race, the race of humanity; there is only one

religion, the religion of love; there is only one God who is omnipresent.

The drama emphasised the truth that fights between the followers of different religions were meaningless as the source of all of them was one Divinity, though they call it by different names. Beautiful dances and acting of the children, sweet and appropriate songs contributed to the successful portrayal of the theme of unity of faiths. The drama which began at 4.00 p.m. in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan came to a close at 4.30 p.m. At the end of the drama, Bhajan singing started. The Bhajans were first led by Vizianagaram devotees and later by the Institute students. The programme came to a close with offer of Arati to Bhagavan.

Chinese New Year Celebrations 2005

Chinese (lunar) New Year was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam on the 9th lunar day which fell on Thursday, 17th February 2005. On this occasion, a magnificent programme of devotional music was presented by the Chinese devotees who had come from Singapore and Indonesia to celebrate this auspicious day in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. At the outset, a group of ladies devotees highlighted the main features of Chinese New Year celebrations which are held for 15 days. On the New Year Day, children dressed in bright coloured new clothes pay their



respects to their parents and parents-in-law and seek their blessings for the New Year. People exchange a pair of oranges for good luck and prosperity when visiting friends and relatives. Adults give to children red packets (hong bao) with their good wishes. Besides narrating these traditional features of the celebrations, the devotees enacted these sacred practices to the delight of all. Chinese children in their white dress paid their obeisance to their Divine Parent Bhagavan Baba, offered a pair of oranges to Him and received blessings from Him. They also offered a basket of oranges and another of red packets containing sweets to Bhagavan who graciously blessed these which were later distributed as Prasadam to all the devotees.

After performing these traditional rituals, the Chinese devotees started their musical programme. They began with a prayer song propitiating the god forms of Siva, Vishnu, Narasimha, Lakshmi and Varaha. Next, they sang 17 Chinese songs expressing their love and devotion to Bhagavan as well as to Lord Krishna, Buddha and goddess of mercy. In the end, they sang Chinese Bhajans. The pleasant surprise was their Bhajan in Telugu which their lead singer sang and the entire group followed line by line. Bhagavan's love can do many miracles, and this was one which every devotee witnessed when the entire group sang the Bhajan in chaste Telugu!

After this music programme, Bhagavan blessed two speakers to address the gathering. The first speaker was Sri Wee Lin who shared with all his

personal experiences of Bhagavan's Divinity. He also spoke about the Seva activities undertaken by him and his team of Sai devotees in North Korea when it was hit by tidal waves. At the end of his speech, Bhagavan delighted everyone when He materialised a gold chain with a locket for him. The second speaker was Sri Anil Kumar who observed that the word "Sai Ram" was uniting the entire world and was acting as a panacea for all the ills of man today when man was miles and miles away from smiles! Bhagavan Baba, he said, will always come to our support. At this, Bhagavan asked him to repeat what he had said. When Sri Anil Kumar repeated his words, Beloved Bhagavan said, "Not just support you; He will come and literally lift you up." At the end of Sri Anil Kumar's speech, Bhagavan again waved His hand and created a large diamond ring. Sri Wee Lin who had received a gold chain a few minutes earlier was again blessed with the ring too. Bhagavan lovingly slipped the ring onto his finger.

At the conclusion of the function, oranges were distributed as Prasadam to all the devotees. Another traditional Chinese Prasadam of red packets containing sweets was also distributed. Bhajans started after the distribution of Prasadam. The function came to a happy conclusion with Arati to Bhagavan at 5.00 p.m.

A Scintillating Mridangam Recital

The devotees at Prasanthi Nilayam had a rare treat of Mridangam music when Mridangam maestro Padma Bhushan Sri Umayalpuram Sivaraman of Chennai gave a scintillating



performance in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the afternoon of 19th February 2005 in Sai Kulwant Hall. The Principal of Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music, Sri R. Krishnamurthy sang various Ragas to the accompaniment of Sri Sivaraman who gave a solo performance also. It was a thrilling moment for both the artistes when Bhagavan expressed His appreciation by applauding the emotional finishing of the song 'Devadi Deva' in Sunada Vinodini Raga. The scholarly rendering of Purva Kalyani Raga Kriti 'Parama Pavana Rama' also drew ovation from the devotees for the brisk Swarakalpna and the scintillating Tani Avartam of Sri Sivaraman. The programme which started at 3.25 p.m. enthralled the audience for over half an hour and came to a close at 4.10 p.m. At the end of the programme, Bhagavan materialised a beautiful gold bracelet for Sri Sivaraman. Bhagavan also honoured him and Sri Krishnamurthy with a silk Dhoti, and gave clothes to Sri Ajit Prasad, a student of Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music who very ably supported Sri Krishnamurthy in vocal.

Thyagenaike Amrutatthwamanasu: A Drama

The students of Brindavan Campus of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning enacted a beautiful drama on the theme of sacrifice in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 24th February



A scene from the drama "Thyagenaike Amrutatthwamanasu" (only sacrifice grants liberation) enacted by the students of Brindavan Campus of the Institute in Sai Kulwant Hall.

2005. Taking several episodes from the Puranas and the freedom struggle of India, the drama portrayed how the people of Bharat practised the ideal of sacrifice to set the highest standards of noble and ideal life. Episodes from the lives of Karna, Bharata and freedom fighter Khudi Ram Bose were presented in a realistic manner to show the idealism of the Bharatiyas that it was only sacrifice which could lead man to immortality. The drama successfully depicted through these episodes and the transformation of a young painter how this sacred land of Bharat was Punya Bhumi, Karma Bhumi and Thyaga Bhumi (the land of merit, action and sacrifice). Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba sat through the entire performance and gave the participants the coveted opportunity of group photo with Him at the end of the drama. The drama which started at 4.15 p.m. came to a conclusion at 5.35 p.m. with Arati to Bhagavan. Prasadam was distributed to all in the end.



TSUNAMI RELIEF WORK BY THE OVERSEAS SATHYA SAI ORGANISATIONS

THE FLOWERS of Bhagavan Baba's grace and blessings were in full bloom as the Overseas Sathya Sai Organisations continued to respond with love and compassion to the needs of the victims of the tsunami disaster.

Sri Lanka

Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Committee initiated a disaster relief effort, providing medical treatment and counselling for the needy. An eighteen-member team of doctors, nurses and volunteers from the USA and Canada under the leadership of Dr. Mahesh Ghayal departed for Sri Lanka on 29th January 2005. Upon arrival, they met the leaders of Sri Lanka Sai Organisation and several villages near Batticaloa were identified as areas that were in great need of assistance. The team discerned their needs and delivered the required services to the stricken communities. Functioning as a unit of Sai selfless workers, they provided comprehensive aid in the form of medical treatment, psychological counselling and socio-economic assistance to the survivors of the catastrophe. Most importantly, they provided Sai love.

The flowers of Swami's grace appeared in many shapes and hues. Children were comforted and counselled. One mother and father lost four young daughters, only one son survived. The parents were despondent and had lost their will to live. The team members gave them psychological

counselling, Swami's Vibhuti, love, hope and encouragement. The next day the father emerged from his profound depression, the mother came for Bhajans and the son who survived remembered how to smile.

Dr. Allen Levy conducted a workshop for members of Sri Lankan Sai Organisation so that they could continue the uplifting service after the team left. These workshops on relief and rehabilitation work were interactive and inspirational. The team counselled more than 1400 men, women and children. Medical clinics were conducted in tents and the team treated 108 patients.

The team distributed bed sheets, clothes, bicycles, sewing machines, items for



Distribution of bicycles by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Sri Lanka.

personal hygiene and toys for the children. School uniforms and school supplies were given to the students. Food was served to the people in the nearby Sai



Centre and in addition food packages were distributed to people in the relief camps with love and humility, emulating the Grama Seva performed by Swami's students.

Gayatri Mantra was chanted for protection and purification of the surrounding areas. At the camp sites, children sang Bhajans and the National Anthem of Sri Lanka. All who participated, the servers and the served ones alike, were spiritually uplifted.

Indonesia

During the first week of February 2005 a task force from the Sathya Sai Centre of Medan, Indonesia installed two water purification units in an area near Lhoksuemawe, Aceh. These units are very much needed to supplement the limited supply of water provided by the Government. Sri Sathya Sai Central Council of Indonesia is currently working with the Government of Indonesia to assist in the rebuilding of Aceh, which was devastated by the earthquake and tsunami. The Sai Centre of Medan is now engaged in serving the refugees who have been housed in shelters by the Government in the Lhoksuemawe area.

Thailand

On 29th December 2004, a team of twenty-five Sai devotees left the capital for the South. They travelled in one of the Sathya Sai School buses and another vehicle. The bus went straight to Krabi, one of the worst hit areas in Thailand, and preparations were made to open a kitchen for distribution. Medical supplies, clothing, blankets, water and food were taken to the site.

All volunteers met the local people and a plan of action was conceived. The plan included three areas in which Sai service was very much needed. The first was at the Pracha Santhi Suk Foundation, which had been converted into an area to receive the remains of hundreds of people who did not survive the tsunami. Sister Lorraine Burrows and other Sai devotees worked from morning until night assisting the people who were searching for their relatives. There was a desperate need for volunteers who could speak both English and Thai as well as other European languages in order to assist the thousands of foreign visitors who were looking for their loved ones. The second area was at Krabi hospital. Here also there was a great need for translation and understanding for the patients and foreigners in the hospital.



Sai devotees engaged in preparing food. The devotees prepared food from morning till evening for distribution in Thailand

The hospital also served as one of the focal points for the distribution of food, medical supplies and clothing. The third area was the preparation and



distribution of food. Devotees worked from morning till evening preparing food. More than one thousand boxes of vegetarian food were distributed everyday.

On 23rd January 2005, a medical camp was held in a school in Chengdau, a district 80 kms from Chengmai. 262 people were seen by the medical team and medicines were given to patients. Bhajans were sung during the whole session. Clothes, quilts, slippers, eating utensils and toothbrushes



Sai volunteers distributing blankets to the victims of tsunami in Thailand.

were distributed to 300 people. Food was served to 720 people, and all felt uplifted.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba says, "It is not so much that other people need our service, but rather we who need opportunities to serve." We, His children, are grateful for the opportunities He gives us to serve God in man and help us realise and manifest our divine nature.

– Prasanthi Council

B H A R A T

Andhra Pradesh: Srikakulam district conducted a veterinary camp in Kattula Kaviti village treating 1256

animals and vaccinating 192 calves. It carried out a free medical camp treating 362 patients, conducted Grama Seva in 15 villages giving food provisions known as Amritha Kalasams (each containing 5 kg rice, 1 kg dhal, 1 kg oil and 1 kg tamarind) to 38 selected poor families. These families were also given cooking vessels, Saris and Dhotis. In one of the villages a drinking water well was dug. The district organised Sri Sathya Sai Divya Sandesh Maha Sabha in Sankili village inviting people from 92 villages. 5230 people took part in the meeting held on 23rd January 2005, in which significance of Nama Sankirtan, Seva and Bhagavan's message (full text given elsewhere) given on 23rd August 2004 to the devotees of the district at Prasanthi Nilayam were explained. This district opened 2 new Bhajana Mandalis in Ondrujola and Ohorlangi villages in January 2005.

Hyderabad district conducted a veterinary camp in Veera Reddy Palli village on 23rd January 2005 treating 150 cattle. It carried out a free medical camp examining 500 patients and giving free medicines and identified 19 cataract cases to be treated at Hyderabad. This district started an extended school building at Nagayapalli Thanda built under Sri Sathya Sai Gurukula Seva Yajnam. On this occasion, Narayana Seva was carried out to 1000 people. Notebooks and pens were given to all school children. The school children trained by Bal Vikas Gurus took part in the cultural programmes arranged on the day.

Kurnool Samithi conducted a free kidney check-up camp and advised 12 patients on follow-up treatment on 9th January 2005. This district conducted



a health check-up of 62 inmates of Bharat Seva Asramam; they were also provided toothbrushes, pastes, tongue cleaners, steel plates and glasses. The district conducted a neurology camp treating 15 patients on 16th January 2005. It carried out Narayana Seva for 58 people on 23rd January 2005 and provided drinking water in Burujula village by digging a borewell on 27th January 2005.

Medak district distributed sweets and fruits to 350 prisoners in the District Central Jail at Sanga Reddy town after conducting Bhajan and Satsang. Similarly, 100 prisoners in Siddhipet Jail were given sweets and fruits on 25th December 2004. This district distributed blankets to 80 selected poor persons, did Narayana Seva to 800 people and performed two free marriages giving the necessary material to the couples on 1st January 2005 at Siddipet. This district conducted a medical camp treating 900 persons and giving free medicines. It also distributed Sai Protein food to 600 children.

Assam, Manipur and N.E. States: In order to arouse public awareness about Bhagavan Baba's mission and to spread His message of love, Tinsukia district of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations of Assam, Manipur and N.E. States and other neighbouring districts organised a two-day devotees meet on 4th and 5th of January 2005 at the oil town, Digboi. The programmes included a procession, Bal Vikas cultural programme, exhibition, public meeting, etc.

The people of the town were thrilled at the huge rally of around 400 persons starting from the old Delhi Public School premises, the conference venue. It went through the main roads of

Digboi with banners of messages of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Around 300 devotees attended the conference on both the days. This unique public function generated unprecedented enthusiasm in the area and it was a happy augury that the youth and the Seva Dal volunteers shouldered various responsibilities with zest. The cultural programme of Bal Vikas students was appreciated by the large number of audience.

Delhi: A short-term winter course on Indian Culture and Spirituality for college students was conducted from 25th December to 30th December 2004 by Sri Sathya Sai Trust, Delhi and Punjab and Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Delhi. One hundred and sixty five boys and one hundred and fifty five girls from Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and Chandigarh participated in the programme. Besides topics on Indian Culture and Spirituality, students were also exposed to the concept of Seva, spiritual games, quiz and other value-oriented programmes. This course was held for the third successive year.

Karnataka: Fourth Anniversary of the inauguration of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield was celebrated on 19th January 2005 in the hospital premises. The celebrations to mark this event were simple but touching. The day started with Suprabhatam in the grand dome area of the hospital, after which the Bhajan group led the Nagar Sankirtan around the hospital and the residential campus. This was followed by greeting the residents in the campus by conducting house visits. Later,



patients in the wards and the CCUs were individually greeted with a picture of Swami and a packet of Vibhuti.

The function started at 10.00 a.m. in the dome area with the chanting from the Narayana Suktam.

The Director, Dr. A.N. Safaya, then gave his welcome address and briefly highlighted the work done by the hospital during the last four years, with Swami's grace and blessings. It was satisfactory to note that the hospital had performed nearly 10,000 cardiac and neuro surgeries, an equal number of cardiac cath procedures and over 2,80,000 consultations during the last four years since its inception.

There was a panel discussion on the achievements, uniqueness and vision of the Institute. The participants were Dr. A.S. Hegde (neurosciences department), Dr. P.K. Dash (cardiology department), Dr. Anil Kumar Mulpur (ctvs department) and Dr. Geeta Rangan (neurology department). Dr. Hegde spoke about the role played by spirituality in the healing process of patients treated in this hospital, which he attributed to Bhagavan. Dr. Anil Kumar spoke about the uniqueness exemplified in the five S's, namely, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Students, Seva Dal, Staff and Self-satisfaction.

As the main function ended, the invitees were taken to the exhibition in the basement of the hospital. The theme of the exhibition was "My Life is My Message". It depicted through pictures, quotations and creatively designed posters the entire gamut of service



Fourth anniversary celebrations of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield (Bangalore) held on 19th January 2005.

projects undertaken by Bhagavan. This was followed by the inauguration and sapling planting of the "Sai Nutrition" garden. This initiative by the Institute would serve in improving the greenery in the hospital campus and also produce fruits and vegetables for the canteen and dietary kitchens. There was a Narayana Seva wherein senior functionaries of the organisation served food to the Narayanas, who were assembled in the campus for the occasion. This was followed by lunch for all the invitees.

In the afternoon, there were three programmes: The first was a magic show for the patients held in one of



the wards. The second programme was felicitation of all the support staff, the silent workers and the pride of the hospital, who work round the clock to ensure that the hospital runs smoothly and efficiently, and is maintained spick and span. Three: there were two friendly volleyball matches wherein staff displayed their athletic prowess for all to see!

In the evening, there was a cultural programme, which began with the group song, "Hum ko Tumse Pyar Kitna..." sung by the ladies staff. This was followed by a Nataraja dance programme and a skit titled "No Service is Small", both performed by the Bal Vikas children of the hospital. After the events, the Director distributed tokens of love and appreciation to all these children, who had put in a lot of effort to make the evening programme a grand success. This was followed by a music programme, which was a bouquet of devotional songs offered at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan by some gifted doctors and staff, who excelled, not only in their area of expertise but also in the field of music. The language mix of the songs was diverse, from Bengali to Tamil and Oriya to Hindi. The visual projections of the meaning of the songs along with appropriate slides served well to heighten the experience of the event. The fourth anniversary ended with Arati. In the heart of hearts, everyone expressed their gratitude to Bhagavan for making them a part of His Divine Mission and silently rededicated their lives for the furtherance of His Mission.

Maharashtra and Goa: Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Maharashtra and Goa made a magnificent start of 80th Birthday celebrations of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba by holding a grand and holy function entitled "Sri Sathya Sai Namasmarana – A Spiritual Renaissance" at Andheri Sports Complex, Mumbai on 29th January 2005. The programme was inspired by the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the importance of Namasmarana for the redemption of mankind in the Age of Kali and to usher in an era of peace and divinity in the world. It was presented by Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, a renowned santoor maestro.

Besides Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, several leading artistes including Sri Suresh Wadkar, Sri Anup Jalota, Smt. Kavita Krishnamurthy, Smt. Richa Sharma, Smt. Padmaja Phenany Joglekar and Begum



Leading artistes rendering Namavalis at the Andheri Sports Complex, Mumbai in the function organised by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Maharashtra and Goa.

Parveen Sultana (all devotees of Bhagavan) rendered Namasmarana Bhajans in the function. The uniqueness lay in the fact that they did not sing individual Bhajans but rendered Namavalis, which are the hallmark of Sri Sathya Sai Namasmarana Movement.



The stadium was full to capacity with 30,000 people, who sat in rapt attention listening to the melodious Namavalis being sung by all the artistes. The laser show on Sarva Dharma Message of Bhagavan was the highlight of the presentation, followed by an Audiovisual show on the major achievements of Bhagavan in the realm of social service. The entire audience of 30,000 sat through the entire show which started at 6.30 p.m. and concluded at 11.30 p.m. Several celebrities including the Governor of Maharashtra attended the function.

The stage was very magnificently created by way of a three dimensional set of Prasanthi Nilayam and the same was looking gorgeous, creating a feeling for the audience as if the artistes and the audience were actually seated in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam. Before the show concluded with Arati, all the artistes and celebrities were called on the stage to sing together, the Namavali dear to Bhagavan, viz., "Mandir Mein Tum Ram Ho Sai, Masjid Mein Noor Mohammed...". This was really unique. Indeed Bhagavan's Divine Presence was felt by one and all during the entire show. All the artistes were felicitated by a memento of crystal glass carrying the logo of 80th Birthday celebrations of Bhagavan. The entire show was covered by ten cameras.

Orissa: In the Annual Car Festival at Puri, 300 Sai workers and Seva Dal volunteers undertook Seva activities which included first aid, canteen and food supply, mobile supply of drinking water, stretcher service, removal of debris and sanitation and cremation of unclaimed bodies.

Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Dharmagarh in Kalahandi district undertook a project to construct two

kilometre long road for the adopted village Birmal. The work started on 10th September 2004 with 150 Seva Dal volunteers of Dharmagarh Samithi and its Bhajan Mandalis. The construction work is being done on every Sunday and it is to be completed before the 80th Birthday of Bhagavan Baba.

Sri Sathya Sai Rural Community Centre cum Cyclone Shelter which started functioning on 6th January 2001 has so far provided free treatment to nearly one lakh persons.

A district level Bal Vikas rally of Keonjhar district was held at Joda from 15th to 17th October 2004, in which 201 students and 40 Gurus took part. The programme started at 6.30 p.m. on 15th October 2004 with Bhajan and cultural show. Indoor and outdoor competitions were held on this occasion on 16th October 2004, a discussion on the theme "Sai Education and Building Personality" was organised which was followed by a cultural programme. On 17th October 2004, a grand rally was organised which covered important areas of the town. In the valedictory session, the participants were awarded certificates and prizes.

Rajasthan: The central objective of Sai Mission is "Love All Serve All". Sai devotees of Rajasthan have adopted a more effective way to spread this basic message to the people at all levels through organising "Sri Sathya Sai Prem Seva Sandesh Vahini". It is Rajasthan Parikrama Programme (a chariot built on a car depicting Sai activities through colourful exhibits displayed all around this chariot). The Vahini glides along

with 400 students from 2-3 schools in busy market places and thickly populated streets. The students



carry placards bearing Bhagavan Baba's sayings.

In the valedictory function, the students were provided with Sai Prasadam and Sai literature specially designed and published for this purpose as gift which reached the parents developing their awareness about Sai Mission. Also colourful pamphlets containing short profiles of the life and mission of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba were distributed to general public. The programme from 9th September

2004 to 25th December 2004 had covered 10 cities, viz., Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, Ajmer, Jaipur, Udaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Padampur, Bhadra and Kota. Cooperation of school management and teachers was conspicuously observed in this programme. Devotees experienced Bhagavan's Leelas during the organisation of this programme while covering 11 villages for door-to-door Narayana Seva.

In these programmes, about 3,500 students actively participated and 40,000 people observed these programmes during Vahini's 95 km Parikrama in cities, towns and villages of Rajasthan.

An 80-hour Akhanda Bhajan was organised by Bhilwara Samithi from 14th January 2005 to 17th January 2005. Devotees from other adjoining Samithis also participated.

State Conference – 2005 of Sai Organisation was held on 6th February 2005 in Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Jaipur. 99 devotees attended and deliberated on three years action plan in connection with Bhagavan's 80th Birthday celebrations and other Sai activities.

Tamil Nadu: As part of 80th Birthday celebrations of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Organisation of Tamil Nadu organised a function at Sundaram on 20th February 2005 to honour octogenarian



147 elderly couples were honoured by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Tamil Nadu at Sundaram on 20th February 2005.

couples. Significantly, this unique function was organised in the Silver Jubilee year of Sundaram. 147 couples of all faiths, including Christians and Muslims, participated in this function, which was presided over by Prof. Rangabashyam, a renowned surgeon and was addressed by a Muslim priest and a Christian priest. One of the speakers was Maj. Gen. Aban Naidu who narrated his experiences of



Bhagavan's Divinity since the year 1958. Another speaker, Sri Ramamurthy, recollected his student days with Bhagavan at Kamalapuram where Sri Mehboob Khan was the teacher who had special love for Bhagavan. A Bal Vikas student spoke about the glory of Bhagavan. To add joy to the occasion, mandolin maestro Sri Rajesh gave a performance for half an hour in honour of the couples. Special care was taken to prepare food for the couples. Besides wedding clothes, the couples were given various other gifts with love and reverence.

A Conference of ex-Bal Vikas students of Tamil Nadu was held at N.K.T. National Girls High School Auditorium, Chennai on 19th December 2004. A total of 744 students (338 boys and 406 girls) and 108 Gurus participated in this Conference. All India President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Sri V. Srinivasan delivered the inaugural address. The speakers at

the Conference highlighted the importance of Bal Vikas in developing values in children and making them role models for a new social order. The participants responded with overwhelming enthusiasm to the inspiring speeches of the learned speakers. This was reflected in the scintillating speeches of six speakers, both ladies and gents, from the alumni. The group discussions that followed and the presentations by group leaders highlighted their deep sense of gratitude to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba for giving to society this illuminating movement for its uplift and well being. All the participants expressed their resolve to work for the spread of this movement and serve Bhagavan Baba. At the end of the deliberations, an action plan was drawn up. The Conference concluded with Mangalarati to Bhagavan in which all the participants joined with lighted candles.

An Appeal to Devotees

Everyday, a large number of letters from devotees all over the world are coming to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Due to His immense love for His devotees, He personally opens and reads every letter, spending much of His valuable time. It is but natural for devotees to relate their problems to Bhagavan and pray for His grace for their redressal. However, it may not be necessary to write lengthy letters to Bhagavan relating their problems and difficulties as though the Omniscient Bhagavan is not aware of the problems of His devotees. *The devotees are, therefore, requested to ensure that their letters to Bhagavan are as brief as possible and to the point, confining to not more than two or three sentences.*

Publisher

ONCE MAHARSHI AGASTYA met a farmer. Though a man of virtues, the farmer was undergoing a lot of suffering as he was mired in the problems of worldly life. Maharshi's heart melted at the suffering of the farmer, and he proposed to him, "My dear! Come, I will take you to Vaikuntha (heaven)." Without denying the offer of going to heaven, the farmer said, "Swami, my sons are very young. I will definitely go with you after ten years."

After ten years, the Maharshi went to him and said, "My dear! The period of ten years asked for by you was over yesterday. Now come with me to heaven." The farmer said, "Swami! During this period, my elder son got married. I will go with you after seeing my grandson." After the passage of another ten years, the Maharshi went to the farmer's house and stood before it. The farmer was nowhere to be found. Maharshi saw a dog near the courtyard of the house. By his yogic power, the Maharshi recognised that it was the farmer who had taken birth as dog after his death. Giving knowledge to the dog with his power, the Maharshi asked, "Will you go with me now?" But the dog said, "My young grandsons do not know that these are difficult times as thieves frequent this place at night. I have to guard this house. I will come to heaven after ten years."

After ten years, Maharshi Agastya went to that house again. There was no dog. The entire house had undergone change. By his yogic power, the Maharshi came to know that the farmer had taken birth as a snake and it was living in a hole at the back of the house. Below the hole was the money hidden in the ground by the farmer. The snake was protecting that money.

The Maharshi decided that this person should somehow be granted liberation this time. He called the inmates of the house and told them, "There is a lot of money under the hole at the back of your house. But first



By his yogic power, the Maharshi recognised that it was the farmer who had taken birth as dog.

you should kill the snake which is holed up there." All the inmates of the house joined together and started breaking the hole with iron rods. The snake was forced to come out. The grandsons of the farmer killed that snake with iron rods. The very persons, for the protection of whose money the farmer took birth as a snake, became the cause of his death. From that day, his attachment to life came to an end. That was the end of Moha (attachment). Did it bring Moksha (liberation)?

What is the lesson we learn from this story? The fundamental cause of man taking birth again and again are his desires and his actions with attachment. In spite of being shown the path of liberation, the farmer in this story did not make use of it. Why? The iron chains of attachment pulled him down!



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