

2013

Sathya Sai Service Organisation

Republic of Ireland, Zone 9, Region 91

**SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER
SEP-OCT 2013**

Dear Devotees of Sathya Sai,

A new Sathya Sai Centre has opened in China, and is situated in a small town called Fung Shun.

It is truly a beautiful and spacious new building and can accommodate at least 2,000 people. "This is the first Sai Centre in Mainland China, established with the permission of the Government and was inaugurated in Oct. 2012. It is located in a small town called Fung Shun, in Guangdong Province, in Southern China.

A person from a small town migrated to Hong Kong years ago and became a leading businessman. He also became Swami's devotee in Hong Kong and started a small prayer hall, for Baba, in this town eight years ago. Subsequently, with the initiative taken by the people of this town and Chinese devotees of Baba, from Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, this Centre was established and inaugurated last year."

The man who takes care of Swami's Centre, is Mr. Xu Xian Li, and is so happy to greet new visitors with a "Sai Ram" and to have this new abode of Bhagavan Baba in China, was pleased to show everybody around. The centre-piece was the altar, above which was a balcony. (This reminds me of the Sai Centre in Ottawa, Canada, which also has a balcony adjacent to Swami's bedroom that overlooks the main hall. Ed.)

Mr Li knocked on the door gently in order to tell Baba that someone is coming to see Him.

The altar is beautifully decorated with pictures of Shirdi Sai Baba and Bhagavan. It is also adorned with idols of Vinayaka and Buddha. Among many pictures of Baba adorning the walls of that building, and one picture of Swami that is special to many devotees, was one that was brought from Malaysia.

Adjacent to the centre, in the compound, is a small guest house where visitors may stay.

Local people also attend meetings there for weekly prayers and they have their own bhajans in Chinese. "They are attracted to Swami's mission since this is more spiritual in nature and not a religious organisation. Swami has all along emphasised that man has to live with righteousness, honesty and as a person with love for fellow human beings and helping them as much as possible."

The Chief of the town's governing council, played a major role establishing this Centre, obtaining permission from their Government.

Once they were taking a person who was critically ill to the hospital on a motorbike since they did not have a taxi and it was mid-night. The motor-cycle stopped on the way. The gentleman prayed to Swami and all of a sudden a hand appeared, accelerated the vehicle, and it started moving again till they reached the hospital where the patient was admitted, the motor-cycle stopped working! To this day he is unable to explain who came to their rescue! He says it could only have been their Beloved Baba! Ed.

For those who spread falsehood about Me derive joy therefrom;

I am happy that I am the cause of their exultation and joy. - BABA

Baba's Identity, Mission and Advent revealed

"This is perhaps the longest period when I kept the devotees wondering and worried. That was because of the heart attacks which had to come later on the Bhaktha, from which also he had to be saved. Then, there is another reason too, why the 8-day period had to be observed. Well, I shall tell you why. That means I must tell you about Myself, about something I have not disclosed so far, something which I was keeping within Myself, for the last 37 years. The time has come to announce it. This is a sacred day, and I shall tell you".

"You know I declared on the very day when I decided to disclose My Identity, My Mission and My advent, that I belonged to the Aapasthamba Suuthra (Code of Conduct) and the Bharadhwaaja Gothra (lineage). This Bharadhwaaja was a great sage, who studied the Vedas for full one hundred years; but, finding that the Vedas were ananta (endless) he did tapas for prolonging life, and from Indra he got two extensions of a century each. Even then, the Vedas could not be completed, so he asked Indra again for another hundred years. Indra showed him 3 high mountain ranges and said, 'What you have learned in 3 centuries form only 3 handfuls from out of the 3 ranges, which the Vedas are. So, give up the attempt to exhaust the Vedas. Do a Yaaga (ritual sacrifice), instead,

which I shall teach you, that will give you the fruit of Vedas story, full and complete."

Sathya Sai Speaks, 6th July, 1963.

Never take lightly the transformation that is taking place as I walk among you... All that My eyes fall on will be transformed. - BABA

Shocking Suicide Figures

Since my article on suicide in the May/ June issue, I have come upon some shocking figures on this subject, worldwide. I was assisted greatly by Sai friends in Vancouver, and Ottawa, with the figures for Canada. These statistics made my head spin! When I first began looking into this subject, I never realised, for a moment, the enormity of the situation.

In the Northern Region of Canada, in the vast area called Nunavut, the suicide rate amongst the native people there is extremely high. In 2011, the community of roughly 2,400 had a suicide rate equivalent to 250 per 100,000 - nearly 20 times that of Canada and far and away the highest in the world! The accounts I have could fill a book.

In Pikangikum, a reserve in northwestern Ontario, one couple lost five of their 12 children to suicide - sniffing solvents and petrol, "Probably half the youth population of the (native) reserve, sniffs," says 26 years old Anthony Quill, a solvent abuse councillor. "I got sniffers who are sent home from school because they smell of gas (petrol). They feel

rejected. That's why they sniff." Young children are seen walking about at night with plastic bags containing petrol or solvents.

The reports I have studied make for incredible reading - very disturbing!

It's an epidemic sweeping most countries; so many people wanting to end this present life cycle. In Japan alone, the 2012 figures were 28,000, which some people there consider good, since it had fallen below the 30,000 figure in the last fifteen years, still startling figures by any stretch of the imagination.

A recently released 52-minute documentary, "Saving 10,000: Winning a War on Suicide in Japan", has attracted a lot of media attention, as it makes for uncomfortable viewing. The overall picture is of a society pressured to bursting point, where bullying is as pervasive in the workplace as it is in schools, where children as young as 8 years old are bullied into taking their own lives, with threats written into their school books!

"Consumers opt to end their lives in order to cash in on life assurance to pay off unaffordable debts, and an outdated private mental healthcare system cares more for profit than for patients' wellbeing," one media article reported. Further, "Loneliness kills so many people in Japan, as does gambling and alcohol."

China's rate is 22.23 people out of every 100,000. A spokesman for Beijing Health Bureau stated, "Our nation has one of the highest rates of suicide in the world!" About 287,000 people kill themselves in that country of 1.3 billion every year,

with the suicide rate in rural areas being three times higher than in urban centres which accounts for 75% of China's suicide total.

Nearer home the figures are no better, with the UK rate standing at 6,045 for 2011, with these being mostly men between 30 and 44. About 23 men per 100,000 took their own lives. And the latest phenomenon is the 'social media' services which have also been linked to the suicides of teenagers in both Ireland and the UK - following online bullying.

Recent figures from Western Australia, are just as staggering, with figures being consistently higher in the rural areas, than the metropolitan areas, as in Canada.

Having received 21 pages of statistics from Australia, I won't go into details other than to state, sadly, that the shocking problem is replicated in most countries of the world. The World Health Org. on violence and health, points to 10 causes of killings, e.g. wars, homicides, then suicide. They also state that 1.6 million people lost their lives to violence in 2,000; half to suicide, one third to homicides and one-fifth were casualties of armed conflicts.

One amazing fact is that last year, more U.S. soldiers were reported to have committed suicide than U.S. soldiers killed in action in Afghanistan!

Should you, by now, be finding all this too depressing, perhaps I should conclude by quoting once again what Swami advised regarding suicide; "In case death is inflicted arbitrarily, you are denying yourself a chance to

work out your karma as early as possible and reach a permanent abode. In suicide, you are stranded midway. It would be a frightening state of affairs for you. There is no vacant space in nature. God has filled space with spirits and other invisible entities. When suicide is committed, they show up and terrorise you!"

Violence in any form is evil and to kill innocent animals is tantamount to blatant savagery.

- BABA

What Happened Before the Mandir Was Built?

At one time, in Puttaparthi, the villagers turned against Swami and the devotees. They dubbed the extraordinary miracles as magic. When He was staying with Karnam Kamamma's house, He found the situation uncomfortable, as some objected to His visiting the kitchen, consequently He never entered the kitchen.

As the house was too small it was proposed to find Him a place to live in Bukkapatnam, but the villagers there refused to give Him a place to stay, saying the village would not prosper if He stayed there.

Swami left the town and began to live in the caves on the other side of the river, near the village of Janakampalli, where He stayed for about six months. He also stayed in a cave near the "wish-fulfilling tree", where devotees visited him there bringing food.

Later, the villagers assumed that He was undertaking austerities to obtain siddhi powers, so they approached the caves to stop Him, but snakes appeared from nowhere and drove them away!

Swami was later offered a small hut owned by the Karnam family on the other side of the river, where He lived. But jealous and intolerant villagers made life difficult for Him, and finally set fire to His hut with Him inside.

Swami was later offered land for His own use and the use of the devotees. This was in 25 July 1945.

When the Mandir was built Swami was taken to the site in a floral palanquin around the town and going to the rear of the building, He placed His hand in the ground and fresh water sprung up and He ordered a well to be dug on the spot. This remained to be the only source of drinking water for the village, and is still in use today.

In 1947, Kanamma recalls, "That night sitting in the courtyard of the old Mandir, Swami told us the importance of the Venugopala Swami temple next to the Old Mandir. He told us that Maharishi Valmiki had meditated in Puttaparthi. In the place where the Old Mandir stood, there was a forest full of Tulasi leaves. Swami revealed that Lord Narayana, as a Rishi, had meditated there. Referring to Himself, He said that the same Rishi has reincarnated now."

Man can realise his mission on the earth only when he knows himself as Divine and when he reveres all others as Divine. And man has to worship God in the form of man.

- BABA

No Place for God!

I always loved the following story of the old negro, a gentle and well respected man, who one day decided he would like to become a member of the church near his home.

He called upon the pastor and spoke of his desire. "My dear man", said the pastor with a touch of aloofness, "I don't think you will be happy here, though I appreciate your good intention. Really, you would be most uncomfortable among my people and I am afraid it would be quite embarrassing to you and perhaps to them. I suggest you think it over and meditate on it, and see if God does not give you some direction."

A week later the old negro met the pastor on the street and stopping him said, "Reverend, I took your advice and prayed and meditated, and finally God sent me a message. He said that I should not bother any more trying to join your church. He said that He Himself had been trying to get in there for years, without success!"

God said to him, "You may ask where I am now and how you can meet Me. But I am within your heart and we can meet without any effort."

Wherever and whenever you put yourself in touch with God, that is the state of meditation. - BABA

How God Answers Our Prayers!

The following story illustrates the depth of Swami's love for His devotees.

Dr. Ahmed was on his way to an important medical conference, where he was going to be granted an Award For Medical Research, which he had recently completed. He was very excited to attend the Conference and was desperate to reach there as soon as possible. Having worked long and hard on his research, he felt his efforts deserved the award he was about to receive.

Two hours after the plane took off, the pilot announced that there was a problem and that they would have to make an emergency landing at the nearest airport. Fearing he would not reach the conference on time, he approached the help desk only to be told there was nothing could be done to help him, as there wouldn't be another flight for ten hours. It was suggested that he could hire a car, and drive down to the city which was only four hours away. To this he agreed although he hated driving long distances. Soon after he left, the weather suddenly changed and a heavy storm began, with pouring rain making it difficult for him to see and he missed a turn which he was required to take. After driving for two hours he was convinced he was lost.

Heavy rain, a deserted road, and feeling hungry and tired, he frantically sought for signs of

civilisation, and finally came across a small tattered house. The door was answered by an old woman, to whom he explained his plight, and asked to use the 'phone. She told him she didn't have a 'phone, nor electricity, but he was welcome in for some food and a warm drink, as it would take him some time to get back on to the right road.

Hungry, wet and exhausted, the doctor accepted her kind offer. While he sat to his meal, she excused herself to finish her prayers. While he ate, he sat watching the woman in the dim light of the candles as she prayed next to what appeared to be a small baby crib.

Feeling that she might be in need of help, the doctor took the opportunity to speak as soon as she finished praying, and said that he hoped that God would answer her prayers. He asked her if there was anything she needed, she replied that God had answered her prayers except one. She said she didn't know why God hadn't answered this specific prayer, but perhaps it was because of her weak faith. The doctor asked if she wouldn't mind telling him what she needed. She replied that the child in the crib was her grandson and that both his parents had recently died in a car accident and that the child had a very rare type of cancer and that all the doctors seemed unable to treat him. She told him of a doctor who specialised in this type of cancer, but she was unable to get to him, as he lived very far away from her. So she was spending her days and nights praying to God to help her find a way to get to Dr. Ahmed, the only doctor, she said, who could treat her grandson.

Upon hearing this tears began to flow down the doctor's cheeks and he said, "God is Great, there was a malfunction in the plane, a thunderstorm hit, and I lost my way; and all of this happened because God did not just answer your prayer by helping you find a way to get to Dr. Ahmed, but He brought him to your house. I am Dr. Ahmed!" Tears streamed down her cheeks, and the woman raised her hands and prayed, "Oh God, how great and merciful You are!"

Reproduced from, "Sanathana Dharma" magazine.

You can reach God through love alone. - BABA

Contemplate More On the Creator
than the Creation

(Sanathana Dharma Magazine)

Dr. Eruch B. Fanibunda relates an interesting anecdote, giving a valuable lesson to all of us. It was in 1976, soon after the summer course in Ooty, Bhagavan spoke to many students of the Sathya Sai Colleges about His childhood days. At the end of His talk, He said that He would tell something of the future, and produced a four inch diameter emblem of India, lined with precious stones at the edge. Each precious stone was issuing a silver line pointing to various future Sai Centres in India. The names of those in charge of these Centres were also written on the emblem.

Everyone was naturally excited to see and touch the emblem and to scrutinise it. The emblem was

passed from hand to hand, and each tried to fondle it reverently. However, Bhagavan was repeatedly heard to say, "I am here...I am here... But I am here." This was an enigmatic statement for Dr. Fanibunda, although students in their excitement did not hear what Swami was saying.

Dr. Fanibunda, however with Swami's Grace explains the message, that God is declaring to devotees, "I am here", but devotees are engrossed with the emblem - the one created by the Creator. Likewise, in our day-to-day work, we are engrossed with the material aspect of the creation, that we almost forget the creator.

The best option to realise the Sai in us, as the Gita teaches us in Chapter X11 - 6 to 20; is to constantly remember His Name and dedicate all our actions with total Devotion to Sai.

May Bhagavan give all of us the strength in this endeavour!

K. Tharmaratnam.

We are not doing any favour by helping the needy and the downtrodden. It is they who are doing us a favour by giving us a chance to do so. - Gandhi -

"I Was Caught In Quicksand" by Vijay S. Prasad

I was studying in Bhagavan's residential school at Ooty. One fine Saturday, my parents came to take me visiting various places of interest. We visited the lake in Ooty,

had a pleasant ride in a boat and then and then visited the famous Botanical gardens. It was around 11 a.m. or so, we decided to rest in the gardens. So, we sat next to the pool, and my sister and I were playing with a frisbee. As we were playing, the frisbee landed in the pool. In my innocence, I jumped into the pool, and noticed to my horror that I couldn't come up. It was quicksand and I was being drawn to the netherworlds faster and faster. Hearing my screams my sister realised the gravity of the situation and prayed to Bhagavan. The next moment, some great force pushed me up and I was able to reach my parents! God takes care of His devotees!

Here is another instance when Bhagavan came to the rescue of His devotees. There was a denotee whose son was employed in a chocolate factory. His work included putting slabs of chocolate under a splitter that split the bars into pieces of equal size and shape. Every time he would push a chocolate slab into the splitter, he would have to take out his hand very fast, or it could sever his hand. One day, as he was pushing the chocolate bars, his hand got stuck and however he tried, it was to no avail. The splitter was coming down to fragment the bar, and with it his hand. The son remembered Swami, closed his eyes and waited for the inevitable. He waited; five seconds passed... ten seconds... nothing happened to his hand! Opening his eyes, he saw something nobody could believe, he saw the splitter had stopped just about an inch from his hand, due to a power failure! Everyone in the factory was amazed!

Later, when they went to Parthi, Bhagavan quipped with a naughty, mischievous smile, "When Sai power comes, all other powers fail."

God takes care of His devotees!

Usually devotees go around the idol or do Pradakshina (circumambulations), but in Parthi it is just the opposite. Here, God goes around the devotees.

- BABA

The Seva Cafe

The following article appeared in the Canadian Sathya Sai Newsletter, Guru Poornima issue;

"Here's a look at a very impressive paragon, Siddarth Sthalekar, who took his will to inspire the best of humanity by opening-up his Seva Cafe, a coffee shop in Mumbai that is run entirely without consumerism. His currency? Love and Seva. Here, patrons aren't charged for the food they're served, instead they are free to pay whatever they want. Or, they can walk out without paying a single penny. It is an ENTIRE enterprise just run by volunteers. This is the gift-economy, an economic system that is the ultimate transformation of our market society. We have here, the proof that customers have kept the cafe running by paying up even when they could have got away without it.

Sthalekar found that there is enough people not governed by greed - something he had set out to test in the first place. Seva Cafe provides a space for people to

practice generosity by recognising the selfless giving of the volunteers. 'When there will be enough generosity in the world, there would be no need for the cafe," he said.

The power of one individual is inspiring and we see it time and time again. Their ability to take a pure ideal and somehow make it accessible to each one of us is humbling and monumental to our own perception of society. It allowed us to re-evaluate what is truly important to us. Of course, Sthalekar showed this through his project, but the prime example is Swami Himself. They recognise the most important concept of all in relation to this topic: Ideas and efforts do not cost any money. When they pertain to the betterment of society, ideas are truly invaluable.

The world is a huge hospital and humanity is bedridden. Some are writhing in the pain of envy, some are bloated with pride, some are losing sleep through hate, some have become blind through miserliness, some are struck down by selfishness; everyone has some illness or other. - BABA

Swami's Grace & Compassion

In a remote village in the northern district of Cooch Behar, in West Bengal, a poor farmer had been diagnosed with a severe heart condition that required immediate attention. The doctor he consulted said that there was only one hospital in the country, indeed the whole planet, which holds some hope for such a person, and the farmer was

directed to Swami's Whitefield hospital.

After a long journey he finally arrived at the Super speciality Hospital where the doctors examined him and informed him that there was a queue of poor patients ahead of him also awaiting operations and it was not humanely possible for him to have the operation done immediately and suggested having it done elsewhere.

But he was poor and was unable to have an operation elsewhere, so he decided to write to Swami and posted it through ordinary mail. He wrote in Bengali about his wretched condition and of how he came to Swami's hospital and concluded his letter with the words; "I came with hope. It is now your will."

A few days later the District President of the Sai Organisation of Cooch Behar got an urgent call from the State President of West Bengal, who in turn had been called by the All India President of the Sai Organisation. Swami had called the President and showed him the letter from the poor farmer. An extensive search was launched for the farmer and eventually he was traced. He received the operation which was successful and fully recovered and very happy now.

The amazing thing was that when the farmer returned home he found the letter he wrote had been returned to his address as he failed to write Prasanthi Nilayam or Puttaparthi, only Swami's name and Andhra Pradesh!

Then what was the letter Swami showed to Sai President? Another Sai miracle!

Swami once stated, "When anyone lifts a pen to write to Me, I know everything that will be written. I take letters only to give My devotees happiness."

Knowledge not put into practice is like food that is not digested.

- BABA

Begin Now!

"The advent of a new beginning is greeted by welcoming a new, and bidding farewell to the old. This is the usual practice in the ordinary world, but this is not entirely a worldly affair. The observance of a beginning is based on statements in the almanac. The almanac is an artificial, man-made work and is not related to anything permanent. The sun and the moon remain unchanged, but the calendar is a man-made device. For the Divine, there is no coming or going; God transcends such concepts. He is the Lord of what is called the "Kingdom of God". Each one has to acquire the proper qualification to enter that kingdom. All are not entitled to enter it, but every person should aspire to achieve that right. That is the essential purpose of human birth. People are bound by their actions in the world. Your actions should be good. Be pure in your speech, develop a sacred vision, and purify your hearts." -Sathya Sai Baba

Prasanthi Nilayam, January 1st, 1999.

Except for God in man, there is no other God. Man is God. God is man. There's no difference between the man and God. - BABA

Attention All Devotees

It was back in 1995, that Michael Goldstein, M.D., made the following entreaty:

"It has come to our attention that several individuals and /or organisations are using Swami's name in association with their healing workshops. They are teaching a "system of natural healing" called Reiki and claim that Swami has approved, blessed, and/or initiated them in this practice. Let it be known that Sathya Sai Baba has not given His permission to associate His name with those practices. Swami has not initiated anyone in any special healing technique.

"Baba has come for the good of all people everywhere. He has said repeatedly that He relates to every man and woman, heart to heart. He has assured us on many occasions that He requires no intermediaries. We must remember Swami's words and not be swayed by the charisma or convincing arguments of people who would exploit."

The eagle is pestered by the crows, so long as it has a fish in its beak.

The crows swish past the eagle to steal the fish from its mouth. They pursue the bird wherever it sits for a little rest. At last, the eagle

gives up the attachment to the fish and drops it from its beak; the crows fly after the fish and leave the eagle free.

So too, when you give up the sense pleasures, the crows of pride, envy, malice and hatred will fly away and leave you in peace.

- BABA (1994)

Animal Matters - July 2013

GRIEVING PARROTS

"...Next take the example of parrots. Conjugal fidelity is the supreme quality among parrots. The firm attachment to each other in a parrot couple is not to be found even among highly developed human beings...the story of how Valmeeki was deeply moved when a hunter killed one of two birds who were a loving couple is well known. When one of the birds died, its mate followed suit, unable to bear the pangs of separation...when its mate dies, a bird will not seek another partner. It will starve itself to death. How many men care to follow the example of the birds in their devotion to monogamy? Many are ready to remarry after the loss of their first wife. The supreme virtue of monogamy is a quality man can learn from birds... Thus there are many useful lessons to be learned from animals, birds and insects." (Sai Baba, Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 30, Chapter 4.)

The following is an article by Mercini Sherratt, for Vedanta Empire's charity incentive.

For so long, animals have been misunderstood by man. Because they cannot express themselves in human language, it has been convenient for many to believe that they are automatons without feeling or intelligence and behave accordingly. This has had disastrous consequences for them and lead to untold suffering at the hands of human beings. Luckily, this attitude is slowly changing because scientists of animal behaviour are very much finding otherwise. They are now acknowledging what many animal lovers have intuitively known all along through their own observation and experience. They are finding that animals have rich emotional lives and are capable of much more complex thought processes than hitherto realised.

Parrots, for example, may have walnut sized brains but they are not actually bird-brained and have demonstrated unsuspected and remarkable cognitive abilities. They reportedly have the emotional age of a toddler and the intelligence of a five year old. Recent research has shown that some can also use the language they learn at appropriate moments and not just randomly, showing much more understanding than previously thought. I personally know of a good example of that. Once a particularly tedious acquaintance was visiting and complaining long and loudly, so much so that her listeners were quietly losing the will to live. Suddenly, my mother's parrot, in another room, screeched out some rude words in Greek in a meaningful way and at just the right moment. It did the trick in that the neighbour, on hearing the parrot's words, jumped up in a fury, gathered up her

belongings and flounced out of the house, never to come back, saying she had never been spoken to like that before in her life. What a good turn he did that day!

A zookeeper once told me that parrots are very particular about whom they mate with. He explained that he had great difficulty in finding Mr. or Mrs. Right for the parrots he looked after because they were extremely fussy and had to feel a real affinity with any prospective partner. As we know they are monogamous, as are swans and some other birds and animals, and this seemed to apply not just to their parrot mates but also to the humans with whom they bond. They are very emotional and become passionately attached. If abandoned or separated from those they love they can suffer deeply. My mother's own parrot literally died of a broken heart when her family had to emigrate and leave him in someone else's care. He was my mother's darling and when parted from his human flock, he refused to eat from that day on. Such was his grief that he just pined away and soon died.

Budgerigars are similar. A young boy I know, once had a couple of budgerigars whom he was very fond of. One day, the female became ill and suddenly fell off her perch and died. Her mate became very distressed. He then stopped eating and soon he, too, died. He could not live without her. Their owner, a young Japanese boy was heartbroken himself and told me that he cried for three days when his budgerigars died.

Lastly, one cannot talk about parrots without mentioning the

famous Alex. He was an exceptional grey parrot who, for thirty years, collaborated with Irene Pepperberg, an American professor of psychology studying animal cognition and trying to establish interspecies communication. Even though Alex was thought to be exceptional, he has opened the doors to a deeper understanding of what parrots are potentially able to do. He knew well over 100 words and appeared to understand what he said. He could do simple arithmetic, name 50 objects accurately, and answer questions about them. He could recognise different colours, shapes and sizes, and understood what the concept of 'zero', 'the same' or 'different' meant. When one of the younger parrots that Irene Pepperberg was teaching, mispronounced the word 'green'. Alex, who was bossy with the younger birds, called out, "Talk clearly! Talk clearly!" Sometimes he acted as her assistant in teaching the younger birds. Like all parrots he was jealous and possessive and became huffy around Irene when she focussed her attention on others. He could communicate his needs for different kinds of food and the places where he wanted to be. There was a tree he liked to look at and when he wanted to do that, he used to say, "Wanna go tree..."

Apparently, during conversations between Ms. Pepperberg and her assistants, he would correct any mistakes they made! His last words, before he unexpectedly died one night, were, "Be good, see you tomorrow, I love you."

The more we learn about other living creatures, the more we can understand what is said in The Holy

Koran: "There is no beast on earth, nor bird which flyeth with its wings, but the same is a people like unto you. All God's creatures are His family and he is most beloved of God who tryeth to do the most good to God's creatures."

Serve man until you see God in all men. - BABA

The Divine Stories: THE EARLIER DAYS

The first Mandir in Puttaparthi was opened on Friday, December 14th 1945.

Many people were blessed to receive personal Invitation Cards from Swami Himself. The 'house warming' ceremony was the very first event in Puttaparthi village, which back in 1944, was a tiny hamlet.

Swami was supervising the building work and the arrangements for the inaugural function. The young men were involved in hanging decorations and photos on the walls, and even Swami Himself would climb a ladder to assist.

The meals of the day were prepared by Smt. Savithriamma and the group from Bangalore, for this inaugural day. Swami's gentle touch multiplied enough food for the entire village and hundreds of devotees besides. He arrived in procession, and installed the idols of the two Sais, and pictures of other deities.

Swami performed Puja, and would dust the pictures as well as clean and

decorate the idols, and lead the Bhajans.

The first song of that day was, "Sree Ganesha Sivuni Kumara", and would strike two coconuts together, as well as perform Arathi to Himself and show it to all devotees.

After gifting prasad - coconut scrapings mixed with sugar, He would sing, "Sai Rama mana prasada midigo Randi Bhakthularaaa" (Receive the Divine Prasada of our Sai Rama), and would grant interviews to everyone.

Reaching Puttaparthi in those days was a Herculean task, as devotees had to take a new unknown route because of floods in the Chitravathi River.

The Mandir had only four rooms with four kitchens in a row at the back. On the inauguration day, Swami went to a corner and placed His palm on the ground, and soon a spring of fresh water rose, where a well was later dug, that was the only source of drinking water for the entire village at the time. Even in summer the water level remained the same.

The devotees slept in the open space with Swami's cot in the centre. His belongings were meagre, unlike His vast heart!

Westerners have investigated the vibrations produced by the (Gayatri) mantra. They have found that when it is recited with the correct accent as laid down in the Vedas, the atmosphere became visibly illumined. - BABA

Dussera Procession, 1946

During a procession along the two small streets of Puttaparthi an amazing miracle took place. While it would normally take about 45 minutes to an hour to cover the distance from the Old Mandir to the end of Puttaparthi village and back, on this day everybody started at 8 p.m. hoping to return to the Old Mandir at 9 p.m. or at latest 9.30 p.m.

But, strangely, that was not to be, as the devotees seemed to walk on and on. By the time they returned it was 2 a.m.! No one felt they had been to the place twice. Where then had they walked for 6 hours?

In those days Puttaparthi was a simple two lane village. So the next day many devotees went back to the village just to look, but things were just the same as they had thought. Then, to where had they been walking for 6 hours without rest, and returning without an ounce of fatigue?

A mystery, indeed! And still is today! Had they shifted into another dimension? God knows!

What the superior man seeks is within himself; what the inferior man seeks is within others.

Confucius (550 B.C.)

God Takes On Physical Ailments

In an interview with Dr. Narendranath Reddy in April 2011, regarding God's involvement in

taking on physical ailments, he stated the following;

"The first time when I saw this was when I was the Vice Chancellor. He (Swami) used to call me frequently to the interview room and I saw the one of His toe nails was black. I asked Swami what that was. He said, "I stubbed My toe against the door stop." I didn't know that these things happened to God. I said, "Swami, how does it happen to You?" He said, "How it happens to you, it happens to Me." I said, "Swami, it must be very painful." He replied, "Of course, what else do you think?" Then I told Him, "Swami, tomorrow is Vinayaka Chaturthi; You generally walk with a long robe. Your toe will not be visible; everyone will be grabbing Your feet and it will be very painful." He replied, "Yes, it will be painful. But can I tell the devotees not to approach Me? If you do anything like that I will wring your neck," and asked me to keep my mouth shut. He said, "Devotees come for Me and not for you. If they want to do Padanamaskar, they are entitled to it."

"The key thing to note here is the fact that Baba has said that even though He uses His shakti/power to heal us, God does not use His power to cure Himself as it is selfish. Baba has explained that it is up to God's devotees to pray and ask for God's physical comfort. Just imagine if we knew this unique gift of knowledge when Jesus, Shirdi Sai Baba, Buddha, Rama, Krishna, was here!

"Well, with Sai Baba's grace, now we are blessed to be told this knowledge of utmost importance. Yes, God is formless, but He does incarnate in a physical body to bless

and guide us all, so let's always pray for this unique and most important cause, unconditionally...God has such unconditional love for His children and all of His creation.

"The intense prayers of the devotees are My medicine...This body is not mine. It is yours. Hence, it is your responsibility to look after this body...I have never used Me divine power to cure Myself." (Guru Purnima Discourse 2003)

Bend the body, mend the senses and end the mind - make this your endeavour. - BABA

UNDERSTANDING SWAMI'S SOCIAL REVOLUTION

(Sourced from Peter Phipps'

"Sathya Sai Baba & Jesus Christ")

"Sathya Sai Baba states that this hospital (in Prasanthi Nilayam) will set the standards for medical care in India and the world for the next thousand years. Thus the Golden Age of Medicine is evolving within our sight in Prasanthi Nilayam.

"Sathya Sai Baba is involved in a re-forestation programme within India. He teaches that climatic changes in the world are the direct result of Man's interference with Nature, particularly in the felling of forests and greater emissions of carbon dioxide. Much of India is now denuded of the forests which used to cover the land, and the land has turned to desert. A programme under His inspiration uses Australian trees to provide cover for

the growth of indigenous Indian trees, with the intention of returning the desert areas to productive uses.

Use of Human Agents

While there are miraculous aspects to the work of Sathya Sai Baba, it is notable that He uses human agents wherever possible. He takes a direct interest in the design and construction of buildings and institutions which bear His name. He is the source of inspiration either directly or indirectly for all major projects. At the opening of the Super Speciality Hospital, He commented that He could have waved His hand and manifested the building (and most of His devotees have no doubt that He could do exactly that, if He chose), He commented that such an action is not appropriate in the current age. Human architects, builders and labourers constructed the physical buildings, but nobody has any doubts as to the source of inspiration.

“He makes it very clear that He has not come to undertake all the work Himself, but to enlist our aid in the spiritual revolution. When Dr. John Hislop once addressed Sathya Sai Baba and referred to “Your mission” he was corrected and reminded that the work is “our mission”. He has called certain individuals to help in furthering the mission around the world. It will not be long before everyone is called upon to help”.

“There are many social service projects around the world conducted under the auspices of the Sathya Sai movement. In India, there are large-scale projects to feed the hungry, help the poor and relieve misery. In New Zealand, Sathya Sai devotees work with The Salvation

Army in distribution of food parcels and providing meals to the elderly. Medical clinics providing free medical checkups to those who cannot afford doctors are provided in many places. The scope of Sathya Sai service activities is already vast throughout the world and is growing at a very fast rate. This work is motivated by love for Sathya Sai Bana, and Swami’s statement that “Service to Man is service to God.”

Understanding Sathya Sai Baba

The more one tries to understand Sathya Sai Baba, the more of a mystery He becomes. In His presence one becomes aware that here is a Being who knows literally whenever the wind blows through a blade of grass, who knows our every thought, word and action. He is also involved constantly in keeping the whole Universe functioning, at every level from the smallest atomic particle to the vastest constellation of stars. Not only does He know all these things in the present, but He is conscious of the infinite past and the infinite future at the same time. He says:

“Your worldly intelligence cannot fathom the ways of God. He cannot be recognised by mere cleverness or intelligence. You may benefit from God, but you cannot explain Him. Your explanation are only conjecture, attempts to cloak your ignorance in pompous expressions. Bring something into your daily practice as evidence of your having known the secret of Higher Life from Me. Show that you have greater brotherliness, speak with more sweetness and self-control. Bear defeat as well as victory with calm resignation.

"I am always aware of the future, the past as well as the present of each one of you, so I am not so moved by mercy. Since I know the past, the background, the reaction is different. It is the consequence of evil deliberately done in the past birth and so I allow your suffering to continue, often modified with some small compensation. I do not cause grief or joy; you are the designer of both these chains which bind you."

Baba makes the point time and again, that He cannot be understood by intellectual analysis, but by absorbing Him and His message into the heart.

Sathya Sai Baba attracts our attention with what we call His miracles, but he takes pains to point out that they are only His playfulness. He often describes them as His "calling cards" to demonstrate that He is not like other people.

"My acts are the foundation on which I am building My work - the task for which I have come. All the miracles which you observe are to be interpreted so. The foundation of a dam requires the right materials; without them it will not last and hold back the waters."

Sense of Urgency

Many a time Sathya Sai Baba mentioned the need for urgency in spiritual conversion of people. Life is short enough, He declares, and the purpose of our existence is to become one with God. We should utilise our every moment for that end. All we have in life is time and Baba often says, "Time waste is life waste", or "Time is God, do not waste time."

"It is out of ignorance that we become diverted into time-wasting activities, many of which take us away from spirituality and into inevitable misery. We depart from spirituality when we become more firmly attached to the things of this world, to possessions, to status, to our jobs and our relationships. Baba does not tell us to renounce these things, or avoid responsibilities. He does tell us not to bind ourselves to them so that they take over our lives.

"Practice detachment from now on: practice it little by little, for a day will come sooner or later when you will have to give up all you hold dear. Do not go on adding to the things which bind you to them. Bind yourself to the great liberator, God."

The richest man on earth is the one with least desires and the poorest man on earth is the one with most desires. - BABA
