



Sathyam Sivam Sundaram

Volume 2

Life Story Of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
1962-1968

By

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Publisher's Note

"Baba is Himself an open book, with no mystery or pomp or abstruseness about Him and everyone can approach Him and secure His grace," says Sri N. Kasturi, author of this series, Sathyam Shivam Sundaram. In this series, which is divided into four parts, the author brings out the life history of the Divine *Avatar* from His birth in 1926 to 1979. Sri Kasturi, who had the extreme fortune of being close to Baba, shares His *Mahimas* and *Leelas* with the readers. The first Part of this book was placed in the hands of the readers in 1961.

The need for the revised and enlarged edition was felt by the publisher for more comfortable reading, especially by the elderly readers. As a result, these Volumes are brought out in larger format, with computerised typesetting, using larger typeface, better line spacing, and with a number of photographs.

With these changes, it is hoped that all spiritual seekers will benefit and enjoy reading these series.

Convener

Sri Sathya Sai Books & Publications Trust

Prasanthi Nilayam

June, 2001

Congratulations

Congratulations, dear reader! I am glad you have taken this book in your hand and decided to delve into its pages. In the first volume of this Book, “Sathyam Shivam Sundaram,” I communicated the story of the Advent of the Divine, as Baba, in human form; of the early years of superhuman intelligence; of the epoch-making announcement of the fact of Incarnation; of the marvellous works and signs, by which He gives understanding to those, whose hearts beat slow; and of the richness of His mercy, the universality of His comprehension, the might and munificence of His compassion.

I am now seventy six years old. He has let me live the last twenty five years with Him, in Him, through Him, by Him, for Him. This is but a reflection of the ‘I’, which is He. I am full of thanks that He has preserved me and that He has permitted and prompted me to declare again His doings among the peoples.

I am but an amateur sherpa, trudging along the panoramic path to the highest Himalayan peak, thrilled to sublime silence by the glory and grandeur that grow with every onward step, gasping to tell others, in the anaemic prattle of the plains, the upsurge of empyrean joy. There are thousands, millions on the mountain tracks, drawn by the strange fascination of the Supreme Power, the sempiternal wisdom and the sovereign love of the Gaurishankar that Baba is. Many of them have, I know, firmer grasp, finer perception, and more mature wisdom. They are more acclimatised to altitudes and better trained to overcome the hazards of the heights. I do hope you will soon be able to delve into the pages of a book that emerges through such a pilgrim.

Meanwhile, come! Give me your hand; we shall go along, page after page, sharing the wonder and the wisdom, the awe and the mystery, the truth and the testimony, the glory and the grandeur, and the abundance of the peace.

N. Kasturi
Prasanthi Nilayam
Dasara, 1973

I am trudging still, at eighty five, onwards and upwards towards the Lotus Feet. I find many sturdier companions on the pilgrim track, climbing higher and higher, uplifted by His grace.

N. Kasturi
Brindavan

Ramanavami, 1981



He, who understands the significance of My Divine Birth and My Divine deeds, will overcome the cycle of Births and Deaths and attain Me.

Gita iv-9

He is the sub-stratum, the substance; the separate and the sum—the Sat; the SATHYAM.

He is the awareness, the activity, the consciousness, the feeling; the willing and the doing—the Chit; the SHIVAM.

He is the light, the splendour; the harmony, the melody, the Ananda, the SUNDARAM.

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1.

Resume (1926-1961)

His playmates called Him, 'Guru' (Preceptor). For, He was always correcting them and consoling them; He comforted them in distress and never seemed to get cross or tired. He was a liberal giver, even at that age; for, He pulled out of empty bags, delectable sweets, pencils, pieces of eraser, toys, flowers, and fruits for them.

A ring of pink brown hills, a broad deep valley with a river cutting through and emptying into a tank built by an Emperor about six hundred years ago—that is the milieu, where the village of Puttaparthi nestles. It was the seat of a chieftain, who ruled over the surrounding area in the past; later, it became desolate and isolated, but the soil continued to be the nursery of saints and scholars. The family of the chieftain, the Rajus, continued to lead and guide, to teach and train the village youth!

Kondamaraju was a saintly centenarian, who built a temple for Sathyabhama, the temperamental Consort of Lord Krishna; he was proficient in the ancient texts and scriptures. His eldest son was named by him after a famous recluse, who adorned the family tree, Venka Avadhoota (Venka, who had given up all attachments to earthly things); he called him, Venkappa Raju. This son married a distant relation, a daughter who was born after the construction of a temple by her father to Shiva, (under the appellation, Ishwara) and so named Ishwaramba. They were a pious couple, quiet and contented; the only recreation Venkama Raju allowed himself was 'playing' epic roles on the village stage just as his father, Kondamaraju did. They had a son and two daughters; then: on November 23, 1926 was born another son, Sathyanarayana, who proved quite soon that He was uniquely Divine in nature and attainments.

His playmates called Him, 'Guru' (Preceptor). For, He was always correcting them and

consoling them; He comforted them in distress and never seemed to get cross or tired. He was a liberal giver, even at that age; for, He pulled out of empty bags, delectable sweets, pencils, pieces of eraser, toys, flowers, and fruits for them. When asked how He got them, He answered, 'O, the village Goddess gives Me what I want.' That was only to slake their thirst; that was the only answer which would quieten their doubts. But, the wonder remained!



It increased when He was put to school; there He acquired a new nickname, '*Brahmagyani*'. It meant "One who has acquired the wisdom that reveals the Inner Reality." What a name for a boy of six summers! At the age of eight, Sathyanarayana decided to reveal His mystery by a dramatic miracle; when He was ordered by His teacher to 'stand upon the bench' for listlessness in the class-room, He 'willed' that the teacher stick to the chair, until He stepped down from the bench. It happened so and He became the talk of the region. He was simple and sweet, in spite of all this publicity; He formed a prayer-group of boys in His village and led them from place to place, carolling the hymns He wrote and taught.

He was an adept at dance and music, as well as in the histrionic art. Nay, His talents were used even by theatrical companies that toured the countryside; He had the temerity to write songs for them and for himself and even stretches of dialogue, when He was barely 'twelve'.

He accompanied His elder brother to Kamalapur and Uravakonda, where the brother served as a teacher of the Telugu language; at school, in those places, Sathyanarayana stood head and shoulders above even the teachers, for He shone as a poet, playwright, scout, sportsman, and songster of extraordinary standards of excellence. He had also the mysterious power of tracing lost property, reading others' thoughts, seeing far into the future and deep into the past. He became the pet of the town and was much sought after by the distressed and the downtrodden.

He sat through the first years of the High School course and was but a few weeks in the second year class, when the call of the task, which had brought Him among men, could no longer be ignored by Him. He had already found it hard to cloak His majesty in the petty rigmarole of home and school. When on a picnic with His brother and others among the ruins of the ancient capital of the Vijayanagara Empire (Hampi), He was seen by them as Ishwara, just where the Ishwara idol was installed in the Virupaksha Temple.

On the 8th day of March, 1940, He could not but leave the body and go to the succour of a devotee in dire distress. This was misunderstood by His brother and others as a scorpion-sting or a snake bite, or a fainting fit, or an attack of hysteria. Doctors, of course, could not diagnose it right. Quacks and sorcerers were tried; they guessed wrong. They only tortured Him and proved that the boy could suffer great pain and remain steady and unruffled.

At last, in the village of Puttaparthi, on the twenty third day of May, 1940, while scattering gifts into the outstretched palms of all who came, Baba declared that He was Sai Baba come again to save humanity from downfall. He asked them to worship Him, every Thursday, as the first instalment of spiritual discipline. Back at Uravakonda, even while attending school, Sathyanarayana was worshipped as Sai Baba, the Saint of Shirdi come again, according to the promise He had made at Shirdi. Manchiraju Tammiraju, the teacher, who loved Sathyanarayana more than any other member of the staff, has written about these Thursdays-how, Sai Baba, his pupil gave to those, who gathered for congregational prayer, sacred ash or other curative gifts of Grace, like a piece of the *gerua* gown that Sai Baba wore at Shirdi (the saint had entered the tomb in 1918) that He got by a mere wave of the hand! Hundreds used to flock around Him and interrogate Him on all kinds of subjects, but He replied calmly and correctly.

He went on *Mahashivaratri* (a holiday dedicated to the worship of Shiva) to a Shiva temple outside Uravakonda with a few companions including Tammiraju's son, Sairam, and the

youths were astounded to find a stream of effulgence flowing from Sathyanarayana towards the Idol of Shiva and another flowing from Shiva to Sathyanarayana. One Thursday, He informed the wife of Kashibhatla Ramamurty, “I have placed a picture in your shrine; go and worship it.” She hurried thither with some neighbours and opening the locked doors and the closed window shutters, jammed tight to prevent the entry of monkeys, she found a picture of Sai Baba of Shirdi, inside the shrine of her home! He introduced or created such pictures inside many a home during those years - pictures which gave the people their first acquaintance of the Shirdi saint.



Tammiraju’s experiences were amazing; Sathyanarayana came into his house one evening and showed him on the wall of his modest home, as in a movie, the sacred Forms of the Ten Incarnations of the Lord, besides life-like portraits of many sages and saints mentioned in the sacred scriptures. His wife was so moved by this uplifting experience that she wrote a poem on it in Telugu; it was published in the ‘Sai Sudha’ magazine of Madras. Another day, Sathyanarayana gave him a picture of Shirdi Baba in an astoundingly new way—a bumble bee entered his room through an open window, with something rolled held fast by its legs. It dropped it and flew off; the paper was unrolled; it was a picture of Shirdi Lord! A few days later, a monkey perching on the window, outside his room, threw a small bundle of cloth into

it. When the bundle was opened, Tammiraju writes, it was found to contain a ball of sweets and a letter from Sathyanarayana, who was away at Puttaparthi! And what did the letter say? “The other day, I sent you with the bumblebee My picture; today, I am sending herewith *prasadam* for you.” Others too had amazing experiences of the Divine powers of the teenage Baba; but, He was biding the moment for Full Manifestation and Final Declaration.

October 20, 1940, was the day He chose. Returning sooner than usual from school that day, He threw His books outside the door of His brother’s house and when His sister-in-law came out to discover what the cause of the noise was, she was astonished to hear Him say, “I do not belong to you, I am leaving; I have work to do.” Then, He stepped down and took the road. “Those devoted to Me are calling Me. The task for which I came is yet unfinished: I am starting now,” He said and walked off vigorously. He was accosted by the learned *Pundit*, Narayana Shastry, the neighbour, who ran up and tried to stop Him. He was half afraid of the boy, for He had called him out one day, when he was expounding a difficult Sanskrit text, and corrected his interpretation. This time, when he expostulated with the boy, he saw a halo around His head and was rendered mute. The brother too failed to make Him retrace His steps; Sathyanarayana told him, "The illusion has gone; I am no more yours; I am Sai Baba."

Baba proceeded to a garden around the house of the Inspector of Excise, for it was extensive and open; He sat under a tree on a rock with the whole town around Him. Immediately, He inaugurated the *Bhajan* that was to progress so quickly and dramatically in every nook and corner of this vast land, revolutionising the habits and attitudes, the nature and character of hundreds of thousands. The very first song, which He taught to arouse the mass of humanity, was an invitation to surrender to the Feet of the *Guru*, who had so mercifully appeared. It also contained a lesson that Baba has always emphasised since then, that *Bhajan* or reverential adoration must be a mental upsurge, not an oral exercise. It ran thus:

**“*Manasa Bhajare gurucharanam,*
Dustara bhavasagara taranam”**

(Oh, ye seekers! Worship the Feet of the *Guru*, with all your mind; you can thus cross the ocean of grief and joy, and birth and death).

Sai Baba returned to Puttaparthi or rather was brought there by the ‘parents’; they prayed to Him not to leave the village. Now, every day became a Thursday and large groups of people gathered to have His *darshan* and blessings.

Baba spent most of the time at the village in the house of the Brahmin *Karnam* (hereditary village accountant) of the village, where the aged Subbamma served the pilgrims with care and love. He granted many people their wishes, which ranged from a vision of Dwarakamayi (ruined mosque where Sai Baba spent His days at Shirdi) to the cure of an ulcer or an ache. He sat on most evenings among the devotees, on the sands of the Chithravati River, and created from the sand images, pictures, idols, sweets, and fruits. He climbed the hills around and vouchsafed to the groups below, visions of the splendour and effulgence associated with Shiva, Narayana, Kumaraswamy, and other forms of God. He plucked from the branches of the tamarind tree growing on the hill—apples, mangoes, figs, bananas, and grapes—and distributed them to the devotees. He showed them Himself as Krishna or as anyone of the ten incarnations of Vishnu, or as Shiva.

He also gave guidance to many, who were struggling along the hard path of spiritual *sadhana*. For example, there came to Puttaparthi a lame monk, whose attainments were two popular vows – he would not speak out, but would only write what he had to say and would not wear clothes. Baba saw through this exhibitionist asceticism; He requested him either to retire into the forest for *sadhana* (He assured him that He would ensure him food and shelter even there) and save his devotees the ignominy and burden, or to resume talk and wear clothes, which were not handicaps to spiritual effort. This incident happened, when Baba was scarcely sixteen. People felt that this was the task for which He has come, correcting and guiding erring men.



One devotee had run deeply into debt and so, he decided to escape into Burma or Malaya. When he went to Madras Harbour to purchase a ticket for the journey, his pocket was picked; penniless he returned to his hotel; there was a letter from Baba on the table, advising him, commanding him, in fact, to return and brave it out. He did and is today, quite happy with his wife and child, whom he had decided to desert. How did Baba know his address at Madras?

Hearing that Sai Baba had come again, many who had been to Shirdi and many who had lost all hopes of contacting the Saint hastened to Puttaparthi; they took Him to Hyderabad, Bangalore, Madras, Karur, Tiruchirapally, and Udumalpet. Rajas and Zamindars, ryots and clerks, doctors and lawyers thronged the house of Subbamma and later, the tiny little *Mandir* that she and others built for Baba.

Baba was now twenty years of age; His elder brother, Sheshamaraju, the teacher of Telugu, could not quite grasp the mystery of this phenomenon. He watched, with increasing consternation and genuine fraternal love, the procession of cars that came to the right bank of the river and took his 'simple village grown brother' away into the cities that glittered beyond the horizon, full of temptations and pitfalls. A few press comments that rose from ignorance

pained Him. So, He wrote a letter to His brother, warning Him and imparting to Him the lesson he had learnt in life about society and human foibles, about fame and its attendant pitfalls.

The reply that Sai Baba wrote to him on the 25th May, 1947 is in my possession. It is a document that reveals Baba in unmistakable terms. So, I must allow you to have it: “To all who are devoted to me” (Though the letter was written by the brother, the reply is addressed to all, including you and me, for it is essential that you and I should know the real nature of the phenomenon that has appeared for our sake).

My dear One! I received the communication that you wrote and sent; I found in it the surging floods of your devotion and affection, with the undercurrents of doubts and anxiety.

Let Me tell you that it is impossible to plumb the hearts and discover the natures of Gnyanis, Yogis, ascetics, saints, sages, and the like. People are endowed with a variety of characteristics and mental attitudes; so, each one judges according to his own angle, talks and argues in the light of his own nature. But, we have to stick to our own path, our own wisdom, our own resolution without getting affected by popular appraisal. As the proverb says, it is only the fruit-laden tree that receives the shower of stones from passer-by. The good always provoke the bad into calumny; the bad always provoke the good into derision. This is the nature of this world. One must be surprised if such things do not happen.

The people too have to be pitied, rather than condemned. They do not know. They have no patience to judge right. They are too full of lust, anger, and conceit to see clearly and know fully. So, they write all kinds of things. If only they know, they would not talk or write like that. We, too, should not attach any value to such comments and take them to heart, as you seem to do. Truth will certainly triumph someday. Untruth can never win. Untruth might appear to overpower Truth, but its victory will fade away and Truth will establish itself.

It is not the way of the great to swell when people offer worship, and shrink when people scoff. As a matter of fact, no sacred text lays down rules to regulate the lives of the great, prescribing the habits and attitudes that they

must adopt. They themselves know the path they must tread; their wisdom regulates and makes their acts holy. Self-reliance, beneficial activity - these two are their special marks. They may also be engaged in the promotion of the welfare of devotees and in allotting them the fruits of their actions. Why should you be affected by doubt and worry, so long as I am adhering to these two? After all, the praise and blame of the populace do not touch the Atma, the reality; they can touch only the outer physical frame.

I have a 'Task' - to foster all mankind and ensure for all of them lives full of Ananda. I have a 'Vow' - to lead all, who stray away from the straight path, again into goodness and save them. I am attached to a 'Work' that I Love - to remove the sufferings of the poor and grant them what they lack. I have a 'reason to be proud', for I rescue all who worship and adore Me, aright. I have My definition of the 'devotion'. I expect that those devoted to Me have to treat joy and grief, gain and loss, with equal fortitude. This means that I will never give up those, who attach themselves to Me. When I am thus engaged in My beneficial task, how can My Name be ever tarnished, as you apprehend? I would advise you not to heed such absurd talk. Mahatmas do not acquire greatness through someone calling them so; they do not become small, when someone calls them so. Only those low ones, who revel in opium and ganja but claim to be unexcelled yogis, only those who quote scriptural texts to justify their gourmandry and pride, only those who are dry-as-dust scholars exulting in their casuistry and argumentative skill, are moved by praise or blame.

You must have read life-stories of saints and Divine personages; in those books, you must have read of even worse falsehood and more heinous imputations cast against them. This is the lot of Mahatmas, everywhere, at all times. Why then do you take these things so much to heart? Have you not heard of dogs that howl at the stars? How long can they go on? Authenticity will soon win.

I will not give up My Mission, or My determination. I know I will carry them out; I treat the honour and dishonour, the fame and blame that may be the consequence with equal equanimity. Internally, I am unconcerned. I

act but in the outer world; I talk and move about, for the sake of the outer world and for announcing My coming to the people; else, I have no concern even with these.

I do not belong to any place; I am not attached to any name. I have no 'mine' or 'thine.' I answer whatever the name you use. I go, wherever I am taken. This is My very First Vow. I have not disclosed this to any so far. For Me, the world is something afar, apart. I act and move only for the sake of mankind. No one can comprehend My Glory, whoever he is, whatever his method of enquiry, however long his attempt! You can yourself see the full Glory in the coming years. Devotees must have patience and forbearance.

I am not concerned, nor am I anxious that these facts should be made known; I have no need to write these words; I wrote them, because I felt you will be pained if I do not reply.

Thus,

Your Baba.

What a letter this! It is an epic epistle; a parting of the curtain, to give us a quick glimpse of the God in this human frame!

Sri Satya Saibaba



PUTTAPARTHI,
(BUKKAPATNAM P. O.)
(Via) PENUKONDA.

25 5 1947

అక్కరికి

నాయనా! విచ్చవలసి వంపి వద్దు. వీరి రెండు
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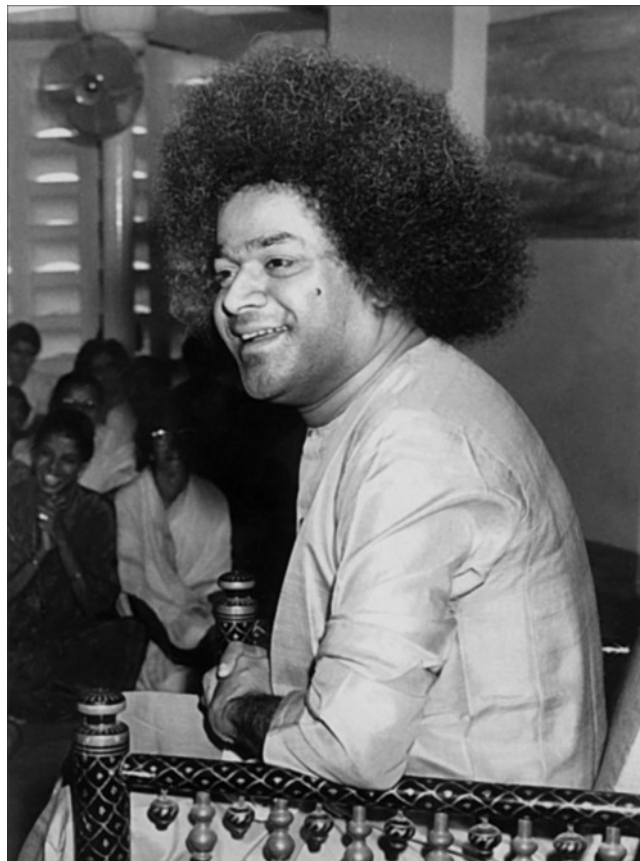
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వచ్చిన యులులు, వ్రాసిన యులులు.

The letter in Telugu, written by Baba to His brother at the age of 20, page 1

Baba refers to Himself as 'Sai Baba' and to the Sai Baba of Shirdi as 'My previous Body'. He speaks of His having come down, like Rama and Krishna, for the restoration of truth and morality, peace and love among mankind, for instilling faith in God among men, who deny Him through pride and ignorance, and for saving the good from the talons of the bad.

He had announced that till the age of sixteen, He would be mostly engaged in sportive pursuits and that from then on, until the age of thirty-two, He would be drawing people to Him by means of *mahimas* (miracles); for, as He has so often said, without these 'visiting cards', no one can gauge even a fraction of His glory. "I shall give you what you want, so that you may want what I have come to give," is what Baba said, at Shirdi, while in His previous body. These miracles range from revealing to those, who go to Him, their past and future, to shaping their future as He wills it to be; by a wave of His hand, He changes empty air into sacred ash, sweets, images, idols, flowers, fruits, books, bowls, rosaries, crucifixes, drugs, dolls - in short, all things that man is accustomed to, as well as many that he has not known.



"If I had come amongst you as Narayana with four arms holding the Conch, the Wheel, the Mace, and the Lotus, you would have kept Me in a museum and charged a fee for those who sought *darshan*; if I had come as a mere man, you would not have respected My teachings and followed it for your own good. So, I have to be in this human form with supra-human

wisdom and powers,” Baba has said. Baba is every moment the spiritual guide, which is His prime role, though He had said that He would begin His *Upadesh* (Teaching) only when He reached His thirty-second year. He was too full of kindness to wait until then, to remove the ignorance of men, ignorance that was leading them on to war and ruin.

Since 1947, Baba has emerged as the Great Teacher of the people. That year, He presided over the All India Divine Life Conference at Venkatagiri and all those, who heard Him, monk or scholar or litterateur, ryot or industrialist, young or old, man or woman, were moved by a strange exhilaration into the new world of the Spirit. Thereafter, Swami Sadananda, the author of a commentary on Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutra* and other valuable books as well as Swami Satchidananda followed Him for months and persuaded Him to visit Rishikesh and Kashmir, Delhi, Mathura, and Brindavan. They had the good fortune to witness some astounding miracles and hear many satisfying interpretations of religious doctrines and spiritual discipline, which they spread enthusiastically among those who contacted them. Baba made them His instruments for announcing His advent.

In fact, every person who came to Him either for getting some physical illness cured, or getting over some secular handicap, or to be helped over a spiritual stile which he could not negotiate, became a loud herald of the tidings that a Divine phenomenon has appeared in human form, inviting all, with sweetness and love, to receive from Him joy and peace, security and liberation.

In February 1958, on the sacred occasion of *Shivaratri*, Baba inaugurated a monthly magazine to convey His teachings into every home, a magazine which He named, *Sanathana Sarathi* (the timeless ever-present charioteer), intent on taking us to the goal of peace, everlasting *prasanthi*. This magazine is published in English and many languages other than the Telugu original; it has brought Baba into thousands of homes and hearts. It has also been the vehicle for a series of books from the Divine pen, as well as for the inimitably wise and simple discourses that Baba gave in the cities and villages He deigned to visit, at the request of devotees.

The revival of *Dharma* (the regulated life of the spirit affecting every detail of the process of living, with liberation from the consequences of ignorance always in view) is the avowed purpose of all incarnations of the Divine. Baba too has come for the same task. The revival of scriptural studies, of classical mores, of prayer, of temple-ritual, of simple living and high thinking, of piety and virtue—these are all items in the programme for uplift that Baba has

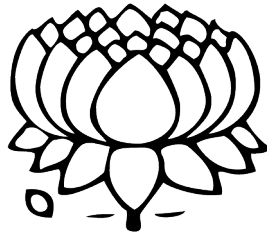
burdened Himself with.

His visits to the ancient temples of Ayodhya, Varanasi, and Badrinath were for “charging the batteries that had gone weak,” He said.

These are but stray examples of His overwhelming love for mankind. His ministrations to the sick, the insane, the desperate, and the downtrodden, and His “extra-corporeal journeys” to save men from calamity or to bless them at the moment of departure from the physical cage, proclaim His Mission of *Bhaktarakshana* (guarding the good). His touch, His word, the very sight of Him has opened a new chapter in the lives of many a sinner, miser, and atheist, idler, agnostic, and ascetic.

The revised edition of the First Volume of this Book published in 1961 gives the Divine Life of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, until the epoch-making visit to Badrinath.

I am thankful for this chance to continue the purifying record in this Second Part of the same Book, for which the only fit title is “Sathyam Shivam Sundaram”—for, His nature and His reality are Truth, Light, and Beauty—*Sat, Chit, and Ananda*—Existence, Awareness, and Bliss.





2.

The Sugar And The Ants

In the Gita, Lord Krishna has affirmed that He embodies Himself and incarnates among men in order to fulfil the task of Dharmasthapana. The assurance then; the fulfilment now! Let us keep our eyes open and bright, to bear witness to the wonders of the Advent.

Many a *sadhaka* and seeker has announced the deep desire that he should remain an ant, tasting the sugar, that is God, grain by grain; he does not like to become the sugar, which does not know its taste itself. When someone prayed to Baba that He reduce the number of days, when He is away from Prasanthi Nilayam on tour, He replied, “Yes; you think it is more appropriate that the ants come to the sugar, but consider this: how can the poor, the sick, the aged, and the infirm, for whom I have come, travel to Prasanthi Nilayam? I must go near them and speak to them, so that they may make their own homes and hearts the Nilayam of 'prasanthi'.” This, then, is the reason why Baba moves, wherever mercy takes Him and agony draws Him.

As described in the First Part of this Book, Baba returned from Badrinath on the third day of July, 1961. Speaking about the journey to Badrinath to a gathering at Bukkapatnam near the Nilayam, Baba said, “We saw thousands of old and decrepit men and women, besides others stronger and younger, braving the cold and hunger, the storm and rain, the risky landslides on the road, trudging along regardless of the cost and distance, to get a glimpse of Narayana installed there. When in Ayodhya, I could see and sense the constant recitation of *Ramanama* by almost all people there. I am often asked where *Dharma* has taken refuge in this Iron Age. Well, *Dharma* is still flourishing in the hearts of these thousands, I reply.”

Baba left for Mysore City during the month-end, for the devotees there wanted Him to be with them for *Guru Poornima*, the Full Moon dedicated to the worship of one's spiritual

preceptor. That evening, He reminded a gathering of 20,000 that Mysore was famous for the fragrance of its Sandalwood and the musical attainment of its people. “But, I want the fragrance of *Prema* to fill each act of yours; I want the harmony and melody of music to permeate every sprout of thought, every tendril of emotion, every bud of speech. The *Guru* is adored in India as the physician, who corrects vision with the medicated unguent called Gnyana: he cures other diseases too, diseases which afflict the mind and warp the judgement, like the jaundice and malice, the anaemia of envy, the fever of greed, and the paralysis of hate. You must seek a *Guru*, who can diagnose correctly and prescribe both the drug and the regimen; you should submit to both with care and faith. If a human preceptor is not available, prayer will induce the Lord within to awaken and guide.”



Referring to the panic that was fanned by the astrologers of the East and West over the ‘ominous’ conjunction of eight planets between the 2nd and 5th days of February 1962, He explained that they would only ‘appear’ as conjoined along a line and that there was no reason for fear. “Many are advising you to win the favour of the God's, so that they may spare you from calamity; many are collecting funds to perform rites, which can ward off the fire and fury which are predicted. I do not object to prayer, or to the rites, for they are good in themselves, apart from the planetary phenomenon. But, do not be misled into inviting terror

into your hearts. There will be no convulsion in Nature, no tornado or torrential flood, no damage to earth or sky! The only calamity that will take place is the forfeiture of deposit money by a number of defeated candidates, contesting the General Elections that month!"

During the fateful week, Baba was a tower of strength for millions in panic. He allayed the fear aroused by the soothsayers of many lands. Lavagnani, the Mexican astrologer, quoted by the Illustrated Weekly of India, wrote, "It may be particularly unsafe on those first days of February, to travel either by air, or sea and even in some places, to sleep in a house." An Indian astrologer with a vast American clientele wrote, "A very severe type of earthquake and severe cold waves will happen as a result of the February '62 combination." Civil strife, radical tensions, military crises, political upheavals, famines - these were predicted by popular prognosticators, both "scientific and unscientific" in almost all lands. Many people came over to Prasanthi Nilayam, to be in that Haven of Peace during the critical week.

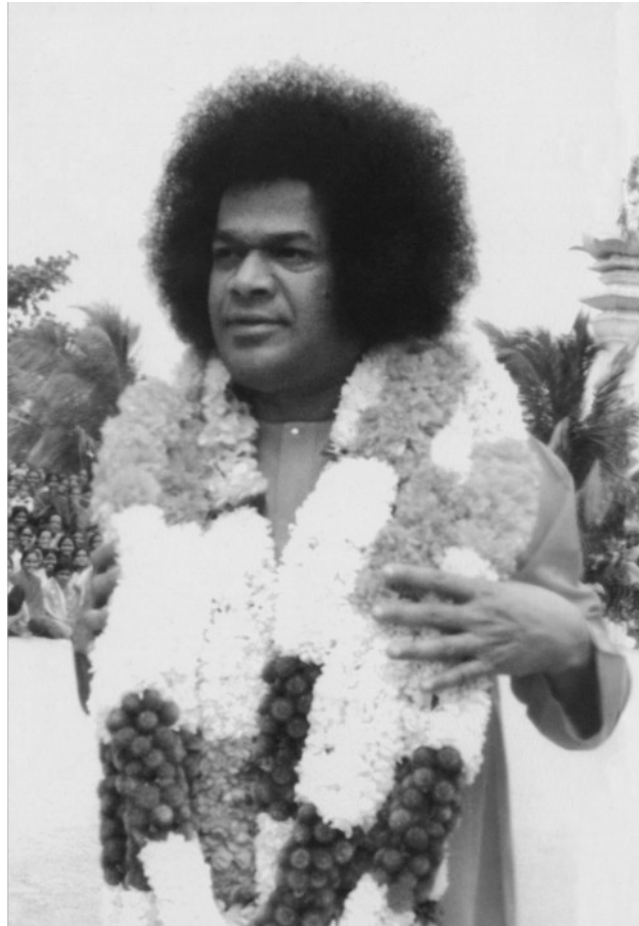
Experiencing His Love and Grace that gave courage and strength, many devotees were tempted to believe another and smaller group of astrologers, who drew other conclusions. Bellairs of Johannesburg said, "The planetary situation may refer to the coming of the New World Teacher, either His Birth, or His Entry into His Ministry." There was also the widely publicised statement of A.N. Chandra: "This unique configuration may even indicate the Advent of a Great Religious Leader, who will bring solace to the distressed and harassed people of the modern world." They knew that the New World Teacher had come and had entered upon His Ministry; they knew that Baba was granting solace to the distressed and harassed people of the modern world. He was, in fact, announcing it as the task for which He has come.



From Mysore, Baba went into the Wild Life Sanctuary, called *Abhayaranyam* (the Forest where there is no fear). Baba loves to meet the denizens of the forest, for they too are His children, creeping, crawling, trailing, walking; flying, from birth to birth, towards His feet. Before a fortnight was over, He was at Hyderabad for a short visit and from there, He motored 600 long miles to Udumalpet to bless a hospital and a college. Returning via Madurai, He reached Ootacamund, the crest jewel of the Nilgiris, Queen of Indian hill stations, where are preserved still, both simplicity and spiritual sanity. They had Baba with them on the *Krishna Janmashtami*, the Birthday of Krishna, who is adored and loved in India by every philosopher and *pundit*, by every seeker and saint. Baba told the gathering that Krishna was the very embodiment of *Prema*, that the word meant, “He, who attracts and draws the mind towards Him.” He reminded them that whoever adores Krishna must cultivate this Love. Krishna also means, “to plough, to plant and grow,” so, every person who reveres Krishna must plough the field of his heart, remove the weeds of passion, sow the seeds of love, and foster the plants with vigilant care, until the blossoms of *seva* (loving service) yield the fruits of *ananda*.

Dasara, 1961, which came soon after, was memorable for many reasons. On the very first day, Baba gave a glimpse of His glory when He announced, “You have read that the Lord saved Draupadi from humiliation, Gajendra from that quagmire, Arjuna from defeat, Ahalya from petrification, Dhruva from ignominy, and Prahlada from annihilation. You do not know of countless other acts of grace. Similarly, for every act of grace which you know this Form has done, there are thousands you do not know! Rama was the embodiment of *Sathya* and *Dharma*; Krishna, of *Shanti* and *Prema*. Now, when skill is skipping faster than self-control, when science laughs at *sadhana*, when hate and fear have darkened the heart of man, I have come, embodying all the four. I have come equipped with no limitations to help you contact Me and derive benefit from My coming. I manifest such powers as will help Me to confer the benefits I have planned for you, the boons you deserve. In a short time, within years, the number of which can be counted on the fingers of one hand, you will see here the suffering, the aspiring, and the inquiring from every part of this world. The number will be so large that the sky alone can be the roof to shelter them.”

Another day, 21st October, He announced that the Mission of the Revival of *Dharma*, for which He had come, has begun. “Until now, it was in the preparatory stage; from now on, the work will proceed without slackening speed. It is now for you to share in this campaign for the liberation of man from ignorance. In no previous era have men got so many and so clear intimations of the advent of the *avatar*, as now.”



On 23rd November 1961, during the Birthday celebrations, the book, *Sathyam Shivam Sundaram* written in English, of which this is the Second Volume, the first full-length biography of Baba, was reverentially placed at His feet by me, whom He graciously chose as the instrument for that task. Baba said, “You might wonder why I permitted the publication of a book on My life. ‘*Ramayati-iti Rama*’ (He who gives joy is Rama). The joy surging in all devoted hearts is the joy that pleases the Lord. The joy of the Lord is the reward that the devoted heart seeks. I responded to the prayer of devotees and allowed him to write it. The title, ‘Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram’, speaks of Me as immanent in every one of you. For, *Sathyam* is Truth; you resent any imputation of untruth. The real ‘you’ is *Sathyam*. How then will you accept any other appellation? So too, you are *Shivam* - joy, happiness, contentment, auspiciousness. You are not *shavam* - dead, miserable, weak; you are *Shivam*. Again, the real ‘you’ is *Sundaram* - beauty, harmony, melody, symmetry. You resent, and very naturally, when you are described as ‘ugly’. You are the *atma*, which is entangled in the body, a wave of Sathyam, Shivam, and Sundaram, playing on the Ocean of Sathyam, Shivam, and Sundaram, which is the Lord. Getting to know Me, through this Book, or more clearly through the book of your own experience, is part of the destiny of mankind today. Each one

of you has to be saved. I shall not give you up, even if you keep afar. I shall not forsake even those who deny Me, I have come for all. Those who stay away and those who stray away will also be drawn near and saved; do not doubt this, I shall beckon them and bless them.” Do we need any clearer intimation than this, about His grace and His divinity?

After the Birthday celebrations, Baba left for the village of Repalle, in Guntur district, to install a marble idol of His previous appearance in the temple there. Baba had installed such idols in a few places previously, at Madras and Coimbatore and at the Ayodhya Ashram, near Madanapalle. At Madras, where He had sanctified the temple at Guindy, in His twenty-second year, the *bhakta*, who had built the temple, washed, and worshipped His feet, wanted an impression of the feet on a piece of silk cloth in sandal paste. Baba said, “I shall give you the Feet of ‘Sai Baba’, My previous Body!” and lo, the Impression that the silk cloth received from those lovely, tender feet of His was that of a pair of feet nearly double the size of Baba’s, and definitely that of a person above sixty years of age! The silk cloth with the sandal paste impression that He gave so miraculously to prove that He was “the same Baba come again” is there, inside the shrine at Guindy, for all to see!

No wonder the people of Repalle were elated, when Baba agreed to install Himself in the temple they built; no wonder too, that hundreds of thousands converged on that place to get the *darshan* of Baba. The idol had to be brought to the bungalow where He stayed, for the roads that led to the temple were too thickly packed. While the initial rites were gone through, Baba created a charming little golden idol of Sai Baba and placed it on the head of the idol. Late at night, when the roads became negotiable, the idol was taken into the temple. Baba placed the golden statuette in a cavity on the floor and, over it, He wanted a marble slab to be drawn. The idol was installed on the slab. Thus, the mysteriously created golden image became the unseen but potent source of Grace in that temple, just as the *Linga* which Shankaracharya placed was the source of the potency of Narayana at Badrinath! Baba reminded the thousands who had gathered to listen to His words, "This idol is only a container; the thing contained is *Sai Tatwa*, which is the Divine Essence. Pour that Essence in this container, it is called Sai Baba. Pour it in another; it is Srinivasa, Shiva, Krishna, or Rama."

“You should now infuse the marble with your faith and devotion and make it live; having installed Sai in your village, install Him in your hearts, on the altar of *prema*, for Sai is *Premaswarupa*. Sai is not a temple dweller; He dwells only in hearts.” Baba by His sweetness and universal Love entered the hearts of all the thousands, who milled around Him

for *darshan*. Many, who could then touch the hem of His silken gown, will remember it for years!



From Repalle, Baba went to the town of Eluru, where at the Gita Bhavan, He had to install two life size marble idols of Radha and Krishna. He was accorded a reception, which Baba felt was too extravagant. He chided the organisers, “Whoever has heard of the master of a household being received into his home by his children, with fireworks and flags, pageantry and pomp?” Baba created for the rite of installation, the nine gems, as well as a mystic cryptogram on metal, which can ward off evil forces from the eight directions. He said that Radha and Krishna formed the *Prakriti-Purusha* duo, creation and the creator, patent and latent. Radha is the *adhar* (basis) for the *dhara* (continuous stream) of *aradh* (worship). That is to say, Radha is the created universe, which has to be used by man for discovering the divinity immanent in it, the divinity that is revealed as beauty, truth, and goodness, as *Sat*, *Chit*, and *Ananda*, as *Sathyam*, *Shivam*, and *Sundaram*.

Back in Bangalore in December, Baba inaugurated a Society of Sanathana Social Workers. He said, “The word, *sanathana*, in the name of your Society has brought Me here today. You

are all *sanathana* (eternal), though you believe you are *nutana* (new). In India, the science of recognising the reality of man, his glory, his divinity, has been taught from ancient times. Only those, who have learnt this science, deserve to be children of this land; the others, though they are born here, are essentially aliens.”

At Bangalore, as well as later, at Prasanthi Nilayam, He assured people that the *ashtagrahakoota* (conjunction of eight planetary bodies), which by its imminence was darkening weak minds with clouds of fear, boded no ill. He said, “No additional calamity will come about, consequent on the conjunction; in fact, the confusion existing now will become a little less! When the *avatar* has come,” He asked, “why shiver in dread, at imagined “dangers?” Believe Me,” He declared, “nothing will happen; no, there is no danger at all.” And, as Baba willed, nothing happened.

On the holy day of *Shivaratri*, 1962, which fell on the 4th March, Baba advised the thousands, who had witnessed the emergence of two golden *Lingas* from Him, “Why do you discuss and debate among yourselves about My nature, My Mystery, My miracle, My reality? Fish cannot gauge the sky; the gross can grasp only the gross. The eye cannot see the ear, though it is so near. When you cannot reach down to your own reality, why waste time trying to explore the essence of God? You are like a Telugu audience sitting through a Tamil picture, or a Malayali sitting through a Japanese picture. The nuances, the subtler significance, the deeper meanings and interrelationships, the inner patterns of the fabric, are beyond your understanding. Sit through the entire film; master the language and the technique; watch earnestly and vigilantly and try to imbibe the meaning of every gesture, act, and word; then, you may know Me, a little.”



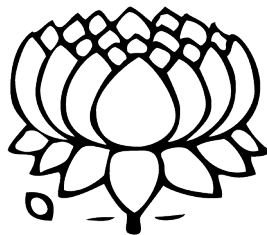
Festivals at Prasanthi Nilayam afford the people the chance to hear the discourses of *pundits* learned in the science of spiritual disciplines and to meet brothers and sisters, who have experienced Baba's might, majesty, or mystery. They return to their homes, full of the inspiration derived from the soulstrengthening discourse of Baba, wiser, sadder, and often purer in habits and mental impulses. Many among them stay on for the chance of the precious interview with Baba. Therefore, Baba is engaged for hours on end, morning, noon, and evening in calling in and conversing with the thousands, who keep on at the Nilayam, until they are thus favoured and blessed. It is a clear sign of His grace that He thus keeps Himself busy with our petty trivialities and pestering desires, though in the discourses He gives, He is advising man to give up the demeaning attachment to the physical and the secular. He knows that longer exposure to His glance and grace will wean us away into *sadhana* and success.

Baba left for Tirupati, after most of the people praying for interviews had been satisfied. It was the Tyagaraja festival that drew Him there. Had not Tyagaraja, the singer-saint (born 1847) appeared in a dream and directed Sri Nagarathamma, his incomparable disciple, to proceed to Venkatagiri so that she could have *darshan* of "the Lord whom she adored?"

Nagarathnamma had gone wondering who the Lord was; she saw Baba there!

That explains Baba's statement in His discourse, "I come often to this festival, for I feel it is a part of the task for which I have come. Tyagaraja had given up attachment to sensory pleasure; he had discovered the supreme joy of inner contemplation; he expressed that joy in moving musical notes, in simple sincere phrases in songs that thrilled the heart and illumined the intelligence. Tyagaraja knew the secret of surrender. Without surrender, man can have no liberation. Cross out the 'I'; and, you are free. How to kill the 'I'? Place it at the feet of the Lord, saying 'You', not 'I'; and, you are free from the burden that is crushing you."

Dasara, 1962! On the 29th of September, the first day of the ten days' festival, while hoisting the prasanthi flag on the Nilayam, Baba declared, "At Prasanthi Nilayam, every day is a festival day, every moment is a holy moment." As the saying goes, "*Nitya kalyanam. pachcha toranam*" (perpetual festivity, perpetually green festoons). During that Dashami, Baba explained, in clear unmistakable ways, His task, which He defined as "*Vedasamrakshana, Vidwatposhana, and Dharmasthapana*" (preservation of the *Vedas*, fostering of scholarship, and establishment of righteousness). All three are interdependent; the *Vedas* are the basis of *Dharma*, the *Vidwans* are the instruments; *Dharma* is the panacea for the illness of mankind. In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna has affirmed that He embodies Himself and incarnates among men in order to fulfil the task of *Dharmasthapana*. The assurance then; the fulfilment now! Let us keep our eyes open and bright, to bear witness to the wonders of the advent.





3.

The Task

"I have come for that very purpose, for Vedic revival. It shall be done. I will do it. Wherever you are, you will know of it. The world will share that joy, that light."

BABA visited the foremost *shaivite* shrine of India, Varanasi and the foremost *Vaishnava* shrine, Badrinath in 1961 in order to infuse spiritual power in those dynamos of grace. At Varanasi, He created a unique jewel to be placed on the idol of Vishweshwara, declaring that it has the mystic might to charge that symbol of the Lord with Divine potency. At Badrinath, He drew from under the present Narayana image, a *Netralinga*, which according to Him, was brought from Mount Kailasha and ceremonially installed there, by no less a person than Shankaracharya about twelve hundred years ago! This *Netralinga*, when it emerged at the call of Baba, created a chapter in history; a *Linga* as the basis of the celebrated *Vaishnava* shrine was a welcome reminder of the basic harmony of *Shaivites* and *Vaishnavites*.

Tradition has it that the present Narayana idol at Badrinath was thrown by alien hands into the Alakananda River and that after long and strenuous asceticism, Shankaracharya was rewarded with the revelation that it was sunk in the Narada Kund of that river. Shankaracharya recovered it and installed it at its present site.

Therefore, when Baba announced that the *Netralinga* was the original nucleus, which had to be 'energised' by Him with suitable rites and ceremonial ablutions with the sacred waters of Gangotri, golden *bilva* leaves, and *tumme* flowers, which Baba miraculously procured quickly on the spot, even the Trustees of the Badrinath temple were pleasantly surprised!



Baba spoke of the *Linga* as being one of the five *Lingas*, which Shankaracharya brought from Kailash and installed in India, and so, the wonder grew; earnestness to know more of this Divine mission of Shankara was aroused in many. Those, who knew Him, accepted the accuracy of this exalted origin of the *Linga*, which they were privileged to see for some precious minutes on that never-to-be forgotten day.

Shaligrama Srikantha Shastry was one of those, who were afflicted by this earnestness to discover the authenticity. He had studied the *Shankaravijaya*, the classical biography of Shankaracharya; he sought to know the origin of the *Lingas* that had been installed by Shankaracharya in the monasteries he had founded. In the reply he received from the Sringeri *Math*, the monastery established by Shankaracharya amidst the mountains of western Mysore, he was told that mention was made of these *Lingas* in the *Shivarahasya Mahetihasa*, a book which he was able to get after elaborate search from the library of a *Vedic* college at Varanasi. In the XVI Chapter of the IX Section of this book, it is said that Lord Shiva welcomed Shankara at Kailash and blessed him with the words, “You are marked out for the

establishment in the world of the true teaching of the *Vedas*, namely, *Adwaita*. Spend 32 years of your earthly existence spreading this faith and overwhelming those, who decry or deny it. Accept these five *Lingas* that I am giving you now. Worship them with the *Panchakshari* and with *Shatarudrabhisheka*. Offer the sacred *bilva* leaf and ash and recite the holy *Pranava*. Complete your three tours of victory dispelling the darkness of *Dwaita* and then, install these *Lingas* from this thrice-holy Kailasha, marked by the effulgence of the crescent, named *Yoga*, *Bhoga*, *Vara*, *Mukti*, and *Moksha*, in sacred sites chosen by you before you shed this mortal frame at Kanchipuram.” So; the story of the *Linga* at Badrinath was authentic.

The Shankaravijaya of Anandagiri mentions that one of the *Lingas* was installed at Nilakantha-Kshetra, which reminds us of the snow-clad Nilakanthaparvata, the Queen of the Himalayas, behind Badrinath, resplendent in its brilliant purity.

There is a temple at Badrinath, called 'The Original Kedareshwara'. The legend says that Vishnu discovered that Badri was a fine place for *tapas*, but finding that it was already under occupation by Shiva, He resorted to a stratagem to take possession of it. He assumed the form of a child and started wailing aloud. So, Parvati took up the forsaken baby and fostered it, in spite of the remonstrances of Shiva. Some days later, when Shiva and Parvati had gone to the river, the child assumed its real form. Vishnu insisted on staying at the place, so that the Divine pair had to seek a place many miles off for residence, namely, modern Kedarnath.



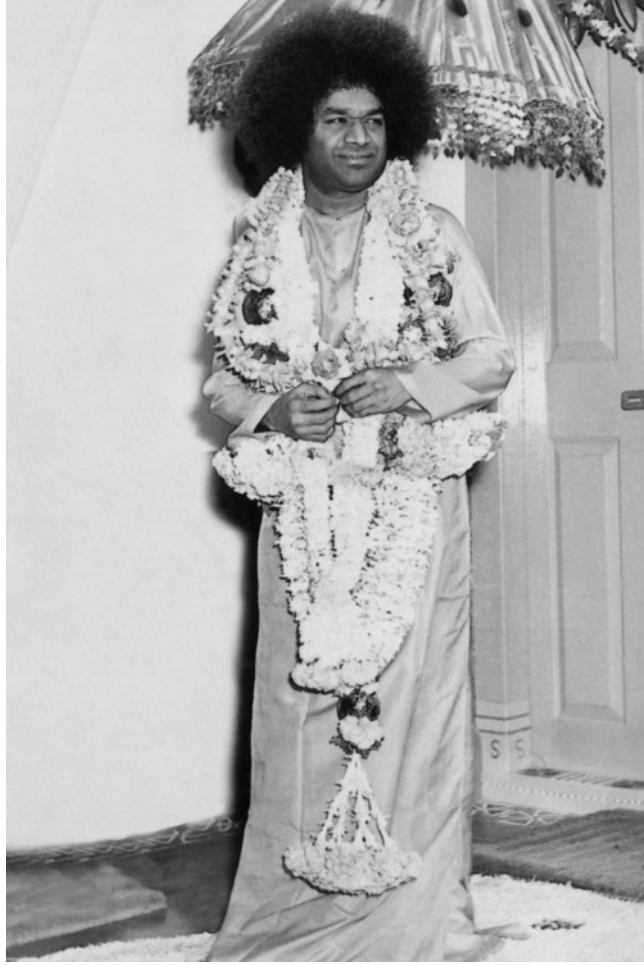
This legend indicates that the Badri shrine was originally *Shaivite* and later, became *Vaishnavite*. The Kailasha *Linga* must have been there from the very beginning, even when the Narayana image was installed on the holy spot. These surprises arise in our minds when we delve into the history of the *Linga*, which Baba revealed as having been the initial “spiritual nucleus” of Badri. Whether as NilakanthaKshetra or as Kedaram, the site, where

the Narayana temple is existing now, was blessed with a *Linga* by Shankaracharya; this is certain. We can only offer our homage of reverential awe to the unpredictable depth of Baba's Divine awareness, when we recapitulate the story of the Badrinath *Linga*.

In pursuance of the same mission of heightening the spiritual potency of the great shrines of India, Baba visited Kashi and Badri of peninsular India too, to wit, Srishailam and Pandharpur. At Srishailam, which He visited on the 5th of January, 1963, He said, "This shrine has consoled and comforted thousands and thousands of pious persons year after year, for centuries. Shankaracharya was here and he sang of the holiness of this place and the calm he enjoyed here. He has installed a *chakra* here, which I may tell you, is in a small cave by the side of Patala Ganga." He added, "The atmosphere of holy places should improve. The attitude of the monks, who are the custodians of the places, requires drastic correction. This will be done by Me, as part of *Dharmasthapana*, the task which I have come to fulfil."

Srishailam is a shrine saturated, over the centuries, with the deep devotion of mystics like Akka - Mahadevi and nation-builders like Shivaji. Baba revealed the inner significance of the names, by which the Lord and His consort - Mallikarjuna and Bhramaramba are worshipped at Srishailam. This too was something new, a gift from Baba to generations of votaries. Arjuna means white, pure, without blemish; *mallika* means the spotlessly white jasmine flower. So, Mallikarjuna is Shiva of the snowy peak Kailasha; pure, cool, resplendent with the sacred ash spread all over. He is the fragrant flower that draws the *amba* (consort), the *Shakti* aspect, called *Bhramara* (the bee, which is attracted spontaneously by the honey of grace). She is the true representative of the ardent devotee and Mallikarjuna is the purest conception of the grace showering God, who yields to sincere entreaty.

While inside the innermost shrine, Baba showered on Mallikarjuna golden *tumme* (*Leucas Linifolia*) flowers, which He created on the spot by a wave of His hand. That was the ceremonial rite of multiplying the potency and improving the sanctity of the focus of worship.



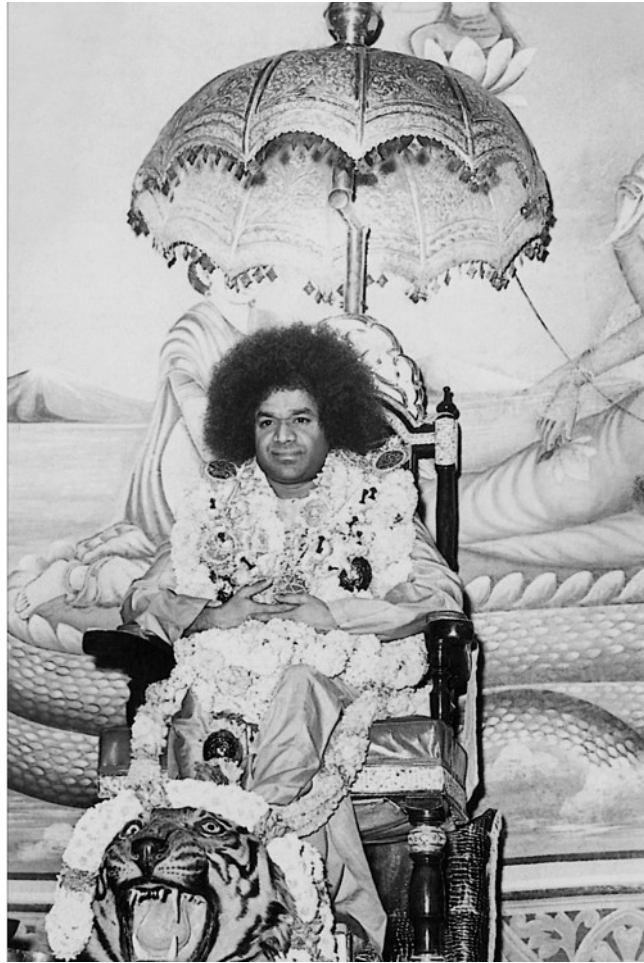
Pandharpur and the shrines of Panduranga and Rukumayi have woven themselves into the history of Marathas and Kannadigas and of millions of others by the inspiration they imparted for centuries to a long line of saints, mystics, and poets, famous for the songs that emerged from their ecstatic experience. Purandaradas, the great itinerant singer of Panduranga's glory, was a Kannada saint; Tukaram and a host of other stalwart servants of God were from the Maharashtra country. Even while a boy, Baba had gathered a band of comrades at Puttaparthi village, who danced and sang of the joy derived from a pilgrimage to Pandharpur to witness the shrine of Panduranga Vithal. He had composed many captivating Telugu songs for His comrades to sing; some of them glorified the Lord who blessed devotees at Pandharpur; some detailed the route to be followed; some described the travails of the long journey; some expressed the thrill of the exhausted pilgrims when they had the first glimpse of the temple from afar. A Divine design, an indescribable kinship, was drawing Baba towards Pandharpur since His childhood.

At last, Baba visited the shrine with a number of devotees from Maharashtra, on 13th June, 1965. He stood silent for a few minutes before Panduranga, the Vithal whose vision He

Himself had often vouchsafed to those, who yearned to see that form in Him; then, He moved on to the shrine of the consort, Rukumayi, Rukmani, the *Shakti* of the Lord and, urged by a quick irrepressible memory, He created a *Mangalasutra* and placed it round the neck of the Goddess. A page from the *Bhagavata* came alive during that moment. Besides these temples, Baba also visited and intensified the sanctity of the temple of Giridhari at Brindavan and of Ramachandra at Ayodhya, in Uttar Pradesh and Bhadrachalam and Mahanandi, in Andhra Pradesh.

The resuscitation of the holy places, where millions gather to draw solace and peace, is only one of the many means of *Dharmasthapana*. The repositories of that *Dharma*, the interpreters of that *Dharma* had to be inspired to a greater awareness of their responsibility. The twin objects of *Vidwatposhana* and *Vedasamrakshana* (fostering of scholarship and preservation of the *Vedas*) can be gained only by drawing the *pundits* of the land into the circle of His grace.

Like all acts of Baba, this shower of grace came about in a quiet, spontaneous manner, no one noticing the 'grand design' or the harvest of precious grain. The deltaic region of the Godavari Basin is even now the home of classical learning in Andhra Pradesh, though the scholars, who are struggling to keep the flag of *Vedic* learning flying, are finding it hard to brave the buffeting of economic distress and social neglect.

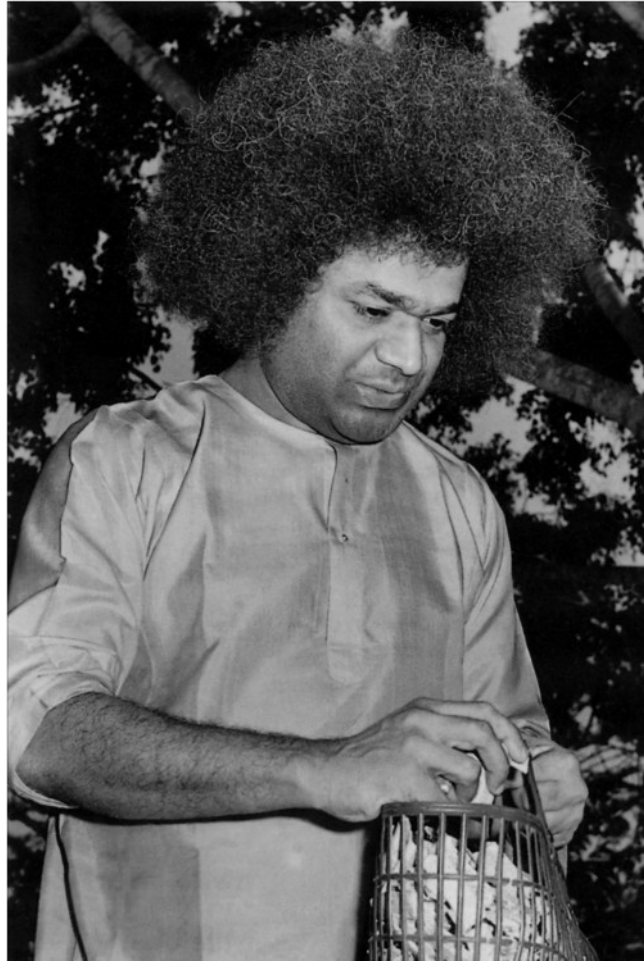


When the devotees of Baba suggested that a *yaga* be included as one of the functions He might attend, when He visited the East Godavari district, Baba replied that they could as well celebrate the *yaga* at Prasanthi Nilayam itself during Dasara, when thousands from all over India could have the thrill of witnessing it! Lists of qualified ritualists and reciters, *pundits* and *Shastris* were sent to Him, but when Baba saw that they were all selected from the *Konasima* (Delta area) only, He set them aside with the remark that His *Sima* (area) is not *Konasima* only; it was *Vedasima* (all areas, where the *Vedas* are revered). So, the lists were revised and *Vedic* scholars and *pundits* were invited from Benares, Bangalore, and Hyderabad, besides the contingent from the Godavari Basin.

When they started from their villages, these savants did not know how epoch-making the journey was, both for their own lives and for the life of the country and its culture, for each one returned home vastly richer in faith, more firmly established in courage, more steadfast in loyalty to the *Vedas*, which were the source of sustenance for himself as well as for the people.

The *yaga* was called *Vedapurusha Sapthaha Gnyana Yagnya* and it consisted of two sections,

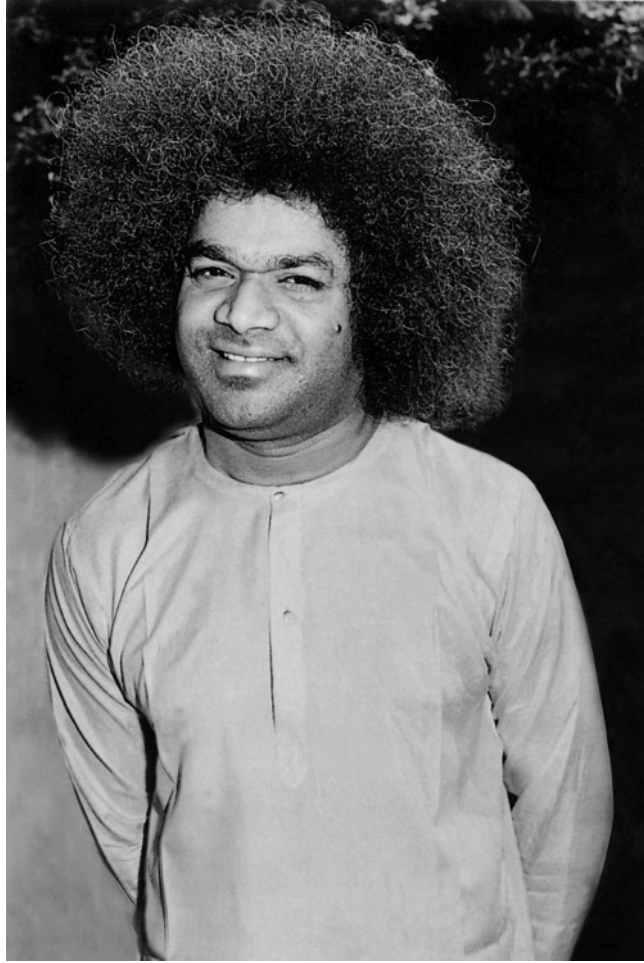
the morning sessions for seven days of *Ati-rudra homa* with all its complementary rites, and the evening sessions of a *Gnyanayagnya*, where distinguished exponents of the *Vedas* explained to the vast gathering, the meaning and significance of the scriptural rites. Since the festival had to highlight the efficacy of the *Vedic* injunctions, Baba said that scrupulous care should be taken to observe them all, down to the minutest detail. Therefore, the number, size, and situation of the pillars of the *Yagamantap*, the number and shape of the sacrificial pits, the location of the shrines of subsidiary deities like the *Yoginis*, the *Vastupurusha*, the *Kshetrapalas* like *Abhayankara*, and the *Navagrahas* were all correctly fixed. The kusa-grass seats for the participants were prepared in accordance with the do's and don'ts that the *Shastras* prescribe. The materials for the sacrifice, like ghee prepared from cow's milk, earth from ant-hills and from royal equestrian stables and royal elephant stables and royal palace enclosures, the banyan tree twigs, the spoons made of special wood, were all collected under His personal supervision. Altogether 2,26,270 spoonfuls of ghee were offered during the seven mornings into the sacrificial fire, with the concurrent invocation of the appropriate name of the Lord, describing one among His manifold facets! The *yaga* was certain to promote, according to the *Vedas*, the welfare and peace of the world. "*Shanti Kaamastuhomayet*" (those who desire the establishment of peace have to do this sacrifice), say the *Vedas*.



Baba, in one of His discourses during the week, referred to the derision with which even many Hindus react, when they see so much ghee being poured into the fire. He spoke of such critics as dwellers in the realm of cash books, persons who clamour for jars of ghee and bundles of fuel, rather than the more precious and the more lasting joy of having invoked and pleased the Gods. The very performance of an ancient honoured rite gives a satisfaction that cannot be expressed in terms of cash. “These questioners have consumed hundreds of bags of rice, since birth and they have drunk pots of ghee, so far. Let me ask them, whether they have had a single day of happiness themselves or whether they have been able to give a single day of joy to their kith and kin. But, this *yaga* gives great joy to many; it gives peace and joy to the world. I and My people are delighted; that is enough compensation. When ghee is poured into the fire, those who do not know or believe the *Vedas* say it is waste. Those who do not know agriculture may cry that casting seeds in the furrow is a colossal waste; they do not know that the tiller will get the grain back a hundredfold. This is also like that. Prayers reach the addressee, only when they are duly stamped with *mantras* and dropped into sacrificial fire. This is a science as much as any other.”

The foremost reciter of the *Vedas* in Andhra Pradesh, a person honoured by his colleagues as *Vedasamrat* (undisputed Master of the *Vedas*), Brahmasri Cherkumalli Kameshwara Ghanapathi was invested with the office of *Sarvadyaksha* (over-all supervisor) of the *yaga* and a *pundit* in the *Nyaya Vedanta* and *Jyotisha* schools of thought, Brahmasri Kuppa was installed as the officiator. Sri Uppuluri Ganapati Shastri, a septuagenarian scholar, one of the very few in India today, who can expound every syllable of the *Vedas* in conformity with authentic commentaries, on whom learned Societies have showered titles like *Amnayarthavachaspati*, *Vedabhashyavisharada* and *Vedabhashyaalankara*, was chosen as the president of the *Gnyana Yagnya* section of the *yaga*.

Sri Ganapati Shastri has stated that in his fifty years of experience of *Vedic yagas* and *yagnyas*, he has not had the privilege of witnessing a scrupulously correct *yaga*, which could pass the most rigorous tests of orthodoxy. As a matter of fact, the discourses he gave every evening on the significance of the rites were punctuated with sincere gratitude to Baba for His upholding the *Vedic* injunctions. He quoted *Vedic mantras* in support of what looked like ‘casual acts’ of Baba: Baba’s reference to the *ritwiks* as ‘gods’, His distribution of white silk clothes to the reciters of the *Vedas* and red silk clothes to those engaged in other rites, and even the order in which He presented awards to the participants at the end of the *yaga*! Baba was the *Vedapurusha*, he acknowledged. Baba Himself declared, “Do not be misled; I am not the person performing this sacrifice. I am the Person receiving the sacrificial offerings and awarding the rewards.” And He gave proof too. On the penultimate day of the *yagnya*, He announced, “Tomorrow, when the valedictory offering is poured into this sacrificial fire, I want each one of you to resolve with your will that you are pouring into the flames all the evil in you, all the egoism and degrading attachments, all the habits that drag you down.” Many, who had equipped themselves with gold and gems, silk and sandalwood in order to be ready to put these precious things into the fire (as is the wont in all *yagnyas*), were awakened by this call, into the knowledge of the significance of the *yagnya*. Baba made also another announcement, "Tomorrow, at the moment of valedictory offering, you will be given the *darshan* of the *Yagnyapurusha*, the Person who accepts the *yagnya*."



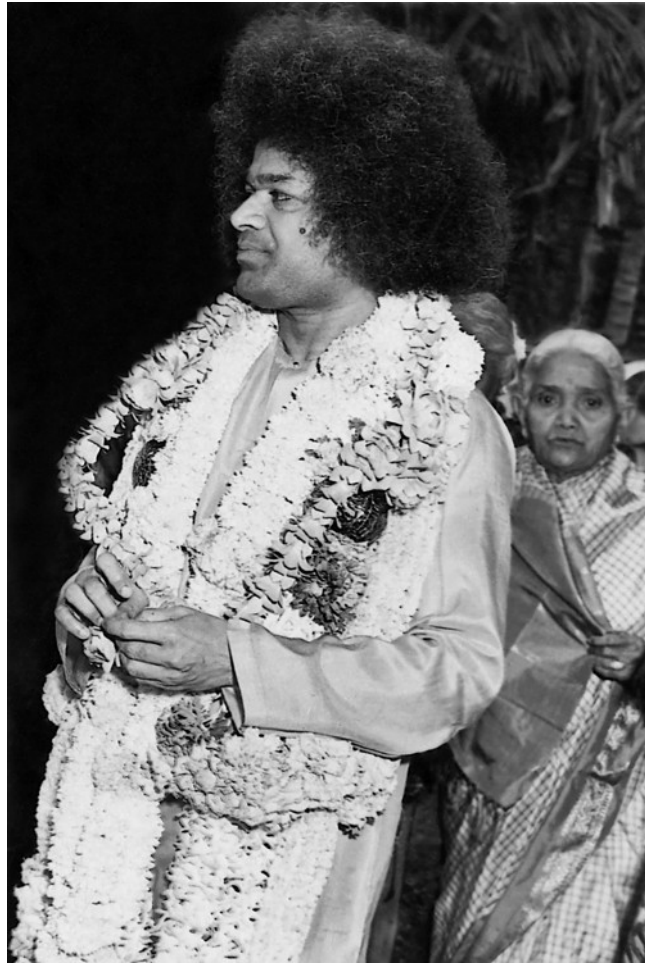
True to the promise, Baba ascended the *Yagnya Vedi* at that very moment. He granted *darshan* to the tens of thousands, who ecstatically acclaimed Him as the Person who accepts the *yagnya*.

It must be mentioned that the *kamandalu* (watervessel) of Shirdi Sai Baba, which miraculously found its way into Prasanthi Nilayam, was placed on the *yaga-mandap* to hold the ceremonial water used for most of the mystic rites; the continuity of the two Sais was thus symbolised. When the officiator required images of the *Navagrahas* for installation, Baba created them by a wave of His hand; when he held out his hand for a plate of gold to be deposited with the relevant *mantras* in the water vessel, Baba made it on the spot and gave it to him; so too, when the time for the valedictory offering approached, He created the nine gems and dropped them in the plate held out before Him. The *pundits* as well as the thousands who attended the *yaga* had also another glimpse into His Divinity, when Baba one evening came down from His seat and moving out of the roofed area, looked up at the growling sky, which was bent on a heavy downpour of rain; as at Shirdi, Baba must have rebuked the skies and said, “Stop your fury and be calm,” for the sky was stunned into

sudden calm and clarity.

The *yaga* achieved many results, chief among them being the transformation it brought about in the outlook of the *pundits* of the land. Many of them came infected with the prejudice that Baba was only an adept in magic, a hardy prejudice that had unfortunately kept Shishupala, Duryodhana, and millions of others away from grace in previous eras. Ganapati Shastri confesses that he too was thus affected, but, “as a result of the constant association with Him for many days during this *Gnyanayagya*, and observation of the ever fresh and unique examples of His glory, I realised that I was incapable of gauging His reality, for He was undoubtedly the incarnation of God.”

Darshanabhushana Chatustantri Kolluri Somasekhara Shastri, who had a similar experience, began addressing Him soon as *Bhagavalleelavatara*, *Leelamanusha vigraha*, meaning that He was indisputably Divine. Vidwatkavi Vemparala Suryanarayana Shastri revealed before a large gathering of devotees that he had refused to place faith in the theory that Baba was an incarnation of the Lord; he was not convinced when many people told him that their lives were saved by the *vibhuti* that Baba had materialised and blessed them with; even when his friend, Sri Kameswara Ghanapathi had shown him gifts that Baba had created and given him at Rajahmundry, he had turned a blind eye. But, before the *yagya* concluded, he confessed that, “The conviction that Baba was Krishna come again, was rooted deep in me.” *Adwaitavedanta Shiromani*, Meemamsavisharada Mallavarjhula Venkatasubba Shastri of Warangal, who was also a doubter, turned into an ardent advocate of the *avatarhood* of Baba. He said that even the *Vishwarupa darshanam* vouchsafed by Krishna to Arjuna could be dismissed by cynics as a major magic performance; if the Lord presented Himself before them, they would attribute it to an optical defect or describe it as an apparition pictured by feverish imagination. But, he applied the various tests prescribed by the *Shastras* and concluded that Baba was *Bhagavad-avatara-murti* and so, he exhorted all to worship Him with steady devotion and sincere love, to accept Him as their Teacher and Guide and by these means to save themselves.



This revolution in the reactions of the *pundits* was in conformity with the declaration by Baba Himself; for, He has said often that only those conversant with *Vedas* and *Shastras* can delve into His Reality, to any appreciable extent. No wonder therefore that the hundred odd scholars of the scriptures that basked for seven days in the sun of His grace decided without any extraneous prompting, to arrange a unique function on the Tenth Day which they named “*Tribhuvana Vijayam*” (triumph over the three worlds)! When asked whose triumph they were arranging to celebrate, the answer was Baba’s! The *Vedas* and other scriptures, along with the ancient science and disciplines by which they could be understood and practised (like Grammar, the six systems of Philosophy, Philology, Phonetics, Theology), were to approach God on His Throne and beseech Him to glance at them lovingly, so that they may grow strong again and afford shelter to mankind. They pleaded that Baba must be on the throne and proposed that they would approach Him with pleas on behalf of the sciences of the Spirit. And, Baba agreed. When some objected, “Baba! They are asking You to act a role! They can be roles, but You are God.” Baba intercepted, “But, I am acting a role now in this human form. The function-less and the role-less has come, taking on the function and

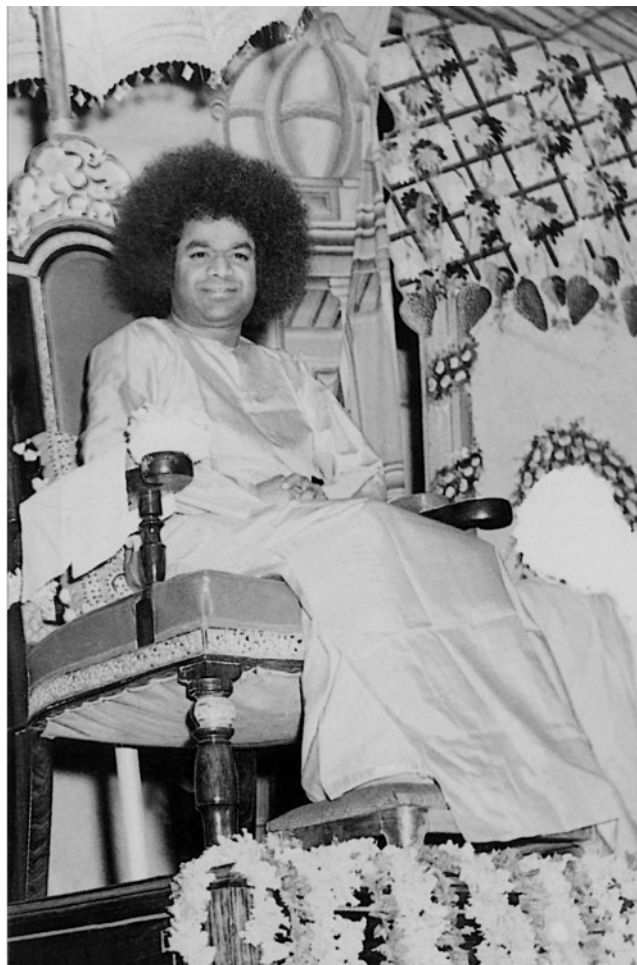
assuming a role."

A strange thing had happened, unawares, in preparation for the "Tribhuvana Vijayam!" A devotee had a dream in Bombay a few weeks previously. She saw Baba as Narayana on the Primeval Serpent (Shesha) couch. So, she got ready a magnificent serpent couch in wood, complete with coils and hood and her kinsmen brought it to Prasanthi Nilayam, in a motor vehicle specially reshaped for the purpose. The *pundits* were happy that the very thing they needed to make their function realistic, the serpent throne, had come through the will of Baba.

Let Ghanapathi Shastri himself describe the scene: "When Baba reclined on that *Sheshatalpa*, with the *Yagamandapa* as the background, each *pundit* and *shastri*, who was a master of one chosen branch of a scriptural lore, stood before Him and represented as previously arranged, the importance of his field of knowledge and the urgent need to foster it. Everyone saw Mahavishnu in Vaikuntha reclining on the Shesha serpent and Brihaspati and all the gods and sages displaying their scholarship and attainments of His glorification and praying to Him to save the *Shastras* from decline. It was indeed the *Devasabha*, the Divine durbar and we forgot all about ourselves in the supreme joy, in which we were submerged. It was an occasion to be personally gone through and experienced; the joy we felt cannot be communicated to others by even Brihaspati, the all-knowing preceptor of the Gods, or by the four-faced Brahma, or the six-faced Kumaraswamy, or the thousand tongued Adishesha." To the *Sarvadyaksha* of the *yaga*, Sri Kameshwara Ghanapathi, it was a fruitful revelation. He came, he saw, and he was conquered. He left his native home in the far-off Godavari Delta, he turned his face away from his village set in the midst of the coconut gardens he cherished, and stayed on at Prasanthi Nilayam, where he found the *Vedapurusha*, whom he had been extolling with *mantras* for sixty years!

The *Gnyanayagnya* or evening discourse provided an opportunity for the *Vedic* scholars to fathom the extraordinary scholarship of Baba. Ghanapathi Shastri expresses the sense of admiration of the learned *pundits* thus: "Apart from the thrill that the listeners derived from the discourses of Baba, the reputed masters of the ancient disciplines, who had gathered renown by lecturing to many vast gatherings throughout the land, were themselves struck with wonder at the depth and width of His knowledge." Mallavarjhula Venkatasubbarama Shastri analysed the reactions of his colleagues thus: "In all His speeches there was not the slightest deviation from the *Shastras*, nor the faintest whisper contrary to the trend of their teachings. And, the subjects He handled! They were indeed the most profound! The

methodology of exposition was in strict conformity with the canons laid down in the scriptures. There was no repetition of argument, no irrelevant digression, no jeering criticism, no jarring adulation, no over-emphasis.” Kalluri Venkatasubramanya Dikshith reacted similarly. “The nectar of His love filled every word of His parables and explanations. It was overpowering grace that made Him pity the poor understanding of the listeners and search for tiny, tasty stories that could clarify the profundities. He was unravelling the goals He desired to picture.” In short, the scholars found in Baba the master mind that was guiding and shaping their own.



But, it was not all wonder and admiration! The *pundits* were made aware of the worth of the treasure that they were preserving; they were told that the reason for their poverty and for the neglect, which was their need, lay in themselves! They were induced to examine their own lives and beliefs, their own attitudes and prejudices, their own preferences and foibles. “You may ask why *pundits* and *Vedic* scholars are passing through such hard times. They are mostly hungry, ill-clad, and homeless. No one comes forward to join *Vedic* schools. I shall tell you why they have come to this pass. They have themselves lost faith in the *Vedas*. Let

them be fixed in that faith - then, the *Vedas* will make them happy. If the *Veda* cannot make a man happy, what else can!" asked Baba. He filled the Brahmins with faith in what they carried in their heads. He also condemned the ignorant sneer, which branded the *Vedas* as clever stratagems by which the Brahmin priests ensured their position as intermediaries between man and God and won superiority in social hierarchy. "Look at the regimen of restrictions and regulations, the hundreds of do's and don'ts limiting freedom of life and limb, which these Brahmins have imposed on themselves in order to promote the good of society and of the world and for their own spiritual uplift. Do not dismiss them as superstitions. No one will bind themselves from dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn with such drastic rules and limits, for mere fun. They are hard limitations on daily conduct, social contacts, and economic effort. It requires great courage, determination, and faith to hold these rules vital and put them into practice. Honour those that have faith in that ideal. Their adherence to those ideals has been of tremendous value to India and the world, for it has preserved the only culture that can save mankind. I know the sincerity with which they have been leading the hard life, for I have been with every one of them, in their rites and rituals, since years," Baba said; this transformed the hostile attitude of many towards the Brahmin community, an attitude fostered by pseudo-political fears and prejudices caused by the ignorance of the sacrifice the community had been practising for centuries.

This was no ordinary *yagnya* that Baba presided over; it was a revival; it was a revelation; it was a revolution, a resurgence. It was a symbol of cultural renaissance, for Baba explained that the *Vedas* were essentially for all mankind, that sacrifice or *yagnya* was the sign and secret of all life. He advised the participants to recapture the ancient, ascetic simplicity; He explained that in the *mantras*, the glory and majesty of the One God is visualised in various contexts; He elaborated on the symbolism of the sun and the moon as guiding the inner and outer vision of man. He spoke of the tonic effect of the very sound of the *Vedic mantras*; they charmed away the evil in man. "I want to prove to you and to those others that a *yagnya*, celebrated according to *Vedic* formulae, will certainly grant the fruits promised by the *Vedas*," He said. "The *Vedas* belong to those who value them, who are moved by thirst for spiritual uplift, who desire to practise them, and who have faith that they will benefit by that practice. No one else has the right to talk patronisingly of the *Vedas* or disparage them, for all such talk is hollow and insincere," He warned.

Forty-five days later, on the auspicious occasion of His birthday, when thousands had gathered to celebrate it in His presence, Baba invited the incomparable Amnayaartha-

vaachaspati Uppuluri Ghanapathi Shastri to inaugurate the Sathya Sai *Veda Shastra Pathashala* (the academy for *Vedic* and Sanskrit Study), at the Nilayam. He said, “The *Vedas* are in need of revival. We have to prevent the goats from nibbling at the sprouts. I have come for the sake of this *Dharmasthapana*. ‘*Vedokhilo dharma mulam*’ (The *Vedas* are the root of *Dharma*). *Vedic* scholars have to grow in numbers for the sake of the promotion of *Dharma*. So long as *Vedic* Scholars are produced and honoured, *Vedas* will remain green in the hearts of man. This is the real *Dharmasthapana*. ‘My Task is to open your eyes to the glory of the *Vedas* and to convince you that *Vedic* injunctions, when put into practice, will yield the promised results.’ My *prema* towards the *Vedas* is matched only by My *Prema* towards Humanity.”



“These boys,” He said, pointing to the first batch of boys that was enrolled, “will grow into strong, stalwart pillars of *Sanathana Dharma*; they will be the guides and leaders of this land in the days to come, to save it from vain follies and wild passions. You may say they are only

twenty in number now; but, as a vast country is administrated by a Cabinet of twenty Ministers, this band of students will be ample for the work I have in view. Parents, who have sent them to this *Pathashala*, have reason to be happy, for these boys will become lucent gems, spreading *Vedic* splendour and *Shastric* light. I shall take care of them, more lovingly than any mother.”

Then, the distinguished *Vedic* scholar taught the boys the correct pronunciation of the inaugural *rik*, from the *Yajur Veda*, “*Ishetwa*” and wished the *Pathashala* all success. Baba takes great delight in moving among the little boys and watching their progress. He instils hope and courage into them. He pays special attention to their health, discipline, and character. He insists on outer and inner cleanliness. Baba encourages them to seek the meaning and purpose of the *riks* they recite, for, as He has often remarked, they should not get transformed into mere tape-records of the *Vedas*; they must charge themselves with the devotion, the rectitude, the detachment, and the sense of kinship with Truth, which the *Vedas* teach.

He insists also on all-round progress of the boys, so that they may grow into helpmates of the downhearted and distressed. In recent years, He has Himself written musical plays brim-full of the noblest scriptural teachings on “Markandeya,” “Sakkubai,” and “Radha-bhakti”; the first depicts in easy, sweet Telugu the story of Markandeya, who defied death and won immortality as a Star in space. The second deals with the simple saint Sakku, whose devotion to Panduranga was so intense that the Lord Himself took her form and served her husband and mother-in-law, in order to release her from her home for the pilgrimage to the Panduranga temple. The third reveals the deep significance of the spiritual yearning, which filled the entire being of Radha for Krishna. Baba Himself selected the boys for the cast, assigned the parts, supervised the rehearsals, decided the stage fittings and curtains, and trained them to sing the many songs He composed. He designed the costumes for every role in every scene, and on the days when the plays were presented, Baba spent hours in the green room directing the make-up and encouraging each little boy by a soft pat with His loving palm, when they moved out towards the flood lit stage, where tens of thousands greeted them with loud applause. For about a month, the boys had the unique good fortune of being inspired by His vigilant *prema*, during rehearsals. Since every participant imbibed the entire text, whatever be his individual role, all the words from Baba’s Divine pen had sunk into the hearts of all the boys. Baba was thus transforming them into proper instruments for the fulfilment of the task, for which He has come. The *Pathashala* is bound to grow into a great

Banyan tree, affording shade and shelter to countless people caught in the desert sands of greed, hate, and despair.

Baba saw that the rampant decline in private and public morals was due to the neglect of the discipline prescribed in the *Vedas*. The Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya *varnas* are burdened with greater obligations than the rest of the community, because they are initiated into spiritual life, too. This rite of initiation is called *upanayana* - leading near - that is to say, taking the boy near the *Guru* or spiritual preceptor for *Brahmopadesh* (guidance to Brahman). This has to be done according to the *Shastras* by the teaching of the *Gayatri mantra* before the boy evinces longing for sensory pleasures and thereby, gets lost in the wilderness of transitory adventures. The Brahmin boy has to be initiated into that sacred *mantra* before he is eight years old, Kshatriya before he is eleven, and a Vaishya before he is twelve. *Mantra* (*trayate through manana*) is that which saves through constant reflection on the meaning. But, though these caste strictures still persist in varying degrees of strength throughout India, this great rite has suffered drastic decline. In many regions and families, it is postponed until as late as the marriage rite, or completely overlooked! When thus the very spring of spiritual discipline is allowed to go dry, how can the call of the ancient ideals raise any response in the heart? Man should not be allowed to remain a beast, caring only for feeding and breeding.

Therefore, as a great step forward in the revival of *Dharma*, Baba announced that He will be granting members of the three *varnas* dedicated to a second birth the great chance of being initiated into the spiritual life, at Prasanthi Nilayam. The devotees of Baba were thus aroused into a recognition of their primary duty to their children; they hastened to benefit from the offer. On February 3, 1963, when 35 boys were “led near Him” and became *Brahmacharis* (pilgrims on the path of Brahma-realisation) through the *Shastric* process of receiving the sacred *Gayatri mantra*, Baba declared, addressing the group, “You have come in this body, this receptacle, in order to realise the glory that you really are. This body is the cocoon that you have spun round yourselves with the thread of your impulses and desires. Use it to grow wings, so that you can escape from it. The *Gayatri mantra* is a prayer to the Universal Intelligence to awaken the *dheeshakti* in you, your faculty of discrimination, of analysis and synthesis; so that you may realise who you are and why.” Turning to the parents, He said, “This is an important day in the history of *Sanathana Dharma*, for it is a great step in the restoration of *varnashrama dharma*. The study of the *Vedas* is the highest learning, for it leads to the conquest of death itself. Today, these, your children, are set on the road to

explore their inner realm and innermost reality.”

In 1964, when the *Upanayanam* rite was again arranged, 300 boys were so blessed; in 1965, the number increased to 450. The festival is made unforgettable for participants as well as spectators by the shower of love, with which Baba greets not only the boys, who are initiated, but even their parents and relatives. He makes up for all ritual lapses of the parents, like disregard of the ‘naming rite,’ or ‘ear boring rite,’ or ‘tonsure rite’; He overwhelms the parents with gifts. He does not allow any display of wealth by the richer parents, lest the poorer are cast into gloom during the auspicious occasion. To have the rite performed in the Divine Presence is itself a unique gift and many a devotee has felt sad that he has aged too fast. Many are depressed that their children have undergone the rite already and have therefore, rendered themselves ineligible for the great chance.

Baba’s grace flows spontaneously towards the assemblage of *Brahmacharis*. He gives each of them ceremonial clothes, ritual vessels, mementos, and books, besides what is treasured as most auspicious, the inaugural *bhiksha* (alms) when each boy starts the ‘mendicant’ career that day, as prescribed in the *Shastras* for every seeker during the years of *Vedic* study. The boys walk up in a long line to Baba’s Presence and after introducing themselves in traditional style, mentioning their *gotra*, *sutra*, and patron rishi, pray ‘*Bhavati, bhikshaam dehi*’ (Ma, give me alms), and Baba, as *Vedamata* and *Annapurna*, fills their plates with grains of rice. Baba insists that the newly initiated prostrate themselves before their parents; He explains to each boy, at that particular moment, the *Vedic* commands ‘*Matru devo bhava*’ and ‘*Pitru devo bhava*’, meaning ‘May your mother be your God,’ ‘May your father be your God.’ The boys as well as the parents are visibly moved by this act, which Baba considers as important as any other item in the ceremony. Then He places in the hands of the boys, gifts, which they pass on reverentially to their parents.

More memorable than all these, especially to the *Brahmacharis*, is another spontaneous gift from Baba, a blessing that He alone can grant. Baba calls each boy to Himself, even when the number is 450, and, in the sublime silence, He whispers into the ear of the child, fresh from his first lesson in *Vedic* recitation, a sacred *mantra* which He instructs him to keep strictly to himself; he has to repeat it with *shraddha* and *bhakti*, every day of his life. Many an ardent seeker has striven long to get *mantropadesha* from the *avatar* of the Lord, but they still await the gift, while these chosen boys, on the threshold of the kingdom of God within them, acquire the key which will help them to enter it, through the loving grace of Baba.



The *upanayana* festival is also marked by the discourses by eminent *pundits* on the *Gayatri*, as well as on the need to regulate and restrict the wild senses by the discipline prescribed in *Dharma Shastras* for the twice-born and others, Baba too discourses on these and kindred topics; His advice is directed towards the elders, who, by their neglect of this rite, have brought about the downfall of the magnificent edifice of *Sanathana Dharma*. A gentleman from Mysore had not initiated his seven sons into the *Gayatri*; without any resentment, Baba invited him to bring all of them to Him, for, as He said, it is never too late to start on the Godward journey; his sons, ranging in age from 28 to 8 were all led into the sacred path. He wanted that parents too must perform the *sandhya* rite and repeat the *Gayatri mantra* for their own good; the boy should not be made to feel that this was a chore invented for tormenting him. “Do it cheerfully, with evident relish. Learn the procedure from these boys, from your children and grandchildren. For your own sake and for the sake of the human community, start *sandhya* today with *Gayatrijapa* and continue it, with increasing fervour. I know how systematic you are in eating and drinking. You take pretty good care of the body. I do not condemn it; I only want that you should take equally good care of the needs of the Spirit.”

The *Gayatri* is a *Vedic* prayer that has been addressed to the effulgence that is immanent in

the universe, by millions during millennia throughout the length and breadth of this land. It prays, not for health or wealth, happiness or victory, but it prays for “awakening of intelligence.” It is a prayer, which all men in all lands can well adopt. Mr. J.B.S. Haldane has written that the *Gayatri* can be carved on the doors of every laboratory in the World. “May intelligence grow, prevail, and ripen into wisdom,” and save mankind from perdition.

Baba does not hide His displeasure, when He finds that a Brahmin, Kshatriya, or Vaishya is not performing the *sandhya* rite and repeating the *Gayatri* during the rite. Fear of that displeasure has persuaded many, who come to Baba, to resume the *sandhya*, brushing their memory in haste from books or from their own children. When Baba surprises people with the question, “Are you doing *sandhya*?” many have to accept the lapse and promise to correct themselves.

God is said to love the returned prodigal; Baba encourages by special marks of grace, those who come back into the *sandhya* discipline. For example, a person from Shimoga Town came to Him to get His blessings, for a venture that he had set his mind upon. Baba surprised him with the question, “Are you doing *sandhya*?” and he hung his head. “No, Baba, though I have been enjoined to do it, years ago on the *upanayanam* day,” he said. “Well, it is not too late; start as soon as you reach home,” Baba ordered. The rite took about 20 minutes and had to be done three times a day; at dawn, when the sun was at the zenith, and at dusk. Rao kept the promise he had given Baba; he did the *sandhya* with growing devotion and pleasure. After some time, he felt that a *Linga*, which his grandfather and father were worshipping ritually every day, for many years, should be retrieved from the limbo, to which he had consigned it. He recovered it; he filled it with his devotion; he offered flowers and fruits and poured sanctified water on it, with the appropriate *mantras*! Baba ‘willed’ to grant him tangible proof of His appreciation of this laudable advance; the colour of the *Linga* changed from opaque dark into golden transparency. And, very soon, inside that round-topped little cylinder of hard translucence, Baba allowed Himself to be ‘entangled!’

For months now, thousands have seen, inside the *Linga*, a lovely, captivating picture in brilliant colour of Baba with His sweet smile, in the centre of a halo of mellow golden light!

Apart from the day fixed by Baba, for the *upanayanam* of the boys who are brought to Prasanthi Nilayam, Baba confers the boon on other days also, if devotees yearn for it and if He feels the boy deserves it. On Shankarajayanti day, the birthday of the great Shankaracharya, who revived Hindu religion and built Hindu philosophy and culture on the

unshakable foundation of basic unity of *Adwaita*, He seldom refuses this boon. Baba considers this ceremony of opening the inner eye of the rising generation to be so important that He even reminds parents of their obligation to initiate their children and calls upon them to celebrate the *upanayanam*. This, He does both directly and indirectly. Take, for example, the telegram received by Sri C. Ramachandran of Kirkee, Poona.

“On 26th April 1965, when I went to my residence at lunch break,” writes he, “both my sons came running forward excitedly and put into my hands a telegram which had been just received. The telegram ran as follows: “Sri Sathya Sai Baba arriving at your residence on fifth May to attend *upanayanam* of your sons and give them *Brahmopadesham*.” The words “Sathya,” “*Upanayanam*” and “*Brahmopadesham*” were underlined in the telegram.

I had never discussed with anybody the question of having the *upanayanam* of my sons performed during the summer, although I had a keen desire to perform it as early as possible, since this function was already overdue and had been put off, during the last two or three years. I had not made up my mind, whether to have it performed at Shirdi or Palani, my family shrine. I was, therefore, surprised to find that the place and the date had been fixed by the sender of the telegram. We were overjoyed at the prospect of having Baba with us for the function.”

On enquiry, Sri Ramachandran discovered that the person, who was responsible for sending the telegram from the Central Post Office, Poona, had described himself as “a person in transit, with no permanent or local address!” and that when the postal authorities pressed him to give an address, he had written his name as Sri Maragathavelu, C/o All India Sai Samaj, Mylapore. Hesitant to neglect so mysterious a manifestation of Baba’s grace (of which he was well aware through other more concrete instances, like *vibhuti* emanating from the pictures of Baba, in his shrine-room), Ramachandran decided to have the *upanayanam* of his two sons celebrated on the 5th May as directed. And Baba gave proof of His presence. “During the evening *Bhajan*, everyone in the gathering of nearly a thousand people had a peculiar feeling that the sofa kept on the platform for Him was not vacant. When *arati* was over, we found that the new silk seat-spread had been creased in such a way that we could clearly make out that Baba had been sitting there. Besides, the ring of jasmine flowers, which was placed on the right arm of the sofa, as is generally done at Prasanthi Nilayam, was crushed just as if His hand was resting on it.” A sign is enough for those who seek.

Writing about the *Dharmasthapana*, for which Baba has come in human form, we have to

devote special attention to the academy of *Vedic* scholars established under His guidance, which is fast spreading its beneficent activity from one State of India to another, since 1964. It was on the sacred day of *Ramanavami*, when a million homes all over the country were celebrating the incarnation of Rama, described as the embodiment of *Dharma*, that Baba revealed His intention. He was at Rajahmundry on the Godavari River; and that day at dusk, He entered a motor launch with a number of learned *pundits* and scholars. When we reached a patch of dry sand, we saw an island bathed in cool moonlight, set in the dark blue background of the river above the Dhowaleshwaram anicut and there, seated in the centre of the circle of adoration, Baba spoke on the state of the world and of India, which must guide it with the lamp of *Sanathana Dharma*. “We must reform the habits of man; reconstruct his character; recondition his ideals and modes of living; help him regain the spiritual heritage, which he is now encouraged to ignore by protagonists of material prosperity and monetary happiness,” He said. He created from the sand before Him, resplendent idols of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Anjaneya; then, He created a charming idol of Nataraja, the Dancing Shiva, symbolising the energised universe that expands and contracts (or breathes) in harmony with the Divine will. Then, in the climax of that sublime silence, He announced that He had decided on the establishment of the *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha*, an all India academy of *Vedic* scholars, who will strive to awaken humanity to the need to attain the *prasanthi* (inner harmony and equipoise), which has its *nilayam* (abode) in the *Sanathana Dharma* enshrined in the ancient scriptures of India. Surely, a great moment in the history of this Age.

Baba had given indications even in the forties that He would rebuild *Vedic Dharma* on a stronger foundation. In 1955, on the first day of October, at 9:30 a.m., as recorded in my Diary, Swami Amritananda ran towards me, after an interview with Baba, gasping with joy. He said, “I had a big sum of money with me, which Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi advised I should use for *Vedic* revival. I had invested it in the Benares Bank and later, with some Trusts. I had consulted Madan Mohan Malaviya, Bhagawan Das, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak about the scheme, but somehow, my plan did not fructify. Just now, Baba told me, unasked, all about my unfulfilled yearning. He said, 'Do not worry anymore; the task of *Vedic* revival is no longer yours. It is Mine.’” The Swami Amritananda died, peacefully, within two months of the transfer of this burden.



In January, 1960, a great Sanskrit scholar from Sorbonne France, Valestin by name, who was in India to translate the commentaries on the *Vedas* into French, arrived at Prasanthi Nilayam. One evening, during an interview with Baba, he suddenly caught Baba's hands and pleaded, "Baba! *Vedic* scholarship is fast declining in this holy land. You must revive it, You must foster it." I was there, nearby. I felt that East and West were also there, awaiting with palpitating heart, wondering what reply Baba would vouchsafe. For, the *Vedas* are for both East and West, for all mankind. And Baba did not disappoint us. He said, "I have come for that very purpose, for *Vedic* revival. It shall be done. I will do it. Wherever you are, you will know of it. The world will share that joy, that light."

The *Sabha* was formally inaugurated at the *Swadhyaaya Saptaha Yagnya* during the *Dasara* Festival, 1965. About 200 *pundits* had assembled at Prasanthi Nilayam for the Convocation on 20th October. "Bhavani," said Baba, "gave a sword into the hands of Emperor Shivaji, commissioning him to venture forth and uphold Hinduism; this "Shiva-Shakti" is today giving these *pundits* the sword of courage and commissioning them to go forth and revive

Dharma in the world. I am sure this *Sabha* will move forward from victory to victory, for it is contributory to My work. In all lands, the true sense of values has to be restored and faith in the divinity of Man has to be implanted. This is the work for which I have come. The world has to be saved from the consequences of limited knowledge and of the blinding pride that precedes a fall. The world is a parched desert, calling out for rain. This *Sabha* will give each thirsty mouth a cup of solace and strength, from the well of the *Vedas* and *Shastras*.” He condemned the criticism of *Vedic* rites, rituals, and teachings as superstitious. “The *Vedas* are the root of *Dharma*. If the roots are injured, the tree will die. They give *ananda* and *shanti* that are lasting and sustaining,” He said. “They transmute all activity into worship of the Supreme and save man from unending desire and inexplicable sorrow,” He said, “Know thyself, instead of the sun and moon - that way lies the road to *ananda* and *shanti*.”

The purpose of the Akhila Bharata Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha was clarified by Baba, during the discourses that He gave on the days following the inauguration, while presiding over the lectures that the *pundits* gave on subjects suggested by Him from *Vedic* and *Vedantic* texts. The watchword for the *Sabha* should be, He said, the prayer that is mentioned in the *Vedas* as rising however indistinct, from every human heart. “*Tamaso maa jyotir gamaya*” (From darkness, lead me unto light). “Eradicate *agnyana*, the ignorance of the Universal that is the basis, the Ocean of which the individual is but a wave; light the lamp in village after village. Instil faith in man’s freedom from grief and pain, that is to say, instil faith in the *atma* and the *atmatatwa*; share your learning and experience, in love and sympathy, with the people, who are hungry to know and be saved; remind them of their worth and work. We are not to condemn anyone’s faith or to develop any new sect; foster the positive attitude in spiritual effort; faith is a precious plant, a gust of harshness will make it wither. Be kind, be considerate, promote love, tolerance, service, sacrifice, wherever you find them in the heart of man. These *pundits* have at last attained the fruition of their long study, for they have secured this medium, this *Sabha*, for sharing their joy and their wisdom with their brothers and sisters. They have been allotted districts and the Central Committee will be supervising the programme and progress. They will sow in all cultivated hearts the seed of *Karmakanda*, the *Upaasanakanda*, and the *Gnyanakanda* of the *Vedas*, of *Dharma* as expounded in the *Manudharmashastra* and other texts, and of the glory of God and Man as explained in the *Bhagavata*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Ramayana*,” He announced.

Turning to the thousands of devotees, who had come from all parts of India, Baba said, “They sow the seeds. But, you have to tend the young crop, feed it with the manure of *manana*, rid it

of pests like greed and pride, harvest the happiness of love, and establish yourselves in the *prasanthi* that the nourishing grain ensures.” Baba recognised that the *pundits* must grow experienced in the art of explaining the essentials of scriptural teachings to the masses, in small, easily assimilable doses that are relishing. He warned that, unless the *pundits* took care to practise what they preached, their discourses would be exercises in sheer hypocrisy. The people too have to be trained in the art of listening to short, straight, spiritual discourses, which arouse the desire to practise what is taught. For, as Baba said, the great sins are hypocrisy, spiritual weakness, self-condemnation, and cowardice. “These can be cured only by the awareness of one’s inherent divinity, which can never be harmed by passing clouds of depression.” Baba declared, “This *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha* is not something new, it is *sanathanam*. It is now once again set on the age-old mission. This work of *Dharmasthapana* is being done over and over again. You have now the chance to share in it. So, join this great task and make your lives worthwhile.”

That call was irresistible. Towns and villages vied with each other in asking for the chance, to arrange meetings and seminars for the benefit of their citizens. The members of the *Sabha* were already famous over the length and breadth of the land. Dr. B. Ramakrishna Rao, a great social worker and political leader who served the people as Chief Minister of Andhra and Governor of Kerala and Uttar Pradesh, is the President of the *Sabha*; he has a Central Committee of *pundits* who have earned enduring fame by their scholarship, speeches, and writings of *vedic* scholars like Uppuluri Ganapati Shastri, who was honoured as *Amnayartha vachaspati* by his colleagues; Kolluri Somesekhara Shastry, honoured as a Kulapati by his grateful students; Bulusu Appanna Shastry, known as *Darshanaalankara*, the renowned translator and commentator on Shankara’s *Gita Bhashya*, Remilla Suryaprakasa Shastry, honoured as *Sanga Veda Vidya Bhaskara*; Varanasi Subrahmanya Shastry, who by his unexcelled scholarship relating to the works of Vyasa is celebrated as *Balavyasa*; Ghandikota Subrahmanya Shastry, the doyen among *Dharmashastra* scholars and the masters of *Vedic* lore; Pishapati Krishnamurti Shastry, a great expert in astrological observations and calculations according to all the schools of that ancient science, and others. To bring such a galaxy of stars into the same orbit was itself an achievement, made possible only by the unique attraction which Baba’s Divinity exerted on them all with equal force.

The Inaugural Meeting, where the *pundits* carried the message to the people at large, was held in the immediate presence of Baba Himself at Venkatagiri Town, in the Palace quadrangle, under the chairmanship of the Raja Saheb of Venkatagiri. Baba mentioned that

the citizens of Rajahmundry on the Godavari were hoping that the meeting would be held in their town, since the *Sabha* was resolved upon ‘on the sands of an island on the bed of the Godavari on Sri Ramanavami, last year.’ But, “like all good things, this chance is won not so much by present effort, but by merit accumulated through years numbering centuries.” Baba said: “Venkatagiri has been for centuries the seat of a royal family dedicated to the support and protection and promotion of *Dharma*. Consider how many temples were built or renovated and maintained by its munificence! Take count of the *pundits* it has patronised so far and the number of religious books its donations have helped to reach the masses. See the interest the family takes even now, for the upkeep of temples and *mutts*, although their State and status have been overwhelmed by the storm of political change.” No wonder that when the Madras State Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha was inaugurated six months later, Baba selected the vast grounds of the Venkatagiri Palace in Madras City as the venue.

The Mysore State Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha was inaugurated at Brindavan, Whitefield, near Bangalore on 13th April 1964, under the Chairmanship of Hon’ble Sri B.D. Jatti, then Finance Minister of Mysore State. Inaugurating the *Sabha*, Baba said, “The link between the *pundit* and the politician, the religious leaders and the ruler has snapped and each goes his own way, irrespective of what the other thinks or feels. Long years of foreign rule, during which the *pundits* were derided as symbols of an outdated culture, contributed to the widening of the gap. But, even after that rule ended, nothing has been done to re-establish the link. Sunk in the search of passing pleasure and cheap recreation, people have become deaf to the counsels of the past and the call of the sublime. Unless the people are trained to direct their newly won opportunities into channels of service and self-control, there will be large scale moral breakdown, when the Five Year Plans stud the land with dams, power-stations, furnaces, and factories; we must have a plan, a well-thought-out plan for the moral education and the spiritual uplift of the nation, in order to avoid moral disaster.”

At the Inauguration of the *Mahasabha* in Madras State, Baba declared: “Man’s ambition to conquer outer space, even before he has understood fully his own nature will lead him into great disaster. No knowledge, however impressive, which refuses to acknowledge the existence of God can be safe and sustaining,” Baba declared. The *Mahasabha* was also established with His blessings at Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh at a meeting presided over by the Governor, Sri Pattom Thanu Pillai. The Maharashtra Branch of Vidwan Mahasabha was inaugurated by Baba at the Shanmukhananda Hall, Bombay, on 7th June, 1965. A Committee under the Chairmanship of Hon’ble Sri P.K.Savant, Minister of

Agriculture, Government of Maharashtra, has been formed with the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Chairman of the Legislative Council and others as members.

Sri Savant is an ardent devotee of the shrine at Shirdi, where Baba lived and taught the way to God, as Sai Baba; Sri Savant was a member of the “Shirdi Samsthan Trust Committee” and for some time, he was its Chairman. The Trust manages the affairs of the unique shrine that has grown around the *Samadhi* (tomb) of the *Sai avatar*. When, therefore, Savant heard that the Master had taken human form again, he was naturally cautious about the claim. His curiosity however took him to the bungalow of a devotee, with whom Baba had stayed for three days in May, 1960. There, Savant joined in the *Bhajan*; he went through the album of photographs depicting Baba’s activities; he saw a few hundred feet of film recording Baba’s visit to Badrinath and the *yagnya* which was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam; then, he was taken into the very room where Baba had stayed during those three days. It is kept as if He has just left the place, in perfect readiness to receive Him, any moment. While in the room, Savant was offered the *vibhuti* brought from Prasanthi Nilayam, kept in a small receptacle there.

Naturally, he opened his mouth to receive it, but his breast was suddenly afflicted with an understandable pang of doubt whether, as a staunch devotee of the Sai Baba of Shirdi, he could now take in the *udi* consecrated by a stranger, who claims to be the “Same Baba” come again. There are Babas and Babas, he felt, spurious, pseudo-authentic, and dubious, pitching their claims to reverence on all manner of unprovable relationships.

We should not be surprised when a devotee with Savant’s steady faith in Sai Baba was harassed by doubt; we must indeed be thankful for his hesitation, for, just at that split second, in order to convince him that the Sathya Sai at Prasanthi Nilayam is *Sathya* (Truth), the same as the Sai Baba of Shirdi, a long bright flash of light emerged from the right palm of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the picture hanging on the wall of that room, above the heads of Dr. D. J. Gadhia, who was offering the *udi* and of Sri P.K. Savant who was outwardly ready, though inwardly undecided, to receive it.

That flash scattered all argument against the identity of the two Babas; it shattered the dark clouds of doubt and hesitation. Savant received the *udi*. Some months later, at Prasanthi Nilayam, Baba declared, “The depth of the devotion of Savant to that Body and this Body of the same Sai is known only to him and Me.” Savant attended the inauguration of the Mysore State Branch of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha and so, he was happy that a branch of the

Organisation founded by Baba was started in Maharashtra. He and all, who shared the thrill of that day, were glad that the grace of Baba had descended on Maharashtra again and that a new era had dawned for the *pundits* of that State, who could share in the revival of *Dharma* under His auspices.

The Vidwan Mahasabha has been actively promoting lectures by *pundits* in several towns and villages. A seminar for about twenty of them was held for a week to suggest subjects (on which they could speak to the people), selected from the vast reservoirs of scholarship that they have each stored in themselves and to suggest methods of presentation that would receive response. Baba invariably encouraged the people, the organisers, and the *pundits*, either by His physical presence and discourses, or by some 'sign' of His presence. The district committees would arrange the discourses in the headquarter towns of *Taluks*, for the devotees in the *Taluk* headquarters could carry the message to the villages around. Thus, the disciplines and ideals of the *Upanishads* have been planted among agitated communities in areca-gardens and coffee-plantations, rice fields, factories, suburbs, University campuses, pensioners' colonies, pilgrim centres, and professional clubs.

Where formerly the audience at the meeting that those *pundits* addressed could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and where in every place the same few were the only ones attached, the meetings of the Mahasabha now drew tens of thousands in towns and all the population in the villages. For, the discourses were in the language of the people and were simple and useful, directly affecting the daily life. Baba's Divine presence gathers hundreds of thousands to His discourses, for they are the authentic *upadesh* of the Lord.

As Baba declared at Venkatagiri, "The establishment of the *Vidwan Mahasabha* is an epoch-making event; for it is not less than the dawn of the Golden Era of the Liberation of Humanity."

The liberation of humanity from the petty role to which man has condemned it, deciding wrongly that he is the sheath and not the sword, the body and not its occupant - this is the very purpose of Baba's advent in human form. Baba has revealed that the repositories of ancient Indian culture are His instruments for this purpose. During His Tamil Nadu tour, in the village of Surandai, He encouraged *Vedic pundits* to recite *Vedic riks* in the *ghana* mode and rewarded them with medallions of gold. Similar medallions were awarded by him to *pundits* on the conclusion of the recitation of *riks*, at Akiripalle and at Rajahmundry. In 1963, at a *Vidwatparishat* (assembly of scholars) held at Rajahmundry, He gave to each member

robes of honour, encouraging them to apply themselves to the study and exposition of the *Vedas* and *Shastras*.

In 1960, He presided over the College Day celebrations of Markandeya Oriental College. While welcoming Him to that institution, Dr. S. Bhagavantam (whose father was the Founder of the college), the great scientist, now Scientific Adviser to the Defence Ministry of the Government of India, said, “Whenever I went to have Baba’s *darshan*, I was amazed to find around Him groups of people from all countries and professions, great and small, rich and poor, sick and healthy, young and aged, and *pundits* filled with academic conceit, wondering how all their learning is found useless before this All-knowing One.” They wondered and the wonder ripened into devotion.

Baba has blessed by His presence the *Niranjana Bhajan Mandali*, at Maddur, the *Shivana-nama-japasaptaha* (week-long continuous recitation of the name of God) at Srishailam, and the *Gita* Study Circle at Naini Tal and the Hindu *Samaj*, Rajahmundry. The *Sanathana Bhagavata Bhakta Samajam* (Association of the Dedicated and Devoted) of the Krishna-Guntur districts has been taken by Him under His benign care. Baba has also graced the *yagnya* celebrated by devotees at Rajahmundry, Venkatagiri, and Srinivasapur. He visited the Sanskrit *Pathashala* and the *Vyasashram* at Erpedu.

When the Benares Sanskrit University arranged the *Akhila Bharata Tantrika Mahasabha*, it sent Swami Dattatreyaaji to Prasanthi Nilayam to invite Baba to be present and bless the *Sabha*. Though Baba has often declared, “This is the age of *Tantra*,” He had to send the Swami back disappointed. The Organisers of the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* approached Baba for joining the group of *Swamis*, who were guiding it. Baba told them that He had come for the very purpose of reviving the ideals of Hinduism and setting it on the road of victory; “I am every moment doing the very thing you have now in view.” When the Telugu *Vignyana Samiti*, Malleswaram honoured some members of the Central Committee of the *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha*, Baba agreed to preside over the meeting.

Governor Pattom Thanu Pillai, while inaugurating its Hyderabad Branch, said, “I am glad one of the main objects of the *Sabha* is the fostering of scholarship by honouring the *pundits* and thereby, encouraging the study of the *Vedas* and *Shastras*.” Baba presided over a vast gathering of admirers and students, when the *Hindu Samaj* at Rajahmundry honoured three old and revered masters of the ancient learning, Bulusu Appanna Shastry, Varanasi Subrahmanya Shastry, and Kolluri Somasekhara Shastry. During the *Dasara* festival, 1965,

Baba conferred upon these three and on *Vidwan* Dhupati Tirumalacharyulu of Venkatagiri, the mark of appreciation the Royal Patrons used to confer in past ages, namely, the “*Suvarna Kankana*” or gem set golden bracelet. Everyone, who saw the tender love with which He helped the old men to come on the stage, the delight He seemed to take in their achievements, and the solicitude with which He helped the Governor to fit the jewels on the wrists of the recipients, and cover their shoulders with the gold embroidered shawls, will cherish the scene as both inspiration and instruction. *Pundits* have good reason to welcome the Sathya Sai Era, for He is their *kalpataru* come on earth. When a *pundit* read before Him some poems that he had composed about Goddess Kamakshi of Kanchipuram, Baba created a golden image of that Goddess and granted him that precious gift; when others offered Him works on *Yogavashishtha* and *Gitabhashya* that they had composed, Baba’s grace provided them funds to publish them.

Baba is *Vedamata*; He cannot tolerate a *Vedic* scholar toiling with the sweat of agony on his brow. Except, of course, when He is set on teaching a lesson! For, He is a hard task-master, intent on maintaining the moral standard of those, who claim to be masters of the ancient scripture.

For example, a *pundit* from the East Godavari district was so desperate financially that in his despair, he denied Baba’s grace! He denied his wife permission to write to Baba asking for succour. Two days later, he was amazed to receive a letter from Baba, who was at Prasanthi Nilayam, 800 miles away, in which He severely reprimanded him for it. “Why did you tell her, ‘You have no permission’? Do I not know? Can I know only when she writes or anyone writes? Do I not know, for example, that you went to Ramachandrapuram, expecting to collect some little money through discourses on the *Gita* and that you returned home having incurred loss? Do I not know that you then started condemning yourself that all your learning was a waste, that all your experience was of no value? For Me, who is providing for all this world, it is no burden to provide for you and your family. I am placing all these hardships on you only to teach you a few lessons.”

The following extract from the letter, which the *pundit* placed in my hands at Amalapuram, indicates the lessons:

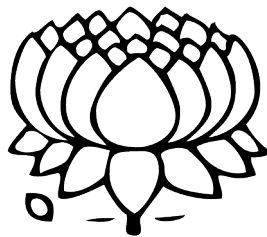
“When life flows merrily on, people claim that it is due to their own effort and they forget the Lord. When failure resists the flow, they start cursing and losing faith. When you grow desperate, you are insulting the Atmatatwa, the Atma principle which you really are, that

knows no pain or joy. You have become erudite in many subjects, but you do not try to derive the fruits thereof by putting them into practice. If only you have the faith that nothing can hinder the Atmananda, which is the live spring in every heart, how happy you can be! Just imagine how calm and collected you can be then.”

“In your lectures, you dilate on the Atma and the Ananda derivable by men, who drill deep down into it. It is easy to advise others; when it comes to practising what you recommend, you feel it an awful bother. Carrying all the Vedas, Shastras, Puranas, Itihasas, and Upanishads stuffed in your brain, all this wailing and anger do not become you. Instead of resorting to the most effective specific for all anxiety, namely, the Name of the Lord, why do you waste time recapitulating and lamenting over pain, fear, loss, and grief?”

“Engage yourself in that, which is enjoined as your duty, the duty which your status demands. Do it courageously and gladly. Strive to gain the four Purusharthas; then, you can certainly experience the Highest Truth. Practise and earn the Highest Bliss. Do not decry the rich; no, not only the rich, do not decry anyone, in any manner. For, remember, Sai is in every person. So, when you decry another, you are decrying Sai Himself.”

After this paternal but firm admonition, Baba closed the letter with the revealing colophon: *"Nee Hridayanivasi, Sai"* (He who resides in your heart, Sai). This vigilant supervision of the workings of the inner consciousness of the *pundits*, who have come within His orbit, is another of the many ways in which this *Vedamata* (Providence, which revealed the *Vedas*) seeks to promote *Sanathana Dharma*, for, unless we have a brave band of *Vedic* scholars, who live the *Vedic* life, the world cannot be enthused to honour and accept the *Vedic* teaching of Fundamental Oneness.





4.

The Call

"... Follow My instructions and become soldiers in My Army; I shall lead you on to Victory." Then, He made this grand declaration, this great Call: "When someone asks you in great earnestness where the Lord is to be found, do not dodge; give them the answer that rises up to your tongue from your heart. Direct him to Puttaparthi and invite him to share your joy."

WHILE hoisting the Flag of Prasanthi on the Nilayam, on the 23rd November, 1962, Baba referred to the Chinese, who were pouring across the Himalayan valleys into the plains of India, and announced, "My Birthday festival will not be marred by any dispiriting news; you will only get positive cheerful news. *Sanathana Dharma* will suffer no harm." And, true to this declaration, the Chinese who were in the full flush of advance had started withdrawing, from the midnight of the 22nd beyond the mountain ranges, for some as-yet-undisclosed reasons!

That evening, when the Minister for Planning in the Andhra Government opened a school donated by Him in the village of Puttaparthi, Baba spoke on the colossal waste that education involves at present. "Look at the village roads, the village home, the village children, and tell Me whether 50 or 60 years of teaching the rules of health and hygiene has had any effect. If even these lessons affecting health and well- being and one's life itself are thus neglected in practice, I need not say that other subjects laboriously taught in schools produce even less effect." Baba pointed out the imitative trends, which have cut children off from native currents of culture and made them rootless and dry. "You teach children nonsense rhymes like 'Baa, Baa, Black Sheep, Have you any wool' or 'Jack and Jill went up the hill'; sustaining and elevating lines like "*Shuddha Brahma paraat para Ram Kalatmaka*

Parameshwara Ram” (Ram, the Pure Essence, the Supreme Beyond, Ram, the Time Principle, the Lord of Lords) have been dismissed as out of date and burdensome. Of what worth is an India that has discarded its nature and become a fake Russia or a fake America? Make the country more really Indian,” He advised. “For the illness of greed, hurry, hatred, and conceit that this country, along with the rest of the world is afflicted with, those who plan the education of the children must get ready to teach them the first few steps in spiritual *sadhana*, silence, repetition of the Name of the Lord, meditation on the Creator of this wondrous Universe, positive acts of service to others, detachment from demeaning habits.”

Dr. M. Chenna Reddy, the Minister, referred during his presidential address to the pilgrimage that he had made to Shirdi a few weeks previous. “I consider my coming to Puttaparthi so soon after that, as a piece of good fortune, for the Sai Baba of Shirdi has taken *avatar* here as Sathya Sai Baba,” he said. Baba told him as well as the gathering, “I am all Names, not only these two - Sai Baba and Sathya Sai Baba. To call that manifestation Sai Baba or this as Sathya Sai Baba is only one of the many methods of designation. Then, as well as now, Sai is all Names and all Forms.” Truly, a glimpse of the universality of the Divine! Baba invites us to seize the chance of His grace and save ourselves with alacrity. “By seizing this chance, you can elevate yourself step by step, steadily. A stomach ache or a fever, some loss or grief brings you to Prasanthi Nilayam. You start liking this place and its atmosphere, the *Om* *kara*, the *Bhajan*, the calm quiet that prevails. You see Me and observe My movements, words and actions; you leave with hope and courage, confidence and strength with a *bhajan* book and a picture, perhaps. Before long you forget the ache or fever, for it has either disappeared or lost its acerbity; you have developed a new ache—for *prasanthi* (unshaken peace), for *darshan*, *sparshan*, *sambhashan*, for *japa*, *dhyana*, and *sakshatkara* (Realisation). Follow My instructions and become soldiers in My Army; I shall lead you on to victory.” Then, He made this grand declaration, this great Call, “When someone asks you in great earnestness where the Lord is to be found, do not dodge; give them the answer that rises up to your tongue from your heart. Direct him to Puttaparthi and invite him to share your joy.”

In December 1962, Baba was in Madras City. He inaugurated the Sathya Sai Nivas, a prayer Hall set in the centre of Perambur Suburb, where there is the colossal industrial complex radiating from the Integral Coach Factory and the Railway Workshops. Baba said, “This is a lighthouse for this region, to save those endeavouring to cross the ocean of *samsara*; it will point out to them the treacherous rocks of greed and hate, and signal the storms of wild egoism.”

In the very first week of 1963, on the 6th January to be exact, the *Vaikuntha Ekadasi* had to be celebrated, according to the calendar. Baba's calendar marks out that Day as *Amritodbhavam* day, when Divine nectar emanates from His hand. The day is observed as the day when the gates of heaven are opened for all in the great *Vaishnavite* temple Srirangam, where the Lord as Ranganatha, the director of the world-stage, is presiding over the drama of birth and death with a few scenes of living in between. For those who are near Baba, this Sri Ranganatha in human form, the gates of heaven open, when He gives them the nectar He creates that day.

On 6th January, Baba took many devotees to Mahabalipuram on the eastern sea, a place where the waves whisper to man wonderful tales of long ago. It is a place hallowed by centuries of history. Here, chisels held by deft hands inspired by *Karma yoga*, directed by eyes sparkling with the light of *Bhakti yoga*, trained by brains illumined by *Gnyana yoga* have shaped rebellious rock into rapture-filled idols. When the party settled around Baba on the seashore and began singing *bhajan* songs, the waves must have recalled bygone days when the temple deities of Tamil Nadu were installed for worship on the seashore and the shore was filled not with picnic blinded crowds, but with masses of devout hearts and humble seekers of God. They surged, one behind the other, in serried ranks to catch a glimpse of Baba and to hear the lilt of the songs Divine. Even the elephants, deer, and monkeys carved in stone strained to escape from the rock and sit around.

Baba created that evening three charming idols of Vishnu, Narayana, and Krishna, and when the group of devotees around Him were exulting over the luck, the mute image of Arjuna doing penance must have turned and folded hands in a sport of sudden inspiration to pay homage. The three idols, Baba explained, symbolised the *satwic* aspect of God, the aspect that confers *amrita* or immortality to man. Vaikuntha is the place or stage of no "*kunthita*" or dullness or stupidity, mutilation or misery. On the *Ekadasi* day, dedicated to the winning of that stage, the gates of Vaikuntha are open for those, who have achieved success in the struggle for overcoming the handicap of ignorance. "When the mind obeys the whims of the senses, you get bound; when the mind listens to the warnings of its master, the *buddhi* or reason, you are saved. So, train the mind to heed the intelligence and not the vagaries of the senses," Baba advised. After granting the devotees this *Bodhamritam*, Baba created the *amritam*, which was generated by the *Devas* and *Asuras* on that auspicious day by churning the Ocean of Milk, (as described in the *Bhagavatam*). He gave it to all present, with the warning that the tongue that has tasted *amritam* must not be contaminated by *anritam*

(falsehood) thereafter.

Returning to Prasanthi Nilayam, Baba called upon the devotees, who had made it their home, to follow the rigorous discipline that He had prescribed. “This *avatar* has *Bhakta-rakshana* (the fostering of *bhaktas*) as one of its tasks. So, strive to be *bhaktas*. Give Me your mind, fully and without reservations; give it to Me with all its fickleness and waywardness. That is the only thing you need do. Then, you become *bhaktas*; you will be liberated from grief. Not only you, but every being in the Universe has to be liberated and will be,” Baba said.

A few days later, the ceremony of initiation into *Brahmacharya* of about 30 boys was celebrated. Finding that 16 of them had not gone through the preliminary ‘ear piercing’ rite, Baba waved His hand and produced as many ear-ring wires of gold as were needed; He Himself pierced the ears of the novitiates. He gave each of them robes for the ceremony and the copper vessels they have to use. Brahmin priests had come from many towns, accompanying the parents of the boys who were to be initiated. Baba spoke to them of the accretions that Time has piled on the simple *Vedic* rite. He directed them to discard these exhibitionism, the social and convivial frills of the *Vedic* venture and adhere to the simpler schedule that He had decided on. They gladly agreed; they were happy that Baba has come to separate the chaff from the grain. “I shall be their Mother,” He said, when the priests suggested that the mothers have to stand behind the boys during the rite. “Some among the boys have lost their mothers; when they see other boys with mothers beside them, they will shed tears at their own misfortune; I do not want any boy to shed tears during the rite, when he is being given the ‘grief destroying’ *Gayatri mantra*; so, let us not have mothers near the boys.” The mother has to pour the first handful of rice when the initiate starts his student career and says, “*Bhavati, bhiksham dehi*” (*Ma, Give me alms*); but, Baba said, “I shall be the Mother. I shall fill their hands with gifts.” What great good fortune, this!

The *Shivaratri* festival was celebrated in the wake of the *upanayanams*. Two *Lingams* - one golden and the other, crystal - emerged from Baba, having formed themselves in Him, as is the wont since 1940. Baba explained that the *Linga* was a ‘mark’ or a ‘symbol’ representing the merging of the particular in the universal, the dissolution of the mind (with its agitations, aspirations, and accomplishments that attach and adhere) in the *atma*-awareness. The wise realise that the mind and the vast phantasmagoria that it weaves are all subsumed in the *Linga*, in the beginningless, endless Ocean of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.

After *Shivaratri*, Baba left for Rajahmundry for presiding over a three-day *adhyatmic*

(spiritual) festival of discourses. Hundreds of villages in the region around Rajahmundry, the vast, fertile, deltaic tract of Godavari River, were looking forward to this visit, which they hoped would be extended to their area too. But, Baba announced that “visits to other places have been postponed: all can, however, take *darshan* at Rajahmundry during the meetings.” Therefore, while Baba was motoring along the Grand Trunk Road on the East Coast of India towards the Godavari Town, thousands were speeding towards that place from far and nearby car and omnibus, train and boat, on cycles and rickshaws and by bullock carts. Trains puffed into the station heavy with human throngs and left it empty, for all were anxious to reach and none was prepared to pass beyond or leave the town. Old men, who had seen the mammoth gathering that the River Festival of Pushkaram attracts into Rajahmundry, swore that the record was broken into bits. Baba Himself remarked, on the 29th, when He addressed the gathering which was packed to bursting point in the largest *maidan* of the town, that it was a reminder of the *Vishwa virata swarupa* itself. That is to say, the multitudinous manifestation of the great unknowable. Baba had to change the venue to the vast, open spaces of the suburb, where he could speak to them from a house-top that commanded the vast area. The fourth day of Baba’s stay at Rajahmundry was *Ramanavami*, the birthday of Rama, the *avatar* of God, worshipped as the embodiment of *Dharma* from Himalayan valleys to Kanyakumari homes. All India was fragrant with incense, tinkling with temple bells that night. Baba sat that night on a patch of sand in the centre of the broad river, as Rama must have sat long ago, while He was on His peregrinations in the south. It was an epic hour; a turning point in the history of world. For, Baba announced in that hour His plan for the spread and propagation of *Vedic Dharma* throughout India and the world.

Baba teaches that *karma* has to be suffused with *bhakti*, so that *gnyana* may be won. He has pointed out that the *Vedas* have three *kandas* or sections, the first one dealing with *karma*, which is the most voluminous, and the second, shorter in size, called *upasana* or worship. The third or the *gnyana* section is the Upanishad literature, which is shorter still, the *Vedanta* or the consummation of *Vedic* discipline. He compares these three to the ‘tender fruit’, the ‘ripening fruit’, and the ‘ripe fruit’. The ripening fruit becomes filled with sweetness, in much shorter time than the tender fruitling takes to grow into the ripening fruit. The sweetness, for which all this is a preparation, is *Gnyana*.

Baba agrees with the *Vedic* dictum that *gnyana* alone can confer liberation, that *karma* and *bhakti* are preliminary stages that the seeker has to go through. *Gnyana* alone reveals the essential oneness of the universe, the oneness of mind and matter, of time and space, of the

most distant star with the smallest speck glittering in the sunlight.

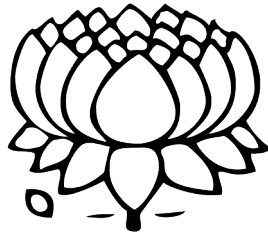
Baba spoke of this One-ness, this non-duality, *advaita*, on the birthday of Shankara, who was the most vigorous exponent of this *vedantic* truth. “This interpretation satisfies the most complex demands of the intellect and reconciles all the One in full measure, in all things, at all times. When you know that the ‘many’ is a figment of your own imagination born out of your incomplete knowledge, you become sole master and all fear vanishes; you are free from the thralldom of the many-faced *samsara*,” Baba said.

On the 10th May, Baba inaugurated the factory of the Rao Insulating Company at Whitefield. He addressed the employees and gave them His blessings and advice. He told them that each one of them was a link in the chain of production; sloth, slackness, negligence, or inefficiency of a single person will nullify the skill, vigilance, efficiency, and enthusiasm of the rest. Be tolerant of the other man’s point of view, be aware of the other man’s difficulties; respect the other man’s needs as much as you respect your own. He said He knew the British technicians, who were collaborating with them and so, He could congratulate them on securing such earnest and loving friends from abroad.

Baba lays His finger on the crux of what is often exaggerated as the labour problem, for He sees it as a human problem of acquiring peace and joy. At Srishailam, when he saw the thousands of masons, stone cutters, and mechanics engaged in building a Dam across the Krishna River, He gave them advice, which leaders and guides of labour can well take to heart. “Do not go about this work in a haphazard way; this is a sacred task, which will provide food and happiness for crores of men, women, and children for centuries. Truly, your lives have been worthwhile; you, who toil to curb your own waywardness too. Dam the roaring flood of passion, which endangers the peace and joy of your own homes. Canalise it into useful fields. Just as you obey the rules of health for fear of falling ill, obey the rules of mental control too, so that you may have abundant peace. Spend a few minutes every morning and evening in the silence of your home before the altar, spend them with God. Practise the constant presence of God, see Him with you, always, under all conditions. Rely on Him; it is His drama, you are but a role, an actor.”

From Whitefield, Baba went to Mysore City and the Nilgiris and from thence, He proceeded to Tirunelveli, Mukkudal, Madurai, and the Kodaikanal Hills, reaching Prasanthi Nilayam in time for the festival of *Guru Pournima*. The miraculous events that preceded that festival, and that made it unforgettable, deserve a separate chapter, a chapter which has to be inscribed in

letters of gold.





5.

This Shivashakti

“I have been keeping back from you all these years one secret about Me; the time has come, when I can reveal it to you, for this is a sacred day. I am Shiva-Shakti,” He declared, “born in the gotra of Bharadwaja, according to a boon won by that sage from Shiva and Shakti. Shiva Himself was born in the gotra of that sage as Sai Baba of Shirdi, Shiva and Shakti have incarnated as Myself in his gotra now; Shakti alone will incarnate as the third Sai in the same gotra, in Mysore State.”

READERS must have noticed that Baba declared Himself as Bhavani, who gave a sword to Shivaji and commissioned him to save *Sanathana Dharma* from forces inimical to it. He said, “This *Shiva-Shakti* is doing the same, now. I am giving the sword of courage into the hands of these *pundits* and commissioning them to share their wisdom and joy with all men, as *Sanathana Dharma* dictates.”

That word "Shiva-shakti" took the large gathering, who heard it, on the wings of memory to the sixth day of July, 1963—the time about 7 p.m.—when a miracle of miracles happened in the Prayer Hall of Prasanthi Nilayam. That was a seismic event, which enlarged the bounds of faith and deepened the ardour of devotion. So, I shall describe it in some detail.

It all began on the evening of 28th June, when Baba asked me to announce that He would not grant interviews for a week. No one could guess why; for, there was nothing out of the ordinary in the events of the day. On Saturday, 29th June at 6.30 a.m., while moving into His room on the first floor from the southern veranda, Baba spoke of “reeling sensation” and suddenly, fell on the floor. I was with Him then; but, though I held Him with my hand, I could soften, only slightly, the impact of the fall.

Even as He fell, the left hand clenched its fist; the left leg stiffened; the toes became taut.

Evidently, He had taken upon Himself in His infinite mercy, the stroke of paralysis destined to incapacitate, or perhaps kill, some saintly person. Having seen Him while taking on the typhoid fever, the gastric pain, the bleeding ear, the mumps, and even the stroke, I waited with Raja Reddy the moment of His coming to, when we could get from Him the name of the person and of the place to confirm our surmise. The face twitched and muscles drew the lips to the left the tongue lolled. The left eye appeared to have lost its sight. We whispered to each other about His postponement of interviews ... for one week! Baba seemed to have known that someone had to be rescued that morning.

As the clock ticked the minutes away and the hour hand moved relentlessly on, our anxiety thickened into fear. Gloom filled the room and spread gradually all round the Nilayam. Dr. B.G. Krishnamurti said that Baba was 'in coma', that Baba showed symptoms of 'apoplexy'. The jaws were locked tight; the pulse rate was ranging from 84 to 100. The Doctor, while treating patients in the Sathya Sai Hospital, placed more reliance on the curative value of the *vibhuti* blessed by Baba, than on the efficacy of the drugs the shelves contained. Now that He found Baba stricken, he could only pray to Him to cure Himself.

Meanwhile, someone, who feared that the illness was genuine, hastened by car to Bangalore (106 miles off) and brought with him, late at night, Dr. Prasanna Narasimha Rao, the Assistant Director of Medical Services, Mysore.

Let the Doctor relate what he saw. I shall quote from his letter. "It was on the afternoon of the 29th of June that I was summoned urgently to the feet of Sri Sathya Sai Baba at Puttapparthi. I sped on, in the company of my brother-in-law Sri Kesav Vital, to witness a spectacle of extreme pain and suffering at Puttapparthi. We reached the precincts of the holy place after midnight. Anxious as I was to learn the details of the incident that caused the summons, it was His will that I should contain myself till the next morning. Next morning, when I was taken into the room on the first floor of the Nilayam, I saw there lying prostrate the physical form and body of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, in a posture assumed by a patient, in coma. Respiration was hissing at times; the left side of the body, the upper and lower limbs were rigidly held in a position of extensor tone. There were gross twitchings of the face, occasionally on the right side. The head would be suddenly tossed to one side or the other, with a groan of anguish and the utterance of ununderstandable syllables, which was the result of an impairment of the faculty of speech; in short, it was a sort of jargon.

After an analysis of the signs and symptoms and the history of the case, I had to infer that the

semicomatose conditions and the posture assumed could only be due to a space-occupying condition in the cranium, with localizing signs of predominance over the right half of the brain in the frontal area. The different diagnosis of such conditions in a person of about thirty years, after excluding remote possibilities, pinned me down to that of ‘tubercular meningitis,’ with perhaps a tuberculoma, silent for a long time.

The treatment was one of energetic anti-tubercular measures, with symptomatic supportive treatment by intravenous substitution and replacement, to maintain ionic balance and nutrition. A diagnostic lumbar puncture was an immediate necessity, for the professional assessment of the case. My attempts to administer glucose solution intravenously was, by a gesture and movement of the body, foiled completely by Baba, leaving me utterly bewildered and helpless in the face of His Will. Having completely resigned to His Will, I returned to Bangalore on Sunday evening, bereft of all hopes of having His *Darshan* again, in the physical form assumed by Him for this Incarnation.”

Baba was ‘unconscious’ all the time; He evinced only faint gleams of awareness as when He pushed away the Doctor’s hand when injection was attempted. The body perspired a great deal, but He could be given only a few spoonfuls of water, the spoon being inserted after pressing the jaws apart. He was apparently severely exhausted. Moreover, He suffered from what Dr. Krishnamurti named ‘angina pectoris,’ paroxysms of intense pain, originating at the breast bone and radiating thence mainly to the left shoulder and arm. The physical frame groaned. Inmates of the Nilayam standing tip-toe under the window heard and wept. To relieve the exhaustion, we could give only occasional drops of glucose water, or lemon juice after parting the tightly clenched teeth.

On Monday, Baba intensified the atmosphere of tragedy. Summoning near His bed some residents of the colony, He gestured and lisped to make them understand that the tasks allotted to them should be carried out with undiminished ardour. It was heartrending experience - to catch those hazy sounds and interpret them, for the words emerged from the mouth gone awry and tongue turned left. He warned us not to frighten the other devotees with our fear. “Deal gently with them. Talk sweetly to them,” He seemed to say. “Give them *vibhuti*, ask them to leave for home, and come some other time.”

He declined medicine and nursing, brushing aside angrily the spoon which had a few drops of coramine. He insisted on relieving Himself in the bathroom itself, though He had to be lifted or drawn over two door sills. The pulse registered danger after each such hazardous journey.

We and the Doctor could only wring our hands and pray.

The fact that it was a stroke of paralysis could not be announced and so, a variety of rumours circulated in and around the Nilayam to explain the ominous gloom. The wildest of these was that Baba was under the maleficent influence of black magic. Others surmised that He had gone into *samadhi*; still others guessed that He had taken a vow of silence and inaction. Perhaps, the villagers of Puttaparthi were more competent interpreters, for they had known of His ‘unconscious’ days at Uravakonda when He had ‘gone out’ of His body to save a devotee from calamity. They said Baba was about to enter a new chapter in His history, as He had done after that incident at Uravakonda while in His teens. Tuesday arrived, Baba showed signs of consciousness, more often and for longer periods. Referring to the visit of the Doctor, He said, “He can only take *darshan* and leave. Injections are inadvisable in such cases. This will last five days in all. Tomorrow, the pain will be less. I had two heart attacks, these three days. You must have heard the groans. No one else could have survived.” He gestured and smiled.

Dr. B. Sitaramayya, who was the Medical Officer in charge of the Nilayam Hospital, was summoned by a telegram. He came on Tuesday evening to the bedside. Tuesday night was filled with fear, for Baba groaned causing us excruciating agony.

Wednesday dawned, dark and dismal. About 9 a.m., Baba, who was extremely exhausted, showed signs of sinking. He struggled for breath; hiccups tormented Him. The ‘parents’ could not contain their sorrow; the ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ were wallowing in grief. Though rooted in the faith that Baba was Divine, we tottered and wept aloud like panic-stricken babies. We could not decide whether, at this awful hour, we could stoop to the sacrilege of bringing to Prasanthi Nilayam a Doctor from Anantapur or Bangalore. Was it right? Was it pardonable? Was it urgently needed? Could any doctor be of use? We gathered under the mango trees and with tears streaming down our cheeks, weighed the pros and cons.

Just then, glad tidings arrived. Baba had regained consciousness; the hiccups has lost their rigor—two hours later, we had a tragic jolt. His breathing worsened; He grasped and rolled. His feet and palms became cold. We prayed to Him amidst sobs; we got no sign to encourage us. The doctors sat on the floor and leaned against the wall, resting on their hands their heavy heads. For full four hours, Baba broiled us thus, in mortal anguish. Then, He opened His eyes, looked around, and smiled.

About an hour later, He beckoned us and told us in His pathetically ineffective vocabulary,

supplemented by gestures with the palsied right hand, the events of those four hours. We understood Him to say: “The mind is a thousand petalled lotus, each petal directing it outward into some facet of the objective world. In the very centre of the lotus is the flame of the I principle. The flame is ever unsteady, veering now towards one petal, now to another, but if through the exercise of will you keep it steady and straight, the I is unaffected by the events that happen to the body.”

Someone quoted *Shruti (Vedas)* and said, “*Neela toyada madhyasthaad, vidyullekheva bhaswara, tasyamadhye vahnisikhaa*” (In the centre of the blue cloud, shining like a streak of lightning, with the tongue of fire in its centre). Baba nodded approval. “During those four hours, I held the flame straight. I was away, apart. I was watching the body from above, Myself unconcerned, unaffected.” (Even at Shirdi, in 1886, Sai Baba saved Himself for the world from a critical illness, by deciding ‘to take His *prana* high.’)

About 7 p.m., Baba gestured: “All of you should sleep around here, this night.” It betokened a crisis. “Will there be a heart attack, this night?” Some one dared enquire. Baba replied ‘yes’. That night was the longest, the darkest, and the most dreadful in the lives of us, fifteen mortals. The heart attack happened; we listened to the groans. We prayed to Baba to assuage the pain and assure us of the victory we sought.

At last, the day of relief, Thursday, the sixth day, when as He had told us, the pain ‘will lose its severity’ and the attacks on the heart ‘will cease.’ The sun rose over the hills across the Chithravati. Baba announced that the pain as well as the 'burning sensation in the chest had gone.’ The very first order He gave after this declaration was: “Arrange now for all the devotees to get *darshan*: they are broken by despair.” We pleaded that the *darshan* be granted two days later, on Saturday (*Guru Purnima* Day), when thousands gather at the Nilayam from all the States of India to pay homage to their *Guru*. Master and Teacher. We hoped that He could recoup Himself more to bear the strain that *darshan* involves.

Baba asked me to announce at the Prayer Hall that *darshan* will be granted to all on *Guru Purnima*. I had to do it after the morning *bhajan session* at 9 a.m., Thursday. Baba reprimanded me, for I came away making a short statement, without any detail about the illness. He insisted on my giving the assembled *bhaktas* an accurate description of His physical condition, so that they are saved from the sharp and sudden shock, at the sight. I announced the condition of His leg, hand, eye, tongue, and face in Telugu, but I broke down when I saw the agony on the faces that learnt for the first time, the awful truth. I had to repeat

the announcement in English, Kannada, Tamil, and Malayalam, but I could only speak in sobs.

That night, Baba conveyed another bit of good news, “The clot in the brain is dissolved.” We prayed to Him to ‘will’ to be His normal self: He was our refuge in distress; so when the distress was caused by His own play, that was the only prayer we knew.

Throughout Friday and even during the morning hours of Saturday, we attempted to persuade Him to give up the plan to give *darshan* in the prayer hall on the ground floor. Someone appealed to Him to allow us to announce to the gathering that He would render Himself hale and hearty before *Dasara*, a hundred days ahead; another ventured to pray that He should cure Himself fully by Krishna *Janmashtami*, which was forty days later. Baba seemed to resent the proposals; He only shook His head.

The Prayer Hall was packed, as never before. People from many villages around Puttaparthi, who had come to know that Baba was for the first time being brought down, came in large numbers. The broad spaces around the Nilayam were filled. Baba was carefully brought down the circular steps (18 in all) to the ground floor. Major Dr. M. Bhanu of the Government Hospital, Palladam, writes, “I saw Baba moving down with the help of three *bhaktas*. His left leg was lifted over the doorstep by one of them. He had a kerchief around His head and face to bind the halo of hair that had gone awry and to hide the twitching of the facial muscles, from the eyes of devotees. His gait was the characteristic hemiplegic one, the paralytic left leg being dragged in a semi-circle, the toes scarping the floor. Seeing Baba in that condition, even the bravest wept aloud.” The wail was so sudden and so loud that we were angrily blamed by many, who inferred that it was the end; they cursed our bravado in putting the most precious life on Earth to this risk. “Why did you bring Him down?” they cried in anger.

Baba was placed in the silver chair on the floor, propped up by pillows. As soon as He was in position, a pillow was placed over His chest and the limp left hand was lifted by Raja Reddy and placed on it. Seeing this, there arose a gasp from every breast. Baba signalled to me and I knelt at His side to catch what He was trying to tell me. After repeating to Him what I had guessed to be His Message and ascertaining that I had understood Him all right, I announced to the grief-stricken gathering of about 5000 people Baba says, “Do not grieve. This is not My ailment. This is an ailment I have taken over. I can never fall ill; No, Never. Do not feel dispirited. If you lose heart, it will pain Me.” Then, He signed to me to speak to them at some

length, and signed that He will speak after me. Many felt that He had exerted Himself too much already; they feared the consequence of a further adventure in speaking with His impaired resources.

I called upon everyone to pray to Baba, (propped on pillows on the silver chair) the only refuge we knew, to cure Himself at least by the next New Moon, for “the Full Moon of today is blocked out for us by this unbearable sorrow. Let the next New moon become a Full Moon for us all and for the world.”

Baba signed that the mike be held near His lips. Slowly, He whispered into it, in swollen half-suppressed syllables, “*Vinipistunnadaa?*”, but even we, who had learnt to decipher the mushy paralytic alphabet, could not make out what He was trying to say. He repeated it twice. Then, someone caught the meaning and repeated it on the mike. Baba was asking them, “Can you hear Me?” This raised another groan: He was heard but, alas! It tore their hearts. It was too indistinct. Evidently, Baba was too tired by that attempt to speak, for He gestured for water to drink. It was brought by Krishnappa, in a silver tumbler, and held to His lips by Raja Reddy. His palsied right hand came towards it... He tried to hold it... His fingers slipped into it... the fingers dipped ... He sipped a few drops .. He sprinkled, with the fingers of the right hand, a little water on the limp left hand on the pillow above His chest ... He sprinkled the water, faintly shaking the fingers, on the left leg too. He stroked that left hand with the right. And WITH BOTH HANDS, stroked the left leg. He rose; the pillow fell off; we could hear His Divine voice calling us, as was ever His wont, “*Premaswaroopulara!*” He had begun His Guru *Purnima* Discourse!! O, oh! Our Baba hale, hearty, holy, healthy, heavenly ...

People could not believe their eyes and ears. But, when they realised that Baba was standing before them, speaking, they jumped about in joy, they danced, they shouted 'Jais', they wept; some were so overcome with ecstatic gratitude that they laughed hysterically and ran wild amongst the crowds rushing in.

Oh! It was the miracle of miracles. It shot us in an instant from the deepest pit of gloom into the seventh heaven of delight. Major Bhanu writes, “The Doctor of Doctors cured Himself in a trice, leaving me aghast with wonder.”

“*Premaswaroopulara*” (Embodiments of Love!) “*Dikku lenivaanikki Devude Dikku,*” (For him who has no refuge, God is the refuge) Baba’s silver voice awakened all to attention. “That is the reason I had to take on this disease that one forlorn *bhakta* was to suffer from. He

would not have survived it, nor could he come through the four heart attacks I took on. My *Dharma* is *Bhaktarakshana*. I had to rescue him. Of course, this is not the first time I have taken on the illness of those I want to save. Even in the previous body at Shirdi, I had this responsibility. This is My *leela*; My nature. It is part of the task for which I have come, *Shishtarakshana*.” (Had He not declared at Shirdi, as Sai Baba, “The sea may turn the rivers back. But, I will not neglect My devotees”?)

He spoke for over an hour with the eloquence, the same compassion, the same humour, and the same love that He evinces always. Then, raising the voice a little, He said, “I have been keeping back from you all these years one secret about Me; the time has come when I can reveal it to you, for this is a sacred day. I am Shiva-Shakti,” He declared, “born in the *gotra* of Bharadwaja, according to a boon won by that sage from Shiva and Shakti. Shiva Himself was born in the *gotra* of that sage as Sai Baba of Shirdi, Shiva and Shakti have incarnated as Myself in his *gotra* now; Shakti alone will incarnate as the third Sai in the same *gotra* in Mysore State.”

“This illness has to be borne by Shakti (the consort of Shiva), for She incurred the ire of Her Lord by neglecting to notice Bharadwaja for full eight days at Kailash, Their home. As a consequence of the neglect, Bharadwaja had suffered a stroke; Shiva sprinkled the restorative water and cured him. Today, you saw the illness of Shakti (the left half) cured by Shiva (the right half) by the same means. These matters are beyond human ken; so, I had kept it from you so long, but now that within the knowledge of so many, Shakti suffered and Shiva saved, it is time you knew this. The *bhakta*, who was saved by My ‘taking over’, is only the ‘immediate’ cause, the ‘remote’ cause is the boon and the retribution,” Baba declared.

After this disclosure, Baba sang a few songs, which He wanted the congregation to repeat in chorus: When He started off in double quick tempo the lines, "*Hara hara Shiva Shiva subrahmanyam, Shiva Shiva hara hara subrahmanyam, Shiva sharavanabhava Subrahmanyam, Guru sharavanabhava Subrahmanyam,*" Dr. Bhanu rushed in... but let him explain why he did so. “I forgot I was a volunteer, posted outside to keep the crowd in check; I rushed inside to fall at His feet and pray to Him not to continue that song. I was afraid if His tongue performed the acrobatics, so soon after it regained its normalcy, it might fail and suffer a relapse. But, at the very door, I held myself. I remembered the miracle I had seen with my own eyes. I remembered the sweet voice that was won back in a trice. I kept mum. Who was I to check God? I controlled myself and stayed outside.”

Baba ascended the steps to the first floor with His usual agility. He announced from the veranda above to the gathering that He would grant every one of them the chance to touch His feet as *Namaskaram*, the next day, at 6.30 a.m. He partook of normal food that night. No one slept: the miracle they witnessed kept them awake in ecstasy.

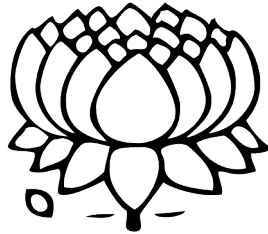
O! Within a split second, Baba had given Himself back to the world. The joy kept every eye awake. Next evening too, He gave a discourse. He pitied those, who revelled in bad news and were eager to circulate it. He declared, "From this day, nothing and no one can stop or obstruct or delay the work, for which this *avatar* has come. During a previous Advent, only one mountain, the Govardhan, was lifted; this *avatar* will lift many ranges. This Ganga will roll majestically on, feeding the roots of all creeds and races."

Referring to this mighty miracle, Baba said, a few weeks later, "Rescuing a true *bhakta* is My *dharma*, My very nature. Someone asked Me whether it was right on My part to plunge thousands into grief, in order to rescue one. Such numerical calculations cannot apply to acts of grace. I act My *dharma*, regardless of how it affects you or him. Rama obeyed His father's desire; He did not desist though all Ayodhya was bathed in tears. The father, who had acceded to His mother's wicked desire to exile Him, and the very brother, who was to benefit by the exile, urged Him to stay on. But, He did not turn back. The illness that I took on had to execute *its dharma*, according to its nature. I allowed it to behave so; for, it is only then that you can observe and imbibe the glory of the victory. Krishna could have waved off the rains that Indra threatened to pour on the region of Brindavan, but He permitted the god of rains to carry on his *dharma*. And, He utilised the occasion to let the Gopis and Gopas have a glimpse of His glory. He lifted the Govardhan Mount on His little finger to save them from the devastating downpour. He observed His *dharma*, the *dharma* of *bhaktarakshana* (granting succour of devotees). Now too, as in that age, the purpose is the proclamation of divinity."

"You must count another benefit too, though you may not be aware of it. I know to what depths your devotion to Me reached, as a result of this 'illness' during those eight days. You would not have achieved that single-pointed meditation on Me, even during years of *tapas*." He knew that all those, who knew of the illness, were spending those awful days in prayer, penance, and penitence. They prayed that He may rise from the sickbed with more resplendent glory, that they be pardoned for their errors which may affect His majesty, and that their suffering be accepted in lieu of what He was 'ailing' from.

The *darshan* of Baba is a creative chance to transmute the base metal in us into gold. To

listen to His words is to be charged with the current of spiritual regeneration. To read His writings is to feed your intellect with wholesome sustenance and purge it of egoistic dross. This heavenly Ganga vitalises, fertilises, and purifies all who dive into it.





6.

The Constant Presence

He has initiated persons into spiritual sadhana through upadesh granted in dreams; He has taught people new bhajan songs in dreams and asked them at Prasanthi Nilayam to sing them; He conveys information and advice in dreams; He operates on boils and buboes, on eye, ear, or tongue. The patient dreams that He is operating with the knife and the dream is true. Those who went to bed in pain woke up happy, rid of the dire disease!

ON Sunday, the 13th day of December 1964, Baba was at Venkatagiri town. He had reached the place a few days earlier in connection with a heavy schedule of discourses in the Chittoor and Nellore districts, in Andhra Pradesh. But, Baba is not bound by the limitations of space and time. On that very day, about 8 a.m., "Baba surprisingly appeared in front of my house," says, U. Ram Mohan Rao, Superintendent of the Junior Technical School, Manjeri (28 miles south of Calicut on the west coast, in the State of Kerala). As the crow flies, the distance between Manjeri and Venkatagiri will be more than 600 miles! But, distance is only a game that Baba plays to keep us, poor mortals, apart.

We shall listen to Ram Mohan Rao describing this visit. "I and my wife were indoors with our daughter. The maid told us that a *Sadhu* had come. We went out to see who it was and we were surprised to see Sri Sathya Sai Baba! Baba said, '*Hari Om, Shantih Shantih Shantih.*' We prostrated ourselves at His Feet. We led Baba into the office room, but, on the way, He saw our *Pooja* room where His Photo was hung along with several holy pictures. He said He would sit in the *pooja* room itself. He told us that He had come to us that day, being very pleased with the *Bhakti* of Sailaja, my daughter. He asked me to send word to devotees if any were available, for *Bhajan* and *Pravachan*." "He sent word to his neighbours and people collected immediately," says Ramesh Rao, his cousin. "He sang '*Nandamukunda Sayinatha,*'

‘O Bhagawan,’ ‘Jayaram Jayaram,’ along with the *Bhaktas*. After *Bhajan*, He talked to me in Tamil, to my wife in Canarese, and to the others in the mixed dialect of Tamil-Malayalam. He blessed us by the gift of a *Shankhamala* and Himself placed it on His own photograph. He told me that my father had decided on a rite to propitiate the Snake-God (*Sarpasamskaram*) at Bangalore, on 25th February, Thursday (‘My day,’ He added), but He told me that he need not perform it, since He had already wiped off the calamity it was intended to avert and the sacrilege it was designed to atone.

He took some light refreshment. Then, He told the persons around Him that all will be anxiously awaiting Him at Kalahasti. So, He took leave of us and asking us not to follow Him, went through the gate. He disappeared in a few seconds. We all felt happy at this unexpected *Darshan* and were struck by the ‘disappearing miracle’ within the twinkling of an eye.”

Nor was this all. There are a few more paragraphs in the letter, which I am quoting: “24th December, Thursday, was a holiday; we felt lonely since our Sailaja was away at Mangalore. So, we went out in the afternoon to visit some friends and returned home at 6.30 p.m. We were shocked to see the lights burning within the house. My wife asked me whether I had forgotten to switch off all the lights. I first examined the lock of the main door and finding it intact, went round the house too, to see whether the other doors were bolted from within. They were o.k. Then, both of us came to the front door, opened the lock, and walked in. We found everything intact; all the lights were on. We saw Baba in our Prayer room! We prostrated ourselves at His feet. He asked us (in Kannada) whether we were afraid! We replied that we were very lucky and that we felt very happy! Baba said that He had come, because we were lonely and said, ‘Let us sing *Bhajans*. If Sailaja were here, she would have liked to sing,’ He said. He sang a few *Bhajans*. He took food. Later, we discussed some general topics together. Then, Baba retired for the night.

Early next morning, Baba had His bath; He had coffee with us and then, discoursed on *Bhakti* and the Basic Truth of Nature. All of a sudden, we saw a rosary of *Rudraksha* beads in His hand; He put it on my neck with His Blessings, with the direction that I should wear it during my *Sandhya* rites. After those rites, I was to place it on Baba’s photograph. We had breakfast together. The *Pooja* room was decorated specially with garlands and flowers. *Bhajan* began. Meanwhile, devotees came to know that Baba had come; so, they too assembled for *Bhajan*. Baba discoursed on *Bhakti* in the Tamil-Malayalam dialect. He granted every one the coveted interview.

At 12 noon, Baba himself waved the Sacred light of *Mangalarati* and distributed *Prasadam* to every one present. The quarter kilogram of dates that I had, sufficed for 100 persons! We had our lunch with Baba. He rested for a couple of hours and we had 'tea' at 4.30 p.m. Then, He told us that several devotees were eagerly waiting for Him at Kalahasti. He blessed us again, when we fell at His feet. At 5 p.m., He went out on the road through the gate and suddenly disappeared. What a wonderful miracle! We could not believe our own eyes!"

Nor could I, without confirmation through independent sources. Baba had given *darshan* to persons in distress in distant places, but nowhere, so far as we knew, did He stay so long and so concretely. It was too overpoweringly unscientific! I wrote a letter to two friends, P.K. Panikkar and P.A. Menon in Kerala, enclosing a list of 84 questions, for which I wanted them to find answers at Manjeri. They proceeded to Ram Mohan Rao's house and sent me a fuller report, which dotted all the 'i's and crossed all the 't's of his letter to me!

Ram Mohan Rao and his wife told them that Baba was wearing a yellow gown on the 13th December; He walked in, barefooted and went into the shrine room saying, "I shall go into My own place." My friends saw the picture on which the rosary of *Rudraksha* beads was placed. It had a thick outgrowth of sacred ash in a few days. Strangely enough, the face of Baba was clear, but from the outer area in the picture, there fell a continuous shower of *vibhuti* dust, which was being collected and distributed with the reverence due to the Divinely created gift of grace!

"Rao and his wife have been devoted to Shirdi Sai Baba for many years; they have not visited Prasanthi Nilayam, but they had secured a picture of Sathya Sai Baba seven years ago and placed it amidst the other pictures in their shrine. When Baba sat in the shrine room and leaned against the wall, right under His own picture, they saw that the picture was genuine! That was the first time they saw Him; they had borrowed the book 'Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram' from a friend and read it. They thought that Baba had come, accidentally, to Calicut or some nearby town and had decided to bless them by this visit."

"When Mrs. Rao was listing her sorrows to Baba, encouraged by His overflowing love, Baba said, "Sorrow and pain are the lot of all; don't you know that both sisters of this body are widowed?" When Sailaja asked Baba for a *bhajan* book, Baba said, "Palghat Menon has brought 400 *bhajan* books, printed in Malayalam, to Prasanthi Nilayam. I shall give you one." So saying, Baba held His palm upside down, waved it twice, and caught with His fingers the book that appeared! He gave it to the girl; we saw it! It was the same book with

the blue paper cover! Sailaja had great faith in Baba, since her eczema on the foot was cured by Baba a year ago, in answer to her pleading before His picture."

"When he was asked to bring some persons for *Bhajan*, Rao did not go far, for he did not desire to miss Baba's company for long. He brought in the owner of his house, an old gentleman, by name Thalayur Moosad and his 5-year old daughter; he brought the widow of Madhavan Nair, the founder of the renowned Malayalam newspaper, 'Matrubhoomi,' and his sister. Baba asked Moosad, "What ails your leg?" He gave Him an account of his disease and prayed for some drug. Baba told him, "The course of treatment you are now undergoing is enough." Mrs. Rao is now sending him the *vibhuti* Baba showers from His picture; he finds it very effective. The widow told Him of her diabetes. "I am getting bags and bags of rice from my fields, but I cannot eat a grain," she said. Baba replied in Malayalam, "It is the result of your past *karma*." He asked Rao to bring an empty glass. When Baba held it in His hand, it was full of a pink liquid. He gave it to her. "Take this thrice daily, for 3 days; you can then eat any quantity of rice you like."

"One cynic was there, among the rest. Baba knew and so, He jocularly asked Rammohan Rao to bring a pair of scissors and he asked the fellow to cut for himself a single hair from His head! The man tried hard but failed, whereupon a bigger pair was brought at His command. This time too, he failed. So, he put down his head and walked away without a word," writes U.N. Ramesh Rao, Rao's cousin, who visited Manjeri soon after this incident.

"Baba sang four songs in all, during the *Bhajan*, asking the gathering too to sing them after Him in chorus. They were, 'O! Bhagawan,' 'Pahi Pahi Gajanana,' 'Shiva Shiva Shiva,' and 'Omkara priya Sai Ram'."

"We saw the *Shankhamala*, the rosary of small conch shells," says the report. "It is of the type available at Kanyakumari, each shell being no bigger than a seed of pepper. They are white in colour, with brown dots. There are 108 of them in the rosary, created and given by Baba. When we saw it, *vibhuti* had heaped itself over the beads. The rosary of *Rudrakhasha* beads also was examined by us. Baba told them that, until he could string them in gold, he should place it on the picture. Baba also created an orange-size, bell-metal drinking cup with a spout and gave it to Sailaja. He also created a piece of scarlet, silk cloth with borders of gold thread, and, presenting it to the girl, asked Rao to have a jacket sewn for her. He gave Rao additional *vibhuti* and *kumkum* created on the spot to be given to "Calicut" (meaning U.N. Ramesh Rao, his cousin living there). Baba left at 11 a.m. on the 13th, saying, "I have to

keep to a programme at Kalahasti.” They did not then know that Kalahasti was about 20 miles from Venkatagiri. They were too aggrieved at His resolve to leave, to ask where it was. He said, “No one need come with Me.” He closed the gate behind Him and disappeared!”

"The second visit was on a Thursday. Mrs. Rao was afraid to approach the house, since the lights were on. Rao approached to open the lock and entered. He saw Baba in the shrine, sitting leaning against the wall. Baba asked him in Tamil, “Are you afraid, seeing Me?” “I have come to join your *Bhajan*,” He assured him. Rao had brought some dried dates from the bazaar; he gave the plate into the hands of Baba for distribution; he felt He alone could make it suffice, for all those who were present. Baba entered the kitchen and protested against the dish of ‘kheer’ being prepared. He did not “relish that sweet dish.” “This is enough for six,” He said! They had cooked only for two, but, after dinner, food for three more was available. Next morning, Rao and Mrs. Rao partook of it as a sacramental. Before retiring for the night, Baba removed one picture of His from the shrine and hung it on a nail in the bed room. ‘Let it be here,’ He said. From that picture too, *vibhuti* is showering in large quantities now."

“Rao peeped through a slit in the door to find out whether Baba was sleeping well, but he saw Him sitting up, most of the time, ‘lost in thought, as one in reverie.’ Next morning, Baba had His bath and breakfast. When the housewife started preparing ‘festive dishes,’ He noticed her enthusiasm and warned that He would leave without eating anything at all; He insisted that only their daily menu should be given to Him. He talked to them of Shankaracharya being caught, while young, by the crocodile (*Maya*) in the river Poorna (*Brahma*) and saved by renunciation (*Sanyas*). He spoke of Sai Baba, and of God as Subrahmanya; He created a thin plate of gold, drew on it with His nail the picture of Subrahmanya on a peacock, and rolling it, directed her to wear it round the neck, inside a golden cylinder, to be made later. He said jocularly, “Sorry! I have no gold!”

This is perhaps the most dramatic, detailed, and authentic narrative of the multilocative miracle of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Baba appears in dreams to console, to advise, to assuage pain, and to instruct; He has said often that persons can see Him in dreams, only when He wills! He informed a Divisional Commissioner of the Life Insurance Corporation in his dream that a certain document he was desperately searching for, a document which everyone declared was destroyed by the Post office, where it had to be preserved only for 6 months, had not actually been destroyed! He went to the Postmaster, spoke about the dream, and got the document he wanted from the

place indicated by Baba in the dream. It had not been destroyed! In a dream, He woke up a school teacher at Tumkur and told her to take the next train to Bangalore, so that she could recover her jewels from a person, who was leaving for Bombay at 8.30 a.m.!

I have heard Him say, “Poor fellow! When he left, he prayed for My *darshan* at least in dreams! I must give him the chance,” or, “Tell your son I will appear in his dream next Thursday!” He has directed me to ask some persons, “Did you not see Baba in your dream last night?” and sure enough, they had an unforgettable dream experience, in which Baba granted them *darshan* and blessings. He has initiated persons into spiritual *sadhana* through *upadesh* granted in dreams; He has taught people new *bhajan* songs in dreams and asked them at Prasanthi Nilayam to sing them; He conveys information and advice in dreams; He operates on boils and buboes, on eye, ear, or tongue. The patient dreams that He is operating with the knife and the dream is true. Those, who went to bed in pain, woke up happy, rid of the dire disease!

Listen to the experience of Dr. V. D. Kulkarni of Chadchan in Bijapur district. He writes on 2-11-1961: “A Muslim lady (60) Badooma Kasim, suffering from pneumonia in both lungs, was admitted in my clinic last month. On the fourth day, I came home at about 8 p.m. after examining all my patients and finding them progressing well. About midnight, however, her son ran to me in hot haste and hastened to the clinic to find that her heart was sinking. I administered Corramine orally and by injection, and waited for an hour by her bedside, but found it ineffective. The son started weeping in despair. I came home at 1 a.m., had a bath, and entering my shrine-room, did *pooja* to the ‘picture’ of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, recited the 108 names of Baba, and prayed, ‘My efforts have all become vain; I know no other course except to surrender to You. Yours is now the victory or defeat, the fame or the failure. On You is the responsibility of making her come out alive.’ I then quietly took to bed, but could get no sleep. Even before sunrise, I hurried to the clinic. I found Badooma sitting up. ‘What happened at night? Had anyone come?’ I asked her. ‘Yes! On this bed, near my pillow, someone with a pile of hair sat; he placed his hands under my ears and stroked my face softly. So, I could rise and sit up,’ she said. I showed her the small photograph of Sri Sathya Sai Baba I had with me. ‘Yes! This very person,’ she said. How lucky is this woman! She got a lease of life through His Touch,” writes Dr. Kulkarni.

There are many instances, when Baba has appeared and applied the *vibhuti* on the forehead of the sleeping or unconscious patient and the dot is seen on awakening. Or, as Swami Abhedananda (aged 75) writes, the appearance may be to convey a message. “In the early

hours of the 28th December, about 4 a.m., while I was still in bed brooding over the melancholy and disturbed state of my affairs, I felt a sudden blow on my head, strong but bearable. I got up and switched the lights on. To my surprise, I observed a shining form of Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi, which changed into Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba - appearing separately for some time and then, merging together into a dazzling column of light, which lasted but a few seconds. I felt I had the vision of both my benevolent *Gurus!* While in this happy state of mind, I heard a voice (which was then strange to me, but which I later verified as the authentic voice of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba) which spoke to me in Telugu, “Do not get agitated; do not meditate! Merely watch the mind; that will make it disappear. Watch! And know that he, who watches, is pure awareness. Abstract and absolute Awareness is Self, *Sat-chitananda*. That Thou Art. This is the Peace that knows no second condition. This is what you are ardently seeking. Be firm. Bliss is thyself; you know it through intuition. The blow I gave you was to reveal this secret: Watch!” I started following the instructions from that moment onwards. Bhagawan is a ‘living presence.’ He says often in Telugu, “I am with you, *kantane, ventane, jantane, and intane* (before your eyes, behind your back, by your side, and in your home).” Baba wrote to Charles Penn, “Know that I am always with you, prompting you and guiding you. I know also that you are aware of this. Live always in the constant presence.” Charles Penn receives lessons from Baba during *dhyana*. “My teacher Sai Baba said to me, ‘Every time the hand is lifted, lift it for Him.’ I wrote to Baba and thanked Him for the lesson. In reply, He explained the meaning of what He had told me. He wrote, ‘If you lift the hand to help, to serve, to console, to encourage another man, you are lifting it for God. Because in every man, there is God; use all your talents for serving others; that is the best way of serving yourself!’”

Charles Penn of Los Angeles is a Captain in the Civil Air Patrol, attached to the U.S. Air Force. This is a voluntary organisation formed for the express purpose of rescuing pilots, who have had ‘forced landings’. During the air search for lost flyers, Penn saw Baba sitting beside him and knew that he was directed by Baba. “Penn! You need not look out! I shall look for you,” were the words he heard, words which convinced him that he was but an instrument in His hands. “This gave me a feeling of fearlessness in the hailstorm across the mountain peaks,” he says, “Petrol splashed across the wind screen, but I saw Him beside me and so, calm and collected, I brought my plane down and after hurried repair, went up again.”

Hasn’t Baba always told us that distance is no bar in His way? If anyone could have faith and love, He is always with them to take care of them. “Here, 10,000 miles away,” writes Hilda

Charlton from New York, “a person, who has never met Baba in the physical form, is healed and is feeling Baba’s Presence always with her!” Baba is no stranger; He is in every one. Mary Simpson was unsuccessfully operated twice, for blood clots in the lungs and for congested, enlarged breathing tubes. The doctor told her daughter when she was taken home, “I am sorry your mother is leaving the Hospital worse than when she entered.” But, she had the luck to know of Baba and to get a picture of Baba, as well as some *vibhuti*. When she prayed, Baba appeared before her and filled her with the vibrant thrill of well-being. Within a few days, the Doctor said, “I cannot believe this; the improvement is a miracle.”

Whenever Baba wills or our wills contact His will, the laws of nature are transcended, the unpredictable alone can then be predicted. A three year old boy was thrown to a distance of 20 feet by a Staff car, in Kharagpur (West Bengal); there was bleeding all over the body. He was conveyed to the K.G. Hospital. When he regained consciousness, he told the Doctor, “Do not fear, Doctor! Sai Baba lifted me up. He held me by the hand!” There was no fracture, no wound, he was discharged on the third day.

An officer of the Hindustan Aeronautics at Bangalore was admitted into Hospital, with severe Thrombophlebitis with pulmonary embolism and probable pulmonary tuberculosis. His condition became so serious that the oxygen tubes were taken away. The kith and kin were waiting outside the window, standing in the corridor. He saw Baba standing by the side of the bed; He heard Baba say, “Do not be afraid; you will be cured and you will be a new man.” From that moment, improvement started. The doctors of the Victoria Hospital wondered! Later, when he was called in by Baba at Prasanthi Nilayam, Baba said, “So, you have come re-born!”

The rustling of Baba’s silken gown, the touch of His smooth soft hair, the faint foot-fall of His light lovely feet, the silver voice, the flash of lightning from those eyes, the sacred fragrance of His presence—these have served to indicate to many that Baba has come to heal and hearten.

No word of His is spoken without significance. Baba told Mrs. Some Dutt Khera of Calcutta, when she implored Him at Madras to visit her home, “*Achcha Achcha Achcha,*” thrice. She saw His form distinctly at her place on three occasions and felt thrilled that the promise had been fulfilled. When Sri Raghavan, Inspector of Health, Malavalli came to Baba and prayed for the cure of his wife, ill with chronic osteomalacia and fractures of the pelvic bones, Baba said, “Do not despair; putting her in plaster for years is beyond you; I shall cure her, *tak, tak,*

tak like that,” and He made that noise with His two fingers to make His point clear. Four months later, one night, in the late hours, Baba appeared before her and asked her to rise. She fell at His feet; He stroked her back with many a word of consolation; she heard something snapping within her, ‘*tak tak tak*’! She could stand and walk; she was herself again!

J.P. Maroo of Bombay writes, “At about 5.30 a.m. on the *Guru Purnima* day (day dedicated to the worship of the spiritual preceptor), Sri Bhagawan appeared at the residence of Mr. Iyengar (at Sion) and gave *darshan* for about 3 minutes to Mr. Iyengar’s mother. She was filled with joy. She prayed to Bhagawan to remain a little longer, so that she could awaken her children. But, Bhagawan did not agree. He moved about the house and placed on a glass plate in the shrine room a small quantity of saffron-mixed rice created on the spot. Then, He disappeared.”

Sometimes, Baba indicates His presence by some sign. At Chaganlal’s Shanti Kutir in Madras, He indicated His presence during *Bhajan*, pushing the foot-stool under the chair placed for His use, though He was away at Rajahmundry. Those engaged in *Bhajan* saw the stool sliding in, as if He had pushed it in, as He does when He rises from the chair and gives *darshan* standing, as a sign that *Bhajan* shall close!

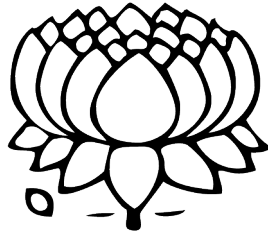
At Sirsi, the cloth over the chair developed two clear pictures of OM, when He decided (at Prasanthi Nilayam) to convey a message to the thousands gathered there. At Shimoga, a small garland of big jasmine flowers, which was offered to Him at Mysore 200 miles away, fell in full view of the gathering, to indicate His presence! At Jamnagar, He indicated His presence by the sudden appearance of Om on His portrait, before which the gathering sat for *Bhajan*.

“When I remarked that He did not come to my house as promised, He said with a smile, “I did! Did you not see the indication?” I was overjoyed, for the 3 footprints, all of the right foot, which I had seen at home on the day He had promised to come, were thus acknowledged by Him as His!” writes Sri B.S. Kesava Vittal of Bangalore. To M.S. Dixit He said, “I shall come to your home in January.” Dixit showed signs of doubt whether He deserved that signal gift of Grace. “January! January of which year?” he blurted. “Next month, middle of January, without fail,” was the reply. Baba placed His hand in Dixit’s hand and repeated the assurance.

It was the 17th day of January. When Mrs. Dixit was eating her lunch, she heard Baba’s voice calling, “Dixit, Dixit,” twice. She ran up to the door, but found no one outside it. She came back and resumed her meal. Then, she saw a glimpse of Baba’s face peeping into the room.

She rose and went into the next room. But, there was no one there. She saw seven foot-prints, leading from the outer door to the shrine, left-right, left-right in that order and both feet by the side of the shrine! They were all marked out by *vibhuti* ash, the outline only. In a few days, the *vibhuti* of one footprint grew and rose up to two inches in height! Thousands saw it for months on end and knew that Baba's will had caused it.

Thus does Baba fulfil His promise to be with us. He is the loving guide, the dearest companion, the closest kinsman, the fondest parent, and the nearest master.





7.

With Wounded Wings

Baba reconstructs Man by revealing to each the Sai within him. Whether it be a prisoner within the high walls of a jail, or within the high walls of ego-built desire. He is the liberator, the watchful Master, who takes you as you are and leads you on to the joyous vastness of freedom.

WHEN the life-giving Sathya Sai Ganga wends its way into a prison, dead bones become alive. Dry plants put forth leaves. Sunshine sweeps away sadness. Blessed are they, whose iniquities are forgotten, to whom the Lord will not impute any sin. It was grim and gaunt, this prison in Andhra Pradesh, but not far from God's grace. Baba sent a message to the prisoners, when they asked for it. Let us go through the grateful acknowledgement from prisoner No. 1: "We are sinners, certainly; but, our lives have become full of hope, through some stray acts of merit which we chanced to do, in some past birth; for, we have rendered ourselves fit to receive Your grace! Really, if there are any who can be declared fortunate in the world, we are the ones. We are truly proud of this. That the stream of Your mercy has started flowing towards these mean men, who have injured society and who are suffering punishment, is no ordinary event. We prayed that You should grant us Your *darshan* and Your blessings. You have written to us, out of the vastness of Your mercy, that You will elevate us with *darshan*, *sparshan*, and *sambhashan*, at Puttaparthi! The sage Narada blessed Savitri, on whose head the blow of widowhood had descended, with the statement, 'May you have being-with-husband status long,' and she was able to win her husband back from the dominion of Death. We too have learnt from Kalpagiri, whose death sentence was cancelled, that Your word will come true. It knows no defeat."

The reference to Kalpagiri in this letter reminds us of a page from actual life, which deserves to be inscribed in letters of gold. He committed a foul murder and escaped the sleuth-eyed

police of his area. He slithered silently towards the Himalayas and right at the gateway to those sempiternal regions of the soul, he donned the ochre robes of a monk and wandered from one *dharmashala* to another, trying to smother the squeaks of conscience by chanting the name of God. Four years he spent thus, trying to flee from himself into the sylvan glory and silence spread before him. He met many a saint and sage, *sadhaka* and monk, but he was harried by a doubt in most cases, whether they too were not sheer ignorance or wickedness or pride packed in pious robes. He read many sacred books, discussed the role of *bhakti*, *gnyana*, and *karma* in releasing man from bondage and became proficient in the dialectic of non-duality. He decided within himself that he could safely venture into the old familiar regions and so, he extended his pilgrimage to Simhachalam, Tirupati, Kanchi, and Rameswaram, at the extreme south of India. Thence, he turned to Madurai and Srirangam, Chamundi Hills, Melkote and reaching Bangalore, heard of Puttaparthi, where, he was told, a new Shirdi had emerged within the last two decades. He boarded the Guntakal train, alighted at Penukonda, and a bus brought him to Prasanthi Nilayam.

Baba called the *sanyasi* in. He is the all-knowing One. Nothing can be hidden from Him, by time or space or the artifice of Man. He chided him for running away from the consequences of his deed, a ruse which he could never accomplish successfully. While at Shirdi in the Sai Baba body, Baba had told Shama once, “Debt, enmity, and murder have to be atoned for; there is no escape.” So, Baba said, “Why postpone for another birth the suffering, which you must undergo in return for the dire deed?”

He told him that the ochre robes ill became a debtor, who has not paid his dues. He went up to His apartments and brought down white clothes for him to take off. He commanded him to go to the police in his area and give himself up. He gave him the fare and also the precious *vibhuti prasadam*, four packets of it; He assured him, “Go, confess and undergo cheerfully whatever punishment they ultimately give you. You will not be hanged; I promise that. Your neck shall wear a *Japamala*, a rosary, which I shall Myself put round it, when you come to Me after the sentence is over.”

Kalpagiri emerged from the room, like a serpent that has thrown off its coil and renewed itself. There was a glint in his eye, a vigour in his voice, a lightness in his gait that were not there that morning. Baba must be the Lord Himself, he thought. He decided to obey His command and save himself, rather than discarding it and get caught in the net of retribution and rebirth.

Travelling in the crowded train that night, he saw a fellow writhing in pain, with his hand pressed on the abdomen; he could not but part with one of the four *vibhuti* packets he had with him; he was happy to find that the pain stopped and the man slept soundly. He knew that his estimate of Baba was correct. So, he confessed to the police and the death-sentence the Judge pronounced was commuted by the President of India into a sentence of life imprisonment. During the weeks when the petition for Presidential Mercy was being considered, Kalpagiri in his cell was telling his neighbours, Chengappa and others, that he had met the Incarnation of the Lord at Puttaparthi and that He had assured him that mercy will be shown, and that he would get from Baba Himself a rosary, when he finished his term and went to Him, freed from the recoil of the stab that he had inflicted on a fellow-being. The word came true: the petition bore fruit. Naturally, others in the prison were eager to know from him the name and address, the glory and splendour, the wisdom and mercy of Baba. And they wrote to Baba, in their own unsophisticated style, for His blessings, His pictures, and books about Him.

The letter from prisoner No.1 is evidence of the exhilaration felt by the prisoners of that Jail, when the parcel arrived, with a message of consolation and courage from Baba. Other letters from Baba followed and the prison became a paradise for the pious.

"We are listening to the reading of 'Sathyam Shivam Sundaram' chapter by chapter. We are overpowered by the grandeur of the incidents mentioned."

"The pictures in the book captured my heart."

"I have fixed a picture before me; without interfering with my other assignments, I worship it daily."

"I am a very sick person, ailing from many diseases. I am decorating Your picture in the Bhajan room, as far as I can. I will not get the work done by any of the others."

"From my boyhood days, I used to take a delight in religious carols and worship; now, that tendency has again reappeared in me and I am filling all my spare time by Sankirtan and Shramadana."

"As directed, I am reciting Your Name and listening to Your story and sharing in Bhajan." – these are lines from the letters the prisoners wrote. Baba continued sending replies to those correspondents.

Prisoner No.4 writes. "Each letter that comes to us from Prasanthi Nilayam is a blessing:

truly, it is as if Baba Himself is before us, conversing with us.” V ... writes, “I am an aged man. My sons and my son-in-law are also in this prison. Since we got the chance of sharing in the nectar that You so kindly sent us, the feeling that we are undergoing a sentence is fast disappearing. With this food that we have now secured, our hearts have become full and free. They do not incline towards any other desire. What more do we need? For reading during spare hours, we have Your Divine story: we have the *pooja* of Your picture. But, yet, O Lord, the heart pines for more, pardon the poor thing.”

R... writes, “I am eager that along with my mind, all my senses – outer and inner – must serve God. So, whether I sit or walk, whether I see or hear, I am trying to dedicate every moment to the Lord. Why should these hands be idle? I am writing *Ramanama*, with intent to complete ten million names. Every day, I worship the holy representations of God with incense, lights, and prayers. This is my daily routine. Recently, Your sacred Name has been planted in this jail; it sent the first sprout up very soon; now, it has grown magnificently, heavy with flowers and fruits; under the shade of that tree, I too am enjoying cool comfort. My joy defeats all attempts at description. The letter You sent us the other day made me and all others wonder at our good fortune. It brought back to memory the Vishwavidya Veera Brahmendraswami of four centuries ago.”

The clean mirror reflected clear. Repentance calmed the passions. In the hearts of many a prisoner, there had sprouted the creeper of devotion to the Almighty, the tendrils of which had now got Baba to fasten upon. S.N ... spoke to his comrades of Baba, whom he had seen and heard at Hyderabad. “From that day, I have been worshipping Your Form that is installed in my heart,” he writes. He became soon a fertile centre of information and inspiration. After Baba visited Repalle, near Guntur, for the installation of the marble idol of Shirdi Sai Baba, a person, who had witnessed the ceremony, happened to stay for some months as an under-trial prisoner in the same jail; he described the scene, the enthusiasm of the lakhs of people who had gathered, the creation by Baba in full view of the multitude, by a mere wave of the hand, of a golden image of Shirdi Sai Baba. He told them a sheaf of other heart-warming stories about the glory of Baba. The prisoners felt that Baba Himself had arranged this visit by the Repalle ryot, so that His band of *bhaktas* might know more about Him.

Baba told Hemadpant one day at Shirdi, “Look at that mango tree in blossom. If all the flowers you see brought fruit, what a splendid crop it would be! But, do they? No. Most fall off faded; or, they fall off when the fruit is tender or unripe. This is what is happening to those, who come to this place.” His grace alone must save us from falling and so, we have to

pray to Him for His grace and win it by our virtue and steady *sadhana*. However, Sathya Sai Baba has a more heartening role for us. He says, “When the sun rises and shines, not all the lotus buds in the lakes and ponds bloom; only those that are ready, do. The rest have to bide their time. But, all are destined to bloom, all have to fulfil that destiny. There is no need to despair.”

When we reflect on the implications of these words, we can understand why some of the prisoners slowly relapsed into indifference and were satisfied with erratic correspondence with Baba. But, among those who clung to the Divine feet from the moment Kalpagiri made the divinity known inside the walls, Chengappa deserves special mention, since his story reminds us of a mountain torrent reaching the plains and the sea, after many a steep fall. His letters reveal an intense yearning for spiritual realisation. “A slight difference of opinion arose between myself and my wife and so, I decided that she should no longer live on Earth. I resolved to end my life too, along with hers. Placing some poison on my tongue, I stabbed her while she slept and swallowed the fatal dose. The woman died; but, death declined to accept me. I could only sense the fire on my tongue; nothing more happened inside me. I felt I must die soon. So, I ripped open my bowels, with the knife still dripping with her blood, and fell on the floor. I regained consciousness in the hospital, to which the police had transported me. They stitched the ghastly wound and made me whole. Later, while I was confined at the Rajahmundry jail, they had to open the stomach again and after some years, once again, in order to repair the damage done in previous operations. The wonder was, I survived all these calamities. I surmised that God was guarding my life, for, perhaps, He had planned a good future for me, when I could do some work for Him and for those whom He chose. Therefore, I offered my body, heart, and soul to God. I have since felt supremely happy, for I live every moment in the knowledge that I have the grace of God. The Godly are my kith and kin; sages are my dearest companions. I have lost all interest in my erstwhile kinsmen. I have secured You, Baba, Lord come on Earth. What more do I need? I have placed Your picture, the one You sent, before the seat which I use for *dhyana*. When I open my eyes, I see You; when I close my eyes, I recite Your name. This is my *nityapooja*; I practise the *sadhana* of being with You, in You, for ever. God for me, I for God .. this is the thirst. This gives me limitless joy.”

He is happy that the doctors have prescribed for him uncooked greens and pulses soaked in water, for that is the *satwic* food, which helps the *sadhaka* to have his meditation unhampered by *rajasic* thoughts.

When Baba wrote a letter to him, encouraging him in his resolve, Chengappa writes: "I placed the letter on my eyes; I pressed it on my heart. I was as happy as Sita must have been, when Anjaneya placed in her hands the signet ring of Rama. It was Thursday, the Silence Day, when I could not communicate to my comrades my joy. I had read in the *Sanathana Sarathi* that You had recommended silence during Thursday. I read the precious words myself. Ah, how fortunate I am!"

Others too in the jail were subjected to this Divine alchemy, as their letters indicate. A seventy-year old prisoner writes, "Like Ramadas, I am engaged in *Ramadhyan* in this prison ever since I entered it. Once in ten years, I am permitted to go home and see my people, my mother, brothers, and other relatives. My mother bore me and bred me and underwent great sacrifices to make me a man; but, I have given her only sorrow in return. I have rendered myself incapable of serving her in her old age. My heart is filled with a yearning that bids me to come to You and be Your servant until I die." No.7 writes: "As a consequence of a crime, three of us, brothers, are undergoing sentence here. We are trying our best to fix our wandering minds on Your Lotus Feet. When will these unfortunate fellows get the lucky chance of having *darshan* of the Lord of Parthi?"

Prisoner No.8 writes, "Ever since we heard about Your Divine name and read the Divine story, we have been keeping Your name in mind every moment. That sweet lozenge has become our companion. The epistle that you sent to the prisoners here has been received with reverence. Many of us have learnt it by heart and can reproduce the contents. It passed from hand to hand and the message was imbibed with alacrity by group after group, who read it and enjoyed it. In the eager rush to read it sooner than others, the paper got crumpled and torn in places. But, we have pasted the pieces together and kept it framed for all to read in the *pooja* Room." The prisoners write to Baba for books and *Bhajan* song collections, for notebooks in which they could write *Ramnam* continuously until it totals lakhs, and sometimes they refer to their mothers or children, who, they fear, might be in distress.

In such cases, Baba has sent many through the post to the addresses mentioned and when the addresses were found to be correct and the persons known to be alive and available, He dispatched clothes and other gifts by post, with letters of consolation and encouragement.

I shall close this narrative of alchemy with one more letter; the writer had the good luck to fall into the company of these Sai-inspired *sadhakas* and he writes, "My native state is Nepal. You might know that Nepal is a very God-fearing country, since You have been to the

Himalayas. I am now undergoing imprisonment as the result of past actions and the consequence of sin. But, I do not reckon this to be evil; I am convinced that this is for my own good. You have written in one of Your letters to one of my comrades, '*Even Kamalanabha is subject to Kashta*' (Even the Lotus-navelled Lord of Creation is described as having suffered misery). So, what of poor me? Since some months, the recitation of Your Divine name and reading of Your story are happening in this prison. In this stream of devotion, my mind too has got dissolved. The letter You sent a few days ago had a more profound effect on me than on many others; it read as if it was written to me and about my problems. Who can tell when exactly Your grace will be showered on one? You have taken residence in my heart, I call You my *Hridaya Sai*."

Baba has been accepted as the Guardian and Refuge by some prisoners, in the Hazaribagh and Gaya jails, too, mainly due to the influence of some Telugu speaking citizens, who had to serve sentences there. Those of us, who dismiss a criminal from the mind as soon as the prison doors are closed, with him safely inside, will be surprised that Baba is there, inside the bars, assuaging the bleeding heart, the penitent mind, the vigilant conscience, the innocent sufferer, the child aware that it has erred and determined not to err again. Most crimes are perpetrated in passion, in the temporary blindness of hatred, in the momentary insanity of anger, in the egoistic bravado of greed, in the malice that ignorance breeds. The law too is very often an ass, as they say: it was framed with little consideration for the iron that enters the soul when injustice hits one in the face, for the warp that the motions get when men live through dirt and disease, drink and dice, and the deleterious atmosphere of homes broken by divorce and disorder. Baba asks us to correct the corroding influence of the cinema on the mind and He has often spoken of the responsibility of literary men and artists, like musicians and dramatists, to produce clean entertainment and wholesome inspiration for the rising generation. The respect now shown to cleverness rather than virtue, the absence of any teaching of scripture and *Shastra* to the children in schools, the evil example set by elders, who indulge without a shred of shame in anti-social activities, like cheating in business, adulteration of food-stuffs, vendetta in politics – all these have been mentioned by Baba as conducive to crime.

Like the mother, who pours extra love on the wayward child, Baba is kind to repentant criminals and the sunshine He spreads over these is a sign of His universal love. He has always insisted on the criminal confessing his crime and bearing the consequences gladly, resolving not to repeat the offence. As a matter of fact, He advises against asking pardon. Be

bold, face the result, suffer, and learn fortitude. Repentance is enough compensation for the sin: so, use the period of the sentence for repentance and inner purification. That is His advice.

I remember a person, who came from Uttar Pradesh to escape from the legal proceedings, which he had to face for alleged misappropriation of funds belonging to the co-operative society where he was employed. Baba advised him to return and accept his guilt, but promised that He would mitigate the punishment, provided he repented sincerely. The man could not muster sufficient courage to go back to his place, but Baba insisted that he should, and he left with Baba's blessings on the mission of self-improvement.

Rendering base metal into gold - that is the rehabilitation work, which Baba likes most. Wherever He is, whatever He talks about, the purpose is essentially this. For example, let us see Him at Brindavan, Whitefield, where He spends a few weeks every year.

Hilda Charlton of the United States writes thus about her experience of this alchemy: "A quietness fills the air, a peace, *Shanti* indescribable, which is not lessened, but only made more cognisable by Baba's voice, as He sings a song or speaks the wisdom of the ages to those, whose grace it is to receive. As I arose at 4 a.m. and walked down the long garden to the spreading tree at the end of the path, there was a cool silence, which brought a flood of joy in its wake. The bright moon illumined the garden. Silhouetted against the sky were the stately fir trees, the heavy fig trees, the line of ashokas, the brilliant red of the gulmohurs, and the white gardenia bushes. The statue of Krishna in the centre of the pond made me yearn for the music of the flute, which I felt might emerge any moment from its lips. Arms automatically rose in adoration of God's glory that beckoned me from every side."

In His talks yesterday, Baba had said that the best time for meditation was the *Brahma-muhurtam* (from 3 a.m. to 5 a.m.). To meditate under these trees in the open is a spiritual treat, for we are perhaps carried back in memory to the days, when, in past ages, we were meditating on the banks of the Ganga, in the Himalayan valleys. Baba has told us that it is good to form a habit of meditating at the same place, at the same time, and for the same length of time each day, at least until one progresses enough.

Baba has also said, the inner meditation is only one factor, the aim must be to derive *ananda* with every breath, by filling every moment with the sweetness of His name. *Pranayama* of this type must become part of your very being. Then only do you start the process of truly living. Today is the first day of January 1965. I remember Baba's admonition not to attach

too much significance to any particular day. Every day is *Guru-vaar*, not Thursday alone, He has said. Every second is a new start and has to be celebrated as an opportunity. The New Year, beginning on a particular day, is separating God's Infinity into tiny sections. But, I find many coming into the bungalow with garlands of fragrant flowers. The altar is made a magnificent heap of white, pink, orange, and magenta flowers.

Baba started the day taking sweets from the air and distributing them to all, saying, "These sweets will bring joy into our lives." He made a small picture with just a wave of His hand and gave it to Mr. B. Then, turning to Mrs. B, He asked rather playfully, "Jealous?" He took the picture back and placed it in His right hand, clapping hands quick. Instantly, there were six copies of the same, one for each of us, sitting before Him.

During the conversation that ensued, He picked up a piece of paper from the floor and rolling it into a ball, gave it to Mr. B. He found on his palm not a ball of paper, but a flavoured sweet block, which, it seems, was his favourite. In the same manner, He prepared another paper ball for the wife, which too became, on contact with her hand, another item of edible sweet!

These little surprises, as He called them, culminated in the miracle of Om. A devotee had come from Madras, bringing with her a jewel in the shape of Om, which she had got made; she now held it before Baba for being blessed by His Divine touch. Baba looked at it and laughing, joked about the Om being more like a monkey's curved tail. Evidently, He did not like the artist's handiwork. He asked the devotee if He could correct the Om or whether she preferred a new jewel, with His own portrait incorporated in it. She chose the new jewel, naturally. Keeping the Om jewel in His closed fist, He blew on it and when He opened His palm, we found to our astonishment that the Om had disappeared and in its place, there had come into being an exquisitely designed gold locket, with a large portrait of Baba in colour encircled by diamonds and with a pendant of lovely pearls. "This is a reward for twenty three years of unremitting prayer," Baba said, while placing the jewel in her hand.

The miracles of Baba are done with purpose to inspire, to encourage, and to strengthen faith. The greater miracle of Baba, is, of course, the supreme miracle of the change in our nature, in our character, which is far more inspiring and uplifting than the creation of jewels. Sai Baba at Shirdi said, "I give what you want, so that one day you will want what I give." And so, one feels, it is with Baba; every move, every word, every act (and every act of the Lord cannot but be a miracle) has a deep meaning, which we can seldom unravel.

I saw a miracle of change in character that was highly inspiring. Baba declares that He does

not affect the change from outside, but He releases the innate perfection, lying unknown and dormant in us. A lady from Britain came to Baba with no background of spiritual yearning and no previous study of Eastern religion or philosophy. She was on a tour of South India and her intention was only to stay for three days, before she resumed the tour. But, on meeting Baba and glimpsing His glory, she cancelled all further engagements and stayed on for full four months!

These were months of complete dedication and renunciation of old habits, likes as well as dislikes. She had never meditated in her life before coming to Prasanthi Nilayam and was not conversant with *yoga* or Hindu systems of thought. Yet, we were struck, when she drafted a programme for the twenty-four hours of each day and when she stuck tenaciously to it. At 4 a.m., she was up, meditating, whether she had slept well or not, during the night. Her day was filled with reading, writing, meditating, *japam*, and acts of service, like sweeping the compound of Brindavan or Prasanthi Nilayam. This she persevered in doing sincerely, though on account of the changed climate and food, she was plagued during this period of intense *sadhana* with abscesses and infections, which were irritating and very often painful. She had to keep awake during most nights as a result of these, but she held fast to her determination.

Her steadfastness and perseverance, as well as her love for God, were rewarded by Baba; slowly, her meditation sessions became calm and rewarding. A new radiance was shining in her eyes. There was a strange charm in her face, which was not there before. Her quiet, unobtrusive, unselfish acts made her, as Baba advises all to become, a hollow, ego-less individual, a flute with which God can sing the melody of perfection.

She left after four months equipped with a completely new outlook, an awakened consciousness, and a sincere desire to continue her *sadhana*. Baba has assured that if a person would give the whole being to God, and meditate as directed, one could, within three months, attain results that would be most encouraging. The results depend, of course, on steady faith and *sadhana* done continuously.

Before she went overseas, we had the privilege of witnessing a miracle of Baba. As she was soon to be married in Britain, Baba had promised her a *mangalsutra*, a jewel to be worn for the wedding ceremony. One day, while we were sitting before Him in a group, He took a betel vine leaf from the box near Him and started carving on it a decorative design, with the edge of the tiny silver spoon used for spreading lime upon it. From time to time, He would hold it up and show it to us, and we admired the design that was unfolding before our eyes,

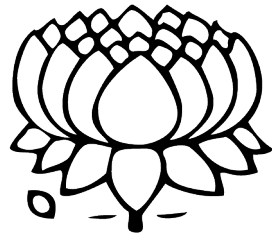
with each line He drew. We did not realise that He was designing the *mangalasutra* for our friend. Then, suddenly, He held up the leaf on the conclusion of the picture, and blew thrice upon it. The leaf disappeared and in its place was the most beautiful wedding jewel ever seen as designed.

It was of gold and the symbolic significance, which Baba explained to the recipient, was such that she would always be reminded of her *sadhana*. On each side were three rubies, representing the three *gunas* which must harmonise in husband and wife. Right at the top were two rubies, side by side, which symbolised the husband and wife. Suspended from the main jewel, there was a pendant of perfect pearls, having in the centre a lotus, made out in precious stone, to remind them both of Prasanthi Nilayam, with the Lotus Circle right in front of the Hall. It was indeed a delightful reward for days and nights of intense *sadhana*; she had not squandered even one moment of those four months.

Baba is unfathomable, unknowable. One cannot comprehend with the human mind, what He is. One can only trust, believe, and obey. As I stood before Him, immersed in wonder, He said, “Everyone sees the world through glasses and their world is that, which they see through them: worry glasses, hate glasses, glasses of envy, jealousy, greed. I wear only Love Glasses. I cannot hate even if I want to. Hate and anger are not part of Me; nor is disease possible for Me, I may hiss to warn and correct; but, I never hate. I am bliss and bliss only. I am wisdom, *anandam*, *shanti*. That is My nature.”

Baba reconstructs Man by revealing to each the Sai within him. Whether it be a prisoner within the high walls of a jail, or within the high walls of ego built desire. He is the liberator, the watchful master, who takes you as you are and leads you on to the joyous vastness of freedom.

Hilda Charlton; who had spent decades in Ceylon among Buddhist *sadhakas* and who had practised *Tantrik sadhanas* under Hindu *Gurus* in Delhi, chanced to hear of Shirdi when in Bombay and during her stay at Shirdi, she came to know of the Form that Sai Baba had taken to bless mankind. She came to Prasanthi Nilayam about three years ago. Here, she found the fulfilment of her striving, a place where she could do *sadhana* with the assurance of success.





8.

Incredible! - Still

Sathya Sai Baba has said that in His previous Body, He told Kakasaheb that He would appear after 8 years, and not as 'a child of 8'. He appeared again at Puttaparthi, in 1926, 8 years after that Vijayadashami. He revealed Himself as a Divine child, with a miraculous career before Him, in His 8th year, when He willed at school that the teacher should be stuck to his chair, until He could get down from the bench on which He was ordered by him to stand. That was the first 'dramatic' announcement of the Advent of Sai again 'as a child of 8.'

THE first Volume of this book has a chapter on "The Same Baba," where many facts that convince us of the identity and continuity of the Sai Baba at Shirdi and the Sai Baba at Puttaparthi were mentioned. Baba refers to Himself always as Sai Baba. The name Sathya Sai Baba is being used only to avoid legal and administrative complications with institutions and organisations that have grown round 'the previous body' and its admirers. When the Chairman of the Shirdi Samsthan, charged with the duty of administering the properties and the ceremonials of worship at Shirdi, where the 'previous body' is laid to rest, hesitated to swallow the *vibhuti* materialised by the 'present body', (Sri Sathya Sai Baba) because he feared it might be a sacrilege, Baba gave him a sign to convince him that the two were the same. His picture on the wall of that room, in Bombay, gave forth a flash of brilliant light and the dark doubt in his heart was gone!

When Tidemann Johanessen of Norway was before the Shirdi shrine, an old man appeared before him and giving him a picture of Sathya Sai Baba and also a small quantity of *udi*, directed him to see the present *avatar* in Bombay, on the thirteenth day of March! No one had any inkling of the visit to Bombay in March of Sathya Sai Baba, at that time. Later, when on

13th March, he met Baba at Bombay, Baba convinced him that he was informed at Shirdi by Him alone.

Sathya Sai Baba is the effulgence, the majesty, the compassion that animates every shrine in which Shirdi Sai Baba is now adored. A nephew of Kakasaheb Dixit, one of the inner circle of Sai devotees at Shirdi (if we can speak of inner and outer, instead of stronger and weaker), had written a song of prayer to Shirdi Sai Baba, where he yearned to be at least, 'Your gate-keeper'! This was years ago. Now, he is the gate-keeper at Brindavan, Whitefield, living in a cottage near the gate and hurrying with the keys, when Baba drives in from Prasanthi Nilayam, or Madras, or Nilgiris.

Pray to Him either as 'Shirdi' Baba, or as 'Parthi' Baba; it is Baba that hears. Mrs. Batheja and her daughter heard of Baba while at Bangalore; they had to proceed to Bombay after a visit to Shirdi. They decided to have the *darshan* of Baba on their way. Since they could not get the 'interview' within a few days, they had to leave. They called out to Baba when He was passing along the veranda on the first floor, for permission to leave. So, He called me into His presence and giving me some 'udi' packets, said, "Go and give these to the mother and daughter from Bombay, waiting below." He added, "They have brought a piece of cloth for Me. Tell them they can take it back and use it, stitched as items of dress, as My *prasad*." When I told them this, they were amazed! The piece of cloth they had brought and kept carefully inside their box was for offering at the Shrine of Shirdi; there, it would be spread on the 'tomb'! But, since Baba had accepted it, "We shall not go to Shirdi; this is Shirdi. That offering has been accepted and returned as *prasadam*," they exalted.



The *Sai Satcharitam*, written while Sai was at Shirdi, with His blessings, by Govinda Raghunatha Dabholkar refers to Shirdi Sai Baba Himself as "Sathya Sai!" It speaks of the story of Shirdi Sai Baba as "Sathya Sai Katha," it also describes a Sathya Sai Vrata. Sathya

being, as has happened in the present incarnation, the abridgement of the name Sathyanarayana!

Bhimaji Patel, after a miraculous recovery from disease through the grace of Shirdi Sai, celebrated thanks-giving ceremonies. Full of gratitude and reverence, instead of the usual *Sathyanarayana vrata*, he observed the Sathya Sai *vrata*! Instead of *Sathyanarayana Katha*, which had to be read after the *vrata*, he recited the Sathya Sai *katha*!

Sai Baba at Shirdi must have, as the indweller of Bhimaji, prompted him to name the *vrata* and the *katha*, in that manner, urged by the *Sankalpa* to suggest coming events. For, had not Sai Baba said at Shirdi, over and over again, “Blessed and fortunate is he, who knows Me as seated in the hearts of all beings.” In fact, He knew the past, present, and future as Dabholkar has declared.

Ten years ago, a Maharashtrian composed a poem on Baba at Shirdi, in which he characterised Sai as Sathya Sai. Last year, he came to know Sathya Sai, through the first volume of this book. He came to Prasanthi Nilayam, drawn by the name which had come to his pen unawares. He told me that the continuity of the two Sais was confirmed by the last incident in the life of the first, and the first incident in the career of the second. Sai Baba appeared before Das Ganu at dawn, on the 16th day of October, 1918 and said, "The masjid has collapsed; I am going from there now; I have come to inform you; go there, quick. Fulfil this wish of mine; place flowers on My *dabari*." *Dabari* indicated the 'tomb'. Das Ganu did as he was told. In 1940, when Baba announced Himself as having come again to resume His work and foster His *bhaktas*, Pedda Venkama Raju asked his Son, who was making the announcement, “Show us a sign and convince us that you are the same Baba.” And, Baba asked that ‘flowers’ be placed in His hands—flowers that He had asked Das Ganu to place on His *dabari*, when He took leave of Shirdi! He threw the flowers on the floor and the two words SAI and BABA were formed by those flowers, moving by themselves into those lines. For those who can read the tracks and trails of Godhead, this is a meaningful coincidence.

On *Vijayadashami*, 1916, when someone told Sai Baba at Shirdi, “Today is *Seemollanghanam* Day,” Baba stunned everyone by His Announcement, “Yes; it is the day of My *seemollanghanam* too.” *Seemollanghanam* means the act of crossing the boundary, from one kingdom into another. Kings, in former days, gathered their forces, equipped them with arms worshipped and propitiated on *Ayudha Pooja day* (the day previous to *Vijayadashami* day), and crossing their own state boundaries, they invaded the neighbouring state, eager to

achieve *Vijaya* (victory). That was on the tenth day of *Dasara*, the tenth or *Dashami* day of the bright half of the *Aswija* month.

What exactly did Sai Baba mean, when He said, “*Vijayadashami* is the day of My *seemollanghanam*?” Which border was He crossing and into which State was He proceeding? He left the body, as He had foretold, on *Vijayadashami*. He told Das Ganu next morning, appearing before him, “I am going from Shirdi now; oil mongers and grocers tease Me a lot.” So, He left Shirdi and crossed from one state to another, from Maharashtra to Andhra. That was the *seemollanghanam*!

Sathya Sai Baba has said that in His previous body, He told Kakasaheb that He would appear after 8 years and not as ‘a child of 8’. He appeared again at Puttaparthi, in 1926, 8 years after that *Vijayadashami*. He revealed Himself as a Divine child, with a miraculous career before Him, in His 8th year, when He willed at school that the teacher should be stuck to his chair, until He could get down from the bench, on which He was ordered by him to stand. That was the first ‘dramatic’ announcement of the Advent of Sai again - ‘as a child of 8.’

There are some, who limit the Almighty Will of Godhead and say that Sai Baba cannot enter into a human cage, once having flown out of it - as if they are the law givers for that Eternal Absolute! One such wrote a letter to me from Madras, repeating this argument; when he received my reply, he was so firmly convinced that he supported the identity and continuity and advent by a new argument! “The *Bhagavad Gita* tells us, the Lord has announced that those, who depart from the body during a distressed smoky condition of the mind, or during the night, or the dark half of the month, or during the six months when the sun is in the southern hemisphere, that is to say, during the six months that mark the southern or the manes’ path, reach the region of the moon, if they are *yogis*. After some time, they have to return thence to the earth and human birth. (Chapter 8, *Shloka* 25). *Shloka* 28 says that if they depart during the day and during the bright half of the moon and during the six months of the Northward sun, the *yogis* do not return at all. Sai Baba of Shirdi departed during *Dakshinayana*, the six months of the southern sun, because evidently, He courted the chance of returning to Earth.” I can only say that such buttresses are not needed to prove the obvious. Here, beckoning us in love and sweetness is the *avatar*, the reappearance of Sai, whom we can all experience and benefit from. What need is there for argument?

As a boy of 14, when Baba decided to stand forth as Sai Baba, giving up the role of Sathyanarayana Raju, He threw away His school books and walked away from His home, to

a garden outside the town of Uravakonda. He told His sister-in-law, who tried to persuade Him to stay, “I have got My work; My *bhaktas* are waiting for Me.” What was the work? Who were the *bhaktas*? We can see that the work was the continuation of what was achieved at Shirdi; the *bhaktas* were those, who adored Him while at Shirdi and subsequently. This was the reason why He chided a far-famed worshipper of His Shirdi Form, who refused to recognise Him, thus, “What is the use of all your adoration and meditation, when you cannot recognise the very God whom you are adoring and meditating upon?” Even in His teens, He demonstrated to two of His masters at school, Subbannachar and Kondappa, that He was Sai come again; He granted visions of Shirdi to His mother and father, and many others at Puttaparthi. He gave pieces of the *Kafni* He wore at Shirdi to Tammiraju Manchiraju and others at Uravakonda.

Tammiraju Manchiraju was a teacher at the Uravakonda High School. He has written many articles about those days in the “Sanathana Sarathi” magazine. “Since the untimely death of my daughter, my wife was very depressed and so, my ‘pupil’ at school - Sathya shall I say or Baba - came to my house frequently to console her. She used to go every Thursday evening to Him, at the Telugu teacher’s house (the house of the elder brother of Baba). One day, while she was falling at His Feet, He raised her up saying, ‘I shall carry all burdens for you. Be happy, henceforth.’ Then, He waved His hands and created rice grains (just as He created for Megha at Viramgaon, while at Shirdi), and asked her to tie them up in the *gerua* piece of the *kafni* He had given us earlier.

We had to go some distance to the village well for the day’s stock of potable water. My wife one day collected the children of the neighbours and asked them to play with our five-year old son, so that she could go to the well and return. She gave them some sugar and said, ‘Do Sai *pooja*, all of you; I shall come soon. Offer this sugar to Him and then, take it as *prasadam*.’ The children went into the shrine room; they repeated the hymns they knew. They saw Sai Baba sitting before them. He ate a small quantity of the sugar and gave each one of them a handful. My son was so excited at the Old Man’s visit that he ran out to meet his mother and bring her along. He knew she would be delighted to meet Him. When she came in, the room was empty. ‘Where has He gone?’ she asked the children. The little innocents replied: ‘We saw Him go into that picture.’ Within a few days, we were at Puttaparthi, Baba told me, “You were sad that I had come away to Puttaparthi; but I can be here and still be there. I knew you would believe this only when the children spoke about what they saw.” Tammiraju writes, “The question may arise: Why did He choose the Shirdi

Form? I asked myself this question. I got the answer too from Sathya: There is no ‘that form’ or ‘this form’. Both are one.”

Sai Baba, while young, used to sing with enthusiasm and dance with tinkling anklets on His feet. In this appearance as Sathya, He used to delight in dance and impart delight to others by the dance. He sings with enthusiasm *kirtans* and *namavalis*, which inspire hundreds of thousands into ecstatic devotion. Sai Baba wore, when He came to Shirdi, only a *dhoti* round His waist and a shirt on His body; for many years, at Puttaparthi also, He wore the same style of clothes. He changed over to the long gown, as Sai Baba did at Shirdi, only later. He adopted the coloured gown and *dhoti* for general wear, at the insistence of devotees that He could be more readily identified and not get lost, when hundreds milled round Him for *darshan* and to touch His feet.

“Your joy is the food I subsist on,” says Sathya Sai Baba. To give joy to the people around Him, at Shirdi, Sai Baba meekly submitted to pageantry and pomp. Every alternate day, Sai Baba was taken in procession from Dwarakamayee to the Chavadi, where He slept. Groups of men and women with *taal*, *chiplis*, *kartal*, *mridang*, *khanjira*, *veena*, and other musical instruments formed the vanguard of the procession. A long line of beautiful *raths* followed behind. Next came the richly caparisoned horse, Shyamakarna, which Sai Baba fondled and loved. Behind the horse was a palanquin borne by men, who sang hymns, accompanied by many torchbearers on both sides. There were others with canes, silver sticks, poles with flags, bearers of poles with carved figures of *Garuda* on their crests. They danced in joy, shouting *Jai*, to the tune of drums and trumpets. Fireworks announced the approach of the procession through sound and the brilliance of sudden flashes of multi-coloured light. Baba appeared on the steps of the *masjid* with persons holding yak-tail *chowries* on each side of him. The *bhaldars* announced His appearance by shouting His name. Devotees spread folds of cloth on the road, as He moved along. An umbrella was held over His head; flowers besmeared with *gulal* were showered on Him as He proceeded slowly.

The *Sai Satcharita* says, “What a beautiful procession! What an expression of devotion! That scene and those days are gone now. Nobody can see them now, nor in the future.”

No; Baba has come again! He permitted devotees to arrange such processions again at Puttaparthi, during the *Dasara* and Birthday festivals, until about 1954. At Shirdi, Baba was bejewelled before He started for the Chavadi. “They put on His head a *mukuta* (crown) and placed jewels round His neck as well as garlands. (Years ago, Sakamma from Bangalore

brought many jewels, which she put on Baba). During the short time of the procession, they changed His headdress off and on.” Even now, Baba yields to the prayers of people, when He knows they are sincere and allows them to arrange processions in towns and villages (as at Shivajinagar, Kalyanapuram, Udumalpet, Coimbatore, Ootacamund), though with paraphernalia very much reduced.

At Shirdi, Baba referred to His sircar, His treasure, His *Durbar*; now too, He refers to Himself as, *Shatchakravarti*; He speaks of His storeroom, His treasury, His treasure (*pennidhi*). At Shirdi, He said “This Dwarakamayi is the Dhankapuri of Dakurnath, the Pandhari of Vital, and the Dwarak of Ranchod.” Baba has announced that the present Dwarakamayi (Prasanthi Nilayam) is “another Mathura, another Badrinath, and another Tirupati.” The name Dwaraka was applied to the city built by Krishna on an island, because the word means, a place, the doors of which are open for the four castes and for the four types of men, namely *aarti*, *artharathi*, *jignyasu*, and *gnyani*, so that they may attain the four *Purusharthas*.

Certainly, the dwelling of the Lord at Dwaraka, Shirdi, and Puttaparthi deserves the name. Baba has said, “This Prasanthi Nilayam has no wall or fence round it, for the Lord is accessible to all, who come from all directions and all paths. All are welcome to the gift of Grace.”

Sai Baba ‘expressed a wish’ that a Muralidhar idol of Krishna (with the flute or *murali* in His hand) be installed in the quadrangle of the palatial building that Buty built in Shirdi; but He ‘left’ Shirdi before that wish could be fulfilled. Perhaps for that reason, Baba has a Muralidhar idol of Krishna on the porch of Prasanthi Nilayam, as the centre of adoration for all, who raise their hands in prayer. He has a Muralidhar in the shrine in the Prayer Hall. There are two charming images of Muralidhar in the lovely garden of Brindavan, too.

A close study of the *Sai Satcharita* is a MUST for anyone seeking to unravel the mystery of Sathya Sai Baba, for the Hand that gives and the Voice that teaches are the same. When a *Brahmachari* of the Ramakrishna Mission came to Prasanthi Nilayam to get his chronic colic cured, Baba asked him to pray to *Guru Maharaj* Himself and instructed him that Ramakrishna, his *Gurumaharaj*, will cure the ailment that hinders the spiritual progress of his child. At Shirdi, Baba would have given the same advice. “Do not lose hold of the bolster you have secured.” “*Apula bap to, apula bap*” (Our father alone is our father). “You cannot change one Master for another, to suit your whim and fancy.” Sai Baba gave *darshan* to the

disciples of Raghunath Maharaj as Raghunath Maharaj. Sai Baba was all saints in one.

Now also, it is the same One. While at Prasanthi Nilayam, Baba has given *darshan* at Ramanashram to Swami Abhedananda as Ramana Maharishi and at Shimoga to Ramanandarao as Ramadas of Kanjangad! Sai Baba has accepted gifts intended for other saints and *gurus*, for He was all of them. Baba too has surprised many people by telling them that He has been with them for years, guiding and guarding. When they protest that they are meeting Him for the first time, Baba makes it clear that He is the very *guru* that they have followed so far.

The Secretary of the Hindi *Prachar Sabha*, Bangalore, had a meaningful experience. He was in the home of a friend, when Baba arrived there, years ago. His friend and many others fell at His feet, but he had no mind to do likewise. He feared that he may be singled out as a conceited youth, refusing to revere a great person. So, he fell at Baba's feet, with a mental reservation that the prostration was not for Baba, but was for his *guru*, who was at Maddur in a Shiva temple. When he rose after the fall, Baba patted him gently on the back and said, with a smile, "Your homage has reached your *guru* at Maddur." Thus, He came to know, as many did at Shirdi, that Baba is the Divine vein of gold that runs through all spiritual masters and all Divine teachers.

The unbroken continuity of the Sais is established by the identical panacea they grant—*udi*. Then, it was given from the *dhuni* or fire place at Dwarakamayi; now, it is created in the Divine Palm, for a fire-place cannot now be carried wherever He goes, or feels like granting it. I must mention here one interesting fact about the *udi* and Shirdi Sai Baba. Sai Baba often sang a song on the *udi*, a song which has become immortal, since He sang it "*Rama the Raam! Raam! Aayoji, aayoji! Uodianoki gonia Laayoji, laayoji!*" (*O, playful Rama, come, come! Sacks of udi, bring, bring*). Who is the Rama that is called upon by Sai Baba to bring sacks of *udi*? Rama of the *Ramayana* did not distribute *udi* as a mark of His grace. *Udi* was Baba's own special gift, His unique means of alleviating man's physical and mental ills. So, it is a call into the future; for Baba at Shirdi did not stack the *udi* and carry bags of it. It is a peep into the present, when we find Baba moving between long lines of men and women with a bag or basket of *udi* packets and placing a few in the outstretched palms of hundreds and thousands, in towns and villages all over the land!

When Baba "took on" the cerebral thrombosis or as the Director of Medical Services in Mysore diagnosed it, 'tubercular meningitis' of a devotee of the Lord, we were reminded not

only of similar acts of compassion shown by Him in the past, but also of such acts done by Him while at Shirdi as Sai Baba. Sai Baba had taken on four fully developed buboes from the son of Dadasaheb Khaparde of Amraoti. Showing them to the boy's mother, Sai Baba declared, "See how I suffer for My devotees; their suffering is Mine."

When we hear Sathya Sai Baba announcing, "Vivekananda has come again; he is growing up in Ceylon; he will come to Me and join in My task," as He did one morning or, "The man, who wrote the first English biography of Vivekananda, was born last night in a thatched hut on the seashore, on the west coast at Kuttipuram. It is a charming baby, with bright big eyes," we are reminded of Sai Baba at Shirdi announcing to the people around Him the past lives of snakes and cows and goats! In His discourses, Baba has often said, "I know your past; I know your future; so, I know why you suffer and how you can escape suffering." The declarations that resound from Prasanthi Nilayam are but echoes of those heard at Dwarakamayi. Baba says, "Imagine how foolish you are! Coming to this *Kalpataru* and asking for a little coffee powder! Your behaviour is like a man coming to a huge departmental store and asking for a towel." As Sai Baba, He said, "I am sitting here, ready to give you the gold embroidered shellac cloth; then, why go and steal rags?"

Sai Baba spoke in such conundrums and parables. He told Kaka Saheb that He would send him a *vimana* (vehicle) when he died. What happened was that he died in a moving train. Sathya Sai Baba also speaks thus. He told an aged film star, who spoke to Him of his physical illness, "I know; your body is a bundle of disease; I shall overhaul you and give you a new body." What happened was, he died soon and entered a new body. That film star was blind; he pleaded that he might at least or rather utmost, get a picture of Baba in his heart. What happened can best be described by quoting a para from the book, *Sai the Superman*, by Swami Sharananand. He was writing about Sai Baba of Shirdi, but exactly the same thing happened at Prasanthi Nilayam, too! He prayed to Baba, "I have lost my eyesight. I do not feel its loss; for want of eyesight keeps me away from many undesirable things; but I am eager to see the human form in which You, My Lord, have manifested Yourself. Please therefore, grant me eyesight till I satiate myself by the sight of Your glory. You may withdraw this grant as soon as this is done." Baba at once granted this request; he saw Baba with his own eyes and then, he lost vision and became blind again.

Sai Baba evinced enthusiasm to safeguard and foster *Sanathana Dharma* and to promote scriptural studies that can alone clarify the intellect and purify the mind. We read in the *Sai Satcharita* how He rebuked a Ramadasi for retaining his short temper, in spite of his recital of

Vishnu Sahasranama for years. He rebuked Swami Vijayananda, who had ostensibly given up kith and kin, when he asked him for permission to go to Madras to see his sick mother. “Go and read the *Bhagavatam*,” He told him. As Sathya Sai Baba, He is continuing on a vaster scale this role of correcting the craving and attachments of monks and *sadhakas*. He rebukes them for celebrating or even remembering their birthdays; for decorating themselves and others with titles indicative of spiritual progress, and engaging themselves in competitive publicity to attract and retain rich followers. Sai Baba asked Haji Sidi Falke of Kalyan, “Do you read the Quoran like this?” As Sathya Sai Baba, we have seen Him regulating and modifying the speed and pitch of renowned *Vedic* reciters. Sathya Sai Baba places emphasis on the *Gayatri*, on *Omkar* as well as on the *Gita* as the most efficacious of *mantras* and texts. As Sai Baba too, He did the same. He asked people to read the *Bhagavata*, the Patanjali *Yogasutras*, the *Vicharasagara*, the *Panchadashi*, and other texts. Dadasaheb Khaparde, an expert in Vidyananya’s Commentaries, ‘uttered no word’ in Sai Baba’s presence, because as he confessed, ‘learning cannot shine before self-realisation’. This is the experience of many a scholar in the presence of Sathya Sai Baba, also. When a renowned poet and *pundit*, a popular preacher, who has toured USA, USSR, Japan, and other countries and lectured there on religion, fell at His feet and offered to spend the remaining years of his life in flying from continent to continent, spreading the happy news of His advent; Sathya Sai Baba told him, “Do not worry about My advent; worry about your own future. I wish someone would clip your wings and keep you in one fixed place, so that you can do some *sadhana* and save yourself, before it is too late.” “Concentrate on your uplift before attempting to uplift others,” was His advice to another popular exponent of the *Gita* and *Upanishads*. He has come to cure the blind, correct the proud, console the ignorant, and comfort the distressed.

The declaration made at Shirdi and by Sathya Sai Baba everywhere about the divinity and mystery of Sai are naturally identical. Sathya Sai Baba says, “My *shakti*, My power, My mystery can never be understood, whoever may try, for however long a period, by whatever means.” Sai Baba said, “I pull the wires of this puppet show.” At Shirdi, He told Vijayananda, “You were able to reach this place only as a result of the merit acquired in previous births.” At Puttaparthi, He says the same thing to all those, who come. The reaction to praise and blame, then as now, is the same. The *Satcharita* says: “Sai Baba was tolerant, emotionless, unattached, eternally free.” Baba wrote to His brother when He was but twenty, “I shall not slacken My activity; for Me, fame and name, reputation and calumny are equally trivial. I am unconcerned with the whole lot.”

Sai Baba was the embodiment of *prema*; Sathya Sai Baba names Himself as *Premaswarupa*. The *Satcharita* refers to *udivrishti* and *kripavrishti*, the shower of *udi* and shower of grace; any book on Baba, then as now, must mention these two showers, for they are the marks of the Sai Godhead. Sai addressed people as “O, *Bhau*,” “You *Anna*,” or “You *Bapu*,” in love and endearment; now, in the new Sai form, He addresses them as “*Bangaru*,” “*Nayana*,” or “*Appa*”.

Then and now, Sai has taken every opportunity to proclaim His glory, for how else can man realise His good fortune? At Shirdi, He said, “I am the indweller of all beings.” Recently, Baba wrote to a learned *pundit*, “Do not disparage the rich; do not disparage anyone. Sai dwells in everyone and so, when you disparage anyone, you are disparaging Me.” Professor G.G. Narke of the Engineering College, Poona, wrote of Sai, while He was at Shirdi, “He spoke as One seated in my heart, knowing all its thoughts and all its wishes. I tested Him at times. Each test produced the same conviction that He was all-knowing and able to mould things according to His will.” Now, in the present Sathya Sai form, Baba told a *Sarvodaya* worker, a certain Sri Mehta, who asked Him quite frankly how He could read his mind so right, “This is no *siddhi* or attainment; this is My *swabhava*, My very nature. I do not by means of a power that I have learned and armed, enter into your mind, collect all the information I require about its contents, emerge from it, and then recite it all to you, to impress you. No. I am there always and everywhere. I am your *hridayavasi*, the indweller.”

Sai Baba told Balaram Mankar, when He appeared in person before him at Mathsyendragad, while also at Shirdi, and in answer to Mankar’s question as to why He had sent him away from Shirdi to that hill, “You imagined that, with this body three cubits and a half long, composed of the five elements, I was at Shirdi! Isn’t it? I wanted to make you know My reality; that is why I sent you here, so that I may come before you and show you that I am not in that body only.” Sathya Sai Baba too has appeared as such to devotees in far off places and even beyond the seven seas, making them aware that He is not bound by the physical frame, which many mistake to be He. He says, “Learn to yearn, so that you can draw Me to you wherever you are. That is a more rewarding *sadhana* than the journeys you now undergo. Transform your heart into a Prasanthi Nilayam; then, I shall certainly come and stay there.”

The golden streak of continuity is evident in the miraculous cures they effect, in the mysterious ways by which they save devotees from accidents, by which they forewarn and rescue, in the methods by which they teach and train, in the emphasis they lay on the fundamentals of faiths. People, who have lived long at Shirdi, have noticed at Prasanthi

Nilayam the same turns and twists in conversation, the same love and mercy, even the same mannerisms of gesture. M. S. Dixit vouchsafes for one such, “Sathya Sai Baba waves His right hand, just as the Shirdi Lord used to do, one or two fingers in the air, as if He is writing in the air.” This waving of the hand, with no evident purpose or planning, is mentioned in the *Sai Satcharita* of Hemadpant in Chapter 27.

Another trait of Baba, at Shirdi and Puttaparthi, is the awarding of nicknames to people around and using them in general conversation. At Shirdi, the Lord was fakir, Panduranga was Vittal Patil; at Puttaparthi, He is the potter, the smith. Das Ganu was the ‘bridegroom,’ another person was ‘the gourmand’ or ‘the fat one’. The nickname, Hemadpant, with which he accosted Govindarao Raghunath Dabholkar, has become historic, since he accepted it as his *nom de plume*, writing at the end of each chapter, as its colophon, *Bhakta Hemadpant Virachita Sri Sai Samartha Satcharita!*

Hemadpant was a famous minister of the Yadava dynasty, who ruled from Deogir (Daulatabad); he served two of the rulers, Mahadeva and Ramadeva, in the XII century, A.D. He wrote many celebrated works in Sanskrit, like *Chaturvargachintamani* and *Rajaprashasti*, mainly concerned with sociology and political science. When he was given this nickname, Dabholkar took it as a “dart to destroy my ego, as a means to teach me *nitya nirabhimana* (permanent egolessness)”. He contrasted his own insignificant attainments with the gigantic achievements of the person, whose name was stuck on him; he prayed that Baba may write His story Himself through the pen he was privileged to hold. And, Baba blessed him, ‘So be it!’

Now too, there is a repetition. When recently I scanned my Dairy for 1958, I discovered this entry on the 29th day of November: ‘Baba accosted me, when I went to Him at 7.15 a.m. as Nannayya Bhatta!’ I had no idea then, that it was a name that was heavy with history. This was two years previous to the publication of His Life, Sathyam Shivam Sundaram, a book He wrote while I held the pen, His *Satcharita*. He had blessed me with the task as early as 1948, and I was waiting for His command to begin, even ten years later, for He was saying, “Now, if you publish a book about Me, people will not believe it; they will deem it as a fairy tale; wait till the world is made ready to receive it.”

That name He accosted me with is, as I learnt later, famous in Andhra, as the name of the *Adi Kavi*, the First Poet, one of the three, who together compiled the immortal *Andhra Mahabharatam*; Nannayya Bhatta is also said to have composed another great poem on Sri

Rama, *Raghavabhyudayam*. He lived at Rajamahendravaram on the banks of the Godavari River, in the eleventh century A.D., and he had as his patron, the Chalukya Emperor, Rajaraja. While naming, with a twinkle in the eye, illiterate me as Nannayya Bhatta, who extolled in excellent poetry the glory of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, Baba was only revealing His identity. The nickname was a dart against my egoism, the conceit of this infinitesimal ripple on the ageless, boundless ocean that He is. May I too be established in *nitya nirabhimana*, that is my daily prayer.

M. S. Dixit, to whom reference has been made, is the nephew of Kakasaheb, who was intimately attached to Sai Baba at Shirdi. He had many opportunities of receiving blessings from Baba, at Dwarakamayi. Once, Baba took *udi* and applying it to his forehead with a slap, said, "Go to the Wada, don't sit here." He was a boy in his teens then; so, he told his uncle, "I will not go to Baba; He slapped me on the forehead." But, Kakasaheb said, "You are a fool; the slap means your horrible headache will not recur." He is seventy now and the headache has not dared to pay him a visit since that slap. Dixit writes of another incident; "One day, at about 5-30 a.m., Baba sent for the barber and had a shave, after which He bathed. This was very unusual. He generally had a shave and a bath in the afternoon. That day, after the bath, He sent a man to the grocer and got a coconut, some jaggery, and a quantity of groundnuts. He broke the coconut and cut the kernel into pieces; then, He gave a piece along with a jaggery and groundnuts to all present. After this, He said, 'Bolo Gajanan Maharaj ki Jai.' We all cheered, *Jai*. I wondered why; no one knew who this Gajanan Maharaj was. Later, Baba said, 'I have lost My brother this morning.' Two days later, a letter came to Kakasaheb from Shegaon written by Buty Saheb, that his *guru* Gajanan Maharaj had left the body at 5-30 a.m., that day and that during his last moments, he had assured him, 'My brother Sai Baba will take care of you, hereafter; go to Him at Shirdi!' (Sathya Sai Baba too is immediately conscious of the birth or death or whatever happens to all; He announces to those around Him the passing away—or rather, the mergence in His feet—of persons yearning to have that happy way of release.)

Some years ago, Dixit, who was at Mangalore and reading the '*Guru Charita*' in the orthodox style, determined to finish the book in seven days, a *saptaha* as it is called. On the seventh day, he had a dream: "I entered an arched gate, which led me into a magnificent building at the end of a wide road, with dark green trees on both sides. As I was proceeding, I felt someone was following me, calling me in a soft sweet voice, 'Dixit, Dixit.' When I turned round to find out who it was, I saw a charming figure in silken robes and a thick halo

of hair that was remarkably curly. A few days later, I went to a friend, a doctor and I saw in his room, the picture of that same figure. "Who is this? Is He available?" I asked. The reply took me by storm. "He is Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba!" 'Sai Baba? Sathya Sai Baba?' - I pondered. The doctor said, "Some of my friends are going to see Him shortly. You can join them, if you care to." Dixit was overwhelmed with joy; he joined the party and arrived at Prasanthi Nilayam. He passed through the arched gate. He proceeded along the wide road with dark green trees on either side. He saw the charming figure. He heard the silver voice, when he was called in for a personal talk, in the private room.

Let Dixit relate what happened. "Baba called me in. He saw with me a small photograph of my uncle. 'I know him, he is Dixit, your father's brother, elder brother. I told him I will be coming again, eight years later. Have you any doubt?' He enquired. That question was relevant, for until then, I was bogged in doubt." Dixit is unshakeably convinced now, that this Sai Baba is the same he served at Shirdi, for he had many an experience to deepen his faith.

Baba also grants many fortunate persons such experiences, even the many who have not heard of either Baba. His plan is perhaps, to draw them to Him, so that they may become messengers of the 'Sai Era' of spiritual joy. Else, how can we explain the following remarkable experience of Srimati Sudha Mazumdar of Calcutta? She is a social worker since many years and had contributed much to the amelioration of the lot of women in the prisons of India; she was for a long time the Vice President of the All India Women's Conference. Her translation of the *Ramayana* into English has kindled the flame of devotion, in thousands of hearts all over the world. Here is her own account of the way in which, quite spontaneously, Sathya Sai Baba established Himself in her heart and instilled faith in Him as the same Sai, who was at Shirdi.

"There was a slight drizzle that morning, in October, 1964. I was in Darjeeling, high up in Jalapahar, on a bench under shelter, on the edge of the road, looking down the deep valleys. Beyond were the snowy ranges of the Kanchenjunga, covered with clouds. The beauty of the Himalayas failed to lift my spirits; I was weighed down by my troubles. As I gazed at the splendour of Nature with unseeing eyes, I noticed a figure, clad in white, climbing up to where I was. An old man, with a battered umbrella under his arm, reached the shelter and stood before me, breathing heavily. He had on a small, white cap; from his long white robe, I knew him to be a *fakir*. He hesitated, as if he was not sure whether I would like him to share my bench. I welcomed him warmly. He smiled and sat beside me, carefully leaning his umbrella against the bench. It was covered with some white material that had become

unstitched, in places from the frame; I wondered how it served its purpose!"

"He sat in silence; so did I. We both gazed at the snow covered peaks before us, for the clouds had moved off, revealing the dazzling splendour. When he had recovered his breath, I asked him where he had come from. "Oh, very far," he smiled and with outstretched hand, he pointed to the distance. "From Nepal," he added. "But, where do you stay here?" "Oh, anywhere, when the sun sets." "And food?" "People are kind, I always get something to eat and some kind of shelter at nightfall." Then, he laughed. "I enjoyed a fine meal, when the poor were fed after Nehru died." He had crossed his long legs and fumbling in the cotton bag slung over his shoulder, he brought out a piece of rag, from which he took out a pinch of tobacco. He did not partake of this, however; he sat with his eyes on the distant mountains, while he chanted melodious words in Hindi. "What is this?" I asked. Turning his eyes on me, he said they were from Kabir. He was a *Kabirpanthi*. "Yes," he continued, "both my father and mother died, when I was very young. I had no other kinsmen. Neighbours said I must marry, for someone must cook me food. But, I thought, since He has chosen to leave me without any people of my own, it must be because He wants me to leave the world. So, one night, I left home and became a wanderer. When I was sixteen years old, I became a *fakir* of the path of Kabir."

"Here, he hummed another verse. It had a haunting quality. Taking out a notebook and a pencil I had in my bag, I begged him to give me the words. With kindly eyes, he looked at me and nodded. One by one, I jotted down the terse verses. He corrected the mistakes and explained the meanings. Here they are, translated as best as I can:

1. Choosing bits of brick with care

Man erects a mansion here.

Then, he says, "This home is mine!"

But it's neither 'mine' nor 'thine';

So I heard

It is but a Nest for the Bird.

2. Thy land shall go

Thy good shall go

Thy linen fine shall go

With braided hair, the maid so fair.

The blind too shall go.

Oh, so beautifully ..

And for a while thy abode,

The wilderness shall be!

3. With what high hopes the boy was raised

How fondly fed with milk, so pure ...

And he?

Blame not the mother, nor the father

It was all destined for thee.

"The *fakir* taught me the meaning very patiently, "Homes are but nests for the Spirit encased in the body; the nest is abandoned when the allotted span is spent... All that is in this world will have to be left here, when death arrives. The body returns to the elements of which it is composed..." With compassion in his eyes, he explained the last verse, "When you do not get love or gratitude in return for all the labour and pain you had undergone, remember, that is the result of one's own *karma*; blame none."

"Very true," I murmured with misty eyes. "But how to proceed on the path?" I remember he gave good advice. That I should wake at 4 o'clock in the morning and repeat these verses and meditate on them. He was so kind and understanding. I bent low before him with folded hands, in a *namaskar* and placed a rupee beside him on the bench. He gave me his blessings in many words that I do not quite remember, picked up his umbrella, and left me with a sense of peace. Who was this *fakir*? My son said, "I go down daily to office, from this side of Jalapahar; I have never seen any *fakir*. Your habit of making friends with strangers will land you in trouble someday, be careful."

"In the Illustrated Weekly of November, 1965, there appeared articles and pictures of Sathya Sai Baba. The hair arrangement completely put me off. I never even read the article! In March, 1966 came an anonymous post card with a Bombay stamp—one of those chain letters, requesting me to send off to 20 people what was written on that card about Sai Baba and good fortune would be mine in 10 days! I was in great mental distress at the time. I found myself getting 20 post cards and typing the letters in secret and posting them off! If the

family knew, they would have teased me; for had I not refused to know anything of Sai Baba, because of his hair?"

"Late in November, two friends came to me for discussion over a seminar, to be held the next month at Bangalore. "You are lucky to be able to go; try and see Sai Baba if you can," said one friend. "Oh," I said absentmindedly "Why? Who is he?" Then, we were told of the miraculous powers of Baba and that miracles were happening in the home of a Mrs. Rao. The details sounded so incredible that I must have smiled. "You don't believe me?" she said in a hurt voice. I hastened to assure her that since this came from her, what she said must be true. She shook her head. "No. You must see for yourself. I can take you there now, it is not far."

"So, we left files and papers, called a taxi and came to the modest home of Mrs. Rao. Welcoming us, she laughed and said, "See what Baba is doing!" and took us where amongst other holy pictures, the small framed one of Baba had benediction in his eyes. Over his forehead, there appeared a fine, grey dust. This was *vibhuti* we were told and we were given a little, folded in pieces of paper. Mrs. Rao had never seen Baba except once in a dream; she secured this photograph of His and sometime later, this fragrant ash began appearing on it and it is stored for devotees. "But, this is nothing." she laughed. "You should see what is happening in the home of my *dasi*."

"She related how this woman servant became a devotee of Baba, and securing three pictures, kept them framed in her place of worship. She finishes her prayers at 4 o'clock in the morning, before she goes on her daily rounds to wash and scrub and sweep in different homes, for her livelihood. Over her pictures, as an indication of Baba's grace, there appears *vibhuti* in one, *kumkum* in another and on the third photograph, *haldi* powder! Good fortune is hers now; she has left for better wages offered elsewhere. "Is her home very far off?" I asked. "Can we not go there now?" Mrs. Rao said it was not a distant place, but in the heart of a *bustee*, where there were no street lights even and the rain that day must have made the land leading to it very muddy indeed. We assured her we would not mind anything, if she would kindly lead us there. We walked with her in the darkness through narrow lanes, lit up now and then by the flickering flame of oil lamps from adjoining homes, till we reached our destination."

"The maid's name was Madhuri. She was not at home, but her husband, a truck driver, was there with the four children. Occupying half the small room was a split bamboo structure fixed on the mud floor, on which they all slept together, keeping their belongings under it.

The other half of the room was reserved for their place of worship."

"The place was specklessly clean, the few brass vessels gleamed in the lamplight. The wall of this portion of the room was covered with coloured prints of holy pictures, including one of Shirdi Baba and at the bottom, above a steel shelf covered with a clean cloth, were the three pictures of Sathya Sai Baba, and true enough, there could be seen the *vibhuti*, *kumkum*, and *haldi* powder (turmeric powder) in profusion over Baba's forehead. A light burnt on a brass lamp and a beautiful fragrance pervaded the humble home. The place had a definite atmosphere and overcome, I uttered a prayer and left a small offering. Two days later, the maid had managed to trace me and sent a large basket of prasad - mostly homemade sweets and Baba's *vibhuti*. I was moved to the depths and vowed to myself that I must see this Sai Baba."

"How I succeeded in my endeavours, when I had given up all hopes, is another story; here, I will conclude with only the portion that is connected with my *fakir*. Leaving the car on the road, Usha and I were walking by the footpath to where Sai Baba was giving *darshan* to devotees, on His last day in Madras, in January, 1967. Lost in thought over what I had seen and heard of this most extraordinary person, I heard Usha say, "Look Aunty, isn't that a lovely house?" "Yes, it's indeed beautiful," I agreed. Then, suddenly remembering that first verse of Kabir, I sang it softly to myself. "What is it, Aunty?" asked Usha. "Oh, only a *bhajan* given by a *fakir* in Darjeeling, it's Kabir's. He was a *Kabirpanthi*." Usha stopped and faced me with puzzled eyes, "*Fakir? Kabirpanthi? Why, Aunty,*" she gasped, "that must have been Shirdi Sai Baba!" "What on earth are you saying, Usha?" Greatly excited, Usha clutched my hand and nodded, "Yes! Yes! It must be Shirdi Sai Baba. I have just been reading Arthur Osborne's '*Incredible Sai Baba*' and in this, there are incidents when He appears to people, and He was a *Kabirpanthi*." I could do nothing but smile at the extravagance of her thought. "Aunty," persisted Usha, as we continued to walk, "Ask Sai Baba, when you meet Him this morning, for He is the reincarnation of Shirdi Baba."

"I could never ask Him anything so absurd," I told her, but she continued to press the matter. Her parting words were, "You need not fear. He is never annoyed over questions."

"As I recall the past, I was amazed at the strange consequence of events that brought me before the closed door upstairs. I had in my hands a small slip, in which I begged for an interview if He did not think I was too unworthy. It was meant to be made over to the person, who opened the door. We had not knocked. The door opened and behold - it was Baba!

Playfully, He said to me smiling, "Come, do *namaskar!*" He was giving me my heart's desire. I bowed low to touch the beautiful feet of the red clad figure with benediction in His eyes."

"I had meant to ask Him questions about my own troubles, but it was He, who told me what my sorrows were and assured me all would be well. Then, remembering my niece's words, I stammered, "Baba, Usha was saying I should ask about the *fakir* I met in Darjeeling... he..." Interrupting me, He said, "That was I in another form." "I gave you three *upadesh*," He added, raising three fingers. I remember sobbing at His feet and all that came to my lips was, "Baba, will You be with me?" I felt His hand upon my head and as in a dream, heard, "Always! Always!" My face was wet with tears. My heart was full. My spirit was at peace at last. Then, He materialised, as if to comfort me, *vibhuti* and a small photograph with His *abhaya hasta* raised that had His address too, like a visiting card. "Put this in your purse," He said and gave me a handful of small packets of *vibhuti* from a brass container. "Come to Puttaparthi during *Shivaratri*. All facilities will be provided." He also told me He would come to Calcutta. He only knows when I will be blessed enough to be at Puttaparthi and favoured with another *darshan*."

"June, 1957. I was at Bombay for a meeting, but my mind was bent on a cherished wish, "I would like to go to Shirdi!" I told my friends."

"Do please make enquiries," I entreated my host, "and help me to make this visit." He returned from office, smiling broadly, one day, saying, "Why Aunty, when I mentioned your desire, I was told since you wished to go, Shirdi Baba would surely fulfil your wish!" "That is all very well to say," I replied glumly, "But how? With whom? And where do I stay in Shirdi?" My health was not too good and the more I thought about it, the more despondent I felt at the prospect of going to a strange place all by myself. But, the prediction was true. In an extraordinary manner, I was guided right from the train, in which I was going in the wrong direction, by a charming Maharashtrian lady travelling in the same compartment. With my two companions discovered at the last moment, devotees of Baba, she gave us hospitality in her home at Nasik and made all arrangements for our Shirdi visit, one morning."

"The *arati* is commencing; come at once!" The bus drive had been long and dusty; so, after a quick wash we hastened to the *Samadhi Sthan*. Where the mortal remains of Shirdi Baba had been laid to rest, a gleaming, silver sheet covered the spacious place. There were colourful flowers in abundance there, lights burnt, the air was heavy with the fragrance of incense, bells

were ringing, the crowd surged, and I pressed forward for a better view. My heart stood still as my eyes fell on the life size, white, marble image. Sitting with His right leg crossed over His knee, this figure of Shirdi Baba near His *Samadhi Sthan* strangely resembled the *fakir* I had met in Darjeeling. The same face, the same pose, only instead of the small cap, there was a scarf wound round His head. The same kind, inscrutable eyes looked penetratingly at me. I held my breath. Time passed. My mind gradually accepted an indisputable fact and ceased to worry over the whys and wherefores. With my surrender, the tears rained down easing the tension. My trembling lips murmured, “Baba! Baba!” and wordlessly, I prayed for His *kripa*. My hands held on to the tray filled with fruit and flower given to me, to make the formal offering here with the others. My tears continued to fall, I was blessed with a sense of peace—the peace that passeth all understanding filled my heart.”

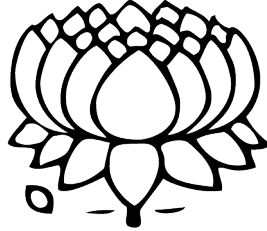
Sathya Sai Baba spontaneously and suddenly choosing Sudha mazumdar at Darjeeling, as His instrument and drawing her into the Sai family, giving her *darshan* and *upadesh*, in the form of His previous body! Fakir, Sathya Sai Baba, Sai Baba - Sudha mazumdar is indeed fortunate beyond words! Her experience is an eye-opener to those, who refuse to see.

There is an old lady at Prasanthi Nilayam, whose experience clinches the question of the *avatarhood*. Her father, a Collector in the Nizam’s dominions, took her to Shirdi in her third year and again in her seventh year; she was married at that age; torn by agony at the death of the four children that she bore, she clasped the feet of Sai Baba at Shirdi, in 1917, asking for spiritual initiation or *upadesh* and permission to stay on with Him. In Lendi Bagh, Baba told her, “Not now; I will come again in Andhra; you will meet Me then and be with Me.” She returned to the Nizam’s dominions, took to the propagation of *bhakti* by means of musical recitations on the life-stories of saints and sages, established a refugee-home for orphan girls named Sai Sadan, and, during her peregrinations to collect money for her institutions, heard that a Raju boy had announced Himself as Sai Baba! She hurried to Uravakonda, joined the throng that was proceeding to the house of Sheshamaraju that Thursday, and sat near Him on the right side.

She says that Baba spoke to her in a low voice in Hindi, as at Shirdi, “So, you have come, My child.” He asked her for a balance of sixteen rupees that she owed Him! This took her by storm. She asked Him how that debt arose. He replied, “Out of the money you had accumulated to be sent to Shirdi, for the *dasara* celebrations, you lent Balaram forty rupees; he returned only twenty four.” And He added, in a whisper, “I am asking you this, only to convince you that I am Shirdi Sai Baba... You have not touched My feet... You sat as soon as

you came in.” This lady had to wind up her institution and visit Puttaparthi frequently, thereafter. She is now at Prasanthi Nilayam, happy that what Baba told her at Shirdi has come true.

Incredible, isn't it? Well, Arthur Osborne could not get any other adjective to summarise the glory of Sai Baba; the incredibility of the wonder persists even now.





9.

Holy Joy

He says, "I know the agitations of your hearts, the aspirations, the waves, and whirlpools; but, you do not know My heart. I react to the pain you undergo, the joy that you feel. For, I am in every heart. That is the temple, where I dwell."

ANYONE writing a book about Baba has to be moved by a constant trepidation, for Baba says, "I do not need any publicity. What are you daring to publicise? What do you know about Me, let Me ask you! You speak one thing about Me today, and another tomorrow! Your faith has not been rendered unshakable. You praise Me when things go well, you blame Me when things go wrong. You flit from one refuge to another." Yes; I know precious little about the mystery that is Baba; 20 years of constant adjacency and association have failed to break the veil – through which He is comprehended but dimly. Baba says, "Be sincere; talk only about your genuine experience; do not distort, exaggerate, or falsify that experience." I can only try my best to adhere to His direction that He has given us. "If you accept Me and say, 'Yes,' I too respond, 'Yes, Yes, Yes.' If you deny Me and say, 'No,' I echo, 'No.' Come, experience, and have faith; that is the method of utilising Me." That was the reason why, though He told me in 1948 that I should write His biography, He gave me the green signal only in 1958, when I had "gone, experienced, and devoted faith," after thirty years of carping criticism of the antics of social and religious leaders!

The sneer, with which I used to write about such leaders, was motivated by my dislike of 'miracles,' due to my contact with the Ramakrishna Mission. But, Baba says, "Some people remark that Ramakrishna Paramahansa said that the *siddhis* (powers), acquired during spiritual exercise, are 'obstructions' in the path of the *sadhaka*. Of course, they are. He may be led astray by *siddhis*. He had to keep straight on, without being involved in them. His ego

will bloat, if he yields to the temptations that these powers dangle before him. This is correct advice that every aspirant must heed.”

“But, the mistake lies in equating Me with a *sadhaka* or an aspirant, equating the seeker and the Sought! All that I do is fundamental to the nature of an *avatar*. Cynics carp without knowledge. If you learn the *Shastras*, you can see things more clearly. Or, you should cultivate direct experience.” And, clarifying what He means by an *avatar* come to redeem and reveal, He says, “I know the agitations of your hearts, the aspirations, the waves and whirlpools; but, you do not know My heart. I react to the pain you undergo, the joy that you feel. For, I am in every heart. That is the temple, where I dwell.” However hard the task of writing about Him, however hesitant the pen, the landmarks have to be marked, the outlines lined as clear as He has let me see them.

On the 13th day of December, 1964, Baba visited Sri Kalahasti from Venkatagiri, as He said, “I have to keep to a programme at Sri Kalahasti,” when He passed out into the road through the gates of Rammohanrao at Manjeri, hundreds of miles away! On the 17th, He visited the Vyasa *Ashram* at Yerpedu, near Sri Kalahasti, from where the late Malayala Swami had done yeoman service in spreading the *Adwaita* doctrine and its universal message. Baba said, “The Malayala Swami made everyone who came to him and the thousands whom he met, understand the grandeur of the Real behind the unreal. He knew it by study and by *sadhana*.”

Vimalananda, the monk in charge of this seat of *sadhana* and scholarship, was for many months an inmate of Prasanthi Nilayam, before he left for Benares to join the University for Higher Studies in Sanskrit. While at Prasanthi Nilayam, he composed a garland of verses and placed it in the hands of Baba. When his *guru*, the renowned Malayala Swami, revered throughout Andhra Pradesh and many other neighbouring states, passed into immortality, Vimalananda turned to Baba for guidance; he desired that he should be initiated into monastic life by His Divine hands. But, Baba did not wean him away from his *guru*; He insisted that he should take on the new status, as indicated by Malayala Swami himself.

The atmosphere of the *ashram*; redolent with the glory of Vyasa, reminiscent of the ordeals and tribulations of the saint, who was adopted as the preceptor by thousands in Andhra Pradesh, ringing with the recitation of *Vedic* hymns, and fragrant with ardent discussions on the meaning and purpose of existence must have induced Baba to reveal some part of His mission and message. “My task is not merely to cure, to console, and to remove the misery and pain of individuals. That is but incidental. My main task is the re-establishment of

Vedanta and *Vedantic* way of life in India and the world.”

To the students of the Sanskrit school, He said, “Compete with others in the quickness with which you march on the pilgrim road to God. Grow up self-restrained and disciplined; the country needs such children, not well-read and ill-disciplined citizens, who plunge society into disorder.”

Baba had a word of appreciation to say, at Penukonda, where He inaugurated the School Day celebrations, in February 1965. The students all over the country were drawn into a movement to protest against the policy of government over the Hindi language and, on the very day the School Day was held, the agitation had reached its acme of irresponsibility all round the town. But, the students of Penukonda refused to be involved; they concentrated on the celebrations and won Baba’s grace. Baba told them, “The debt of love that you owe to your parents, who are toiling in the fields in sun and rain to keep you here in comfort, has to be repaid by intense and sincere study. All other debts come only later, even the debt to the mother country and the mother tongue. I find that you are aware of this, that you are keeping calm and collected, while all around you, the storm is blowing wild.”



February also saw the *upanayanam* of about 450 boys at Prasanthi Nilayam. “They are recruited into My army today,” said Baba. The *upanayanam* (being led to the *guru* or preceptor for spiritual training) is a great event in the life of Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya boys. It was a magnificent sight, many bright young lads on the threshold of a new life, “reborn” as it were, affirming as their ancestors did on the banks of holy rivers, the validity of *dharma* which sustains the universe. It was inspiring to see them being initiated into the most sacred of *Vedic mantras*, the *Gayatri*. It is a prayer addressed to Light that pervades the whole of creation, dispelling darkness, ignorance, and evil. A sacrament that was fast going out of fashion amidst the glittering gadgets of ‘American and English’ social life has thus, been restored by Baba to its pristine place in the training of these lads.

Shivaratri came soon after. Baba shines forth as Shiva, on that sacred day and His discourses have a distinct emphasis on *gnyana* and the need to earn it. “*Gnyanam Maheshwaraad ichchet*” (desire from Maheshwara the gift of *gnyana*), say the *Shastras*. The *rishis* fixed these days in the calendar, for dedication and initiation.

On *Shivaratri*, the miracle of miracles, the creation of *linga* in His body and its emergence, takes place. In 1955, about eighteen thousand people watched this unique and solemn process in deep silence and tension; their eyes riveted on the spare resplendent figure on the dais. The tension mounted to a climax, as a shining, smooth, transparent *Linga* emerged from His mouth, its green sheen almost dazzling the eyes - a symbol of *Brahmananda*, the universe over which Shiva keeps eternal vigil; it was a symbol of something too infinite, too stupendous for our little minds to grasp. Its green glory moved us into tears of joy and gratitude. It spoke to us of the beauty and light that reside in every thing and being; in the star-studded sky and the human heart.

For two weeks after *Shivaratri*, Baba was busy with the award of grace to the sick, the old, and the handicapped who had come, as well as to many whom He recognised as needing His immediate attention, for physical, mental, or spiritual overhaul. Thereafter, He left for Kakinada, in the Godavari Delta, where the devotees attached to His previous body that sanctified Shirdi had built a temple, which He was to inaugurate. The gathering at Kakinada was frightfully large; the streets were packed tight and the roofs spilled over with eager throngs. The organisers were alarmed, since the houses were not built to carry such heavy burdens on their roofs, but Baba assured them that nothing would happen. He just glanced round, saying, "This is enough to ensure the safety of every man, woman, and child." During His discourse, Baba said, "You need not build a temple for every new name, with which you call upon God or every new form which you feel He has assumed. You can call upon Him anywhere, at all times. The ancient temples have been saturated with the piety and prayers of generations of genuine *bhaktas*; it would be wrong to deny yourselves the capital that has thus accumulated."

From Kakinada, Baba drove to a small village named Shampara, about 20 miles away. Though more than 750 miles from Prasanthi Nilayam, this village was a lovely garden blooming with devotion for Baba. For a number of years, groups of 50, 70, or even 100 men and women had been coming on pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam and staying on for weeks to soak themselves in faith and discipline. Every house in the village, every homestead was a clean, fragrant Prasanthi Nilayam, with the *pranava* recitation, the *bhajan* sessions, the *namasmarana* as the 'duties', around which daily life revolved. No wonder it was flags and festoons all the way. The villagers arranged every year the exposition of the *Bhagavata*, a course, which lasted for months at a time and so, they saw, in the Master that was coming to them, the Lord whose flute filled the universe with sweet melody.

It was an inspiring commentary on the *Bhagavata* that we saw as we accompanied Baba to Shampara. We could see in the faces of the simple, rural folk, who raced from furrowed fields across canals and fences, towards the car of Baba, the ardour that filled the hearts of the cowherds of Brindavan. As we neared the village, the pages of the *Bhagavata* became more legible. Toddlers, boys and girls, maids and mothers, stalwart youth and the tottering aged – they beamed in unspeakable joy. They never imagined that the Lord would so readily respond to their prayers and actually come along the dusty roads and cow-dung smelling lanes, right up to the village-hall! Baba was all love and grace to those sacred souls. When He found someone racing along to catch a glimpse, He asked that the car be slowed, so that he could have the coveted *darshan*; when a group riding to the village on a bullock-cart was overtaken by the car, He halted a little, so that the occupants could alight and slake their thirst. He stopped when He saw ryots, bent with age, trudging along to the village to fill their eyes with Him, and gave them fruit, so that they could return home without trudging any further. There was an old villager, who was driving a few sheep into Shampara; Baba asked the car to slow down so that he could have *darshan*. He wanted the horn to be sounded, so that he could turn around! But, no. He was deaf to the call of Grace. Baba said, “Poor fellow, next time, next time,” and the car gathered speed.

The village was drunk with holy joy. Baba told the gathering, “You have been yearning for My coming among you for six long years; therefore have I come now, to cool your hearts and give you joy.” He warned them against the temptation of the noise and glare of towns and cities. “There man has become quarrelsome, greedy, and cruel. The towns standardise the speech, the habits, and the attitudes of man into a vulgar pattern. There man is an animal, which is petted and humoured to turn wild. The divinity of man is ignored in the rush and worry, in the struggle for possessions and pomp. Learn to be content and happy where you are. Do not run towards towns, hoping to have happiness and contentment there. They are inner riches, not outer acquisitions.”

Baba has given this advice to every village He has gone into. At Sathyavada, which He visited later during this tour, He said, “Humility and reverence are fast disappearing in the towns; uppishness and irreverence are rampant. The fear of sin has faded; the city-dweller has no faith left in God or his brother. But, these virtues - humility, reverence, dread of sin, faith in the victory of truth and the efficacy of virtue, in the existence of an ever-present witness - these are still alive in the villages.”

From Kakinada, Baba proceeded to Pithapuram, where a huge gathering had collected amidst

the ruins of a historic fort. “These bastions and turrets were once the symbols of power and pride; now they are grim reminders of the frailty and fickleness of fortune,” Baba said. “These pathetic walls teach you that Time is the greatest conqueror,” He told the people.

Yelamanchilli, a village on the borders of the Visakhapatnam district was the next place, which received Baba’s grace. Fifty thousand persons had gathered there to see and listen, and carry home the precious acquisition. “I do not accept from you flowers that fade, fruit that rots, coins that have no currency beyond the boundary; give Me the lotus that blooms in your inner *Manasa-sarovar*, in the pure, pellucid waters of your inner consciousness; give Me the fruit of your holiness and steady discipline,” He asked.

Then, Baba entered the delta of the Godavari River, the Kona Seema as it is called, the region, which Baba says, is, “the home of traditional scholarship in the *Vedas* and *Shastras*, the nursery of learned and versatile *pundits* in all branches of the ancient learning.”

Naturally, His discourses at Amalapuram, the centre of the deltaic area, were addressed to the repositories of ancient culture and the guardians of *Vedic* learning.

About three hundred thousand people filled the town of Amalapuram, when Baba was there; by car and boat, by bus and cart, on cycles and on foot, they trekked to have His *darshan* and to listen to the message of strength and joy. Baba gave *darshan*, whenever the gathering on the roads before His residence grew too large; He addressed the gathering for ten to fifteen minutes, every hour or so, in order to reduce the pressure on the meagre resources of the town to cater to non-residents! In spite of this, the evening meetings were huge, mammoth affairs. Baba said, “You have come in hundreds of thousands from all the villages and towns, from miles around, spending time and money and undergoing great exertion. Take back this lesson from here, retain at least this much out of the hours of listening that you do: Attachment causes grief and detachment gives joy.”

He said that the *pundits* have the key to open the treasure of detachment. “Fortunately, there are some *pundits*, in this region, who preserve faith in that key and who are serene in the face of loss or gain, fame or calumny. They are not news and so, you will find no reference to them in the papers. No one worries about them; they do not worry anyone. People know more about film-stars now, than about the sages and saints in their midst.”

Baba is moved by the love that streams out towards Him from the lakhs of beaming faces, that are filled with indescribable joy when He grants *darshan*. He often says, “I do not like to interrupt this transfer of *ananda*, from you to Me and Me to you, by starting a discourse. It

seems as if this is ample recompense for all the trouble and yearning.” At Amalapuram, He told the people, “I can understand the depth of your love; you have denied yourself food, sleep, and rest, struggling for a place to squat, a cup of water to drink, a patch in the shade. You have moved *en masse* from your villages, like ants from ant-hills, issuing out for sunshine, for sugar. You have the hunger for God, the thirst for spiritual light.”

From Amalapuram, Baba proceeded to Rajahmundry; near where the genius of Sir Henry Cotton devised an anicut across the Godavari River, to curb the raging flood and fertilise the vast deltaic region. This was about a century ago; the inhabitants of the delta are so grateful to Sir Henry for his engineering skill and foresight, that they revere the anicut site as a holy place, where a bath in the sacred spot is felt as sacrosanct as at a site sanctified by a *Vedic* saint! Rajahmundry or Rajamahendravaram, as it is known to the natives, is a place full of historic memories, cultural relics, and religious festivals. Baba reached the town in time for the valedictory offering of a three day *yagnya* performed by devotees in the temple of Vishweshwara, the Lord of the Universe. Baba causally moved round the corridors of the temple; He peeped into the shrine of the consort, the Shakti, personified grace. Annapoorna, the granter of *anna* or sustenance to the universe. He saw the stone idol and said “O, She feeds the entire community of living beings, but She herself is poor, She has no nose-ring!” With these words, He waved His hand and, lo, a big, bright, diamond nose-ring had formed itself in that Hand; it was clipped on the nose!

He gave the performers of the *yagnya* confidence and courage by showing them that good deeds, done in a dedicatory spirit, always yielded fruit. The final offering of sacred objects in the sacrificial fire was accompanied by a downpour of unexpected rain! “The rain that fell this morning and surprised everyone did not surprise Me, for it is the inevitable consequence of the *yaga*. It is a special science, which these *pundits* know. You laugh at a sculptor chipping flakes off a piece of rock! You call it waste of precious stone and precious time, for you do not know that when he finishes chipping, a beautiful statue will emerge. You suffer from short sight and from ignorance.”

Baba gives the *amrita* He creates to everyone present; differences in economic status, scholarly attainments, or caste affiliations disappear before the light of His grace. All are His children. In His discourses, He gives the *amrita* of *upanishadic* teachings to all who have ears to listen, in sweet, simple, story style. “Some of you may ask, why tell such great truths to these vast gatherings, truths that have to be whispered in the ears of ardent seekers only? How do you know there are not many such here? I know there are many. They will treasure

the truth, ruminates over it, and use it when the need is acute. They will then say, 'Ah, Baba told us this at Rajahmundry,' and derive strength therefrom. Nothing that is experienced will go to waste. It will shape the course of events. It will change attitudes and habits, it will clarify and purify situations."

There was a father and son, who listened. The son was an ardent seeker; he saw, he heard, he imbibed. When he returned home, he had no thought other than of God; he dedicated all his conscious moments to God. The father too was proud of the son. He was happy that his son had been confirmed in the Godly path. He too was so firmly established in *sadhana* that, when his son died a few months later in perfect bliss, with the name and form of Baba on his tongue and his eye, the father wrote to Baba, "My son had a happy end; he had no other aspiration than to merge in God. I am glad this son of mine had such a life and such an enviable end." The word had clarified and purified two listeners at Rajahmundry. Who knows but He, which field is ready for the seed!

Baba told the vast gathering at Rajahmundry that the leaders of the country had to plan not only for prosperity, but also for counteracting the calamity of prosperity. In the West, where nations have the highest standard of living and the means of material comfort are within the reach of all, anxiety and moral anarchy are affecting the social fabric. The individual is torn by frustration and fear; insanity and suicide are increasing; flippancy, misdemeanour, and irreverence are rampant. "Man is deluded into believing that he is bent by blasts of grief and joy. But, he is immortal by nature; beyond the atmosphere of agony and joy, of the twin pulls of likes and dislikes."

At the Hindu Samaj, Rajahmundry, Baba presided over a gathering called together to honour three renowned *pundits*, who were members of the central committee of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha. "Become aware of your illness; then, long for the cure; see the physician; take in the medicine; follow the regimen he prescribes. That is the only way to be healthy again. These *pundits* and men like them have a knowledge of the cure that will make you free," He said.

Baba visited Kadali and Razole village in the Delta and then, proceeded to the village of Sathyavada, to which the yearning of rural hearts drew Him. The village houses have thick and high mud walls around them and so, Baba could not grant *darshan* to the thousands, who filled the narrow serpentine lanes. Sensing the anguish of the crowds outside the wall, Baba had a ladder brought, a narrow bamboo contraption with eight horizontal rods as steps; He

climbed it, to reach the precarious foot-hold on the crest of the wall. He stood there, silhouetted against the sky, in the hot sun, to confer the coveted *darshan* to the people. I have seen Him ascend the parapet walls of storeyed bungalows and the top of His own car, in order to afford *darshan* to the milling crowds and to calm their ardour. In Bombay, He has walked along the parapet of the Gwalior Palace; in Kurnool, He has stood on the narrow slab on the top of an arch; in Budili, He has stood on a chair placed on a bullock-cart; in Trivandrum, He stood on the roof of a Fiat car in the hot sun, so that more people could see Him and be satisfied. But, this quick climb along the bamboo-ladder placed against the mud wall, this stately stand on the mud wall shine in my memory as a golden reminder of His grace!

And the discourse that the sea of faces drew forth from Baba, O! it was a stream of nectar. “You wake with the cock-crow, you sleep when the birds fold their wings. You toil in the sun, soak in the rain, trudge in the slush, handle dung and dirt—to provide food and raiment to your kith and kin and even for those, who scorn you and slight you, who profit by your ignorance of the fashions of the world. But, is this all? Does this complete the whole duty of man?

Is this the aim of all aeons of struggle that won for you this human frame? Do not let the fertile field lie fallow, infested with thorns and weeds. Plough the heart with virtuous deeds. Irrigate it with the stream of *prema*, sow the seeds of the name of the Lord, pull out the weeds of greed, watch the crop grow, enclose it with the fence of discipline, and be happy when the flower of *dhyana* blooms, and the grain of *ananda* is harvested.”

From Sathyavada, Baba drove to Repalle, where at the temple, He consecrated the marble idol of His previous body. The vast masses of pilgrims in His presence were calmed to perfect silence at His very *darshan*. It is a phenomenon that has to be seen to be believed. And, Baba too spoke on 'Silence'. “The crocodile is happy and unharmed, it is undefeatable, in the depths of the lake or river. Once it sprawls on land, it becomes the target of death, the plaything of man. The depths! They are your refuge, the source of your strength. Do not stray into the shallows or the sands. In the depths, you have the Silence, where you can converse with God.”

Soon after Baba returned to Prasanthi Nilayam, Baba was at Bombay. It was on the sixth day of June that He reached that City – His second visit. “O! Really, He was in Bombay! I have no words to describe the occasion,” writes Hon’ble Sri P.K. Savant, Home Minister of the Government of Maharashtra and for many years, Chairman, Shirdi Sai Baba *Samsthan*. A

magnificently organised meeting was held in the Shanmukhananda Hall in Matunga, the next day. “It was a sight for gods,” writes Sri Savant. “It was the proudest day in my life,” he says. On the same day, Baba inaugurated the Maharashtra Branch of the *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha*. Baba said that the present crisis in human history can be averted by propagating the eternal values, for which this country has stood for generations. Next day, a meeting of the committee of the *Mahasabha* was held, when one of the members read a poem of his, named *Navaratnamala*, the garland of Nine Gems; Baba talked on gems, false and genuine, and among the gems, on the diamond. He said that when the mind dies and all agitations are stilled, one becomes a better gem called ‘Diemind’! That evening, Baba addressed another mammoth gathering at the Andhra Maha Sabha, where he laid emphasis on the fundamentals of integrated life. Baba met the heads of many religious sects and faiths, and discussed with them ways and means of deepening the springs of faith.

Baba returned to Bangalore by car, with a few hours halt at Pandharpur, the holy place consecrated by Panduranga. He Himself had taught comrades of His childhood days the *Pandhari Bhajan* songs on the Panduranga manifestation of the Lord, on Rukmabai, his consort, on the Chandrabhaga river that was sanctified by association with the place, on the arduous journey on foot that the pilgrim had to put up with for days, at the first glimpse of the temple steeple, the thrill one experienced when he crossed the sacred threshold—all written by Him. Many of these He sings even today, when His devotees pray; many have become regular features in the repertoire of *Bhajan* parties in surroundings villages. Baba entered the temple and took His devotees around—an act of grace that He has done so often in the past, as human manifestation of Panduranga! He placed a wedding jewel of gold—a *mangalasutra* created on the spot in His palm, around the neck of Rukmabai.

For those, who have the unique good fortune of travelling with Baba in His car, it is sweetness, sweetness all the way, all the time! They can witness the flow of *prema* in every act and word of His. A cowherd tending cattle on the hills will be called near and given fruits; a blind beggar will get a fiver, with a warning not to mislay it or mistake it as just paper. A woman on the way to the weekly market, tottering under the weight of the load on her head, will receive a token of His grace. Baba is never too busy to leave the little ones of the earth unnoticed.

For those in His car, the journey is sweeter still. Baba sings Marathi, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and English songs. He prods and teases with questions, in order to teach and remove lurking doubts. We see in Him the very embodiment of *ananda*, fresh as a flower whatever the hour,

the very intimate friend, the very erudite scholar, the very picture of charm. Quite suddenly, His grace may take the form of a miracle! Once while returning from Hyderabad, the car was stopped near the bridge over the river Krishna, because some of us prayed that He should give us sweets from out of His hand, created especially for us. He had the car stopped; He asked us to pick a stone and give it into His hands; we did not know why? A piece of road metal from a nearby heap, piled for repairing that bit of road, was given. He said, "Bring a flat piece of stone. How can you break this one into pieces with your fingers?" He asked throwing that into the distance. We wondered why He should be concerned with breaking a stone into pieces! A flat, thin piece of stone was, however, brought and given. He held it in His hand and gave it back; it became a flat thin piece of sugar candy! We could easily break it into pieces with our fingers and eat it.

Navaratri or *Dasara* is the festival for the worship of the Primal Urge that disturbed the beginningless equilibrium and caused all this Divine delusion called Creation. The *Jagat* or universe is a vast agitation, trying to regain the equanimity that was then lost. Once that equanimity is attained, the ideas of past, present, and future, of manifoldness, of gain and loss, of pleasant and unpleasant will disappear. The three qualities of *satwa*, *rajas*, and *tamas* (the calm, the active, and the dull) affect the consciousness and so, we have the three forms, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, and Mahasaraswati, which are worshipped for three days each during this festival. With their grace, we can gain equanimity.

Baba introduced the festival of 1965 with the words, "*Dasara* celebrates the victory of the forces of righteousness over the forces of evil. They were able to win, because *Parashakti*, the dynamic aspect of divinity, the power that has elaborated God into all this manifoldness, all this variety and all this beauty, came to their succour and lent Her strength!" Then, referring to the invasion of India by Pakistan, which had just concluded in a cease-fire arranged by the U.N.O., He said, "This country had to meet unrighteous forces and *Parashakti* has saved it from dishonour and defeat." Baba spoke of the agitation that affected many, on account of the war on the borders and the fear that *Dasara* might be cancelled by Baba, as was done at Mysore and elsewhere. "In spite of obstacles," Baba said, referring to the last minute somersaults of national representatives at the UN headquarters and the precarious chances that peace had until the very last minute, "the fighting has stopped. Peace is restored." And Baba added, "This is another instance of the grace, which Prasanthi Nilayam showers. This is the way *mahima* works!" It was the will of the Lord that tilted the balance in time!

On the first day of *Dasara*, the Sathya Sai Hospital celebrates its Annual Day and Baba discourses on the physical and mental bases of health. These deal with the psychosomatic and even deeper causes of illness and are valuable lessons for medical practitioners. In 1965, for example, He spoke of ill health being a social product, for the sick and the suffering are limbs of the self-same corporate body. He advised against the ascetic view of the body. "Disgust is not desirable towards anything in creation. Everything is God's handiwork, an example of His glory, a glimpse of His majesty." He recommended proper attention to the body, as an instrument for securing liberation; He is against coddling and over-fondling. "When you believe that you are the body, the body will demand from you more food, more variety in food, more attention to outward appearance, more care for comfort. A large portion of the food now consumed is superfluous and positively harmful. Man can live happily on much less, and more healthily." Baba advised against the modern instruments of popular education, which infect people with discontent, despair, and distress. "People are getting anxious and afraid of things they do not understand. They can neither avoid them, nor correct them! The radio, the newspaper, the cinema—all scare people into panic about health, the standards of living, social security, and national safety. Every hour of listening or reading is an extra dose of anxiety." Pleasure has become the universal port of destination and so, there is a great deal of frustration and repression. People live and die, without recognising the loss; society is frightened at its own shadow, its hidden discontent, and its suppressed turmoil. Fear is the biggest cause of illness. So, Baba tries to restore faith, so that fear may fade. "Transfer your faith from pills to Providence; put your trust in Madhava, not in medicines; resort to prayers, *sadhana*, *japa*, *dhyana* and not injections. They are the vitamins you need. No tablet is as efficacious as *Ramanama*. Accept the *ananda* way, the *sadhana* way, to peace and happiness and health." That is the call of the Voice Divine.

The Bombay Sathya Sai Seva Samiti brought to Prasanthi Nilayam a pictorial exhibition they had prepared, with the help of artists of high repute, depicting the teachings of Baba; this was inaugurated by thousands. It was liked so much that the van, which carried it, had to tour for three months all over peninsular India and even beyond, to bring inspiration and instruction to about three lakhs of people.

Baba took under the wings of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha - an institution that was rendering yeoman service to feed the roots of devotion among the people - the Sanathana Bhagavata Bhakta Samaj - consisting of scholars, musicians, poets, expounders of scriptures, reciters of epics, storytellers, minstrels, all of a high order of skill and efficiency. They go in

groups, for three or four days at a stretch, to a place; through songs and music and speeches, they stir the place into a new awareness of their spiritual heritage. No one, who takes in vitamin G (God), can escape His grace.

Every *Dasara* now, Baba arranges a *Saptaha Yagnya*, which respects the *Vedic* injunctions and the *Vedic* spirit of the universality of the Godhead - sun worship, image worship, fire consecration, the contemplation of the formless, and the recitation of the glories of the various manifestations of God, with name and form, are carried on in full view of the thousands of devoted aspirants. At the crucial moment of the Final Offering of all the ceremonially sacred articles in the rising flames, the Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Dr. Pattom Thanu Pillai was present. Later, he opened the *Shanti Vedika* (an eight pillared *Mandap* in classical style with frescoes of the *Gitopadesh* scene and of a scene from the *Ramayana*, and of the *Shivalinga* and the *Pranava*), from where Baba discourses to the vast sea of heads on special occasions.

The Governor presided over another function, where Baba requested him to honour four outstanding scholars of Andhra Pradesh, members of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, with golden bracelets worn on the arm as mark of undisputed superiority in *Shastraic* learning. His Excellency said, "To be honoured at this centre of spirituality, which influences all the states of India and even countries in other continents, is a great inspiration!" The next day was the Poets' Day, when poems in Sanskrit, Telugu, Urdu, Tamil, Kannada, and English were read before Him. Of course, Baba had every valuable advice to give them. "The poet is able to discover more than the mere thinker. He recognises and knows the next step and the next. In fact, he is aware of the goal. The *Kavi* or poet is Divine, in the estimation of India. So, he has tremendous responsibility. He is '*anushasitara*' - he, who lays down the law and the norms. He should not trail behind the whims of the mob in search of cheap fame or counterfeit prosperity. He must fertilise and canalise the Divine urge in man. Poems that deal with the basic problems of life and death, of freedom and destiny, of truth and delusion, of virtue and temptation, of ascent and descent, of aspiration and achievement - these will last for ages, provided something deep in man, deeper than the senses, or reason, or passion, is the inspiration, the source of illumination. Man's struggle to discover the Creator in creation will arouse genuine enthusiasm." Baba spoke against flimsy, foppish poetry, fiery, fuming verses, meaningless lilt and jumbles, "Do not infect others with your superstitions and perplexities." Thus, *Dasara* was rendered into a seminar on spiritual study, in an institute of spiritual rehabilitation.

Soon after, Baba went to Hindupur, a town about 40 miles away, which He had visited last only as a young boy, with His *Pandhari Bhajan* group of comrades. He said that people, who did not approach fire, would never know its warmth. He playfully blamed the citizens for being content so long, with the light emanating from the fire. Baba hoisted the National Flag in the Municipal High School Stadium at 8 a.m., for it was the Diamond Jubilee of the school. He was then taken in procession through the streets of the town, in an open jeep. While devotees felt that He was in the scorching sun far too long, Baba expressed His joy that the jeep wended its way through all the roads and bye-lanes of the town, “How else could the sick, the weak, the lame, the old get My *darshan*?” He asked. He found time during the hot hours of the day, to address the Rotary Club of Hindupur, the Club, which thus won the honour of being the first recipient of that grace. Baba’s address was an eye opener to many a social worker and enthusiast for international understanding. “Living in this ancient land suffused with a culture based on detachment and sacrifice, where everyone is revered as reflections of oneself, who is himself a reflection of the Ultimate Absolute, Rotarians will find that their ideals are native to the people here. The query, 'Who belongs to whom? Am I my brother’s keeper?' is alien to Indian thought. Here, each is all and all is One, namely He, or IT, or THAT. This has been the daily diet of India since the beginning of time,” Baba told them.

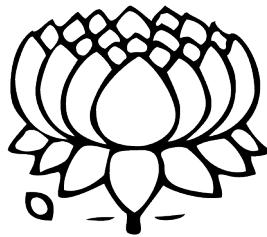
He spoke also to the students of the college, asking them to learn the principles of *Sanathana Dharma*, “Whether you have it in the curriculum or not, practise at least the first steps in *sadhana*, silence, meditation, sweet and soft speech, control of the senses, recitation of the name of God, reading of the scriptures, and social service. Avoid wasteful, debilitating recreation; maintain your health intact by sane habits; become worthy sons and daughters of the motherland.” Baba considers that the system of education, now being worked out in the schools, is harmful to the best interest of the children and the community. “More information is forced in; less inspiration to seek it is imparted! Skills are added; virtues are subtracted! Respect for the sacred texts, sages, and holy places have diminished and as a consequence, respect for the land that produced them has also declined.”

The birthday of Baba was an occasion for the offering of grateful homage, by tens of thousands and the gift of grace by Baba to each one of them. “Do not try to get grace by offering Me flowers that fade, fruits that rot, leaves that dry, and water that evaporates. Give something Divine, if you want the Divine. *Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema* - these are Divine,” He reiterated. Baba conferred the joy of anointing Him on that sacred day, on a few

old couples chosen from Mysore, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Madras. Among them, there was a couple where the husband was blind, and another where the wife was blind. The ecstasy of the blind can well be left to imagination.

Referring to the eclipse of the sun, which happened that day, Baba said, “Many people wrote to inquire whether the festival is postponed on account of this.” But, Baba said, “Do not worry when the shadow of some foul passion, some dark desire, some evil greed, some monstrous thought casts its ominous gloom on your mind! That is the inauspicious eclipse you have to avoid.”

Baba does not appreciate the celebration of what is called His birthday; He is anxious that we should celebrate rather the day He is born in each of us, or to put it more clearly, the day when we recognise that He is the inner core of each of us. So, the Birthday celebrations are used by Him only to reveal the unknowable depth of His mystery to those, who preen themselves on having plumbed it!



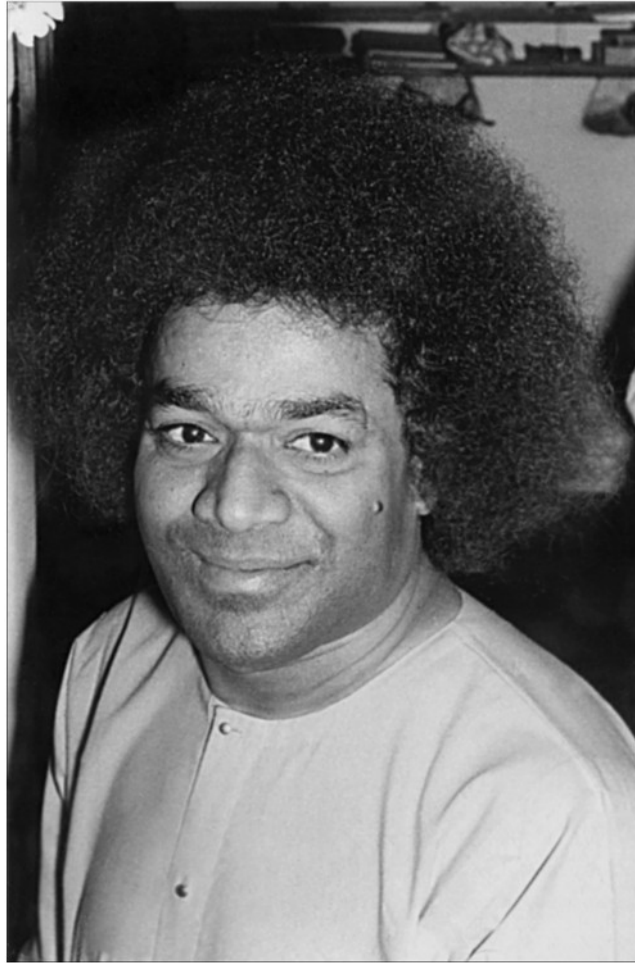


10.

Gifts Of Grace

Baba grants Grace, but never allows it to foster the ego in man. The vibhuti stops or some other harsh reminder is given, when the ego raises its ugly head. Hysteria - Baba calls it, when a person gets intoxicated with pride or envy, as a result of this shower. One has to be constantly aware of one's weakness and one has to be praying every moment for the faith necessary to receive the grace. Or else, one has no right to claim kinship with the Sai Family.

AT SHIRDI, Baba gave the Divine panacea, the ash contacted by His Divine hand, from the *dhuni* or fire that was always lit and active in the *masjid* room, where He spent His days. Now, the *dhuni* is in His own hand, ever ready to yield the precious gift; He has only to will and wave. Nor is it essential that the ash, or *vibhuti* as it is called in Sanskrit, should be so created. Baba wills, but does not wave His hand. Yet, the *vibhuti* flows as a stream of grace, where He wills, when He wills. This is the greatest of contemporary miracles, this overflowing shower of Divine *vibhuti* grace!



The showers come, silent and unannounced, like dew before the dawn on blossoms in the fields. An anxious parent inquired whether the appearance of ash clusters, on the picture of Baba that he was worshipping, boded ill, for he had met Baba a few weeks previously about a missing son, and the ash for him was a reminder of cremation and death. Baba directed me to write to the correspondent that *vibhuti*, on and from His picture and the pictures of other forms of God, can never be so interpreted; it is a sign of grace. This happened in a village in the Tanjore district.

At Paramathi, in Salem district, a person, who had not visited Prasanthi Nilayam and who had not met Baba in person, had a picture of Baba in his shrine. He writes, "Since the 2nd of last month, ash as well as *amrit* are falling in showers from Baba's picture! I am collecting them and giving them to the people, who come. But, I have extra stock with me, which is daily accumulating. Advise me what I should do with these? Can I put them into the holy Kaveri River that is near my place?" Another correspondent from Cochin wrote about the same time, to the Editor of the *Sanathana Sarathi*, "A few days back, I found that an oily fluid was flowing from one side of the glass of the framed picture of *Bhagawan*. There are red dots of

kumkum and white dots of *vibhuti* that have appeared on the glass. As I am not quite sure what the above things relate to, I have not given any publicity to this. I shall be highly grateful, if you can kindly enlighten me.” What could I do, except congratulating him on the unique proof he had before his eyes of the majestic glory of Baba?

Or, I shall quote from a letter about a happening in Calcutta. “I am a devotee of Baba for several years; but, my brother’s sons at Calcutta have not seen Baba. So, they are naturally upset, when *vibhuti* appears and can be collected not only from Baba’s picture, but from all the other ten pictures of Hindu Gods! *Vibhuti* is also originating from the photograph of my brother, who died some 8 years ago. Of course, he was a very pious and simple man, with a large heart. On the *Ashtami* day, when our family deity at Vaikom is taken out in the annual procession, the *vibhuti* that showered from Baba’s picture was the same, in texture, colour, taste, and density, as the ash given at Vaikom as *prasadam*. Please find out the significance of all this and let me know what I should do?”

K. Rajarama Rao from Konaje, near Vittal, in South Kanara district, Mysore, was afflicted with doubt. He wrote to the Editor, “My youngest sister noticed the *vibhuti* at about 9.30 a.m. Immediately, a piece of paper was kept beneath the photo and the showers were collected on it. Please write to me, how we should use the *vibhuti* that has fallen and is falling.” The Chief Chemist of an explosives factory, at Poona, did not waste time in asking questions and waiting for answers. He was too full of chemistry for that. He examined the frame, the glass, the cardboard placed behind, and wiped and turned it upside down; but, he could not discover wherefrom and wherefore the ash emanated! He came to Baba at Prasanthi Nilayam. Baba called him in and after the interview, when he left, He said, “I am giving you *udi* at home, at Poona, not here. Go.” That was the confirmation, the benediction, the revelation!

A Circle Inspector of Police (Retd) quite accidentally came by two photograph portraits of Baba, on 26-11-1965; he had them framed and kept in his shrine. He and his wife were inspired to hurry up to Prasanthi Nilayam, which they reached on the 28th; they were called in and blessed by Baba on the 29th itself. When they left, Baba patted him on the shoulder and said, “I shall come there.” How? When? He could not ask. Baba demonstrated to him His arrival and presence, by showering *vibhuti* from His portraits. That was fulfilment enough. And, to demonstrate that He was all the manifestations of God known and unknown, it fell in continuous showers from the portraits of all the manifestations, Krishna, Rama, Shiva, Muruga, Krishna (as installed at Guruvayoor), and Christ. Perhaps, Baba had a special reason for willing that the picture of Jesus shower the amazing new sign of grace. For, on the 24th

day of February, a Christian, who had gone far astray, was brought to this house of wonder. He heard the *Bhajan* from the veranda, he peeped in through the window. He saw the picture of Christ. He trembled before a vision of Sathya Sai Baba in awe and penitence (as he related later) and he burst into a declaration, "I will correct myself; I shall not drink anymore." He has been saved and accepted as a child by Baba, in His abundant love.

That picture of the shrine at Guruvayoor, too, has a special importance. At Guruvayoor, there are big, brass lamps fed on oil placed in the shrine; every picture of the shrine has two of these depicted, on either side of the idol. The shrine has been immortalised by the great poet-saint Narayana Bhattathiripad, who cured himself of chronic rheumatism by worshipping the idol through his inimitable rendering of the glory of Krishna, the *Narayaneeyam*. Therefore, the oil from the lamps inside the shrine is held as a specific for rheumatism, by people from all parts of the land; they take it reverentially and use it with enormous faith. Baba is the form that is in the innermost shrine of all temples; so, He willed that oil be given from the lamps in the pictures of that shrine! This resulted in drops of oil falling from the edges of the painted lamps in the printed picture of the Lord of Guruvayoor, in the shrine room of the Circle Inspector of Police! It was collected and used for the same curative purpose; it was seen and examined by priests associated long with that temple; they declared that the oil was indisputably genuine, identical with that available at the original shrine!

And, not in the homes of individual *bhaktas* only, Baba wills that His grace be showered in this form in prayer halls too. A. Nataraja Pillai of Muvattupuzha in Kerala writes, "*Vibhuti* and *kumkum* are to be seen on the picture of all the Gods placed in the *Bhajan* Hall. To our extreme joy, it is very interesting to note that butter has emanated and is found in heaps, in the palm of baby Krishna, pictured on a calendar hung on the wall." The picture depicts Yashoda, the mother, threatening her Divine child with a stick, for stealing butter.

Baba characterises the miracle of creating *vibhuti* in the palm of the hand as 'My visiting card'. He has visiting cards of various types and size, revealing more and more facets of His personality. They serve to announce the arrival of the *avatar*, the glad tidings of the advent of the saviour of civilisation from being degraded into a death-trap for humanity. The showers of auspicious articles from the portraits of Baba and His manifold forms are only streamers, banners, headlines that serve to announce the same comforting news. No consecrated image has so far given such patent proof that it is saturated with divinity, such daily dramatic evidence that one universal will does correct the multifarious forces in the world.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, after awarding Arjuna a vision of Himself as that Universal Will, that is motivating all creation, Krishna says, “Arjuna! This is but a fraction of My *vibhuti*. My *vibhuti* is endless!” “*Vibhuti* means power, might, splendour, glory, majesty.” In the case of Baba, the *vibhuti* that Baba gives, either Himself directly, or through His portraits indirectly, or through the portraits of His other forms that are revered by man, is endless in its *vibhuti* (splendour).

P.V. Natarajan from Kugalur wrote to the Editor, “*Vibhuti* is showered from the raised palm of Baba in the picture; this assures me that He is ever with me and that I need never be afraid.” In the village of Samphagaon, Dharmawar District, *vibhuti* is falling from Baba’s photograph in the houses of many devotees.

Sri S.B. Kadakola wrote, “Seeing all this excitement, Dandayyaswami Rachayyaswami Salamath spoke challengingly, 'This must be false and faked. How can *bhasma* or *vibhuti* fall like this of its own accord? I too have a photo of Baba in my shrine room. Why does this *vibhuti* not fall from that?' And, the same day, *vibhuti* was found all over that photo, sticking to it and showering from it. This continued for 3 days. A friend of Salamath came to his house during that period and said, 'How can *vibhuti* be produced on this glass? The whole village is being misled by some types of mischief.' He wiped the glass clean with a wet towel and squatted before it, declaring, 'Now, let me see what you call the *mahima* (glory) of this Baba of yours. Let the shower of *vibhuti* fall.' Within 25 minutes, the shower reappeared; the quantity sticking to the glass was double the previous quantity! The critic fell prostrate before the picture.”

A mechanic in a sugar factory found that because the *vibhuti* that showered from about four or five pictures of Baba in his house was extraordinarily sweet, ants swarmed to eat it. He hastened to Baba to pray that the sweetness might be taken away; but, Baba assured him that the ants will be kept away... and, from the next day, the ants stayed away. There are some houses, where the pictures shower *vibhuti* on Thursdays only, some, where more is showered on festival days when there are more to share it, some, where the *vibhuti* that is granted from each picture is different in taste and texture from that granted from the rest. If it is rather dark grey and grainy, they call it Shirdi *vibhuti*; if it is soft and fragrant, they call it Parthi *vibhuti* and so on. So too, the *kumkum* can be of varied hues, the *amrit* of different consistencies, taste, and fragrance. A Saurashtra devotee wrote that the liquid, that the portrait (or rather, Baba in the portrait) granted on the last day of *Shravan*, when they finished their month long vow of abstinence from salt, was salt-water (strange, indeed, are His ways), with which they

could resume their pre-vow life.

Thus shines this saga of the sovereignty of Baba over time and space, over matter and spirit.

“At Ankola, from the photograph of Bhagawan Sathya Sai Baba in our house, *vibhuti*, *kumkum*, and *haldi* powder (turmeric powder, considered as auspicious) have been showering since two months,” writes an advocate. At Rajkot, on *Vaikuntha Ekdasi* day, *vibhuti* appeared. At Jamnagar, on *Mahashivaratri*, “to our great surprise, we saw ‘Om’ and ‘Sri’ written on the glasses of four big portraits hung in the hall. It was written in some oil liquid, which we could smell as *amrit*.” A doctor from Palghat writes, “I prescribe the *vibhuti* of Baba more than drugs: Baba is giving me a regular supply from the pictures in my house.” Dr. Bailur in Santa Cruz is also in that happy situation. Advocate Saxena of Rampur gets *vibhuti* like this; many devotees in Kharagpur, Jamshedpur, Calcutta, Trivandrum, Madras, Trichinopally, and other towns and villages between the Himalayas and the Cape are granted these auspicious signs of grace, in this amazingly convincing manner, by Baba.

When I prayed to Baba for permission to publish some of these incidents, illustrating His majesty and glory, He remarked that it may be misinterpreted easily as ‘propaganda’! But, the miracle is so widespread, so obvious, so easily liable to be examined and confirmed that the misinterpretations will be quickly acknowledged by the critics as due to ignorance. At Salem, *vibhuti* is falling from the pictures, in the house of the Professor of Physics of the local college! When he shows the pictures to visitors, he cannot be accused of propaganda. I myself have sat on the floor of the house of Vimalananda in Shimoga, watching the piling up of *vibhuti*, grain by grain, second by second, dropping from the picture frame’s edge. I have seen at Mangalore, *vibhuti* grains dropping from the right foot of Shirdi Baba’s idol (the foot that is kept on the left knee) and forming a pile underneath! I have been most pleasantly surprised, when hundreds of *amrit* drops appeared suddenly over the big portrait of Baba at Devi Vilas, College Road, Palghat, just when I finished *arati*, after a talk on Baba’s glory, on the holy day of *Shravan*, celebrated throughout Kerala as 'Onam'.

The second objection that Baba raised, when such incidents were proposed to be published, was that it will make the person so blessed very ‘conceited’ and lead to his spiritual ruin. This is the reason why Baba is against undue publicity being given to any grace that one receives from Him; it is a gift that one should hold dear in the recess of one’s heart, that one should ruminate over in the silence of one’s own deepest meditation. It is a secret sign of love from one’s dearest Beloved. Some have been led astray, however, for the ego raises its poisonous

hood; they start advertising their spiritual superiority, they challenge others in the village to win such grace from Baba; they compare and cavil, they compete and condemn. They inaugurate a chain of evil, which robs them of their blessedness. Anxious to establish that they too are devotees of equal intensity, weak men fake and all are tarred by the same brush, when the trick is laid bare, for truth must triumph quickly.

Let us leave such tricksters to the retribution in store for them and pay attention to the genuine votaries, on whom Baba has conferred these and other signs of His incredible *mahima*. The *Nadaswaram Vidwan*, who used to come every *Dasara* and *Shivaratri* to play music at the Nilayam, had an uncle of his as an accompanist, on the drum. His name is Ganesh. He writes, “When I took leave of Baba after the Birthday festival, 1965, He graciously assured me, ‘You will have no trouble anymore; I am by your side, always.’ I went with my nephew to Thiruvannamalai temple and after playing the music there for the ten-day festival, returned home to find showers of *vibhuti* falling profusely from the pictures of Baba and Shri Krishna, kept for worship in my house. I am overcome with joy. I pray to Baba that the showers may increase, so that I can give it to all who come.”

As a matter of fact, Baba has given ‘inexhaustible receptacles’ of *vibhuti* to a few devotees, who will not misuse the gift for their own aggrandisement. You have only to shake it with the name of Baba on your tongue and it fills itself. There was also a man, who prayed to Baba that the *vibhuti* showers may stop. The poor goldsmith in Bombay did not have the patience. His work spot is under a staircase on the ground floor. He has *vibhuti* falling from a picture of Baba; he interrupts his work to receive the stream of visitors, who come to see this most ‘unscientific phenomenon’ of paper turning out ash! This other person lives in a single room, with his wife and three children, in a chawl in Bombay. He writes, “Baba has granted me the grace of *vibhuti* showers from His portraits, in my house or rather, room. As a result, hundreds from all the chawls around stream into my room, from dawn to dusk and even far into the night. It has become difficult for me to live in this place. Please ask Baba to stop this *vibhuti*.” This is a very pathetic letter which no devotee will ever make, unless his distress is unbearable. One can see that the *vibhuti* is as genuine, as his grief at the publicity that it got.

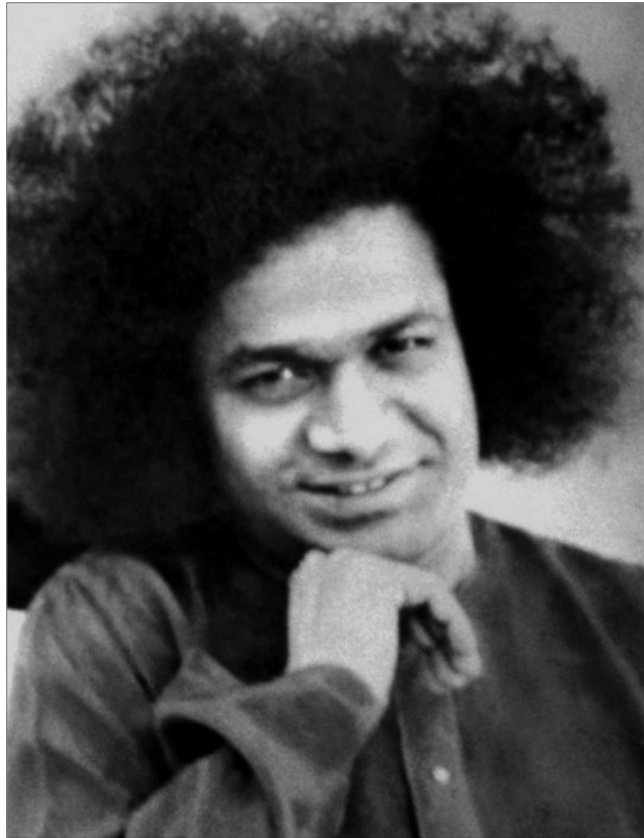
Sri Vaidya of Navasari came to me at Prasanthi Nilayam and gave me a report of the activities of the *Bhajan* Society, which he has built up. I found there an item, “visits to places of Sai Leela,” which drew my attention. He explained to me that in the village of Chinam, there was a devotee, in whose house *vibhuti* and *kumkum* were showering from Baba’s pictures. “At Stupa, when the *Bhajans* started, *vibhuti* showers started,” he said. This

reminded me of an experience I had. In the shrine of an old Brahmin lady, at Kalpathi, there was a row of glass-framed pictures of Baba. When *Bhajan* began, one of the pictures began swinging from right to left, slow and quick, according to the slowness of the beats. When the song ended, the picture came to a halt. Water that was kept before the picture of Baba, as an offering to slake His thirst, turned in a moment into a fragrant flavoured drink, which *bhaktas* termed *amrit*. (This happens in a number of places all over India). Moreover, *amrit* flowed in a gush from the Divine mouth in the picture! (This reminds me of a certain *Vaikuntha Ekadasi* day, when Baba, sitting in the midst of a few hundred devotees, signed for a tumbler and poured *amrit* into it—a glassful—from His Divine mouth!) “At Markapur, ten miles off, the party saw the same evidence of Baba’s omnipresence and overflowing grace.”

Baba grants grace, but never allows it to foster the ego in man. The *vibhuti* stops or some other harsh reminder is given, when the ego raises its ugly head. Hysteria - Baba calls it, when a person gets intoxicated with pride or envy, as a result of this shower. One has to be constantly aware of one’s weakness and one has to be praying every moment for the faith necessary to receive the grace. Or else, one has no right to claim kinship with the Sai Family.

Baba does not encourage anyone to demand or receive special reverence, as a sign that He has bestowed upon the person some signal proof of His grace. But, people find it difficult to resist the temptation of offering and accepting the reverence that will harm both receiver and giver. They slide down the ego way into spiritual nihilism.

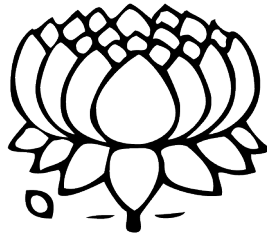
Baba told the gathering at Kakinada, “There are some, who come to you and say, ‘Sathya Sai Baba likes me much; He has given me this, a thing which He seldom gives except to those, who are nearest to Him.’ And then, they beg for help or crave special attention, which is an insult to the Divine principle itself!” “To receive a mark of grace from Me is a great responsibility; it is a reminder that you should be humble, sweet in speech, truthful, detached, and ever aware of the Sai in all.” But, there are some, who celebrate the anniversary of the first appearance of *vibhuti* in a grand manner, collecting donations for the same; yet others, who dispatch *vibhuti* or *amrit* by post to correspondents and collect donations, little knowing the injury they are causing to their own progress!



There is another series of happenings too, of which mention can be made here. Little children or sometimes even feeble-minded adults, growing up in the atmosphere of the unreasoning external worship, are prone to suffer from visions, to imagine that they hear voices, and to believe that they are able to read messages that He writes, or otherwise communicates with Baba! When such cases are known to exist in one house, the neighbour's child is most likely to be affected, too. Thus, a regular mass hysteria developed recently in Madras city, in East Godavari district and in South Kanara district, as well as in Ceylon. Baba condemned this in strong terms. At Amalapuram, on the 29th March, 1965, He said, "This has become quite an infection. I am not laughing at anyone or blaming anyone. But, the truth must be made known. There are quite a few around Amalapuram, who declare that I am coming upon them, possessing them, and speaking through them. They wave their hands and sway and shake and shiver, and people sitting around them assert that they are under My influence! They answer questions and, their agents and brokers claim that they are granting 'interviews,' as I do! This deceitful disease is spreading among people through schemers and cheats. Whenever you see or hear about people suffering from this disease, nip it in the bud; scotch the agents first; then, teach the child or the feeble-minded adult to shut up and be normal. I never speak through another. I never use another or possess another physical vehicle to express Myself. I am not a ghost or spirit to do so, to need some medium. I come direct, I speak direct, I come

as I am, or as I will to come in fresh created forms. I do not use weak, vacillating human vehicles; I confer boons straight and without any intermediary.” At Yelamanchilli, He said, “Persons, who claim to be possessed by Me, have appeared recently; order them out, wherever you meet them. Do not yield to such morons and fakes, and lower your own dignity as devotees.”

Devotees of Baba are advised by Him to be ever vigilant against the subtle pulls of the sinister and the secret; when the *avatar* has come and is so accessible and free with grace, it is sheer stupidity to say the least to lionise the diseased and the deliberate crooks.





11.

Cities Aflame

His speech with even casual visitors becomes a pat on the back, often a prick to the bubble, a stab to the ego, a candle in the darkness, a stick to the lame, a path in the wildness, a rose amidst the thorns, a beacon that beckons to nobility and divinity. A smile from Him is a cherished treasure that one would nourish in the silence of the shrine.

CHARLES PENN writes from Los Angeles, “Across the oceans, Baba reaches to each one of us, time after time. He blesses; He leads. He gives strength to those needing support. He smiles His acknowledgement by a whispered 'God bless...' and beckons those He wants to guide to Prasanthi Nilayam. He teaches us that life is endless, not punctuated by nights, days, months, and years—for all are one in the eternal stream.”

This was the lesson Baba gave to the gathering at Prasanthi Nilayam also, on the *Uttarayana* day, January 14, 1966. Festivals based on the calendar, solar or lunar, celebrating the apparent change of movement or direction of the sun or the moon have been devised, He said, in order to emphasise the need for mind-control (the Moon is the presiding deity of the mind) and intelligence-regulation (the Sun is the presiding deity of intelligence). Placing disproportionate faith in material wealth and objective pleasures, man has lost the art of tapping the resources of joy within himself, within his own mind and intelligence. One need not wait for *Uttarayana* to arrive, for resolving upon the process of mind-control and intelligence-sublimation. Every moment is the right moment – that is Baba’s Message. His is the urgent, the insistent call for wakefulness, for action, for gaining the joy of spiritual progress, without delay or diminution.

He thrills our hearts with this message as no one else can; for, who else can say, as He does: “The kinship between Me and you is ageless; it is eternal. It is not based on worldly relationships; it is based on the aspiration of the heart for the very source and spring of

inexhaustible joy. I see you all, as waves of the sea, when the moon rises in the sky. I see the *ananda* shining in your faces. The love you have for the source of love is the real root of that *ananda*.”

Every year, since 1940, when He announced that He was Sai Baba ‘come again,’ the emergence of one *Linga* (or many) from His body through His mouth has taken place during the *Lingodbhava muhurta* (the auspicious moment for the exterior manifestation of the symbol of the all-pervasive Divine principle). This is an inscrutable mystery: how the *Lingas* of various types of stone or metal are formed within Him and how they emerge at that particular moment, every year, calculated according to the ancient texts of *Jyotishshastra*! Nine *lingas* of ‘silver’ had come out one year; in other years, there emerged five or seven or three or two, all in a lump or in succession. Until that illustrious moment, no one can pronounce on the number, size, or composition of the *lingas* that are undergoing concretisation in Him. It is all so normal, until the *Lingodbhava muhurta* arrives.

The gathering of 20 or 25 thousand sits expectant and worshipful, listening to the discourses by *pundits* on some scriptural text or spiritual discipline. The talks are mostly on Shiva, the aspect of the Godhead that destroys the basic ignorance, that awards enlightenment, overwhelms the accumulated consequences of the past, and wipes off all traces of one’s animal ancestry, in order to cleanse the mighty stream, called the mind. When the *pundits* have finished, Baba takes up the trend and sweetens the programme with one of His inimitable discourses. At some point during that discourse or at the end of it, during the *Bhajan* sessions which Baba leads with a few songs, people become aware of the slight cough, which, as many of them know, is the harbinger of the precious *Linga*. The empyrean eloquence is interrupted off and on, by gasps until the internal thrust can no longer be checked. Then, amidst the paean of praise *Om Namah Shivaya*, rising from many thousands of tongues, the *Lingas* travel to the mouth and fall on to a silver plate. Baba invariably holds them aloft for all to see and revere; they are kept for our view the whole night. In the morning, Baba takes them in His palm and passes along the serried ranks of *bhaktas*, who are stunned by the size which could not, without a miracle, pass through the tiny passage of the throat.

In 1966, after about 20 minutes of swaying and heaving, gasping and coughing, in order to ease the passage, an emerald *Linga*, three inches high, fixed on a pedestal five inches across, that had formed itself in Him emerged from His mouth, to the unspeakable joy and relief of the huge gathering, which was watching His face with single pointed attention. Thousands

were exhilarated by this Divine event, which took place in the newly built, magnificently lit *Shanti Vedika*. The entire night was spent by the gathering in *Bhajan*. Baba appeared again at the *Shanti Vedika* at dawn the next day, when the *Bhajan* was closing. He reminded the people, on the meaning of the vigil and the paean, the lesson of sense-control, of mind-control, and the elimination of the ego through rigorous discipline. Then, He moved along the lines of pilgrims with the unique illustration of His glory, so that their eyes could feast on it.

In the last week of February, 1966, Baba presided over the School Day celebrations of the Zilla Parishad High School, Bukkapatnam, which grew into a High School because of His blessings, since He had given it the privilege of calling Him an 'old boy.' In grateful acknowledgement of His fostering care, the school is named Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba High School. Baba exhorted the parents to hold forth for emulation by the children, good examples of virtue and humility, and service to fellow men. On the 2nd day of March, He was at Hyderabad for a three day session of the *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha*. About 50 to 60 thousand people listened eagerly, each day, to the discourses of scholars like Prof. V.K. Gokak and Sri D. Venkatavadhani, and to the alchemic addresses of *Bhagawan* Himself.

Baba is by far the most moving speaker in the world today, for He keeps hundreds of thousands listening for hours, in rapt attention, to the highest philosophical truths, which He analyses and presents in sweetest rhetoric; each one feels that the speech is directed at him, in order to help him out of the intellectual or moral tangle, into which he has been drawn by circumstances; each one rises with a lessened load, happy and strong, for having had the experience of listening to that melodious voice, which opens the gates of heaven to the poorest in spirit as well as to the richest. No wonder Prof. Gokak was inspired to sing in verse:

Have you seen Baba

Who sets cities aflame with longing

And drenches them with the delight of existence?

You have missed the very meaning of your life

If you haven't seen Him and heard Him!

Baba made it clear that the *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha* was designed by Him to remind men of the road they have missed and of the paltry track of pitfalls, into which they have strayed. The patient has now no respect for the doctor, who alone can cure him or the drug,

which alone can give relief. Imitative condemnation and superficial cynicism are destroying the faith of the children of the land in their own invaluable culture; they are becoming victims of alien attitudes and fashions of dress, behaviour, and mental outlook. The Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha will pave the way to peace, though not to the achievement of competitive glory.

Baba reached Bombay, on His third visit to the city, on the 13th day of March, 1966. As Baba has said, "Maharashtra is a holy land, where the stream of *Bhakti* has fertilised social, political, and philosophical fields for ages. Ramdas, Tukaram, Gnyaneshwar, and many others have filled the hearts of the people with reverence for God and love for man; this was also the field of activity, the centre from which radiated the grandeur, of the Sai form of this present Sathya Sai. Do not doubt that Maharashtra will soon be a centre of *dharmic* revival." During the fortnight that He stayed in Bombay, Baba established Himself in the hearts of hundreds of thousands of its citizens, through His simplicity and sweetness. As Dr. Gokak has described it, He becomes noiselessly and naturally the patriarch of each family,

That gathers around His knee

And drinks the golden honey of His Love.

He's the eternal Child playing in the garden

Winning back the adults of an erring world

Through sheer simplicity and innocence of heart.

He is the healer of a world in pain

The blue-throated God,

That drinks the poison of the world's suffering

To make it happy and whole.

His speech with even casual visitors becomes a pat on the back, often a prick to the bubble, a stab to the ego, a candle in the darkness, a stick to the lame, a path in the wildness, a rose amidst the thorns, a beacon that beckons to nobility and divinity. A smile from Him is a cherished treasure that one would cherish in the silence of the shrine. The stories and similes, with which He illumines philosophical conundrums, are valued possessions forever. People clamour for the chance to touch His feet, to have their children named, or initiated into spiritual disciplines according to scriptural rules by Him, to receive some token of His grace, and to lay before Him their mental and physical illness, so that He may render them whole.

His grace grants ‘colour to the painter, notes to the composer, voice to the singer, strength to the athlete, endurance to the climber, and bliss to the *yogis*.’ So, all roads led to Gwalior Palace, Worli Beach, for full two weeks in Bombay, for Baba gave *darshan* in the morning and the evening every day, there, during *Bhajan* Sessions.

Bhajan! Baba has given, like Chaitanya Mahaprabhu centuries ago, an extraordinary impetus to the congregational singing of the praise of God. He declares that, when one breathes in the atmosphere rendered fragrant with the name of God, all egoistic impulses are eliminated. He has emphasised that, when the name is sung, the way in which the name originated, the halo which it carries, and the nuances of its meaning have also to be recalled to memory. It is not just gymnastics for the tongue; it is gymnastics for the mind, anaemic, malformed, and maimed, in order to strengthen it with the tonic of the tone of Heaven, correct it with the pressurised massage of beat and *taal*, and cure it with the drug of Divine joy that association with good men bring. The sweetness of the human voice is never more apparent than when it is used to sing the majesty of God; the highest bliss is won, when one merges, with thousands of others, in the flood of *ananda*, which the *darshan* of Sathya Sai Baba, moving among the thirsty, the pining, the sick, the distressed, and the Divinely-oriented confers.

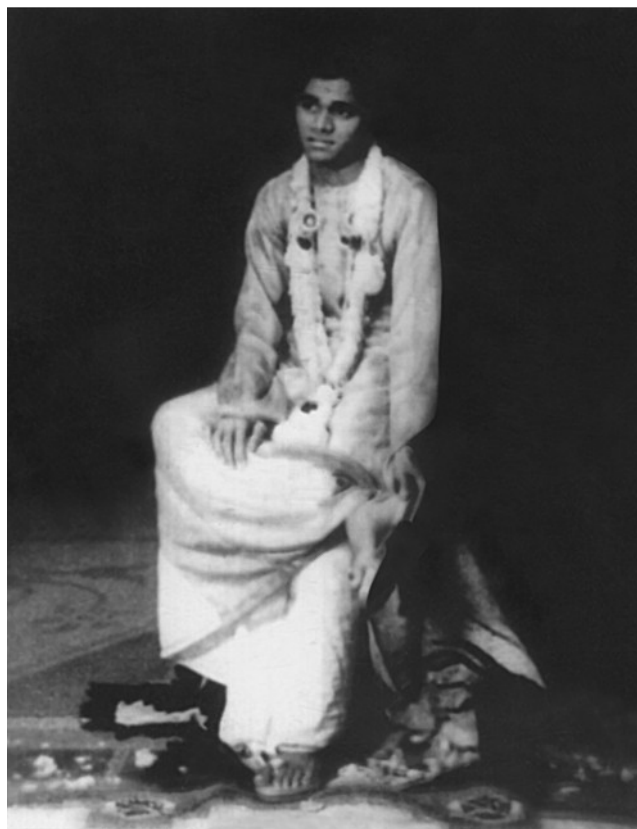
As Dr. K. Bhaskaran Nair writes, “the deafness of our soul is cured and the heavenly harmony is again audible to the ear of faith. The humblest life is lifted to the skies and acquires the aura of eternity. Man is enabled to find sense in this chaos of experience, and discover the meaning and measure of this incomprehensive flux of successive ‘flourishing and perishing’, which we call Time.”

As Hon’ble Sri P.K. Savant, Minister of Agriculture, Government of Maharashtra, and erstwhile Chairman of Shirdi Samasthan said, “*Bhagawan* is the *avatar* of Sai Baba of Shirdi, to whom millions look for strength and solace. Baba belongs to Maharashtra in a special sense, though He has come for all humanity.” The *Bhajan* sessions provided splendid chances for Sai devotees to serve the people of Bombay. Hundreds of trained volunteers served visitors with humility and loving regard; Baba selected from the gathering, children and old persons, who were ill beyond repair by medical skill, and calling them aside after the *Bhajan*, diagnosed and dealt with them, with Divine love, to bless them with relief and health.

Baba addressed mammoth gatherings, the like of which even Bombay has seldom seen in its long history, at the Sardar Vallabhai Stadium, on the 16th, 17th, and on the 23rd March. The last meeting was on *Gudi Padua* day, the festival of the New Year in Maharashtra and lakhs

of people directed their steps to the stadium to have His *darshan* and to hear His voice, as their inaugural experience for the coming twelve-month-period of their lives. Baba too gave them a Message that, as Sri Page, the Chairman of the Maharashtra Legislative Council said, could “sweeten and lighten” the burden of life. Baba said, “Man is tossed about by every wind and wave; he has weakened his will and warped his vision. So, he drifts into shoals and whirlpools. He is the child of immortality, heir to divinity - destined to be the master of the mind and its waywardness - the crown of creation. He is not a monkey that has taken but a few steps towards civilisation. Realise the God that is immanent in the universe, that is calling out for recognition from every flower, every dewdrop, every star that twinkles in the sky; realise Him as the source of the *ananda* that you project on the objects around you, so that you may enjoy them. That realisation will clothe the world, and you, in a new and glorious vesture; it will make you unafraid; it will render death a pleasant passage to birthlessness.”

Baba found time, while in Bombay, to discuss with the members of the Maharashtra branch of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, as well as other seekers and aspirants, personal and philosophical problems. He stepped into the hearts of all, who sought solace and sustenance.



Baba left Bombay on the 26th March, for Poona, where the city had arranged a grand

welcome for Him. On the 27th, He addressed a gathering in the premises of Andhra Association. “There are thousands before Me here, listening to My words, but fundamentally, you are alone; you are a thousand waves on the face of the ocean. Food is earned by the combined efforts of all the limbs and skills of body. It is converted by the stomach into sustenance and strength, and given back in that form to all limbs that helped to produce it. You are all limbs of that One body, the *Purusha*, who is far more expansive than this universe, which is but a fraction of His physical manifestation.” He spoke about the attempts to limit oneself by name and form, as belonging to this nation or that, speaking one language or another and building a cage around oneself. Referring to the remark made by someone, while welcoming Him, that it was a ‘family gathering,’ Baba said, “Yes; this is a family gathering. As a matter of fact, all gatherings into which I come are family gatherings for Me, the entire mankind is My family. I carry no labels, assigning a country of origin or residence for Myself. I am above all labels.”

Baba reached Gulbarga, in the State of Mysore, late at night on the 28th, and by sunrise, He saw sitting in long lines all over the vast maidan, people from far and near, eager to carry away in their hearts the picture of His smiling face. Baba moved among them and distributed *vibhuti* to one and all. Later, at the public garden, where another mammoth gathering awaited His presence, Baba sang a few *Bhajans* and gave the Gulbargans a taste of the sweetness of His heavenly voice. Baba reached Hyderabad, in time to give *darshan* to devotees on the day dedicated to the advent of Sri Rama. That day is sacred to devotees for another reason too, for it was on that day that Baba gave the world the institution, round which was crystallised the faith and hope of the custodians of the *Vedic* culture of India, namely, Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha. Therefore, the Hyderabad branch of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, inaugurated on Sri Rama’s birthday, monthly discourses on the ancient, but timeless texts of spiritual discipline. Baba returned to Prasanthi Nilayam on the 4th day of April, after assuring lakhs of people that divinity has not given up humanity, but has only to be discovered within man himself.

Baba is a unique phenomenon and therefore, no one can identify Him or understand Him. In 1960, He said, “I have not come to Madras for personal propaganda or publicity; I have not come to collect disciples or devotees. I am yours, though you may doubt, discard, or deny Me. You are Mine, though I am far away in space or time. What then is the need for publicity or propaganda? I am in you; you are in Me; we are inseparable. This truth can be known by you, only when you know yourself.” But, the world has foolish men, who can feed their ego

only by slandering those who are revered by others. Even in His 20th year, Baba assuaged the resentment of His elder brother, who feared that the role which Baba had taken up will draw upon Him the evil eye of envy and hate. Baba had replied that He would never be affected by praise or blame, that He was beyond the bounds of time and space, and that He would pursue the task, upon which He has come, unintermittently. “I invite all to come, experience, discriminate and judge, and benefit from Me. Dive before you pronounce your estimate of the depth; eat before you declare the taste,” He wrote.

This demand is beyond people, who dip their pen in tar and revel in the gloom of night. Pathetic efforts have been made, since the very first annunciation of Baba, to wean people away from His feet by those, who saw thousands trekking to Puttaparthi and returning home happier, healthier, and more convinced of their own liberation from bondage. But, Baba has dismissed these with Divine disdain and planted His feet on earth and sky, as He planned when He arrived in this human form. “To grasp My meaning, you have to tear into tatters the doubts and diversions that you now indulge in and develop *prema*. For, the embodiment of *prema* can be known only through wisdom and pure *prema*.”

Microscopic brains exaggerate the colour of the gown that Baba wears and the curly hair that forms His distinctive crown, and indulge in adjectives and expressions such as ‘medieval potentate’, ‘luxurious silk’, etc., as if Baba is an ascetic attempting laboriously to travel along the path of *sadhana*! Baba says, “*The gnyani* will not look upon Me as wearing a yellow gown today, pink gown tomorrow, cotton in summer, silk in winter; He will penetrate into the truth behind this name and form and he will know that this body is a ‘dress’ worn for a purpose! The *avatar* that will take place next, of this same Principle, will have another ‘dress’.” This was said by Him in 1960.

In 1962, during the Birthday festival, He said, “I have often told you not to identify Me with this particular physical build-up. But, you do not understand. You call Me by one name only and believe I have only this one form. Remember, there is no name I do not bear; there is no form I do not fill. You have not understood Me at all, if you come one day and go away the next, saying, ‘I have seen Sathya Sai Baba; He wears a fine, long gown; He has wonderful hair!’ Determine to discover, decide to learn, dive deep, and then, it will be made known to you, for it is the right of such as you.”

Baba is aware that mean men sneer at Him, as a ‘magician’. At Vyasashram, established by the renowned Malayala Swami at Yerpedu, He said, “People say that Mine is all magic, black

or white. Well, they can say with equal truth that Krishna held aloft the Govardhan Mountain, or that Rama built the bridge across the sea, through black magic! The manifestation of the Divine can only be inexplicable or miraculous. They cannot be equated with magic. How can the egg of the cuckoo be equated with the egg of the crow? Magic thrives on deceit, the tricks are rooted in falsehood and are used for appeasing the greed for food, clothing, and shelter. This body, which has come through Divine will to uphold truth, can never stoop to that depth. No. Never.”

The miracles, which are spontaneous expressions of Baba’s divinity, plentifully patent in His presence, as well as where His physical presence is not evident, are not for advertisement or publicity. Baba said at Venkatagiri, in 1964, “These miracles, as you call them, are but means towards the establishment of *Dharma*, which is My task. Some people remark that Ramakrishna Paramahansa has said that, miracles produced by the faculties earned by *sadhana* are obstructions in the path of the *sadhaka* and they should be avoided by those, who want to reach the goal of Self-realisation. Ramakrishna said that, the *sadhaka* would be tempted to overdo the demonstration that inflated his ego. This is correct advice, so far as *sadhakas* are concerned. But, the absurdity lies in equating Me with the *sadhaka*, whom Ramakrishna warned.”

The miraculous cures that Baba effects, when His grace is sought after by people, are also incidental and secondary, according to Him. “The removal of misery and distress is not the main plank of My mission. My task is not merely to cure, console, and remove individual misery. It is something far more important. For the plantain tree, the fruit is the chief consummation, but the leaves and the trunk are also useful to man. My main task is to promote, preserve, and propagate *Sanathana Dharma*. Do not hunger for comfort, for continuous bonds with the outer world, for more and more things to worry about; hunger for *ananda*, deep and full! I know that most of you come to Me for tinsel and trash, petty promotions and profits, status symbols and short-lived fame. Very few ask from Me the thing I have come to give, namely, liberation from grief and pain, worry and fear, anxiety and agony.”

Since the vile insinuations that are circulated by the calumniators are the products of envy, at what they consider to be the luxurious living standard of Baba, it is good to remember that Baba eats the food of the poorest of this land, without any milk, or curds, or butter, or ghee, and that He has no taste for sweets. He sits and sleeps on the same mattress, at Prasanthi Nilayam and uses dilapidated cars or taxis in cities, lest the masses recognise Him and follow

Him for the coveted *darshan*! Baba gives another reason also to infer that His lot is unenviable, to say the least. “Some of you may feel that it is glorious for the Lord to come in human form. If you were in My place, you would not feel so glorious. For, I am aware of the past, present, and future of every one of you. Therefore, I am not moved by mercy; I know why a person suffers in this birth, what it is the consequence of. So, I react differently from you; you may call me either cold-hearted, or soft-hearted. I do not cause joy or grief; you design the chains that bind you, both gold and iron.”

He is the most tireless worker at the Nilayam, planning, designing, arranging, and supervising every little act that conduces to the proper functioning of its various world-wide activities. Nothing is done there, or in other places where organisations function in His name, without His express permission and blessings. At the Nilayam, He is busy day and night, teaching, training, consoling, comforting, and counselling the hundreds, who come to Him for light and guidance. Even while on tour, He uses what little time He can spare for the amelioration of the suffering and the distressed, the poor and the downhearted. “Make every moment holy by filling it with loving service,” He advises, by example more than by precept.

Baba curbs the enthusiasm of devotees and does not allow them to display the fruits of the grace they have received from Him. He declares that such display is highly unspiritual, for it promotes egoism. He condemns in very strong terms those, who try to earn popularity and profit by erecting *mandirs* and temples for Him! Speaking at Kakinada in March, 1965, Baba said, “I strongly discourage attempts to build temples for Me. I ask instead, that existing temples be renovated and used more. This mania for *mandirs* has become a popular business adventure! People, armed with lists, search for likely victims and squeeze donations out of them, using My name. A great deal of back-biting, envy, and greed is generated in this process; pushing your master’s name forward easily degenerates into tarnishing the name of the other man’s master.” At Madras too, He harped on the same theme. “I do not appreciate this enthusiasm. Worship any form, under any name, in any temple! You neglect the ancient temples of this city and build new ones, only to neglect them also, when you discover some reason to give up these new ones. People, who run helter-skelter clamouring for donations for *mandirs*, are really promoting atheism, for they are urged by greed, malice, and egoism, rather than by the dedicatory spirit of devotion. When these self-styled promoters of the cause come to you, do not give even a paisa. Why do you need a hall for *japa* or *dhyana*? Make your house a small *mandir* for yourself; meditate in your shrine-room. Sing *bhajans* with your children. Impress others by your sweet speech, your humility, your universal love, your

steady faith, your truthfulness. Then, others will come into the fold of believers, in numbers larger than any hall could bring.”

Baba is ever on the watch to stop the overflowing of devotion into absurd channels. For example, there was a man, who devised a series of discourses on Baba and on Prasanthi Nilayam, which he sought to win popularity and money by attributing sacred properties to every tree and well, every stone and stump at the Nilayam, representing them as ‘gods’ and ‘sages’! Baba sent me to his field of activity and directed me to warn his fans and to scotch his campaign of absurd adulation! He is ever alert to condemn the hysterical outpourings of adolescent and childish devotees, who affect to be ‘possessed’ by Him and to reply to questions asked, as if they are Himself! Any behaviour that weakens man, that trades upon the signs of grace, that sets up pompous symbols of the simple truth is immediately condemned by Baba, in His discourse or through a note in the *Sanathana Sarathi* magazine and its subsidiaries.

To misuse the freedom of speech and expression that we have won in India after a hard struggle and to taint with foul tongue and pen this sublime sacred phenomenon, with so much power, wisdom, and love is, we know, undiluted wickedness! But, Baba will only say that it is a part of His play. “Without this dark slander, the splendour of My glory will not shine bright.”

Picturing Baba to be just another itinerant *fakir*, who trades upon esoteric skills, many mean and small men, who can see only meanness and smallness, are slandering Him, wherever His glory shines. All men must hang their heads in shame that human beings like themselves sit in their dens and concoct outrageously despicable fiction about a person, whose movements and utterances, attitudes and manners are so impeccably Divine. It is a measure of the fortitude and self-control that Baba has instilled, into those whom He has drawn towards Him, the conviction that rats, which revel in stink, are best left alone to die of starvation. All, who have tasted His sweetness, are pained by this exhibition of morbid malignophobia.

Many newspapers howl pitiably against the Moon of His majesty, and silence themselves when their throats get too sore, or when their hunger is not appeased by blackmail. Some men in Bombay, unaware of His glory, once pitted a practitioner of yogic feats, like consuming nails and acids, against His majesty and, when He passed unconcernedly by, tried to raise a laugh, which recoiled like a thunderclap on themselves.

Baba referred to it at Anantapur, where He presided over a School Day, soon after His return.

“Last month, I was in Maharashtra State, in Bombay, where lakhs and lakhs of people were able to slake their thirst for *darshan*; I was discoursing to several thousands on the fundamentals of the *Vedas* and the *Shastras* and directing the members of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha (Maharashtra branch) to resuscitate the great culture of our land. I was discussing with Ministers of Maharashtra State and the Home Minister of the Central Government, Sri Y. B. Chavan, and also judges, business magnates, doctors, lawyers, editors, and others, besides spiritual leaders of various religions, about *Dharmasthapana*, or the revival of *dharma*. But, here, in this part of India, newspapers were wallowing in the lies they invented and circulated, about My being all the while in prison. Yes! I am imprisoned in the hearts of My devotees.”

“Of course, such calumny is the experience of eminence everywhere, at all times. This has been My experience, in previous eras also. The successors of Shishupala even now fret and fume, vomiting brimstone and fire, against Truth and Right. I pity these unfortunates, who, in order to scrape together a few paise from diseased minds, stoop to such venial tricks! These sub-human antics might pain some of you; so, I declare, “Even if all the fourteen worlds unite against Me, the work, for which I have come, will not suffer a bit; even if earth and heaven combine in opposition, My Truth will remain unshaken.”

Perhaps in response to the first rumblings of this tale of gall, Baba had said during *Dasara*, 1965 itself, “There are some, who write and speak as if they have known Me. I can only say this: They can never know Me, for, to know Me, one has to rise to this stature. Again, listen to this: My activities and movements will not be altered, whoever may pass whatever opinion on them. People may remark disparagingly on My dress, on My gown of coloured fabric, on My hair - but, I am not affected at all. Does a person become holier by wearing rags? Pay attention to what is grown in the heart, not on the head. I shall not stop My plans, My *Dharmasthapana*, My *bhaktarakshana*, My discourses, My miracles, which are but expressions of My miraculousness, nor shall I retrace or retract. For 26 years, I have been carrying on alone the task of inculcating *prasanthi* in the hearts of those, who have lost the art of gaining it. I am ever happy, full of joy. I smile at those, who deride Me and invent lies about Me. I smile at those, who praise Me.”

Baba advised those, who were pained by this irresponsible but futile mudslinging, to be calm and unconcerned. “Do not damage your health by anger or worry. Be happy, on the other hand, that while you call on Me in your shrines, these men shout My name, along the dark squalid bye-lanes and by the busy bus-stops, where they hope to find victims for their

salacious ware. Many people, who read the rag, through sheer craving for the sensational, will be turned towards the Truth, by the very absurdity and unbelievability of the lies.” He instanced the story of Bhasmasura, who won from Shiva the power of causing a conflagration on the body of anyone, upon whose head he places his hand. He tried to kill Shiva Himself by this newly won capability; but, God so manipulated events that, unaware of what he was doing to himself, Bhasmasura was tempted to place his hand upon his own head; he died in the conflagration that he lit upon himself. So too, their wickedness and their pride will be reduced to ashes in the fire of repentance.” In fact, a gentleman, who ignorantly equated Baba with his own species of exhibitionistic yogis and challenged Him to do a much-advertised feat, was humiliated by his own conceit; his promoters suffered dramatic discomfiture.

Baba analysed the motives of these men afflicted with pride. He said, “Egoism is the seed-plot of a host of down-dragging tendencies, like greed, anger, malice, and hate. It clouds the intelligence and distorts the face of the real into the disgusting features of the false. It hides truth in a cloud of dust and urges man into immoral deeds, in the effort to cater to the claims of self-aggrandizement.” During *Dasara*, 1966, Baba spoke of some *yogis*, who boasted that they could walk on water and challenged others to do likewise, “It is a far greater and far more useful vital attainment, if a *yogi* can trample on envy, pride, greed, and malice.”

Speaking of men of little faith, Baba said on Krishna *Janmashtami*, 1966, “Do not give ear to what others say; believe your own experience, your own eyes. Whatever gives you joy and peace, believe that as genuine. Why should you go about, asking all and sundry whether something is salt or sugar? Having judged it as sugar, why should you revise your opinion, when someone cavils at it and says it is salt? Put a little on your tongue; that will clinch the issue. Do not deny with the tongue, what you have relished in the heart; do not bear false witness to your own conscience. Do not adjust your opinion to the company you fall into,” He advised.

Only the Divine can evince such love and such mercy, towards error and mischief. Baba forgave His traducers, for they were as He said, “moths, whose nature is to bore into fabrics. They cannot but do anything else; they have an inner impulse, which they have not been taught to overcome. They slander all, who come in their purview. The moth bores into cotton saris, woollen cloth, silken vestments; it has no discrimination in its make-up. So, be happy that they are deriving joy by reviling Me. My aim is to render all men joyful. If these men can derive joy through such means, why should you deny them that avenue for the expression of their nature? I am glad that they are able to feed their wives and children with the coins,

which the stink sheets give them. Why should you be miserable, when they are eating their meal?”

Baba is *Premaswarupa*; He is love, in every limb and look, in every glance and stance; in every gesture and vesture of thought. So, He pardons these dealers in untruth and asks all good men to pray for their correction. “Sooner or later, they are bound to repent; no man can wander in the wilderness for long; when he discovers that he has lost his way, he will stop and retrace his steps, until he regains the highway. Pray for their transformation into *satwic* individuals, for the speedy cure of their blindness, for their tongues to cognise the taste of truth. Direct your love to these misguided brothers; they will re-join the pilgrim path, soon,” Baba said, addressing the *Dasara* gathering in 1966. He gave the example of the leech, which relishes diseased blood from the wound, but drops off when it is too bloated to suck further. “They too fall off, when they have had their fill.”

“When water is poured into milk, the water too acquires value and fetches a price! When lies are manufactured about the great, people who prefer nausea will pay cash for them.” Baba mentioned also a positive advantage, which these traducers confer. He said. “When the winnowing is done, the husk falls afar and can be thrown into the furnace. The grain forms a mound; it can be stored and made into bread that sustains and gives strength. These men fanning the empty air separate the chaff from the grain. Persons, without deep-rooted faith, fall off at the first whisper of scandal, but persons, who have their faith deep-rooted, stand up against the storm; they get tougher and harder in fibre.”

In May, 1966, Baba spent about ten days in a Coffee Plantation in the charming Hill district of Coorg, in Mysore. Coorg is the home of a hardy race of stalwarts in the fields of sports and battle. It is the nursery of heroic soldiers. The Coorgs are hospitable and pious. They trekked long distances, uphill and downhill, along the winding roads, in order to have a glimpse of the Lord staying in their midst. Baba had a smile and a blessing for every one of them; He visited a number of Coorg homes and spread light and joy. The bungalow, where He stayed, became the target for cars and omnibuses, from miles around. Later, Baba left for Madras and from thence, He accompanied some devotees to Kodaikanal, another salubrious Hill Station. Every day, at Kodaikanal, as at Coorg, *Bhajan* sessions were held, so that hundreds and thousands could imbibe the joy of singing the glory of God in chorus and thrill, at the *darshan* of Baba. Baba said, “The good luck of these people on the hills brought Me here; else, I had no plan to come.”

Soon, Baba drove down to Madurai city, where devotees had completed the construction of a new suburb around a Sai Baba temple, which was named Sathya Sai Nagar in reverential gratitude. Discourses were given by *pundits* from Tamil Nadu on three evenings and Baba, who presided, supplemented them with His elucidations.

Returning to Prasanthi Nilayam, with the first rains of the monsoon, Baba was available for *darshan* to about 10,000 people, who gathered on *Guru Purnima*; He gave each of them a few drops of *amrit*, nectar, with the exhortation that the tongue, which has tasted *amrit*, should no longer relish *anrit* (falsehood). Baba inaugurated the branch of the State Bank at Prasanthi Nilayam Township, an amenity to help the residents as well as the thousands, who visited the place. Baba transmutes each such occasion into a spiritual harvest; so in His discourse, He compared the Bank, where money is taken and given, to the Bank, where love alone is accepted and given. "That Bank," He said, "receives deposits and maintains accounts strictly and confidentially. Every little deposit is entered and accounted for - thoughts, deeds, words, good, bad, indifferent. Develop the saving habit, for saving yourself. Here, they take *dhanam* (money); there, they take *dhyanam* (equanimity) as deposit." Each sentence was a brilliant flash, revealing the deepest truth.

On the third of August, Baba presided over the opening day celebrations of the Primary Health Centre at Kottacheruvu, a village seven miles by road from the Nilayam. Baba was welcomed enthusiastically by the villagers, as well as by the Hon'ble Minister for Panchayat Raj. Dr. Lakshminarasiah from Hyderabad, and leaders elected to Local Bodies by the people of Anantapur district. One of them, Sri T. Ramachandra Reddy, the President of the District Board, Anantapur, confessed, "I must admit that it is only after His fame has spread all over the world that we, who are living so near Puttaparthi, have come to realise His Divinity." The Minister also said, "He is so near us, but we commit the mistake of dealing with Him as if He is distant." There were many officers of the district on the dais. So, Baba said, "The Cabinet of Ministers, the officers, and the people are like the three blades of the fan rotating here, to give us cool comfort; they must all be activated by the current (the spirit of service) to give happiness and peace." The mention by the Doctor of the need for Family Planning, by means of artificial aids, drew from Baba a forthright condemnation of the movement that is bound to undermine morality and let loose buffeting storms of passion. "It is only rigorous self-control through *sadhana* that can ensure the acceptance of parental responsibility; countrywide movements to spread artificial aids will bring about the fall of moral standards."

The fourth of August, 1966, is an important date in the history of Prasanthi Nilayam, for, on

that day, the Minister for Panchayat Raj, Andhra Pradesh, ceremonially declared that the area was separated from the village of Puttaparthi, of which it was but a 'ward'. It was constituted into an administrative unit, named the Prasanthi Nilayam Township. This was because the Nilayam was fast developing into the spiritual hub of India and the world; its rays were heralding the dawn of a bright, new day in all continents of the earth. Baba called upon the residents of the colony to “use the new administrative set-up, for the benefit of this as well as neighbouring areas.”

In September, on the Birthday of Krishna, Baba gave *amrit* to all, who had gathered and also, the *amrit* of His discourse, on two days. “Edison,” He said, “the great scientist and inventor, used to spend hours and days in his laboratory, concentrating on some experiment or problem; milk, bread, or tea was pushed into the room from under the closed door, but they were untouched, until he solved the riddle that was in his mind. So great is the concentration that science demands. Consider then how much more should the *sadhaka* be fixed in single mindedness, in order to achieve success in the subtler and the more sublime sphere of spiritual conquest. Man must be both bright and light, like the lamps that float on the Ganga at Haridwar. If the weight of worldly desire is added, the lamp will sink and the light will be out.”

Dasara, 1966! While discoursing prior to the hoisting of the Prasanthi Flag, Baba gave a new message to the thousands before Him: “I shall tell you of one form of worship, which will endow you with Divine strength.” It was the reverential and grateful use by man of the five elements that are his constituents and His manifestations - Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether! “Use them all intelligently,” He said, “use them to promote your own welfare and the welfare of others; use them in moderation and for the service of humanity.”

The Hospital Day celebrations were presided over by Opal Macre, a famous writer and social worker from United States, who had come to the Nilayam for her *sadhana*. She spoke of her attempts to cure insanity, feeble-mindedness, and other defects by the therapy of music in New York and Hong Kong. Baba said, “Music is the instrument, by which passions are sublimated, emotions tamed, and impulses directed to higher purposes. India has recognised the therapeutic excellence of music long, long ago.” Baba declared that medicine and hospitalisation were for those, who hesitated and argued in doubt. For those, who rely on the Supreme Doctor, His name is drug enough.

In His discourses on the significance of the *yagnya*, on the activities of the Prasanthi Vidwan

Mahasabha, on the occasion of the recitation of poems by poets, on the drama 'Radhabhakti' which He wrote and directed (contains as He said, 'the quintessence of a dozen discourses of mine'), Baba was continuously harping on the pathetic condition of the world and of India, which He has come to heal. "The world is now narrowly compartmentalised, on the basis of religion, colour, convictions, etc. Those, who question the validity of compartments, are themselves in a compartment! Metal pieces gathered in a heap are still pieces; they have not been fused; fuse the peoples in the crucible of Love, into One. The heart must be purged of hate; when God is installed therein, hate will flee. The thinkers of the West are turning to the East to learn the art of keeping peace and winning peace - lasting, satisfying peace, *Prasanthi*. The sun is a minute dot of light, when compared with some of the stars; but, it does give illumination and drives away darkness. So too, India may be a poor and weak nation, but it can give light and grant peace." Baba also spoke of the social illness of maladjustment that are infesting the world, in the wake of mechanisation and industrialization. He said they smothered man's Divine nature, which struggled to blossom into service, sacrifice, and *sadhana*.

On the *Deepavali* day, 1966, Baba said that Festival of Lights is ordained to celebrate the victory of heavenly over hellish impulses. Many thousands had gathered that day at the Nilayam, to have His *darshan* and to listen to His discourse. Asking them, after the festival, to return to their places, Baba said, "I know your love towards Me; you know My affection towards you. But, yet, you have to leave to your places, where duties and obligations call you, where your services are needed by individuals and institutions. They are also Mine; service to them is service to Me. I desire also to give you the experience of My being everywhere, wherever you are, restricted by time or space. If you are here always before Me, how can I grant you that joy?" He asked.

Baba's 41st Birthday came soon after. In the Birthday message He graciously wrote and gave for publication in the *Sanathana Sarathi*, Baba said, "What do the many wars that man has indulged in, teach him? They teach that lust, anger, hate, and envy are evil forces that haunt him. Examine the anarchy and the lawlessness, the chaos and the killings that are raging in the world today. They are the consequences of these evil forces. Why, even the illness your bodies suffer from and the unrest nestling in your homes are due to the vices of lust, anger, hate, and envy." He condemned those, who impute faults and foist failings on others, and indulge in blaming and hurting them. "Hate and envy distort the charm of the human face. A person having greed, lust, anger, and envy will suffer digestive and nervous illness.

Therefore, learn to expand your love and your devotion to God, until the whole of mankind has been enfolded,” He advised.

When Baba came to the Auditorium during *Bhajan*, on His Birthday, preliminary to the anointing that is the ceremonial rite of the day, He wore over His silken gown a resplendent shawl of gold-thread, into which was woven the letters, *Sairam*, 1008 times, by a weaver devotee, who, like Kabir, recited that sacred name when the shuttle was moving to and fro forming the fabric, for the God whom he adored. He wore it, since the yarn was the gold of devotion. Baba went among the vast concourse of devotees and placed in the hands of each a '*laddu*' as the Birthday gift of grace. It was nearly 3 p.m., when Baba returned to the Nilayam after the long 5-hour distribution of grace. One small incident may be mentioned here to illustrate His Omniscience and His mercy. One man among the 15,000 tried to collect more than one from His hands. At last, Baba told him, while giving him the *laddu*, “This is the fifth I am giving you! I believe that is enough!” He knew how often He had given him; He had no harsh words against his greed.

In the discourse that Baba gave that evening, He gave a new interpretation to the words, *Sathyam Shivam, Sundaram*. Those, who were identifying them with *Sat*, *Chit*, and *Ananda*, opened their eyes at the novel meaning: “Follow the *karma-marga* with the harmony and charm of *Sundaram*; follow the *Bhaktimarga* with the exhilaration and exaltation of *Shivam*; follow the *Gnyana-marga* with the directness and steadfastness of *Sathyam*.”

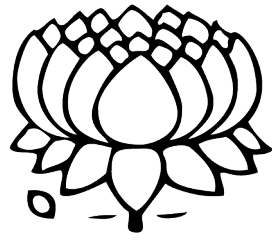
Three days later, He inaugurated a Public Library at Bukkapatnam, the village where, as a boy, He had attended school. Years ago, Baba had opened a park there and later, He had switched on electric lights in the Temple. He chided the villagers for being content with the contemplation of His glory from a distance, without taking earnest steps to get near Him and enjoy the warmth of His heart. Speaking about books, Baba cautioned them against books that excite emotions and arouse passions and dull discrimination. Books must add strength to the will and curb evil inclinations and urges in man. He spoke of the increasing neglect of classical literature and exhorted writers and readers to develop taste for the basic excellence of our ancient culture.

On the 13th December, Baba left for Trichinopally on the Kaveri River, where devotees had arranged a three-day session of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha. The Principal of the Institute for the Training of Teachers of Hinduism at Madras welcomed Baba, in a speech replete with quotations from Tamil classics. He spoke of the supreme and sovereign grace of

Baba. "His look will grant illumination, His touch will communicate revelation, His word will awaken us to realisation," he said, quoting the sages of the distant past. Baba called upon all scholars and students to take up the task of their own moral uplift, by their own efforts and of others, by their example. He spoke of the devaluation of man into a mere nut in a mammoth machine, whereas he is the heir to the heritage of immortality. "You claim to have won *Swarajya*, because the men who ruled this land for centuries have gone home. But, the inner masters, who rule tyrannically over you, have yet to be forced to quit. Until then, you have no *swarajya*. When once that is done, no enemy can overpower you. That is the moment of your independence. Now, what you have won is only the rind, not the kernel."

On the 17th, Baba found time to go to the village of Budalur, where thousands had gathered round the Sathya Sai Vihar, to welcome Him. Baba moved among them in the thickening dust and while doing so, He noticed here and there some sick people, to whom He gave *vibhuti* out of His own hand. The first to get the precious drug was a dumb boy, the second was a deaf ryot, and the third an old farmer with an ulcer in the stomach! On the 18th, He left Trichinopally and stayed at Pollachi for the night. Next day, He motored to the Parambikulam forest, the home of elephant herds, in order to show the people, who were with Him, the grandeur of that sylvan scene; but, it also enabled the simple dwellers of the jungle to fill their eyes with His never-to-be-forgotten beauty.

Baba entered the State of Kerala on the 20th and after two days at Palghat, He visited Eranakulam, Trippunittura, and Alleppey, before reaching the Nilgiri Hills during Christmas. At Devi Vilas, Palghat, Baba moved among the devotees with His benign smile and courage-granting *abhayamudra*. He spoke to many in Malayalam language and drew the hearts of all towards Him. At Kollengode, when a cyclonic gale gathered heavy, dark rain-clouds over the gathering and rain came down in thick drops, Baba said, "Do not worry. These are not rain drops! They are drops of *ananda, shuddhabindu!*" And the rains held off, for full one hour! This miracle was highlighted in the newspapers of Kerala, the same day. At Trippunittura, a Christian couple, deeply devoted to Baba, prayed to Him to lay the Foundation Stone for a Prayer Hall they had planned to build. At Olavakkot, too, a Sathya Sai Nagar (suburb of bungalows, where Sai devotees live) had grown; so, Baba, out of His infinite mercy, blessed it, laying the Foundation for a Prayer Hall. The twenty-third of December was *Vaikuntha Ekadasi*, the day when Baba showers grace as nectar to all. He spent the day with devotees at Alleppey. Hundreds gathered there to taste the nectar of His talk and imprint His beautiful form on their hearts.





12.

Signs And Wonders

Each cure is an eye-opener, the gift of a new vision, the vision of the Divine Healer, who heals the body, so that it may be a fit instrument for the conquest of the mind and for the realisation of the ananda, lying dormant within the region of senses, emotions, impulses, and intellect!

THERE was a blind person once, who came to the Nilayam for getting his eyesight restored; he was a teacher in the State of Mysore, who had lost his sight suddenly, without any apparent reason. Baba did not pay any attention to him, at first. Then, one day, He said to me, pointing to the man being led by his wife along the veranda, "See, that man wants his eyes back; he does not know that blindness is his good fortune!" Two days later, he received a letter from the Government of India offering him a scholarship to go to Delhi for training, in an Institution for Teaching the Blind! I know of one deaf supplicant, to whom Baba said, "Your ears are your *guru*; they brought you to Me; now, be thankful that at least one source of attachment is providentially put out of action." About another supplicant, He said, "If I give him back his eyesight, he is sure to ruin himself." Baba has the knowledge of the past and the future; everyone is an open book for Him. So, He says, "You pour sympathy so easily; but, I have to calculate the potentialities, the retribution they deserve, the use or misuse they will make of additional faculties and capabilities." When someone died in one of the cottages around Prasanthi Nilayam, and the kinsmen prayed that Baba might revive him, Baba said, "Do you mean to say that this area alone is Mine? What of the thousands, who have died this moment all over the world? They are also as much Mine as this person. Again, tell Me how this man is indispensable for the world's progress? He has finished his career; he was born to work out his destiny, not to provide temporary, trivial joy to a few, who cling to him."

In the *Vivekachudamani*, Shankaracharya refers to the master as “*Ahetukadayasindhu* - the Ocean of Mercy that saves without any reason or context.” Baba is like that. He cures some chronic illness by the exercise of His will; He allows other supplicants to suffer. No one can say, why? The instance of Sheshagiri Rao, who is referred to in the First Volume too, will throw some light on this aspect of Baba’s ministrations. Sheshagiri Rao, who tended the shrine at the Old *Mandir* and later, at the Nilayam for full 14 years, had a fall and was in the throes of death. He was declaring aloud with his last breath the amazing truth, which no one except sages recall at the moment of mortal crisis: “This body composed of the five elements is disintegrating into its components; I am being liberated!” I stood by admiring and envying the old man. “What great good fortune, to pass into the beyond with these words on one’s lips!” I told myself. Suddenly, Baba appeared in the room, as someone had informed Him of the approaching demise of His trusted servitor. Baba chided Sheshagiri Rao in firm tones. He said, “How dare you start on this journey, without taking a ticket from Me? Come down; do the task allotted to you. I order you to come to the Prayer Hall this noon and carry on with *arati*, as usual.” We stood aghast, at this ‘unkindness’, but who are we to pit our judgement against the All-knowing One? Sheshagiri Rao obeyed the order; he attended *Bhajan* and went through the allotted schedule of work.

Six months later, he fell ill, seriously ill. He was admitted to the Sathya Sai Hospital; his condition became worse, pathetically worse. His brain became soft, he lost all disgust for dirt, he made everyone sad that a faithful servant of God should suffer so. His brother came from Bangalore and prayed to Baba that he might be allowed to take him to the Victoria Hospital, where he could be given personal attention by his son and his nephews, who were employed there. But, Baba said, “Do not worry at his present plight. I am allowing him to work out the suffering he has to undergo. After this, he has the chance to die peacefully and quite happily. Otherwise, I could have despatched him months ago, when he had a fall.” And, it happened so. A month passed. Sheshagiri Rao recovered quite mysteriously. The sun shone around him in his apartment. He spent six weeks of bliss, doing his chores. Then, he started to decline and took to his bed. His son was by his side, tending him lovingly. One evening, Baba went into the room. I had the privilege of going with Him. He asked me to bring a cup of hot milk. Spoon by spoon, He fed him the entire cup, calling on him by name and telling him that it was his Baba that was feeding him! Then, He rose and moved; turning back while at the door, He looked at him and said, “Now, you can go!” And, Sheshagiri Rao obeyed, within an hour! Baba knew when he had to come down and when he had to ‘go’. We can only watch and

pray, only stand aghast at the wonder and the meaningful “waywardness” of the wind of grace.

Let Dr. T. Nallainathan of Castle Lane, Colombo, tell us of one such wonder. “A boy of 12 called Anthonis was suffering from Ependymoma (a cancerous growth of the cauda equulova of the spinal cord inside the lower vertebrae). His father’s brother is a famous surgeon and the neurosurgeon performed an operation in my presence, which lasted for 3 hours and 15 minutes; but, no good came out of it. The boy passed urine at all hours, without intermission, while unconscious. This did not stop, nor could it be checked or decreased. A member of the Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Colombo, gave the child a little *vibhuti* brought from Baba. That very night, the parents found noticeable improvement. So, they went post-haste to Baba at Madras; they had His *darshan* on November 10th. Bhagawan created an amulet by a wave of the hand and asked that it be worn by the boy round the wrist. They had *darshan* twice and returned home happy. I saw the boy on Christmas day, playing delightfully and talking of attending school after the holidays! I know he is attending school now.”

Among the large number of cases that have come to my notice, I shall quote here a specially wonderful cure. One noon in '66, February, a young couple arrived by car from Bangalore, after landing there by plane from Delhi. The lady’s brother had been sent home from a New Delhi Hospital, as a hopeless casualty. Someone told them of Baba and they came to seek His grace, so that the brother’s life might be saved. Baba gave into my hands two packets of *vibhuti*, from the receptacle kept in His room for distribution by Him, and asked me to tell them to take the two to New Delhi ‘immediately’! The case history of the brother makes very sad reading: “Baliya aged 30; chronic nephritis; anaemia. In July, 1960, had attack of pain in left lumbar region and haematuria. In December, 1963, was noticed to have swelling of the whole body. Urine - Alb. was +++. He had generalised anasarca, too. Blood urea - Normal; blood pressure normal. X-ray Alb. - normal; X-ray chest - normal. In 1964, Dec., complained of diminution of vision. Blood Pressure - 240/140. Xray and intravenous Pyelography: Dye not secreted by both kidneys. Blood urea - 70 mgm. Urine Alb.+++; Treatment continued with hypertensive drugs. Then, suffered from hypertensive encephalopathy (Oculogyric crisis) - involuntary movement of the right side of the face. BP - 240/ 140. Admitted to Hospital; Treated with hypertensives and sedatives. Blood urea - 98-13, came down to 80 mgm. Urine alb - heavy traces, no casts. Occasional RBC. BP came down to normal, but rose for 10 days to 150/100-200/120. Urine output - 50-60 oz. Haemoglobin gradually decreasing. On 18-12-1965, H.9 gms. RBC 3.5 million; Hg 8 gms; 7.5 gms; 29-11966 HC 5.8 gms. At

present, patient gets restless; pallor and slight puffiness of face - pain in both joints, unbearable pain. Treatment: Adelphin Esidrex 2 tablets, 3 times a day; Serpasil, 1-2 tablets, three times a day; Injection Serpasil S.O.S., Injection Largactil. Injection Jectofer started on 22-1-1966, on alternate days. Pot. Chloride gr 15, three times a day; diet, protein restricted.” The two packets of *vibhuti* were to be given, internally in water and some of it was to be smeared over the body. I was amazed, when I received a telegram from the sister that they were bringing the patient to Prasanthi Nilayam, ‘the next day’. This was before the fortnight was over, after their visit. The car from Bangalore came into the compound and three people came out, the couple and a stranger. They walked briskly towards the *mandir* and as soon as I saw and recognised them, I enquired, “Where is the patient?” They laughed and pointed him to me. It was the third person, the man with no sign of illness on him, except a woollen muffler wound round his throat.

Or, let us listen to another tale, from the Padubidris of Bombay. “May 4th, 1957. It was her first birthday. The children’s party was in full swing. While her young guests helped themselves with the snacks and sweets, the little hostess rocked vigorously on her wooden horse. She needed something to provide her distraction from pain. Medical experts were investigating her case. The birthday party was not quite over, when the X-ray report came. It revealed with sudden, unbelievable finality that the poor one-year old was stricken with a bone-eating disease of the worst type; Pott’s Disease; the disc between her 5th and 6th vertebrae was completely destroyed. Nothing grimmer could have befallen us.

The bone specialist ordered that the child be strapped in plaster to reduce her movements to the minimum of almost nil, to help the recalcification. Besides, a prick with streptomycin every day and a long list of medicines and tonics were prescribed. How long was she to be tortured thus? We prayed to Sai Baba; dreamt that He was holding the child protectively close to Him. In June, 1958, she was out of the plaster, but the doctor prescribed an iron jacket as support to her recalcified vertebrae. On November 4th, we reached Puttaparthi with her. Baba interviewed us for 45 minutes. He blessed the child, stroked her back, gave her *udi*, and told the anxious grandmother, “Leave everything to Me; I shall always take care of her; you are worrying too much about her.” He assured us that the child would start walking in January ... and, she did!”

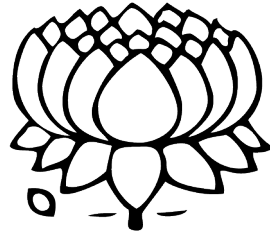
Instances where He has willed off cases of cancer, saying, “Your cancer is cancelled,” are plenty. The case of D.R. Ghule is remarkable in many ways. In a letter dated 15th June ’66, Rao Saheb V.R. Ghule writes, “On 11th May, 1966 I had sent a letter to Bhagawan Sri

Sathya Sai Baba, informing Him of the sad plight of my brother, Dattatreya Ramachandra Ghule, aged 76. I wrote, ‘The pain is now concentrated on the right side of his throat, like terrible pin thrust, even while swallowing milk, tea, or coffee. He has become very weak. He is unable to speak clearly. The doctors at Jubbulpore declared it was cancer and he is now taking X-ray treatment at the Tata Hospital here, at Bombay. Day by day, he is getting weaker and weaker. We obtained the book, Sathyam Shivam Sundaram and after reading it, we brought a photo of Yours and kept it in a prominent place for daily *darshan*. I do not know whether this appeal will reach You, for I do not know Your present address or Your correct address. With folded hands, I beseech You, to save my brother from this terrible pain and illness.’

On the 13th, in the morning, my brother’s condition became serious and doctors called him for an immediate operation. I placed a copy of my letter to Baba at the feet of Baba in the picture and prayed for His mercy. It was about 12-30 p.m. At 1 p.m., my brother asked for water, which he drank freely! He, then, drank milk, which he had not been able to take for long past! We took him to the hospital, where he was found to be normal and the doctors declared that there was no need for an operation. He is now very much better.” The amulets, packets of *vibhuti*, or other articles that He gives are but assurances for the recipient, that they have ‘something’ from His hands. They are superfluous, when we know that His Will is Supreme. It can cross frontiers of sea and land, language and age, and it can be won by prayer, sincere and deep. It cures, for reasons best known to itself. He has come for the revival of morality and the restoration of faith in God, and in the ultimate liberation of man from grief and pain. These cures are visiting cards that He scatters, in order to announce that the Divine has come among men. “Take up thy bed and walk,” has been said by Baba to many, at Prasanthi Nilayam, during the daily session of Grace-gifts, called “interviews” and then, He gives the advice, “Walk in faith, walk in hope, walk in Truth.”

There was a girl in her teens, who was being carried about by her brother. She had come from Bhadravathi in Mysore State. For 5 long years, she had not set foot on the ground. Baba called the brother to Him and asked that the sister be brought. He carried her in, as one carries a child. Within minutes, the door of the room opened and 500 people sitting outside the Nilayam saw the girl walking, helped by the brother and mother; Baba had asked them to go round the building three times. And, the next day, she did it alone! And, Baba exhorted the girl to go home and be happy! Each cure is an eye-opener, the gift of a new vision, the vision of the Divine Healer, who heals the body so that it may be a fit instrument for the conquest of

the mind and for the realisation of the ananda lying dormant within the region of senses, emotions, impulses, and intellect!





13.

Facets Of Truth

Thus, the Ganga of Grace flows from the Prasanthi Nilayam, which is Baba. It is restoring health, reviving the drooping, sanctifying every service, fertilising every noble impulse, clearing the vision, and revealing the Godward path.

BABA has, as the main plank of His mission among men, the revival of *Dharma*, by which He means the *Sanathana Dharma*, which is universal and eternal. Baba has come to fuse, not to refuse or confuse! *Sanathana Dharma* belongs to the whole world; that is why Baba is worshipped by His devotees with the name, “*Sarvamata Sammataya namah*,” (Prostrations to Him, to whom all religions are equally acceptable). When I approached Him for directions about a cover design, for the 1967 Shivaratri Special Number of the *Sanathana Sarathi* magazine, Baba seized His pen and drew on a piece of paper a five-disc design, with petals in between, enclosing a circle, inside which I could print His own portrait. On the discs, He Himself drew the symbols of the major religions of mankind: the *Pranava* or *Om* to indicate the Hindu faith; the Wheel to symbolise the religion taught by the Buddha; a sheet of flames, the Sacred Fire, which the Zoroastrians worship; the Crescent and the Star, as a reminder of Islam, and the Cross as the symbol of Christianity! He said, “All faiths are facets of the same Truth, which can be spelt as love, as purity, as charity, as sacrifice, or as surrender of the Will. Even those, who deny God or decry morality, love someone or something; they speak the truth, so that they may be believed; they have to be pure, so that they may satisfy their consciences and the conventions of society. They seek peace and joy. That truth, that love, that peace, that joy is God,” Baba says. His Grace is so vast and limitless that He claims the whole world to be His mansion, every State being but a Hall within it.

This is the reason also for the emergence of the *Linga* from Him on *Shivaratri*, for the *Linga*

is the most universal symbol of God, the simplest, the easiest to comprehend and transcend. It is the Form emanating from the Formless. The *Linga* creates itself in Him; He creates Himself in the *Linga*.

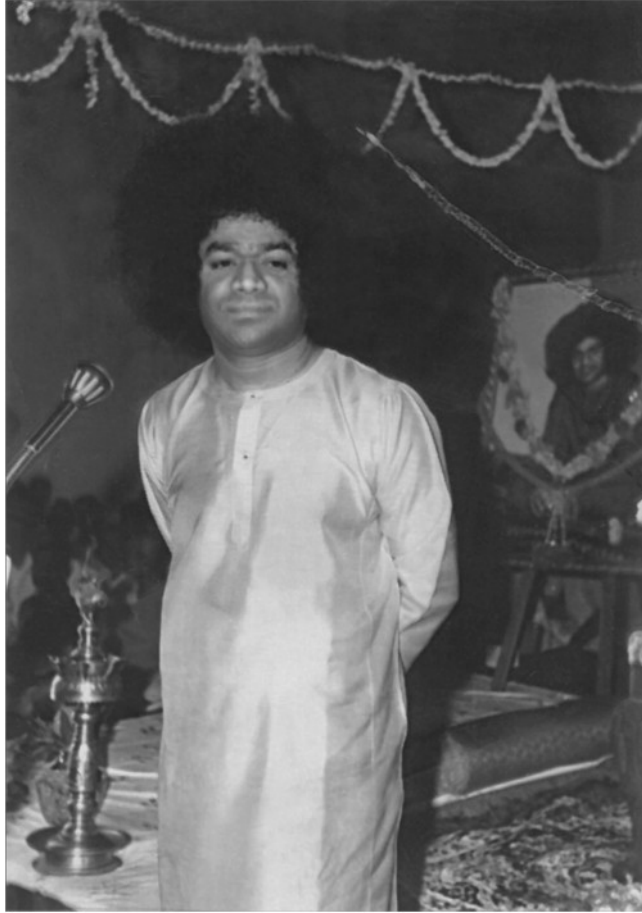
That is the miracle at Kothnaghatta, a tiny little Puttaparthi, nestling behind the colossal, monolithic image of Gomateshwara on Indragiri, at Shravanabelagola, in Mysore. Two boys of this village heard of Baba and braved the long journey with borrowed funds. Baba spoke lovingly to them and filled them with cheer. But, He told them, "I am always in your village; you can have *darshan* there itself; why should you come here?" The boys went back with sad hearts saturated with the devotional songs, sung during *Bhajans* at the *Nilayam*. They collected a few ryots of the village and sang the same song at the village temple.

The temple had a *Linga* installed in it, a marble one, brought by a villager of the place, who had gone to Kashi a hundred years ago. He had brought two such from the Narmada River and built temples for them, one in his own village and another at Kantharajapura, nearby. He endowed land for the temples, had rest houses and wells constructed for the use of pilgrims, and annuities for the priests. The *Linga* at Kothnaghatta stands about 12 inches high, over the pedestal. Daily worship is offered on *Shastraic* lines, since the inauguration a century ago. When the boys sang, the elders, who sat on the fringe, wondered who this Sai Baba was. The boys told them about the Sai of Shirdi and the Sai of Puttaparthi, and about the peace that one could bring in plenty from Prasanthi Nilayam! Very soon, the priest noticed something inside the image, some new lines and colours, some outline being filled up day by day and the boys wondered what it was to become. Within a week, they saw two pictures clearly, within the marble *Linga* - we too can see them now - a picture of Sathya Sai Baba (half the body, facing us, with a garland round the neck) and a picture of Sai Baba of Shirdi (side view, sitting at Dwarakamayi, with black beard, and cloth tied round the head)! It is over a year since the transformation came. We can see them both in that marble home.

Baba has granted many gem-set rings with the blessing, "You can see Me inside this stone," and one can take *darshan* of Him in those gifts. But, this manifestation is in a public temple, where all can see and strive, know and need the twice-embodied Almighty, for ever and ever! Baba Himself has directed many people to go to Kothnaghatta and have *darshan*. His Birthday is celebrated there by the villagers in grateful grandeur. To stand before that shrine of Sailinga is to be confirmed in the Sai faith; it is a baptism of *bhakti*, for the wavering and the wilfully blind. Baba is in every *Linga*, in every idol that is worshipped by man; all *Lingas*, all idols worshipped by man are in Him - that is the message that the birds on that

temple tower chirp to the pilgrims at Kothnaghatta.

Shivaratri, 1967, was on the 9th March. Baba said that morning to the huge gathering, “The Ganga is a holy river, every inch of its flow, from Gangotri to the sea; but, some spots along its bank, like Haridwar, Prayag, Varanasi, and Dakshineswar are held to be specially holy, on account of their association with historical incidents, or vibrating temples. So too, though every day is holy in this Prasanthi Nilayam (and in the Prasanthi established by you in your own hearts and homes), the *Shivaratri* is specially so, on account of the emergence of the *Linga* from living Shiva.” That night, when the hour of emergence was announced by the first sign, the cough, 30,000 hearts pounded quicker; they prayed to Shiva more intensely, as they watched Baba on the *Shanti Vedika*. A deep pink, oval *Linga*, four inches in length, the *Vishwalinga*, with the orbits of planets luminous inside it, and a few minutes later, a smaller one the *Jyotirlinga*, both emerged from the mouth of Baba. The celebrations connected with the festival continued till the 12th and on the 13th, 14th, and 15th, Baba was engaged in healing and attending on the sick, the infirm, and the old among the pilgrims. “Endeavour every moment to see good, hear good, speak good,” He exhorted. “Practise some *sadhana - dhyana, japa, bhajan, namasmaran*. Take but one step forward, I shall take ten towards you. Shed but one tear in penitence, I shall wipe hundreds from your eyes.”



The Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Bombay, and the Maharashtra branch of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha entreated Baba to spend a few days at Bombay and Baba graciously agreed. “He reached Bombay on the 16th March, by car. The students of the Sathya Sai Veda Shastra Pathashala, Prasanthi Nilayam, about 60 little boys, also left in an omnibus. Baba took the same route as the bus, in order to be present wherever the boys halted for food on the way; He caressed them lovingly like a mother and attended to the demands of their curiosity and wonder about the areas, through which they passed. They saw the famous ruins of the Vijayanagar Empire at Hampi, scene of Baba’s own boyhood miracles, and the temple of Virupaksha (where Baba had given *darshan* to His brother and others as Virupaksha Himself) and the mammoth, monolithic images of Ganesha and Narasimha - all under the guidance of Baba Himself. The boys staged two musical plays at Bombay, plays written by Baba specially for them, full of His own strengthening message of courage, based on the inherent divinity of Man.

Radhabhakti is an elevating play, full of popular lilt and folk dances, which delineate the pure devotion of the simple cowherds towards Krishna, who had captured their hearts to the exclusion of everything else. It rescues the reputation of Radha from the absurd, erotic

calumny, to which low tastes have subjected her. The play centres round the festival organised at *Brindavan*, to celebrate the anniversary of the raising of the Govardhan Peak by Krishna. Krishna accepts the invitation of the cowherds, who yearn to see Him and pay homage to Him. Nanda and Yashoda, His foster-parents are also happy that they can feast their eyes on Him. Preparations are made by the cowherds to receive Krishna, who brings the noble Rukmini with Him, but not the other queen, Sathyabhama. She is too jealous of the attachment that Radha has for her own Lord. At *Brindavan*, Radha is forced to remain indoors, for she was a wild sprite, running hither and thither in search of the Treasure she had lost! But, Krishna halts before her door and, when she is brought before Him, He elucidates the true nature of Divine love, of which she was the purest representative.

Baba does the task of *Dharmasthapana* through many channels: direct teaching, writing, discoursing, exhorting, explaining, strengthening the props of *Dharma* (like temples, holy places, and *pundits*), cleansing the ancient texts, which have been tarnished by the slush of time and by the touch of slimy pens. *Radhabhakti* is an instance of this expurgation. The Bhagavata Vahini He is writing in the *Sanathana Sarathi* gives the pellucid, curative stream, which the *Bhagavata* originally was, before it received the contaminating inflow of interpolations.

The play on Sakku Bai, which the boys enacted at Bombay, was also a pleasant surprise, for Baba has depicted in it, through dance and song, the message of 'Grief being the kindest Guru'. The scene, where the 'idols' of Panduranga and Rukmayi come alive and converse on the plight of Sakku and the implications of her suffering, is a fine lesson on the philosophy of grace. His Excellency the Governor of Maharashtra said, while congratulating the little boys on their creditable performance, "You are the emissaries of the great culture of this land."

Baba addressed mammoth gatherings at King's Circle and the Vallabhai Patel Stadium, and lit in the hearts of all who heard Him, the lamp of *Gnyana*. "Fire and water, in conjunction, produce steam, which can haul heavy wagons along. *Karma* and *upasana*, likewise, produce *Gnyana*, which can haul you, with the heavy load of the consequences of the thoughts, deeds, and words of many previous careers on Earth, to the Lord within."

Students predominated at the stadium on the 21st March and Baba gave them good advice. "Like the tiger, which refuses grass, however hungry it may be, man must refuse to descend to the low levels of scandal, sadism, and miserliness. The greed and selfishness that are infecting this country are tragedies for humanity, for India has the role of guiding and leading

mankind to the goal of self-realisation. Youth in India is growing up in the hot house of faction and passion, not, as in the past, in the cool bowers of reverence and humility. Elders indulge in fratricidal fights, vengeful litigation, corrupt means of earning money, and cut-throat competition; their low behaviour in the home, in the village, in the clubs, in the civic bodies, in the legislatures, in all walks of life sets the standard for youth! Indian culture, which is really international in its outlook, has to be taught and lived in the schools and colleges of India, so that India and the world can be happy and content,” Baba said.

Baba takes special interest in youth, for on them rests the burden of upholding *Dharma*. Keeping them close to Him, He moulds them into instruments of service and practitioners of *sadhana*. He grants them grace and wins their loyalty. Then, He tells them, out of His unbounded love, “You are all My limbs, nourished by Me. You constitute the Sai Body. Sai will send you sustenance, wherever you are, whatever your function, provided you give Sai the things Sai considers desirable: virtue, faith, discipline, humility, and reverence.” It is difficult to resist this call.

Baba has planned Study Circles in schools and colleges, for the study of the scriptures and sacred texts in the context of present aspirations and handicaps; He has advised the recruitment and training of groups of young men and women, in the disciplines of *japa* and *dhyana* as well as the technique of tending and nourishing the sick and the distressed. “Members of this Sathya Sai Seva Dal must be saturated with devotion to God and service to Man, the ‘terminus’ and the ‘starting point’ of the pilgrimage called life. The *Dal* must be eager to serve, and able to serve, intelligently, sincerely, and gladly,” He advised. Baba encourages devotees to arrange for religious and moral instruction classes in schools, on the wide bases of *Sanathana Dharma*. He recommends the establishment of hostels, where students can imbibe the disciplines of *Yoga* and *sadhana*, while pursuing their studies in an atmosphere of silence and serenity.

At King’s Circle, the stadium, and at the bungalow where He stayed at Andheri, Baba ceaselessly carried on His mission of mercy, showering His grace on the sick, the old, the mentally deranged, the social outcast, the froth and the dregs of this civilised age. He stepped down from the decorated dais and the silver chair, and moved slowly along the passages, in between the seated men and women, seeking out those, who needed His attention and acknowledging by the *abhayahasta*, the homage of the people. He also found time to solve the spiritual problems and even personal tangles of persons, who approached Him for guidance and blessings. He graciously responded and sanctified the homes of devotees; the

homes were often on the upper floors of limitless chawls or mansions, but He climbed up and descended many stairs a day, with the alacrity springing out of unbounded love. Entering the home, Baba joked and laughed, appreciated and warned, fondled and gave gifts to every member of the family, for He is friend and father, teacher and mother, guardian and God for the households that seek Him.

On the 27th March, Baba left by plane for Jamnagar, Saurashtra. This was a welcome chance to the airport staff at Bombay and Jamnagar to touch the feet, which millions covet to hold. On the flight, Baba drew the attention of persons, who were with Him, to the charming scenes on sea and land, painted by the Master-artist for His own delectation. Saurashtra is studded with Sathya Sai Study circles and *Bhajan Mandalis*; Baba had showered His grace on that land even when He was at Shirdi, and now that He has come again, He had drawn the people in cities and villages so close to Him, by concrete evidence of His presence and benevolence, that it was fast changing into Saurashtra. When I asked someone at Jamnagar the reason for the unprecedented streams of men and women that flooded the area, where the public meeting was to be held, he answered, “In every village, hereabouts, Baba has announced His presence and grace by indisputable signs, like the spontaneous appearance of *vibhuti* showers in the shrines, where He is worshipped!”

Baba stayed at the Amar Vilas Palace Guest House and was welcomed there by the Rajamata of Jamnagar. He came out on the porch many times, until long after midnight, in order to give *darshan* to the hundreds, who surged around. At Jamnagar, Baba opened a spacious building, which will serve as the headquarters of the Sathya Sai Seva Samiti. He then moved into the vast *pandal*, which was filled to overflowing, devotees spilling on the fields for furlongs on all sides. Noticing some sick children, Baba created the *vibhuti* panacea for them and thrilled the assembly by this evidence of His mercy and power. He returned to the dais and sang a few *namavalis*, which the people repeated after Him. He spoke to them about the need to feed the Spirit, as they feed the body; the food of the Spirit is '*japa, dhyana, namasmarana,*' He said. After the meeting, Baba met the members of the Seva Samiti and directed them to work in unison, without any sense of ego. “No man can claim to have achieved this victory or that, for all are but instruments in the hands of the Lord,” He said.

At dawn on the 28th, Baba left Jamnagar by car for Bhavanagar, stopping at Rajkot on the way, to give *darshan* to thousands, who had assembled there. He sang a few *Bhajans* and spotting some sick people, mercy induced Him to give them *vibhuti*, created on the spot. The dailies *Jai Hind* and *Phul Chhab* had taken the news of Baba's journey to all the wayside

villages, before the sun rose that day and so, Baba had to halt every few miles, to enable the villagers to feast their eyes on the Lord they adored. Baba's hand was waving *abhayam* all the way from start to finish.

Baba reached the outskirts of Bhavnagar at about 11 a.m. The citizens had planned to take Him in procession in a floral car, through streets bedecked with floral arches and flanked by school children and eager multitudes. But, since the town was already too full of visitors, Baba saw that a procession would add to the traffic problems of the city. He announced that *darshan* would be given in an additional place, namely, at the Town Hall. We have often seen Baba taking charge of such situations during His tours, when the organisers are too overwhelmed by the magnitude of the gathering to think calmly of the next step. Baba stayed in the bungalow of Abdulla Noor Mahomed at Takeheshwar. Baba gave *darshan* to the multitudes, from the roof of the bungalow. He came among them at 5 p.m., and addressed them for over an hour. "Do not fall in love with the world so much that you bring yourself again and again into this delusive amalgam of grief and joy," He said. "You take up a newspaper and read it; you find that the world is mad and foolish, full of crooks and cranks; it is being made every day safe only for hypocrisy; heroism is futile and fame is momentary; you throw the paper away, in disgust. So too, you must deal with life. Realize that it is all a fantasy, a play, a pantomime. Use the world as an instrument, as a training ground for service, sacrifice, and for winning liberation. Stand a little apart and watch both the play and the Director, who produces it."

Later, Baba laid the Foundation for the Sai *Mandir* of Bhavanagar city. On the 29th, Baba left by plane for Bombay, to return again by car to Navasari, in Gujarat, on the 30th March.

Navasari had four times her population concentrated at the place of the meeting! There was scarce standing room for the mammoth gathering anxious to secure *darshan* and hear the discourse of Baba. Baba moved along the furlong-long alleys between the thick crowds to give them *darshan*, but devotion could not keep the people in their compartments; they moved forward to the dais, in order to have nearer *darshan* and could not be quietened into the silence needed for *Bhajan*.

So, Baba proceeded to Baroda, to save the people the consequences of the stampede, which they were about to create. Twenty miles away, when His car drove along, Baba heard *Bhajan* songs from about 4000 people, sitting in an open space adjoining the road. The devotees of Ubel had taken a vow that they would be engaged in continuous *bhajan* for 12 hours; and

they prayed that Baba should come amidst them, on His own. And, the vow yielded fruit. Baba was pleased at their exemplary discipline; He alighted from the car, moved among them, and gave *vibhuti* to a few; He ascended the dais and for about twenty minutes, He sang *namavalis* for them to repeat after Him. Then, He walked back to the car, unhampered by anyone trying to fall at His feet, and drove away. The *Bhajan* was continued by the gathering until the determined hour!

Baba spent the night at Baroda. On the 31st March, He met the members of the Baroda Sathya Sai Samiti and of the study circles of Jambusar and other nearby villages. About 200 people had His *darshan* and quite a few, His gracious gift—*vibhuti*—created on the spot.

Back on the Bombay road the next day, the cars passed through Navasari and towards early afternoon, members of the party were scanning the precincts of the road for a mango tope, or a cluster of other trees, where lunch could be spread and taken. Baba seemed uninterested. He was signing to the cars to move forward, until they came to a school building, Baba stopped and wanted inquiries to be made, whether the school was working. It was not; it had a hostel where some students, who had taken Agriculture as their special subject, lived. Baba had the cars turned into the hostel gates and He showered His grace upon the boarders. He gave to each of them His grace, His photograph, *vibhuti*, and enough money for a new set of clothes; meanwhile, students, members of the staff, and villagers from miles around gathered there and Baba spoke to them for about half an hour. They all had the unique pleasure of *darshan*, *sparshan*, and *sambhashan*! Baba later said that He knew there was a school, where He could give joy to many. Baba says no word of His is without significance; no act of His is without benefit.

On the second day of April, Baba was at Poona, where He addressed a gathering of 20,000 on the grounds of the M.E.S. College. On the 3rd, *Bhajan* was held at the riverside bungalow (of Mr. Banatwala), where He granted interviews to many officers of the Armed Forces. The Andhra Association welcomed Him in the evening. He gave a discourse in their premises. He disclosed there what had transpired earlier. “I had a talk with the Headmasters of Poona, about moral and spiritual training for boys and girls. An institution will soon come up in Poona, where parents, teachers, and student leaders will be trained to guide children along the right lines through the teaching of the fundamental principles of religion and morality; students too will be trained there in *yoga* and *dhyana*, so that they will grow strong and straight.”

Baba left Poona on the 4th April and reached Prasanthi Nilayam on 7th, after a short stay at Hyderabad. On the 10th April, addressing the devotees gathered to receive His New Year message and blessings, Baba declared that the tour of Maharashtra and Saurashtra saw an unprecedented flow of spiritual delight.

On the 20th and 21st days of April, an All India Conference of the office bearers of all organisations bearing Baba's name was held at Abbotsbury, Madras, in the immediate presence of Baba. This was a historic event, pregnant with tremendous potentiality for the uplift of *Dharma*. Nearly a thousand delegates from all the States of India (and many countries overseas), gladly took part in the Conference. Basking for two days in the sun of Baba's glory, they returned home charged with a new enthusiasm and a strange thrill. Representatives from each state came before the gathering, at the request of Dr. B. Ramakrishna Rao (President, All India Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, and former Governor of Kerala and Uttar Pradesh), who presided, and gave their reports revealing the varied ways, in which devotion to Baba and His teachings were being expressed to suit the needs and solve the problems of the people. Group meetings to sing in chorus the glory of God was a common feature; there were Study Circles to learn about Baba's message and teachings, and attempts to bring Indian culture and *Sanathana Dharma* to the doors of the common man by means of discourses by *pundits*; there was a travelling, pictorial exhibition depicting the illustrative parables and metaphors, which Baba uses to clarify knotty problems in philosophy or *sadhana*, also three-day seminars on the 'Winning of *Prasanthi* in the context of the modern world', which were held in more than five towns in Mysore State.

Baba directed that delegates from overseas also express their views. The delegate from Hong Kong said that the group attending *Bhajan* and study sittings there, was a miniature U.N.O. and that he had found great enthusiasm for *yoga* and *sadhana* as well as *namajapa*, in Japan. He said that the yearning for God is still dormant in the Chinese Republic and pressed for the translation of books, by Baba and on Baba, into Chinese and Japanese. The delegate from East Africa described how the groups there had both congregational prayer in the Prasanthi Nilayam style and the study of Baba's works, as part of their *sadhana*. The delegate from Ceylon gave instances of Baba's gracious presence in Ceylon, as evidenced by the indisputable experiences of devotees and delighted the gatherings by declaring that Baba was in Ceylon as much as anywhere else. The delegate from Norway described the plight of people, who have lost faith in God and not acquired faith in man; he spoke of his hesitation to accept various western dogmas and of his study of Indian *yoga* and Philosophy.

“On the 25th February, 1965, when I was sitting in front of the *samadhi* at Shirdi, a strange man in a blue shirt approached me with the question, 'Have you seen Sathya Sai Baba? If there is God on Earth, it is He. He is coming to Bombay on the 14th March. You must see Him. This is *vibhuti* from His hand. This is His picture.' That was how Baba called me towards Him, for, as I knew later, on Feb 25th, the date of Baba's reaching Bombay was known only to Him!”

“When I sent a letter to Baba on the 14th March, when He was in Gwalior Palace, Bombay, Mr. L. C. Java took the letter quick and fast, saying, 'Baba told me an hour ago that a foreigner would come with a letter, which I should take to Him, without delay!' 'We are blessed,' he said, 'for we have been selected to spread the news of His advent and His message all over the world.’”

Dr. Ramakrishna Rao said that the rapid advance in science and technology, with no corresponding advance in moral strength (in fact, with a rapid decline in morality and virtue), is posing a crucial problem before mankind—the problem of survival. The intelligentsia of India are unaware of the roots of their culture and are apologetic, when confronted by ardent inquirers or purblind slanderers. Baba's insistence on *Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, and Prema* is the only cure for the ailing world. Those, who have heard and understood His call, have formed in their own neighbourhoods, associations and societies, institutes and institutions to bring together kindred minds for mutual inspiration. But, this has happened in a haphazard manner and so, Baba has brought us all together, so that we do not stray away from the path of *sadhana*; we have to follow certain basic principles of efficient publicity, for the Advent is done by the man, who practises His teachings and proves by His words and deeds that He is experiencing peace and joy thereby. Just as the waters of a raging river are regulated by the banks, the enthusiasm of devotion has to be regulated on certain accepted principles. But, in the framing of rules and regulations, Baba said, people should not ignore the *raison d'etre* of Sathya Sai Organisation - making everyone aware of the joy, peace, and wisdom that he truly has and is!

The Sathya Sai Organisation is only the reflection in the members of the One Sai, whom all adore. The more clearly He is reflected, the greater the service one can do. The Conference appointed committees, listened to the reports of their deliberations, and decided to follow certain general guidelines—but, these were not its chief gains. The chief gain was—Baba. He persuaded, convinced, counselled, conversed, and, like a close comrade, conferred His love on all. He sat among the delegates during breakfast, lunch, and dinner; He met them as

District groups. He had a solution ready for every difficulty; His smile was coveted by all and was awarded to all. He sat with them for photographs. He entered into the heart of each. The universality and innate validity of His teaching won enthusiastic welcome.

“You must serve others, because you can have no peace so long as another is denied peace, you have to make every heart, including yours, into a Prasanthi Nilayam; work without despondency or pride; co-operate with all who are good and selfless. Keep in touch with all persons who trudge along the pilgrim road to God, whatever the name by which they know Him, whatever the form which they attribute to Him, until you reach Him and know that He is all names and forms,” Baba exhorted them. The delegates departed with the blessings of Baba reverberating in their ears, “March forward as one, united, courageous band, searching for the God, who resides in every being and worshipping Him by devoted service.”

On 22nd, 23rd, and 24th April, tens of thousands of people heard Baba and a few scholars speak at the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha sessions held in Madras. Dr. V. K. Gokak, D. Litt., addressed Baba as ‘world redeemer’ and as a ‘saviour, whose mercy beckons every son of Earth to God.’ “The world has ignored the unity of Spirit and matter. Real progress can come only when man seeks, not information, but transformation and discovers his own reality lying under thick layers of error and illusion.” On the 24th, Dr. S. Bhagavantam, D.Sc., Scientific Adviser to the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, spoke. He said, “It is a rare privilege that anyone can get, to be invited in whatever capacity to be on the same platform as Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Baba has put me into many tribulations, even in the province of science. Years ago, in one of my first confrontations with Him, Baba said, ‘Scientists have no faith in God, is it not? You, in particular, have you any respect for the ancient texts of this country? The *Bhagavad Gita*, for example?’ It hurt my pride. To establish the bona fides of my tribe, I told Him of Oppenheimer and his exclamation when the first experimental atom bomb was exploded, ‘*Divisurya sahasrasya*,’ which he had learnt from the *Bhagavad Gita*. ‘The truly learned among the scientists,’ I said, ‘are aware of the wisdom of the ancient texts, the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*.’ ‘Do you like to have one?’ He asked me and took with His fingers some particles of sand from the bed of the Chithravati River, where we were seated around Him; the sand turned into a text of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which He placed in my hands. I examined it later to discover the name of the press, where it was printed; needless to say, there was no name on it. This was an utter denunciation of the laws of physics, for which I stand. Later, He performed a surgical operation before me, creating knife, needle, bandage—all that was needed. I was a fairly lost person at that time!

Dr. Gokak said yesterday that Baba ‘defied’ the laws of physics and chemistry! He does not defy the laws; He ‘transcends’ them. He is transcendental. He is a phenomenon. He is Divine. This is the right way, the safe way, for me to get out of the dilemma. We scientists are a very humble lot; every time we have added a little to what we already know, we realise that there are more things that we have to name, for adding to the area of ignorance. As I am speaking, a man made contraption is digging into the moon, quarter million miles away, a trench 18" long and 9" deep! We know that only knowledge can be acquired, but wisdom? That has to be got from Baba! Bhagawan is our nearest kith and kin; turn to Him for the eternal message. That alone will save us.”

During the discourses that He gave on the three evenings, Baba emphasised the importance of dedication, so that activity may become meaningful and conducive to happiness. He said that man must be reminding himself of his essential divinity, so that he may not slide into the beast, which terrifies and gets terror-stricken. “Fear is something that can never affect the man, who knows he is a spark of the Divine,” He said.

From Madras, Baba proceeded to the Nilgiri Hills and after a short visit to Calicut on the Arabian Sea Coast, He proceeded to the Annamalai Hills, the home of coffee and tea plantations, to inaugurate a High School there, and reached Prasanthi Nilayam for the *Guru Pournima* festival, which after the unforgettable Shiva Shakti miracle, has acquired an epochal charisma! A week later, Baba left for Whitefield and from there, He went up the Horsley Hills with a few devotees, to spend some time in that quiet place, 4000 feet above the sea level.

It did not take long for the people of the valleys all around, to know that Baba was shedding His lustre in their midst; they went up to Him in large numbers, during the fourteen days of His stay and they were amply rewarded at the *Bhajan* sessions, with *vibhuti* from His hand. The small group of aspirants that Baba brought with Him could get from Him elucidation for the many Gordian knots of *sadhana*, which they placed before Him.

“You call them miracles, but for Me, they are just My way; you cannot solve the mystery; for Me, they are no mystery, they are part of My essential miraculousness,” Baba says. Devotees at Horsley Hills had many chances of experiencing the Divine mystery. While walking along a footpath among the trees, Baba saw a jasmine creeper and plucking a flower, He breathed on it; it became a diamond of exceeding brilliance! Another day, He gave a piece of granite, picked from the ground, to a devotee at hand; but, it was not the stone that he received! The

stone had turned into sugar candy!

Another day, He created rosaries and other sacred articles and gifted them to the *sadhakas*. He materialised a 'silver' vessel full of the precious nectar that He alone knew how and when to 'prepare' and gave each one a few drops of that grace. Howard Murphet of the Theosophical Society with Mrs. Murphet was with Baba at the Hills. He writes, "I was no cynic when I came to India. I know that I was a sceptic but, not an incurable one. My approach has always been the cautious, scientific one. I needed to see and touch for myself, in order to believe. Through a strange network of circumstances (which I can only say, was due to the grace of Baba), I met Sai Baba! Baba was kind to me. I saw and touched miraculous incredible things; I have established, to the satisfaction of my critical self, that miracles do take place, actions speak louder than words. The Word is powerful, but in the 'Word made Flesh', we see its power dramatically. Then, it becomes a strong buttress for our tottering faith."

While exhorting the devotees one day, as Murphet writes,

To reach beyond the portals

To where the Part is Whole

Beyond all thought, all feeling,

Beyond the stars and sun

Beyond the Cosmic Zero

To where all things are One.

Baba created a picture, which He gave to one devotee, of the Cosmic *Purusha*, the Universe as a person (the *Virat Swarupa*), incorporating all gods and demons, all stars and skies, all beings and becomings, including Himself and the previous Shirdi body!

Murphet writes, "In all these, we must not lose sight of the greatest miracle of all! This is the miracle of His *Prema* - His Divine Love. While UNIVERSAL (going out to all men), it is at the same time INDIVIDUAL. You feel it beamed directly and blissfully on YOU. As one of His *Bhaktas* put it, 'Every person thinks that Baba loves him most.' Yes. This pure love--universal, yet individualised-is the central miracle, from which all others come, as by-products. The main end-product of this stream of *prema* is to raise us to a knowledge of our true spiritual Selves, to a realisation of our oneness with all life, with the Author of all life. How few there have been, through whom has flowed this miraculous river of pure, egoless

love, with its attendant whirls and eddies of lesser miracles! How lucky, how blessed we are, to have known such a one on Earth and to be with Him still!”

Baba says that the world is not an empty, meaningless dream; it is a purposeful play, with plots within the plot. God plays the roles and so, be on the watch! Recognise Him when you see majesty, beauty, order, harmony, melody on the stage. He wears many masks to hide Himself. He says that His is also a role now and that He plays it of His own free Will!

Baba reached Prasanthi Nilayam from Brindavan, Whitefield, on the third day of July; the Murphets accompanied Him thither, drawn by the love that He showered on them. Howard Murphet spoke on Baba at Prasanthi Nilayam, on the 21st and on the 23rd.

Dr. Judith (Jyothi-priya) Tyberg of the East-West Cultural Centre, Los Angeles addressed the residents; she had a long talk with Baba, during which she asked Baba whether movie films of His miracles could be taken and shown, to convince people of their authenticity. Baba replied that doubts would still persist. It is only by strengthening one’s faith, by clearing the doubts in one’s own mind, that one can convince others. “Faith travels from one mind to another.” Baba then created some sweets for the group, demonstrating that He had nothing in His hand or up His sleeve. They came through His “*Sankalpa*, Resolve.” They were not in the hand, but “in the head,” He said. He revealed Himself thus to Dr. Judith, for she was an earnest *sadhaka*, soaked in devotion and scholarship. Her arthritis had been miraculously mitigated by Baba, who sent a few packets of *vibhuti* for her use through a person, who returned to the U.S.A. from His Presence. He told her, “I am in all hearts. I am one with all. But yet, I never share their pain or their joy, I never experience sorrow or anger. I am *Anandaswarupa* and *Premaswarupa*.” No wonder that Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, the chief proponent of transcendental meditation, the holy man who has cast a powerful spell over the youth of the West (“We who are tired of our dead and decayed Western Culture will follow His Holiness, our Master, to the grave,” say the hippies to him), wanted that Baba should bless the “leaders of the youth of the world, who are training themselves at Shankaracharya Nagar, Hrishikesh, to become the guides of Youth!”

On 30th July, Baba visited the College of Engineering at Anantapur, about 60 miles distant from the Nilayam. Baba pointed out to the vast gathering of students and teachers that education had degenerated into a course of training for mere living, not for reaching the goal of life. It teaches skills, confers scholarship, but it does not concern itself with the resources latent in the deeper levels of consciousness, the springs of sympathy, service, and

renunciation, the urge to return to the haven of joy, from which one has come away. Baba stayed on for three more days at Anantapur, presiding over the sessions of the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha.

The fifth day of August, 1967 is a noteworthy date in the history of Prasanthi Nilayam, for that day, it was formally constituted into a separate township with a Chairman and a Committee, which will manage its civic administration. Speaking about the village of Puttapparthi from which the township area was separated that day, Baba said that there would never be any trace of 'apartness' in the mind, so far as He or the devotees were concerned. "Brindavan belongs to all; Govinda is everybody's God," He said. He exhorted the Chairman and Members to serve with love and care the residents, as well as the other members of the Sai family, who come to the place.

Baba went to Mandya (known as Sugar Town) at the invitation of the Minister of Education of the State of Mysore, on 20th August. There were at least a hundred thousand villagers gathered in the vast open spaces, in and around the stadium. The Minister said that he was happy that "so many of my fellow countrymen are enthusiastic to have the *darshan* of Bhagawan and to listen to His message. It augurs well for the future of this nation." "You are legitimately proud of the great temples in your district, built by great architects and sculptors and master craftsmen. But, you must remember that these heights of artistic excellence were reached by men, in music, sculpture, painting, poetry, drama, architecture, etc., only when the skill was dedicated to the God in man," Baba told them, in reply to their Welcome Address.

During the first week of September, Baba was so moved by *prema* that He drove 400 miles by car to the bedside of Dr. Ramakrishna Rao at Hyderabad, to confer on him, during his critical illness, the inestimable boons of *darshan*, *sparshan*, and *sambhashan*. The last function Ramakrishna Rao attended at the Prasanthi Nilayam (where his heart always was), was the inauguration of the Township. He was nominated by Baba as the President of the All-India Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha, for he was a scholar and poet in many languages, and an ardent devotee. As Governor of Kerala, he had the honour of receiving Baba in that State more than once; as Governor of Uttar Pradesh, he was happy to accompany Baba to Ayodhya, Kashi, Prayag, and Badrinath. He used to translate Baba's Telugu discourses quickly and correctly, into Hindi.

Baba granted him supreme contentment and joy, during the last phase of his life. "I have got what I yearned for," he repeated, when Baba came away from his beside. On 14th September,

after midnight, a few minutes before the end, he assured the members of his family, “Baba will guard you and guide you, as He has done so long.” Then, he uttered from the depths of his heart, the sacred *mantra*, “*Sriman Narayana Charanou Sharanam Prapadhye*,” (I take refuge in the Feet of the Lord) and attained peace and liberation! Truly, a great *Karma yogi*, who, as the *Gita* teaches, had, through *upasana*, attained *kaivalya* (liberation) by the *gnyana* he earned!

It will be a thrilling chapter, if one could collect and compile the events of the last days of the devotees of Baba, who have merged in Him. They die in silent serenity, in prayerful surrender, or in the midst of the *Bhajan* they share, or during the recitation of *Pranava*; they get *amrita* from nowhere and sip it as they die; they see Baba before them with their departing sight and leave, after prostrating to Him; they have *vibhuti* emanating from their heads, in token of His blessings! O, it is amazingly sweet and heartening - the way in which Baba showers His grace, when His devotees bid farewell to the bodies wherein they dwell!

“I had read of the great miracle workers and teachers of India’s past; I hoped that some might still exist today. I hoped - yet, hardly dared to hope - that I might even meet one. For, underneath, like all men, I longed for ‘the many-splendored thing’ that Francis Thompson says, the ‘estranged faces miss’,” says Murphet. Among the many, who came to India from foreign land on this search, were the Raymers, husband and wife, who heard of Baba and came to the Nilayam and stayed there continuously for over six months, engaged in *sadhana*. When they went back, persons who had already come under the influence of Indian *Yoga* and thought, through the teachings and inspiration of Ramana Maharishi, Aurobindo, Yoganandaji, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda, gathered at their place or drew inspiration from their example, to study Baba’s work and do *sadhana* according to His directions. A large number of people have come into the Sathya Sai *satsang*; a few have come over to India to have Baba’s *darshan* and blessings.

Charles Penn is singularly fortunate, because though he has not come, he is able to feel the constant presence of Baba, whether up in the sky while searching for fallen aircraft or down on the seashore collecting shells, or in his prayer room picturing His form in his heart! Baba sits before him, converses with him, teaches him, answers his questions, as clearly as if He is concretely present, across the seven seas! The reasons are characteristic of Baba that their authenticity is clear to all, who know how Baba elucidates. Moreover, when Penn sends the typescripts to me for perusal or publication, I have often asked Baba for further clarification and never once has He disavowed His authorship; in fact, He has justified certain new

examples and parables that He had told Penn at Los Angeles, on the score that He had to explain things that way, since the background of Penn differed from that of His Indian listeners. “I give him the example of daffodils, because there is a bed of daffodils outside the shrine there.” He said once, “I tell him about strong breezes and sails and ships, because he knows about them, not you,” He said to me.

Indira Devi, a Russian-born American citizen living in Mexico with an Indian name, was directed to Baba by a clairvoyant and later, more directly, by the Murphets. She had learnt *Yoga* in Mysore, from Yogi Krishnamacharya; later, she had lived in Shanghai and given demonstrations of *Yoga* in Moscow; she has a *Yoga* Foundation at Tecate, Mexico. She was to be introduced to President Kennedy at Dallas, Texas, so that she could present her books on *Yoga* to him and tell him about a few *asanas* and deep breathing exercises, which would make him physically fit for the strain of the extraordinarily heavy Presidential schedule. But, she was shocked, along with the entire world, when he was shot dead a few hours before the engagement! In order to exorcise hatred from the human heart, she devised that day a “Meditation Crusade for Light in Darkness,” and came to India, where she had learnt the elements of *Yoga* and meditation. She met the Murphets in April, 1966 and they sent her to Prasanthi Nilayam! Baba gave her, as she says, “more than kindness, more than goodness, more than grace; refuge: *abhaya*,” “Call Me whenever you need Me; I shall be with you,” “I felt a stream of brilliant light pouring on me, giving me a tremendous sense of joy and happiness, which filled my entire being. ‘Thank You, Baba,’ I whispered, in gratitude. Carrying this radiant light, I returned to Los Angeles and Tecate,” she wrote.

She was back again in February, 1967, full of enthusiasm and devotion for *Yoga*, as a cure for the frustrations of the world. Baba encouraged her to train men and women residents of the Nilayam, as well as the boys of the *Vedashastra Pathashala* in the *asanas* of *Yoga* and the technique of meditation. He was Himself present on the two days, ready to elaborate the reasons she gave for choosing the Flame as the focus of meditation and to clarify other points, which she felt essential for the course. Contemplation on the flame is the ancient *Vedic* prescription, where the Lord is described as a ‘straight streak of lightning brilliance, in the centre of the heart.’ Baba has the *Paramjyoti* or the supreme light, as the crest and crown of the *Yogadanda* on the Prasanthi flag. In the Nilayam, during the pre-dawn hours of meditation, a lamp, with its steady flame, clear and bright, is used for concentration. In the *Dhyana Vahini* written by Baba, He describes the *atma* as, “the Sun of Suns, the Effulgence of Effulgence; it is the supreme light, the *swyamjyoti*, the self-effulgent.” Therefore, Baba

appreciated the crusade of Indira Devi and blessed it. He told her of its implications and possibilities in the context of the ancient *Vedic* prayer, “*Tamaso maa jyotir gamaya*” (From darkness, lead me to light). In the book, *Prasanthi Vahini*, written by Him years ago, He had explained it thus, “O Lord, when the objects of the world attract me, remove the darkness which hides from me the all-pervading, all constituting *atma*, which every object really is.”

Dasara, 1967 began with the dawn of October 4th. Dr. K. Bhaskaran Nair. D.Sc., writes, “Life in India today is like a lotus flower at night. It is downcast with the burden of dew and the petals are closed in suffering. It droops with pain and privation, and waits in agony for the dawn. Will the dawn ever come? Let us not despair. The crimson rays have broken the evil night. Very soon, it will be day! This is the hope Puttaparthi holds out to us.” After the dawn, Baba gave *darshan* to the thousands waiting for it and hoisted the flag of Peace on the hearts of all, making each heart a *Prasanthi Nilayam*. The Lotus bloomed.

In His discourse during Hospital Day celebrations, Baba said that concern about the future, contrition about the past, and castles planned to be constructed in the future cause most mental illness; men are not brave enough to forget the past, to look the present in the face, and to plan sensibly for the future, He said. On the 6th, about 10,000 hungry people were fed sumptuously, people whom Baba would refuse to call ‘poor,’ for many of them, as He says, are “rich” in spirit. He also gave thousands of saris and *dhotis*, with the affection and care that no parent evinces towards his children. The *Vedapurushasaptaha-yagnya*, which has become an annual feature, highlighting Baba’s mission of *Vedic* revival, started on the 7th. That evening, when the 4th anniversary celebrations of the *Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha* were inaugurated, everyone became aware of the vacuum left behind by Dr. Ramakrishna Rao.

Dasara is, above all, the worship of the Mother as the Goddess of learning, of wealth, of food, of beauty, of art. So, Baba admits into the programme music recitals, musical discourses, dramas, folk plays, recitations, readings from their poems by poets, etc., as offering at the feet of the Mother. The *yagnya* was successfully accomplished on Vijayadashami day (the Day of Victory). Baba gave *darshan* that day, wearing the resplendent robe of gold thread woven by a devotee, who had himself woven the *mantra*, Sairam, 108 times into it, reciting it throughout the process of weaving. When Baba came that morning wearing that unique robe, devotees felt a thrill that awakened all levels of their consciousness in bliss, as if the Lord extolled in the *Vedas* had presented Himself before them in His full glory. They remembered the song that Baba had sung, during the inaugural

discourse of *Dasara*:

When man is bogged in wrong and hate

Lost in error, afar from era's mores,

To lead him right, in love ...

When world does writhe in agony

At thirst of blood and loot,

To cleanse the heart of hate ...

When trampled under heavy hoof

The good, as orphans, grieve,

To fondle, foster, free ...

When the word of God is twisted

By petty putrid tongues,

To reveal, unfold, proclaim ...

To lighten burden of the Earth,

To keep the truth He plighted

God has come, as man amidst men!

Can call be clarioned, clearer?

Drawn in and tossed on the waves of

Birth and Death

You sign and groan in pain, O Man!

Be steady a moment; watch; catch; within reach

The life-boat floats: Sathya Sail

The confidence, which that assurance gave, the joy imparted by these tidings, devotees desired to share with the people of their towns and villages, as early as possible.

Baba too left for Hyderabad, so as to be there on Deepavali, the Festival of Light, commemorating the victory of the uplifting faculties of man over the down dragging tendencies. While driving along the trunk road, Baba granted shepherd boys, men behind the

plough, women with babies in arms trudging home in the hot sun, and boys watching buffaloes wallowing in the pools gifts of fruit, sweets, and cash, ensuring for each of them a Happy Deepavali! One fortunate woman received a bagful of sweets, a jar of pickles, a tin of biscuits, and enough money for a fine Sari; besides, Baba asked the old lady, “Do you know who I am?” She confessed she did not! Baba asked her whether she had heard of Sai Baba. She had! She said, the *Karnam* of her village had gone on pilgrimage to a place called Puttaparthi and seen Him. Baba, embodiment of *prema* that He is, stood before her and said, “See! I am that Sai Baba.” The lady fell at His feet. “Go, have a happy, holy day,” He said.

On November 2nd, Baba was at Bombay. Next day, Baba drove to the outskirts of Andheri along the Mahakali Cave Road, and reached the site where 30,000 ardent *bhaktas* were singing paeans of praise for the glory of God, awaiting the precious moment, when He was to consecrate the spot where “Dharmakshetra” was to be built: Baba went up to the topmost terrace on the hill; the ceremonial rites were nearing completion; the trench, in which the first row of stones was to rest, was ready. Baba waved His hand and a ‘silver’ plate, with the mystic symbols of the presiding deities of the Nine Planets of *Vedic* science, emanated from it, in full view of all. Baba directed that it be placed underneath the first stone and Himself laid the mortar with a trowel; then, He hoisted the Prasanthi Flag and unveiled the copper plaque, announcing the Inauguration of “Dharmakshetra”.

Addressing the vast gathering of devotees, Baba said that the name Dharmakshetra was used for the battlefield, wherein the *Gita* was taught. Though its real name was *Kurukshetra*, it was referred to as Dharmakshetra, in the *Gita*; it was the field, where *Dharma* won over *Adharma* (where Right prevailed over Wrong). This place, this Dharmakshetra too, will see that victory, will ensure through the teaching and learning of a celestial song, that victory! Indeed, the body of man is the genuine dharmakshetra, the battlefield where right fights with wrong for victory. *Ksha* means that which suffers *kshaya*, or decay through vice; *tra* means that which recovers by means of virtue. So, the body, which flourishes and perishes through virtue and vice, is the *kshetra*; it has to be made into a *dharmakshetra*, by the discovery of the dweller within the body, the *kshetragnya*, the *atma*, the *antaryamin*. Hon’ble Sri P.K. Savant, who presided, said that the Dharmakshetra, which will rise on that site, will be a Prasanthi Nilayam, Home of Highest Peace, and that its radiant rays will scatter and destroy *ashanti* from the hearts of men. Baba then met the devotees, who had won the privilege of building *kuteerams* or ‘spiritual retreats’ for themselves at the Dharmakshetra site. He exhorted them to intensify their yearning and to deepen their faith, so that they may be

examples to those, who doubt or deny the value of spiritual endeavour.

In the evening, Baba inaugurated the Sathya Sai *Seva Dal*, an organisation of young *sadhakas*, who strengthen and supplement their *sadhana* by efficient and earnest service rendered to the weak, the disabled, and the distressed. Baba Himself is, to us, the supreme exemplar of service through love. On 4th, 5th, and 6th November, Baba gave *darshan* at the Dharmakshetra site, during *Bhajan* in the morning; His eyes picked out from the thickly packed masses, sick children, diseased adults, and deformed or defective unfortunates. He blessed them with *vibhuti*, created to assuage and assure.

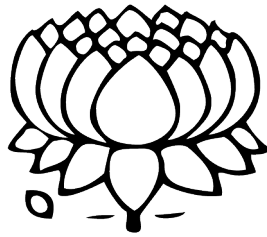
Baba reached Prasanthi Nilayam on 14th November, in time for the Birthday celebrations. “Each year, My Birthday is celebrated in grand style. Thousands come to have My *darshan*, the *darshan* I brought you to enjoy, to the Nilayam, on My wings,” said Baba to Charles Penn in Los Angeles, during one of His supra-corporal visits to him! “But,” He cautioned Penn, “do not think that it is My Birthday that is celebrated! No. I am a part of each of you; after years of onward movement, you merge in the estuary of My stream.” That was what He told Penn! Listen to what He told the thousands, who had come on 23rd November to Prasanthi Nilayam, “This is not My Birthday; I have no birth, no birthday; I am ageless, eternal. You must celebrate your birthday, when you are born into Knowledge, not into bondage. Adore Me, on the day that you are I, on the day when you derive unbounded bliss therefrom, on the day when you can be full of joy that you are born.”

During the celebrations, on the 26th November to be exact, Baba called upon the President of the Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Bombay, to announce to the vast concourse of devotees that a World Conference of *sevaks* and *sadhakas* of the Sathya Sai units will be held at Dharmakshetra, in May, 1968, an announcement that was welcomed with acclamation and unbounded joy.

The prospect of sharing with kindred spirits from all over the world, the thrill of Baba’s *darshan*, *sparshan*, and *sambhashan* filled organisations and units in every State, with ardent hope; hence, Baba resolved to hold preliminary conferences of office-bearers of Sathya Sai Organisations in the states of India, to ‘confirm and consolidate, collate and co-ordinate activities and programmes.’ A conference was held at Ernakulam in Kerala State, on 20th December, at Madras on 24th December, at Brindavan in Karnataka State, on 30th December, 1967, and at Prasanthi Nilayam, Andhra State, on 23rd February, 1968.

Besides emphasising once again the basic principles of *sadhana* based service to the

community, irrespective of the creed or faith of the beneficiaries, Baba directed that they should not get enmeshed in organisational entanglements and the competitive search for donors and financial supporters. Baba had a President chosen for each State and He gave them the task of co-ordinating and supervising, guiding and counselling the various groups of *bhaktas*, who have formed units in His name. He chose also District Presidents. Unhampered by committees, these Presidents will work as a team, under the State President, to promote and strengthen the *sevak* and *sadhak* groups all over the country. Baba advised the workers to start group-singing of *Bhajans* along the streets of the village and town, in the early hours of the day, so that people may waken to the name of God and the atmosphere is filled with the fragrance of the glory of the Lord! He wanted also that the message of *atmic* strength and *atmic* unity be sown in the hearts of students. Women devotees were directed to form *Samitis* to serve their sisters. Thus, the Ganga of Grace flows from the Prasanthi Nilayam, which is Baba. It is restoring health, reviving the drooping, sanctifying every service, fertilising every noble impulse, clearing the vision, and revealing the Godward path.





14.

The Call - The Response

We are all His reflections; He recognised us as such, though we have not yet become aware of it. How can He then give us up?

BABA addresses the vast assemblies that gather to listen to His discourses, “*Divyatma-Swarupulaaraa!*” - “Ye, Divine *Atmic* Realities!” He sees all as Himself; He calls upon all to see Him as themselves. This identity is the truth, but we revel in the delusion of separateness and suffer. Baba is love, wisdom, power, grace. So, He is able to declare, “The world is My mansion; even those who deny Me in any form, I shall present Myself before you.” “I am in the least of you, as much as the best; do not slander or injure anyone, for you are slandering and injuring Me, who is in him.” Such is the universality of His majesty and His love.

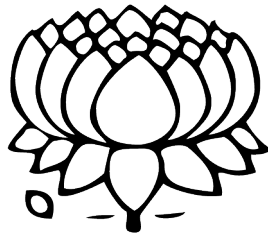
It is that love, which prompts Him to invite us to “approach, examine, experience, judge, and then, accept” Him. Lord Krishna, too, after teaching Arjuna the *Gita*, said, “Now that you have heard all, revolve this in your mind and do as you desire.” Baba has no anger in His composition, no trace of fear of fanaticism. We are all His reflections; He recognised us as such, though we have not yet become aware of it. How can He then give us up? He sees mankind as a massive caravan on the pilgrim road across the desert waters - some straying away, where mirages attract, some searching for oases, some listening to the voices of those, who have seen the goal. When Baba, at the age of 14, cast away His satchel of school books and stepped on the road with the words, “I am no longer yours, My devotees are calling Me, I have My work to do,” the caravan was about to destroy itself in the arid region of simoom-ridden technology and die of thirst, deprived of the waters of love.

There is in every river, Baba says, the urge to return to the sea, from which it was born. Rising as vapour into the sky, rolling across it as cloud, falling as rain upon the earth, flowing along the bed it scours, it keeps that urge in mind; the urge rushes it forward over every

obstacle, until it reaches the sea; so too, all men in all lands call out in all languages for God, from whom they have come, so that He may give a sign, an echoing call to lead them along the quickest, the safest path to Him. Baba hears that call. He gives the sign, the echoing call.

“My devotees are calling Me; I have My work to do,” He said. “All men are Mine; the World is My mansion,” He says, “I have no Name I can specify as My very own.” He has come to guide all mankind. When someone wrote to Baba, “I am happy that Your name is adored in every home, here,” Baba replied, “You will soon see that It is adored in every inch of space, all over the world.” Yes. That is the Meaning, the Purpose, the Mission, the Consummation.

The World Conference of *sevaks* and *sadhaks* of the Sathya Sai Organisations and groups will inaugurate that Golden Era of Universal Love.



About SSSSTPD

On 1st January, 2009, Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust (SSSST) commenced operations with four divisions; the Bhakta Sahayak divisions (one in Prasanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi and another in Brindavan, Bangalore), the Publications division, and the Media division.

The Publications Division (SSSSTPD) caters to:

1) The publication and distribution of spiritual, religious, and educational Sai Literature and the production and distribution of audio and visual multimedia, photographs, calendars, and diaries, educational software, etc. for the benefit of visiting pilgrims and devotees all over the world. All the literature and publications are based on the teachings, philosophy, message, and values of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

2) The publication and distribution of Bhagawan Baba's monthly spiritual journal - Sanathana Sarathi - in English and Telugu languages. Since 2011, e-versions of the magazine are also released simultaneously and are available in PDF and EPUB formats on www.sanathanasarathi.org.

3) Maintaining a reporting channel, which covers all the major activities taking place in Prasanthi Nilayam, and publishing an e-newsletter 'Sai Spiritual Showers'- for free distribution.

4) Organising and conducting seminars and conferences on spirituality, religion, education, and human values.

5) Providing library and Reading room for visiting devotees, with a very large collection of various spiritual and religious books.

Other Books By SSSSTPD (In English)

1. Sai Sathya Sakha, 2. Summer Showers In Brindavan, 1972
3. Satyopanisad I, 4. Satyopanisad II
5. Gurudev, 6. Namasmarana
7. Bhakthi And Health, 8. Life Is Love, Enjoy It!
9. Life Is A Challenge, Meet It!, 10. Life Is A Dream, Realize It!
11. Bhagawan And Bhakta, 12. Body And Mind
13. My Dear Ones, 14. Sevadal
15. Silence, 16. Suffering

17. Surrender, 18. Atma
19. Do You Know, 20. Gopikas Of Brindavan
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