

Dear Devotees of Sathya Sai,

While reading a response that Swami gave, some years ago, to the question, "What should I do if I see a crime?" I was reminded of the observation by the early Irish philosopher and statesman, Edmund Burke, when he said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil, is that good men do nothing!" To put it another way, when good men do nothing, then they get nothing good done!

Swami's response to that question is just as valid today as it was then; perhaps more so.

"Today many are indulging in actions opposed to Dharma and Truth and, on the basis of their caste or community, are promoting strife and conflict in the country. Elders in the nation are remaining mere spectators of all the unrighteous and violent actions that are being done by evil elements. Even the scholars and intellectuals are remaining silent. Persons holding high office are merely watching what goes on. No one, however, is making any effort to stop this menace. They are not resisting the evil elements. It appears as if all their knowledge, position and influence have been reduced to nothing. Such persons, though they may not be indulging in unrighteous acts, are giving encouragement to them. When evil and injustice and violence are being perpetrated, if individuals look on unconcerned, they must be regarded as accomplices in the crimes. In the end they also suffer as much as the criminals. By their passive association, they provide encouragement to the evil-doers. When the good are associated with the wicked and do not oppose them, they share responsibility for the deeds of the evil doers. The Divine destroys even those who either do not oppose or remain passive while injustice and wrongdoing are perpetrated. The Divine will not consider whether they are learned or ignorant, wise or unwise. If they are learned or wise, why did they not stand up for truth and justice? Why did they

remain silent? It means they are tainted by the same guilt. The failure to resist evil is their offence. It is only when we resist acts of unrighteousness and injustice and try to put down malpractices in society that we can claim to be assisting in the task of restoring Dharma.

"Whoever may commit an offence, whether a son, a relative or close associate, one will be free from the taint of being accessory to the crime only if he opposes the wrong action and tries to correct the offender. If, on the contrary, he allows it or encourages it to be done, he will be guilty of abatement."

A Happy New Year to One and All! Ed.

Sai International Centre for Human Values, New Delhi

In December '08, I had the privilege of visiting this Sai Centre and met with General Dr. Chibber, Director of the Centre. He spoke very eloquently on the content of Swami's discourse delivered on 31st May 2008, at Brindavan, in which Swami declared that, 'in the next 25-30 years, the entire human race will become one'. This concept of 'singularity', is well described in a booklet produced by this Centre, entitled, 'Ekam or Singularity or Wahdaniyat'. Gen. Dr. Chibber has also written a book on Leadership imbibing Swami's teachings. The contents of this book have been taken up by the Indian Army and incorporated into their training programmes.

I also met with Mr. Kaw, Dean of the Sai School. This school has 60 children and all areas of each child's needs are taken care of by the Centre, including personal and educational. This is a wonderful example of Mother Sai taking care of such tender hearts.

The Centre has a comprehensive research department and library. To date they have a number of publications on human values and six of the major religions together with books on each of the five values. They run a five-day

training programme for school principals on SSE and integrating human values in mainstream curriculum.

I wish to express my gratitude to Gen. Dr. Chibber, Mr. Kaw, the children and staff, for their warm welcome and imparting information on their work. I would like to suggest to devotees travelling to India, to visit this Centre, to see the inspirational, dedicated and living work being carried out in Sai's Name.

*Rosemary Marron,
Director, ISSEI.*

New Tennis Courts

On 17th December 2008, Swami blessed the Tennis Courts, built to international standards and quality. This was a further landmark day for students and staff in P.N.

Swami had been enquiring about the various programmes of the Annual Sports Meet, which has become one of the biggest functions in P.N.

After blessing the tennis courts, He went into the Indoor Stadium and watched Volleyball and a Basketball match, for 45 minutes, to the delight of students and staff.

People may say thousands of bad things about Bhagawan, but He never punishes them. You may question now, but later in future you will repent for your mistake. No one has recognised even a fraction of His thoughts. They do not recognise the love that comes out of His heart. All should be happy and live in love. We may not have property and wealth, but if we have the wealth of love, we are sure to succeed.

-BABA. (83rd B'day Divine Discourse)

Karmic Laws by Swami

Once a person asked Swami, "It is mentioned that we are bound by acts of your past karma, the so-called fate. Is there any way for us to escape from this fate, especially by the Grace of Divine personalities like Baba?"

Swami smiled and started to explain, indeed it became a fulfilling discourse lasting about an hour.

"Yes, not only man, but all creatures in the universe take birth again and again based on their past karmas. The evolution takes place on the merits of their karma. From birth to birth, man very often indulges in dushkarma (bad deeds) and he will have necessarily to pay for it by way of retribution some time or other.

There is no way of escape at all, from the effects of such bad karmas, which act as the preordained fate or destiny, deciding the birth, the pain, the sufferings, etc. If there have been good deeds to his credit, he will get good rewards of such good karmas. In short, man is the author of his own destiny, from which he can not escape. God may choose to influence or so-often the destiny of a man but in some extreme situations, He Himself decides how far He can come to the rescue of the devoted calls of a man who sincerely repents and engages in Sathkarmas. Or sometimes God can also make things easier for him to pass through the sufferings, which he has to undergo as a result of past bad karmas. Much depends on the efforts of the incumbent.

Man can also overcome the effects of the fate destined for him. By leading a pure spiritual life, he can cleanse his chitha, his intellect. He will then engage himself in 'Nishkama Karma' Seva activities, which will go beyond his self-interests and benefit people beyond him and his family. The results of those good activities will start accruing to his account, which will slowly erase the effects of past misdeeds.

Always engage in 'sath' karmas, engage in service activities, live a life useful to the humanity at large, and then pray to Him. In such cases, God will definitely hear your prayers and will show compassion and reward you with His merciful Grace to mitigate or overcome the so-called fate, to which the human beings are bound in bondage."

If you chant the Gayatri Mantra wholeheartedly, you will never face difficulties or misery in life.

-BABA.

SPIRITS

Devotee: Baba, do spirits really exist?

Shirdi Baba: *Yes. We have nothing to do with them.*

(One night the devotee saw a spectre under a tree, got frightened and thinking of Baba, got courage and went back to his lodging at Shirdi. Next morning Baba Himself, when meeting him, referred to the topic.)

Baba: *What did you see last night?*

Devotee: I saw a spirit.

Baba: *That was I.*

Devotee: No, Baba. It was a spirit.

Baba: *That was I. Go and ask your Ayi.*

(The devotee went and asked his mother, who said that all spirits were under Baba's control.)

Baba: *And am I not inside all of them. They will do nothing (no harm) to us. Have I not told you this last year.*

The desires that cling to the mind are the blemishes that tarnish man's inner consciousness. Control the senses, do not yield to their insistent demands for satisfaction. When a corpse is placed on a pyre, and when the pyre is lit, both the corpse and the pyre are reduced to ashes. So, too, when the senses are negated, the mind too disappears. When the mind disappears, delusion dies and liberation is achieved. - BABA.

Even a Blade of Grass Can't Move!

Several years ago, Swami was going into the rows of devotees and He selected an Indian lady for an interview, who was sitting with a fairly 'grown-up' child but she was sobbing inconsolably. It turned out that this child was not able to walk and must have been ten years old.

I was standing at a distance away from Swami -this was in the olden days before the Sai Kulwant Hall was built.

When Swami selected this lady for the interview, she just couldn't get up as she tried to lift the child, who was quite a weight! As she was struggling, I thought I would rush forward to help, but as I tried to come forward, I saw Swami visibly angry and asked me to get back! I got taken aback and I moved away. Then Swami turned to this child and said, "Walk!!"

Lo and behold, the child started WALKING though not in a perfect fashion. This fairly-grown-up kid, who was on his mother's lap, who had not been able to walk for several years, NOW WALKED TO THE INTERVIEW ROOM!!

The whole gathering burst into loud applause and tears started flowing from my eyes. This is an experience that stands so vividly even today in front of my eyes.

This shows that Swami can do anything at any time but sometimes does not do so instantly. He has his own time-table! He didn't even wait for an interview. He didn't wait for the Vibhuti to be materialised.

He just COMMANDED THE CHILD TO WALK -IN ENGLISH -AND THE CHILD STARTED WALKING. It was truly a moving experience.

Devotion is not an activity to be undertaken at leisure time. Erase sensual desires; clear the heart of all blemish. Then, the Lord will be reflected therein as a mirror.

-BABA.

A Shower of Vibhuthi

My husband was working in Delhi, in the Finance Dept. of the Union Ministry, and he was a non-believer of Baba at the time, unlike I was.

I kept Swami's photo in the shrine room and one day I saw Vibhuthi on the frame

of the photo. It appeared on the hair and looked like a white crown! I had seen such miracles in the houses of the Lord of the Universe.

When I showed it to my husband, he showed no excitement at all and couldn't believe it. Next day he told his colleagues about the shower of Vibhuthi and they all came home to see the miracle. My husband was determined to find out how the Vibhuthi was coming and he called a scientist friend! He consulted him and took the photo to him for scientific analysis!

The scientist examined the photo but couldn't arrive at any explanation as to how the Vibhuthi was coming on the photo. While this was going on, I was worried to know what to do with the sacred Vibhuthi, so I wrote to Prof. Kasturi in P.N., who confirmed that the Vibhuthi was a clear indication of Swami's presence and advised me to keep the photograph in the shrine room.

As the days passed, the shower of Vibhuthi increased and one day found it stopped and the Holy Nectar began to ooze out of the photo!

The flow increased on the Shivarathri Day. We gave the Divine Prasadam to all our friends and neighbours. This Divine Leela continued for three more months. After that we shifted out house and while the photo was transferred to the new house with utmost care, neither the Vibhuthi nor the Nectar appeared again!

(The writer, Mrs. Radha Sreedharan, had been called by Swami for interviews more than 15 times and her family had experienced Swami's Divine Love in abundant measure.)

The age of this body is 83 years. Till today I have not forgotten anything. I may appear forgetful but there is nothing that is forgetfulness in My life. I am the eternal witness. Truth has no hatred, enmity, anger or differences. I have no differences. You consider others with differences. All are equal; all the children of Sathya. Whoever

comes and speaks to Me, I always smile. I am never angry with anyone. Even when I appear angry, it is a pretention to correct you. -BABA.

Dakshina from Shirdi Baba

Receiving Dakshina (money) from His followers, Shirdi Sai Baba used it as a means of teaching and guiding His devotees. Whatever Shirdi Baba collected in the morning, He would distribute in the evening. He would give out specific, but different, amounts to some people around Him everyday. He would pull out money from His pocket without counting it. The amazing thing was that each person present would get the exact same amount every day.

Once, the British authorities wanted to tax the money Shirdi Sai received, and appointed an agent to check on how much He would receive each day. The agent used to get perplexed and frustrated, because, according to his observations, Shirdi Baba would receive 25 rupees everyday but He used to distribute hundreds of rupees!

Sometimes He asked for money as a way of reminding the devotees to pay off any forgotten commitments, or to highlight their weaknesses and bring about change in them.

Shirdi Baba used to say; *"I never take money unnecessarily, nor do I take from everyone. I ask only those that Allah points me to. Actually the person that gives me money is planting seeds for a better future. Money is there to do good to others and to progress on the path of dharma.*

If money is spent only for personal comforts, such use of money is a waste. What you have is given by God, and now is being asked by God. By giving money, the person attains Jnana (spiritual wisdom) and increases his devotion.

What do I do with money? I give back ten times more!

Acquire good qualities. Shed your narrow outlook. Cultivate a broad

vision. Today the foremost need is to develop the spirit of sacrifice. You are not expected to give away all your wealth and possessions. What is required is a sense of compassion at the sight of a suffering being. When the heart melts, that itself becomes sacrifice. What we witness today is not the melting of hearts, but their hardening.

-BABA.

Providence

Baba: *People must put full faith in the Lord's Providence. They should not worry about food and clothing. Do not waste your life on these.*

In the abode of my devotees, there will be no dearth of food and clothing.

(St. Mathew's Gospel, ch. V125. "Take

no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat and body than raiment?)

If you sow the seed of bitter lime, how can you, later, expect to reap sweet mangoes? -BABA.

From Kenya With Love

Daniel Otieno of Kenya, grew up as a Christian, and studied different branches of the Christian faith. While at university he visited a friend who owned an electrical store. While his friend attended to a customer, Daniel noticed a photo on the wall and read the quotation beneath the picture and "I was blown away by the power of its wisdom".

"I thought He was some kind of philosopher or a highly educated person. My friend told me who it was and gave me a book called *Education In Human Values*" by Loraine Burrows from the Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Thailand.

"One Saturday morning, I woke up and started reading it. I did not put it down until I was through...that weekend I asked for another one. He gave me *Man Of*

Miracles by Howard Murphet. I read it within a day and I wanted to meet this Sai Baba immediately. After a period of time, I finished my university (with a degree in education). That's when my friend told me that there was a Conference in Puttaparthi for teachers!"

Arriving in P.N. in May 1988, while Daniel was smitten by Sai's wisdom, he still harboured some scepticism about the possibility of divinity incarnating in human form. "Because being a Christian, the concept of Avatar is very alien. Apart from Jesus Christ, we do not know any other reincarnations of God. So it was very unusual for me, who has been brought up as a Christian, to have this scepticism", he said.

"The moment I saw Swami, an intense feeling of warmth came through my heart and I just felt this deep feeling of love...it was heavenly." Once the instrumental *darshan* music came on and the beautiful form of Sai gently gliding by, Daniel Otieno was not the same person. "I imagined myself in heaven. This was something that was beyond the usual," he accepted.

During the weeklong trip, Daniel had a deep yearning to have a personal audience with Baba. On the very last day, that dream too came true.

He explained, "Swami took us inside the room. He said, 'OK, boys from Kenya, how are you? Very good boys, very happy boys, but only one problem, you complain too much. Because, when you are out there you are grumbling, doubting, if Swami is going to call us?' Swami told us exactly what we were talking about when we were outside."

Swami demonstrated concern for his poor health and advised him to 'Eat more and eat well. Why are you so thin like this?'

Otieno admitted that at that time he was extremely emaciated and rather unconcerned about his health. He hardly cared about the well-being of his body, which Baba says, is the temple of God.

His immediate response to Baba's motherly concern was to quit smoking forever. Even before he stepped out of the interview room, he had resolved to take better care of his health. Otieno currently serves as the Principal of the Sathya Sai School, Uthuru in Nairobi, Kenya. He is also the Deputy Director of African Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Nairobi campus.

Man is varily God. But man is not able to know his true nature. Education leads to only argumentation. Modern education is not conferring the knowledge of the Self. Parents spend lakhs and lakhs to send their children abroad for studied. But they return totally spoilt. There is no need to go abroad. What is available in Bharat is not available elsewhere. The greatness of Bharat is beyond estimation. The kind of fortune that you find in Bharat is not found anywhere.

-BABA. (Convocation '08)

How To Summon God

Moorthy, Sri Kasturi's son, was doing research in Geology, when he had to tour forest areas in Assam, North-East India. On one occasion, when he was alone, a wild bear noticed him and started closing in on him.

Moothy started running but the animal continued to chase him and as he ran faster over rocks in his desperate flight to safety, he tripped and fell, but continued to cry loudly, "Baba! Baba!"

Moments later a truck appeared from nowhere and Moorthy found safety in the cab.

Many months later while visiting P.N. Swami told him, "*I received your phone call and dispatched a truck. Did it reach you on time?*"

Another incident is worth mentioning here. One night Pedda Bottu, a great devotee of Swami, was sleeping under a tree opposite Swami's residence. As it began to drizzle, she went to the veranda outside Swami's room and prepared to

sleep there. As she was making her bed, she was muttering to herself, "Om Sri Sai Ram," as a matter of habit. Swami came out and asked her, "*Why won't you allow Me to sleep?*"

Pedda Bottu said, "Swami, who stopped you from sleeping?"

"*When you're summoning Me,*" retorted Swami, "*how can I go to bed and sleep?*"

The poor lady explained, "But I was in the habit of doing *Naama Smaran*, whispering to myself and didn't intend to call You."

Swami told her, "*What does that JAPAM mean? It amounts to calling Me only! Naama Smaran is no different from summoning God!*"

(P.S. Incessant NAAMA SMARAN of a deity filled with longing, anguish and love for God, elevates the devotee to a level that he attains the form of that deity itself! -BABA)

The inner voice is another name for the Buddhi (intellect). Man is guided by this inner voice in the conduct of his life, Whenever problems arise, he awaits the directives of the inner voice. If satisfactory answers are not forthcoming from his inner voice, he will have no satisfaction in life. In other words, one's satisfaction with the external world, is a function of one's satisfaction with one's inner world, represented by the inner voice. Sometimes you hear people saying, "My conscience is not satisfied", or "My conscience does not approve of this". Here, conscience refers to this inner voice. Only when you follow the dictates of your conscience can you reach the right destination. -BABA.

Two & A Half Year Old With Swami

Howard Murphet writes, "At Prasanthi Nilayam in 1967, I met Mr. Russi C. Patel, a Parsi of Bombai, and his wife. From them I learnt the story of the little daughter, Ketu."

At the age of 2.5 years, Ketu could not speak, walk or even stand. She

had been given various kinds of medical treatment, including modern drugs and physiotherapy. But nothing seemed to have any effect. The source of the trouble was a mystery. Some thought it was a matter of mental retardation; others said that it was some kind of unknown deep-seated nerve trouble.

This was the state of affairs in Feb. 1965, when Mr. Patel decided to go to Parthi and see Sai Baba. His wife, who was a very orthodox Parsi, was not in favour of the idea, thinking it was a waste of time and money.

Sivaratri festival was on when Mr. Patel arrived at the ashram and huge crowds were there. Several times he wrote a note, intending to hand over the note to Baba as the latter passed through the crowd near him, but each time, when he saw the little figure with the luminous face, full of light of understanding, he decided that it was not necessary and tore it up. 'When Baba wants me He will call me up,' he told his friends.

But the days passed and Baba never called him. Streams of people were going in to see Swami but not Patel. Then one morning, a few days after the creation of Sivalingam, it was announced that there would be no personal interviews. However, Baba came over to the balcony and gave blessings to all the devotees before they went home. Mr. Patel felt the great compassion pour into the crowd and into his own heart.

Yet in the train on the homeward journey his faith and spirits sank to a low level. He thought of the time he spent there and the chances of speaking to Baba he missed. He thought of his poor little daughter still unable to stand or utter a single word. He imagined his wife's reproaches about the time and money he had wasted. He arrived at the door of his house, very depressed.

When he opened the door, the first sight his gaze met was little Ketu, who could not even stand when he left, walking down the hallway to meet him, calling out, 'Daddy, Daddy'. He picked her up,

embraced her and then embraced his wife, while both wept with joy over the miracle that had somehow taken place!

On checking the facts with his wife, Mr. Patel found that Ketu had first began to walk and speak on the day before he arrived home, -just after Sai Baba had given His Blessings from the balcony to the assembled devotees!

Some time afterwards, Mr. Patel took his wife and daughter to see Baba when Swami was on a visit to Bombay. In the midst of the many thousands that crowd around Him in that metropolis, Sai Baba saw them, and in the words of Mr. Patel, 'greeted the little girl as if she was an old friend returned after a long absence'. He took her on His knee, materialised some vibhuti and put it into her mouth. After that her speech improved greatly and she began using longer words!

All this narration underlines the basic concept that He is not in Parthi alone and He does understand our problems without them being physically expressed. A sincere prayer would certainly move Him to make wonders.

Sourced: "*Man of Miracles*" by Howard Murphet

**As is the food, so is the mind.
As is the mind so are our thoughts.
As is the thought, so is the action.
As is the action, so is the result.
-BABA.**

Mercy to Mad Dog

In Viasak, 1917, a small dog got bitten by a rabid dog, and began to chase big dogs. The villagers, clubs in hand, chased the little dog, that ran through the streets and finally got into Dwaraka Mayee and stood behind Shirdi Baba and mane Him his sanctuary.

Villagers: 'Baba that dog is mad. Drive it out and we will kill it.'

Baba: '*You mad fellows, you get out. You want to persecute and kill a poor creature?*'

Thus Shirdi Baba saved the life of that dog, and it proved to be not rabid.

Source: 'Sai Baba Charters and Sayings'

Love is God. Where love is, there God certainly is. Love more and more people, Love them more and more intensely, transfer the Love into service and transform the service into worship that is the highest discipline in spirituality. -BABA.

The Sindhi Advocate

Once an advocate, who was a chronic smoker, arrived at P. N.. Due to his habit, cancer had afflicted his throat. Doctors advised surgery along with radiation and chemotherapy. This advocate wanted Swami's permission before beginning the treatment.

The ever-merciful Bhagavan invited him into the interview room and asked him to hold his palms together to form a bowl. The Swami materialised, and poured a large quantity of Vibhuti into them and asked him to eat it all! It was dark in colour and tasted like bitter gourd. Swami affectionately cajoled and persuaded him to finish it.

After the interview, the advocate went into the canteen to have a cup of coffee. When he was there his eyes fell on nearby 'Pakodas' -a savory crisply fried in oil. Unable to resist, he ate a plateful. For a long time, due to the pain in his throat, he had not been able to eat properly despite his strong taste for food. But now he was able to comfortably eat, taste and relish the food! When he probed with his fingers inside his mouth, at the cancer affected spot, he *felt no pain at all!*

He realised that the cancer had gone and was totally overwhelmed. Tears flooded his eyes as he remembered Swami's mercy.

When he was again called for an interview the next day by Swami, the advocate fell on his knees and expressed his gratitude to Him. He told Swami that he was proficient in Sindhi language and begged to be permitted to translate and publish the Sindhi edition of *Sanathana Sarathi*, monthly magazine.

Swami replied, *"It's only for that purpose that I've made you come to Puttaparthi!"*

From then on the blessed person has been translating and publishing *Sanathana Sarathi*, in Sindhi!

Your mission has begun. Only those whom I have called can serve Me. I have prepared you for this work over many incarnations. I have drawn you to Me. As you perform your silent work, I will embrace you to My heart and henceforth your soul shall be lifted up and your eyes will reveal My presence. Your example will be that of ANGELS!

- BABA.

Stephanie Cappitelli's Experience

(This was a personal experience of Stephanie Cappitelli shared at the SSB Centre of Manhattan)

"During a visit to P.N., I was sharing a room in one of the round buildings. While I had known my roommate before this trip, we found ourselves so compatible that we went to *darshan* and ate our meals together. But on one occasion my roommate wanted to leave early to meet a former friend before *darshan*. So I stayed in the room. When I was ready to leave, imagine my chagrin when I discovered my roommate had inadvertently locked me in.

Now I was in a real predicament. No one else was around. I was alone, locked in my room and very upset. I would be missing *darshan*, trapped, perhaps for hours, as my roommate would not be back for two hours of *darshan*, the hour or so for dinner and another hour or two for shopping in Puttaparthi. I panicked and began to cry, bemoaning my fate. It was in this terrible state of mind, feeling like a victim, that I noticed a small hole in the window screen. An insect, like a wasp or a bee, had come into the room, adding another worry - that of a bee sting. I prayed to Swami, trying to accept His will. I also prayed for help to get out of the room.

After a while I calmed down and became fascinated by the bee. It was obviously distressed at being trapped inside the room, and seemed desperate to get out. It kept banging against the screen in its attempt to do this. Each time it failed, it flew back into the room and tried again. It did this over and over again. Finally, after many attempts, it found the hold it had come in through and flew out of the window.

Watching this, I realised that nothing happens in P.N. without reason. Everything is a message from Swami. What was the message of the bee? Surrendering is not feeling like a victim. Surrendering is accepting your circumstances and doing the best you can, leaving the results to Swami. So I began to do something for myself and not just wait for a miracle. I cried out, shouting for someone to come and help me. Soon a man sweeping the hall heard me and came over and opened the latch.

I made afternoon *darshan* on the time. And I learned 'to bee' an active participant in surrendering. I had taken the first step towards Him.

This word 'surrender' has been misinterpreted and people promote idleness in the name of surrender.. We think that our mind, thought and body have been surrendered to the Lord. This in fact is not true and is in the direction of deceiving the Lord. We are undertaking to cheat the Lord. Your mind is not under your own control and under such circumstances how can you hold it and give it to the Lord. You have no control over your own body. If you have a small cut, blood oozes from the body and you run to a doctor asking for a bandage.

If this is your body and if you have complete control over it, why is it that you are not able to control the outflow of the blood. In this context to say that you have surrendered your mind and body to the Lord, is a statement which is un-true. The word surrender conveys that there is someone who gives and someone who

accepts and that you are surrendering to someone. There is a feeling of duality implied in this word surrender. A man with a dual mind is half-blind. In this manner, while he remains with this dual thought, how can he recognise the non-dual aspect.

-BABA, 1974.

Prisoners to get Programmes on Spirituality

The volunteers of Sri Sathya Sai Org., put together a programme for inmates of Puzhal prison in Chennai, to celebrate the New Year.

"The volunteers staged a play on Buddha's life, which showed how love can transform a person. The play had a deep impact on the inmates, so we thought that if Sri Sai Baba could talk to the prisoners, it would have a greater impact," said R. Nataraj, director-General of the prisons. Sai Baba is expected to visit the State in a couple of months and the department is planning to invite him to the prison.

The state President of the Sai Organisation said, "We realised that if we introduce spiritual ideas into the human mind, it brings about a change in any person. So we organised this programme for the inmates of the prison," said N. Ramani, state President of the Organisation. People in the age group of 18-35 years, were involved in the programme at Puzhal, which included a one-and-a-half hour bhajan session. The Organisation also distributed 4,500 laddoos to the inmates of all three prisons on the Puzhal campus and donated a set of books on Sai Baba's life and principles to the prison library.

"The department showed interest in having regular programmes. We are ready to prepare the agenda if they send us a written proposal. We know that they wouldn't want to be lectured, so we would be conveying messages by staging plays and screening movies," Ramani said. The programmes would first be conducted at Puzhal. Later, volunteers

from other centres would be asked to attend these programmes to learn how they are conducted and take them to other jails and sub-jails, in their areas, he said.

The inmates received talks on yoga and on meditation, on Dec. 31st.

The centre also donated 135 books on meditation, in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Gujarati, to the Puzhal prison library.

On Dec. 25th, in a first-of-its-kind initiative the department allowed inmates of all eight Central prisons, sub-jails and Borstal schools, to meet their family members between 9am. and 4.30pm. Being a national holiday, the prison is usually closed to outsiders on Dec. 25th

When the magnet does not attract the needle, the fault lies in the dirt that covers up the needle. When the Lord does not approach the devotee the fault lies in the heart of the devotee; it is not pure enough. -BABA.

The Safety Pin

Mrs. Jayasri Balakrishnan narrated the following; "1966 was a very special and auspicious year for us. It was the year that brought us to Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Since then, we have learnt to leave all our burdens on Him. Our lives have thereby become enriched and secure; the future does not hold any fear or insecurity for us!

"He immediately comes to our aid whenever we encounter difficulties. There are many instances of these outpourings of Grace. But, I like to share with you one wonderful experience of ours, when Baba came to our help as soon as we called on Him.

"We were returning from His Presence on the 18th day of January 1968, from Puttaparthi to Madurai. We started our journey after the Darshan in the morning. My husband, our three children and I were in the car. Our youngest was three years old then.

"We were about 30 miles from Salem, where we proposed to halt for the night.

We were already late, since we spent some time in Bangalore. Darkness had fallen upon the earth. Our car started giving trouble. The driver failed to find the trouble and there were no houses or shops anywhere near us. We were stranded in a patch of deserted land. The car had come to a stop. None of the gears could be worked, in spite of the frantic efforts of my husband and the driver. We tried to halt some passing trucks but the drivers shouted back that they did not know much about Fiats. Others turned up their noses at us and drove on! We were resigning ourselves to a night spent in the dark with hunger and fear as companions. But, we had Baba as Guardian. We told ourselves that all will be well.

"Suddenly, a white Fiat car, drove up and stopped just by the side of our vehicle. The car had two persons in it, one whom we took to be the owner. He was the first to speak. He did not wait to be told what the matter was with our car. He asked my husband, rather sternly, for a safety pin and when that was handed over, he instructed our driver, in a sharp and penetrating voice, to get under the car and fix the pin to the nipple!

"The driver did what he was told; it took him only a few seconds - he was an intrepid young man. Then, we were asked to proceed to Salem and take the car to a workshop there. The car started without any difficulty and we drove smoothly on. The other Fiat came behind us for some minutes and then shot forward at great speed and soon vanished from view.

"We reached Salem and took the car to a workshop and there found that the gear rod was broken in two!

"Yes! Broken in two! They wondered how we could come all that distance with a broken gear rod! They took three ours to get the thing welded!

"They found no safety pin and nobody could say where the nipple was! But Baba knew our distress and He saved us.

"How compassionate our Baba is!"

Do not think that God is somewhere in a distant place. You yourself are God. Develop that confidence. However, when you consider yourself as God, you must develop divine qualities. Then only you are entitled to consider yourself as God. -BABA.

The Gold Walls of Shirdi Baba Temple

The four walls surrounding the statue of Shirdi Sai Baba have been adorned with gold sheets weighing 50 kg and embossed with pictures of the 20th century saint (PTI report).

The sheets mounted over the walls, prepared using about 50 kg gold, 50 kg bronze and about 250 kg copper, have been adorned to the temple's trust by a Hyderabad-based businessman Adinarayana Reddy, a Sai Sansthan trustee told PTI. Bangalore-based artist Raja Algar who has embossed the sheets with pictures depicting the saint, six in all, has been working on it since the past four months, he said.

Algar has worked on the designs for many temples including the Tirupati Balaji in Andhra Pradesh, he said. In 2008 Reddy had donated the golden throne on which the Sai Baba now sits, after his wife Sulochana had a dream in which the saint asked her to get it made.

The throne, which cost close to Rs 90 crore (crore=10,000,000 Ed.) was made using 100 kg gold. It was also prepared by Algar.

The temple, the second richest in the country after Tirupati Balaji, see 25% increase in the number of devotees each year, the trustee said. Shirdi Sai Baba temple has collected Rs 81 crore in cash, 120 kg of gold and 440 kg of silver, in the form of donations during the year 2008, he added.

The Dharma that is the heritage of India is the staff of life for all men; it is the backbone of morality and well-being. It is the nectar which can confer immortality. Others may, in their

ignorance, laugh at Indians for taking a stone to be God, but what they do is to elevate even the stone to God It is transformed into God, an act, which is a grand victory. -BABA.

Evil Begets Evil !

Swami was once staying in Dharmakshetra in Mumbai accompanied by Swami Karunyananda. While Sai Baba was in His apartment on the upper floor, Swami Karunyananda was given a room situated on the ground floor right beneath Baba's room.

Swami K. bolted the door to his room and was looking out of the window when he saw a very disturbing scene. Just outside the compound wall, some children were vying with stray dogs to grab crumbs of food from discarded leaf-plates! This scene filled him with surprise as well as distress. "Is it so ironical that human beings were competing with dogs to eat the discarded food when GOD in Human Form was present at that moment in that very building!" he thought.

As these thoughts were passing through his mind, there was a gentle touch on his shoulder, and turning around found Sathya Sai Baba smiling and looking into his eyes!

Swami K. was flustered and said, "How could you enter my room when I had bolted the door from inside?"

Baba countered, "*If I want to come in, can mere bolts come in My way? I've come to take you foe meals.*"

"Swami, I'm troubled by a small doubt. You are GOD incarnate and present here right now in this body And just look there behind that wall where some children are fighting with stray dogs to pick up crumbs of food from the garbage. How is it, Swami?"

Sai Baba explained patiently, "*They have spent their earlier lives in ease and luxury. They disdainfully ate from tables heavily laden with every kind of rich food, pecking a little from this and a little from that plate. They threw away much more*

than their ever ate, discarding precious food. Hence in this birth they're picking up what they earlier so recklessly wasted and consigned to the garbage dump!"

Swami Karunyananda later referred to this incident during his speech on the occasion of the World Conference of Sathya Sai Organisations, at Prasanthi Nilayam, when Sai Baba was also present on the dias.

Today every act of man is filled with selfishness. Selfishness has entered his thoughts, words and deeds. Man lives as a puppet in the evil hands of selfishness. Once under the control of selfishness, how can he ever progress? - BABA.

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