CHAPTER 1
BONDING BETWEEN BABA, PRASANNA AND SRINIVAS SASTRY

This chapter recounts the story of how bonding between Sri Shirdi Sai Baba, Srinivas Sastry & Prasanna came to be.

Listening to the countless miracles that took place at Sri Sai Nilayam, one can imagine the intimate relationship the Sri Shirdi Sai Baba has with Sastry Uncle's family. Given the kind of love and grace Baba has showered upon their family, especially upon Sastry Uncle and Prasanna Aunty, one might assume, and for good reason, that they must have been ardent devotees of Baba since a very long time. But one would be surprised at the fact that they hadn't heard of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba or Shirdi until the year 1996. Until that year they would regularly go on pilgrimages to the holy places of Annavaram and Tirupati, the holy abodes of Sri Veera Venkata Satyanarayana and Lord Vishnu respectively. The former is believed to be an incarnation of the latter.

During the late 1990's Srinivas Sastry was employed with Glaxo, but owing to certain health issues he would resign from his job. While working, Srinivas had bought a flat in an apartment complex located in Kakinada. Later when he resigned from his job, his friend, one Suryanarayana suggested that they invest a certain amount of money and start a business. Unfortunately, the venture turned out to be a disaster, and suffering from huge financial losses, Srinivas would eventually shut the business down.

Having invested all their money in an unfruitful venture, Srinivas Sastry and Prasanna were financially crippled and were staring at an uncertain future. The circumstances they found themselves in were so dire, that putting food on the table was also becoming impossible. In addition to their other responsibilities, they also had two beautiful children, both of whom were still studying at that point.

The building complex in which Prasanna and Srinivas were staying had four more flats which were yet to be sold. The builder/contractor of that complex Jaya Kumar offered to help Srinivas by giving him a commission, if he were to help him sell the flats. While things were going on like this, the ever-merciful Baba was silently planning for receiving Srinivas at Shirdi.

One fine day, seeing the plight of the Sastry family, Jaya Kumar proclaims to Srinivas that visiting Shirdi and taking darshan of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba would be the only panacea to end all their difficulties. Until that point in time they hadn't known anything about Shirdi or Sai Baba. Prasanna tells her husband, Srinivas Sastry, to acquiesce to Jaya Kumar's request and to go visit Shirdi.

Jaya Kumar was already in Hyderabad and asked Srinivas to meet him there. From Hyderabad, they planned to drive to Shirdi in a car. As per the plan, Srinivas started from Kakinada, reached Hyderabad and stayed at his brother-in-law's house which was located in Ramnagar. Jaya Kumar was staying in West Maredpally, and he asked Srinivas to meet him at his house by 4:30am next morning.

Reaching Maredpally from Ramnagar that early in the morning was rather difficult in those days owing to the limited availability of autorickshaws, especially at a time when the whole city would be fast asleep. Braving the odds, Srinivas gets ready by 3am and waits for an autorickshaw at the nearby stop. What happens next has no explanation, and only proves that divine are the ways of God. Miraculously, an autorickshaw shows up and asserts "Aren't you too headed to West Maredpally? In fact, I'm headed there myself, let me drop you there" Srinivas was more than happy at his good luck and immediately boards the autorickshaw.

It was not until after he arrived at the destination, that he began to wonder – 'How did he know where I was headed? Neither did he ask me nor did I tell him? How did the autorickshaw happened to show up at the opportune moment?' He assumed these favourable circumstances were the result of sheer luck and his good fortune. At that point in time, people didn't have the knowledge or the realization to understand that all of this was in fact a miracle of Baba and none else. However, shortly afterwards, this would change, once and for all!

Srinivas's Shirdi pilgrimage went off smoothly without a hitch and before you know it he was back with his family in Kakinada. One day, Deepthi and Kartik after returning from school tell their parents that " Soon, Dad is going to land a wonderful job". Prasanna and Srinivas were pleasantly surprised at this proclamation by their children and ask "What makes you say so?" To which they respond: "Mom, while getting down from the bus we met a tall man wearing a white dress and he professed that Dad would soon land a very nice job".
Half puzzled and half scared, Prasanna ran into the balcony to see, who it was. But no one was there. Prasanna and Srinivas thought that may be their children made up the story, because Deepthi and Karthik were only 4 and 3 years old.

Srinivas continued to pursue his job search, he received an opportunity with a pharmaceutical company based out of New Zealand. He was to deposit INR 150,000, and it was not trifling amount. Since he didn't have the necessary funds, he asked his mother if she was able to help him. Unfortunately, she too didn't have such a large sum of money, hence Srinivas let go of that offer.

Based on his previous experience, Srinivas started applying to jobs through various consulting and staffing firms based out of Mumbai. He applied through one staffing firm named *MELCO MANAGEMENT* and another firm whose name, was unfortunately forgotten.

Within twelve days, Srinivas received a call letter for a government job in Saudi Arabia and he was asked to submit his passport and deposit INR 25,000 in cash. He immediately started for Mumbai, submitted all the documents, paid the asked amount and decided to visit Shirdi. During the train journey, he met a person and both began chatting. The person casually suggests that Srinivas should not to go to Saudi as the culture and life style were very different and it would be very difficult for Indians to adjust. He further told him not to accept the job, even if he were selected.

While Srinivas was in Mumbai taking care of the documentation, Prasanna received a letter addressed to Srinivas, from MELCO Management stating that he landed a job in Doha, Qatar. The joining letter stated that he was to report within the next 15 days. After Shirdi darshan, Srinivas returned to his house in Kakinada and came to know about the joining letter.

He was in a dilemma because he had already handed over the passport and along with INR 25,000 to another consultancy. He was in a real fix and didn't know what to do. Two days later, he receives a call from the other consultancy with the news that the job would be on hold for two months as it was Ramzan season, and that he should come and collect the passport along with the sum paid earlier. In addition to that, they also provided the ticket fare for a *second-class AC berth*.

These strange set of events would raise doubts in anyone's mind:

1. How is it possible for anybody to land a job without an interview?
2. Landing a decent job in our own country is quite difficult, but Srinivas
3. received the joining letter from an organization based outside India
4. An unknown person recommending Srinivas not to accept the job in Saudi Arabia.
5. The first consultancy returning the passport and payment, while also arranging for a comfortable second-class ac travel.

Consulting and staffing firms almost never return the passport or the payment until the candidate is placed with them.
How often does one see these rather rare but fortunate events unfolding before their eyes?
Realization suddenly dawned upon them that it was Shri Shirdi Sai Baba who was magically guiding them with his miracles all along. Appearing in various forms at various times, as a tall man donning white clothes to their children, as the auto-driver to Srinivas at Ramnagar and as the passenger in the train, to arranging a wonderful job for Srinivas out of Qatar.

This realization ignited their hearts with pure love and devotion for Sai Baba and the gratitude left their eyes overflowing with incessant tears of joy.

Isn't it wonderful, the way in which Baba entered the lives of Prasanna, Srinivas, Deepthi and Kartik and sowed the seeds of faith and devotion in them?

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 2
BONDING BETWEEN BABA, PRASANNA AND SRINIVAS-II

This chapter continues to describe the events related to the chapter title.

In the last chapter, we learnt how Srinivas took care of all the necessary documentation upon receiving the offer letter. Since he had only fifteen days to report, he immediately began packing and left for Doha as per the joining date mentioned in the offer letter. He could not ask his wife, Prasanna, to join him as their children were too young and it would be better if they stayed back as there were resources in their immediate vicinity should any unforeseen circumstances arise.

Prasanna, who was a devoted wife and loving mother, loved responsibilities but she was not alien to the imminent challenges with telecommunication that would arise. For example, back in the 90's mobile phones were practically non-existent and those available were out of the reach of the common masses. Meanwhile Srinivas had landed in Doha and was slowly getting accustomed to the life there. In Doha, there is an examination that one needs to be clear to be eligible to work as a pharmacist. The company which hired him, gave him the permission to study for 3 months and even paid him stipend for that period.

With Baba's grace Srinivas cleared his exam and within a year he obtained his driving license and along with the prized and much sought after - family status visa, both of which are rather hard to obtain for a recent immigrant in Doha. Soon after Srinivas left for Doha, Prasanna began her first ever Parayana of the Sri Sai Satcharitra. Parayana is the devout and religious study of any holy book in its entirety within seven days.

Prasanna was moved by the story of Mr.Cholkar in the Sai Satcharitra where he stops using sugar in his diet until saving enough money for a trip to Shirdi for taking the darshan of Sri Sai Baba. With equal fervour and tenacity, Prasanna too decided not to consume coffee until her husband, Srinivas, was settled well enough to move his family to Doha with him. She would visit Sri Sai Baba temple daily and be present for all the four Baba Aarathi's.

A year passed by quickly, and with Baba's blessings, after a short trip to India, Srinivas moved back to Doha, only this time it was as a family, with his wife Prasanna and their children Deepthi and Kartik. Srinivas's company handed him a car for commuting, however the salary was barely enough to make ends meet. Directing her thoughts at Baba, Prasanna began to wonder why did we move here? Is it worth all the trouble? While in Kakinada, Srinivas wanted to learn BDPS, and enrolled in a course accordingly. But he couldn't pursue it as he had to move to Doha, so he had a word with the academy to find out whether his wife could take those lessons instead of him.

One night in Doha, Prasanna thought she saw her daughter Deepthi talking to herself. When she asked her who she was speaking to and what the discussion was about? Deepthi told that her mother that she was talking to Shirdi Sai Baba and that he told her that "You would be getting a job in two days' time". Then Prasanna was delighted to hear those words from her innocent daughter but began to wonder, given how she had no prior work experience, if there was even a remote possibility for such a thing to happen.

Strangely enough there was an advertisement in the `Gulf Times` newspaper, for a female sales secretary who was very proficient in the Telugu language. The name of the organization
was "Jassim Decorations and Services" (Now called Jassim Brothers). Prasanna attended the interview and throughout her interview she had an overpowering feeling that she was sitting in front

of Sri Sai Baba and not the interviewer. She was confident that she wouldn't clear the interview because she had answered no to most of the questions.
Mr.Sager Ibrahim Alghanim informed her that he was planning allotting her to staffing and management, and that she would be handling recruitment of manpower and along with being responsible for proper correspondence and error resolution between the sheiks and hired manpower.
Few of the questions were:
1. Do you have any computer knowledge?
Prasanna replied that she was skilled at using MS Office.
2. Do you have any prior work experience?
She responded by saying that "No, I don't. But I can master any skill, provided I'm trained properly"
3. What is your motivation behind wanting to work?
She honestly responded by explaining that it would enable them to provide their children with a quality education.

Mr. Sager, admired her honesty and sincerity. He told her that wearing Salwars were fine but sarees and gaudy ornaments were not accepted in their country. She was fine with that and began working from the very next day. Her starting salary was fixed at 1200 Riyals, however there was room for hikes and bonuses based on here performance and contribution to the country.

Once again Baba profusely showered his blessings and took care of the family in this own miraculous and inscrutable ways. Baba's words are pregnant with meaning and they are never untrue. Blessed indeed was Deepthi who had the good fortune of talking with Baba at such a tender age. Fast forward seven years, and the start-up where Prasanna was employed shot to the number 1 position. Thanks to her game changing ideas and contributions inspired by the grace of Sri Sai Baba!

This chapter once again highlights how Baba takes care of his devotees. All that is needed from our side is implicit faith in his words accompanied by an unfaltering love towards him.

Baba's miracles are unfathomable and beyond the ken of our intellect. How else would Prasanna have landed a job for which she was clearly unqualified?

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 3

Both Prasanna and Srinivas were working, and Deepthi had just completed here 10th standard. However, Deepthi didn't want to pursue her higher education in Doha, as the peer-to-peer competition wasn't challenging enough. Taking her opinion into consideration, her parents enrolled both Deepthi and her brother in a nice school in India. They rented a flat, hired a cook and returned to Doha. Every two months, they would travel to India and meet the children. And every time Prasanna was in India she would visit Shirdi without fail.

Commensurate with her experience, Prasanna's salary was raised to 1800 riyals. Once when she was on an official trip to Hyderabad, she came to know that her brother had bought a house in Sahara. She too desired to have a house for her family as they didn't own one. She paid 60000 in cash advance for a house in the same apartment complex as her brother. The remaining balance was to be paid in recurring monthly of 50000. Back in Doha, Srinivas was surprised at Prasanna's announcement regarding the house. Srinivas asked Prasanna, how they were going to afford such high monthly instalments? Prasanna's only response was "BABA IS THERE AND HE WILL TAKE CARE EVERYTHING"

These words turned out to be true. Prasanna had to be present in India for Karthik's board exams, so she obtained permission for a two months leave-of-absence from her boss. Due to a strange turn of events, she couldn't return to Doha until after 6 months. Upon returning she immediately got in touch with her Boss asking if she there was any possibility for her to re-join the organisation. To her pleasant surprise, her boss told her that she was to join immediately and that they were all eagerly waiting for her. Her boss generously raised her salary by another 500 riyals. This miracle of Baba enabled her to pay off the monthly instalments with ease, and within a year they were able to get the apartment registered under their name.

1. Is it possible to join the same job after taking a leave of 6 months, that too without intimation?
2.Does any organization raise the salary of an employee returning from a long leave?

Indeed, these are nothing but the *Divine Leelas* of Sri Sai Baba.

It drives home the point of work is worship, and God helps those, who help themselves. Hadn't Prasanna been such a hardworking employee, the organization wouldn't have recognized her valuable contributions nor would they have waited for her to return.

By 2005, Prasanna was doing the work of four people and impressed with her attention to detail and ability to effectively multitask, the boss gave her the power of attorney. She was responsible for handling the organization's accounts while also taking care of heading the recruitment for six countries! She was promoted as a secretary to her boss and was travelling around the world. Deepthi had secured a BE CSE seat, but her interest was in ECE. Knowing that Deepthi was brilliant, Prasanna sold off here flat to make funds available for securing the desired ECE seat for Deepthi. Much to the chagrin of her relatives! But Prasanna didn't hesitate once. The story of how they bought their house in Vizag will be explained later.

Upon finalizing the house, she went back and informed her boss about it. After a few days, her boss announced that if she were to make a targeted number of successful recruitments, he would give her a certain percentage of the business. Prasanna achieved the target, and thus reached a new pinnacle in her career.

If we contribute our hard work and patience to Baba's blessings, every work will be a success.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 4
SAI NILAYAM

This chapter describes the story behind the name `Sai Nilayam`

In Sri Sai Satcharitra, Baba states on several occasions that merely listening to his miracles is conducive to one's happiness and wellbeing. The power of Self Realized Masters is such. Their spell binding and awe-inspiring miracles are capable of purifying of heart & soul, strengthening our faith in Baba, while inspiring us to embrace the various *Sattwic emotions*. Hence, I consider every individual who has the good fortune of coming across these miracles of Baba to be blessed.

As Prasanna and Srinivas, were both employed in Doha, they requested their children to search for a nice house to buy in Vizag. On a *Guru Poornima,* in 2007, Prasanna was blessed with a divine vision. In her vision she saw a beautiful, fully furnished apartment with the most intricate woodwork. She could clearly see Sri Sai Satcharitra books lying on a shelf in the cupboard. (This is the same cupboard which can been seen in the hall). On the same day Karthik & Deepthi called their mother, Prasanna, and informed her of an amazing house they came across in the Allipuram neighbourhood and that they should buy it.

However, they had their reservations about taking a hasty decision and buying a flat without seeing it. If you are wondering how two young children could find a flat like that? Read on!

Every Thursday, Kartik and Deepthi visited the BABA temple located in Seethammadhara. That week, after taking Baba's darshan they were discussing about searching houses. One lady overheard their conversation and introduced herself as Parvathi. She told them that her flat was up for sale and that they should drop by for a tour. Both went, saw the flat and immediately called their parents and told them that the flat was very nice. Since they couldn't come from Doha, Prasanna asked her brothers to go and talk to Ms.Parvathi. Her brothers spoke with Parvathi and came to know that the `*link documents*` were in `*mortgage*`. They informed Prasanna for these developments and suggested that this was not worth the unnecessary trouble.

On the 10th of October 2007, Prasanna was in India on an official trip. She halted in Vizag to meet her children. Karthik then insisted her to see the flat as it was very nice but she said that there were certain complications involved and it may not be worth it. But Karthik was unrelenting , so Mom finally agreed to visit the flat. The minute she entered the house, she was overcome with overpowering emotions, and shivers sent chills through her spine. The striking similarity between the house she saw in her vision and this one was beyond her comprehension. How could that be? The woodwork, the copies of Sai Satcharitra in the cupboard, along with everything was present just as she had seen in the vision. She was both thrilled and amazed that Baba had finalized a house for her even before they knew about it.

Prasanna, spoke with Parvathi. She asked her about how the link documents were in mortgage and how people were unwilling to buy the flat. Parvathi had many financial issues
and that was the only reason she wanted to sell the flat at a lower price. Parvathi also happened to be a staunch Baba devotee , and was doing Parayana with the object that her flat should be sold so that she could climb out of her financial problems.

With full faith in Baba's vision, Prasanna made up her mind to purchase the flat without even consulting her husband, Srinivas. She also wanted to help Parvathi as a fellow human being. Now the

problem was in securing a large amount of money in a short amount of time. Prasanna wasn't carrying such large sums with her at that moment. So, she immediately called her husband and told him of the situation, who in turn got in touch with the SBI bank manager at the Dondaprthy branch, Mr. Pavan Kumar and brought him up to speed on the current events.
This Pavan Kumar, was also taking care of their NRI Accounts. While banks in India are known to be lousy and operate miserably at snails-pace , surprisingly enough this bank manager was rather efficient and he took care of the entire documentation and paperwork. The loan amount was sanctioned within a day. The following day Prasanna and Pavan helped release the link documents from the mortgage and paid the remaining balance in cash to Parvathi. Parvathi vacated the house on the same day and handed over the keys to Prasanna and Co.

Prasanna boarded the 2.20PM flight to Doha.

The beauty of Baba's miracle is that he made the impossible possible. He's grace ensured that the house was secured in less under two days including a successful approval of a bank loan.

This wouldn't have been possible without Prasanna's unwavering and unfaltering faith in Baba and his vision. Also, she was kind enough to put Parvathi's problems before her own to help her out. Both Srinivas and Prasanna knew of no rituals other than dutifully reciting all four of Baba's Aarathi's. Baba doesn't want the pomp and paraphernalia, all he wants is purity of thought and a childlike trust in him, that he loves us and whatever he does is always in our best interests. Baba used to often preach that one should never hate another person, and that we should all love and help one another. Baba always encourages good thoughts and ensured their fruition. Baba is always present with any true devotee who whole heartedly calls out to him.

Nilayam literally translates to `eternally present`. Prasanna and Srinivas believed that Baba was always present with them. Also, Baba was the one who gave Prasanna the vision, hence he was already present in the house which they bought. Thus, Prasanna and Srinivas aptly named the place 'Sai Nilayam' – a place where Sai Baba is eternally present. Even today , they refer to this house as 'Baba's house' and you would never hear they say 'my house or our house';

Doing pooja and rituals out of mere obligation helps achieve nothing. What is needed on the devotees' side is purity in thought , purity in deed and a firm belief in the teaching of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba. The more we listen to his miracles, the deeper will be our yearning for his stories.
When in doubt, just ask yourself if that act is suitable to be enjoyed by Baba and if you were going to indulge in it in Baba's presence. Those suitable will be embraced, and things which are unsuitable will be shunned. This way our discrimination for the right and wrong will increase and our consciousness will expand and attune to the divine frequency. Slowly as we practise these teachings in our everyday lives, our Raajsic and Taamsic qualities will fade away and slowly be replaced by the divine Saattwic qualities. As we remain steadfast in our endeavours, Baba will himself guide us on the social, spiritual and material aspects of our lives.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 5
HOW THE MIRACLES BEGAN

This chapters describes how Prasanna and Srinivas quit their jobs overseas and how the miracles began.

As per Baba's wish Prasanna and Srinivas were working in Doha. Srinivas was in the *Pharmaceutical Industry*, and Prasanna's work revolved around *Human Resources*. Both were back in India for the wedding of their daughter Deepthi. After the wedding, Prasanna had to leave immediately as she didn't have any more holidays, but Srinivas still had some more holidays so he decided to stay in Vizag. She boarded the usual flight from VTZ-DOH but to her shock, the plane was grounded on the runway moments before take-off. Citing `technical failures` the flight was cancelled.

What transpired after this changed everything, forever. Minutes after the incident, Baba gave Prasanna the following message. "The flight was destined to explode into a million pieces, I saved you from that fate by halting it on the runway. I blessed you and your husband with abundant riches. Now dedicate the rest of your lives to my service and be happy." Prasanna returned home and conveyed the message to her husband, Srinivas, and both agreed to implicitly follow Baba's order.

Let us not forget that both the wife and husband were holding very well-paid elite positions in their respective offices in Doha. But they were ready to forgo everything because of the kind of devotion they towards Baba. Most people never realize the truth that nothing belongs to anybody. Whatever they possess is due to the grace of the Lord. *Blinded by the egoity ingrained by one's ignorance, they tend to falsely identify themselves with the physical body and proceed to believe in the delusive dichotomy of the Self and the One Infinite Spirit which is perpetuated by the compellent forces of nature*. And without rhyme or reason, they mindlessly run after transient and ephemeral materialistic pleasures and completely forget the ineffable joys of supreme bliss that can be experienced only through divine communion with God.

Material wealth should be used only a means to harvest the infinite spiritual wealth. Money never makes anybody completely happy. Prasanna and Srinivas' story teaches us a beautiful lesson that money is not everything. True happiness lies in contentment, self-sufficiency and an inner peace achieved by tuning one's thoughts with the divine frequency.

The devotes and volunteers at Sri Sai Nilayam Satsang consider November to be the luckiest month as that was when everybody started witnessing the divine miracles of Baba. On the *Kartika Suddha Ekadashi* the master bedroom in the house was covered in a thick blanket of UDI (aka Baba Vibhuti), like it had rained UDI. Prasanna and Srinivas were rather bewildered by this unexpected event but didn't know what to make of it, so they carefully collected all the UDI and stored it. Next morning, when they woke up they found the room to be covered in another blanket of fragrant UDI, and the Baba photo in bedroom was completely covered with UDI. It was the holy day of Kartika Pournami and their already baffled minds were met with a sight they would never forget. The pooja room was under a sheet of chromatic turmeric, with the following words written in three distinct lines:
1. 13 NA VASTHA
2. ROOPAM
3. ANDARU

On the same day, BABA'S picture in the pooja room started to ooze divine tasting nectar like milk and honey. To everyone's surprise the picture was not wet one bit. All the devotees present that day had the good fortune of partaking a delectable sip of the divine milk and honey. While Prasanna and Srinivas was delighted by these somewhat random and inexplicable, nobody could explain the

significance nor their cause. So, Srinivas met with one his holiness, Guruji from Devipuram, and requested him to grace their house and bless it. This Guruji was God realized and a perfect Siddha.

Guruji graced their house, immediately asked Srinivas "Have I been to your house before? To which Srinivas replied, “This is the first time you are visiting our house.” Guruji then said, “I have boarded an Innova car and visited your house before.” Srinivas kept his thoughts to himself, and thought it could have been in a vision which Guruji had. But it was highly likely given that the Guruji was a Siddha of Siddha and through his constant communion with God, he would possess spiritual powers that enable him to see the future through visions.

Guruji glanced at the UDI in Sai Nilayam, and assured the couple “Only good is bound to happen. Do not worry or feel perturbed”.

Just the way Sri Sai Baba came to Shirdi with the marriage party of Chand Patil and remained in Shirdi forever, so did Baba in Sai Nilayam when he accompanied Prasanna and Srinivas.
Let us leave all our worries and burdens to Baba and pray to him with pure love and devotion. May he bless us all with Shraddha and Saburi and give us the ability to exercise these in our everyday lives.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 6
BHIKSHA

This chapter deals with the importance of Bhiksha, as expounded by Baba

In Sri Sai Satcharitra, the importance of human birth is highlighted. God generously endowed human beings with `Knowledge`. This knowledge gives us the ability to discriminate between good and evil, and most importantly provides a means for reaching God. Unfortunately, due to ego and body-consciousness, we inadvertently make innumerable mistakes all along the way.

But due to our good fortune and the blessings of Baba, we have the luxury of learning from two of Baba's most ardent devotees - `Prasanna and Srinivas` both of whom are living testimonies to the many miracles of Sri Sai Baba. We are indeed lucky to have taken a human birth, and even more lucky to be with Srinivas and Prasanna, and luckiest to have the ever-guiding force of Sri Sai Baba in our everyday lives. The knowledge of the Self is so subtle that no one can achieve it of his/his own accord. Hence the guidance of a Guru cannot be stressed sufficiently. This necessity of a Guru is amply exemplified throughout various chapters of the Sri Sai Satcharitra. Guru is the manifestation of God in human form, who can guide us towards self-realization.

Divine Avataars such as Sri Shirdi Sai Baba can destroy a devotees' sins by merely casting a glance upon them. This spiritual grandeur is a direct consequence of their oneness with God and a result of their boundless and infinite self-realization. As outlined in the holy scriptures, there are several ways for an individual to break free from the endless cycle of deaths and births. But the path of Bhakti and Devotion as underscored by Baba, is indeed the best way for anyone to attain *Mukti*. On several occasions, Baba said that the mere chanting of `Sai Naam` was enough to do away with the sins of the previous births.

From reading the Sri Sai Satcharitra, we know how Baba would go begging for food from house to house in Shirdi. In fact, Baba was an incarnation of God and had no need to beg food from houses. But he did that teach us a few things. First, the importance of non-attachment to material possessions, and secondly, it was a way for the devotee to receive blessings of Baba. Whatever a pure hearted devotee gives to the Lord, the Lord gives it back 100 times of that. Lastly, it is mentioned in the scriptures how householders incur sin during their daily activities and by providing the Bhiksha to Baba, they absolve themselves of their sins. In keeping up with the customs of the daily rounds of begging done by Baba at Shirdi, a similar approach was followed at Sai Nilayam Satsang in Vizag.

Baba instructed Prasanna to seek Bhiksha from houses he handpicked. This Bhiksha ritual was to be carried out during the month of November 2008. While working in Doha, Prasanna had bought a golden statue of Sri Sai Baba with her first salary. Baba further instructed Prasanna to tie that statue of his to end of her *saree pallu* when asking for Bhiksha. Using items received during the Bhiksha rounds, she was to prepare the Naivedyam and offer it as prasad to Baba. It may be very hard for some of us to follow in the steps of Prasanna, as the outward act of *Bhiksha* may appear to be gross. However, this thought occurs only in the minds of egotistic individuals. It is a blessing to be able to seek *Bhiksha* on behalf of Baba, and only the most-worthy and highly advanced disciples are given this opportunity. Prasanna executed the instructions of Baba to the *tee.*

It is worth perusal that Ego, being so subtle, is the most dangerous hindrance to any one's spiritual progress. Ego or *Ahamkara* blinds the reality, and falsely makes us believe that we are the doer. Since Prasanna, had no ego she carried out the instructions of Baba without the slightest hesitation. She had the firm belief that whatever happens is ordained by God, and is therefore in our best interests.

Few names of people from whom Baba accepted *Bhiksha* and blessed *them:*

1. Sravan: (24-11-2008) BABA accepted *Bhiksha* to improve his health. Four years later, we can see the noticeable change in Sravan's health and demeanour.
2. Kavita: (25-11-2008) When BABA asked *Bhiksha* from them, they did not understand the reason at first. Later it was revealed that it was for ensuring the well-being of their family.
3. Annapurna: (26-11-2008) She prayed that her daughter should secure a good job and that they find an eligible suitor for her daughter. Both her wishes were fulfilled.
4. Kalpana (27-11-2008) Many of her longstanding personal problems were promptly resolved.
5. Lakshmi: (28-11-2008) They were living in flat 404. She was deeply depressed and worried about the future of her daughter, as the newly-wed daughter was windowed only four short months after the wedding. Baba removed her anxieties by blessing her daughter with a loving and caring groom.
6. Saraswathi: (20-11-2008) All her daughters were married to amazing gentleman.
7. Padma: (30-11-2008) With Baba's blessings, her son securing a well-paying job.

It is interesting to note the subtler intent behind Baba wanting Prasanna to seek *Bhiksha* from the neighbouring devotees. In a way Baba was solving the various troubles of the devotees by accepting their *Bhiksha* through Prasanna.

More interesting stories will be narrated in the upcoming chapters.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 7
PARAYANA OF SATCHARITRA

This chapter highlights how Baba enabled Sai Nilayam devotees to undertake a *Parayana reading* of the *Sai Satcharitra*.

The material and spiritual benefits one gains by a devout *Parayana* of the *Sri Sai Satcharitra are innumerable.* Baba therefore wanted all his devotees to also undertake a complete reading of the Sai Satcharitra, in addition to the *Bhiksha Program*. Devotees began taking part in both these programs starting NOVEMBER 24th 2008. Baba passed the message that those undertaking the *Parayana* should do so using the version original book that details both the spiritual and metaphysical significance of the various miracles catalogued in the *Sai Satcharitra.* This book "SRI SAI SATCHARITRA" was originally written by *Keerthiseshulu Govind Raghunath Dabholkar Krutha in Marathi,* and the *Telugu version was written by Keerthiseshulu Sri Swami Achalananda Saraswathi* and published by *Vedanand Charitable Trust*.

This book was not well known in the spiritual circles, given how the abridged version of the book was more popular and readily available. Most people hadn't heard of it until Baba had told them about it. This book was very hard to find, but with Baba's blessings Srinivas was obtained a copy. He took charge of dutifully leading the devotees through a successful *Parayana* of the *Sri Sai Satcharitra.*

To expand on why Baba wanted his devotees to undertake a devout reading of the Sai Satcharitra, there are several reasons behind it. First, it enables the reader to gain a profound understanding of the philosophical and metaphysical significance of the various miracles mentioned in the Satcharitra. Second, the precious realizations that dawn upon a devotee when that undertakes a devout reading of the book while also following the Bhiksha program are priceless. Only ones who have experienced that joy and bliss can agree with the above statement.

As per Baba's guidelines, the *Parayana* was undertaken between 10am-12pm daily. As is characteristic of Sri Sai Baba, no devotee who step foot in Sai Nilayam ever left hungry. They had the good fortune of receiving Baba's Prasad. The *Prasad* was prepared from the items collected from Bhiksha. It was distributed to the devotes, after first offering it to Baba during the Parayana. Neither the number of people nor the quantity of Bhiksha obtained was known, but miraculously Baba always ensured that no was left hungry. One on occasion, Baba requested one devotee to take care of *Annadaanam* for eleven days. She was to make all necessary preparations herself including preparation, serving and cleaned. She is truly blessed, for *Annadaanam* is one of the greatest service.

Following the success of this *Annadaanam*, the rest of the devotees followed suit and participated in the Annadaanam preparations with great fervour and enthusiasm. The *Annadaanam* would conclude around 3-4pm every day. The Parayana first began on 24th November 2008, the congregation comprised of only five people, but the 13th January 2009 the congregation had 150 people! The reading took 51 days. Indeed, undertaking the task of feeding an unknown number of people continuously for 51 days without a single hitch is a nearly impossible task. Baba's blessings ensured the success of this program.

It is remarkable to think about the patience needed by one to religiously follow Baba's instructions for 51 days without any lapses or compromises. Prasanna and Srinivas should be lauded for their patience and for being such incredibly inspiring role models. It was no easy task and Baba tested their mettle on numerous occasions to know how much faith they had in him.

Noteworthy events:
1. 26-11-2008: *Baba gave Chandanam as prasad in adhyayam 11, page 115 of the Satcharitra.*
2. 28-11-2008: *Baba gave Kumkum as prasad in adhyayam 20, page 240 of the Satcharitra*
3. *Baba blessed Prasanna with turmeric in adhyayam 39, page 461 and along with Udi in adhyayam 31, page 359.*
Unfortunately, all the dates were not catalogued. There are more experiences of devotees where they were blessed with an endless supply of Udi flowing out of their Parayana books. Certain miracles were so divine, that they are left out of this book so as not to taint their significance by vainly trying to describe the indescribable divinity in the language of the us mortals.

With Baba's blessings, the devotees studied the Sai Satcharitra with heart and soul, not merely out of obligation. The ultimate goal of any human being is to attain Self-Realization and break free from the cycle of births and deaths. Reading and listening to Baba's miracles sow the seeds of faith and devotion in our hearts and endear us to Baba. To ensure that all devotees understood the chapter properly, through Prasanna, he instructed that the devotees present should share their views and opinions, and relate any store that may strike as significant and relevant to the portion read. Finally, through Prasanna, Baba conveyed the meaning of the portion that was read out. Because mere book reading is of no avail, and without bhakti there is no appreciation of the underlying beauty and without beauty there is no joy.

After the completion of Satcharitra, BABA asked the devotees to begin a Parayana of the *VISHNU SAHASRANAMAM*. One cannot sufficiently highlight the emphasis that Baba laid on the Vishnu Sahasranamam. It can break the shackles and set ignorant souls, free. It is advised to read more about its importance from the Sai Satcharitra.

The subsequent comments following this paragraph were included as per Baba's instruction. "They have not been edited and have been left as found in the original book. Though it may seem unintelligible at places, the devotees are requested to focus on the essence and philosophical meaning and not merely on the vernaculars themselves."

"Leaving aside one's ego, one must do *Sarvasva Sharanagati* i.e. complete self-surrender to our Sadguru Sri Sai Baba and seek his blessings." We must serve our SADGURU as follows "*Bow your head and do Namaskara to Sadguru leaving aside your ego. Serve the feet of Sadguru with your hands. Give your eyes the endless opportunity to visualise the Sadguru. Give your tongue the opportunity to savour the Teertha from the Sadguru's feet. Let the ears always listen to the qualities of Sadguru. Always meditate on the form of Sri Sai Baba in our hearts. Always think about baba with your heart & soul*.

Let us surrender our body, mind, heart and possessions at the feet of the Sadguru. We must wholeheartedly dedicate our entire life in his Seva. Chanting the Guru's name, staying in his blessed company, let us seek his blessings and enjoy the sweetness of meditating on his lotus feet. When chanting the Guru Mantra, let our faith and determination invite his divine presence to our house and bestow us with infinite joys. Then Baba will ultimately set us free from the clutches of this mundane worldly existence.

Everything mentioned above, is easier said than done. It is only with utmost trust, faith, unbounded love towards the Sadguru, accompanied by Saburi and finally following his path will we be able to achieve these. And to achieve all these the guidance of Sadguru is always necessary. All these are the most powerful in the universe. These lead the devotees to the door of moksha. People with

unbounded faith and trust in Sadguru have proved that they can reach the door of moksha. Staying in the company of guru is like the river Ganga. The company of Sadguru cleanses our Sins and bad karma and makes us clean and fills us with purity.

The company of Sadguru is compared to Ganga, because she originates from the locks of Lord Shiva. The holy Ganga flows all the way giving water to the thirsty, helps in Growing crops which gives us food in turn and many more things which are crucial to the sustenance of all the creatures. She is always pure, even though we all flood her with our impurities. It is the nature of Ganges to help us all thought we try to harm her. Here too Baba has taught us that purity is attained by the deeds we do in our life, deeds which are inspired by our dedication and devotion to the Sadguru.

According to the author, the above words can be found in Chapter 1, page 4, lines: 54-59.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 8

FIRST APPEARANCE OF BABA IN SAI NILAYAM

This chapter describes how the holy Statue of Baba arrived in Sai Nilayam.

The author makes some preliminary remarks on how blessed it felt to have the opportunity to write about the life of Baba and his miracles at Sai Nilayam and how the author fully transferred the burden to Baba.

Baba blessed Prasanna with a blissful dream in which he asked her to have his idol carved and consecrated at Sai Nilayam. Prasanna conveyed the dream to her husband Srinivas. However, they didn't know how to obtain a beautiful statue of Baba. Baba solved this trouble by delivering a beautiful message. Baba said "Rajeev *Thalim*, the grandson of the *Balaji Vasant Thalim* who sculpted the Baba Idol in Samadhi Mandir, will be the one to have the statue sculpted. The idol in Sai Nilayam is a replica of the idol in Shirdi, and it was inspired and carved based on the idol in Shirdi. They spoke with Rajeev and placed an order for the idol.

Few days later, BABA gave a message to Prasanna that "his idol will have some black spots". Prasanna replied that "the black spots will not beautiful on the Baba Statue". Then Baba asked "If the baby in your womb has black spots will you abandon the child or would you still accept the child as your own?" So Prasanna, paying heed to Baba's advice, decided to accept Baba's statue that way Baba seemed fit and appropriate to grace their home.

Later Srinivas called Rajeev and made him aware of the fact that Baba's idol was going to have few black spots. But he replied that there are chances for such an occurrence was not possible because they were using superior quality marble form Rajasthan.

After a few days, Baba informed Prasanna that his idol should be consecrated on 20th of May 2010 along with his *padukas*. Baba further informed that the preparation of the *padukas* involved eleven members. Upon completion, the *padukas* were to be taken to all *Datta kshetras* and finally to Shirdi. From Shirdi the *padukas* along with BABA'S idol were to be brought to Sai Nilayam.

Everything was going as per instructions of BABA. The date of installation was set for May 20th and the travel dates for taking the padukas to *Datta kshetras* was allotted to a week prior to the 20th i.e from the 14th -20th. Three days later Srinivas received a call from Rajeev stating that black spots were appearing on BABA'S idol during the final polishing and they cannot give the idol like that and further requested to have two more months' time for the preparation of a new idol. As decided earlier, it was agreed that the Baba statue would be accepted, regardless.

As per Baba's instructions, the padukas graced all Datta kshetras like Pithapuram, Kuruvapuram, Gaangapur, Akkalkot, Audumber and finally to Shirdi. From Shirdi they were transported without a hitch. Finally, on the 20th of May 2010 Baba's statue along with the padukas were installed. Thus Sai Nilayam had its own Dwarakamai!

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 9

PANCHALOHALU BABA

This chapter recounts the story of how Baba sanctified Sai Nilayam in the form of `Pancha Loha Sai Baba`

In the last chapter, it was mentioned how Baba informed Prasanna ahead of time that his Idol would have black spots, but that the statue should be accepted as is. And as per Baba's wishes, both Prasanna and Srinivas were more than happy to welcome Baba's statue to Sai Nilayam regardless of the blemishes.

Rajeev once again informed Srinivas about the dark spots that were developing on the statue, and how he was against delivering, what he thought to be an imperfect statue. Three days before Srinivas' scheduled trip to Mumbai, Rajeev once again called Srinivas with news that there was another statue which was being carved, and if they like, he could arrange for them to have it picked up instead of the one with visual shortcomings. He also added that this would be their best option as sculpting a new statue would take another two months to complete. Soon after the call, he sent over pictures of both the statues.

This new development put Prasanna and Srinivas in an uncomfortable predicament. On one hand Rajeev was not willing to deliver their Baba statue as it had some spots on it, on the other hand there was no way there could get themselves to violate Baba's direct order. To ease their tension, that very night Baba appeared in Prasanna's dream and gave her the following message" "*I already told you that my statue will be have black spots. No one could have stopped it. If a child in your womb had black spots would you have abandoned it?"* He further added "*If you don't accept me, who will?"* Prasanna woke up from the dream to find the entire room diffused with the invigorating and divine fragrance of *UDI*. They also discovered the following sentence in written in the `Pooja Room`: "Savour the mystical brilliance in my eyes. I will grace your house in a beautiful form, later" (Originally in Telugu "NAA KALLALO VUNNA THEJASSUNU CHUDANDI. INKOROOPAM LO ANDHAM GA VASTHANU".)

We believe this message was an indirect reference to the blemishes on the statue and devotees should be concerned with the spiritual grandeur of Baba and not be swayed by blemishes which run only skin deep.

Srinivas reached Mumbai on the 14th of May. Upon reaching there, he quickly sent over the pictures of both the statues and sent them to his wife. Srinivas was overcome with emotion upon seeing how the black spots were beautifully complementing Baba's divine aura. The sheer brilliance emanating from Baba's eyes was a splendid spectacle in itself, and no words can ever do justice. So, he made his intentions clear that he would take the statute which they originally ordered and none other.Now if you are wondering how Baba fulfilled his prophecy about "appearing in a beautiful form" , keep reading!

Another beautiful statue of Baba caught the eye of Srinivas, and he found that it would cost him INR 40,000. However, he didn't have so much money at hand so he requested Rajeev to give him a discount. Rajeev smiled and handed over this statue of Baba to Srinivas without charging a penny. How divine are Baba's miracles? This was none other than the "Pancha Loha Sai Baba Statue"!

Baba will appear to us in any form he desires. Everything is in hands. Everything he does is always in the best interests of his devotees. Therefore, we must all hand over all our worries to Baba and just pray to him with pure love and devotion. He will take care of the rest.

On 20th of May the statues were consecrated and installed. Prior to the installation Baba gave the following message on 27.4.2009:
"*AHWANAM" NAALUGU NELALU NUNCHI VACHE NAA BHAKTHULU MAATRAME NAA PRATHISTHAKU RAAVALENU*". After the statue was installed, the devotees witnessed another miracle. That night they found BABA's eyes shedding tears his entire shawl was dripping wet. Prasanna and Srinivas were worried if some error had crept in during the consecration and thus Baba was shedding tears. They were so worried that they couldn't sleep that night. Then Baba appeared in a vision with the following message: *"NAA EE KANEELLU ANANDA PAASHPAALU NENU VIGRAHAANI KAADU, NENU IKKADA VUNANU".* i.e "*those were tears of joy and not sadness. I am not just the statue, I am present everywhere throughout Sai Nilayam*".

Indeed, Baba's all-pervading presence can be experienced by devout bhaktas in every nook and corner of Sai Nilayam. Sai Nilayam is another DWARAKAMAI to us. Anybody who steps in here have all his problems solved and will be happy.

The key takeaway from this chapter is that one should have implicit faith in Baba and carry out his orders without making any modifications of our own. Baba is our mother and father. Whatever he does is always in our best interests.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 10
PADHUKULU VRUTHANTHAM

The previous chapter described the story of how the Paadukas were installed in Sai Nilayam. A mention was also made that a total of eleven people were involved in the preparations surrounding the Paadukas.

When Prasanna and Srinivas were given the message from Baba regarding Paadukas, they immediately began to wonder “What size of Paadukas should be ordered?” It was so thoughtful of them to be genuinely concerned about the comfort of Baba. Only true love and devotion enables one to be so aware of the needs of the people around them. Any individual who has that level of love for Baba, has nothing to worry about as Baba is an incarnation of the Almighty and he always takes care of the true devotees.

As both Prasanna and Srinivas were very eager to learn the size of the Paadukas, Baba fulfilled their desire by blessing them with a small miracle. The next day when they woke up they found the bed room filled with UDI and in the UDI were 11 footprints all measuring size 11. They also found footprints of a smaller size that added up to a 6. Based on the facts mentioned in the Sai Sat Charitra, Sri Sai Baba was 3 and ½ cubits long so they knew that the size 11 belong to him, but the smaller foot prints of size 6 still remained a puzzle. But shortly later they would come to know of its significance through an auspicious ceremony that followed the revelation. But this would be saved for a future chapter.

With Baba’s blessings Srinivas placed an order with the right size for Baba’s Padukaas. The Padukaas enshrined at Sai Nilayam are noticeably bigger than the generic Paadukas found at other place, because the Paadukas at Sai Nilayam are a replica of the original size of Baba.
As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Paadukas were taken on a holy pilgrimage to all the holy Datta Kshetras. Before they embarked on this journey, Baba gave Prasanna the following message “*I will give Bhiksha in Kuruvapuram and take Bhiksha when my Paadukas are in Gangapur*”. Since Prasanna was unable to accompany Srinivas on this journey, she conveyed Baba’s instruction to him and asked to be attentive so as not to deviate from Baba’s instructions.

When Srinivas reached *Kuruvapuram*, a great man staying in the ashram saw the PADHUKAS and said "*These Paadukas of The Sadguru Are Very Powerful. They will always Carry Powerful Spiritual Vibrations and after installation in Sai Nilayam, an Annadaanam Programme will begin and continue till eternity”*. The holy man also gave Srinivas a `*RUDHRAKSHA MAALA*` instructed Srinivas that the Maala should be put on the Paadukas and never removed. He also donated rice, dal and many more items as Bhiksha. Thus Baba himself fulfilled the first prophecy regarding Bhiksha in Kuruvapuram.

After bidding goodbye to the holy man, Srinivas arrived at Gangapur. At the same time a wonderful incident took place at Sai Nilayam. Baba conveyed the following message to Prasanna, "I will come and accept the Bhiksha". It was the month of May and ripe mangoes were everywhere! Just when Prasanna finished making Mango juice, she heard someone knock on the door. Standing outside was a tall gentleman dressed in all white. He remarked, “I have heard from the others that many miracles take place here, and so I too have come to take the darshan of Sri Sai Baba”. Prasanna welcomed him into the house, so he leaving his sandals outside, he entered the house. He was offered the freshly made mango juice, which he savoured with great relish. Seeing the hundi on the table, he turned to her and said “THERE ARE 7500 RUPPES IN THAT HUNDI, CAN I TAKE IT AS I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE TO A PERSON WHO IS IN NEED OF IT?” The kind lady she was, she agreed instantly, and upon counting she found that the notes added to exactly INR 7500. After which he asked if he could go

and meditate in the master bedroom. But he said "YOU SHOULD NOT KNOCK THE DOOR OR OPEN THE DOOR DURING MEDITATION" Prasanna said okay, but she was a little surprised at the strange turn of events , so she immediately called her neighbour, Kavitha, and asked her to come there immediately as she was all alone with some stranger in the house. Kavita told her she would be there in twenty minutes.

It was late evening, and there was no signs of the gentleman coming out of the room any time soon, and was almost 8.00 PM. Prasanna couldn't wait any longer and decided to find out what he was doing in the room. She found that the door was slightly ajar, so she pushed it open , and to her shock and surprise, the was no sign of the gentleman. It was as if he had disappeared into thin air. The room was covered in Udi and Chandan. Suddenly the entire house was flooded by the divine fragrance of the Udi and Chandan. In the Udi was written "ALLAH MALIK ".

They were surprised to find that, along with the gentleman, even the sandals had disappeared.
Neither of them could figure out how that happened as they were both in the hall all the while. Suddenly, the realization dawned upon her that it was Baba himself who had graced Sai Nilayam, and she broke down into tears and sobs for not having recognized Baba. Baba had kept his word and collected the Bhiksha from her. Everything had happened so soon that she could catch the clue when Baba was able to tell her the exact amount present in the hundi. As is amply evident on various occasions in the Sai Satcharitra, Baba is always true to his words. Hence we must be ever alert and carry out his instructions with all our strength and will.

The Paadukas were taken to all the Datta Kshetras and later installed in Sai Nilayam. The feet of the Sadguru are very powerful and can deliver us from our sins. The greatness of having faith in one's Guru's feet is beautiful narrated in the `Guru Paduka Stotram`. At Sai Nilayam, the devotees have the good fortune of worshipping the holy feet of Sri Sai Baba and offering a handful of rice to the Paadukas. The rice collected in this fashion, is used in the preparation of the food for Annadaanam.

Those who reside far away, can always choose to keep aside a portion of rice, and donate it all whenever they are blessed with the opportunity to visit Sai Nilayam. Baba told that donating rice at his feet, "WILL REMOVE THEIR SINS AND WILL GIVE THEM PUNYA PHALAM". As per Baba's prophecy, the Annadaanam Programme on Thursday's had been going on successfully without a single issue and at least 150 people have the opportunity to relish Baba's Prasadam.

Baba later advised that they should install a hundi (donation box), so that everybody would have the opportunity to participate in the holy programmes such as Annadaanam, Vidyadaanam and Vastradaanam. At first there were three separate hundis, but at Baba's suggestion, they were replaced with just one hundi. Further Baba made it clear that the *Annadaanam* should be carried on for a period of six months, *Vidyadaanam* for four months, and finally two months would be dedicated towards *Vastradaanam*. With Baba's blessings, Annadaanam is now being carried out all throughout the year. Prasanna and Srinivas take care of the funds necessary for the other two donation programmes.

When Baba instructed Prasanna to start Vidyadaanam, few devotees came forward with contributions and others did not. Then one day Baba asked Prasanna, "When watching a movie on a weekend with friends and family, people spend a lot of money. Can we not selflessly donate our one week towards the upliftment and education of the less fortunate members of the society?"

One day in the month of December BABA asked Prasanna, to open her cupboard and see how many unused clothes were lying in there? Prasanna was surprised at this question. Then Baba instructed

Prasanna and Srinivas to go out at 12am and see the number of people shivering with cold during winters. Baba further instructed that they should no longer store old unused clothes and that they should donate it people who could use them. The very next day, they emptied all the cupboards of unused clothes and donated them to the poor. After the other devotees were informed of this development, many more came forward with their donations. Now every year, during winter, warm shawls and blankets are distributed to the homeless and the needy.

Once again, Baba, in his peculiar way, taught us very important and practical lessons of life.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 11

GURU BHAKTHI

This chapter describes how Baba blessed Prasanna and set her as an example and a role model to the rest of the devotees.

An interesting story regarding Guru Bhakti: Sri Padmaaacharyulu was a disciple of Sri Aadi Shankarachaaryulu. One particular day, the guru, Sri Aadi Shankarachaaryulu was standing on one side of the river and his disciple was standing on the opposite side of the river. When the Guru called him to come on to the other side, the disciple immediately started walking towards the Guru, without once thinking about the how deep the river was or how fast it was flowing. His Guru, Shankarachaaryulu was amazed at his disciple's GURU BHAKTHI and through his spiritual prowess, made lotuses appear on the surface of water for Padmaaacharyulu to walk on and cross the river. This story is one among the many stories that portrays how a Guru always saves the devoted disciple.

Back in the days when Baba's statue was not yet installed in Sai Nilayam, devotees had the good fortune of being part of the Baba Parayana sessions led by Srinivas. Prasanna was frequently given visions by Baba. Though asleep, she would be in an unconscious yet blissful trance like state. Srinivas was always ready with a book in hand to document everything she spoke, and at times would even seek clarification with respect to certain things. In fact it was Baba himself who was speaking through Prasanna to further bolster their faith in him. Strangely enough, Prasanna would only remember the vision and none of what she spoke.

One night while sleeping, she had one such vision. Prasanna and Baba were on the beach. Baba started walking into the water and she too started following him. Suddenly, Srinivas heard Prasanna say "I am unable to go". So he asked her back, "Where are you unable to go?" To which she replied "Baba was going deep into the water, and that she was unable to go any further as her dress was getting wet. She further added that she had hydrophobia and she was scared of water." Just as she was saying this, Srinivas found Prasanna's dress become wet from the feet till her knees. Baba left, and the vision ended as mysteriously as it began and Prasanna was wide awake.

The following day, she was blessed with another vision in which Baba conveyed the following to Prasanna "Yesterday, you did not trust me completely therefore you did not follow me, and instead stopped halfway through. If you trust the Guru you will follow him anywhere. You did not trust your Guru" and disappeared immediately after that. Prasanna was dejected and morose for the entire day, for the lapse of her faith in Baba. Srinivas comforted Prasanna saying that she should just follow Baba without second thoughts.

Three days later Baba once again appeared to her in a vision and once again took her to the beach. This time she had vested her complete faith in him and followed him. Prasanna said "Baba and I are somewhere and there is a white fluid everywhere. Srinivas was rather perplexed so he enquired, what the white liquid was. She replied that it was Milk. She further added that "There was a man sleeping on a snake, and a beautiful lady beside him" Then she said" Suddenly she said, they are none other than "GOD VISHNU and GODDESS LAKSHMI DEVI". IT WAS VAIKUNT. The snake on which GOD VISHNU was sleeping was SESHANAGU. Later BABA took her to another place and she just followed him.

Prasanna started shivering a lot. Srinivas asked, where are you and why are you shivering?" She replied that there was a lot of snow and she thought Baba must have brought them to the mighty

Himalayas. As she was shivering, Srinivas covered her in two blankets with the hopes of keeping her warm.

Her nose was red and her voice too had become harsh and raspy owing to the freezing cold. Prasanna described what she was seeing. The description was that of a man who was wearing nothing expect for a tiger skin, there was a snake around his neck and water was flowing out of his hair. Beside him was an extremely beautiful lady. The place was Kailasam, and they were none other than the presiding deities, GOD SHIVA and GODDESS PARVATHI. There was also a boy with them. As she couldn't recognize the boy, she asked Baba about who he was. Baba simply replied, "Your son has the same name", and she realized the boy to be none other than "Karthikeya" son of SHIVA and PARVATHI.

Baba then took her to another place, Prasanna described the terrain to be rather rocky and mountainous. Srinivas could clearly see deep depressions forming under her soft feet, as if she were walking barefoot on a very rough area covered with sharp stones. Upon arriving at the place, Baba spoke the following through Prasanna, "The black stone statue that you see here is that of Lord Venkata Ramana Murthy. The statue is replete with Shankam (Blowing Conch), Naamam, and Chakram. Goddess Ammavaaru is also present.

Finally Baba said, "I'm going to now show you my place." So saying, Prasanna suddenly found herself magically transported to what looked like Shirdi, a really long time ago. The roads were practically non-existent and there was dust everywhere." Baba asked Prasanna to be seated on a big stone that was nearby. After Baba returned, he proceeded to give Prasanna a tour of his Samadhi. *He took her to an underground cellar where they had to get down 16 steps, (Prasanna counted the number of steps!). Baba told Prasanna that this was the actual Samadhi of him.* The one people view at the Samadhi Mandir in SHIRDI is an outward display that is on top of the original SAMADHI. This is how BABA blessed Prasanna with the wonderful visions and showing her the holiest of places, which are normally impossible for normal individuals to even access in even the farthest of dreams.

Few things for the readers to ponder upon:

1. *WHEN WE HAVE TRUE GURU BHAKTHI, WE WILL NEVER HAVE ANY SECOND THOUGHTS IN OUR MIND*.

2. *TRUE GURU BHAKTHI ARISES IN OUR HEARTS WHEN WE HAVE FAITH AND TRUST IN OUR SADGURU*.

3. *TODAY ALL OF US, WHO CONSIDER PRASANNA, AS A ROLE MODEL IN FOLLOWING BABA'S INSTRUCTIONS, SHOULD NOT FORGET THAT EVEN SHE HAD TO PROVE HER METTLE PASS THE TEST*.

The most important takeaway from this is how "Baba taught all his devotees that they should have implicit faith in their Guru and trust him with their lives. They should follow his footsteps. Finally with his blessing one would attain supreme bliss and happiness."

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 12
IMPOTRANCE OF SADGURU

This chapter describes the importance of a Sadguru like Sri Shirdi Sai Baba.

Baba never claimed to be God, but that he was a humble servant of God. Baba always muttered `Allah Malik`. Baba always put great emphasis on the necessity of a Guru, and how no one of their own accord can ever hope to attain God realization without the help of a Guru. Readers are advised to read the chapter from Sri Sai Satcharitra, which beautifully describes how everybody needs a Guru for guidance in all matters, small or big.

As narrated in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, Baba not only preached his teachings, but also practised them as well. In doing so he set a living example as to how one should fully enjoy their life, but not once should they lose sight of the final goal of becoming one with the creator. As Hemadpant rightly said, "Sri Sai Satcharitra is a precious jewel that, we all must study with love and devotion." But more often than not it becomes very difficult to practise what we read, in our daily lives.

Disillusioned by the overpowering Maya, human beings tend to fail to break free from their pattern of habits and always fall back to their old ways. However whenever we listen to the soul purifying stories of Sri Sai Baba, our mind becomes calm and we are slowly drawn towards the path of spirituality. This can also be thought of as the power of repetition. The more we listen to the stories of Baba, the more devoted we become and thereby rid ourselves of all our worries. The closer we move to God, the easier we will find it to move away from evil tendencies and live a life that is full of meaning.

Mere reading of religious and spiritual books, and an outward show of morals or superficial indulgence in auspicious rituals does no good to anybody. If none of this brings about a positive permanent change in us, it is of no use. Baba always corrected his devotees' behaviours promptly and practically. Fortunately for us, Baba is forever guiding us through Prasanna and Srinivas and thereby enabling us to follow the path of spirituality. Through the various bhajans and holy rituals and the many miracles of the devotees, Baba helps his devotees stay on the true path.

Just the way planting a mango seeds does not yield juicy mangoes from the next day, similarly we too should have the `*Shraddha and Saburi*`. More often than not, due to the lack of his patience human beings falsely put the blame on God for not answering their prayers. With a little bit of patience, we realize that we need only wait and be perceptive enough to receive God's answers. We say our prayers and run away, and complain that God hasn't answered our prayers.

Secondly, our prayers and wishes shouldn't be extravagant and unnecessary. It is not that such prayers are answered but extraordinary wishes need to be accompanied by an equally extraordinary sign of faith and goodwill in the Lord Almighty's power, and an unfaltering belief in God that whatever happens , happens for a reason and that it is divinely ordained hence is always in our best interests. To lead a spiritual life, using one's faculties one must clearly discern between needs and wants, and lead a simple life keeping their needs and wants to the minimum. Baba, was God Incarnate, always led a simple life having nothing except a ragged cloth on his body, and few other things.

Thirdly, Baba is our mother and father. He knows what is best for us. If you were to have immense faith in him accompanied by patience, he will himself take care of you. Prasanna and Srinivas are living testimonies to the above proclamation. What is worth highlighting is how neither Prasanna nor Srinivas ever take credit for all the glorious and worthy deeds that are carried out from Sai Nilayam.

They are always humble, and always say that it is Baba how is carrying out everything, use them merely as instruments. All they want is the well-being of all devotees and unbounded love towards the kind Sadhguru Sai Nath Maharaj~

Not everybody gets an opportunity to do good to the society, and not everyone is blessing with the chance of serving Baba. On account of our good luck, and merits accumulated from our previous lives and finally due to the grave of Sai Baba, we have the good fortune of serving at Baba's feet. Indeed it is our blessing to be associated with Prasanna and Srinivas, and through them the opportunity to serve his holiness, Sri Sai Baba.

Let us utilize this opportunity to the make maximum utilization of this golden opportunity and dedicate ourselves towards serving Baba.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 13
EXPERIENCES OF SWAROOP

This chapter describes how Baba guided Swaroop to a fruitful career.

This story should be remembered by all and read with devotion as it shows how Baba helps his devotees on every step of their life. Swaroop was the younger son of Mr. & Mrs Shankar. Right from his early childhood, Swaroop was very hard-working individual. During his 10th standard final exams, he suffered from chicken pox, yet with faith in God, he was undaunted and appeared for all his exams and scored very good marks. Later during his EAMCET examinations, he suffered from very high fever and was completely weakened. Despite his condition, he was able to secure a rank among the top 20,000.

He was rather depressed as he would have easily secured a top 1000 rank had he been in good health. Upon attending the counselling, he was able to secure a seat in civil engineering. However Baba had other plans for him. Through Prasanna he delivered the message that Swaroop was to only join ECE or EEE. But as Swaroop had already begun attending the classes even though civil engineering did not pique his interest. Due to Baba's grace, there was a sudden change of plans and he came to know that second counselling session was going to be held in college. He immediately requested his father to bring all the necessary documents.

With Baba's grace he was able to secure a seat in the EEE department. But bad luck was always hovering around him, and he would always lose the first place in class by a mere mark or two. He was sad and began to wonder, why things going awry around him. Listening to his pleas, BABA asked him to wear a "diamond studded ring" as a solution to this troubles. It was that point in time when his life started to head in a beautiful direction. He received a pre completion job offer and he joined the position. BABA however suggested that he should pursue higher education and not settle down for the job. At first he was not receiving any job offers as he had exceptionally good academics, thus he fell into the high risk zone because stellar students like him are known to change jobs every so often. But Baba assured him that he would get a nice job.

Now the readers might be wondering, why did Baba assure him of a job while also making it clear that he was to pursue higher education? And Baba always keeps his promise and his word in the final decree. This is because, Baba will always support our decisions and aspirations, but when we fall down, he will be there to pick us up and lead us on the right path. As human beings, on account of ego we find it very hard to follow the path by someone else. On account of illusion, we falsely believe that we know everything. But once we realize our mistake, we come to understand the significance of Baba's words.

After Swaroop attended the interviews in Gayathri College, and he got selected for L & T and got posted in Kashmir. Baba then said "I TOLD HIM PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION, BUT HE DID NOT LISTEN TO ME. NOW HE IS SUFFERING AND FEELING SAD. ASK HIM TO COME BACK AND STUDY." Then his mother called him and asked him how he was doing, to which he replied that neither like the job nor the place. So he broke the bond with his employer and returned home to prepare for GRE & TOEFL. His exam centre was in Chennai and he was scheduled for 10am. By 8am, Baba gave the message that Swaroop would secure 308 marks in the examination. To their surprise, Swaroop called them that afternoon to tell them that he scored 308 marks. Both the university and the campus he studied at were chosen by Baba himself. So fortunate was Swaroop.

Six months later, BABA gave a message that Swaroop was to select the area which is near to bay and then he selected Houston, Texas. Before leaving for the US, Baba told Swaroop that he was to be

efficient at time management in order to thrive and be successful. Furthermore, Baba asked his parents to provide him with INR 200000 and that it would last him six full months, following which he would land some job that would enable him to support himself.

During these six months, Swaroop worked part time to sustain himself and not depend on his parents. On the holy day of GURU POURNAMI, BABA asked Swaroop for a dress with CAT EYE colour with his earnings. What an honour it is, to be asked by Baba! True to Baba's words, within six months Swaroop landed a teaching assistant position. Which is even more wonderful because he was given the opportunity by the HOD of MIS department himself. Due to the teaching assistantship, his fees was reduced by 50%!

Indeed, he was very sensible to sustain himself and not be a burden on his parents. Not a lot of people think along those lines. Out of gratitude towards what Baba had done for him and his family, he pledged to contribute 1% of his salary towards Baba. Not a lot of people share such a mind-set, and there are very few people who are willing to be like that. From the money he saved, he sent 100 dollars to BABA on September 1st. BABA gave a message that those funds were to be used in the preparation of RAKSHALU and they have been kept in puja and distributed to everyone who attended the puja.

Dedicated efforts combined with hard work and the grace of Baba make everything possible. Ultimately our endeavours will lead us to success. Baba is always with us, all that is needed from our side is an unbreakable faith in him.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 14
EXPERIENCES OF ANUPAMA

This chapter narrates the experiences of Anupama.

She conceived on 5th of February 2009.However when she paid her first visit to the doctor, the doctor informed her that the growth of the baby was not in correspondence with the number of weeks of pregnancy and was therefore asked to comeback at a later point in time. A week later the diagnosis of the doctor remained the same. Furthermore the doctor added that, it was a case of Intrauterine Grown Restriction, due to which the baby was not growing as expected

Anupama then returned to her hometown, Vizag in order to get a second opinion from her family doctor. It was in that year when she visited Sai Nilayam and took Baba's darshan for the first year. Her Aunt told her "In a nearby house, the statue of Shirdi Sai Baba has been installed recently. Go and take Baba's darshan and seek his blessings." Soon after that both Anupama and her aunt visited Sai Nilayam. They were sitting in peace after taking Baba's darshan, when Baba gave Anupama the following instruction "Do not venture outside your house until you are through the fifth month of pregnancy and your baby will see the light of this world"

Following Baba's advice, she remained in Vizag without venturing outside the house, except for visiting Sai Nilayam on Thursdays. In the 6th month she returned to Chennai only to come back to Vizag in the 7th month as per Baba's orders. With each passing day, her anxiety only worsened however she put her entire trust in Baba. Soon the baby was due for delivery, and Anupama was admitted to the hospital.

Three days passes but there was no signs of Anupama giving birth to the baby. The doctors tried to artificially induce labour, but to no avail. Finally with all hope lost, her aunt ran to Sai Nilayam, to their saviour Baba. Miraculously, on the same day, Udi started pouring out of Baba's photo. Prasanna had that Udi sent to Anupama for ensuring a quick and safe delivery. Finally the doctors decided to go with a caesarean section, and safely delivered the baby. The doctors were shocked to find that the amniotic fluid had all disappeared. Had it been delayed even for a bit, the baby would have not survived. With Baba's blessings, both the mother and the child were safe and sound.

The baby was born a few days before Diwali. The family was surprised to see the new-born sleeping so soundly despite the loud explosions from the firecrackers. Suddenly the doubts crept into their minds that the baby could have been deaf. It was with Baba's grace that this thought occurred to them, otherwise the poor baby-girl's life would have been ruined forever. As a mother her intuition told her that something was definitely wrong, and after a lot of research online she concluded that the baby was indeed deaf and unresponsive to all sounds. Unfortunately none of her family members believed in her words. But her faith in Baba was firm and steady.

On the 21st day Prasanna asked Anupama to bring the baby to Sai Nilayam. Prasanna laid the baby to sleep in the master bedroom, and locked the door shut. She assured Anupama that she was not to worry about anything and Baba would take care of the baby. After half an hour, she opened the door. Anupama found her sitting on the bed, and she was covered in Udi from head to toe. The fragrance from the UDI had such divinely distinct notes that none who breathed the air in Sai Nilayam could ever forget it. Baba instructed that the udi (mixed with water) was to be applied to the baby's forehead. However Anupama continued to express her concerns and fears to Prasanna regarding her baby's condition. Prasanna comforted her and asked her to have complete faith in Baba.

Anupama would continue her Thursday visits to Sai Nilayam, sometimes with her baby, and sometimes alone. At that point that baby still didn't have a name, when Baba instructed that the baby girl was to be christened "Sai Anagha".

On one Thursday, Anupama was in SAI NILAYAM along with Anagha for an evening Aarati. Prasanna took the baby girl on her lap. After the Aarati began, both Sai Anagha and Prasanna were covered in layer after layer of Udi. It was a spectacle to watch! Baba again instructed that Udi be given to Sai Anagha. However the condition of the baby didn't seem to improve even though an entire year had passed. Finally everyone was convinced that the bay was suffering from a hearing impairment. It was especially sad because, it was an innocent baby.

The doctors held the opinion that on account of IUGR, the hearing development would have been delayed. Neither Anupama's mother nor her father knew, how much inner strength Baba was providing her. Sai Nilayam was the only place where should would find peace and bliss and she could sit there for hours without being bothered by any tensions or worries. At 11am that day, a flower fell on Baba's feet and Baba gave the following message "Have Anagha take the darshan of three Shakti Peethamulu, she is going to be all right".

A reassuring peace descended over her and she immediately started on a pilgrimage of the following three Shakti Peethamulu:

1. PITAPURAM
2. DRAAKSHARAMAM
3. KANCHEEPURAM

With a new found confidence, Anupama was sure that the baby was going to have hearing capabilities like any other child. After six more months, the doctors advised that the baby be fed rice, however her grandmother suggested that they first conduct the `Annaprasanna Ceremony`. So on a Thursday, they cooked rice with jaggery and offered it to Baba as Naivedyam. With Baba's blessings, Sai Anagha ate her first morsel of rice from the loving hands of Prasanna.

The baby was now 1 year 3 months old, but she couldn't utter a single word. Recalling those days now, Anupama cannot but think how much trouble she caused Prasanna and Srinivas with endless queries and anxieties. However they were true devotees of Baba and hence they always provided her with much needed love patience and support. Baba blessed Anagha on innumerable and countless occasions with Udi that Anupama says she has lost track of the number of such occasions. Anupama, has affectionately saved all the dresses of Anagha which Baba showered with the divine Udi. Nine years later, the Udi covered dresses still emanate the same lively and divine fragrance.

When the baby was 1 year 6 months old, the doctor observed the child was shouting while communicating and not speaking like children of her age do. The doctor advised that the baby undergo a hearing test. The doctor was a kind gentleman, who personally drove the family in his car and had them meet with his friend who was an ENT specialist. After the test, it was concluded that the baby was indeed suffering from hearing loss, however they were yet to ascertain the percentage. As a hearing loss of >90% would require an operation.

After enquiring if their family had any history of deafness, the doctor referred them to a renowned doctor in Chennai. The whole family was upset and in tears. Both Anupama and Suresh were deeply depressed. When she was holding the reports and crying, her father consoled her and said "Since childhood you were mentally strong. Now you need to be braver than ever." These words instilled in her a new-found hope and confidence. In fact, it was Baba who gave her the strength. Through his

mysterious ways, Baba enabled her family to meet with a paediatrician, who took special care of Anagha. Prasanna and Srinivas were two pillars who were always there for Anupama and her family. The following day, Anupama showed the doctor reports to Prasanna, and she broke down into uncontrollable sobs. They asked her to be patient and rest her entire faith in Baba. It is during testing times like these that makes one stronger. Before heading to Chennai, Anupama took Anagha to Sai Nilayam taking Baba's darshan. That day, Baba showered the Master Bedroom in Udi along with the message that all the Udi was to be given to Anagha. The quantity of Udi was so exuberantly plentiful that her family still has it till date. Only few days earlier, Anupama had mentioned it to Prasanna that she was running out of Udi, and the Merciful Fakir, blessed them with plenty of Udi.

Baba has been and will always continue to be the guiding light in our lives. Fortunately, we also have the good fortune of keeping the close company of Prasanna and Srinivas.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 15

SAI ANAGHA's SURGERY AND OTHER MIRACLES

This chapter describes how Baba took care of Anagha's surgery. The previous chapter narrated how the test results from the Madras ENT Research Foundation Hospital showed that Anagha was suffering from more than 90% hearing loss hence a surgery was their only choice. However, the surgery would cost about INR 25,00,000. This was no small sum by any means for a middle-class family. One could afford a luxurious house for that amount. This led Anupama to think, why did Anagha have to suffer from this condition that would force a surgery, why couldn't it be a scenario where she could make do with a hearing aid? Later she came to know that hearing aids do not pick up all the frequencies of human speech, and their quality was nothing when compared to a cochlear implant.

But doesn't Baba know what is best for us? Our thinking and logic are limited by our human body and inexperience, seldom do we think about anything from a broader point of view? If BABA would have listened to her prayers that day and had Anagha not undergone a cochlear implant, but instead wore a hearing aid, it would have been a truly sad story, for speech is indirectly influenced by one's ability to hear. Thus, Anagha would have been deprived of the opportunity to develop her speech like the rest of the children. This drove home a very important point that Baba, does what is best for an individual, not what he or she asks for.

Anupama returned to Vizag and informed their doctor all that had transpired in Chennai. The MRI scan showed that the nerve connecting the internal ear to the brain had certain grey patches. Per the report, there was the unfortunate possibility of memory loss owing to the above condition, and in such a case, a surgery would not be performed, and even if it were performed, it would be of no use. The pediatrician comforted them saying that the report and all the findings are more a `F.Y. I` and that they were not to worry.

As we will see shortly, Baba had saved Anagha from a major problem in a miraculous way. Baba showered Anagha in UDI FROM HEAD TO TOE, for a reason. More often than not, people tend to think that their problems are so big and like no other in the world, unfortunately on account of ignorance and maya they fail to realize that Baba had averted many life-threatening calamities, without our knowledge. Oneday Anagha was taken for an eye checkup, before her surgery. It was then they came to know that she was infected by the Rubella virus, and that was the cause of her hearing loss. It was further revealed that the virus affected her so severely that her count was 850, and in most cases a score of 50-100 is considered extremely severe.

Generally, the *Rubella virus* affects a host of organs, including eyes, ears, heart,lungs, and the nervous system. But Baba saved Anagha from all that misery. Nobody could have done anything had the virus affected her eyes, heart or lungs. Although her eyes were affected, it was only the top layer of her cornea. Here lies the greatness of Baba, though everyone has to suffer the consequences of karma from their past lives, but Baba ever so mercifully saw to it that the innocent child went through minimal misery. His miracles are beyond our comprehension. Baba soon took care of the surgery too. As mentioned earlier, INR 25,00,000 is a very big sum, and not something that can be arranged for, overnight.

Doctor Adinarayana, paid their home a visit, and without saying a word, handed them INR 15,00,000. The parent's eyes overflowed with tears and their throats choked with emotion. They were left speechless when the doctor further added, *'I AM PROVIDING THIS MONEY FOR THE CHILD'S FUTURE. YOU CAN RETURN THE MONEY WHENEVER YOU WANT TO, IF NOT YOU NEED NOT RETURN IT. THIS IS PURELY AN ALTRUISTIC GESTURE*.

This incident may raise several questions in one's mind. For instance, who in today's unforgiving society, donates charity money? In this case, the amount of money was simply too huge, and it was given so generously without having to go down to the lawyer's office for signing documents etc. A doctor meets several patients each day, if not for divine providence and guidance, would the thought have arisen in his mind to specifically donate towards Anagha's operation? In fact, it was Sri Sai Baba himself, who came to their rescue in the form of the doctor. The date of surgery was set by BABA, and Anagha was to be operated on the 18h of JULY 2011. The surgery lasted five long hours, and to everyone's relief, the chief doctor declared cheerfully that the operation was a success. Everybody present there were very happy with the news.

Anupama, immediately called Srinivas to break the news to him, and through him she learned that BABA had already given the following message to Prasanna. "*Prasanna was not to go out of the room, until the surgery finished. THREE DAYS PRIOR TO SURGERY BABA INSTRUCTED PRASANNA THAT SHE WAS TO DEDICATE ALL HER PRAYERS AND ENERGIES SINGLE MINDEDLY TOWARDS ANAGHA, AND AID IN MAKING THE OPERATION A SUCCESS". This was so because Anagha's was on the operating table and she needed all the positive energy more than anyone else.*

If not for Baba's mercy, and along with the perpetual support and constant prayers of both Srinivas and Prasanna, it is hard to imagine what would have been the fate of baby Anagha. With Baba's grace, Anagha was able to successfully complete her speech therapy within 10 months. Day in and day out, Prasanna, was ever so graciously enquiring about the well-being of Anagha, thus providing the much-needed emotional support to Anupama and her family. Finally when Anagha uttered her first syllable, it was "Bha" , and shortly thereafter, to their elation and delight she uttered "BABA" as her first word. It was one of the happiest days of their lives. A month after the surgery, a recall notice for the cochlear implants were sent out, as it was found that that particular batch was prone to failures.

Since Anagha was already operated upon, there was nothing that could be done hence, they laid the onus on Baba to take care of everything. It was reported that a lot of other children had the misfortune of becoming unsuspecting victims of the cochlear implant failure. Although Anupama had laid the burden on Baba, as a mother she couldn't imagine seeing her daughter undergo a second surgery. It was around Navaratri's, when she met Prasanna and broke down into uncontrollable tears while telling her about the potential risk posed by the failing implants.

That Tuesday was the first day of Navaratri, and BABA gave the following message "Sai *Anagha was to be given the framed pencil sketch of Goddess Anagha Devi, and it was to be put in her bed room"* Now this photo frame was one of earliest pictures to arrive at Sai Nilayam, and it was present in Sai Nilayam until Baba's message. This way Baba once again saved Sai Anagha from a terrible fate. Anupama wished for her daughter's AKSHARABHYASAM to be held at Sai Nilayam and it turned out to be a wonderful coincidence as Prasanna conveyed a similar message that the ceremony was to be carried out in Sai Nilayam.

Shortly before this, Bhagyasree saw a vision during Navaratri's, in which "Goddess Anagha Devi, was tracing alphabets on the tongue of baby Anagha." Both Prasanna and Anupama were delighted to learn about this development. On the day of *AKSHARABHYASAM*, Anupama requested Prasanna to guide Sai Anagha in writing her first words, however she advised that Anupama should be the one to do the honors as she was the mother. Though Anupama deeply desired for Prasanna to do the honors, she kept it to herself. Mr. Narayana was leading the Puja Karyakram, while Prasanna was seated in the hall. Srinivas was ringing the gong as the Ganapati Puja had concluded, but Prasanna thought that the Puja was over so she came over and holding Anagha's hand, traced the words "OM SAI RAM" three times in the rice! Looking at Mr. Narayana's expressions, Prasanna then realized that the main Puja had not yet concluded, but Anupama was bubbling with joy as Baba had once again miraculously fulfilled her heart's desire. There is no doubt, that Baba always fulfills the wishes of a devout Bhakta.

On another occasion, Anagha was sitting in Prasanna's lap and Baba blessed Anagha by applying KumKum to her ears. Prasanna gifted a pair of pearls to Anagha. The pearls were fashioned into ear studs. With the blessings of Baba, these divine studs always protect Anagha, or so believes Anupama. This was followed by a string of miracles, from Baba choosing which school to enroll Anagha in, to advising which application to fill and when to submit the same.

Even though they tried enrolling her in different school, all the applications always came back rejected because they thought that the girl was a special needs child. When they were on the way to submit an application for DPS, BABA asked them not to submit it that day, and that they were not select a particular column which enquired whether their ward fell under the special needs category. After submitting the application per Baba's guidelines, the application was rejected owing to a mismatch in address, however they were given the opportunity to re submit the application with correct documentation. Shortly afterwards, they were called in for an interview which went well and all of the paperwork was taken care of in the office premises itself.

As they were walking out, the admin was curious enquired if Anagha was wearing a Bluetooth device? Anupama replied that it was a hearing-aid and added that their daughter could take proper care of herself. When Anagha suffered from severe rashes on her body, BABA asked them not to send her to school for an entire week. Surprisingly Baba had given this order even before a doctor advised it. Exactly one week later, Anagha fully recovered and was in the pink of health. Anagha would frequently contract cold and throat infections, and antibiotics did her do good. BABA solved the issue by telling that "Anagha, while brushing teeth, was inadvertently swallowing the contaminated tank water, so she was to be given purified drinking water". After following Baba's instructions, both the severity and the frequency of the infections reduced.

On another occasion, when the family were about to embark on a pilgrimage to Kancheepuram, and just as they were about to step foot outside their house, Prasanna messaged them asking where they were? She told them to cancel their plans as Baba forbid them from crossing the city limits until the 5th of September. They were further instructed to visit the ASHTALAKSHMI TEMPLE in BESANT NAGAR.

Though we may not know our past lives or deeds but, Anagha is indeed very lucky to have Baba in her life right from her birth into this world. She is even more fortunate for having the opportunity to celebrate her birthdays in Sai Nilayam with Prasanna, Srinivas and the all-pervading – Sri Sai Baba.

Readers are requested to place their entire trust in Baba, for he is the guiding light of our lives, and he is forever present with us through times both good and bad. For all the lifetime worth of miracles that Baba shows us within a short time, there is really nothing that we can give back except for pure love, devotion and tears of gratitude. Baba has said on several occasions, that of our own accord we may not by pass the fruits of our past karma, however if we were to trust him with our heart and soul, he would ensure that we easily overcome *KARMA-PHALAM (fruits of karma)*.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 16
SURESH & ANUPAMA's CAREERS

This chapter describes how Sri Sai Baba shaped the careers of Anupama and Suresh.

Post Anagha's surgery, the family was in big debt. First they had to repay the doctor, and to add to that was the recurring cost of Anagha's implant which had to be upgraded every so often. In Sai Nilayam, Prasanna mentioned to Anupama that following Baba's instructions, they had recently bought a piece of land. Immediately Anupama said, if Baba agrees then they too would like to purchase land in the same place where Prasanna & Srinivas had bought.
Baba gave the green light, and Srinivas got in touch with the party from whom they had purchased. When Anupama shared the news with Suresh, he was rather perturbed owing to their current financial standing, but he was persuaded otherwise.

But before they could purchase the land, the prices went up. However Srinivas intervened timely and made it clear to the realtors that Anupama was family and he insisted that they be offered the same price. With Baba's blessings the realtor/builder agreed. However the couple, didn't have a single rupee with them to make the purchase. About the same time, Suresh started a new job at Renault. After claiming the amount present in his Provident Funds, he cleared a percentage of the debt, and in the end they had about INR 100000 with them. As they were still in Chennai, all the paperwork was taken care of by Prasanna and Srinivas.
As a sign of good faith, they were first asked to deposit a sum of INR 10000, and a sum of INR 90000 after 10 days. Thus the plot was officially allotted to them. Though It was agreed that the remainder of the amount (INR 1500000) would be paid through monthly instalments, it is surprising how, for 18 long months, the builder hadn't asked for a single rupee until August 2013.This was one of the many miracles of Sri Sai Baba, who always so lovingly looking after his devotees.

Then Baba further blessed them and brought about a huge change in their lives. Suresh had always wanted to work abroad, and Anupama thought that it would be really nice if Baba gave them that opportunity. Within six months, Suresh received an offer to work in Paris. When Suresh returned from Paris, Baba asked them to repay some portion to the Doctor. It was decided that INR 1000000 would be repaid. Suresh had INR 500000 with him and for the rest, he applied for a loan. All of it together they returned to the Doctor.

The Doctor was moved and thanked them and mentioned that he was sending his daughter for higher studies but didn't ask them for the money so as not to inconvenience them. Isn't it wonderful how Baba took care of everything and arranged the right circumstances?

Baba then gave the message that they were to take out another loan and get the plot of land registered. As the bifurcation of the states was imminent, the prices of the land would definitely skyrocket. However Suresh was in dilemma as his salary wouldn't allow him to repay another loan. To his surprise he was given a promotion along with a salary raise. All the paperwork was taken care of by Prasanna and Srinivas and the documents were sent to Chennai for signatures.

If one think's about it, Anupama was just another devotee at Sai Nilayam. There was no pressing need for her to be helped by Aunty (Prasanna) and Uncle (Srinivas) in any manner. They were true devotees of Baba and It was only on account of their Sattvic nature that they volunteered to take care of everything.

Anupama was always an ambitious lady, and was very focused on her career. Though she had worked before and after getting married, she had to discontinue her job as Baba had instructed her to focus all her attention on Anagha. Now that Anagha was going to school, she desired to go back to

work, however it was turning out to be quite challenging. In the month of May, Suresh was in Paris and she returned to Chennai. She hired a maid who would take care of everything. One day BABA gave her a message that she would soon get a job. After several attempts, she finally accepted a position as a recruiter at a training and placement institute. Conveniently, it was a work from home job. My first salary was 5000 rupees and along with a bonus of INR 500 per successful registration. In addition to fulfilling her desire, he further told her that as you will be working from home, you don't require a full time maid. Isn't it amazing, how Baba is always with his devotees, guiding them through every step of their lives, in the most simple and practical of ways. This is on account of our good karma from our past lives and the grace that Baba showers upon us.

One night while talking to Prasanna, when BABA told that her salary would be revised to INR 10000. Immediately after that she received a call from her manager that he was very happy with her performance and therefore revise her salary to INR 10000. This was after two months of her joining the position. Soon after that she had the opportunity to go on a pilgrimage to Kailash Mansarovar. Upon her return, she was requested to work 10 days from the office and that her salary would be further raised to INR 20000.

No logical explanation can be attributed to this gesture from her management, as we know how hard it is to receive a hike, and that too in Anupama's case salary was four times what she had originally began with. By the end of 1.6 years, Anupama was working from home taking home a pay of INR 30000. One day Baba told Prasanna to tell Anupama that she should write down her priorities and decide whether it would be Anagha or her career.

In the month of February last year on Shivaratri day, Anupama went into the puja room to light the evening lamp, when she suddenly heard a voice "Check the silver items". So she started checking and to her dismay, she found that a silver coin was missing. She was disappointed because she had kept the coin to make some silver items for BABA. Sometime before that Suresh had also lost a gold ring. She conveyed the same to Prasanna, when Baba told that they maid had taken the items. When they asked the maid, she was overcome by grief and guilt and accepted the she was the one responsible. While she returned the silver coin, she told them that the gold coin was already sold. Baba suggested that INR 15000 be deducted from her salary over a period of 15 months.

Anupama had the following to say in this regard: "Whatever we have, whatever we are, and everything is merely a consequence of Baba's divine grace and blessings. Baba always gave me not what I wanted, but what was the best for me. I consider myself and my family really blessed for having Baba, Prasanna Aunty and Srinivas Uncle in our lives. Aunty and Uncle are our role models who inspire us in our everyday lives."

She further added that "I sincerely believe that Aunty and Uncle have been with Sri Sai Baba for several past generations, and through them Baba teaches us everything. What they have done for me and my family is beyond what words can describe. I will be indebted to them in this life and for the lives to come."

CHAPTER 17

ARRIVAL OF SRI CHAKRAM AND BABA PADHUKAS

This chapter describes the story of how Sri Chakram and Baba Padukas blessed Sai Nilayam.

When Suresh was in Paris, Anupama was in Vizag and would visit Sai Nilayam almost every day. But on one Friday she couldn't be present at Sai Nilayam to take part in chanting LALITHA SAHASRAM. So she called Prasanna and informed her the same, and she was told that it was up to her. But somehow she decided this was more important than work, so she made up her mind and quickly arrived on time for the Lalita Sahasram. Prasanna, smiled at her and told “Neeku ammavari anugraham vundi" (You have the blessings of Goddess Lalita Devi, and she further added, Goddess Lalita Devi gave her the following message, "EROJU EVERU LALITHA SAHASRAM KI VASTHARO VAALLA DAGGARIKI NENU KORI VASTHANU"(Anybody coming taking part in the Lalitha Parayana will be blessed by my presence (***Sri Chakram***).

The following day, BABA conveyed the message that all the ***Sri Chakrams*** should be present in Sai Nilayam by the day of Ugadi. So all willing devotees accompanied Srinivas to Devipuram. However only of them were available, and they were huge ones. It was decided that one would had by one Mr.Narayana, and Anupama desired to have the other. But she wanted to first consult with Suresh. She felt bad for having hesitated and not had taken the Sri Chakram. When they all reached Sai Nilayam, she sat down in front of Sri Anagha Devi’s photo and prayed thus ,” AMMA I DONT KNOW WHETHER I HAVE ERRED BY HESITATING AND NOT TAKING THE SRI CHAKRAM. BUT I CANNOT TAKE A DECISION WITHOUT FIRST CONSULTING WITH MY HUSBAND SURESH.

Strangely enough, she received a call from Suresh. When she told him of the developments, he chided her for not taking it in the first place and asked her to acquire it immediately. Soon after that Prasanna enquired as to why she didn’t take the Sri Chakram. Anupama informed her that she was hesitating as she would need to request a transfer of funds from Suresh, and he told her that she would receive the funds on the next day. But Prasanna made it clear that Baba had asked her to take it on the following day. Now Anupama was in a fix and didn’t know what to do. Luckily for her, Prasanna said that she could have the Sri Chakram that was already present in Sai Nilayam.

On the very next day, Srinivas requested Anupama to take the Sri Chakram. She was willing to go, but she wished that Prasanna Aunty should also accompany her. At the very last minute, Baba asked Prasanna to accompany her , thus fulfilling her heart’s desire. Anupama recalls this incident and says that, “If one has an intense desire to be a part of a good cause, that wish would be definitely fulfilled”. Prasanna arrived, and Anupama took the Sri Chakram from her hands. Six months after this event transpired, Baba gave the message that the Sri Chakram was to be taken to Chennai and a Puja Ceremony be conducted in the same regard. The Sri Chakram was brought to Chennai by Prasanna and Srininvas.

After the conclusion of the Puja, they placed the Sri Chakram inside the shrine, and they all left for Kanchipuram. They returned home to an unforgettable sight, a miracle that they would remember for a very long time. All of the Kumkum, had mysteriously taken the shape of the Goddess. Prasanna asked her to carefully close the door. Anupama quickly went back into the room to grab a pillow, and what she was astonished to see that the kumkum which had earlier taken the shape of the goddess was not mixed with water and the coconut was broken in half and was present on the plate harbouring the Sri Chakram. She was surprised because the coconut which was near the Goddess

had move to the Sri Chakram. All those present took darshan of the Devi and closed the door. When Prasanna went back into the room, she found that the Goddess was shedding tears, and the saree that adorned her was completely soaked wet in those tears.

In October of 2011, Prasanna presented Anupama with one idol of the Goddess out of the eight Ashta Lakshmi Goddesses' idols present in Sai Nilayam. In the year 2014. BABA gave her another message that "She should keep his Paadukas in their house in Chennai". Prasanna and Srinivas, immediately had them made and sent them to Chennai along with some devotees who were headed there. Baba also informed that, daily Anagha was to pour a handful of rice on his Paadukas, and on Thursdays some item was to be prepared with this and be distributed to the poor.

This is how the Goddess graced the house of Anupama and Suresh. Let us lovingly remember that Sri Sai Baba is the wire puller of the universe and it is he who decides one's past present and future. Anupama considers herself extremely blessed for having the opportunity to experience the divine through the various divine miracles in her daily life. She also conveys her gratitude towards Prasanna and Srinivas, through whom she had the opportunity to experience spirituality.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 18

EXPERIENCES OF SRIKANTH

This chapter narrates the story of Srikanth, who was an ardent devotee of Baba and followed his words without second thoughts.

This young man, Srikanth, nephew of one Mr. Narayana, came to Sai Nilayam for taking Baba's darshan and seeking counsel with regarding his marriage. BABA gave him the following message. "*Anaadha Ashram Nunchi Ammayini Emi Aasinchakunda pellichesuko*". (Marry a girl from an Orphanage and marry her without any expectations). He followed the message given by BABA and married a girl named Sravani. This girl had tragically lost both her parents. After her mother's death, her father married another lady and she turned out to be a terrible and heinous person. Unable to bear the torture of her step mother, both father and daughter tried to commit suicide. Her father died, but she survived and was left alone.

Srikanth was a Brahmin. Sravani was a Vaishya. For their marriage, BABA told that "MANGALASUTHRALU, Sarees MARIYU PELLIKI KAVALASINIVI SAI NILAYAM SATSANGHAM NUNCHI VELLALI"(Everything necessary for the marriage were to be provided by Sai Nilayam). First, Rajesh gave them INR 10000 towards the couple's personal expenses. With these funds they bought a stove, bed and some other items. As per Baba's instructions, Prasanna, Kavitha, Jaya, and Lalita together arranged for the MANGALASUTRAM along with sarees for the new bride.

Baba told them, "Since all of you are participating in helping this girl get married "KANYADHAANAM CHESINA PHALITHAM ANDARIKI DAKUTHUNDI" (All of you will reap the good karma for participating in this good deed). This is how the all-pervasive all-knowing BABA guides all his devotees in Sai Nilayam Satsang for doing good deeds. At the time of his marriage, Srikanth's salary was INR 10000 pm and had a debt of INR 400000 which he took on account of various personal reasons. One day they came to Sai Nilayam for taking Baba's darshan. That day Sravani shared with Prasanna, that managing the house hold with the salary they are getting was becoming difficult. Days went by and one day during *Aarathi* BABA told her to collect *dakshina* from all the devotees present there.

After 2 weeks when Sravani came to take darshan, Baba asked Prasanna to give her the money collected as dakshina, and advised her to start a small shop in their house. She was to sell essential goods to the people staying close to her home. Sravani, now earns around 1500 rupees a month. One day BABA told them that Sravani will inherit some property from her parent's side. When Srikanth asked her, she said that her father long ago i.e., may be 25 years before had deposited an amount of 10000 rupees in her name. They visited their home town, and spoke with her relatives and they said the bond papers were not to be found and they would need to search for them.

Later Sravani became pregnant and delivered a baby boy and they forgot about the inheritance. Again BABA reminded them and told them to follow up. Srikanth said that making multiple trips was becoming very expensive and that they couldn't afford them anymore. Baba advised that he stay there for 10 days and only return upon its resolution. Finally in August, the resolution took place and they received a total of INR 538000. Upon receiving the money, he brought the entire sum to Sai Nilayam. BABA made them put 4 lakhs into fixed deposit, and remaining was used towards clearing off their remaining debts. The interest thus accrued, approximately INR 3300 were used by them for their house expenditures.

Srikanth immediately returned for BABA'S darshan. He was filled with gratitude as Baba had blessed them with such a large sum, so he donated INR 5000 towards Annadhanam. One year after marriage Srikanth lost his job and ran into many financial problems. The same way BABA asked to collect dakshina from all the devotees during *Aarati* and gave them to Sravani. Amma did not even count

the money collected. BABA said "I TOOK THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SRAVANI SO I WILL FULFILL ALL MY DUTIES TOWARDS HER. This is how BABA gave life to an orphan girl.

Few points worth Perusal are:

1. SRADDHA AND SABURI: Srikanth followed BABA'S words blindly without a second thought. This is the kind of love and devotion which BABA wants from all his devotees.

2. CASTE: Srikanth married a girl who was Vaishya and not a Brahmin. BABA ALWAYS TOLD IN SACHARITRA THAT HE WAS NEITHER A HINDU NOR A MUSLIM. ALL PEOPLE ARE ONE AND THE SAME. IT IS WE WHO HAVE CREATED THE DIFFERENCES. RAM AND RAHIM ARE ONE AND THE SAME. THE BLOOD IN ALL PEOPLE IS THE SAME. THEN
FROM WHERE DID THE CONCEPT OF CASTE AND RELIGION
COME?

3. GRATITUDE: Srikanth, donated half his salary towards Annadaanam, out of love and gratitude towards everything Baba had done for him and his family. This is such a big sum for someone making 10000 per month. He married a girl who had no body and gave her a new life.

4. RESPONSIBILITY: BABA never left the side of his devotees. Baba once again proved that he would ensure the well-being of his devotees until the very successful completion of the devotees' endeavours. Baba ensured that Sravani and Srikanth were very well taken care of, and he provided for them even before they asked him for it.

5. HUMBLENESS: Srikanth was an employee with a smaller salary. But even when he received a huge sum of INR 500000, he was not swept away by it, instead he brought the whole sum to Baba to get further instructions. He had no ego, and they spent this gift from Baba only towards making meaningful purchases.

6. SATHSANGAM: It was under Baba's directive that Sai Nilayam Satsang came to be. Through this Satsang, Baba enables all devotees to dedicate themselves in the service of others. A Sathsangam should always work together with good camaraderie among all participants. Through the role models of Prasanna and Srinivas, Baba showed us that one devote one's life towards the upliftment of others through love and patience. It is commendable how they invite everybody to be a part of the various philanthropic activities, so that everybody gets the good karma from it.

Let us all learn and practise the various lessons Baba taught us.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 19

GRUHASTHU ASHRAM

This chapter will briefly touch upon the topic of Gruhastu Ashram.

As narrated in an earlier chapter, at the conclusion of *BHIKSHA* and a *PARAYANAM* reading of Sri Sai Satcharitra, Baba instructed his devotees to continue chanting the *VISHNU SAHASRANAMAM* daily for the next few days. As the number of devotees continued to rise, so did the number of miracles taking place. Every day one or the other miracle used to take place. On certain days, the rooms would be covered in sheets of divinely fragrant Udi/Vibhuti. On other days, Baba would have messages to particular devotees answering their questions pm other occasions the messages would be for all the devotees to take part in certain activities that would ensure the common welfare of all people.

However Baba never forced devotees to do something against their will or wish. While it is not uncommon for the limited intellect of our minds to create several questions, especially when it comes to following someone else's directions. Those devotees who had full love and devotion for Baba executed all his instructions without any hesitations and thereby reaped fruits that were in accordance with their level of faith and trust in Baba. Those who didn't follow Baba's instructions, would be met with was destined for them through the karmic laws of action and reaction.

More often than not, individuals tend to hesitate to walk down an unknown road, and they feel especially perturbed the very moment obstacles start surfacing. Then they begin treading down the dangerous thought train of ` why is this happening to me? If Baba had indeed instructed us, then why are difficulties arising?' and so on. Those who are strong, will not back away, nor will they ask Baba to remove these difficulties. Instead they seek Baba's blessings to give them enough strength that will allow them to navigate these tests successfully.

Furthermore, tests like these are to inculcate the principles of Shraddha and Saburi in the devotees of Sri Sai Baba. These aren't mere words, but they are the based on the personal experiences of several devotees. Sometimes messages given by Baba are of a cryptic nature, and may not make sense at first glance. Fortunately for the throngs of devotees who visited Sai Nilayam, Srinivas and Prasanna would patiently explain the significance of the various messages given by Baba.

There were several occasions when Baba would accept the Naivedyam offered by the devout bhaktas. Certain occurrences were so intense and so personal that, they are being left out of the book, lest words might fail to describe to divine beauty of the miracles witnessed and experienced by those present there. As the news of these miracles spread far and wide, there were those who would come their out of plain curiosity to see whether Baba would accept their offering or not. Though during the early years, all four Baba Aarathis were performed at Sai Nilayam, Baba one day gave the message that all the four Aarathis were to be performed only on Thursdays.

At first Prasanna and Srinivas were worried, if they had done something wrong and deeply repented for any lapses in the puja from their end. But later Baba told Prasanna that, "Your son, Karthik, was sitting in front of me and asking me if Mom and Dad will be engrossed in doing puja and taking care of the innumerable devotees and if they will have time to spend time with me? Will I have time to talk to them?" Karthik was studying at that point, and needed the support of his parents. It is not to say that one must not indulge in Pooja and spiritual activities. But Baba always said that one must pursue one's spiritual aspirations while fully well executing the duties enjoined upon that person by the Shastras.

The spiritual path is not supposed to be a convenient alternative to someone who wants to neglect his/her worldly duties. Spiritualism is the highest path, meant for those who have completely fulfilled their worldly obligations. However, since that is not possible for all individuals, BABA always said that once you are in the GRUHASTHU ASHRAM, YOU SHOULD NOT LEAVE YOUR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES. As mentioned in the Sai Sat Charitra, one must dispassionately attend to his worldly duties while internally remaining fully engrossed in the chanting of *'Sai Naam'*.

The reason behind this is that, a hungry person can never find nor realize God, nor can an unhappy one. Only when man meets his basic needs, will he be able to seek a higher purpose in life and pursue the spiritual path. Once again BABA showed his devotees a practical way that enabled them to continue their spiritual endeavours while enabling them to take care of their everyday lives.

There are countless experiences shared by devotees, they will be narrated as and when deemed appropriate. Finally we conclude this chapter with the following words. No Sadhguru will ever ask the devotees to pursue the spiritual path at the expense of their worldly duties. Also whatever time one devotes toward praying to the One Infinite Spirit, Sri Sai Baba, let them pray with their heart and soul and with such devotion and love that they should shed tears of joy and gratitude. Let us always seek refuge at the feet of Baba, and humbly pray that his name be forever present on our lips and that we always devote ourselves in his service. For everything that we have is on account of his blessings.

More miracles will be described in the following chapters.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 20

SRADDHA AND SABURI

This chapter narrates the importance of Shraddha and Saburi.

As highlighted in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, when Sri Sai Baba asked Rs.2 as Dakshina from his devotees, it was of a symbolic significance, which stood for Shraddha and Saburi. In other words he wanted his devotees to always have Faith, Patience and Perseverance. Sri Sai Baba was always concerned about the welfare of his devotees and did not care a jot for material coins, for he was Sat-Chit-Ananda Swaroopam, Bliss Incarnate, and giver to the whole world, without whose grace not a single leaf could move.

On account of the spiritual power felt at Sai Nilayam and due to intensity with which devotees lovingly call upon their beloved Baba, scores of devotees find permanent solutions to a plethora of problems. We'll now describe the miracle through which Baba blessed Mrs. Lakshmi Janardhan. It was almost five years ago when she first step foot in Sai Nilayam to take Baba's darshan and seek his blessings. At that time she was a worried woman who was greatly concerned about the marriage of her son.

Baba gave her the following message, "He should be married off within this time frame, if not there would be a prolonged delay before he can tie the knot". Paying heed to Baba's advice, they found him a suitable bride and got him married. Immediately following the wedding, Mrs. Lakshmi fell seriously ill and was bed ridden. The doctors found that she was suffering from a large kidney stone and that a surgery was inevitable. However to her plight, she had only one kidney. With hearts filled with sorrow, Mrs.Lakshmi along with her husband came to Sai Nilayam and fervently prayed to Baba to show them a way out of this misery. Now see Baba's miracle, that very night the stone dissolved and passed out, thus relieving her of her trouble.

The next day they returned to Sai Nilayam, and shared this miracle with tears of gratitude. Their faith in Baba grew much stronger and now they visit Sai Nilayam every Thursday to take Baba's darshan. Though we don't know how much it must pain her, but she always reverentially sits down on the floor and worships Baba. Later Baba blessed her grandson by giving him opportunities overseas. Blame it on contaminated foods, but in March she was once again diagnosed with two stones in her kidney. The doctors made it clear that a laparoscopy was their only choice. She came running to Baba in Sai Nilayam, and made an earnest supplication, "NENU NINNE NAMUKUNANU, NUVVE EE KASHTAM UNNA KAAPADALI". (I have placed my entire trust in you alone, please protect me always). After praying thus, she returned to the hospital for further scans. To everyone's surprise the stones had miraculously vanished.

The scan report was produced on the THIRD DAY OF THE HANUMAN CHALISA. The doctors were also amazed at this strange phenomenon and asked her "MEERU EE DEVUDINI POOJISTHUNARU MAMALNI AKKADIKI THESUKU VELLANDI" (Could you please escort us to your temple of worship, for we are amused by this occurrence.) As much as Mrs.Lakshmi wanted to divulge the whereabouts of Sri Sai Nilayam, they couldn't because Prasanna had requested privacy in these matters for news of miracles spreads very fast and could lead to throngs of curious visitors and inhibit those who want to be there out of love and devotion.

With Shraddha and Saburi, one can cross oceans of difficulties. Just the way a blind man trusts the person helping him cross the road, so should our trust in Baba be too. Knowing that Baba is always

actively with us in every phase of our lives, good or bad. To have such unfaltering and unwavering faith in Baba is only possible by pure and unwarranted love.

Saburi, as we know is patience. Mountains can be moved with this patience and one can brave even the darkest of storms. While it is not uncommon, for individuals to seek instant gratifications and immediate solutions to problems, one should not get agitated and lose patience after receiving a message from Baba. As humans, we are mere mortals bound by the karma accrued from the innumerable previous births. Hence it is not unusual if we are unable to provide an immediate rational and logical explanation to an event. One must have patience and not hope for immediate solutions to their problems. Because during this time, the merciful Baba reduces or burns away the karma which has led us to the problem in the first place. So kind is our dear Baba.

As one devotee puts it,

RESULT = *TIME TAKEN BY BABA TO RECUCE OUR KARMA*

PHALAM = *OUR PATIENCE*.

This is not to say that immediate results are not possible. Immediate results are definitely possible, but for that we must have that level of faith and belief in Baba. In the end our results are commensurate with our efforts, be it in prayer or exercise or mathematics. So let us make conscious efforts towards inculcating these two qualities of Shraddha and Saburi.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 21

GRATITUDE TOWARDS BABA

This chapter narrates a story that highlights what Baba want from his devotees.

As described in an earlier chapter, the Bhiksha program had become an integral part of Sai Nilayam. Attentive readers may recall that mention was made regarding a devotee who was told by Baba to oversee Annadaanam for 11 consecutive days. Why Baba shouldered the devotee with this responsibility, we will soon see.

On every Thursday, Paalaabhishekam is performed on Baba's statue and the milk thus consecrated is distributed among the devotees as teertham or holy water/milk. On one such Friday, when the teertham was being distributed among those present, one lady refused to accept the teertham saying "I wouldn't drink raw milk even if I were offered one crore rupees". While it is considered sacrilegious to decline the Prasad from a Pooja, Whether that was on account of her ego or if it was plain ignorance, only she will know.

It is a known fact how Baba always accepts whatever is lovingly offered by his devotees, however when the same lady stepped up to offer Naivedyam, Baba wouldn't accept it. The lady felt abashed and ashamed, and she began to wonder why Baba rejected her offering. To which Baba replied "I wouldn't accept your offering even if I were offered one crore rupees". The lady learnt her lesson, and soon began to humbly accept the teertham along with the rest of the devotees. One has to realize and acknowledge the fact that ego is the most subtle yet the most harmful quality that could hamper one's spiritual growth.

As evident from several incidents narrated in the Sai Satcharitra, BABA always accepts anything offered with love and devotion by the humble devotee. Baba loves all his devotees equally, and he taught her the lesson only to make her aware of her faults and show that egotism would lead one nowhere. He regards all his devotees as his equal and wants to hold them to the highest ideals possible. No Guru will ever leave his devotees at the first hint of disobedience from their end, instead the Guru carefully nurtures them to be their best.

Now let us look at another story which illustrates how BABA never leaves the side of his devotees. Once, the same lady from the previous story found herself in Sai Nilayam, sitting in front of BABA and very worried about her son's job. Heading her prayers, BABA gave a message in the Udi "Make a study of my Parayana 11 times", and your wish will be fulfilled. She began to ardently read the Sai Satcharitra, and by the time she completed seven readings, her son received a wonderful job offer. Joyous with this new development, she share the news at Sai Nilayam and left happily.

While she used to religiously offer a small token amount of Rs.2 as dakshina to Baba, but decided to suddenly stop the practise. But three months later when she was back wailing in Sai Nilayam that her son's offer letter was put on hold. Baba simply gave the following message,"PAARAYANAM??? ANNADHANAM??? DHAKSHINA???" While no one understood this message, it struck her close to the heart. She confided to Prasanna that she had stopped everything, - Annadaanam, Parayana and Dakshina. When she asked if she could complete the remaining readings of the Parayana and fulfil her Annadaanam vow. Baba didn't agree and insisted that she start over again, and not to worry about her son's job. So this time she undertook a devout study of the Parayana and fulfilled all her vows, and true to Baba's guarantee her son ended up joining that role. It is indeed a miracle by Baba that the job was on hold for so many months, which is a rarity in today's corporate world.

It is human nature that he forgets God at the first taste of prosperity. In delusion he fails to fulfil his vows and breaks his vows. This should not be the case. The more prosperous one becomes, the more time she should spend in God's service, for everything that we have was bestowed by the God Almighty. Baba is the Brahma Vishnu and Maheshwar, and the very existence of the universe is a mere reflection of his cosmic dance. When nothing is ours what can one even possibly give to him, except expressing pure love and devotion? Whatever Baba instructs us is always with our best interests in consideration. We should place our blind trust in him and simply follow his lead. All that Baba us is true devotion, an unshakable faith and love that will last forever.

On account of Karma, there are certain difficulties one has to endure and experience. This is karma that cannot be normally changed, but Baba promised that if you put your entire trust in me, I will help you overcome it peacefully. Let us meditate on the blissful form of Baba at every single day and not just in times of difficulty. Let us pray that we never forget him even when we are asleep.

Only a real Sadhguru will correct us when we are faltering and always look upon us mercifully. A Sadhguru only wants his disciples to lead a life of truthfulness, happiness, free from greed, selfishness, and always dedicating their lives towards the welfare of themselves and others around them. Through this service our minds are purified, our karma is burnt and slowly our evil tendencies disappear and enable us to move closer to God.

Let us always consciously remember Sai Naam in our hearts.

OM SAI RAM.

CHAPTER 22

BABA'S BLESSINGS

This chapter narrates the story of another devotee who was blessed by Baba.

There was once a lady who came to Sai Nilayam and sat praying before Baba. Baba asked her to perform the thread ceremony of her son. However, she was not sure what to do as they were not financially strong to bear the expenses of the ceremony. Baba suggested that they sell their plot of land in Kurnool. Though the land was involved in a lot of litigations, Baba's blessings resulted in the land being sold for a very good price. With the money thus obtained, they purchased a brand new flat, a new car and they successfully completed the thread ceremony of their son. Unfortunately after her wishes were fulfilled she was never to be seen at Sai Nilayam.

While Baba loves all his devotees equally, it is in the best interests of the devotees to continue to pray to him with devotion so that they can have all their desires fulfilled, and become dispassionate in the process. Thereby have the opportunity to glimpse at an altogether world that is beyond what we experience. Those who are satisfied with eating raw mangoes, will never know the sweetness of ripe mangoes. i.e the farther the journey the sweeter the experience. Imagine the joy one gets when he reaches the foothills of a beautiful mountain, however he who has climbed the peak knows that the joy experienced in it is indescribable. Similarly true devotees of Baba shouldn't satisfy themselves with the smaller joys of life and limit themselves. There is an entirely different dimension that one can enjoy, where the bliss is supreme, however that requires patience perseverance and a never ending devotion towards Baba.

Now let us look at another devotee's experience. Every individual has his/her own personality and each have a different way of learning. In some cases Baba would bestow material benefits on the devotee, in other cases he would teach them by examples and in the present story we'll see how Baba worked on the devotee internally and moulded her thoughts. Also everybody is entitled to their opinion, which are in turn affected by the environment they grew up in, the personal experiences they had and their mentalities. Some people love spending their money on their family, others on travel, and some on charity and so on.

In Sai Nilayam, Prasanna and Srinivas take great care to ensure that Sri Sai Baba, whom they love so much and all the other deities are well adorned and that the puja room decorations are on par with what a Kind would have wanted for his own place of worship. Seeing all the beautiful decorations, one devotee said to herself, "Why do these people spend hundreds of thousands of rupees on flowers and decorations? ". Immediately Baba replied, "Aren't you spending a lot of money for adorning yourself with ornaments, sarees and what not? Why the hesitation when it comes to buying simple flowers for me?"

The lady was stunned and shocked that Baba knew her innermost thoughts and she immediately realized how narrow minded her thinking had been. Thereafter, shedding her ego and ignorance, she lovingly began buying a lovely rose garland for Baba. Baba doesn't care about worthless material possessions, be it a garland of flowers or a golden crown. Baba loves his devotees and merely wants them to realize that they overcome their limitations and open up their minds to receive the knowledge from Baba. Just the way a caterpillar has to undergo penance to transform into a beautiful butterfly, so should devotees get over their worries fears and narrow mindedness and open themselves to an infinite number of other possibilities.

Whatever we have is on account of our past and present karma, and most importantly Baba's blessings. When we spends hours of time in a shopping mall hunting for the best things to buy, why should we not reciprocate the same things when it comes to matters of God and charity. The ultimate truth is the he who selflessly gives, is the one who receives it back in abundance. That is a secret one has to realize and embrace.

Baba has said several times in the Sai Satcharitra, I never take anything from anybody. If I take something from a person, I return it 10-100 fold. So, the sooner we come out of this cocoon of selfish thinking, and instead work towards the welfare of everybody and practise Shraddha and Saburi in every aspect of our lives, we will be happy and move closer to God. Baba will bless such a devotee with an abundance of health wealth and spirituality. Let us not forget the only reason Baba wanted dakshina for his devotees was to free them from their attachment and slavery to it.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 23

IMPORTANCE OF UDI

This chapter describes the importance of Baba's UDI and touches upon a few questions of the devotees which were answered by BABA IN SAI NILAYAM.

It is a well-known fact Baba distributed Udi or sacred ashes from the Dhuni to his devotees in Shirdi. As mentioned in the previous chapters, Baba bountifully blessed Sai Nilayam with the sacred and highly efficacious Udi on countless occasions. This Udi was given to devotees in urgent situations. Whenever Baba blesses the Pooja room or the master bedroom with Udi, the Udi is affectionately gathered and stored by Prasanna and Srinivas. Until recently it was distributed among all devotees. Now the Udi is given to devotees as per Baba's instructions.

Devotees now have the opportunity to apply udi to their foreheads like Tilak. Since the Udi from Shirdi is of a different texture and colour than the Udi from Sai Nilayam, some individuals expressed doubts regarding the authenticity from Sai Nilayam. Baba eased their restless minds by conveying that the Udi in Shirdi is obtained from the Dhuni which is made from the five elements of Nature. The wood is obtained from the trees, which in turn burns in the air. The trees grow in the soil and depend on water. The sacred ashes obtained by burning the wood is called Udi or Vibhuti. As it is not possible to have Dhuni at Sai Nilayam in a residential complex, the Udi Baba gives has a different texture and colour. It is truly phenomenal how the Udi in Sai Nilayam comes into existence by the grace of Sri Sai Baba.

But what is the importance of Udi? Why did Baba distribute Udi to his devotees? What was the philosophical and material significance of Baba's sacred Vibhuti?

There is no human who is free from troubles, big or small, related to health or wealth or likewise, usually everybody faces difficulties at one point or the other. Many devotees come to Sai Nilayam hoping to find a way around their problems. The speed of resolution and the nature of the solution is dependent upon the individual's level of faith, devotion and earnestness.

If somebody was suffering from a health ailment, Baba would direct Prasanna to give Udi to that devotee along with instructions. There are numerous events where Udi cured individuals from various health ailments. The efficacy of Udi is a direct consequence of the spiritual grandeur and the boundless self-realization of Sri Sai Baba.

Apart from bestowing the devotee with health and wealth, there is a deeper significance of Udi. Through Udi, Baba wanted his devotees to realize a beautiful truth, that – everything is transient, and nothing lasts forever. Everything is made from nothing, and after a while returns to nothing. A tree grows from a seed in the soil and after it dies becomes a part of earth. Similarly all the material possessions that we clamour after all our lives, does not last forever. We are born from nothing, and when we pass away we become part of the earth again. In other words, Baba wants us to be un-attached and dispassionate in our lives, and put our entire attention on seeking God. As God is the only reality and the only one who is capable of bestowing us with unparalled and supreme bliss. Whatever desire we may have, we lose the satisfaction the moment it is satisfied. Seeking oneness with God is the ultimate goal, which upon attainment, we'll seek no further.

While it may be hard to perceive, the other great secret which Baba openly shares through Udi is that the world is an illusion, a cosmic delusion created by the power of Maya. The closer we move towards God, the more and more we begin to experience this truth. This can also be experienced as unalloyed joy during Satsangs and Bhajans, and also during periods of profound silence in meditation

on God. Based on our past karma, we are born in a particular family and once the karma is burnt we pass away. A book that has an interesting take on the topic of re-incarnation is 'Many Lives Many Masters by Brian L Weiss'.

We are all made in the image of God, and the human body is merely a vessel for the soul to experience this world and discharge its duties. The soul is the only thing that exists before and after death. As mentioned in the ancient sacred texts, and as told by Baba, to be born as a human is a beautiful and a rare opportunity. A chance, that one should make full utilization to attain self-realization.

To differentiate between the unreal and the real, one must use the discriminative power of knowledge given to us by God. While many people conveniently attribute the root cause of their miseries to money, it is not true. The problem is not with money itself, but with the attachment that one has towards it. As a matter of fact, it is true of all material possessions. As long as you are internally focused on God, and you can dispassionately enjoy anything, there is no problem at all. As told in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, Baba would collect dakshina from his devotees only to teach them not to be attached to it. From the money collected as dakshina, everything would be distributed the same day, and Baba would be the simple fakir he was.

This is another reason people are asked to actively participate in philanthropic and charitable events. Because when you donate, you break the bond of attachment with that object. In the process you no longer limit yourself to a narrowmindedness, your consciousness expands, your mind becomes free and you go in pursuit of the greater responsibilities and joys in life. So let us dispassionately discharge our duties in our daily lives without any attachment.

The path of Self Realization is not easy task, even the greatest and brightest of minds have fallen off the path. However if we devoutly pray to Baba every day and continue our spiritual endeavours, Baba will bless us and take us closer to God. With Baba's blessings, we will attain whatever it is that the mind desires. So let us not focus our energies on increasing our material wealth, but instead focus on God and increase our spiritual wealth. Because spiritual wealth automatically brings with it all the material joys, without us even asking.

We are indeed blessed to know Baba, and to have him guiding us in our everyday lives. Let use the sacred Udi to steadily progress on the spiritual path.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 24

ALLAH MALIK

This chapter describes the meaning of *'Allah Malik'* and why Baba used it every so often.

Day in and day out, scores of devotees visit Sai Nilayam to take Baba's darshan. Once one devotee expressed the following doubt, - "If Baba was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, then why did he always say 'Allah Malik'? Couldn't he have said Sri Rama or Sri Krishna instead?" Baba answered the devotee's question by explaining the meaning of the phrase as follows: 'Allah means God', and 'Malik' means 'One to whom everything belongs'. In other words, Allah Malik means 'Everything belongs to God' or 'God is the sole proprietor of the Universe'. As a note to new readers, Baba never said he belonged to any religion. He always uttered, 'Allah Malik' and humbly said that he was a servant of God. To us, Baba is our Mother Father and Sadguru.

On several occasions, Baba further said that Guru is God. If you faithfully follow your Guru, he will remove all the obstacles and safely take on the shortest route to God. In fact Guru and God are one and the same. Guru is the bodily manifestation of the omnipresent and the omnipotent God. A form with which humans can relate to.

In reality God is nameless shapeless and formless. God is a beautiful bright joyful mass of conscious cosmic energy that pervades the entire universe. The various forms of life are nothing but a million expressions of the one infinite spirit. As we progress on our spiritual journey, the realization about this beautiful truth slowly dawns upon us. One can realize that Guru and God are one and same, either through self-effort by means of meditation yoga etc. or through the grace of a Sadguru when we make a selfless surrender at his feet.

God is beyond our understanding. No one can of his own efforts understand God, because it is beyond the ken of our intellect. Just the way you can never make a cat or dog understand what Wi-Fi or internet is, we too cannot hope to understand what God is. Not because he is hard to find or impossible to understand, but because our minds have not developed enough to attune to his frequency.

As our understanding matures and our consciousness expands, slowly we gain the opportunity to gaze at this beautiful nameless formless God, even if it is only for a few moments during periods of intense devotion or concentration during meditation. A self-realized Guru, on the other hand, due to his grace can expand our minds for increasing our perception and thus allow us to the frequency of God and thereby realize him.

Baba always said that I am not God, but a humble servant of his. He was has incarnated in the form of a human only for the sake of the people. So that he can guide them navigate their mundane worldly existence and help them find God. When Lord Jesus was alive, a majority took him to be an ordinary mortal and didn't believe him to be God. Similarly during Dwapara Yuga, due to ignorance, many people failed to recognize Bhagvan Shri Krishna for who he truly was.

Given how we live in the Kali Yuga, and how most people are full of doubt and flaunt an unhealthy scepticism of everything, it would have been nearly impossible for people to accept Baba was indeed an avatar of God, especially for those living in India during the mid-nineteenth century under the British raj.

Since we are not endowed with the faculties required to realize God, God has humbly taken up the form of a human so that it would be easier for us to relate to him. For the sake of his devotees, God

bears the suffering and pain of his devotees, protecting them from the various calamities that would have otherwise been upon them. And all this, without expecting anything in return from his devotees, except for their love and gratitude and the determination of the few rare gems to persevere on their journey to Self-Realization.

The other meaning that 'Allah Malik' carries is that by consciously recognizing and declaring that everything belongs to God, the possibility of ego is destroyed along with the karma there of. More often than not, we tend to attribute ourselves with the burden of doership. In the process we are elated by success and depressed by loss, and unconsciously tangle ourselves in the complicated and miserable web of Karma. By declaring and realizing 'Allah Malik', we are no longer the cause of any event nor responsible for the outcome. In short we humbly attribute everything to God, a higher power and the sole source of sustenance of the universe. In the process, we become free of ego and worries and tensions, and therefore have the opportunity to devout our heart and soul in the service of God and Guru.

Finally, before concluding this chapter let us reflect on this beautiful shloka told by Lord Shiva to Goddess Parvathi when explaining the greatness of a Guru, which was in turn documented by the *Sage Veda Vyas* in the Guru Gita, which is part of the larger Skanda Puraana:

Gurur Brahma Gurur Vishnu, Gurur Devo Maheshwarah

Guru Saakshaat Parabrahma Tasmai Shri Guruve Namah

When Parvathi asks Shiva to expound the importance and significance of a God realized Guru, he responds with Guru Gita, of which the above shloka is a part. It can be paraphrased as follows:

'Gu' stands for darkness, 'Ru' stands for dispeller/remover. Thus Guru is the dispeller of darkness and ignorance. Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Lord Maheshwara. Guru is verily the supreme reality. My humble prostrations to this all-pervading Guru who will lift my veil of ignorance.

So, let us whole heartedly surrender ourselves to Sri Sai Baba, who is our Guru our God and everything else.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 25

IMMUTABILITY OF BABA'S WORDS

This chapter highlights how words uttered by Baba were never untrue.

Everything that takes birth in this world has to someday leave this world. This is a universal truth and holds true for all mortals. Death is unavoidable. Plants, Animals, Birds, Fish and Humans, are bounded by the laws of birth and death, which in turn are controlled by Karma. As human beings, we are emotional creatures and we become attached to our near and dear ones. So much so that, the loss becomes unbearable.

Now let us see how Baba foretold the passing away of Mr. Shankar's mother. As part of his daily routine, when Shankar was in Sai Nilayam to take Baba darshan, Baba wrote the following message in the Udi: "Your mother's end is nearing". Baba further added that, the Udi was to be given to her every day. As long as the Udi was there, she would be alive. Once the Udi was over, his mother would be no more and that she would pass away peacefully. Baba asked him to fulfil his duties as the eldest son towards her. These words were told by Baba an year before she left her mortal coil.

Shankar was visibly shaken, but he had to come to terms with what was inevitable. He followed Baba's instructions, and took great care of his mother and gave her Baba's Udi. She stayed with him for three months, and then returned to her house. Time flew by, and one night she called Shankar and informed him that her store of Udi ran out. She told him it would be nice if he could request some more Udi from Sai Nilayam. Filled with dread, he ran down to Sai Nilayam, but by then Prasanna and Srinivas were fast asleep. So he returned early next morning, and asked Prasanna for Udi. She was not sure what to do in the situation. Although she was wanted to give him the Udi, she didn't want to come in way of what Baba had already foretold. But nevertheless she invoked Baba's name and gave him the Udi.

Now see the strange twist of fate that is about to happen. When Shankar reached his mother's house, he somehow got engaged in a discussion with his brother and forgot to give the Udi to his mother. Their mother was in the room across the hall. Suddenly they heard a sound from her room and they rushed to that room to find that, true to Baba's word, their mother had passed away. Thanking Baba for the extra year that he had given to their mother, they carried out all the end rites as per the Shastras.

This next incident relates to Anupama's aunt, Lakshmi. According to the former, the latter was a simpleton and knew nothing about performing Pooja or prayer. She was usually very busy with her household work. But everything changed after she met with Prasanna in Sai Nilayam. She was became a devoutly spiritual person, began doing the Parayana of the Sri Sai Satcharitra, along with lighting the Akhanda Deepam for 41 days. Akhanda Deepam is a religious tradition where the devotee lights a lamp and safeguards it for a predetermined number of days ensuring that it burns nonstop for the entirety of the period.

She was very punctual and never missed worshipping Baba in Sai Nilayam. Once she thought she should purchase a pearl chain for decorating Baba, so she went to a nearby jewellery store. There she spotted a beautiful Om Karam ॐwhich she immediately purchased along with the pearl mala. Few days before this happened, Baba told Prasanna that an Om Karam would find its way to Sai Nilayam. She was surprised but knew Baba's words were always full of meaning. Few days later, Lakshmi presented this beautiful ornament and requested that it adorn Baba's beautiful statue.

Baba instructed that this pearl necklace and Om Karam must never be removed, and should be left as it is.

In the year 2010, on the holy day of *Vaikunth Ekadashi* Lakshmi's daughter visited Sai Nilayam for taking Baba's darshan. During the Aarati, Baba gave Prasanna the following message, "There is a devotee who is here regarding a health problem". After the Aarati, Prasanna gently enquired if any of the devotees wanted to discuss anything about a health issue. That was when the daughter confided in Prasanna that her mother, Lakshmi, was diagnosed with cancer. Baba asked her to daily read Vajrakavacham to her mother. He also gave her Udi, and informed that the Udi will lessen her mother's suffering and she would live as long as there was Udi. Later Baba also told her that her mother would shed her body as a *Punyasri.*

Anupama, having herself seen the suffering her aunt Lakshmi was going through, vouches that Baba's Udi had considerably reduced her suffering. No medicine seemed to have an influence on her. During her final days, she was admitted to the hospital owing to the various complications. The doctors were surprised as to how she was surviving given how the cancer had spread to all her organs. Her daughter would frequently find out from Anupama what message Baba had for her. Baba gave her the message that she should no longer give Udi to her mother, Lakshmi and that she would very soon be discharged from the hospital. However, she would pass away within three days after that.

Surprisingly enough, the doctors shared a similar message and requested that she be taken home as treatments were having no impact on her. Her daughter was heartbroken, and asked Anupama to call Prasanna and talk to her. However, that did not happen as Prasanna was in Guwahati at the time, so Anupama did not call. Exactly one year after Baba had predicted, on 5th February, 2011 Lakshmi passed away peacefully.

Around 3 days later, Anupama received the following text message from Prasanna's mobile, "*ANAMMA, NAA PEDDA KARMA ROJUNA NENU VELLI NAPUDU, NAA MEDA VUNNAVI AMMAVARIKI IVU. THIRIGI MALLI KODUKU DAGGARIKE VASTHANU.*"

Anupama was surprised to read this message and later asked Prasanna why she had sent this cryptic message. She was surprised and told her that her phone was switched off during the journey and that she hadn't sent any messages. It was then she realized, that it was Baba who had sent her the message. Since early childhood, Lakshmi always called Anupama, 'Anamma'. Nobody else knew about this.

All these incidents prove that Baba's words are pregnant with meaning and are never untrue. BABA SAID "NAA VAAKU BRAHMA VAAKU". As is characteristic of Baba to take care of his devotees ensuring them a peaceful passage, he ensured that all the holy books such as Sai Satcharitra, Sri Datta Charitra and others were read out to Lakshmi. This has a striking similarity with similar such events narrated in the Sri Sai Satcharitra involving holy books being read out to devotees whose time has neared, so that their attention is focused on God at the time of passing away.

Really, we owe our gratitude to Baba, who makes us mentally strong by foretelling the foreboding events that are about to happen. That way we prepare ourselves knowing full well that Sri Sai Baba, the Antaryami, is going to be with us and our loved ones before, during and after we leave our mortal bodies. Through this he once again emphasizes on the point that no relation in this world is permanent, hence we should love them with all our heart yet be dispassionate and unattached to them.

Let us dedicate our lives in the service of this Sadguru Sri Sainath Maharaj.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 26

EXPERIENCES OF BHARATHI, PAVANI, SRAVANI

This chapter narrates few incidents where devotees brought misery upon themselves by deviating from Baba's directive.

Story of Bharathi:

A devotee named Bharathi, was a frequent visitor of Sai Nilayam. One day she informed Prasanna that her son secured admission in Pydah College in the engineering stream. Baba immediately advised against it saying that he would otherwise fail in three courses. But Bharathi told that, not joining was not an option, as she had already paid the term fees, hence her son had to continue in the Engineering stream. True to Baba's words, when the semester results were given, the boy unfortunately failed in three courses. The boy failing in three courses was destiny. Baba advising them not to tread the engineering path, was Baba's mercy and an attempt at changing their fate. Bharathi not listening to Baba's words was free will. Thus they had to bear the consequences of their own actions. With Baba's grace, the boy somehow managed to complete his courses and graduate successfully.

After graduation, the boy wanted to pursue higher education in the United States. But Baba told him not to go. This time they followed Baba's words, and waited for his instruction. Later, as per Baba's directive, he went to Australia for to pursue further studies. Although he was struggling to keep up with the coursework, Bharathi would confidently say "Seeing my faith, Baba will himself help my son". Although one has to suffer the consequences of one's own karma, every human being is endowed with free will and intellect. We must use these two to follow Baba's words and execute his orders to perfection.

Story of Pavani:

This incident concerns Pavani's daughter. Baba advised them for their own good but having chosen not to follow his words, had to suffer what was destined.

Baba had determined that Parvathi's daughter's hand should be given in marriage to a suitable groom, and he also set a holy *Muhurtham* for the marriage. However Parvathi wanted her daughter to be married at a different *Muhurtham, one which they had themselves chosen.* Now look at what cruel fate Baba was trying to prevent for the parties involved. Just before the wedding day, the girl's would-be father-in-law passed away, resulting in the postponement of the marriage. Instead being part of a joyous and successful wedding, they had to instead experience severe stress and unhappiness along with a lot of wasted time and money. That was when they realized how merciful Baba was, and how much he cared about the welfare of his devotees. Thenceforth they decided to follow Baba's directions without taking any detours.

Later, Baba chose another *Subha Muhurtham* and this time the wedding went off without a hitch. The girl is very happy and pregnant with her first child.

Story of Sravani:

This story follows Sravani, and how she suffered by not following Baba's words.

Her misfortune began three days after her first wedding, when her newly-wed husband died without warning. She was sad, heartbroken and lamenting at her ill fate. Later she was introduced to SAI NILAYAM by a Good Samaritan and she, along with her parents, paid a visit and took Baba's darshan and took his blessings. Baba indicated that Sravani would find a new groom and that she would be married soon. Since Baba's words are the words of Lord Brahma, her marriage was indeed fixed just a short while later.

However Baba insisted that they maintain transparency and tell the groom and his parents whatever had transpired, and how her first wedding ended. Sravani's parents ended up doing exactly the opposite, and told the groom and his parent's the she was only engaged and that the wedding didn't take place. The wedding went off without a hiccup, and the couple was happy, for the time being. Later the husband found out the truth through his friends about how Sravani had already wed and how her husband died days after the wedding. Learning this, the boy was visibly upset and felt cheated, which resulted in a lot of friction in their relationship and caused a lot of disharmony.

When Sravani's parents returned to Sai Nilayam explaining all that had happened, Baba looked upon them with mercy. Through Baba's grace, a gradual change was brought about in the husband. They have ever since been a happy and content couple. They had a baby girl, whom they christened 'Anagha Theekshana'. Again with Baba's blessings Sravani opened a small business, and through this she lends her husband a helping hand, thus contributing towards her family.

All three incidents drive home, only one existential truth that Baba's words are never untrue. Even though at first glance we may not be able to comprehend his grand plans for us, with love and devotion we must silently follow his words and tread the path paved by him and not indulge in weighing the merits and demerits of his instructions. For whatever he does is in our best interests. As mentioned earlier, Sri Sai Baba, always guides us away from what would have been our unavoidable destiny. That direction which he provides, is his gift, his mercy and his blessings towards us. Whether we choose to follow his instructions or not, is our free will. A free will that is based on a judgement, which is more often than not clouded by our ego, ignorance and a limited understanding of our real self. Hence it is in the best interests of the devotees to simply follow his instructions, verbatim.

This is not to say that following Baba's words is going to be a walk on a bed of roses. If there are difficulties, it is only so that we grow stronger and more mature by braving through the storm. The difficulties are something akin to a test that serves as a measuring scale to segregate the devotees based on their level of Shraddha and Saburi. Never forget that once you place your entire trust in Baba, and make him the sole objective of all your prayers and desires, he will stand with you through the end of times. That is how much Baba loves his devotees.

Knowing this, let us place our entire trust in Baba and gladly follow his words.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 27

EXPERIENCES OF SANJU, LATHA AND ANNAPURNA

This chapter recounts the stories which show how Baba's grace can change one's life.

STORY OF SANJU:

There was a devotee named Sanju, who used to visit Sai Nilayam on Thursday and take Baba's darshan. Her husband, worked as a medical representative. Sanju wanted to start her own independent business with the hopes of supporting her family and leading a good life. Following Baba's instructions, she began preparing homemade curries and rotis and began supplying them in her neighbourhood. Working day and night, she began saving money, finally when she and her husband invested about INR 2,00,000 and bought four food stalls and rented them out. Over time these stalls, became successful and were about to make enough profits to purchase a new flat in an apartment complex along with a new car, and they are living a happy life, thanks to Baba's generous blessings.

STORY OF LATHA:

When Latha visited Sai Nilayam for the first time, she and her family were in the middle of a financial crisis. Her husband's business ventures had gone upside down and were facing severe losses. She earnestly prayed to Baba, to show them a way out. Baba told her to start her own business, but she was to commercialize whatever was her best talent. When Prasanna enquired, what Latha was good at, she told that she had a creative mind and was very good at designing and intricate embroidery. Following Baba's message, she opened her own tailor shop, which became enormously successful and she has been a very grateful of Baba ever since.

STORY OF ANNAPURNA:

Annapurna, was another staunch devotee of Baba, and was among the regular visitors at Sai Nilayam. Luckily for her, her house was located very close to Sai Nilayam. Let us see how Baba blessed her. During the early days when the devotees first began undertaking a devout Parayana of the Sai Satcharitra, she happened to be one of the participants. She was reading the Satcharitra while seated near the gate of her house, when Srinivas brought freshly prepared Obbatulu (called Pooran Poli in Hindi) and gave it to her, saying that Baba had asked him to give them to her. Although she had come across such incidents in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, she had never imagined such a thing would happen to her. She was a simple devotee who loved Baba with all her heart and was content just praying to him, and never wanted anything from him. Baba's expression of love through the obbatulu, moved her to tears of joy and gratitude.

Annapurna was often worried about her daughter, Bhagyasree's marriage. One day Baba asked her to light lamps with ghee for 11 weeks. For the first few days, the wicks of lamps would never catch the flame. However after some days, they began to burn brightly. She was somewhat surprised at this strange occurrence, but she was happy that it was going well. She understood why this had happened when her husband met with a major accident. But she realized it only after her husband met with a major accident. His car had flipped over thrice, and the doctors were shocked as to how someone could survive such a horrific accident. It was truly a miracle of Baba who helped the flame of her house stay alive.

Another time when she was doing Parayana in her house, she heard someone loudly banging on the door. She was terrified and her heart skipped a beat. When she cautiously opened her door, she was

surprised to find that someone had left turmeric water and a piece of turmeric there. She took them to Sai Nilayam and asked Prasanna, what she was to do with them. Prasanna suggested that she tie the turmeric around her neck as a *raksha*.

Her daughter Bhagyasree completed her graduated with a B.Sc. in Agriculture and wanted to do her masters, but Baba advised her to instead apply for jobs. She began applying to bank jobs, but was not very hopeful as those were usually given to men, and women rarely filled those positions. So she started preparing for her Master's entrance exams. Prasanna convinced her that Baba's decision was always the best and she was confident that Bhagyasree would get selected.

As Baba had foretold, she got selected for a position with Andhra bank. Her training was in Hyderabad, and she was told that the posting would be in Orissa, but BABA had other plans and assured that she would be placed in Visakhapatnam itself. True to Baba's words, an hour later, the initial allotments were declared void due to some mistake, and the new list was released shortly afterwards. She was posted in Anakapalli, which is only a few hours' drive from Visakhapatnam.

During her early childhood, it was decided that Bhagyasree would be married to her cousin. According to her horoscope, it was imperative that she be married in the year 2014, as otherwise marrying her cousin would be very difficult in the future. She wasn't interested in any other proposals, and was quite anxious about what was going to happen. Annapurna, talked to her brother requesting them to decide on a holy Muhurtham. He denied the proposition, saying that he had just got his daughter married and he instead suggested that 2016 would be the perfect time for the marriage to take place. Both mother and daughter immediately sought refuge in Baba at Sai Nilayam and expressed their concerns to Prasanna. Baba told them that Bhagyasree would get married in the year 2014 and they were not to worry. This conversation had happened during Dusseshra of the year 2013.

That year during the Navaratri's, Bhagyasree was made to perform the Kathyayani Vratham as per Baba's instructions. After the puja concluded, on that very day Annapurna received a call from her brother, and told her the following, "Today, an old man visited our house and took interest in Omkar's horoscope. He informed that Omkar's marriage had to be performed at the earliest." She was relieved to hear that and mentally thanked Baba for interfering. Soon after that all the marriage arrangements were made in full swing.

On the day when Bhagyasree was made the bride, Prasanna suffered from intense electric shocks. A lot people bore witness to this event. In fact, it was Baba himself who had possessed Prasanna's body and was himself bearing these electric shocks. Many believed that Baba was protecting the marriage party from the harmful influences of evil forces at work that wanted to ruin the wedding. The couple was married in the month of March 2014.

Although we have had the good fortune of reading several miracles mentioned in the Sri Sai Satcharitra along with the joy of mentally recreating them in our minds, nothing compares to the miracles which we have the opportunity of witnessing right as they were taking in front of our eyes. We are indeed blessed to be in Baba's loving presence at Sai Nilayam and have the chance to follow in his footsteps. It is on account of the Shraddha and Saburi of the devotees of Baba that makes them brave through the toughest of life's vicissitudes.

All the three stories once again show us how omnipotent omnipresent and omniscient our dear Baba is, and how he always looks after the welfare of his devotees. Those who follow his words will always reap the benefits. So let us place our entire trust in Baba and pray to him with devotion.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 28

TRUE FRIENDSHIP

This chapter describes how Baba gives us true friends and blesses our lives.

When Prasanna first moved to Dubai along with her children in October 1999, they knew nobody over there, nobody spoke their language, and back in that time there was no Tata Sky nor any Airtel Digital TV! All they had were the local Arabic channels, and they had to make do with that. She was lonely at home for the most part, as her husband Srinivas was working 9am to 6pm, and she had no company.

One day, a gentleman named Mohan was at a pharmacy for some medicines and it turned out that Srinivas was working at the same venue. They exchanged small talk during which Srinivas learnt that Mohan hailed from Tirupathi. Srinivas mentioned how his wife had recently moved here and how she was finding it somewhat boring and lonely owing to the new and alien surroundings. Mohan mentioned that his wife, Shanti, had also move there only recently and she was in a similar boat so it would be great if both of them could meet up. They struck an instant bond and became very good friends.

In June 2000, Srinivas's mother fell terribly ill and unfortunately went into coma. To make things worse, his passport was with the Sheik, and at that point he didn't have sufficient resources to travel to India on such a short notice. For Srinivas alone around 4000 riyals were needed, but they barely had any funds. So the couple was in great dilemma, their departure was imminent but the means wasn't. Mohan happened to visit their house when he learnt of the unfortunate situation their mother was in. Prasanna brought Mohan up to speed with all the recent developments. He was moved, and spontaneously gave them exactly 4000 riyals and requested that they leave for India immediately and that they be with her. He further added that they don't have to repay him and promised that he would never ask them for it.

Srinivas made the necessary arrangements to reach India. Although it pained her a lot, Prasanna couldn't accompany him due to a shortage of funds. Isn't it Baba's miracle that somebody whom they barely knew, decided to give such a huge sum without expecting back. Both wife and husband, sincerely believe that it was Baba himself who had graced them in Mohan's form and personally helped them at a very critical juncture.

When Srinivas was finally at his mother's side, he touched her feet with respected and whispered, "Mother, I am here" (Amma nenu Seenu, vacchanu). She moved her hands and feet, as if she were acknowledging his presence. Moments later she breathed her last. It seemed almost as if she was holding onto her life to see her son one last time. Prasanna and Srinivas continued to be best friends for the duration of their stay in Doha, and even today they are close friends with Shanti and Mohan. They will never forget their kindness and generosity and add "We will remain grateful to them throughout our lives. How can we ever repay for what they have done for us?

One must always be grateful to those who help in times of need. We must never forget what they have done for us. Those kind hearted souls, who help us never expect anything from us expect may be a little gratitude. This is something Baba wants all his devotees to inculcate within themselves. The friendship between both families continued to grow, and when Karthik was offered a position in Chennai, Mohan & Shanti let him have their flat. Helping him out gave them more joy than renting it out to someone else.

They are staunch devotees of Baba, and whole heartedly extend their strengths towards educating poor children, an initiative undertaken by Sai Nilayam as per Baba's directives.

This is how Baba gave us his nectar like teachings in the most practical way possible. BABA once again showed us that one's parents mean the whole world to their children. Hence we must do everything to ensure they are happy and well taken care of. Let us take good care of them.

Let these personal and touching stories inspire us to walk in the footsteps of Baba and be devoted to him forever. Let us pray that the ever merciful Sai Baba looks upon us mercifully planting the seeds of love in our hearts.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 29

OF DEVOTESS AND MANGO TREES

This chapter touches upon the topic of how Baba compared his various devotees to the various stages of a mango tree.

This has been inspired by the same topic which already been described in Hemadpant Dhabolkar's Sri Sai Satcharitra, and is discussed here once again with the hope of reaching those devotees who didn't have the opportunity to study the Sri Sai Satcharitra.

Once when one devotee, after taking Baba's darshan in Shirdi, was overwhelmed by the sight of countless devotees flooding the Masjid. He wondered, "Do all the devotees gain the same benefits?" To which Baba smiled and replied in his peculiar fashion, "Look at the mango tree, and look at all the hundreds of flowers blossoming on it. How beautiful it would be to see all the flowers reach fruition and turn into ripe mangoes? But do they? No. They don't. Some flowers wither away, some mangoes fall off prematurely, others become a snack for a hungry parrot or a cuckoo or a squirrel, some for turn into mangoes but get plucked while still raw , few others are preyed upon by pests and there are others which fall silent victims to the elements of nature. Thus, in the end very few remain that reach maturity and turn into ripe mangoes.

Similarly, not all devotees reap the same benefit. Most devotees become slaves to their senses, fall off the track and lose sight of the final goal which is God Realization. There are very few devotees who persevere and look beyond the trivial materialistic desires. God loves such devotees the most, for they have realized the oneness of the universe and opened their eyes to the truth that it is God who manifests everywhere and everything you see a manifestation of the divine. These are those devotees whose minds have matured enough to realize the central unifying message of the existence of the One Infinite God, who incarnates in various forms at various times. Thus if you seek God, you will automatically receive everything you ever wished for. This concept is beautifully stated in *The Holy Bible, Matthew 6:33, '**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well'***. Baba was told that his devotees shouldn't worry about food and clothing and other material things, for they will be taken care of. Devotees should instead focus their entire attention on their inner Self.

Let us see how devotees can be classified into four categories.

1 The first kind:

These are the curious bunch, who visit Sai Nilayam just to satisfy their inquisitiveness by gathering information about what goes on there. They come impatiently and leave impatiently, and are completely alien to the concepts of Shraddha and Saburi. Their sole objective is to be a witness to the many miracles that take place in Sai Nilayam. They leave once they have enough to start a gossip with their friends about the authenticity of the miracles. They feel they are here to test Baba, and make secret wishes hoping Baba proves himself to them.

Instead of appreciating the miracles of Baba, and immersing themselves in divine bliss and bhakti, they are indulge in crooked thoughts and are always eager to find out if something fishy is going, and are purely driven by their ego. While nobody is to blame for their state of mind, they fall under the first category. They are merely information seekers, and not knowledge seekers. Rest of the Satsang, bear no ill will against them, and hope that such devotees shed their cloaks of ignorance and become ready to receive Baba's blessings.

2. The second kind:

These are the please-fulfil-my-wishes type of devotees. They visit Sai Nilayam only to have their wishes fulfilled and their problems solved. They visit Sai Nilayam, say a prayer or two, pour their hearts out to Prasanna and Srinivas and request they ask Baba to fulfil their desires. They are not concerned with miracles nor are they aware of Shraddha or Saburi. Their only relationship with Baba can be likened to that of a wish fulfilling tree (Kalpataruvu) or a Kamadhenu. Impatience and anxiousness is smeared all over their face, and is tell-tale sign of the second kind. The minute their wish is not fulfilled, they let all their impatience out to the extent of foul mouthing Baba. Their lamps of devotion burn so long as their desires are fulfilled and their pretentious masks of faith last only for fleeting moments in time.

Thus, these devotees are baby mangoes that fall of prematurely.

3. The third kind:

These are the timid if-you-give-this-I-will-do that kind of devotees. These are those souls who have evolved from type two. They too come to with the sole purposes of having their desires fulfilled but they offer to do something in return. They wish for their desires to be satisfied by the grace of Baba, and they try to, even if superficially, participate in the various philanthropic activities undertaken at Sai Nilayam.

They are usually very punctual and follow every word of Baba, not because they want to win his grace but in the hopes of having their desires fulfilled. On certain occasions, they tend not to keep up their promise should Baba generously fulfilled their wishes before the completion of their vows. They may have a hint of Shraddha and Saburi but and strangers to gratitude and empathy towards their creator and caretaker.

To them Baba is like an emergency lamp that they need only when the power is cut off. They are in Sai Nilayam at the first hint of difficulties.

Hence, they are compared to raw mangoes, who have the potential within them but fail to realize it.

4. The fourth kind:

These are the humble Baba-you-are-my-everything kind of devotees, whose hearts are bubbling with love and devotion for Baba. They are not elated by joy, nor depressed by sorrow. They are always the same in any situation, because Baba is the centre of their universe and they couldn't care less about the material world. Every word uttered by Baba is Brahma-agya (word of Brahma, the creator.) and they take great care to execute it carefully. They do not let their sense driven ego and will power guide their decisions. They have made *`Sarvasva Sharanagati` i.e complete surrender to Sri Sai Baba* and consciously take no responsibility of doer ship, but instead lay the burden of thought on Baba. When difficult situations arise, they seek Baba to give them the strength to endure the storm and grow stronger. These are the devotees who are closest to Baba, for they transform themselves everyday thus readying themselves to receive the highest gift from Baba, the gift of Self Realization.

Thus these devotees are compared to ripe mangoes, who have reached full fruition.

Everybody is their best judge. They know where category they fall under. With a little bit of determination and will power, they can quickly reform themselves and move closer and closer to

Baba. For Baba himself said, if any devotee takes one step towards me, I take ten steps towards him. Such is the love Baba has for his devotees.

Prasanna and Srinivas are always there for us to guide us and disseminate the teachings of Baba in simple yet practical ways. Day by day, with a little effort at self-reforming ourselves, we all surely transform ourselves into true bhaktas of Baba. They we can become beacons of radiant light to others who are confused and lost. Thus we can be the ripe mangoes of Baba's mango trees who spread joy and happiness to those around us.

Let us consciously aspire to be true devotees of Baba and forever indulge in performing good deeds.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 30
EXPERIENCES OF YUGANDHAR & SUNITHA

This chapter describes the various experiences of Yugandhar and Sunita, how he was called to Shirdi and finally how both became regular faces at Sai Nilayam.

Yugandhar was a simple person, who believed in God, but never found a reason to perform puja or visit temples. To add to this he was almost always travelling hence he had little time for anything else. He got married in February, 2006. Two months after his marriage, his friend invited him to visit Shirdi. After informing his wife and his mother, he set out on a journey to the holy land of Shirdi. Bear in mind, this was the first time he had ever step foot in Shirdi, and after taking Baba's darshan, returned home. Since then, he has made it a point to carry Baba's photo in his wallet, along with keeping a photo of Baba in his office.

It was in the year 2011, when he along with his sister, Sunitha, visited Sai Nilayam for the very first time. Becoming a part of the Sai Nilayam Satsang changed their lives for good. The experiences he had at Sai Nilayam impacted him so profoundly that whenever he visits Vizag, he definitely carves time out for taking Baba's darshan. Every year without fail, he would be present for the Guru Purnima celebrations. In 2013, the company he was working for in Hyderabad, suddenly decided to transfer him to Goa. Though he had been employed with them for thirteen years now, the transfer was without any additional perks or benefits. He felt cheated and demanded an explanation, how such a thing was permissible? They told him either he could relocate or quit his job.

He consulted with Prasanna, and with Baba's approval submitted his resignation and began applying to new positions. On June 22nd, he attended an interview in Kolkata for a company based in Vizag. One fine day Baba gave the message that he would find a job in Vizag and that he was to start searching for a place to live in. Baba also decided that the Gruhapravesham ceremony would be conducted on August 8th 2013. That same year, he was in Sai Nilayam for the Guru Purnima Vratham. While performing Baba Abhishekham, he felt very weak in his body, and suddenly collapsed into the chair. Prasanna advised asked Lakshmi to give him lemon water to drink, after which he regained his strength and successfully completed the Vratham.

On the same day, he received his offer letter and was very happy. After completing the formalities and paperwork, the house warming ceremony was performed on August 8th, as per Baba's message. The day after that he acquired a Sri Chakram, once again per Baba's instructions. That night when they were sleeping, both husband and wife could distinctly hear the clinking sound of anklets, as if little girl was walking around in their house. It was none other than the Goddess herself in the form of "BAALA TRIPURA SUNDARI". The next day, Varalakshmi puja was performed. It was as if the Goddess had graced and blessed their house.

Another beautiful miracle leading up to the Gruhapravesham on 8th August, will now be described. His sister, Sunitha was helping him search for a house. It was already August 6th but nothing of interest was found. That evening Sunitha met with Prasanna at Sai Nilayam, and described the situation. The latter told the former that Baba's word is never untrue and that they would definitely find a house and the Gruhapravesham would happen as per Baba's prediction. To her pleasant surprise, on August 7th she found a house in Visalakshinagar and the owner did not even ask for an advance payment for securing the house, and told her that they should make preparations for the ceremony.

On August 8th, after the house warming ceremony was complete, he accepted an advance of 33000 rupees. Such is Baba's miracle and unfathomable are his ways. Or else who would finalize the sale of a house at the first meeting, and who on earth would voluntarily agree not to take an advance. The

devotees, must whole heartedly surrender themselves to Baba, and attune to his frequency, and for once shed all their ego and inhibitions and simply follow the path paved by Baba. Then you can experience the divine bliss for yourself, and appreciate the joy and peace that arises by leaving all the responsibilities to Baba.

In Vizag he invested in several businesses, and they turned out to be unprofitable adventures. During these times of difficulty, Baba made him recognize he true friends, and whose company he was to avoid. While working in Vizag, he was once again asked to relocate or handle only marketing. This happened in 25-11-2014. They asked him to come to Kolkata and he did not agree. Then he came out of his cabin telling that he had to speak with his mother, and instead called Prasanna seeking her guidance. She asked him to try convincing him, if not she asked him to serve his 3 month notice. That way he would receive an additional month's pay along with his pay for three months, hence he would be able to take care of his responsibilities while still having sufficient time to find a new job. This is how Baba helps his devotees navigate the various difficulties in life through timely guidance from Prasanna and Srinivas.

Finally Yugandhar spoke with the higher management and requested an explanation for their abrupt decision. He also offered to provide clarifications in case of any misunderstandings. They said they were just following orders and there wasn't much they could do. Finally he made it clear that the GM was to visit the Vizag office and announce his departure from his role in favour of a better opportunity. After submitting his resignation, he finally received offers for two jobs. One based out of Hyderabad and another based out of Vizag. With both offering a similar pay, he opted to choose Vizag as he wouldn't have to relocate and he could continue to regularly participate in Sai Nilayam Satsang activities.

Thus on February 20th, after consulting with Prasanna and Srinivas he finalized the position in Vizag. Although the initial months of the job were good, the company soon began exerting unwarranted and unnecessary pressure on Yugandhar seeking immediate results. They were in a hurry to establish themselves in a new market and wanted quick profits, but Yugandhar requested six months of time for the company to start seeing results. They hadn't paid him his salary in three months, so he began interviewing for other positions without making a scene.

On 29th August, Lalitha Homam was in full swing at Anupama's aunt Lakshmi's house. That day, he received an email from a Swiss company confirming his selection for a particular job. On the very first day of chanting Hanuman Chalisa, he received a hard copy of the appointment letter. He shared the news with everyone and he was very happy. This brings to the mind, another miracle that occurred around the same time. Once when the Lalitha Parayana was going on in their house, Prasanna was sitting in deep meditation. That day BABA gave a message "FIVE SOLALU UDI THO PARAYANAM CHEYANDI" (1 Solalu = 750gms).

All preparations were made, and the puja with Udi began. Later Prasanna asked them to close the doors and not open it till morning. Next day morning when they opened the door "They found beautiful impressions of Baba's right hand, another belonging to Vinayaka and finally an Omkaram impression". Devotees were moved by this divine miracle. In the following year, on Yashwanth's birthday (Sunitha & Yugandhar's son), the boy found an imprint of Baba's right hand on Baba's photo which was inside the Puja room. Even after a year, Baba's imprint can still be found in its pristine form, unaltered and unchanged.

Most modern organizations still hold onto old fashioned norms and customs, and look at a prospective employee's previous tenure, and are often known to let go of candidates who have switched multiple roles over a short period of time. Indeed, it was Baba's miracle and grace that

enabled Yugandhar to switch between multiple roles without facing major difficulties. Finally, he he was blessed with a wonderful job with an amazing company. From someone who was alien to performing puja and rituals, to becoming an ardent devotee of Baba, the devotees of the Sai Nilayam Sathsangam were truly awed by the transformation that the saw in Yugandhar. Today he can be seen actively taking part in the various wonderful activities undertaken by Sai Nilayam under the supervision of Prasanna and Srinivas.

OM SAI RAM

EXPERIENCES OF SUNITHA

Since childhood, Sunitha had always been an ardent devotee of Baba and the Goddess. Her first introduction to Sai Nilayam, was through Ms Kavitha. She and her husband moved from Chattisgarh owing to his illness. They were in Vizag for the various tests. When she was told about Sai Nilayam, she dropped the idea of going to the hospital, and instead head straight to Sai Nilayam to pray to her God, Sri Shirdi Sai Baba. That was the first time she entered Sai Nilayam. Prasanna asked her to worship Baba in the temple, and then then she gave her Baba's Udi. She told her to give it to her husband whenever he was feeling sick. Her husband felt much better within a day of taking Baba's Udi.

The doctors who attended him, said that test reports were pointing to a kidney stone and that a surgery was necessary. In Hyderabad, his condition soon worsened, and the doctors informed that the stunt was infected and that was the cause of fever. He was mortally petrified and his condition became worse when the fever would not subside. That night, in a miracle of sorts, he saw Baba sitting by his bedside, he felt very relieved to and didn't remember much after that. The very next day, the doctors changed the diagnosis to one `filarial fever` and was immediately discharged from the hospital and he recovered within ten days.

The following year, he again suffered from a severe stomach ache and the doctors said there was a stone in his kidneys. Sunitha went to Sai Nilayam, took Baba's darshan and then performed puja using hibiscus flowers. When Prasanna was performing the puja sitting inside the Mandir, suddenly there was shower of UDI and it had a hybrid fragrance of Udi intertwined with that of fresh neem leaves. After the puja she asked Sunitha to collect the Udi and administer it to her husband for twenty one days. Without using medication of any sorts, he recovered exactly after the said duration of time resorting to only Udi.

Once her son (Niteesh) was suffered from an intense stomach ache, and didn't want to attend school. She thought her son was up to some mischief in an attempt to skip school. But when his stomach ache didn't go away, they immediately rush to a doctor who told that a major surgery was necessary and it would be a six-seven hour operation. Then Sunitha went to Sai Nilayam and told Prasanna about the condition of her son. She gave her UDI to be mixed with water and made Niteesh drink it. Later when they consulted the doctor he said that the major operation wouldn't be required and they could make do with a simple operation. Thus BABA averted a major surgery.

On another occasion, Niteesh met with an accident and some areas suffered from very deep gashes and the nerve was affected to a length of three by four quarters. The situation was very bleak, and the doctors made it clear that after the surgery he may no longer be able to hold a pen, let alone write with it. But due to Baba's blessings such a catastrophic fate was avoided, and he recovered very soon and is perfectly well today.

In the month of Sravana, when Lalitha Sahasram was going at Sunitha house, the Goddess gave a message that the Sri Chakram was in "NAGA BANDHANAM". She didn't understand what that meant, and Prasanna explained that she would have the darshan of a snake in her house and it happened after a few days. Sunitha didn't know what to make of it. Then one day while she was at home, she suddenly saw a flash of light passing through the hall and the light acquired the image of Goddess and Lord Shiva and became one with the kumkum which was there on the Sri Chakram. She was overcome with emotion experiencing this divine feat. On several other occasions, they witnessed honey ooze from Baba's photo, which was given to them by Prasanna.

This is how Baba protects and blesses his devotees. All that is needed from our end is unbounded love for Baba combined with Shraddha and Saburi. Baba fulfils the righteous wishes of the righteous devotees. Thus devotees should only seek those wishes that are noble and those that will help them progress in their spiritual journey.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 31

EXPERIENCES OF SWAPNA-I

This chapter describes how Swapna was blessed by Baba and how she later became a part of the Sai Nilayam Sathsangam.

Her first introduction to Sai Nilayam was through an employee at her shop. The story begins on 11-11-08, when the following words from Baba were found in the Udi, “13 NA VASTHA ROOPAM ANDARU". She was among those lucky individuals who were witness to the countless miracles at Sai Nilayam. When first heard of Baba, she was overcome with joy and intensely desired to undertake a Parayana reading of Sri Sai Satcharitra, but she almost never found time to do it. To her pleasant surprise, within days after setting foot in Sai Nilayam, Baba fulfilled her heart’s desire, not once but a full nine times.

On 11-2-2010, BABA asked all devotees present there on Thursday, to complete nine parayanas of the Sri Sai Satcharitra. Parayana is a devout study of Sri Sai Satcharitra undertaken by the devotees and it has to be completed in one *saptah* or 1 week. Swapna borrowed the book from a fellow devotee and successfully completed one *saptah*.

Then the miracle of her life took place. Pleased with her devotion, Baba had Prasanna gift her a copy of the Sri Sai Satcharitra. Soon she completed a second *saptah* too. This was when the series of miracles began unfolding. On 18-2-2011 Baba’s message in the Udi, was "SWAPNAMMAKU NAA ASEESULU". On 21-2-2011 BABA asked Prasanna to give her few coins along with a silver coin that had Baba’s image on one side and his *Padukaas* on the other. The backstory for this is as follows. When she first entered Sai Nilayam, Prasanna asked her if she had seen Baba’s Paadukaas enshrined under the holy neem tree in Shirdi. She said no, and replied that although she had visited Shirdi in the past, she had never taken darshan of his *Paadukas*. Thus Baba kindly gifted her with an image of his holy feet and put her restless mind at ease.

Swapna took the pains of highlighting and saving important points from the Satcharitra and into a separate notebook. Once when she happened to be present at Sai Nilayam during a Parayana reading, Baba suddenly declared, “You wrote a beautiful point regarding health in your notebook. Please read it out loud.” She was both surprised and elated, the former because she had no recollection of writing that specific point, and the latter because Baba was keenly observant of her actions. The next day she was seated beside the sofa and was reading the Parayana, when Baba materialized on the sofa. She was touching his feet and reverentially massaging his feet. Though she couldn’t see it, could feel an overpowering presence of love in Baba’s form. That day she realized that Baba was ever present with us and through love and devotion all our desires could be fulfilled.

For more than two years Swapna, always wanted to have a house of their own in Vizag, and she had taken a vow that she would donate a silver idol to Baba’s temple. One day, while still in Sai Nilayam, during her second *saptah* she felt that it may have been a wrong ideology to want to donate the idol only if her wish were fulfilled. She made up her mind to donate the idol right away and asked Prasanna for her permission. Prasanna agreed, and Swapna immediately purchased a beautiful idol of Baba and donated it to Sai Nilayam.

Shortly after that she came across an advertisement listing a house for sale near Neelam Vepachettu. She liked the house, and returned to Sai Nilayam to consult with Prasanna and Srinivas. It was lunch time and they were about to begin having their meals. They suggested that both husband and wife join them. They gladly agreed. Remember, it was mentioned in the Sri Sai

Satcharitra that offers of food are considered auspicious signs of success and they should never be rejected. During lunch, Swapna told Prasanna regarding the house for sale, and she expressed doubt whether to proceed or not, because the surrounding neighbourhood was not to their liking. Prasanna listened to her earnestly, and after a few minutes, she asked Swapna to go into the master bedroom and see what message Baba had for her. Inscribed in Udi, was a single word in Telugu, “Konu” (buy). She was choked with emotions of joy and gratitude, that Baba knew her innermost thoughts and desires, and how he had already set in motion the set of events that would lead to this beautiful moment.

Immediately on the 25-02-2010, they paid an advance. Baba asked them to perform the house warming ceremony on *Ugadi*. But due to one reason or another, they couldn’t follow Baba’s instructions and thus after many difficulties they finished the ceremony. On Ugadi, Swapna, overcome by grief and guilt was sobbing in Sai Nilayam. She felt bad for not having followed Baba’s direct instructions. Anupama along with Sai Anagha, happened to show up at the same time. Prasanna held baby Anagha in her hands, while Swapna was still crying. Prasanna asked her to hold the baby. No sooner did she hold her in her hands, her hands were filled with fragrant udi, and she couldn’t believe her eyes. Prasanna smiled and told her, “She Baba forgave you”.

Later Prasanna, Srinivas, Kavitha and Shankar also visited the house. While everybody was exploring the house, Baba, in the presence of everybody blessed the house with Udi. Seeing this beautiful miracle, Prasanna added that “Baba has completed his *Gruha Pravesham*, the only delay is from your end.”

Baba always loves his devotees and can never see them sad and dejected. His directions are always in our best interests; hence one should follow them with will power and determination. If we commit mistakes, we have to bear the punishment, and it will be commensurate with the degree of the wrong doing. Remember that the penance or punishment is only for make us realize our folly. Those who sincerely regret their actions from the bottom of their heart are forgiven. Baba is always there for us to guide us through every step of our lives.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 32

EXPERIENCES OF SWAPNA -II: SRI CHAKRAM

This chapter describes how *Goddess Lalitha Devi* in the form of Sri Chakram, graced Swapna's home.

Swapna would usually visit Sai Nilayam on Thursday's, but that Friday, she was there for some work related to Lakshmi, who was one of the helping hand and Baba's sevak. That day Goddess Lakshmi gave the following message, "In the form of Sri Chakram, I will grace the house of every devotee, who participates in the Lalitha Sahasranamam. She was not very sure if she would be able to make it, she consulted with her husband who immediately agreed to it. This message was given four days before *Ugadi,* and both Prasanna and Srinivas focused all their energies on to this as time was very limited. The other message to follow was, "*All the Sri Chakrams should be in Sai Nilayam by Ugadi. After the puja ceremony, they could take it back to their houses*"

Devipuram was the only place where one could get authentic Sri Chakrams. When Srinivas, along with all those interested went to Devipuram. But only two of them were available, and both were huge. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, it was decided that one would be bought by Narayana and the other would be for Anupama. The rest of the people returned home. Srinivas assured that with the blessings of Baba and the Goddess, the Sri Chakrams would find their way home.

Whenever Baba gives us a message, we should make it our second nature to execute his message without using our own judgement and opinions. Once we follow this long enough, we will realize how easy and happy life would be, for we no longer need to take the burden upon ourselves and simply let Baba lead the way. It is for this reason this point of 'complete self-surrender' is stressed upon at various times in the book.

During Dusseshra of 2014, Baba gave the message that the Sri Chakram puja must be performed by the head of the household. Until that point in time, Swapna's husband did not know how to light a lamp, let alone knowing anything about performing puja. Ever since Baba's message he only steps out of the house only after worshipping the Sri Chakram. Later Swapna wished that her husband should sincerely pray to the Goddess on Fridays, and that he should study the Devi Khadgamaala. To her pleasant surprise, he of his own accord began bringing garlands made of 108 flowers to adorn the Goddess and also learnt to recite the Khadgamaala along with Lakshmi Ashtothram, all by himself.

Bases on Swapna's experiences, we can see how Baba knows the innermost thoughts of all devotees, and how he fulfils earnest wishes of his devotees. On another occasion, Baba asked that she complete a Parayana reading by Guru Purnima. She started reading it, but by second day stray thoughts would cloud her mind and she found a lack of interest and concentration on her part. So she left the book at Baba's feet and went to Sai Nilayam. She took a copy of the Sri Sai Satcharitra, and wanted to start reading. The date was 01-07-2014. On page 107, she found the words "Bhiksha Cheyyu" written on it. She didn't understand their significance and asked Prasanna about it. She told her that she was asked to collect Bhiksha and with the items thus collected she must cook and feed the devotees on Guru Purnima. Baba asked her to give dakshina too. She wasn't sure what she was to make of all these rapid developments.

She tried a lot, but couldn't get any answers. After sometime she joined the Sai Nilayam group where she posted her questions. Baba tried to explain it to her through some miracles but she still couldn't make sense of it. She read the stories of two more devotees and immediately messaged Prasanna that Baba was fulfilling all her wishes even though she was not following Baba's words.

Prasanna replied, “This is a sign of your ego. You must drop it. This is the reason Baba asked you to collect Bhiksha and took dakshina from you.” That was when she realized why BABA said those words. They changed her life. In between she took several oaths, which she didn’t fulfil. She visited Sai Nilayam several times to have her doubts cleared.

When Swapna’s in-laws decided to relocated to Visakhapatnam, she wasn’t sure what to do as their current home wouldn’t have been able to house two families. Then she got a message from Baba through Prasanna that it was time for them to buy a new house. Though they didn’t have the financial strength to proceed, Baba gave them the confidence to go ahead. A year later, they bought a new home and are happily living there.

Such is Baba’s grace. He will take care of everything. All that is needed from our end is unwavering and unfaltering faith in him. Let us all seek to be blessed like Swapna and other devotees.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 33
EXPERIENCES OF SWAPNA - III

This chapter narrates how Baba saved Swapna from a major fire accident, how her house warming ceremony was done, finally how the Goddess guided everybody to take up Lalitha Parayana.

The current house, she was staying with her mother-in-law and other family members. One day she put some vessel on the stove and forgot about it. It over boiled and due to the extreme heat a fire broke out and everything around it got engulfed in those flames. Only Swapna and her mother were in the house at that time. She panicked and threw a pail of water on the burning chimney. The electrical appliances, and everything were getting consumed by the fire. Now see Baba's miracle. Rule number one of firefighting is never throw water at electrical appliances on fire, because it can lead to short circuiting and electrocution. But Baba's grace prevented the fire and electricity from endangering the lives of these two women. Those who trust Baba with their heart and soul, no harm will ever come to them or their families.

On 21-7-2015 Lalitha Parayana was going in full swing in Swapna's house. She always had the doubt as to why nobody reads the Phalashruthi at the end of the Parayana. Phalashruthi, refers to the benefits/rewards gained from a devout reading of the Parayana. Other participants had a similar doubt, and finally Ms. Lakshmi posed this question to Prasanna. The following week, on 28-7-2015 in Sai Nilayam when Lakshmi Parayana was going on, the Goddess gave a message that a few lines from Phalashruthi must be read.

The gist from the few lines read were as follows:
Instead of gossiping about worldly matters, chant the Vishnu Sahasranamam instead. Chanting a 1000 names from the Sri Vishnu Parayana equals chanting 1 Shiva Naamam. Chanting a 1000 names of Lord Shiva equals chanting 1 Devi Naamam. Thus when you have chanted a 1000 names of Lalitha Devi during the Lalitha Parayana and Sahasram, and have gained all the punyam in the world, why are you concerned about the Phalashruthi?
Thus Baba, through the Goddess, immediately put the doubts of his devotees to rest, and made them realize that they were not to hanker after trivial things instead they must focus on the sadhana.

The Chandi Homam which was performed on Guru Purnima, was described as a spectacular event. All her relatives said that Swapna was lucky to participate in all these spiritual programmes at an early age. The bricks that were used in the Homam were also distributed by Srinivas and Prasanna to those who took part in the event. The selfless love and dedication shown by both them towards upliftment of the people around them is one reason you can feel Baba's presence in Sai Nilayam. These are qualities, which all devotees must aim to inculcate within them. Swapna further added, that one shouldn't concern themselves with material and outward beauty. It is inner beauty and peace which stands testimony to a person's spiritual awakening, and this inner joy manifests itself as the happiness on one's face.

Annadaanam is the noblest of all donations. BABA loved doing Annadaanam programmes and he encouraged devotees to take part in them and do their part in feeding the hungry souls. One make it a point to perpetually chant, "Sai Sai Sai", while surrendering all the enemies such as Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment and ego. There is no point in hanging on to them or becoming a slave of our senses, while also hoping to gain Baba's grace. One must pray to Baba with all their heart and make him the sole object of all their desires. Because material pleasures can never satisfy man. As Gurudev Sri Sri Ravishankar rightly said, "Desires give you a hope or promise of satisfaction and joy. A hope is all they provide. They never deliver the joy. How much ever you try to indulge in sense

pleasures, you will get tired of them sooner or later, for they can never satisfy your thirst or desires. God is the only true desire, upon attaining which there are no more desires nor longings."
On many occasions, Baba said that My HUNDI is always FULL, I can give anything to anybody, but I have to see if the devotee is ready and qualified to receive it. So let us always help the poor and needy, and ensure that we give with love and joy and without any reservations or ego.

On 2-1-2015 with the permission from Prasanna, she brought the same BABA idol from Shirdi which is now there in the cradle at Sai Nilayam. In September 2015, the Karya Siddhi Hanuman pujas started, and her family and relatives were witness to countless miracles. Soon they became ardent devotees of Baba and began participating in various events with faith and love towards BABA. On 5-8-2015 she attended the Hanuman puja and returned home. Her daughter to told her that on the BABA idol which Sunitha Aunty gave, she had seen KUMKUM and then UDI. Swapna was in some other and said may be by mistake it has come. But her daughter didn't give up and persuaded her and showed it to her.

On 6-8-2015 Swapna asked Prasanna about the future of her children's education. Baba gave the message that they were to perform Hanuman puja with 108 vadalu (a tasty breakfast item made with sour rice batter). They performed the puja with Shraddha and Saburi, and later bought sweetmeat or palakova as an offering to Lord Hanuman. After Naivedyam, the sweetmeat and vanished into thin air. Everybody agreed that Lord Hanuman must have accepted it as a token of acceptance of their devotion. All the while, Swapna's daughter kept silent and didn't say a word. But immediately upon reaching home, she divulged to her and her husband that she heard a voice tell her, "EE ROJU KUDA, MEE INTLO EDO DRUSYAM JARUGUTHUNDI".(You will all bear witness to another divine miracle today). It was none other than the voice and words of Baba. The little girl is indeed blessed to have heard the voice of Baba.

Then Swapna said to her daughter, "yesterday you saw kumkum and udi, may be you might again witness something like that." They reached home to see that "TWO APPALU WHICH WERE OFFERED AS NAIVAD-HYAM WERE ACCEPTED BY HANUMAN". They reverentially bowed down to Lord Hanuman for graciously accepting their humble offering. In the presence of BABA, Prasanna Aunty and Srinivas Uncle, her life transformed in a beautiful way. The house in which they are residing, "Sai Narayana Nilayam", was named by Baba. It has the names of Baba and her father-in-law's'. When they later bought a new house, she wished for the name to have both Baba's name and the Goddess name. Baba gave her the message, "NUUVU ROJU KHADGAMAALA THO SRICHAKRAM PUJA CHESTHUNAVU. ANTE 108
AMMAVAARULIKI PUJA CHESTHUNAVU EE Devi PERU PETTUKUNTAVU ANDUKE BABA ICHINA PERU "SAI SRIMERU NILAYAM." (You are daily worshipping Sri Chakram with Khadgamaala. With which Goddess name can you name your house? So he gave the name SAI SRIMERU NILAYAM).

On the day of Gruhapravesham, Sunitha came to Sai Nilayam. Amma told her that it was Swapna's house warming ceremony. Then Sunitha went there and Swapna was surprised to see her aunt and was happy that she came even though they forgot to invite her. Sunitha presented her with a beautiful idol of Baba which she purchased in Shirdi. Swapna was feeling sad because Prasanna could not make it that day, but Baba cheered her up by himself showing up for the event.

Indeed the remarkable change we see in Swapna today is due to her association with the Sai Nilayam Satsang and most of all – the divine blessings of Baba. She has learnt many a thing, from performing puja, to devoutly worshipping Sri Chakram, to actively participating in a variety of philanthropic events ranging from Annadaanam to Vastradaanam to contributing towards education of the less privileged in the society. BABA taught her that she must shed her ego and be happy with what she has with the firm belief that Baba will provide for whatever is necessary.

Through Prasanna and Srinivas, Baba has taught how one must be considerate, affectionate and full of self-less service towards God and fellow human beings. With Baba as our guiding light, we will certainly reach the final destination.

Let us be perceptive to Baba's message and let us make a conscious effort towards bringing about a positive change in ourselves and be of service to others.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 34

ADDICTION TO GOOD AND BAD HABITS

This chapter describes how Baba's grace enabled one gentleman to give up his addiction.

Baba, once gave a message in Sai Nilayam, and it was applicable to all devotees present there. These devotees were Mr.Ramam and Mr.Chandrasekhar who were Srinivas Sastry's uncle and brother respectively. Each was addicted to a different bad habits. Ramam was addicted to smoking cigarettes, and Chandrasekhar, to consuming alcohol. Baba's message was "Are you a slave to your addiction or is your addiction a slave of yours?" Meaning how can you be so ignorant and not realize that senses were given by God only to make your lose your attachment to them and grow stronger. But why are you allowing the opposite to happen by becoming a slave to your senses and mindlessly falling to these addictions?

This message struck close to Ramam's heart, and felt shameful for his behaviour and realized his folly. He resolved to make amends and bring about a change. This was also financially motivating as he was living on his pension of Rs.9000, and he was spending about Rs.1800 on cigarettes. He took an oath in front of Baba that he would never touch another cigarette in his life. He began doing Baba Parayana for a complete year, and the money thus saved from not smoking cigarettes was donated towards Annadaanam on two separate occasions. Today he is in his early 70's years, living a healthy life and working at Fucor Company in Garividi. He ardently worships BABA and Goddess Ammavaaru.

If you are wondering how he gave up his addiction, the answer is simple – realization and surrender to God. Although modern day media has sacrilegiously altered and destroyed the very meaning of self-surrender, while unscrupulously besmirching the beautiful act of genuflecting to a higher universal cosmic consciousness as something undignified, but the truth remains that those who surrender themselves to God and leave their burdens to him, are always more content, free from the effects of joys and sorrows. God has bestowed every human being with two most important faculties of Knowledge and Free Will. People must use their knowledge to discriminate between the real and the unreal, good and the bad and then exercise their God given free will towards consciously staying on the spiritually righteous path.

Most people are so sad and depressed and disconnected from their true selves, that they forget the true nature which is Sat-Chit-Anand. To attain which, one has to look within himself, but people instead search the whole wide world not realizing once that the beauty lies hidden right behind the heart and in the concentration behind closed eyes. Not finding that true happiness, they run around search for ways of pleasuring themselves, and thus they pick up on a range of different addictions and bad habits, all in the hopes of finding true joy. But except God, nothing else can provide ever-lasting contentment. All the various addictions, all that they barely offer is fleeting illusion of happiness but never the actual happiness, which is why you see smokers falling victims to cancer, alcoholics succumbing to liver problems and so on.

When the deeds you are perform or indulge in, do not give happiness to your family, or your surroundings, or to yourself that is when you must put a stop to that act and work towards transforming yourself. Bad habits, ruin not only your health and peace of mind but those of your friends and family too, and these addictions come a severe financial burden. There are several forms of life, some of which are so dreadful that they wouldn't dare exist even in the deepest darkest corners of your imagination. Human Life is a blessing that even God's seek to be born as human for attaining salvation. Only a human is equipped with the ability to search for God and seek his

presence. If we fail to progress in the only goal of human life, which is God Realization, then in vain is our birth.

Ramam, picked up a good habit, which was “smaran of Baba’s holy name”. Day and night he would think of and pray to Baba. For an entire year, he dedicated himself to doing Parayana after Parayana of the Sri Sai Satcharitra. He surrendered his evil tendencies (desire to smoke) at Baba’s feet and embraced a good habit of studying the Parayana and putting conscious effort into not giving in to his craving for smoking. Although bad habits form easily, but are hard to get rid of, with Baba’s blessings and our self-effort, it is entirely possible

Through Self-Realization, Self-Control and Commitment, one can bring about a permanent change in his or her life, and finally fill themselves with so much joy from Baba’s blessings that we will no longer seek the company of ephemeral and temporary hallucinations of happiness. If we make sufficient effort, Baba will surely show us the rest of the way and guide us safely to our final destination.

Let us see how the other gentleman, Chandrasekhar, ruined his life of his own accord due to his addiction to alcohol. He was a lawyer by profession and fought cases in the high court. But he was addicted to alcohol and he was its slave. Even though Baba showed him his mistake with the hope that he would reform himself, he paid Baba’s advice a deaf ear. Because of his addiction to alcohol, he lost his health, his family, and is now living staying separately. He met with two horrific accidents, but still failed to shake himself free from the vicious grip of alcohol addiction. He distanced himself from the grace of Baba and aimlessly drifted in life’s miseries.

Given the fickle nature of human mind, it latches onto whatever you give it. If you train it to think of good, it will do so, and if you leave it unrestrained it engulfs itself in bad thoughts and ideas. When you make Baba and his teachings, the sole object of your thoughts and actions then you would be filled with positive vibes that will take you closer to God. Because once you have tasted the divine nectar of oneness with God and have realized that, that is indeed your true form, your mind will seek the higher and true joys in life and not get agitated by sense objects or feel drawn towards vices such as alcohol and drugs. The deeper the connection with Baba, the more you will blossom spiritually. As mentioned umpteen times in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, before consuming anything, simply offer it to Baba, and slowly , but naturally you will shun anything that is unfit for consumption by Baba. Hence your thoughts and objects of desire will be driven by sattvic instincts and be blessed by Baba.

There was one devotee named Srikanth who was also addicted to smoking cigarettes. Once when he came to Sai Nilayam BABA made him promise that he would quit smoking. From that day he never touched another cigarette. This made both himself and his family happy and with the money thus saved he contributed towards humanitarian undertakings. In a similar way, Baba helped another devotee named Rama Rao overcome his addiction and reform his life. Once again, Baba has practically shown us that those who follow his words will be always successful in life, but those who do not follow, endure the good or bad based on their karma.

Those of us who are addicted to vices, should gradually substitute bad habit with a good habit, and whenever they feel the urge to indulge in it they should consciously use their will power not to give into temptation but instead pick up the good habit and exercise it. Although it may be seem to be a difficult task at first, with repeated efforts the ego will disappear and make one’s progress more harmonious. Baba will definitely help those who try to help themselves. Let us not be slaves to sleep,

indolence and various addictions, but instead always remain attentive and place our focus solely on God.

At the end, indulgences in vices do no good to anybody. They are a waste of hard earned income, they cause trauma to your family and friends, and lastly pollute the beautiful environment. Remember that God has given the various senses and attractions, for us to look at the beauty of the world, but not to become part of it and get attached and addicted to them and ultimately forget our true selves.

Let us lovingly devote ourselves in the service of Baba the supreme power.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 35

EXPERIENCES OF AMMAJI

This chapter describes how Baba blessed Ammaji in Sai Nilayam.

As the number of devotees who bore witness to Baba's divine miracles at Sai Nilayam rose, so did the number of people who heard the stories. They too wanted to experience Baba's divinity. One such lady who visited Sai Nilayam on account of these miracle was Ammaji. A girl in her neighbourhood shared the new of how Udi kept pouring out of Baba's photo, and how, pure nectar-like honey kept oozing from Baba's photos at a nearby house. She was a regular visitor at a nearby Baba temple, so she was determined to visit this house and see for herself. That was how she first entered Sai Nilayam.

Her experiences at Sai Nilayam were so profound that she made Sai Nilayam her temple of worship. Baba's presence in the house was tangible and palpable, thus she always considered Sai Nilayam as a holy temple of Sri Sai Baba, and she would visit it frequently. She was a simple lady, and would always say that if she would love to move there permanently and hoped to find a house in the same apartment complex. Though she was turning 58, her love and devotion for Baba were youthful as ever.

Ammaji had a son and a daughter. Her son-in-law was the cause of her agony. He was disrespectful towards his wife, and was always very rude and harsh towards her. Ammaji, like any mother, couldn't stand the sight of her daughter's sufferings. She would visit Sai Nilayam with tears in her eyes, and pour her heart out before Baba. Then one day BABA gave a message "YOUR SON IN LAW WILL CHANGE". But she didn't take much note of it and assumed that her son in law will never change and will always remain a brute. But Baba's words are never untrue. Baba told on various occasions, "NAA VAAKU BRAHMA VAAKU" (My word is the word of Brahma, the creator). Today her son-in-law is a changed man, and she cannot believe her eyes seeing him and her daughter so happy and cheerful.

Once Ammaji and her family wanted to extend their current house by constructing another floor on top of the ground floor. Then BABA gave a clear message that they were "NOT TO GO AHEAD WITH CONSTRUCTION. Ammaji, being an faithful devotee, believed in Baba and wanted to comply with his words. But her family members held a different opinion and blatantly went ahead with the construction of the first floor. While the construction was going on, one day Ammaji found herself on the terrace hanging wet clothes to dry. She was near the edge, losing her balance she slipped and fell down from that floor to the ground floor. Floors in India are a good 12-16 feet in height, and for a senior citizen to take such a precipitous fall, would be nothing short of fatal. While falling down, she instantly cried "Sai Baba".

She was rushed to a nearby hospital by her family members, and everybody was surprised to see that she had escaped unscathed. The doctors put her under observation for some days and then released her. She was back in Sai Nilayam in less than a month! The construction continued to be plagued by more unfortunate events. Her husband, who was a healthy senior citizen, suffered not one, not two but three heart attacks during that period. And as if Baba was stopping his death warrant, it always happened on a Thursday. Then her daughter-in-law, suffered from an acute kidney failure. Each day saw a new family member take a fall.

Finally, a Siddhanthi (person well-versed in astrology) informed them that their house had a nightmarish *Vaastu*, and that was causing all the problems. He asked them to immediately vacate

that house and avoid any further troubles. They immediately moved to a rented house, and all their troubles disappeared.

Baba's messages are always pregnant with meaning, and whatever he says are in the best interests of us. Thus we should follow his words, without using our limited intellect to judge or draw conclusions. Above incidents show, how people who do not listen to Baba's words, suffer from a fate according to their bad luck and karma, something which could have been completely avoided by simply following Baba's words. As Baba knew what was in store for them, he warned her beforehand with the hope of avoiding it, unfortunately the family members' decision ruled supreme over her decision and thus they had to suffer their lot.

But Baba's love for his devotees is eternal, and beyond time and space. No matter what he will always embrace us and protect us from calamities. Sometimes, we suffer on account of foolishly exercising our free will, but once we learn our lessons, Baba will quickly take care of us. Imagine, how anybody could have survived such a fall and escape without a single fracture. Her uttering Sai Naam, was what saved her life and gave her a new lease of life.

When her daughter-in-law was not feeling well, Ammaji sat crying in front of BABA, seeking a solution. Then BABA gave a message "LIGHT LAMPS WITH GHEE FOR TEN DAYS". Soon after that the girl recovered completely. Ever since, she has been following all words of Baba without fail, and she insists her family members to forget their ego, and follow suit.

Once Ammaji was sitting in Sai Nilayam and thinking, how she never had the opportunity to perform Puja. Immediately BABA responded to her passing thought by giving a message that she should go inside the puja room and sit alongside Prasanna and perform the rest of the Puja. When Ammaji's mother passed away, she couldn't visit Sai Nilayam on account of the religious customs. When she finally visited Sai Nilayam, Baba asked Prasanna to give her a sari, and added that it was gift to her from her own mother, who was now in a happy place.

Like Baba says in Chapter XV of the English version of Hemadpant Dhabolkar's Sri Sai Satcharitra, "Though I am here physically, still I know full well what you do beyond the seven seas. Go wherever you wish, over the wide world, I am with you. My abode is within your heart, as well as in the hearts of all beings. Always worship me, who is seated in your heart. Blessed and fortunate indeed is he, who knows me thus." Thus Baba knows our innermost thoughts, and he immediately responds to the wishes of an earnest devotee. How kind of Baba, to show Ammaji that death is not the end, and that her mother was still there for her.

How caring and loving Baba is to his devotees! Who else can give shower us with this kind of unlimited, unconditional love without expecting anything back in return?

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 36

EXPERIENCES OF NARAYANA

This chapter describes how Narayana became a part of Sai Nilayam Sathsangam.

Before falling in the loving embrace of Baba at Sai Nilayam, Narayana was an ardent devotee of Hanuman. Day and night, he would zealously worship Lord Hanuman. His name was on his lips and in his thoughts at every moment. His devotion was so sincere that Lord Hanuman himself would materialize before him and give him his darshan. Lord Hanuman, was with him through his roughest patches in life. Narayana was enamoured of Lord Hanuman, and he too wanted to pay his respects by helping out someone in need.

While thinking so, he came to know about his relation's daughter needing immediate financial assistance in order for her to pursue her education. So Narayana, along with his brother, set out to meet this girl at her family's home. He told her that he took a vow to Lord Hanuman and he pay for her tuition fees, and further added that she was free to choose any university and course of her liking. The girl was overjoyed at this God-sent intervention. She thanked him profusely, and chose Gayathri College. The fees was nine thousand rupees per annum. He happily forwarded the required amount to her. He had hoped she would select something along the likes of Chaitanya College which had a more expensive fee structure, but she decided otherwise.

Every month he would visit the girl's family, and extend her some amount towards her pocket money. This young girl, was an ardent devotee of Baba, and she would shares many miracles of Baba with him. He was surprised at the girl's fondness for spirituality, that too at an age when most adolescents would be worrying about which movie to watch or which class to skip! During one such visit of his, she told him about a nearby house where a myriad of Sai Leelas were taking place every single day. She requested him to accompany her to Sai Nilayam and take Baba's darshan. Somehow three months passed and he never step foot in Sai Nilayam.

Finally he gave in to the girl's numerous requests and decided to visit Sai Nilayam. He further thought, there is only one true God who manifests himself in the various avatars. Without thinking too much about who he was going to worship, be it Hanuman or Baba, he made up his mind to go and take darshan. That was the very first time, he entered the holy premises of Sai Nilayam. It was a Thursday, and after taking Baba's darshan he asked Prasanna, *SAAKSHAATHKAARAM ISTHANU ANNARU. EPUDU ISTHARU?* To which BABA'S immediate reply was *"MANASAROVAR YAATRA, HANUMAN OMKARA PRADHAKSHANA, AKKADE DARSHANAM, and SAAKSHAATHKAARAM.*"

After that he began visiting Sai Nilayam, but his wife and his son were more frequent visitors than him. It was a custom that Narayana would worship the Devi/Goddess during the Navaratri time. Readers may recall that consecration of ANAGHA Devi in Sai Nilayam was done on the first day of Navaratri celebrations during the year 2011. Few days before this consecration happened, the Goddess the following message "*I need a person perform my Puja.*" On the very day of the consecration, Narayana happened to be present there. After the Puja ceremony concluded, he thought to himself, "Every year during the Navaratri's, I perform puja and Sahasram, and worship the Goddess. So this year why don't perform it here itself?

To his surprise, these words were not thoughts running through his mind, but he happened to utter them loudly and clearly. Narayana, who was generally a shy and reserved person, ended up making his desire known at Sai Nilayam. Baba was definitely behind this miracle. Per Baba's wishes, Prasanna granted him his request.

For the very first time that evening, all the puja ceremony was conducted by Narayana. It is customary in Hinduism, to start every puja by first worshipping a hand moulded turmeric idol of Lord Ganesha. Narayana however began the puja ceremony without performing the Ganesh Puja. He had assumed that it must have already taken place during the morning ceremony, hence it was not required now. On the next day, *ANAGHA DEVI* blessed Narayana by giving him 108 pearls. With the blessings of Baba and the Goddess, the puja ceremonies during Navaratri's went without a hitch. On the last day, Goddess gave a message "*NAA KUMARUDU PUJA CHEYALEDU EMI? PASUPU ENDUKU VEYALEDU?*" (Why didn't you worship my son, Lord Ganesh? Why did you not offer turmeric?)

He also was under the false impression that only Kumkum is used for performing puja in temples, so he followed the same thing in Sai Nilayam and didn't bother to use turmeric. Upon receiving the Goddess's message, he realized his folly and immediately started searching for turmeric, and amazingly, a handful of turmeric appeared out of Prasanna's hands. He accepted it with reverence and performed the puja properly.

Later, the Goddess asked him to chant "MAHISHASURA MARDHINI STOTRAM." At that point in time, he was suffering from a throat infection, and was in no position to do the needful. However on account of Baba and Anagha Devi's blessings, he was able to melodiously lead the Sathsangam in singing the above bhajan. The Stotram was sung with such love and intense devotion that Goddess Anagha Devi was seen moving her feet rhythmically to the cadence of the singing. Just imagine what ineffable joys would have leapt in the hearts of those who witnessed this miracle with their own eyes!

Later she asked Narayana "*NAANA, NAA NAVARATHRULU 11 SAMVATSARAMULU CHESTHAVA*?"(Will you perform my puja during Navaratri's for eleven years?). He considered himself blessed and fortunate for having received such a great opportunity.

We are so lucky to have the blessings of Baba in our lives. More fortunate are those who had the opportunity to serve at Baba's feet. Only those few lucky one get such an opportunity of a lifetime! Later Narayana began visiting on Friday's for performing the Puja. One day ANAGHA Devi, gave a message "*NEELO PARIVARTHANA RAAKA POTHE PUJA CHEYAKARALEDU, SRINIVASUDU KHADGAMALA THO CHESTHADU*. ("If you do not change your attitude you need not perform puja, Srinivas will do it with Khadgamaala)

Narayana became inconsolably upset, and he cried his heart out for ten straight days. At last, while he was sitting inside Sai Nilayam he had this feeling as if Goddess Anagha Devi was directly speaking to him "*NENU LOPALE GAANI BYTA LENA*?"(Is my presence confined to only inside the temple and not outside of it? meaning, is your worship and bhakti limited to the four walls of the temple? He learnt his lesson, and starting that day he began studying the Lalitha Parayana, both morning and evening.

After few days, Goddess Anagha Devi seemed to be pleased with the reform in Narayana, and asked him to perform the puja. He was overjoyed, and vowed never to fall off the track again.

This is how Narayana became an integral part of Sai Nilayam, and was entrusted with the responsibility of performing Puja during the Navaratri festival.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 37

EXPERIENCES OF NARAYANA IN SAI NILAYAM - II

This chapter describes how devotee Narayana was put to further tests by Sri Sai Baba and Anagha Devi.

One day Anagha Devi, gave the following message, “AMMAVAARINI VAADUKUNTUNARU". But Narayana didn’t understand whom this message was addressed to. This message was given two days before the Anagha Ashtami Puja, which was performed by Srinivas Sastry on a Wednesday in the year 2012. When Narayana, as usual visited Sai Nilayam on the following Thursday, it was only then that he learnt about the Puja which took place on the previous day and realized that the previous message was for none other than him. Unfortunately, Narayana never received the message about the puja.

He could not control his emotions, and broke down into a stream of tears and sat crying for nearly 10 days. He was upset, thinking "Why am I being blamed for something I hadn't done? I never expected any money for the puja I have been doing from anybody, I never used anything for my personal life from Sai Nilayam, I never had any bad intentions in my mind towards anybody. I have always been sincere and truthful, then why did the Goddess direct this message towards him?”

He continued going to Sai Nilayam, for taking Baba’s darshan and for participating in the various activities with trust, faith and love towards Sri Anagha Devi and Sri Sai Baba. But mentally he was carrying the burden, which was preventing him from going closer to the Supreme Power. He carried this strenuous mental burden for two long months. During that period he suddenly happened to recall a poem from the *HASTHEESWARA SATHAKAM*, which was recited by CHAGANTI KOTESWAR RAO, an eminent philosopher of the modern day. Narayana knew this poem by heart, and used to recite it several times a day.

Which translates to:

O Almighty God, I want to serve you, while serving there may be difficulties, losses; people may honor me, people may call be a normal human being; I may be stuck in my family responsibilities or be lost in comfort and luxuries, I may be under the influence of the various planets, I may get *Gyaana, and reach the door of moksham. Even after all that, I will neither be elated with joy nor be dejected with sorrow, for none of them are going to appease my hunger or gratify my deepest desires. The only thing which can appease my hunger, is serving you, and that is all I care about.*

This poem consoled his heart, and made him realize a beautiful truth. Irrespective of what happens, irrespective of what injustice or blame is meted out to him, he must not get flustered and leave the company of holy people and digress from the path of Spirituality. Come what may, he must remain steadfast in discharging his spiritual duties with utmost love and patience. In the end he realized that this was a test by Anagha Devi.

On another occasion, during Navaratri’s Sri Anagha Devi, gave a message “NARAYANUDU IKKADA CHESE PUJALU EKKADYNA CHEYACHU. AKKADA NUNCHI VACHE DABBULU SEVA UPAYOGINCHACHU" (Narayana may perform the Puja anywhere he likes and the money thus obtained, can be put to use for charitable purposes). He didn’t know why he was given this message. He said to himself, “Dear Maata, You have given me everything in life. I have never been a materialistic person, nor have I ever craved for more money. The money I earn is sufficient for taking care of my responsibilities. I

may not be able to afford luxuries, and I do not know if I will be able to get my daughter married or not. But I am not perturbed by any of it. I know that when the time comes, you would do the needful. I have always prayed to you with love and devotion from the bottom of my heart. I have never prayed to you for money."

From that day onwards, he has been dutifully performing the Pooja and using all the proceeds from it only towards charitable purposes, and never for his personal needs. Few days later, he realized that this was nothing but a test of his faith which he was put to, by Anagha Devi. Then onwards, he felt happy and contented and more devoted towards Anagha Devi. This way Narayana passed these tests of faith on account of his Shraddha and Saburi.

On the third year of Dusseshra Navaratri celebrations, one night Narayana received a call from Prasanna's cell phone. He was surprised as to why she was calling him at such an odd hour. He rubbed his eyes, and immediately returned her call. Then Prasanna asked him if he had sent any message regarding the puja during the Navaratri's, because she had just received the following message, "NAVARATRULO AMMANI SAAKHAMBARIGA THOMIDI MANDHÄ SUVAASANULU PUJINCHALI. SAPTHA RUSHI AAVAHANA CHEYALI". He said he had no recollection of sending such a message. Strangely enough, both their phones had the exact same message, being sent and delivered from one another's phones at exactly 09:26pm. This was sweet surprise and a beautiful miracle. This is how Baba and Anagha Devi ensure that everything runs smoothly.

One Thursday, after the Dattatreya Swami Idol consecration was over, it was followed by the Aarati. Upon conclusion of the Aarati, Narayana and another Baba devotee, Murthy, were discussing about the significance of the various Datta kshetras. Baba suddenly gave a message that they were to immediately start on a journey to all the Datta kshetras, and that they were to leave by car by 03:30pm. So Narayana quickly went back to his office and informed them that he would be taking leave as his father-in-law was not feeling well. Baba gave another message that the rear seat in the car was to be comfortably reclined backward.

They did the required adjustment to the seat, but didn't pay much thought to it. They visited Pithapuram Kuruvapuram, Gangapur, Audumber, Akkalkot, Tuljapur, Pandharipur, Nrisinhawadi, Kolhapur, Mahur, Parli Vaidhyanath, and Oundha Nagnath. It was only after visiting all these places, they realized that the seat adjustment was not for the elderly Murthy, but it was for Baba himself who had accompanied them on the journey. Upon realizing this beautiful truth, they felt immense gratitude towards Baba.

While in Kuruvapuram, Narayana decided to sleep within the temple premises itself, just the way Sai Nilayam devotees had done during their previous trip. There he put both his mobiles in his bag and went to sleep. Next day the Samsung mobile was nowhere to be found. He thought it was lost and did not talk about it inside the temple. Later he informed Prasanna about it. When they reached Tuljapur, his mobile magically appeared out of nowhere and was found to be present in the same place where he had put it on the previous night.

Once in Sai Nilayam, Prasanna gave him a silver dollar of Sri Anagha Devi. He began wearing it in his neck along with a locket of Sri Hanuman. This locket of Sri Hanuman, was with him since several years. During a trip to the temple of Ujjain Mahakaleshwar, his locket chain broke and fell down. Prasanna and Srinivas were with him on that trip, and Prasanna suggested that he leave it there, because it fell down in such a holy place for a particular reason. Sri Hanuman wants to rest with Lord Shiva. But Narayana was not willing to part with his dear locket, so he picked it up with the hopes of

getting it repaired after reaching home. But when he went to the washroom, the locket fell into the toilet bowl and ended up getting flushed away.

He felt so bad and could not come to terms with what had just transpired. He felt silly for not listening to her advice. Had he left it there, it would have been resting at a holy place and not the sad confines of a regular toilet. So he learnt his lesson.

This is how Narayana was drawn into Baba's loving embrace at Sai Nilayam. These are just a few of his experiences. The key takeaways from his various experiences are that no matter what, one should never lose trust faith in Baba. Anagha Devi, Hanuman, Baba, Ammavaaru, are all one and the same. They are the different manifestations of the one universal God, who have incarnated in various forms to fulfil the wishes of his devotees. We must all inculcate the habits of Shraddha and Saburi, and sport a smile on our face even during the most challenging times in our lives.

When faced with difficulties, don't complain and cry foul, why is this happening to me? Remember that God dwells inside each and every one of us. Instead of worrying about the problem and its consequences, simply calm all your thoughts, meditate deeply and silently on Baba. In the depths of that silence, you will find all the answers you are looking for. Baba is always there for his devotees so don't worry about trivial everyday troubles, and fully focus your attention of Baba. Everything will take care of itself, and you will find yourself more happy and drawn closer towards Baba.

People with good thoughts will sooner or later find the company of other like-minded people. Baba always encourages one's good thoughts and secures him a golden pass on this spiritual journey.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 38

BABA BLESSES LALITHA

The following three chapters describe how Lalitha received Baba's blessings, and how she and her family witnessed a variety of miracles.

Lalitha's first introduction in Sai Nilayam happened in the year 2006 when her son, Sravan, met with a terrible accident and was fighting for his life on the death bed. With him on the deathbed, they prostrated before Baba's Idol in the hospital, and vowed that should he move out of danger and recover, they would add 'Sai' to Sravan's name. Soon after which Sravan was declared out of danger and brought home. His name was changed to Sai Sravan. This was how Baba saved a dying lad and saved his mother from a lifetime of sorrow.

Although he was out of danger, this incident left her completely shaken to the extent that she was always worried about her son, and was ever engulfed in a state of deep depression. Thus she was in a miserable state, and couldn't visit Sai Nilayam until the year 2008. But as Baba always said, "Let my devotee be across the seven seas, I will drag him to me like a sparrow with thread tied to its legs.", so he brought Lalitha to Sai Nilayam for the first time on Sravan's Birthday. From that day onwards, she has been regularly visiting Sai Nilayam.

On Sravan's birthday, which fell on a Thursday, Lalitha took him to Sai Nilayam during the noon Aarati. Sravan was sitting on a chair and when suddenly Udi fell on his feet and completely covered them. People were amazed to witness this miracle, and Sravan was blessed in this manner for a second time, by Baba. In July, 2009 Lalitha's parents went to visit the USA. She was very close to her parents and very attached to them, and until that point in time she had never stayed away for so long. So she sat crying the whole night. The next morning when she was going upstairs to perform puja, she was stunned to find a lot of udi lying in the hall, present on which was an unmistakable imprint of Baba's foot. She didn't know what to do, so she immediately called Prasanna and informed her of this miracle. Prasanna soon arrived at her house, and when she entered the Puja room, she found an Omkaram had formed there. After paying respects to both Baba's foot in the Udi and the Omkaram in the Puja room, Prasanna told Lalitha that this was Baba's way of telling her that he was always there for her.

When the Bhiksha program (mentioned in chapter 6) was going on, Prasanna was Lalitha's house for the same. So she came out to give the Bhiksha, but Baba gave a message that the Bhiksha must be received through Sravan's hands. So he was called and the Bhiksha was given through him. Whenever devotees had any questions they wanted answers from Baba, they had to write their question on a piece of paper, and put it under Baba's photo in the master bedroom. So Lalitha, followed suit and wrote her request on a piece of paper "NAA KODUKUNI BAGUCHEYI, NADICHE LAAGA CHEYI"(Take care of my son and make him walk) and put it in the bedroom near BABA's photo.

The next day, BABA replied that "NEE KODUKU BAAGU AVUTADHI" (Your son will be fine). Then BABA further added that Sravan would recover with Prasanna's help. Prasanna referred them to a well-known treatment facility located in Kerala. Sravan has been receiving treatment at that clinic ever since.

Bharath was Sravan's brother. He too had few questions regarding his higher education, Lalitha's second son was Bharath. His mother was speaking with Prasanna about his education. He was studying in Kakinada, and she suggested that they transfer him to Vizag for his further studies. While they were discussing this, the following words written in Kumkum mysteriously appeared in the Puja room "Vyaparam" (meaning Business), which implied he was to start a business.

On February 24th, 2011 Lalitha's father met with an accident, and she was terrified. She immediately ran to her saviour, Baba in Sai Nilayam. She dashed into the puja room, with streams of tears rolling down her cheeks, she hugged Baba's idol and poured her heart out begging Baba to save her father. Her experience was that Baba was present there in a living body, and she didn't think for once that the idol was a marble statue. Her love and devotion were so intense.

Baba blessed her with Udi, and it was all over her shoulders and her back. She wasn't aware of it until fellow devotees mentioned it to her. The doctors in the hospital told that his critical and not to have hopes as his chances for survival were negligible. But following Baba's words, Srinivas Sastry took Baba's Udi, and went to apply it on his forehead. The doctors remarked that applying Udi may only increase their hopes but not the odds of his survival. Srinivas Sastry applied Udi to the gentleman's forehead, and put a small packet of Udi under his pillow and returned home.

Meanwhile Baba gave the message that he would recover. During the period of hospitalization
BABA made Lalitha's mother perform the Kumkum puja for nine consecutive weeks and also gave instructions to Lalitha to read certain chapters from the SAI SATCHARITRA while seated in the master bedroom of Sai Nilayam. Finally, he was discharged and brought back home. With instructions from Ammavaru/Goddess, Lalitha parents were made to worship Anagha Devi and perform Puja. After the completion of the nine weeks' Puja, Baba told that they were to go on a pilgrimage to Kamakhya Devi Shaktipeeth near Guwahati, and that they were to go along with Prasanna and Srinivas. Few other members in Lalitha's family also went along with them. In Guwahati her father was talking like a normal person who was getting worried about family, but the fact was that he had lost his memory.

Long ago, Prasanna bought an idol of Sai Baba in Shirdi, and has been lovingly taking care of, since 23 long years. In the month of November (kartheeka masam) BABA gave Prasanna a message she was to give that idol to Lalitha. Prasanna handed her the idol and told her it would do her family good. Lalitha in turn began putting Baba's idol under her father's pillow. One day while changing the sheets, this very idol of BABA fell down and the head severed off.
She was deeply upset and with great sorrow, she informed Prasanna about what happened. Prasanna asked her not to worry and suggested she immerse the idol in the sea. Lalitha, fervently prayed to Baba for his forgiveness, and managed to join the idol into one piece again. She now guards the idol with all her attention.

Baba is the creator and protector of the whole existence. His grace can make a dumb man talk and a lame man, walk. Although every man and woman is bound by the karmic laws, Baba's blessings can destroy their evil karma and change their lives forever. All that is required of the devotees is pure love and devotion, and complete surrender at his feet. Today if Lalitha's father and her son are alive and well, it is only on account of Baba's kindness.

More stories will be narrated in the next chapters.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 39

EXPERIENCES OF LALITHA IN SAI NILAYAM – II

This chapter narrates some more experiences of Lalitha at Sai Nilayam.

It is characteristic of Baba that he always takes care of his devotees. If he gives a word, it is word of Brahma, unalterable, unchangeable and final. Thus he always fulfils the devotees' desires and wishes. All that we need to do is leave the burden to him and just follow his words.

Once BABA gave a message regarding Sravan's health. He told Prasanna that Lalitha was to perform ***Dattatreya Vajrakavacham*** for 41 days and light lamps daily in Sai Nilayam with ghee made from cow's milk. In the year 2012, Lalitha faithfully performed Lalitha Parayana and Baba Parayana for 9 consecutive weeks. Upon conclusion of the nine weeks' of puja, she went to take darshan of BABA. Then Prasanna asked her to go inside the Puja room, and take darshan. She went inside and began praying, when suddenly there was a shower of bright red kumkum on her. Her head and hair was drenched with Kumkum. She considered herself so fortunate and bowed down to the Goddess and to Baba.

During Dusseshra of 2013 when the Devi pujas were going on, as per the instructions from Anagha Devi, Lalitha sat inside the puja room and perform the Devi Abhishekham. Lucky are the devotees whom the divine calls upon! Only Lalitha's trust, confidence, love and devotion made all this possible.

In the year 2012, Lalitha and her family thought of visiting the Kumbh Mela, and requested Prasanna and Srinivas to accompany them. Prasanna told her that she would follow Baba's advice and join them if he asks them to go. Baba gave a message that not everybody could visit every holy place, and that they would qualify only in the presence of certain individuals. He made it clear that they could visit only if accompanied by Prasanna and Srinivas.

Sometime afterwards, their business became dull after her dad met with an accident. Then BABA asked that Lalitha was to take care of the business for one and a half years. She used to be there early in the morning, and Bharath would be there by 10:30am. Later she let Bharath handle all the responsibility so that he could gain more experience. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Lalitha had taken several oaths. Once when she was reading the Parayana, she received a phone call from Srinivas asking her to come to Sai Nilayam. At Sai Nilayam, Prasanna told her that she had not fulfilled all the vows she had taken. Then she remembered her oaths to visit Arunachalam and Tirupathi.

So as not to cause any further delay, she immediately made plans for the trip, and before leaving she went to Sai Nilayam for taking Baba's darshan and bowing down before his holy Paadukas. There she saw an impression of Baba's hand, which she took as a signal that her journey was going to be successful. She had to leave immediately and obtaining train tickets was proving difficult. Srinivas, then arranged for a lovely tempo for Lalitha and her family travel to Arunachalam and Tirupathi. That day it rained heavily in Arunachalam, and as a result of which all the roads were washed clean. She thought that BABA made the roads clean by making it rain so abundantly. Thus her Girivanam, could be completed easily.

A week before the marriage, Srinivas chided Lalitha that she was leaving all her responsibilities and only performing Puja. Spirituality shouldn't be used as a pretext for ignoring the rest of our worldly responsibilities. For a week Lalitha didn't show up at Sai Nilayam. Then one day BABA gave a

message “*Antha Oka Kolliki Vachina Tharuvatha Maaya Chetha Kappabadi Nannu Naa Anucharulan Vidanaadutaku Neeku Sammathamayithe, Idi Vid Likhitham.*"

(After all your problems are solved, enveloped by maya, if you want to leave me and my followers, that is your destiny.)

One day Lalitha was taking her father to the hospital as he was not feeling well. Then Srinivas called her and said told her that BABA gave a message "*NEE INTLO VASTHUVULANU KALLATHO CHUSKO*". Lalitha was too worried about her father to understand the message so she asked him to explain what that meant. He asked her to see her mobile in her hand. Then there was a message in her mobile "MUDOVA GANDAM, KARMA PHALAM NUNDI THAPISTHANU". (The third danger, I will save him from karma phalam).

One day Lalitha's mother went to Sai Nilayam for darshan and BABA blessed her with UDI through Prasanna. Once they all went to SAI RAM RIDGE COMFORTS located in Dwarakanagar. They all had lunch and were coming back. Lalitha requested Prasanna that Baba must continue to bless them and ensure a smooth functioning of the business. Prasanna replied that, "AAYANA VENAKA NUVVU LEVU NEE VENUKA AAYANA VUNNARU" It means that BABA is always with you and he will never let you fall down in your life.

Further Leelas will be described in the upcoming chapters.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 40

EXPERIENCES OF LALITHA IN SAI NILAYAM – III

This chapter narrates more incidents which show how Baba continued to bless Lalitha.

Once Prasanna went on a pilgrimage to the temple of Sringeri. Sringeri also known as, Shringeri is a hill town and Taluk headquarters located in Chikkamagaluru district in the state of Karnataka. It is the site of the first Math/Monastery (Sringeri Sharada Peetham) established by *Adi Shankar Acharya*, who was one of the chief exponents of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy, in the 8th century CE. Sringeri is located on the banks of the river Tungā and is also the site of an ancient and historical temple, believed to be over 1200 years old. Upon completion of the Puja, the head priest gave her a photo of Sri Chakram which was beautifully laminated in a frame.

Baba asked her to present the aforementioned Sri Chakram to Lalitha. So after returning home, she gave it to Lalitha. Then BABA instructed that Sravan was to perform the Kumkum puja eleven times on every Friday before *raahu kaalam* for 52 weeks. After 52 weeks of Puja, they were to visit Sringeri and take the Devi's darshan. They were not sure how to proceed on their journey as getting the tickets was not that easy. Then one of Lalitha's relatives called her and informed that they would take care of booking the tickets, and so they did. Lalitha and her family were joyous that Baba and Devi were taking care of everything.

Once Lalitha brought a new sari to Sai Nilayam and requested Prasanna to drape Sri Anagha Devi's statue with it, and then requested that the sari thus consecrated, be returned to her. Prasanna agreed, and adorned the statue with the new sari. When the sari was returned to Lalitha, it found that the sari was dripping with honey. Everybody present was surprised at this sweet miracle.

In 2013 BABA asked Lalitha to perform ANAGHA DEVI VRATHAM for nine consecutive weeks. The puja was performed with all due formalities, and the nine weeks went by successfully. Thanks to Narayana! On another occasion, Lalitha and her family went to Sai Nilayam. BABA made them chant the ANAGHA DEVI MANTRAM. While chanting the mantra, he husband found himself covered in Udi. He was too overwhelmed by this miracle of Baba and Anagha Devi at Sai Nilayam, so he silently prayed and mentally thanked them for showering him and his family with their grace.

Once, the master bedroom in Sai Nilayam were found to have big imprints of Baba's footsteps. The message instructed Sravan to walk in those footsteps. When Bhargav (Lalitha's younger son) joined a college in Vijayawada for his Intermediate education, Baba gave the following message in Udi, "BHARGAV INTERMEDIATE ABHYASAM THALLI VADDANE". This message made her very happy.

Later when he wanted appear for his EAMCET entrance for MBBS, BABA gave a message that in addition to the EAMCET exams in AP, he was also to apply for examinations held by Tamilnadu and Karnataka. Upon conclusion of the EAMCET exams, Sai Nilayam devotees went together on a trip to the holy Kailash Mansarovar. Although Srinivas Sastry, was generously helping Bhargav with his applications, on account of the congestion in time, he couldn't apply to SRM University Chennai. After returning from the Mansarovar yatra, they found that the enrolment window was open for one more day. Then Shankar bought the application, and Srinivas Sastry, filled up the application and immediately posted it.

With Baba's blessings, Bhargav cleared the examination. When the time for attending the counselling came, Srinivas had to face difficulties. Since Lalitha and Bhargav were both clueless about Chennai and didn't speak their language either, Prasanna and Srinivas decided to accompany them. They duly completed all the formalities at the college. On the day of the counselling, Srinivas

was down with very high fever and felt extremely weak. But not letting it bother him, he ensured that Bhargav's enrolment went through successfully. He took tablets for his fever and left the rest in Baba's hands. Thanks to the efforts of Srinivas and Prasanna, Bhargav has now successfully completed the first few years of his MBBS.

Another time, Lalitha wanted to sell her car. Then BABA gave a message that the car would be sold for exactly Rs 3.9 lakhs. To everyone's surprise, the car was sold exactly at the same price predicted by Baba. All the miracles involving Lalitha and her family, mentioned so far constitute only a minor portion of the actual number of miracles that they had borne witness to in Sai Nilayam. Since including all the miracles experienced by all the devotees would make the size of the published book unmanageable, the miracles are being mentioned in the order that they were told to the author.

The first impression of Lalitha at Sai Nilayam was that of an overly sensitive and timid woman, who was weak at heart. But after the first hand experiences she had at Sai Nilayam, changed her completely for good. Her contact with the all-encompassing divinity at Sai Nilayam in the form of Baba, Anagha Devi, and other forms, and through the inspiration and example set by Prasanna and Srinivas, enabled her to become mentally stronger, with the ability to fight any hardship in life while sporting a smile on her face. These profound life changing experiences drew her closer to Baba, and helped her develop a deep love for him.

Today, Lalitha says that if not for the selfless helping nature of Prasanna and Srinivas at Sai Nilayam, and the generous blessing of Baba, she finds it hard to imagine what her life would have been like. Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry are two exemplary role models in today's world where they dedicate their lives in the selfless service of others, and spread Baba's word and teachings, not through meaningless lectures or empty sermons, but by enabling devotees to bear silent witness and experience the many miracles of Baba at Sai Nilayam and fill themselves with peace and tranquillity.

Blessed are the devotees who have the good fortune of coming into the folds of the love and devotion at Sai Nilayam, and even more blessed are Prasanna and Srinivas, who enable devotees to experience the divinity through life changing miracles.

Lalitha rightfully says, "I owe my life to Sai Nilayam. Whatever I am today, is on account of Baba's grace at Sai Nilayam. I have never experienced such calmness of mind, or the clarity of thought before entering Sai Nilayam. Whatever I am today, is on account of the holiness of Sai Nilayam. They have given me the strength to face every difficulty in life with courage. I will forever be indebted to Sai Nilayam" This is a truly remarkable statement, for who would ever sacrifice their personal life and time, for helping fellow human beings?

Let us bow down at Sai Baba's feet, for they are our sole refuge.

More miracles will be described in the next chapter.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 41
THE STORY OF UYYALA BABA

This chapter describes how the story behind *Uyyala Baba* (Jhoola/Swing) and how the term was coined.

By now the readers can imagine the sheer number of miracles that were taking place at Sai Nilayam. Every devotee who ever entered step foot in Sai Nilayam with a pure heart, had his problems solved. To some devotees Baba would give Udi, to others Turmeric and to others honey and so on. As the devotees kept coming in steady streams, Prasanna would personally take care of keeping the house neat and tidy, and not let the cleanliness of the place be overwhelmed by those sheer numbers. Night time was dedicated to this purpose.

One night when Prasanna was cleaning the house, Baba asked her "*Epudu Subhram Chesu Kovadamena Nannu Paduko Pettava*" (You are always engaged in cleaning, won't you ever put me to sleep?). From that day onwards, they arranged for a small bed in the puja room, for Baba to sleep in. Upon conclusion of the Shej Aarati (Night Aarati) all the lights would be turned off, and the devotees would leave for their homes, and Baba was put to sleep in his bed.

That night, Prasanna and Srinivas began to wonder, when we are comfortably sleeping in an air-conditioned room, then why should Baba have to sleep in the Puja room under the sweltering heat and humidity? So they immediately remodelled the Master Bedroom to resemble Dwarakamai and dedicated the King size bed to Baba. Sometime later, Baba said the following, "NAADI IDI KAADU, REPU VASTHUNDI". (This bed is not for me, mine will arrive tomorrow), but Prasanna did not understand what that statement meant.

Next day, another Baba devotee, one Ms.Nirmala arrived at Sai Nilayam, and presented Prasanna with a brick wrapped in a silk cloth (pattu) and informed that Baba appeared in her vision last night, and asked her to give this in Sai Nilayam. The brick would serve as Baba's pillow. (This is a beautiful incident, as one can recall from Sai Satcharitra how there was one brick which Baba was very fond of, and he would keep it with him at all times.). With reverence, the brick was put on the bed. Miraculously, every morning the neatly laid bedsheets would be crumpled and out of place, as if Baba had slept on the bed and then woke up in the morning!
Even today, if one can observe how Baba's photo in Dwarakamai appears as if he were sleeping. Similarly, the horse – Shyamakarna, would sometimes appear as if he was sleeping. Many such miracles took place in Sai Nilayam, and they will be described as they occur to the author.

Once Prasanna's relative Kavitha came to Sai Nilayam from Hyderabad. She was surprised to see Prasanna making the bed, and asked why she was doing so? Prasanna replied, that the bed was being made for Baba to sleep on, and she was doing it as per Baba's wishes. Kavitha enquired if any miracles took place in the recent past. She was told, Baba appeared on several occasions as if he was sleeping on the bed or sitting on the sofa. After this discussion, they went out to the hall and upon returning to the bedroom they found the bed to be covered with delightfully fragrant Udi, and the shape in which it accumulated looked as if Baba were sleeping right there, turned to one side.

Later, on another day Baba gave a message instructing that a cradle should be arranged for. Prasanna thought it would be nice if they could have the cradle hand-crafted and not have to buy something ready-made. Sujatha, owned a furniture store and wanted the opportunity to be of service. She wanted to provide it free of cost, but Baba refused. Baba gave a message that "DAKSHINA MUST BE GATHERED FROM DEVOTEES WHO WERE HAVING PROBLEMS REGARDING CHILDREN." Then Sangeetha, Rama, Lalitha along with other fellow devotees participated and contributed towards the cost of the cradle.

Lalitha was pregnant and had some issues during her second delivery. By Baba's grace everything went well and they named the boy - Sai Tejas. Rama and his wife were blessed with Sai Kruthi. Sangeetha wanted to have a second child, but the doctors advised against it as there were bound to be complications on account of her health. But with Baba's blessings she conceived again, and during her pregnancy she was plagued with high blood sugar levels. But the baby born was found to be perfectly healthy, thanks to Baba!

Finally the cradle was ready and today we can see Baba seated comfortably in that cradle. Later Kameshwar Rao, took measurements of the cradle and arranged for beautiful bedding to be made. During the night Aarati, devotees would affectionately rock the cradle and put Baba to sleep. Sometime after that Baba instructed that the cradle be moved into the hall, and be placed across the puja room. Prasanna and Srinivas would leave the fan on for Baba to retire comfortably at night, and surprisingly in the morning they would find the fan turned off!

Baba's idol present in the cradle, was one of Karthik's most favourite. One day, as per Baba's instructions, Prasanna gave it to Kavitha. The next day Karthik found Baba's idol to be missing, and he asked where Baba was? Then Prasanna told that she had given we gave to Kavitha. He felt sad. But Baba never disappointed his devotees, and he was always present whenever a devotee called out to him with love. Baba once again returned in the form of the same exact idol, and it was presented through a devotee named Chinna Srinu. Thus Baba was back in the cradle.

Every child, who was born with the blessings of Sri Anagha Devi, i.e. those children who were conceived after performing the Sri Anagha Devi Vratham were baptized by laying them in the same cradle which was consecrated by Baba's presence. This tradition is being followed even today. Baba promised to be with Karthik upon completion of his education and marriage, and so Baba's idol was taken by Karthik to Chennai. Later, by accompanying Prasanna and Srinivas during their return trip from Shirdi, Baba in the form of the same idol, came back to Sai Nilayam and was back in the cradle! Such is Baba's love for his devotees. Since rocking Baba's cradle during the *Shej Aarati* had become an integral part of the process, the devotees affectionately began to call this Uyyala Baba. The Telugu word, 'Uyyala' translates to 'Jhoola' in Hindi and to 'Swing' in English. This is how the name 'Uyyala Baba' came into existence.

Baba always said that there is no difference between me and you. Prasanna and uncle always think the same way and that is the reason they felt that "We are enjoying the comforts given by him, then why shouldn't the same courtesy be extended to Baba?" Only because they felt so close to Baba, and they saw no difference between themselves and him, and only because they had the realization of the universal truth that all are one and the same, and that a `Devotee` is not separate from the beloved `Devata`, could have inspired them to have such beautiful thoughts, and love and affection towards Baba and enable them to look after his comforts. Baba doesn't care about outward paraphernalia, all he cares about is the devotees' wellbeing and earnestness. All the decorations and arrangements are done at the behest of devotees who want to see their Baba beautifully adorned. It is a way of expressing their love and gratitude towards Baba.

What Baba wants to teach us from this is that one should not hanker after material possessions or joys, for they are transient and never give happiness. One should always seek spiritual wealth as it is the only means of attaining supreme bliss, one beyond which there is no greater joy. All Baba ever had in his possession was a stray piece of cloth, a simple kafni, his satka and a bowl for begging food from his devotees. So let us be try to be happy with whatever God has given us and try our best towards progressing on this spiritual journey. God is the only means of experiencing everlasting ever new joy. Just like your body, even a house worth one crore is going to turn to dust, and even the most expensive car is going to rust, so let us not be driven by greed and run blindly after material

wealth. Let us keep ourselves happy with what we can and use the rest towards the upliftment of the society's impoverished.
Let us think of Baba with breath we take, let us think of Baba with every heart beat and let us always chant Baba's name with every blink of an eye, and aspire to become like him. Before every deed we perform or every thought we process, let us think of Baba and this way let us discard everything that is not worthy of being in Baba's presence. The path is not easy, but with conscious and continuous efforts and with Baba by our side, we will surely reach the final destination. Let us look upon Prasanna and Srinivas for inspiration, for they have always lead a simple and devoted life by following along in Baba's footsteps.

Let us not allow our ego driven intellect decide the course of our action. Let us lovingly and whole heartedly follow Baba's instructions with full faith that everything is divinely ordained and is in our best interests. When Baba asked Prasanna to give his Idol to Kavitha, she did so without second thoughts about how her son would feel. Implicit faith in Baba and strict adherence to his guidelines are the surest ways towards achieving salvation.

Let us pray that Baba keeps the flames of bhakti, sraddha and saburi burning bright in our hearts for ever.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 42

STORY OF ZIPPY (KALA BHAIRAV OF SAI NILAYAM)

This chapter narrates the how Zippy, a cute puppy, arrived in Sai Nilayam.

Sri Sai Baba, always used to draw the picture of a dog in Sai Nilayam. Prasanna and Srinivas never understood what Baba's message behind this was.

One day Prasanna and Srinivas went to shop at Spencer's hyper-mart located near Bullaya College in Visakhapatnam. While exiting the store, Prasanna saw a pet shop. Residents of Visakhapatnam can easily recollect how birds, fish, kittens and pups, among other pets are sold on the Spencer's premises. So when Prasanna saw the pet shop, she was immediately reminded of Baba drawing pictures of a dog in Sai Nilayam. She thought maybe Baba wanted us to bring home a puppy. She went to the shop and but none of the puppies caught her attention. Just as they began coming out of the store, Baba gave her a message, "*Ippudu Velli Chudu*" (Go and check again). Prasanna was surprised, she wondered I had gone in only few moments ago, then why is Baba having us go in again?

But as we know, they were very staunch devotees of Baba and they never deviated from his directions. So they went back in, and asked the shopkeeper if they had more puppies in store. They were told that they did have more pups, but as they were only 15 days old, they were not allowed to sell them. But Prasanna insisted that they must at least let her have a glance. After much hesitation, the shopkeeper brought out two puppies. One was male, and the other was female. Upon seeing Prasanna, the male pup darted towards her with joy. He was really very cute and had lots of hair. Baba gave them a message that they were to bring that pup home. Prasanna and Srinivas convinced the shopkeeper, and brought the puppy to their home, Sai Nilayam.

Karthik, who happened to be home, was surprised and asked his mother, How did you end up buying a puppy, I know how you are not fond of dogs! She told him, that they were simply following Baba's instructions. Later they purchased a large cage to house the puppy in. Prasanna fed him milk and put him back inside the cage, and put it towards one side in the bedroom. But as the night progressed, this little puppy wouldn't stop making noises. Prasanna found herself disturbed by the cries of their new pet, so she put the cage in the hall and returned to her bedroom.

Baba then abruptly woke up Prasanna in the middle of the night, and asked her in a stern voice "*Thalli Prema Nunchi Dooram Chesina Thalli Prema Ivvadam Thelida?"* '(You have taken him away from his Mother, can you not show him a Mother's love?). Upon hearing this she felt very sad, she woke up Srinivas, and when they both went out, they found that the cage was wide open, and the little puppy was frantically searching here and there to find people. She immediately picked him up and drew him close to her bosom and caressed him with great love. The puppy found great relief, and soon felt into a blissful sleep and had doggie dreams.

Since he was still a very small puppy, he was still making those cute innocent barks which sounded more like a song. Prasanna suddenly happened to recollect a huge toy dog they had brought from Doha, and it was lying in the store room. Baba asked them to place this toy dog inside the cage. No sooner did they place it, the puppy ran towards the toy and comfortably fell asleep under its furry and cozy embrace.

This how considerate, caring and loving Baba is towards all lifeforms. Having felt and perceived the pain of the puppy, and how it was feeling cold and missing the comforting embrace of her mother, he immediately made sure this little puppy was properly taken care of. After this, the puppy never

made any more sounds. Although the puppy could not speak the language of humans, and could not convey how it was feeling, Baba made sure it was being understood, and made of necessary arrangements.

Baba told them that this puppy was born in the month of February. Both Prasanna and Srinivas wanted to name him after Baba, but Baba asked them to find him a unique name, one which would match his personality. After a thorough search, Srinivas found the word “Zippy”, and Baba immediately Okayed it. “Zippy” means ‘active, energetic, positive, lively, and peppy’. And Zippy was indeed an embodiment of all these qualities. Baba added that, Zippy emanates pure positive energy, and he moves about Sai Nilayam he infuses the whole house with his positive vibrations. In other words he was the protector of Sai Nilayam and he would keep Sai Nilayam safe from the evil vibes and negative energies.

Once Prasanna was worried about Zippy’s falling hair, as his beauty lied in his shiny silky fur. Baba told her not to worry and asked her to feed Zippy carrot juice, apple juice and lots of curd. This magic combination miraculously prevented Zippy from shedding hair. Baba asked Prasanna to teach Zippy everything before the age of three months because for dogs those three months are the most crucial towards learning key skills. So Prasanna taught him how to do the "RAM RAM SAI RAM" Bhajan. Zippy quickly caught on to the rhythm of this song. Now whenever he hears the bhajan, he claps his paws together in joy.

He are few more beautiful things Zippy does, which endears him to all. He devoutly listens to the Vishnu Sahasranamam. After having his bath, he enters the puja room and takes Baba’s darshan. It was observed on several occasions how Zippy never steps foot into the Puja room when he hasn’t bathed. His ears perk up as he listens with great zeal and enthusiasm to the Guru Mantrams which are chanted by the devotees with equal fervour during the Sri Chakram Puja. Surprisingly, he never barks at any of the devotees.

Even during Dusseshra, he doesn’t venture out of his room until the completion of the Puja. He doesn’t express the slightest displeasure even when he is hungry, especially given how long certain pujas tend to go on for. He patiently waits for Prasanna to feed him after everything is done. When Zippy was 8 months old, the naughty puppy he was, he decided that it was time for some mischievous adventure and found himself on another floor of the Apartment complex. Prasanna and Srinivas became quite tensed and began searching for him everywhere. Finally Lakshmi found him playing inside Padma’s house, and she brought him back home. Prasanna, overcome by motherly affection, feigning anger, lightly beat Zippy with a small stick, asking him “Why did you go out without our permission? Do you know how tensed mom and dad will be? Next time if you go I will beat you". Zippy grinned with a devilishly cute smile, and turned his head to one side and looked at them with sparkling puppy eyes. Prasanna and Srinivas could do nothing but hug him and pet him and shower him with lots of kisses. Since that time, he has never step foot outside the house without first letting his mom and dad know.

Prasanna and Srinivas take great care of care of Zippy and shower him with unconditional love. They feel that Baba himself moves around the house in the form of Zippy. Baba once made it clear that Zippy must never be put on a leash, and that he should be left free to roam as he likes inside the house. Thenceforth, Zippy was never seen wearing a leash.

All of this is not possible of any other dog, all the discipline and good behaviour that Zippy learnt was on account of Baba’s will and on account of Prasanna and Srinivas’s spirituality an patience. In a similar way, devotees must draw inspiration from this account and try to put it to practical use when

dealing with their own children. As children they do not possess the mental faculties or the discrimination to understand what they are doing is right or wrong, and whether it is acceptable or not. The onus of bringing up their children lies upon the parents, who need to nurture them with great care and affection, while disciplining them as needed. Finally everything would go smoothly, if parents were to instil the qualities of Shraddha and Saburi in their children from a very tender age, and teach them to place their entire trust in Baba and meditate on his beautiful form. Both good habits and bad ones, develop over time, so let the parents sows the seeds of love and devotion in their children's hearts and nurture them with great care.

Remember, Baba saw whole universe as equal to himself. Everybody is the same in his eyes. Let us surrender ourselves at his lotus feet and seek his blessings.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 43

IMPORTANCE OF VOWS

This chapter describes how Baba made his devotees realize the importance of keeping their vows and oaths.

It is a common practice for people to make vows to God with the hopes of having their wishes fulfilled. This is especially true in the Indian subcontinent, where individuals make vows to different deities ranging from letting go of their choicest pleasures to making donations in the temple hundi to contributing towards philanthropic causes. In any case, making a vow is one's choice, however fulfilling it is mandatory. For even the Bible (*Ecclesiastes 5:4*) states, "***When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou has vowed***", which translates to "If you make a vow to God, keep it".

When Prasanna first began working in Doha, she mentally took an oath that every year she would donate 1% of her annual salary towards Baba, and that she would make this donation towards Annadaanam at Sri Shirdi Sai Sansthan in Shirdi, where lakhs of devotees visit the Holy Samadhi of Sri Sai Baba. So every time she would visit India, she would visit Shirdi without fail and make the donation towards the aforementioned Annadaanam. During one particular year, after completing her darshan she felt quite exhausted, so she quickly visited the donations counter to complete her payment. Unfortunately there was a long waiting line before her; overcome by fatigue she thought to herself, "how does it matter, whether I donate at the Annadaanam counter or at the Hundi" and thus conveniently assuming "Sarvam Sree Jagganadham", she deposited the amount meant for Annadaanam in a nearby Hundi.

She returned and sat down inside the temple premises to catch some rest. Just then a man approached her and asked her for four rupees as he wanted to buy food. Back in those days the cost of bhojan (lunch) at the Shirdi Prasadalaya costed only four rupees. She searched her entire bag but to her dismay, she could not find a single rupee to give to this stranger! She felt a knot tightening in her stomach, owing to her inability to provide this man with such a small amount, that too he wanted it for having food! She told him how she didn't find any money, and requested that he stay there while she would return immediately with money which was there in her room. Then the man sharply retorted, "*Nuuvu Naaku Naalugu Rupayilu Ivva*
Levu Nuvvu Annadhanam Ki Emi Isthavu?"(You couldn't give me four rupees, how are you going to donate to annadhanam?)

At first she didn't understand what he implied, or why he said so. But realization suddenly set in that this man was none other than Sri Sai Baba himself and his remark was directly aimed at the negligent recourse she had adopted some time back. Prasanna suddenly understood that she failed to fulfil her vow by donating the money into the hundi, although it was originally intended for Annadhanam! She wept and mentally pleaded Baba for his forgiveness, and furthermore pledged that she wouldn't repeat this mistake. Thus Baba taught her first hand, the importance of fulfilling a promise.

Let us now look at some more instances devotees who came to Sai Nilayam and how Baba reminded them of their oaths which they hadn't fulfilled.

1. Lakshmi: She played an important role in providing the much needed manpower for ensuring the continuity and success of the various Sai Nilayam programmes. Once she wanted some wish fulfilled, and she took an oath to Sri Tirupathi Balaji, that she would deposit a thousand rupees in his hundi. Later she declared to Prasanna that all GOD'S are the same, therefore I would like to deposit the same amount here at Sai Nilayam, and become free from her vow. Baba did not agree .He said that

she her oath was meant to be fulfilled only at Tirupathi, therefore she must do so accordingly. At the time of writing this book, Lakshmi hadn't yet fulfilled her vow!

2. Kondamma: There was devotee by name Kondamma. She was working as a helper at Nature Cure, Vizag. She came to Sai Nilayam along with her grandson and wanted Baba to give him a name. Baba immediately told Prasanna that the lady had already made a vow to christen her grandson in Vijayawada at the Kanaka Durga Temple. Therefore Baba would not like to interfere in the matter, for Goddess Durga is the mother of the entire universe. Finally Baba told that it was in the lady's best interests that she fulfil her vow. After the Aarati was over, Prasanna asked Kondamma if she had taken any vow to perform the naming ceremony in Vijayawada. Kondamma said yes, and Prasanna requested that she fulfil her vow accordingly!

4. Lakshmi: She was another devotee who regularly visited Sai Nilayam. Once she was there seeking Baba's blessings in finding her daughter a suitable bride. With Baba's blessings, the daughter got married, and to her good luck even the bride turned out to be a Baba devotee. Baba gave Prasanna the following message "ANNI ANUKUNATTU JARIGAYI, ANUKUNNA MOKKU THEERCHALEDU?" Prasanna was didn't understand whom this message was intended for. Then Baba told Prasanna that Lakshmi had taken an oath that if her daughter got married, she would donate a silver plate to Baba. Even though her wish was fulfilled, she didn't bother to fulfil her oath.

One day she came to Sai Nilayam for Baba's darshan and told Prasanna that her son in law got transferred to Hyderabad on but her daughter's transfer was on hold. She requested that Prasanna plead her case with Baba. Lakshmi was then reminded of her unfilled oath. She realized her mistake, and quickly fulfilled her vow. Within two days of fulfilling her vow, her daughter's transfer to Hyderabad was confirmed.

This how Baba reminds us of the oaths we take but forget to fulfil, thereby saving us from the deadly claws of Karma. Devotees must remember that, Baba never asks anything of the devotees. It is the devotees who make vows of their own accord. But a promise is a promise, and cannot be altered by the devotee. Thus it is only logical that the devotee fulfils his promise and frees himself from the vow.

Devotee Anupama, recounts a similar incident where she had made several vows, but forgot to fulfil them and therefore ran into troubles. In the year 2009, she helped her uncle secure a home loan on the name of her husband, Suresh. Her uncle had promised that he would clear the loan. Once Baba told Anupama to purchase a house in Chennai. Anupama informed Prasanna about the loan and how her uncle was yet to pay her. A day after this, Baba gave another message that, Anupama and Suresh were to secure the funds from her uncle as soon as possible, otherwise the uncle had no intention of paying up.

They kept asking him but were never too serious about it. Prasanna, concerned as she was, frequently enquired if they made any progress, but Anupama always said no because her uncle wasn't repaying them. In the month of November that year, Baba gave a message that all these troubles were on account of her not fulfilling her vows. Anupama then made a list of all the vows she had made, and began ticking them off one by one. She is confident that soon after that, all her troubles would come to an end.

This is how Baba looks after his devotees. For an entire year Baba kept enquiring whether her loan situation with her uncle was resolved or not. But she never failed to understand the underlying significance of Baba's questions. When there was no hope of her ever understanding the

significance, Baba then made her realize the vows she had forgotten. Only then she understood how she had gotten herself into this situation, and how kindly Baba showed her the path.

Remember that Baba loves us, cares for us and he will always there for us. But it is up to the devotees whether they want to waste Baba's time by forcing him to interfere in such trivial everyday matters which were caused by the devotee himself on account of his absentmindedness and negligence towards fulfilling his vows, or whether the individual will stay a true devotee of Baba and quickly fulfil all the vows he has taken, and instead seek Baba's help towards navigating this world of mundane existence and for freeing himself from the clutches of Maya and walk towards self-realization.

Attentive readers may remember that similar cases pertaining to Shama and Kakaji Vaidya of Vani, are well documented in Chapter XXX of Sri Sai Satcharitra. Similar incidents are mentioned in another story relating to Dev's Udhyapan Ceremony, where Dev fails to recognize Baba who appears in the form of a Sanyasi.

This is how Baba taught devotees importance of fulfilling vows which were are taken by the devotees. We are fortunate to have the crown jewel of all saints, Sri Sai Baba to be the guiding light in our lives.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 44

EXPERIENCES OF JAYA IN SAI NILAYAM

This chapter narrates the story of how Jaya received Baba's blessings in Sai Nilayam.

In the year 2002, Jaya and her family moved into the same apartment complex which housed Sai Nilayam. When she first moved in, she was be neighbours with Prasanna and Srinivas, and was completely alien to the multitude of miracles that were taking place at Sai Nilayam. Little did she know, her life was about to head in an entirely new and beautiful direction!

Jaya and her family, were suffering from severe financial hardships because their income was not enough to support themselves. Since many years they were desirous of visiting Shirdi for taking Baba's darshan. But due to one reason or another they couldn't visit Shirdi. Finally Baba blessed them in the year 2005 and gave them the opportunity to step foot in the blessed land of Shirdi. As is characteristic of a Shirdi pilgrimage, Jaya began to see a remarkable change in everything around her and also within her. Baba's darshan at Shirdi kindled a new found love in her heart.

So how did Jaya become a part of the Sai Nilayam Satsang? As described in the previous chapters, long before the consecration of Baba's idol Sai Nilayam, countless miracles were already taking place day in and day out. One evening when Jaya's husband was returning home from work, he ran into Srinivas Sastry in the basement of the apartment complex. Srinivas introduced himself and they exchanged pleasantries, after which Srinivas requested that they visit them sometime. But he never visited.

Two days later, Jaya along with Lakshmi and Padma went to Sai Nilayam. In the Pooja room at Sai Nilayam, they found a paper carrying the impression of the Devi's feet. The feet were very small, and it appeared as if they belonged to "BALA TRIPURA SUNDHARI". Jaya was very surprised having witnessed a divine miracle right in front of her eyes. Every day some miracle or the other would take place at Sai Nilayam. This piqued her interest furthermore. One day Baba gave a message asking that Bhiksha be collected from various houses in the apartment complex. Every day Baba would point out to the house from which Bhiksha was to be collected. But Baba never asked of Bhiksha from Jaya's house. So she used to sad about it. Her sorrow multiplied as the rest of the residents were joyous to have been the chosen ones for giving the Bhiksha! This got Jaya brooding over what wrongs she must have done due to which Baba was not gracing her house for Bhiksha.

One day Baba asked Prasanna to give Sri Sai Satcharitra to Jaya, and so she did. Later Prasanna told Jaya "One day Baba will definitely visit your house". Hearing those words, Jaya felt very happy. Back in those days, Jaya used to perform Vaibhava Lakshmi Pooja on Friday's. Since she had to do Udhyapan ceremony, she skipped Aarati on that day, which happened to be a Thursday. Here at Sai Nilayam, Prasanna suddenly got up in the middle of Aarati, and went to Jaya's house and said "Jaya, Baba is coming to your house". She did not what to do or how to respond. Suddenly Baba entered the house, and opened the puja room and said, "During evening Aarati around 6PM, do not keep the puja room closed. Seeing Baba in his physical form that too in her house, left her completely frozen in both body and mind, so she simply acknowledged his instructions mentally.

Before the consecration of Baba's statue, she used to offer buttermilk and chapatti as Naivedyam to Baba's photo every day. For confirming her faith and devotion, Baba asked her for buttermilk, and that too he specified that it must be prepared in the same fashion as it is done in Sai Nilayam. She obliged and quickly prepared savoury buttermilk and offered it to Baba with great reverence. Just as she was handing him the glass, her nostrils came alive from the fragrant notes of Udi, and this beautiful fragrance permeated the entire house, but she couldn't see any Udi anywhere. Baba drank the buttermilk and as he handed the glass back to her, the puja room was suddenly, and

inexplicably, covered by a shower of Udi, and Baba disappeared. She couldn't believe her eyes. None of her five senses could comprehend what had happened. Her heart was filled by an overwhelming sense of gratitude, and tears of love, joy and devotion ran down both cheeks in incessant streams. She was closed her eyes and silently thanked Baba for blessing her so graciously and fulfilling her heart's desire. This was a day which she would never forget for the rest of her life!

Then Baba asked her to perform SAI VRATHAM, and gave her the following message," NANNU NAMMU, BHARAM NAAPAI VEYANDI, CHINTHAVALADHU". These messages had were of very personal significance to her. One Thursday while the Kakad Aarati was going and everybody was singing the Aarati. Srinivas and his daughter Deepthi, were sitting in the
Puja room. He was telling something to Deepthi with great love and affection. When Jaya saw this interaction, she was reminded of her father who had passed away, and was no longer with her. Then she thought in her mind "No matter how grown up a daughter may become, In the eyes of her father, she would always remain a baby girl." She felt sad, for she could no longer have such exchanges with her father.

No sooner did this thought cross her mind, Prasanna called her into the master bedroom and asked her to read the message written by Baba in the Udi. "JAYA THALLI, VAARAM ROJULU NAAKU SNANAM (ABHISHEKAM), VASTHRANI KAPPI, NEYYI THO DEEPAM VELIGINCHU,NEE VENTA NENU VUNTANU". (Jaya for one week, perform abhishekam, dress me and light lamps with ghee. I will stand in your father's place and I will always be there for you.) Words cannot describe the happiness that shone in Jaya's eyes after reading this message. Even in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, Baba said on several occasions, "If I give a word, I keep it even if it means having to die!"

From that day onwards, Jaya found a new strength within herself. Her faith in Baba became so strong, that irrespective of the problems she would face she would never share it with another soul. This was because she had firm belief that Baba would always take care of her.
Whenever a difficulty would arise, she would sit down in front of Baba's Paadukas, and pray that Baba give her enormous strength which would allow her to brave the difficulty. Her faith in Baba grew stronger by several manifold, and she would never share her difficulties with anyone because if one has God behind him, then there is no dearth for anything nor fear of anything, for Baba is Antaryami and he knows every passing thought in our minds! Her questions would be answered by Baba through his acceptance of the Naivedyam offered to him.

Sometime after these incidents, Jaya's husband got transferred to Gujarat. They were not interested in relocating to Gujrat, especially her husband! Since he didn't want to relocate to Gujrat, he decided to quit his job. Jaya panicked because around the same time, they had purchased a house for around Rs. 70,00,000 and as such they were bound to pay the home loan along with the interest on towards it. She thought resigning from his job would be an unwise thing. She was terrified of the consequences, and fears and worries manifested in the form of silent tears rolling down her cheeks. That day during the Shej Aarati, only Srinivas Prasanna and Jaya were present. She returned for participating in the Madhyana Aarati. On that particular day Sai Nilayam devotees had just finished making nine saptahs of the Satcharitra. This they had begun on March 14th, 2013 per Baba's instructions. Baba asked Jaya to repeat the 8th saptah once again, and that she was to offer Naivedyam to him. Baba promised that upon completion, it would bring about a change in her husband.

So she earnestly completed another reading of the Sri Sai Satcharitra, after which she prepared food and offered it to Baba. Due to Baba's grace, the transfer to Gujrat suddenly got changed to Srikakulam, which is about 90kms away from Visakhapatnam. However her husband ended up resigning from his job due to personal reasons. They did not follow Baba's message, however they

didn't want to miss out on taking part in the various programmes that are conducted at Sai Nilayam. Baba accepted their devotion, and blessed them generously.
Baba gave them the same income from their new house as they used to earn when her husband was working. With the blessings of Baba and the wonderful bonding with Prasanna and Srinivas, they are really happy and doing well.

Baba will always be there for all the devotees who leave their burden with him and place their entire trust in him. While it is not easy to do so, devotees must, whenever possible, try to inculcate the habit of being happy with whatever they have and not come to Baba for the fulfilment of their trivial material wishes. Devotees must let go of all their desires and whole heartedly worship and meditate on Baba's beautiful form with the confidence that Baba pervades the entire universe and that he always takes care of all his devotees' needs. For even Jesus Christ said in the Bible, "*Seek Ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*", meaning – "Strive to attain God first, all the worldly pleasures and honours shall come to you even without asking"

Let us have Shraddha and Saburi and pray to Baba with sincere devotion.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 45

IMPORTANCE OF PANCHAMRUTALU

This chapter describes the importance of Pancha-Amrutalu (Five nectars) as told by Sri Sai Baba himself.

While performing puja and serving God, one of the most important part of the ritual is the Abhishekham. Abhishekham refers to bathing the Deity using consecrated water. Pancha-Amrutam refers to the combination of Milk, Curd, Ghee, Honey and Sugar mixed together. Performing Abhishekham using Pancha-Amrutalu is considered to be very holy. In Sai Nilayam, Pancha-Amrutha Abhishekham was performed on a regular basis, and was later distributed among devotees as teertham (or blessed water).

On one occasion, Baba expounded the importance of performing Pancha-Amrutam Abhishekham. Baba said the following of the five constituents:

1. Milk: Just like milk, one must have a soul as that is pure and clean.

2. Curd: One's heart should be delectable like curd.

3. Ghee: One's behavior should be tasty like Ghee (clarified butter).

4. Honey: One's speech must be harmonious and pleasing to our senses.

5. Sugar: One's thoughts must be always be sweet like sugar.

Baba went on to say, if you maintain such purity of thought and lead a spiritual life, then I would accept water poured by you to be Pancha-Amrutam. Without an internal purity of thought and devotion, it doesn't matter even if you were to worship me with several buckets of Pancha-Amrutam. Thus Baba laid emphasis on how one should always encourage clean thoughts, for cleanliness is next to Godliness and, God dwells in the hearts of all!

Therefore all devotees must leave their past behind them, and thenceforth make conscious efforts to lead a well-balanced and spiritual life, all the while nurturing the qualities of Shraddha and Saburi in their hearts, and meditate on Baba's beautiful form. Purity of thought can be effected only by calming one's senses, which in turn is possible only by withdrawing the five senses from the outer world and focusing them on the inner soul. To arrive at this state of calmness and tranquillity, one has to consciously make Baba the only thought in their minds, and forever have his holy name on their lips.

One must be receptive to one's inner calling, and ignore everything that cause the senses to become restless. Remember that it is with great good fortune that one is born as a human being, and it is our only chance to pursue and realize God. After all the lifetimes of birth and death and suffering, do we still want to be slaves to the ungodly feelings like greediness, selfishness, repulsion and attractions towards others? How long do you want to carry on like this? Baba has so affectionately drawn us towards him, and is ever ready to take care of us, so let us with also try to bring about a transformation in ourselves, if we haven't already done so.

On several occasions, Baba spoke the universal truth that, if someone worships God but fails to garner the same love towards all life forms, such a worship is of no use. Over the years, people conveniently began placing the emphasis on the technicality of performing pujas while completely turning a deaf ear to the deeper significance behind them. Now a days you can find people, performing grand pujas in their house with great pomp, but the minute they step out of the house,

they can't get themselves to donate a single paisa in charity or feed the thirsty and hungry. Such outward display of spiritually does no good to anybody. In other words , any activity that is performed should be done so with mind and body, and one has to put the preaching of the scriptures into practice, and do this part towards making the society a better place. God is the very reason behind the very existence of the universe. All things living or otherwise, are an expression of the Lord Almighty. Thus if your spirituality and generosity is confined to the four walls of the puja room, you are indeed unfortunate. God permeates the entire universe, and he cannot be imprisoned in an inanimate idol made of stone. If this realization hasn't dawned in you, in vain is your life.

To realize this universal truth and see God in all beings, one must inculcate and practise Shraddha and Saburi in one's everyday lives. So that the purity in thought can be effected and our internal state of being can become as beautiful as the Pancha-Amrutam.

Like milk, which is very pure one must only entertain clean thoughts which are conducive to spiritual living. Qualities like selfishness and greediness which are driven by a craving for wishes which only provide a momentary gratification of the senses, only make us more restless and rob us of our peace of mind, and drag us lower and lower. God cannot live in a mind filled with evil thoughts. Only a clean and pure mind can enable one to realize and appreciate God.

The devotee's heart should always have affectionate, caring and soothing thoughts, and therefore have the same effect which the sight of tasty curd has! For thoughts translate to speech, one must always garner benevolent thoughts at all times.

One's behaviour should be like Ghee, in whose company everything acquires a more flavourful taste. Thus one must always be indifferent towards all people, and not have good feelings towards some but have hurtful feelings towards others. We must learn to see God in all beings, and therefore treat one and all with respect.

Words hurt more than physical abuse. Yet the same words give solace and comfort, more than any physical gift can ever give. Therefore it best to keep ones words to the bare minimum, and not indulge in mindless and unwanted banter. Therefore one's speech should be sweet like sugar.

Scientists have proved that the way we think not only affects our body and mind, but also greatly influences the surroundings. A smile is infectious, and we all know about it, and in a similar way a dull and gloomy person can ruin the day for everybody. Therefore one must make a conscious effort towards encouraging only good thoughts in the mind and think of none else but Sri Sai Baba. Thus we must try to develop pleasing personalities, just like honey which pleases the palate.

But how can an earnest devotee accomplish these things? BABA suggested two fool-proof tools. They are Shraddha and SABURI

Shraddha: This is nothing but a laser pointed focus. Depending upon how strong our Shraddha on GOD, GURU, MANTRA and TANTRA is, all the above mentioned qualities become so easy or so hard to attain. Baba's life is a time tested example for leading a simple yet purposeful life. So let us humbly follow his teachings and life and try to incorporate them in our daily lives. Slowly but surely, we will move closer and closer to God.

Saburi: Is nothing but a mountain like patience which is backed by immense faith. This Saburi, is the litmus test that separates true devotees from the rest. There are devotees who express unbounded love towards Baba only so long as their wishes are fulfilled, and become impatient and lose faith in Baba the minute things don't go their way. This is not Saburi. This is only a false display of devotion.

Those who have unlimited faith in Guru is God, will never crave for anything for they know full well that everything will be provided for by Baba, and that they have nothing to worry about.

Like it is mentioned in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, Shraddha and Saburi can ferry us across the ocean of mundane existence and take us to God. With Shraddha and Saburi, one can achieve everything and obtain everything that he/she desires of.

So let us attain purity of thought and worship Baba with pure love and devotion, and become his true devotees. For when such a devotee worships Baba with even water, it attain qualities which surpass even the best Pancha-Amrutam known to man!

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 46

QUALITIES OF SADGURU.

Every person born on this Earth wants to be happy in life. Everybody always want to lead a life that is full of comforts. This is so because they feel that these comforts are going to provide that happiness. But often one gets lost in this search for comforts, because these transitory and material comforts can never truly gratify the desires of man. Even the tastiest of dishes become unpalatable if eaten every day, the most fragrant of perfumes will those their charm and sheen if worn every day. In the end any quest that seeks to find an unparalled joy in short-lived materialistic comforts, will end up leaving the seeker in a more miserable place compared to where he/she was at the beginning of the quest. This is because the joys provided by temporary objects are like mirages in a desert, they almost never cause true happiness or satisfaction, but only give you a hope of such a satisfaction.

Thus when man gets tired of the short lived and transient comforts, it often leads to an internal mental struggle and discomfort, which finally leads him to question, what is true happiness? What can show me true happiness? What will let me soak in its everlasting joy? This then leads one question the very existence of the universe, why were we created , why is somebody the way he is, why are some people rich why are some people poor, why do so many people suffer every day, why isn't anybody truly happy, why are rich people also sad? What is the purpose of life? Is this confusion and lack of contentment, all we get for struggling all our lives?

Thus the person oscillates between total distress and complete chaos, and an understanding that everything he truly knows about everything is in fact nothing. This kindles within the seeker an intense desire to free himself from the shackles of this worldly existence. Finally this leads the seeker to find the company of saints or Holy Scriptures, which provide him/her with some degree of mental peace and happiness. It is at this point the first sign of realization takes birth in him that, true happiness lies within one's own heart, and that all else is only an illusion. At last he is able to conceive the truth that the external world or Maya, is nothing but a phenomenon which exists on account of the illusory power of the Lord Almighty. Everything in existence is nothing but a manifestation of the one infinite spirit or the conscious cosmic energy, which is often described as a brilliantly bright soft light that vibrates and emanates pure love, and those who soak in it experience bliss supreme!

But experiencing this light or Brahma is no child's play. Even the most intellectual people have failed on this path, for it is very easy to get lost in the intermediate attractions and such, which hinder one's growth and prevent him from reaching the final destination. It takes rigorous efforts by the seeker, and God's grace to attain this state of Samadhi. As mentioned in the Satcharitra, no one on his own can ever dream to attain this Brahma or bliss. It manifests itself only to the chosen ones, which is again on account of God's grace. But to us Guru is our only God, our only saviour, and our only guide. He can safely take us across all the hurdles and lead us to the final destination. Thus with God's grace, an earnest seeker who is ready both mentally and physically, finds himself in the company of a worthy Guru. This Guru alone can make us attain self-realization.

Getting the blessings of Sadguru, is again dependent upon the intensity of our desire to free ourselves, and based on our past store of merits. Several lifetimes can pass by in the blink of an eye, without once realizing the existence of this mundane world. No everyone can find a Sadguru, only a true seeker, who has completely annihilated his ego and body consciousness will find himself at the feet of the Sadguru.

More often than not, people are not willing to look beyond what is immediately visible to them. They do not want to put effort in eradicate the root cause of their difficulties, instead they are always searching for patch work solutions or an easy way out of their problems and troubles. Due to which they mindlessly ramble from church to temple to mosque to one self-proclaimed guru to another to chanting some mantra given by some fool . . . to what not. They take oaths or make vows, with the hopes of having their problems eradicated. While this may do them short term good, it doesn't really benefit them in any way spiritually, nor does it bring about a permanent change in them. Such individuals continue to suffer on account of their karma, and go on to question why everything happens to them and not anybody else.

But how does one identify a Sadhguru who can effect knowledge to dawn in ourselves? Although the fact remains that a devotee is automatically drawn to a Sadguru when his time comes, and that is possible only when the Sadhguru blesses him, still we will try to make a humble attempt at identifying the qualities of a Sadhguru, so that earnest devotees do not fall victims to charlatans, especially in an era where spirituality has become a billion dollar business!

So who is a Sadguru? According to the Sai Satcharitra, he who can dispel the darkness of ignorance or Agyan is called GURU. According to Vyakarana Shastra, GURU means "Heaviness". It means that the GURU can carry his disciples who have little to no knowledge. Since the SADGURU is nothing but God himself, the scriptures have quoted the following "**Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Devo Maheshwara Guru Sakshaat, Para Brahma, Tasmai Shri Guravay Namah"**

Only a true Sadguru, can save the devotee from the cycle of birth and death, and expand his consciousness and make him realize the true knowledge. Thought He lives in this world, and mingles with the others, He is ever engrossed in his Self, and always meditating on the True Brahma. Although he lives in this world, he is not of this world. Just like a drop of water that rests on the lotus leaf, the Sadguru is unattached to the world, and he makes realize the same, and enables us to live life to the fullest while never getting attached to anything.

Let us now touch upon the teachings of some great Gurus

1. Bhagwan Sri Ramana Maharishi: He always had limited clothing on his body and always said "I am not the body"

2. Paramahamsa Ramakrishna: He always said that the first step to practice spiritual knowledge is removing the quality of "ATTRACTION" from our minds.

3. SRI SRI SRI Chandrasekhar Saraswathi: He followed the Sanyasi dharma perfectly and set an example to all the people in the world.

Thus the following similarities can be found in their teachings:

1. Simple life

2. Control of senses.

3. Winning over Arishad Vargaalu completely.

4. I am not the body. I am the soul.

5. They were never into any establishment of trusts, or after anything monetary.

6. They were always filled with love and compassion for all life.

7. A simple passing away.

All these above-mentioned characteristics, taken birth on account of the spiritual perfection of all these Maha Avtaars. They neither inculcate within them nor do they ask for them. In the same way all the Maha Siddhis come to them naturally on account of their spiritual grandeur. Because for someone who has realized the ultimate truth, everything else comes to him naturally. Only one who has realized God, can lead the others to God. Therefore every sincere seeker should take refuge in the feet of a Sadguru, and reach the final destination.

Though the style of teachings of the different Gurus are different, the essential message remains the same. Therefore a devotee is free to seek that Guru who teachings align closely with his or her style and preferences. The Shastras say that, one should never find fault in his Guru or pose insincere questions, as that leads to further perdition of that person. Fortunately for us we have Sri Sai Baba who always loves and takes care of his devotees! All that we need to do is, incessantly chant Sai Naam in sleep and waking states!

Let us surrender our body, mind and soul at the feet of our Guru Sri Sai Baba, and leave all impure thoughts aside. Let us place our implicit faith and trust in him, and pray to him with pure love and devotion.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 48

EXPERIENCES OF SUDHA & SRINIVAS IN SAI NILAYAM

This chapter describes how Sudha and Srinivas received Baba's blessings in Sai Nilayam.

Srinivas and his family first came to Sai Nilayam on June 6th 2011 when they were introduced through their close friends Sunitha and Rathna. Right after entering Sai Nilayam, they felt a sense of peace and tranquillity descend over them. They whole heartedly considered Sai Nilayam to be their temple of worship, and a place that would enable them to learn and grow in all aspects of life. They performed Aksharabhyasam in Sai Nilayam, as a first step in the journey of Spirituality. Ever since, they have always been ardent devotees of Baba, and lay their entire trust in Baba's feet.

On June 6th when they arrived at Sai Nilayam, they brought with them ripe mangoes as an offering to Baba, and to their pleasant surprise Baba accepted their offering. This gave Sudha goose bumps, and she felt very happy! They came back to Sai Nilayam on a Thursday when Sunitha advised Sudha to seek Baba's blessings in securing a place for them to stay. Sudha acted accordingly, and within two days she found a beautiful house for her family to reside in! Till date they have been residing at the same house, which was secured on account of Baba's blessings. They visit Sai Nilayam every Thursday without fail and take Baba's darshan. With Baba's grace, they are leading a peaceful and happy life.

When Srinivas's mother built a new house in Adoni, Kurnool district, AP she invited them to attend the house warming ceremony. But Baba gave a message through Prasanna that under no circumstances were they to leave the city premises. They didn't know what to do, on one hand Srinivas didn't want to say no to his mother's invitation, at the same time he didn't want to go against Baba's words. When Sunitha heard about their plans, she asked them whether they had intimated Prasanna or not. They told they hadn't done so but they informed that they would let her know on the way to Adoni. Finally it was decided that they would pray to Baba and then begin their journey towards Adoni.

At 5am on June 2nd 2013 they set out on their journey by car. Around 9.30 am, when they reached Eluru, their car met with a major accident, and the car overturned and flipped over several times. By the time the car came to a halt, everybody except Sudha everybody else was unconscious and there was no telling how severely they were injured or if they were even alive. In great agony, Sudha cried, "Sainatha, Sainatha" and said either save us all and bring us back home safely, or else take us all to your abode. Our family cannot live without one another. Nearby people quickly gathered around the vehicle. The car was on auto-lock due to which Sudha couldn't unlock the vehicle, so the nearby people broke the car windows, and one by one pulled out all the members.

As they were going to a house warming ceremony, Srinivas had packed some valuable ornaments for Sudha to wear, but hadn't informed her of the same, and safely hid them underneath the car seat. He did this because their journey involved travelling through the jungles and he erred on the side of caution. After they were pulled out, one stranger walked up to Sudha and declared, "As you were headed to a happy ceremony, you might be carrying some valuables , so please put them with you and the rest of the items will be sent via the ambulance." Though Sudha was surprised at this stranger's knowledge of her family's travel plan, she told him that she doesn't know if anybody was carrying any valuables. Sudha was slipping into unconsciousness and slipping back out of it. This stranger reached out under the car seat, and pull out a small box wrapped in a newspaper. This box contained her jewellery which was packed by Srinivas earlier that day. Then this stranger went on to tie a cloth handkerchief to her forehead. Sudha didn't understand what was going on and she asked what has happened to me. He replied you were in a very terrible accident, and you are bleeding severely from your forehead.

After the ambulance arrived, they were are taken to the nearby Govt. hospital. After regaining consciousness at the hospital, Sudha reached out for her mobile and proceeded to call Sunitha and Uma, and informed them of the unfortunate accident that took place. As she didn't know Prasanna's number by heart, she couldn't inform her first. Then after making a second search of her hand bang, she found her number and told her about everything that took place. Prasanna told her not to worry even one bit, and told her she was meditating on Baba, and that everything would be taken care of. After which her phone immediately switched off.

That was the phone call from Sudha's mobile. Sunitha reached out to Sudha using another number, and asked Sudha not be tensed and added that they were all headed to the hospital.
Prasanna gave them Udi, and asked them to apply it to their foreheads. She assured that with Baba's grace everything would be fine, and there was no cause for concern. By the same evening, Sunitha arrived at the hospital. After applying Udi to their foreheads, she relayed everything which Prasanna had told her some time back.

Sudha silently prayed to BABA to give her the strength to take care of her family. She was a fiercely independent woman, and even though she had several stiches on her forehead, she further prayed that a situation shouldn't arise where she would be forced to be at the mercy of her friends or relatives for help. Because she didn't want to trouble anybody else. To her Baba was her everything, and she had firm faith that if Baba was with them, he would take care of everything.

Within fifteen days, they all recovered from their injuries and were back home. Baba asked them to take rest, and come back to Sai Nilayam to take darshan on Guru Pournima day. They were overjoyed seeing Baba's love and affection towards his devotees. Indeed it was Baba's blessings which gave them immense strength, both physical and mental. Baba's asking them to take his darshan further filled their hearts with joy, because they had been taking rest at home and were in no position to visit Sai Nilayam. But Baba's words gave them the strength and they happily returned to Sai Nilayam after nearly two months and worshipped him with great love.

On their marriage anniversary, they were made to perform Baba's Abhishekham. After the Abhishekham was over, Prasanna asked them to enter Dwarakamai and collect as much Udi as they wanted. Udi is your only medicine. Shankar's sister also accompanied the couple while entering Dwarakamai. When Srinivas was collecting the Udi from the floor, Udi from Baba's photo began falling onto his hands. This was the first time he had witness a miracle, and he froze like a stone and had goose bumps all over the body. This further confirmed his faith in Baba and ever since that day he never leaves the house without first applying Udi to his forehead. Today if the Sudha-Srinivas family is alive, it is only account of Baba's grace.

In 2013, when met with that unfortunate accident, their elder son was in his Xth standard, and was due to appear in his final exams. The doctor advised him bed rest for three months to ensure a complete recovery. Srinivas , Sudha and Uday were badly scarred from the accident, so Srinivas thought they should get plastic surgery done if they wanted to, after which he took a doctor's appointment through his friend. When Sunitha told Prasanna about the plastic surgery, she wasn't in favour of it. She told them that there was no need for any surgery and that Baba would bring everything back to normalcy. And so Baba brought all of them back to normality and the elder son also passed the final board exams with flying colours. He is now pursuing his intermediate education, and his sibling is performing well too.

Baba having anticipated that a deadly calamity was about to befall them, he advised them not to leave the city limits. But because they didn't pay heed to his warnings, they had to suffer the painful

whiplash dealt by karma. Still Baba didn't abandon their side, but saved them from imminent death, or even worse from a life time of disability. In the end all of this was nothing but Baba's miracle. If not how did the strange man know they were going on a happy occasion? How did he know about the valuables in the car? Furthermore how did he pin pointedly know that they were under the car seat? Even after such a deadly accident, and with blood gushing out of her forehead, how was Sudha able to stay conscious for such a long a time? Baba always is with those devotees who think of him day and night, and he always appears whenever the think of him. Baba promised in the Sai Satchartira that if a devotee prays to him with pure love and devotion, He would pull that earnest devotees even from the jaws of death! We believe that when Sudha cried out, "Sainatha, Sainatha" in despair and sought his refuge, Baba immediately appeared in the form of the strange man and rescued them. In the end all of this was nothing but Baba's miracle.

Baba will always be there when we call Him with love and devotion. So let us make it our second nature to continuously chant the holy Sai Naam every second of our life. Baba is our only saviour. Baba just wants Shraddha and Saburi from his devotees and nothing else. Sai Baba is the most compassionate of all Saints and Gods. Let us pray to him with pure love and devotion. He will then surely help us become successful in both spiritual and worldly endeavours.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 49

HANUMAN – THE ADVAITA GURU

This chapter describes the story Sri Hanuman as told by Sri Sai Baba in Sai Nilayam.

Sri Hanuman is called the Advaita Guru. But what does Advaita mean? Dvaita stands for duality. Hence Advaita means non-duality, or in other words, that which is not two. The underlying principle behind Advaita philosophy is the oneness of the entire universe, and the non-existence of everything else. The visible universe perceived by the five senses, is a cosmic delusion or Maya created by the power of God. This principle of Advaita is so esoteric and so cryptic, that no man or woman can ever comprehend its true meaning through the five senses or through the intellect.

The scriptures and Shastras finally go on to declare that no being who is in a state of dvaita can ever experience Advaita. Only those who evolve into a state of Advaita can understand what it truly is. Interested devotees are encouraged to read Chapter 39 in the English version of Sri Sai Satcharitra, where Baba delivers a beautiful discourse on what Advaita is, to Nanasaheb Chandorkar while interpreting Bhagvad Gita IV-34.

In simple terms, Advaita means absence of the duality between subject and object. In our wakeful consciousness we experience duality, and this is due to the perception of the reality which is based on the limited ability of five senses, the ego, the ignorance and the intellect. For the same reason, even though all that exists is the one infinite supreme cosmic consciousness, and everything else merges resonates with its vibrations, our limited perceptions deceive our reality and false lead to us to conclude that we are the body, and that we exist as separate entities different from all else.

This delusion and a perception of a separate existence is caused the ego and ignorance carried over from the innumerable births and deaths. So long as one does not attain salvation or moksha through self-realization, he or she will continue to be enslaved to the cycle of births and deaths, thereby be dictated and influenced by the laws of karma, and therefore being caught up in the delusion of the existence of duality or the pair of opposites like `good and bad`, `high and low` etc. Again readers are requested to study chapters 20 and 39 from Sri Sai Satcharitra which beautifully expounds on this principle.

Although it is beyond realms of human comprehension and the ability of words to describe the state of non-duality, a humble attempt will be made at trying to explain it. Advaita philosophy believes that Brahman is the one and only reality that exists, and else is merely an illusion, just like mirages in a desert. Just as perceiving a rope to be a snake under the shadow of darkness is nothing but an illusion, in the same way even the ignorant mind when accompanied by Ego assumes that it is different from the self, and that it is limited to its own body.

The Advaita philosophy also believes that Atman, the individual self, has no separate existence of its own. It is but a projection or reflection of Brahman in each being. A jiva is a soul deluled by egoism, desires, and other impurities and thereby experiences duality and separation from the true self. Brahman is real, but the world in which we live is a mere illusion. The existence of this illusion and its acceptance thereof, occurs only in our consciousness because of the activity of the mind and the senses. Since we totally depend upon them, we do not perceive Brahman, the ultimate reality, which is hidden inside everybody. When the outward going nature of senses are quieted and focused inwards towards the left, when the life force is withdrawn from the outward senses and drawn inward, and made silent through detachment, purity of thought and renunciation, only then can one see the Supreme Self hidden in all and attain liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. This is

self-realization or moksha. However it is impossible to attain Salvation without the blessings of a self-realized Sadguru like Sri Shirdi Sai Baba.

Now let us understand why Sri Hanuman is called an Advaita Guru. For those who wonder whether Sri Hanuman was a perfect celibate or not, the answer is – yes, he was. But why then did he wed Suvarchala, the daughter of Surya Deva? We shall soon know why.

All this clearly stated in Parasara Samhitha:

Hanuman is called Nava Vyakarana Pandit. The nava vyakaranams (also called vyakaranalu or sasthralu originated from the Damarukam of Lord Shiva. The holy vibrations or sounds, which emanated from the damarukam gave birth to the vyakaranams. The entire speech, culture, and everything we know of originated from the sounds of Lord Shiva's Damaru and manifested in the form of the nine vyakaranams. The one who has studied all the nine Vyakaranams is called a Nava Vyakarana Pandit. Sai Baba has told us that in the entire universe, the only God or Guru who has studied all the Nava Vyakaranams was Sri Rama Doota Hanuman. This is the reason he is referred to as Guruva, or Guru of Gurus.

To study the nava vyakaranams one has to experience Gruhastu Ashram, which is one of the four varnas or stages of life. Since Lord Hanuman was the only capable Brahmachari, all the Gods and Goddesses convinced that he to get married, only then he would be able to complete the study of the nava vakaranams. The Tri Murthy's i.e Brahma Vishnu and Maheshwar, prostrated before Surya Bhagvan (Sun God) and requested him to create a suitable bride from his light rays and endow her with great knowledge. She would wed Lord Hanuman.

Then Surya Bhagvan created Suvarchala. 'Su' means-great knowledge, 'Varchala' means -beautiful girl. When she grew up her father started searching for a suitable groom to get her married. Her condition was that she would only marry the person who does lust after her, and who will consider her his wife only for the purpose of performing yagnas and homams. But her father tells her that finding such a person would be especially hard. Finally it is suggested that Lord Hanuman would be the only suitable groom. But Hanuman does not agree to the wedding, when he comes to know that she was created by Surya Bhagvan, who was his Guru and therefore she would be like a daughter to him too.

But all the Gods manage to convince him to marry her so that he can enter the Gruhastu phase and thereby complete his study of the nava vyakaranams. Hanuman agrees to it and takes all the light into his heart and merges her with himself. That is how he married Suvarchala, after which he completed the study of the nine vyakaranams, and therefore became the master of Advaita. This is the reason, we find the following sloka in the Ashtothram: "Nava Vyakruthi Pandithaya Namah".

All this was conveyed by Sri Sai Baba on 11/9/2015 in Sai Nilayam.

Isn't it beautiful how Baba is always present in our lives, guiding us at every single step. Baba makes sure that the devotees understand the deeper significance of the various pujas and the mantras that are chanted, thereby enabling the devotees to have a profound spiritual experience, as opposed to making the ceremonies a matter of mere drill. By sincerely following Baba's advice and guidance, real knowledge will shine bright upon our intellect, and pure love will overflow from our hearts, and when we break free of all attachments and become dispassionate, with Baba's grace we will finally attain salvation and merge into himself, which is Sat Chit Anand, and reverberate in the ever new joy of Supreme Bliss.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 50
IMPORTANCE OF THE BRICK

This chapter describes the importance of a brick, which Baba held very dear to himself.

As mentioned in the Sri Satcharitra, Baba always had with one brick and he was very fond of it. Baba said that using the brick he meditated on the Self for a period of 12 years. The brick was his companion, his everything. The brick was always in the presence of Baba, and went wherever Baba went. When Baba slept he rested his head on the brick and when he was awake he rested his hand on the brick. In other words the brick never left Baba's company. He made sure that the brick was properly looked after. But why was Baba fond of something as inanimate as a brick? The answer to this has been dealt with at length in Chapter 44 of the Sri Sai Satcharitra. A second attempt will be made here towards understanding the brick's significance.

As described in the Sai Satcharitra, Baba came to Shirdi as a lad at the age of sixteen. He was often seen sitting under the Neem tree and be deeply engrossed in meditative bliss. He always kept to himself and never spoke to anyone unless spoken to. Divine brilliance radiated from him and it could be perceived by all life forms without any barriers. He was a personification of calmness and tranquillity. Countless people have attested to the fact that they forgot everything in his presence, and suddenly found their restless senses quieted. The resounding peace and unparalleled joy they experienced just by being in his presence was beyond description. Ailments vanished without trace just by his mere glance, the poor became rich by his grace, and the wicked became hale and hearty. Such was Baba's power. Baba was the very manifestation of God in a human form.

After first arriving in Shirdi as a young lad, Baba stayed there for a few years and then he disappeared without trace only to return to Shirdi with the marriage party of Chand Patil. Although no mention is made regarding the Baba's Gurudev, Acharya Ekkirala Bharadwaja's Book 'Sai Baba the Master' makes mention of Baba cryptically stating that his Gurudev was called **Sri Venkosa**. (In some places it is mentioned as Venkusa with a U.) Devotees are requested to take the time to read the aforementioned book, which sheds diamond like brilliant light on Baba's life history. Apart from the Sri Sai Satcharitra (The extensive version translated to English by Smt. Zarine, and the compact version translated by Sri NV Gunaji), this book is by far the most comprehensive and beautiful composition of Baba's life and miracles. He compiled the book over a period of eighteen long years.

Where Baba disappeared between his stay is Shirdi, will remain a mystery but some devotees believe that he was in the presence of his Gurudev for gaining mastery over the Shastras. Baba's intelligence was beyond this world, so he was able to quickly grasp all the Vedas and Shastras, and assimilate their essence without making any effort. Though Baba was God himself, he took human form only for the sake of his devotees and to set an example that once must whole heartedly discharge his worldly duties while not growing attached to the fruit of his actions, and never losing focus of the end goal of Self Realization.

What religion Baba belonged to, none ever knew. Being an incarnation of God, he was not subject to the trivial man made boundaries of religious bias and discrimination. He never identified himself with his gross body or existence, which endeared him to his Gurudev. The other disciples at the Ashram were full of ego and identified themselves with the body and considered themselves superior on account of their Brahmin ancestry. Their jealously got out of control and they plotted to kill Baba by bludgeoning him with a brick. So they threw a heavy brick at Baba with great force, and at that critical moment Gurudev Venkusa came in way of the brick resulting him to bleed terribly but saving Baba's life in the process. Thus the Master sacrificed his life for his saving his disciples. Baba's Gurudev's blood drenched the brick. Baba was given the brick by his Gurudev and was asked to

meditate on it and protect it with his life. "So long as the brick is with you unharmed, our bond shall remain intact. The day it is broken will signal that the end is not far away".

His Holiness Baba immediately said, "This shows, that the saints always suffer, to alleviate the sufferings of others. They have powers within themselves, but will not manifest their powers or utilize them for trivial reasons."

A fuller and more comprehensive account of this is described in Bhakta Sant Amrit written by Das Ganu Maharaj. It is as follows: “Baba in this characteristic way used to refer to the brick as ‘HER’. Although the brick was earthen she was baked well and was sturdy. The size of the brick was 1 foot in length, 9 inches wide and 3 inches in depth. He took care of her with love, affection and respect.

Mahalsapathi and Kashi Ram used to worship her and give holy bath daily and place her against the pillar adjacent to Dhuni to dry. At nights they would wrap it in a cloth and give her to BABA to place his head upon. BABA always said that his physical presence was associated with the brick and if the brick is broken he will also leave the physical realm. Once Nana Chandorkar asked BABA, “BABA you must use a more comfortable pillow and not a hard brick covered with cloth” and with folded hands he said "BABA do not place your head on a brick, I will furnish you with a pillow." BABA replied "NANA the value of the brick cannot be measured, even if you give me one lakh pillows.”

Baba then related the following touching story, “This brick is my Guru’s gift to me. My dear man, the value of her is greater than that of universe. This brick is the object of my meditation and also my meditation. This brick is my visible life. If it is broken, this body of mine will also die.

It was hurled at Baba with the object of His death. His Guru stopped it and suspended the brick in air for one and a half hour. Since the force of brick was destined to hit a head taking the life away from that body, the Sadguru Venkusa offered His own head to the force of the brick and sacrificed himself. To this Baba said, “This shows, that the saints always suffer, to relive others from their sufferings. They have powers within themselves, but will not manifest their powers.”

“My Sadguru gifted me with this brick.” said Sai Baba. “As my Guru’s feet (charan) touched this brick, I use her as a pillow.” He whose head is at Guru’s feet, His shadow or darkness is also precious. So i place my head at Guru’s feet.” Sai Baba continued, “Every morning Nana, you and others come and fall at my feet. I dedicate those prostrations to my Guru’s grace. Therefore it is proper for me, to place my head on this brick.

One day a boy was sweeping Dwarakamai, when Baba was not there. He lifted the brick and the brick slipped of his hands and broke. When Baba came to know of it, tears shed his eyes and he said “It is not the brick, but my fate that has broken into pieces. It was my lifelong companion and with it I always meditated on the self. So it is dear to me as my life, it has left me today.

This reason why Baba always had the brick as his companion Baba knew the past, present and future. He knew that death was approaching him and he would be sacrificing his life for Tatya’s ,but he never revealed it to anybody He gave his life for his devotee Tatya, for the word given to his mother that he will take care of Tatya after her demise. He left his physical body but he is always seeing and guiding us. The devotees’ experiences are a living testimony to this fact. As said in the Sai Satcharitra, “Saints incarnate on earth and interact with them like they were ordinary souls, They play laugh and cry with them, but are ever alert to their duties in this world.

We are truly fortunate to receive the blessings, love and affection of kindest of all Saints, Sri Sai Baba. Let us whole heartedly surrender ourselves to him and pray to him for deliverance.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 51
GRACE OF BABA ON DEVOTEES

This chapter recounts the stories of few more devotees whose wishes were fulfilled after receiving Baba's blessings in Sai Nilayam.

Rajeswari was a devotee of Baba. Her first introduction to Sai Nilayam was through her friend named Sujatha. Initially she did not come, but Sujatha kept insisting that she come and take Baba's darshan. Finally after two months she came to Sai Nilayam. After which she has never missed an opportunity to take Baba's at Sai Nilayam, and she has been doing it since more than five years now. The first time when she came to Sai Nilayam, she kept her bill books in Dwarakamai for seeking Baba's blessings. Later she wanted to take them home on the same day but Baba gave a message through Prasanna that Rajeswari was to collect the books on the next day. So she left the books and returned on the next day to collect them. On one page of the book, Baba wrote the word "SRI". It was a blessing from Baba to them.

Till date she has the paper with her. Later her wish regarding her son's marriage was fulfilled. She had been searching for a suitable bride to get her son married for nearly six months. But none of them were found to be suitable. One day she told Prasanna about it and Baba gave her a message "To perform ANAGHA DEVI puja in Sai Nilayam and then her son will get married within six months". They implicitly followed the message and performed the puja and that day the Goddess blessed them with eleven beautiful pearls.

After the puja was over, a few days later she came to Sai Nilayam with details of three prospective brides wanting to show them to Prasanna. After darshan she thought of talking to Prasanna, but before that Prasanna herself asked her "You brought the bio data of three probable brides, the marriage will happen". They saw all the three proposals. Then they asked Prasanna to decide on which proposal to accept, if the bride's families gets back to them. Prasanna told them to accept the proposition of first family that reaches out to them first. Few days later on one Thursday Rajeswari was at Sai Nilayam. That day Prasanna told her that she will get a reply from one among the three prospective brides, so she requested that Rajeswari return home immediately.

As told by Prasanna that day they called and asked them to come to Guntur for further talks and the marriage was finally fixed. To add to their joy, the bride's family also turned out to be devotees of Baba. How wonderful are Baba's Leelas! Within six months, her son got married.

Rajeswari's father obtained the documents of a land which has been in conflict and litigation, since the last forty years. The land didn't have proper documentation and it had a lot of problems. She requested her father to leave it and not to fight over it. She also mentioned about this case to Prasanna, and requested that she speak to her father and persuade him to forget about the land. This happened about two years ago. Prasanna told her that they would get the land. On 11/12/2015 they managed to obtain all the proper documents of the land after struggling for nearly forty years. With Baba's grace, the issue was finally resolved.

It was all possible only on account of the blessings and grace of Baba, and the faith and trust that they had place in Baba's feet.

The second story concerns a devotee named Sravanthi. She came to Sai Nilayam and with the blessings of Baba, she got married. When she first visited Sai Nilayam Baba gave a message that "she was to attend the Kakad Aarati for a few weeks. She came for 4 weeks and later she stopped coming". Later she went to many other places of worship before finally returning to Sai Nilayam. Then Baba gave her the following message "to perform ANAGHA DEVI puja for four consecutive

weeks". She asked what if there is a break due to circumstances not within her control, and then Prasanna assured her that there will not be any discontinuity because this was Baba's instruction!
She dutifully performed the puja, soon after which she got married, and later had a cute baby too. Later Baba helped her to come out of a variety of problems that she got entangled herself into. This is how Baba always protects us. Even if we deviate from his instructions and tread on the wrong path, Baba will still embrace us lovingly and forgive all our mistakes. He will always be there for his devotees. Let us pray with love and devotion to this all knowing and all-pervading Sadguru Sri Shirdi Sai Baba.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 52
EXPERIENCES OF TEJA & FAMILY AT SAI NILAYAM

This chapter describes how Teja first came to Sai Nilayam, and later how he received Baba's blessings.

At first, Teja used to worship Baba in the same way he would worship the other deities in the Puja Room. But after coming to Sai Nilayam he became a staunch devotee of Baba, and began worshipping Baba and seeing all other deities in Baba's image. It was during the Dusseshra October 2012 when Teja first visited Sai Nilayam. At that point in time, his father-in-law happened to visit GVMC (Greater Visakha Municipal Corporation) on some official work when he met one, Chinna Sreenu, who told him about Baba's divine miracles that were taking place at Sai Nilayam, and how devotees experienced a beautiful calmness and peace of mind at Sai Nilayam.

It was Indira, Teja's wife who first went along with her parents to Sai Nilayam during Dusseshra celebrations. They took darshan of Baba and told Prasanna about how they were unable to have children. Indira previously had three abortions and they were worried if she would ever hold a baby in her hands. Prasanna asked both husband and wife to come and take darshan. Indira and Teja went to Sai Nilayam, and also brought with them a box of rice to worship Baba's Padukas with. They worshipped Baba, poured the rice over the Padukas and sat praying before Baba and Anagha Devi.

Dattatreya Swami's idol wasn't present in the temple at that point in time. Shortly afterwards, Baba gave a message that by next year they will be blessed with a child and they were visit regularly and take darshan. Prasanna also told them to chant Anagha Devi mantra 11 times every day for the next 41 days. They started chanting it regularly, and after 2 weeks Teja had to go to Noida on company business. He left his wife at his mother's place and left. But there was no break in chanting, as he was doing it from Noida, and Indira, from Hyderabad.

After the trip they returned to Vizag and took Baba's darshan on every Thursday. At the time when Teja and Indira were given the mantra, three other couples were also given the same mantra for chanting. All couples there had come seeking Baba's blessings for having children. After the said period was over, the other three couples were pregnant with a baby, but not Indira and Teja. Prasanna asked them if they had conceived, they said no. Then Teja told Prasanna that he was in Noida and she was in Hyderabad when they were chanting the mantra. Prasanna told them that they deviated from the message, which was for them to chant the mantra together. She asked them not to worry, and place their complete trust in Baba.

In the meantime Teja's younger brother's was betrothed to Indira's sister, and the marriage was scheduled for February 14th 2013. Around 25th January 2013, they had to go to Hyderabad for distributing the wedding card & other things. It was then that Indira confirmed that she had conceived. They thought they would get her checked after returning to Vizag. So after wrapping up the work in Hyderabad they came back to Vizag and visited the hospital. The doctor confirmed that she was pregnant. The doctor prescribed an injection to address certain issues. They also informed Prasanna about this & Prasanna asked them to wait until Baba's next message, and further suggested that Indira take complete rest.

They had invited Prasanna and Srinivas to the wedding. Prasanna asked them to come to Sai Nilayam on February 14th 2013. They were quite busy on that day, and Indira was feeling nauseous the entire

day, and frequently throwing up. Still they took out some time and went to Sai Nilayam. When they were informed of Baba's message, it came as a surprise to them. As per Baba's instructions, Indira was to take complete bed rest for next five months. They weren't sure what to do, because it was the day of the wedding, and they reception was being held less than a week after the wedding.

Baba's message meant that she could not travel anywhere. Baba was testing their faith in him. Although it was a tough decision to make, they bowed down to Baba's and whole heartedly decided to proceed with Baba's instructions. Teja left Indira in his mother's care and swiftly proceeded to attend to the other things. After the wedding and reception he came back to Vizag and visited Sai Nilayam on every Thursday. Prasanna advised Teja to take an oath that on completion of the 3rd month and the 7th month he would donate towards annadhanam.

As the 8th week was approaching they were much tensed but with Baba's blessings there were no complications, and everything seemed fine. He fulfilled his oath of donating towards annadhanam at Sai Nilayam. Meanwhile at Sai Nilayam, Baba gave a message that everybody was to do Sri Sai Satcharitra Parayana for 9 weeks. This was a beautiful moment for Teja, for he had never laid his hands upon the holy book. His office hours were between 7.00 am to 7.00 pm. On Thursdays he used to go to Sai Nilayam at 7.30 PM after almost all devotees left. As per Baba's instructions, they were to start the Parayana on a Thursday and complete in by the following Wednesday. After which they were to donate towards Annadaanam for 11 individuals.

Seasoned devotees know how challenging completing a Parayana within seven days can be, especially to a first timer who was working 12 hours a day and whose only free time began at 7:30pm. On the first day, after coming back from Sai Nilayam and after purchasing the correct book, he started reading it at about 9.00 PM. By 12.00 PM he could only complete 4 chapters on day 1. On account of his hectic schedule, the backlog of chapters would keep accumulating till Sunday. On Sunday, he would make up for it. With Baba's blessings he finished the 1st week's Parayana, and on Wednesday he visited Sai Nilayam for darshan and also for donating towards annadhanam.

This continued for 5 weeks successfully, after 5th week the bad news came that his Uncle (Father's brother) passed away. So he was not supposed to do Parayana or visit Sai Nilayam for the next 11 days. After completing eleven days, he restarted the Parayana and completed the remaining weeks successfully. After reading Satcharitra, he came to know about many previously unknown facts about Baba and the beautiful way in which he taught his devotees spirituality with real life and simple examples.

On the first day of Parayana, Indira had a dream that they were talking to Baba over a phone and he told Indira, "Why are you in a hurry Indira, I am coming to you we shall speak then, at leisure!) Ever since this dream, she thought that she would be delivering a baby boy. After she completed 7th month Teja again fulfilled his oath of donating towards annadhanam programmes at Sai Nilayam. It was Dusseshra of October 2013, and Indira was 9 months into her pregnancy without any major issues. She was admitted to the hospital, and on October 3rd 2013 she delivered a beautiful baby girl. He immediately called Prasanna straight from hospital and shared the good news with her, and Prasanna told that they are blessed with a Goddess! They were very happy and that the Goddess herself graced their house in the form of their child. They named her *ANAGHA SIRI SAI TANVI*.

As per Baba's message they were blessed with a child by Dusseshra. Indira followed Baba's instructions and took 5 month bed rest which resulted in delivery of a healthy child and there were no post pregnancy complications. After this their faith and belief in Baba grew stronger. They realized how often they keep pestering Baba for fulfilment of their materialistic desires, so they

decided that they wouldn't ask Baba of anything unless it was extremely important. Instead they decided to only seek Baba's blessings.

Baba knows everything about his devotees, so what is the point of asking him separately for one thing after another? He knows all our needs and desires, and he will fulfil them. So let devotees not worry about trivial worldly wishes and desires. Let the devotees surrender their ego and desires at the feet of Baba, and place their entire trust in him. After naming their daughter, they brought her to Sai Nilayam and she was put in the Uyyala (Baba's Cradle).

When Siri turned 6th months old, Teja received a good job offer in Hyderabad with a pay that was 45% higher compared to his current job. Prasanna and Srinivas asked them to go ahead with the job change. Also after shifting to Hyderabad he and his brother together bought a car. Thus Baba blessed them with prosperity, both spiritual and material, and with since the Goddess herself was born to them, all their monetary needs are being very well taken care of too. They therefore consider themselves blessed.

Teja was thinking about Indira's dream about the baby boy, and wondered why it hadn't come true. But again thought they might be blessed with a baby boy in the future, and Baba himself would be coming home to them. Within one month of moving to Hyderabad, Indira was pregnant with their second child. On the 15th of February 2015, Baba blessed them with a handsome baby boy. Thus Baba's words in Indira's dream came true. They named him *BALAJI SUBRAMNAYA BHANU SAI TANISH*. Before returning to Hyderabad, they went to Sai Nilayam with the new born and put him too in the Uyyala Baba Cradle. They are very happy and content that Baba has given them two precious gifts of life, and require nothing more from Baba.

Teja conveys his best regards to Chinna Sreenu for showing him Sai Nilayam, Srinivas Sastry and Prasanna for being the guiding light and always being there for them. He also thanks the care taker Lakshmi, who always waited until Teja showed up and took Baba's darshan, even on occasions when Prasanna and Srinivas were out of Station. Due to her, he never missed Baba's darshan on Thursdays.

Baba bless her and all of us as well. Baba you are the devotees' sole protector and the creator of the universe. Baba is the Para-Brahma-Swaroopam, nothing is impossible for him. So let us place our complete trust in him, and let our love for him be unbounded and limitless. We are blessed and fortunate to have receive his messages and teachings through real life examples. Let us pray that we merge into Him and become one with Him, and realize the ultimate truth.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 53
EXPERIENCES OF KRISHNA PRASAD

This chapter narrates the story of how Krishna Prasad received Baba's blessings.

Krishna Prasad has been a Baba devotee since 1977 and his grandfather Ramalinga Sastry would frequently visit Shirdi as early as 1930 and stay there for 3-4 months at a time in the Sakkori Ashram. Krishna Prasad's mother was also a devotee of Baba and she used to take him to Shirdi whenever possible. Back in those days the number of devotees flocking to Shirdi was rapidly increasing, but was by no means comparable to the swarms of bhaktas who flood Shirdi today. As such devotees had the opportunity to participate in Seva Programs. Whenever Krishna and his parents would visit Shirdi, they would wake up early in the morning and sweep the Samadhi Mandir premises.

On certain occasions, they even had the good fortune of touching Baba's beautiful life like marble statue which adorned the Samadhi Mandir, along with his tomb or Samadhi. After performing Baba's Abhishekham with scented water, the temple priests would sometimes pour this into the hands of Krishna, his mother and others who were present. He fondly remembers all these childhood memories which he experienced in his mother's presence. He missed the many miracles of Baba in 1998 that were taking place at Sai Nilayam.

Let us see how Krishna Prasad came to Sai Nilayam. It all started because of Srinivas Sastry who was his colleague from 1987 to 1998 in GLAXO. After he left GLAXO, they couldn't meet again. From the year 2008 Krishna Prasad used to visit Vizag, once every two or three months. He used to stay in the Ratna lodge near Leela Mahal Theatre. After work, he used to go to various temples. In 2013 he came to know that Srinivas Sastry was staying in Vizag but he did not know his residential address.

Krishna Prasad used to think, it would have been nice if any Baba temple was nearby as he was devotee of Baba. Next day he was having ginger tea when he saw Srinivas Sastry standing just five feet way near a departmental store. He was overjoyed to see his old friend. They met each other and felt very happy. They exchanged their mobile numbers. Next day Srinivas Sastry went to the hotel where Krishna Prasad was staying and told him about Sai Nilayam. As he listened to Srinivas narrate about the various miracles that were taking place at Sai Nilayam, it rekindled his childhood memories of Baba. Being a devotee of Baba since the early 1960s he desired to go and take darshan in Sai Nilayam. After visiting Sai Nilayam he was even more thrilled to hear about the countless miracles that were taking place at Sai Nilayam.

During Guru Purnima of 2013, Baba asked him to do Nine Parayana readings of the Sai Satcharitra, and One Parayana reading of the Sri Guru Charitra. He returned to Hyderabad and started the Parayana of both Sai Satcharitra and Sri Guru Charitra also. Upon completion Krishna Prasad came to Vizag as per Baba's instructions. After reaching Vizag Srinivas Sastry called him and asked him to come to Sai Nilayam and stay there. But Krishna Prasad felt a little shy as it was the first time, but as Srinivas insisted he agreed. By the time he reached Sai Nilayam, it was a bustling with activity, and the Guru Purnima preparations were in full swing.

Yugandhar said that Sai Nilayam was the holy temple, and Krishna Prasad should consider himself blessed for having the opportunity to stay there. Krishna was busy completing his Parayana and after completion, he went into Karthik's room where he and Srinivas engaged in casual banter. Then Prasanna called him and told him that Baba had given him a message and he was enter the Pooja room for the same. Then Srinivas Sastry and Krishna went inside the puja room. He went into the Pooja room and found that sandal powder and Tulasi powder was present around all the Idols. It was about 1pm when the entire room was suddenly engulfed by a delicate and enchanting

fragrance. The message in the Pooja room was "KRISHNA NIKU JAYAM (Krishna, Victory be unto you)" and that changed his life forever.

These words of courage from Baba gave him the much needed strength. During Dusseshra celebrations, Krishna went along with his wife and daughter to Sai Nilayam. Baba gave a message asking his daughter to perform the KATHYAYANI VRATHAM. She performed it and Baba blessed her saying she would be married in six months. Baba's words turned out to be true, verbatim. She got married during May of 2014. The newly-wed couple went and sought Baba's blessings.

Once Krishna Prasad was sitting in front of Baba when he found himself suddenly overcome by a feeling of composing his own mantra and the words just flowed:

OM SRI SAINADHAYA VIDMAHE
SRI DATTATREYA DHIMAYI
THANNO SRI ANAGHA DEVI PRACHODAYAAT

If you genuinely pray for something then Baba about definitely answer that prayer. Krishna Prasad was praying for his job and his daughter's further education. Then Baba gave a message saying "MARRIAGE IS MOST IMPORTANT IN LIFE" and enabled his daughter to get married. When he prayed regarding his wife's deteriorating health, Baba instructed through Prasanna "Forget old things and eat Tulasi daily for 41 consecutive days and you will regain your health".

Such is Baba's miracle. The more earnest is a devotee in seeking Baba, the sooner Baba fulfils his wishes. Although he was a Baba devotee since the 1970's and even though he was frequently visiting Vizag every now and then since 2008, he just didn't have the opportunity to take Baba's darshan at Sai Nilayam until 2013. As highlighted in the Sri Sai Sat Charitra, without Baba's blessings no one can on his own accord visit Baba. A person gains the company Saints on account of his great good fortune resulting from his previous good karma. Only when Baba blesses a devotee, do spiritual thoughts arise in his mind and is magnetically drawn towards Baba. When Baba calls a devotee, the entire universe comes together for making it happen. Otherwise how did Krishna Prasad out of the blue have the chance encounter of running into Srinivas? The odds of such an event are very rare.

It was Baba's grace that enabled that fruitful encounter, which finally drew him into the folds of Baba's love and grace at Sai Nilayam. It was His grace that enabled Krishna Prasad and his family to go from – not knowing about Sai Nilayam to participating in three Guru Purnima celebrations. Once again Baba stayed true to his promise given in Sri Sai Satcharitra, "I draw my devotee to me, like a sparrow with a thread tied to its feet from even across the seven seas." The readers are request to drop all their evil thoughts and tendencies, completely surrender their ego and haughtiness at Baba's feet, and completely dedicate their heart and soul in his service. Let the readers renounce their worldly desires, whims and short lived fantasies, and fill their hearts with love for Baba and seek his blessings. Let them meditate on
Baba's beautiful form day and night, and let them perpetually chant Baba's holy name. Soon their bad karma and good karma would both get destroyed by Baba's grace and finally become free.

Baba has once again proved through Krishna Prasad's example that Baba would fulfil the righteous desires of devotees. Let us sincerely pray to Baba and seek his blessings.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 54

SATSANG

This chapter highlights the significance and importance of one's presence in a Satsang.

But what does Satsang mean? Satsang is a Sanskrit word which is derived by combining the words *Sat* with *Sang*. It is used in the context of spirituality.

- `Sat` stands for 'existence', 'being (verb)' 'essence' ,'reality' – that which is ultimate and unchanging.
- `Sang` stands for 'company', 'in association ', 'gathering'

Thus Satsang can be most accurately translated to "a fellowship of truth" or "a gathering of individuals in pursuit of the ultimate truth". Satsang enables the sincere devotee or seeker to deepen his or her spiritual experience through immersion in the magical divine magnetism that emanates from such gatherings thereby making it possible to have a deep communion with God. Only a Sadguru can truly bring together a group of such devotees and enable the existence of Satsangs where on account of his blessings, the participants rejoice in the glory of the Guru and soak themselves in unbounded waterfalls of spiritual bliss allowing them to make swift progress on the path of spirituality.

While this may sound esoteric to individuals who haven't had the opportunity to experience the many inexplicable joys of just being present at a Satsang, those who have experienced this can definitely attest to the veracity of the above statement. Although an individual may by his own accord make great spiritual progress, often such expeditions tend to dry the individual of all love and compassion thereby making the whole journey a mere formality without any sense of joy or gratification. Nothing compares to Love. Love is the only truth, Love is the only existence, and Love is the true nature of God, before love everything else becomes insignificant. A life without love is meaningless. No experience is complete without love. Only a Satsang allows one to drown in the blissful waves of positive energy and love.

Baba has always loved those who chanted the name of God. During Ram Navami festival, Radhakrishnamai would lead the Naam Saptah, i.e. singing the glory of God's name continuously for seven days. God is present where there is love and sincerity. A Satsang provides us with exactly that. When hundreds of people join together and lovingly call God, sing his praise and immerse themselves in the hymns and tunes of the beautiful bhajans, it makes them effortlessly forget their body and limited existence and allows them to just exist and experience and live in that moment. In the process it gives them glimpses of the infinite divinity which is nothing but Sat-Chit-Anand (Everlasting unchanging bliss).

Participation in a Satsang causes the purification of the mind body and soul. Those few hours that you spend at a Satsang, will pacify your restless mind, remove all worry, expand your consciousness and finally brings you closer to God.In a Satsang, the menial distinctions and discriminations based on caste creed race religion do not exist. The ego, whose presence is so profoundly felt on the human level of existence, ceases to exist on the higher realms of existence. Only through whole hearted participation in Satsangs can one hope to glance at and experience these higher levels of existence. Pujya Acharya Sri Ekkirala Bharadwaja's book 'Sai Baba The Master' documents some of the most detailed, descriptive and some of the most beautiful experiences felt during Satsangs. Interested readers are encouraged to certainly read that book.

Baba has said on many occasions, that chanting God's name is the surest way of attaining salvation or moksha. Just the way two flames merge into a bigger flame, just the way two drops of water

coalesce into one larger drop of water, and just the way billions of drops of water create the oceans, in a similar way when several people join together to perform Satsang every participant's whole being can be felt resonating with God's divine love. Every single day, God answers every individual's never ending prayers and supplications, imagine the million boons that God would bless you with when you pray together in a group. By participating in a Satsang, the prayer from the lips of a hundred voices pleases God like no other, and brings him closer and closer to you.

But how does Satsang effect the purification of mind body and soul? In Satsangs, beautiful bhajans glorifying the grandeur of God are sung, mantras are chanted with equal fervour. All these are nothing but divine vibrations. If you were to think about it, from the tiniest atom, to the millions of galaxies sprawling in the endless expanse of the universe, are all in constant motion or vibration. Some vibrations are so small that we fail to register their existence, and other vibrations are so mighty that we fail to register their existence on account of our short lives in comparison to the infinite cosmic scale. In other words you experience and perception of reality are based on the level of your existence and understanding. Mantras and Bhajans are word of God, and as such resonate with the divine frequencies which clear your mind of all the clutter, develop a distaste for worldly joys and finally cause dispassion to descend upon you. Those who are sensitive enough with an expanded consciousness can understand that the whole universe reverberates and resonates with the sound of Om. Thus by taking part in Satsangs, you lose your ego and make great spiritual progress. Satsangs make realize the truth and fill you with joy, and make you want to become one with it.

Happiness and Joy are infectious, only when one is happy within can he be happy without. In Satsangs divine joy permeates the whole environment and makes every cell in our body vibrate with this happiness. When we are happy, all the toxins get cleansed. As you participate in more and more Satsangs, happier you become, both - inside and outside, and groups of such happy people make the society a better place to live in. At the end of the day, every individual aspires for peace of mind and happiness.

But most people waste away lifetimes searching for happiness outside in the transient world, only to become more sad and dejected. Satsangs touch the very essence of your being, and enable you to have a deep and personal relationship with God. When you close your eyes and sit in meditation and go deeper and deeper within yourself, you will finally realize that behind the restless waves of anxiety lives an ocean of tranquillity and that the truth was within you all along. Suddenly you begin to realize and make sense of all the scriptures which have always said that you ought to look within yourself, not elsewhere. But to have such a realization, pacification of the senses is required, and one can whole heartedly follow this path only if he or she has had that deep personal experience. As you keep taking part in more and more Satsangs, you will find a marked difference in your persona and along with improvement in the quality of life which is devoid of tensions and worries.

Every human being is endowed with three qualities or gunas, namely Rajas, Tamas and Sattvic. Sattvic qualities encourage benevolent thoughts, Rajas qualities result in craving for sensual pleasures and cater to the lowest of human needs. No one in a Rajas state of mind can ever climb the ladder of spirituality. Thoughts of spirituality do not arise in such a person's mind, and even if you were to forcefully bring such a person to a Satsang, he will only feel restless and like a lotus leaf fail to capture and savour the nectar like water. Only through conscious power of will and by assiduously chanting God's name can one free himself from the clutches of Rajas. A person who overly indulges in toxic drinks, unhealthy food and is unrestricted in fulfilling his bodily desires can never of dream of salvation. Such a person is not welcome into the temple of God.

But blessings of Baba can make a dumb man talk, make a lame man walk, and enable a blind man to see the light of day. Every Satsang that genuinely performs bhajans, Bhagwan-Naamsmaran, meditation or dhyanam, will surely experience the presence of God. When the devotee is sincere and earnest in his efforts of finding God, He Himself arranges for such a devotee to be magnetically drawn towards the loving folds of a Satsang. The proof of a spirituality in a Satsang can be ascertained by the number of joyous and passionately dispassionate yet compassionate individuals that constitute the Satsang. A superficial display of spirituality has a fleeting impact on the devotees, as such it almost never draws the earnest seekers. On the other hand, true joy cannot be hidden, a Satsang graced by God, will be overflowing with Joy, and spreading it in all directions, and it automatically draws like-minded individuals into its folds.

Fortunately for us, we have the Sai Nilayam Satsang! During the various Bhajans and japas conducted at Sai Nilayam, the air can be felt pulsating with Baba's celestial being. As the bhajans draw closer and closer to a conclusion, people can be seen experiencing and drowning in throes of transcendental ecstasy with tears of joy flowing down their cheeks in incessant streams.

Baba has taken human form to elevate his devotees and make them walk in the right path. Through practical examples, Baba has been teaching all devotees of Sai Nilayam the right way to lead balanced way of life that facilitates rapid spiritual progress. Satsangs are the shortcuts to salvation. The more you become enamoured of God, the sooner you expand your consciousness and the sooner you will stop associating yourself with the bodily level of existence. Baba has told on countless occasions, that every human being is made in the image of God, which is nothing but Sat-Chit-Anand, and this is an ageless truth expounded by countless scriptures. Most importantly, Satsangs destroy one's evil Karma, thereby making his or her spiritual progress much swift and smooth.

Miracles, are only for those who have not experienced divinity. Miracles are for rekindling their long lost memories, and bringing them back onto the path of service and spirituality. At Sai Nilayam, Baba performed countless miracles for the sake of his devotees, only to increase their faith in God, and through difficulties readying the devotees for the spiritual expedition. By and by, all the restless senses will attain calmness and the mind will become peaceful. Then with Baba's grace all attachments to worldly objects will snap.

At Sai Nilayam, Baba facilities devotees spiritual progress by making devotees participate in various noble activities such as Annadaanam, Vastradaanam and so on. Selfless service is the surest way of destroying ego. When you serve others, you think about their needs and comforts, in the process you stop worrying about yourself and you will no longer be the centre of all your attention. Baba always love those devotees most, who dedicate themselves selflessly in the service and welfare of the less fortunate members of the society. Once the ego is completely annihilated, the path becomes clear, bhakti dawns in our hearts, the purity of mind is effected, and we therefore obtain Baba's blessings. This is possible only through Satsang and Service.

The devotees of Sai Nilayam, are witness to the innumerable things Baba has taught them. For example, how to perform puja and what type of kumkum should be used for what puja (which till date, is not known to most priests at major temples!) and so on.

It is indeed our good fortune that we receive Baba's blessings every day. Baba is an incarnation of God, who is himself holding our hand and guiding us at every step of our lives.

What more can one desire when they have the opportunity to be a part of Sai Nilayam Satsang?

Such occurrences are a rarity in today's world, and therefore we should consider ourselves lucky, and make the most out of it.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER-55

SAI NILAYAM - AN EXEMPLARY SATSANG

This chapter describes how Sai Nilayam stands out as an exemplary Satsang.

In the previous chapter, the importance and significance of a Satsang was described. Here the uniqueness of the Sai Nilayam Satsang will be narrated. How Sai Nilayam Satsang is different from the other Satsangs will also be discussed. Sai Nilayam is a temple of peace, piety and spirituality. Devotees from all walks of life come here to seek Baba's blessings, and learn how to lead a balanced and spiritual life. Devotees have the good fortune of learning through the word of Baba, who is the creator of the Universe who is always engrossed in Sat-Chit-Anand. Fortunate few are those who get such an opportunity of a lifetime, and even more fortunate are those who take full advantage of it. What is one's life without the presence of a Guru? Indeed, it is the devotees' good karma that they have a Sadguru like Sri Shirdi Sai Baba as their Guru.

It takes several lifetimes of evolution for man to even develop a distaste for material things. It takes several lifetimes of human birth and death for one's inquisitiveness to be aroused by spirituality and then be inspired to seek God. Hundreds of millions of individuals waste away life after life chasing transient and momentary pleasures that last no longer than a few fleeting moments. Finally, when they begin realizing how nothing lasts forever, and they stop finding joy in the outside world, they at last begin to look deep within themselves. When they begin this beautiful and enchanting inwards journey, they begin experiencing the most fulfilling of joys. It is on this quest, that they receive the blessings of the kind-hearted saints who draw them close to themselves and guide them on this path.

Really fortunate are the devotees of Baba, for He is ever present to answer their calls and guide them on this beautiful journey while actively participating in the worldly affairs. During the many beautiful bhajans and Satsangs at Sai Nilayam, Baba gave out nectar like pearls of wisdom and knowledge to the devotees. Some of the most mystical and archaic mantras, slokas and Puja customs were explained to the devotees by Baba, there by deepening their spiritual experience. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the power of a Satsang is so profound, and the energy waves are so pregnant with spirituality that merely being present at a Satsang can cleanse an individual of his bad karma, and accelerate his or her spiritual growth. The spiritual power and energy in a Satsang is such, that it can free the mind of needless anxieties and worries, and the body, from the clutches of anger avarice desire and lust. The effect is even more remarkable and prominent when the members of the Satsang are all in higher state of spirituality and expanded consciousness.

Among the various important things which Baba taught, some of them will be highlighted here. The first thing which Baba taught us was:

UNDERSTANDING HUMANS: Baba made us understand that a relationship established through soul is stronger than blood relationship. Unlike blood relations, soul relations do not have the fear that death will move them apart. It is believed the souls always incarnate together. For example, the individuals who are most often present around you are most likely going to be present with you in your next life, and most likely were with you in your past lives. An interesting book with a westerner's take on this subject is Brian L Weiss's Many Lives Many Masters. Another phenomenal

book that makes mention of the reincarnation of souls is Paramahansa Yogananda's Autobiography of a Yogi. Interested readers are recommended to read them and quench their thirst.

Although the human body, subject to the laws of karma, and being overpowered by the ego and ignorance from past lifetimes, seldom lives the divine plan, the soul within remains unchanged. Therefore, the soul which is made in the image of God, tries to steer the human body in the direction of the Divine Plan. Individuals who are sensitive enough with proper intuition can feel this inner calling, or else a Sadguru's blessings is required. The soul only seeks the welfare of those present around it. Since this may be quite archaic to comprehend for some individuals, Baba often put it into simpler terms and said that the prayer from a pure hearted soul has the power to fight even death. Which means, the more spiritual a person is the closer he is to God, so the whatever he says or wishes becomes true, for it is the word of God.

At Sai Nilayam, Prasanna and Srinivas do just that. They are pure hearted and simple individuals with infinite faith in Baba, who always pray unconditionally for the welfare of the devotees who flock there. Prasanna herself suffers and endures great pain and suffering on behalf of the devotees, so that the devotees can gain relief. Only Baba gives her all the needed strength. Listening to hundreds and thousands of problems from thousands of devotees every day no doubt takes great toll on the body, yet the soul remains pure and untouched. The positive spiritual energy channeled by Baba through Prasanna, cleanses the negative energy from those suffering. of others taking the negative energy from us and giving her positive energy. Only 1 in a million can accomplish a task such as this, for only unconditional love combined with the grace of Baba is necessary for one to selflessly serve the society while themselves enduring unbearable pain and suffering. Saint like in persona, Prasanna and Srinivas are living proofs of Baba and we are fortunate to be in their presence.

TALENT: Every individual is unique in their own way. Every individual has a talent which helps them excel in certain activities, therefore God entrusts different activities to different individuals. Some are enjoined with the task of writing books, others are entrusted with doing bhajans and singing kirtans, and others are good at providing service to the society. Few examples of individuals entrusted with different activities will be mentioned below.

Shankar: Baba gave a message shouldering Shankar with the responsibility of performing bhajans and kirtans. In a way Baba drew everybody's attention to Shankar's passion for singing the glory of the Lord Almighty. Readers may recall, how Baba was fond of Das Ganu Maharaj, who too sang beautiful Bhajans. Some people consider Shankar to be Sai Nilayam's Das Ganu!

Jaya: Nobody knew how beautifully she could adorn the Goddess or Ammavaru in a Sari. Only after Baba gave the message did people come to know how talented she was!

Srinivas Sastry: Baba made everybody realize that Sastry can decorate both Ammavaru and Baba in the most ornamental and delicate way possible. Every year, he is responsible for decorating the Idols of Gods and Goddesses on all occasions. Parallel is often drawn between him and Mahalsapathi because he is an ardent devotee of Baba, and adheres to every single message from Baba and executes the instructions with outstanding attention to detail.

Narayana: The mention about this gentleman has been made in earlier chapters regarding how he was entrusted performing all Puja activities. Baba's grace enabled him to learn and master all the various methods of performing pujas, homam, yagnas through different books. Without his own knowledge realization has dawned upon him which allows him to impart spiritual knowledge and teach a variety of previously unknown things. Therefore, Baba gave him the position of Brahma in Sai Nilayam.

Since it was not possible to mention all the devotees' responsibilities, they will be mentioned as deemed appropriate for the occasion. Depending upon an individual's proclivity and tendencies, and inherent qualities, Baba assigned the various roles and responsibilities to the different devotees.

SPIRUTUALITY: Baba made devotees of Sai Nilayam Satsang understand the importance of spirituality and helped them realize how it happens to be the very nature of every individual, and how it is up to the individual to stay on the path and realize that he is one with God. With spiritual growth comes material prosperity. Spiritual growth fosters peace of mind, which is accompanied by a cascade of pure joy and bliss. This was accomplished by Baba encouraging everybody to make a detailed study of the Sai Satcharitra. Although a lot of devotees had been reading this holy book for years now, only few had the ability to assimilate the true spirit of the Book.

In most cases, it was ritual and involved no understanding of the underlying principles and lessons. This was not because devotees were incapable, but because they often do not know what to look for, and often end up consuming the book purely from a factual perspective. When Baba made everybody study the Parayana in a group, doubts and questions began to arise, and through Prasanna he clarified them. Sri Sai Satcharitra is a gold mine of spiritual values and timeless truths. In fact, the proper study of any spiritual book can cleanse the mind and body. Baba laid special emphasis on the efficacy of studying the Vishnu Sahasranaamam.

Among the various things which Baba taught, here are a few:

What is the meaning of Allah Mallik?

Baba made us understand the meaning of ALLAH MALLIK. GOD IS THE SOLE PROPRIETER OF THE UNIVERSE.

What is the importance of Pancha-Amruthalu?

Most people were not aware of the importance of performing Abhishekham, let alone the deeper significance of Pancha-Amruthalu. Baba explained to devotees the importance of both, and enabled them to perform Baba Abhishekham on Guru Purnima and Vijaya Dasami, but with the knowledge of what was going on.

Baba taught everybody why those five ingredients went into creating the Pancha- Amrutham. Hence it was no longer a mere formality when performing Abhishekham! Devotees took the lesson to heart, and vouched to imbibe the qualities of those ingredients within themselves. An individual having such qualities, can perform Abhishekham with plain water, and still equal Pancha-Amrutham!

Baba asked all those present to give up their laziness indolence and addictions over a period of year and transform themselves. Those who have changed can consider themselves blessed and fortunate.

4. **VISHNU SAHASRAM**: During the auspicious Dhanur Masam (usually falls between mid -December and mid-January), Baba made every individual chant the Vishnu Parayana along with Vishnu Sahasranaamam. It is one of the most difficult texts to fully understand and grasp the underlying meaning. Most people didn't know how to study it, but with Baba's grace Srinivas Sastry taught and explained the contents to all individuals present. Now this is done every year, and the devotees take part with great joy. Those who have read the Vishnu Sahasranaamam during the holy month know the kind of impact it has on oneself. Even if one doesn't understand the significance of chanting the Vishnu Sahasranaamam, one must still study it and receive God's blessings. Remember how Baba forced this holy book upon him Shama? In a similar fashion Baba forced this book upon all Sai

Nilayam devotees.

5. **QUESTIONS:** The human mind is often flooded with hundreds of questions. We used to have many thoughts in our mind; Baba clarifies them in Sai Nilayam. Some Sai Nilayam devotees now have the holy Sri Chakram adorning their Puja rooms. This was executed only because Baba had instructed to do so.

Every Sravana Masam (another holy month between mid-July and mid-August), all the devotees study the Lalitha parayana together. The is carried out every Friday at a different devotees' house as per their schedule and availability. One week while doing Lalitha Parayana at Swapna's house, few devotees wondered whether the Phala-Sruthi and Lingasthakam was to be done or not. As explained in an earlier chapter, the parayana study is considered complete only if it is followed by Phala-Sruthi and Lingasthakam.

Narayana who was present there was not very happy with the average explanation. So, he took it upon himself to understand the significance why the above was necessary but didn't make much progress. On the following Friday, Lalitha Parayana was happening in Sai Nilayam itself, where Baba gave the message to appease his and everybody else's doubts. Baba further added that the explanation given by devotees during the previous week didn't do justice.

Baba asked Narayana to read verses 68 and 69 and explain it to all the devotees present there. The summary of which is given here. "To reduce our interest in materialistic attractions and attachments, we do the Vishnu Parayana. Instead of talking about worldly matters, talk about Vishnu Parayana, studying 1000 names of Lord Vishnu in the Parayana equals chanting the Shiva Namam one time. Chanting Shiva Namam 1000 times equals chanting the Sri Devi Namam one time. Therefore, if you are chanting the 1000 names of Sri Lalitha Devi, why do you want the Phala-Sruthi? In this way Baba clarified the doubts of all the devotees present there.

6. **PILGRIMAGES**: Baba made Sai Nilayam devotees to embark on beautiful pilgrimages to various holy places. Not only that, he gave step by step instructions regarding what was to be done where, and how the various legs in the journey were to be done. This ranged from understanding the importance of some temple to knowing what was the ideal time for taking the Lord's darshan. At first most Sai Nilayam devotees were alien to pilgrimages. But, because Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry's efforts, the devotees are now well versed with the various holy pilgrimages. People should understand that the various holy temples are Spiritual Super centers which resonate with Divinity. Temples established by great Saints, are supercharged with the divine frequencies which in turn have a phenomenal impact on individuals and often result in rapid spiritual evolution.

Baba gave a message stating "VISITING RELIGIOUS PLACES REDUCES KARMA PHALAM".

Baba made many devotees sit for consecration of idols in Sai Nilayam. Because those events hold great spiritual significance. For Baba's consecration it was Prasanna and Srinivas along with their sibling and spouse; for Anagha Devi's consecration it was the turn of Jaya and her family along with Ms. Bharatamma and her family, and finally for Dattatreya Swami's Idol consecration it was Shankar and family, Suresh and family. For idol consecration only few people are eligible, but in the eyes of Baba everyone is same and he gave them the opportunity, which is not that easily available to everyone. Only those who maintain purity of thought receive this opportunity.

Baba bestowed the opportunity to do "Kanya danam" to Shankar and Kavitha, as they did not have a girl child. This was accomplished in a rather brilliant manner. After the consecration of Sri Dattatreya

Swami, Sri Anagha Devi Kalyanam (Celestial Marriage) was performed, and Baba instructed them to do the KANYADAANAM of Anagha Devi considering her to be their own daughter.

Baba puts devotees to various tests. This is only to test their mettle, and help them gain confidence and progress in life. Baba, in certain instances, gave somewhat harsh instructions to make that faltering devotee leave his or her addiction. After an initial struggle, most devotes would let go of their devotees and make great progress.

Baba is the only Guru and God at Sai Nilayam. All else is but his manifestation. He is guiding us not only in our spiritual journey but also teaching us how to lead a practical yet balanced life. Here we have no restrictions, rules, regulations, or difference between people. Anybody entering Sai Nilayam is equal to everybody else. If any rule is enforced it will be told by Baba with proper instructions.

Really fortunate are devotees who enter Sai Nilayam where they can be guided by Baba at every step of their lives. Baba provides solution to every devotee's troubles, giving them peace of mind. Every mistake is forgiven and all are embraced by Baba's boundless love. Devotees do not need to have regrets about the past. Once you enter Sai Nilayam, you must drop all your worries outside the door. When a task is assigned to a devotee, Baba always follows up with them to find out how much progress they are making. By participating in the various programs organized at Sai Nilayam creates strong bonds and camaraderie among all participants enabling them to do Satsangs and bhajans with greater intensity and devotion.

Baba engages us in such a way that we handle our responsibilities and at the same he makes us always remember him at every step of the journey. Every second of our lives is under his control, and the guidance we receive from him is based on our Sraddha and Saburi. The more spiritual one becomes, the more receptive and sensitive he becomes, and readies himself or herself to receive Baba's instructions.

These are the five golden principles.

1. Follow his instructions

2. Learn by making the best effort

3. Assimilate

4. Memorize

5. Implement

Baba wants nothing but strict and affectionate adherence to these principles.

Let us reform and transform ourselves and have firm conviction and belief in Baba's words. Let us surrender our ego and weaknesses at his feet. Let us think of him every single second, and pray to him with love and devotion. Let us work together under Baba's caring glances, and make Sai Nilayam Satang a role model by example to all the other Satsangs.

Let us work together and make this possible.

OM SAI RAM.

CHAPTER 56

SAI BABA BHAJAN – ACHYUTAM KESHAVAM SAI DAMODARAM

This chapter explains the meaning of one beautiful Sai Baba Bhajan, couplet by couplet.

1. ACHYUTAM KESHAVAM SAI DAMODARAM
BHAKTHA JANA VATSALAM SAI NARAYANAM

It means praising SAI Baba by the different names of Vishnu.

Sai is always very affectionate towards his devotees.

(Achyutham means Eternal, and Keshavam is another name for Bhagwan Krishna)

2. KAUN KEHTA HAI SAINATH AATE NAHI
BHAKTH MEERA KE JAISE BULATE NAHI

It is not that Sai Baba doesn't go to his devotees, but it is that you folks never call him with the kind of devotion that Meera had towards Krishna.

We must call Sai with the same love and devotion Meera had towards Lord Krishna, which was pure and unconditional. She used to adore Krishna from childhood without once seeing him. She just had an idol of Krishna which she worshipped, and always felt his presence in her heart. Her love towards Krishna increased day by day and went against the chains of society, gave up family ties and became an ascetic and composed many devotional songs on Krishna. So enamored was she of Lord Krishna.

Devotees should have such unconditional love and devotion towards whichever form of God they believe in. Then God will be ever present with you.

3.KAUN KEHTA HAI SAINATH KHAATE NAHI
BER SHABRI KE TARRHA KHILATE NAHI

Who says Sainath will not accept your offering of Naivedyam?
It is just that you do not feed him like Shabari did to Sri Rama.
Ber in Hindi translates to Indian Jujube in English, and to Raagi Pandu in Telugu.

Shabari used to pluck berries and feed Lord Rama daily. This she did in her own unique way. Lord Rama, was her most beloved deity. So she would first eat a bite of each berry, herself first tasting it to ensure they were sweet and only then she would give the sweetest to Lord Rama. Outwardly this may appear as gross, but it is devotion on a level beyond the comprehension of the normal human intellect.

So pure was her love and devotion towards Sri Rama. Pleased by her service, he fulfilled her wishes by gracing her ashram and giving her his darshan. Lord will never see where we stay or what our external paraphernalia is. He only sees the pure hearted devotion. Lakshmana questions Rama that she has tasted the food before offering it to him and how is he accepting it? To this Rama replies, "Nothing could equal the taste of these berries!"

So we too should offer Naivedyam to Baba with devotion that parallels Shabari's! Baba always said think of me before performing any activity, be in eating or sleeping or dancig, and I shall be ever present with you. In SAI NILAYAM also Baba has instructed that before doing commencing

Annadaanam, food must be tasted to make sure it is palatable and delicious and only then it was to be distributed to the devotees.

4.KAUN KEHTA HAI SAINATH NAACHTE NAHI
GOPIYON KE TARRHA NACHAATE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not dance?
You do not inspire him to dance in the way Gopikas did to Sri Krishna.

Enchanted and enraptured by the celestial melodies coming from Sri Krishna's flute, the Gopikas would sneak out of their houses and dance all night long, experiencing the transcendental bliss. He would advise them to return home as it was not appropriate for ladies to be out at this hour of night. The Gopikas had pure love for their God, and nothing else, hence they were quite hurt and felt sad that their God was sending them away. They would bow their heads, drawing lines in the ground with their feet while shedding silent tears asking Sri Krishna why he was sending them away? Especially when they had left everything and surrendered themselves at His feet. Their love for their God was supreme. They knew nothing else. Lord Krishna, out of love for his devotees, extends the duration of the night to the length of one Night of Brahma which equal to 4.32 billion human years! The dance they perform is called Rasa Lila which means "DANCE OF DIVINE LOVE". Rasa means "aesthetics", Lila means "Play, Act or Dance".

5.KAUN KEHTA HAI SAINATH SOTE NAHI
MAA YASHODA KE TARRHA SULATE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not sleep?
You do not put him to sleep in the manner in which Mother Yashoda did to infant baby Krishna.

Yashoda would try to put Nan-he Krishna to sleep with great happiness, and despite all her attempts he would never sleep. Still she would never get irritated. If he closed his eyes, she would tell all the servants to be silent. She would then affectionately ask Krishna, "How can they wake you up if you are pretending to be asleep". You must stop your pretense and go to sleep! Such was the love of this mother!

We must also put our Sai Baba into an ecstatic sleep like we were Yashoda!

6. KAUN KEHTA HAI SAI GALE LAGATE NAHI
BHAKTI HANUMAD KE TARRHA HUM NIBHATE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not hug us?
We do not fulfill Bhakti like Hanuman.

Lord Hanuman, was a pure celibate and free of all worldly desire. His only desire, was divine, which was to serve Lord Sri Rama. His activities therefore, are uttama-bhakti. Not a moment passed by when he did not think of his beloved deity, Sri Rama. When Lord Hanuman tore open his heart, in lived Sri Ramachandra Murthy!

In a similar fashion, we must have pure bhakti towards our Sai Baba, free of all desires.

7. KAUN KEHTA HAI SAI PREET NIBHATE NAHI
TUM SUDAMA KE JAISE DHAR AATE NAHI

Who says Sainath will not fulfill his friendship?
You do not come close to him as Sudhama.

Sudama was from a poor family. Krishna was from a royal family. But this difference in social status did not come in the way of their friendship. They lost contact over the years and while Krishna became a military leader and King of great repute at Dwaraka, Sudama stayed as a humble and a poor villager. Sometime later when Sudama was going through some bad times, without the means to even feed his children, his wife Kalyani reminded him of his friendship with Krishna.

Though he was initially reluctant to go to his friend for help, Sudama finally agrees to go. He leaves with nothing but some parched rice tied in a cloth (atukulu or chuda) as a present because it was Sri Krishna's favorite. Krishna is greatly pleased to see his old friend. He treats him royally and with much love. Overwhelmed by all this Sudama forgets to ask for what he had come to ask. But the Lord realizes what His devotee and friend wants. The Lord always takes care of his devotee. When Sudama finally returns, he finds a palatial mansion instead of the hut. He also finds his family dressed in extremely nice garments, waiting for him. He leads an austere life after that, forever remaining grateful to the Lord.
Such is the nature of friendship with God. He will take care of everything, all that is required from our end is patience and faith.

8. KAUN KEHTA HAI SAI KRUPA KARTE NAHI
BHAKTHI NARSEE KI TARRHA MAANG PAATHE NAHI

Who says Sainath will not fulfill his blessings?
You are not able to demand or ask bhakti like the great devotee Narsee.

9. KAUN KEHTA SAI NATH MILTHE NAHI
RADHA JI KI TARRHA BAAT SAKTHE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not meet?
You are not able to talk like Radha.

Radha was one of the Gopikas who adored Krishna. Unlike other gopikas she used to talk to a Bumble Bee considering it to be Sri Krishna's messenger. Once the bee disappeared while she was still talking to it, and she felt like she was separated from Krishna and went into deep mourning.

Following suit, we too should have deep love filled conversations with our Sai Baba.

10. KAUN KEHTE HAI SAI RAAH DIKHATE NAHIN
BHAKT ARJUN KI TARAH BAN PAATHE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not show the path?
But for that you must be focused like Bhakth Arjun.

11. KAUN KEHTE HAI SAI NATH SUNTHE NAHIN
DRAUPADI KI TARAH HUM BULATHE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not listen?
You do not call him earnestly like Draupadi.

When Kauravas were trying to disrobe Draupadi, she first asked help from her husbands. All of them tried, but failed. Finally, when she was on the brink of losing her modesty, feeling so distraught she seeks divine help from Sri Krishna. It is said that our surrender should be like Draupadi, where we call out to Krishna through complete self-surrender, in a state of helplessness.

Therefore, like Draupadi first we should try our best to solve our own problems and if everything fails only then we should seek Sri Krishna's help by surrendering at his feet. If it is said that Draupadi should have called out to Krishna from the beginning without asking help from someone else then she could have asked for Krishna's help right in the beginning when she was being dragged by her hair.

12. KAUN KEHTE HAI SAI DEEP JALATHE NAHIN

LAKSHMI BAI KI TARAH TUM DEEP JALATHE NAHI

Who says Sainath will not light lamps?
You do not light the lamps like Lakshmi Bai.

When lighting the lamps, you must do it will love, devotion and bhakti, with a pure heart like Lakshmi Bai used to do in Shirdi. It should not be a mere religious formality. What burns in the Diya, is immaterial. All that matters, is, whether an individual is lighting them with purity of heart or not.

13. KAUN KEHTE SAI NATH HASTHE NAHIN
BAI JA MAI KI TARAH HUM HASATHE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not laugh?

We do not make him laugh like Baijabai Ma used to!

We should make Baba laugh with discussion that arises between us, out of innocence but not out of egoism. Then if any question arises, we have Baba who will clear our doubts with great enthusiasm. Baba always told his devotees to stay happy and joyous, and to share this joy with all those around them.

14. KAUN KEHTE HAI SAI DUKH MITATHE NAHIN
BHAKTH TATYA KI TARAH DUKH SUNATHE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not remove our sadness?
You do not make him listen to the sadness like Tatya!

When Tatya was bed ridden he never informed Baba that he was sick. He knew that Baba was aware of everything, so there was no need for him to specifically intimate him. At the final moments, Baba generously took Tatya's spot and breathed his last. When Tatya was cured, he immediately realized the great sacrifice Baba had done for him.

So, the trust we place in Baba should be like Tatya's. Nothing is unknown to Baba, he knows everything, - the past, present and the future.

15. KAUN KEHTE HAI SAI PAAR LAGATHE NAHIN
HUM KEVAT KI JAISE NIBHATHE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not help you to cross?
We do not fulfill it like a boatman. (Kevat is a caste/profession where people are boatmen)
A boat man will help us cross the river. While he makes us cross we completely rely and trust him. The same way if leave our burden on Baba and just trust him blindly he will guide us in the right path and will help us cross this world of mundane existence which is laden with miseries.

16. KAUN KEHTE HAI SAI SANG REHTE NAHIN
DASGANU KI TARAH DIL LAGATHE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not stay in our company?
You do not dedicate your heart like Das Ganu.

Das Ganu was always singing and spreading the fame of Baba in the form of songs and stories leaving his profession. His only thought was that of Baba. Where ever he was he always praised the greatness of Baba, and would base all inferences on the experiences given to him by Baba.

In a similar way, we must also dedicate our heart to Baba.

17. KAUN KEHTE HAI SAI NATH GAATHE NAHIN
GYARAH VACHANO KO HUM SUNTHE NAHIN

Who says Sainath will not sing?
We do not listen to his 11 sayings.

We must all listen, assimilate, memorize and follow Baba's 11 sayings. Then he will be very happy that his disciples are following his path.

18. KAUN KEHTE HAI CHAMATKAR HOTE NAHIN
HUN BABHOOTHI KO SIR SE LAGAATHE NAHIN

Who says miracles will not happen?
We do not apply UDI to our heads.

We all apply UDI on our foreheads, just giving it the importance of tilak. But if you consider the UDI to be the SACRED ASH WITH DIVINE POWER and Baba's spiritual grandeur, then you will see the miracles happen. You have to apply it realizing the fact that it's Baba who has given it and it will free you from your problems in this lifetime, and the next.

19. KAUN KEHTE HAI SAI NATH DIKHTHE NAHIN
BHAKTI BHHAV SE DHYAAN LAGGATHE NAHIN

Who says Sainath cannot be seen?
To see him we must concentrate on him with the feeling of love, devotion and bhakti towards him.

We all can see Baba when you mediate on him with bhakti. We must follow all his sayings and must have the intense desire to have a vision of Him. Then we all can see Baba.

With Baba's grace the author has made a humble attempt at trying to translate this beautiful bhajan. Any mistakes in interpretation or translation are the author's, and attempt will be made to make any necessary corrections in the future versions of the book.

This beautiful Bhajan was originally sung by Sri Shailendra Bharti. Let us sing this bhajan with great joy whenever we congregate in a Satsang.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 57
BABA EKADASI SUTRALU

1. Shirdi pravesamu sarva dhuka pariharamu

Everyone who steps on the soil of Shirdi will be free from the miseries of life. BABA will take care of them if they surrender completely to him. They must have the Sraddha and Saburi. BABA's soul is still present in Shirdi and so he has given such promise. The same way in our Sai Nilayam, BABA is present and anyone who steps in it will have an end to their miseries.

2.Artulina nemi nirupedalina nemi dwaraka pravesinchinantane sukha sampadalu pondagalaru.

Every person is equal in the eyes of BABA. So either it can be unfortunate or a very poor person everyone who enters Dwarakamai, will get happiness and comfort. In Sai Nilayam "OUR DWARAKAMI" once we step in, it's an end to every problem. But the wish we have will be fulfilled only if it's as per dharmam. BABA alone can save us from our distress. BABA removes our interest from materialistic things of this world and enhances spiritual progress. BABA is fulfilling his promise and will never be untrue.

3. E bowthika dehanantaramu sahitamu nenapramatudanu.

I will be always there even if I am not there in the bodily form, and he never made us feel that we miss him. He always takes care of us helping us out from every difficult situation. He is present everywhere in the universe, he is the DIVINE POWER. That's the truth, and today we are experiencing the same in Sai Nilayam.

4. Na baktulaku rakshana na samadhinundiye velupaduchundunu.

I will protect my devotees from my Samadhi. I have left the bodily form but my soul will always protect you from my Samadhi. If any devotee keeping these words in mind meditates on the "FORMLESS", they can experience the truth in his words. The Samadhi is of a "DIVINE PERSON", the SUPREME POWER. Generally we remember GOD only in difficult times, but if we remember BABA in difficult and happy times he will be always with us every second of our life. In Sai Nilayam, BABA fulfills every devotees wish through amma guiding us in every step by helping us to manage our duties and spiritual enhancement.

5. Na samadhi nundiye na manusha shariramu matladunu

BABA always said that "MY BONES WILL SPEAK FROM THE TOMB" There is very deep meaning in this fifth promise given by Sai Baba. The soul is indestructible. So it is clearly understood that BABA left his mortal coil, but his soul is everywhere. He is the DIVINE POWER, which means he is formless, "DIVINE LIGHT", which has no start and end. The thought that BABA is always with us will not allow us to do any bad deed and even if the mind tends to do it, the thought of BABA will never let us go in the wrong path. Practicing this thought, will make us always be conscious to attain him. In Sai Nilayam BABA is guiding us through amma, as she is an example of BABA's true devotee, so let us all follow her path (BABA's path) and prove that Sai Nilayam is a SATSANG with true BABA devotees.

6. Nanasrayinchina varini saranujochina varini rakshinchutaye na kartavyamu

I will protect those who depend on me and surrender to me. BABA will never disappoint a devotee who surrenders to him. BABA sometimes used to scold his devotees, but they used to accept them as blessings. They were hidden blessings of BABA. He is our SADGURU. A SADGURU will

never leave his devotees to fall down in this ocean of worldly desires, rather if we hold tight to him he will help us cross it and attain MOKSHA. The miracles of BABA are very difficult to understand and we ignorant humans have failed to understand it. In Sai Nilayam when BABA gives a message amma and uncle rethink the message many times, try understanding it ,then extract the meaning and then inform the devotee as to what needs to be done. Those who follow BABA's path will always in happy and difficult situations will understand every word of him and in Sai Nilayam it is possible only to amma.

7. Nayendevariki drushti kalado variyende na katakshyamu

Whoever looks at me with love, devotion and faith, I look to them. They will always have my grace on them. BABA will always take the responsibilities of a devotee who has complete faith in him. He will always there with helping hands to every devotee who is about to fall. This life is given by him, then why can't we always look at him? BABA is always there safe guarding us; it's we who are remembering only in difficulties.

So let us all in Sai Nilayam always think of him in every second, I would say for every breath we take, maybe it is a happy or difficult or sad situation.

8. Me baramulanu napaibadaveyudu, nenu mosedanu.

Leave your burdens on me and I will carry. BABA always said I am the "CREATOR, PRESERVER and the DESTROYER". SO why should we all think that, we are responsible for all our deeds. Cast the burden on him and he will make your life easy and beautiful. Then the sense of doer ship will vanish and then BABA will take you on to the path of from where you can attain BABA. In Sai Nilayam BABA is teaching us the same. He takes every burden of ours, he gives us solutions through amma, but we being ignorant are not following his words with commitment and reliability.

9. Naa sahayamu gani, salahalu gani korina takshaname mosanga samsidhudunu.

If you seek my help, advice, it shall be given to you at once. BABA always said that I am always there for you in all phases of life. The same way if you surrender to him he will advise and help us in every situation of our life. The help we seek should be, to fulfill our duties and enhance our spiritualism but not for materialistic things of the world.

10. Na bakhtula intha lemi ana shabdame podachupadu

There will never be any dearth or scarcity of food and clothes in any devotes home. One may lack good health, peace of mind or material riches. Wants are endless and of course multiply upon fulfilling them. Being a slave to wants, man is never content or happy. But being BABA devotee and under the guidance of amma and uncle in Sai Nilayam SATSANG we must be an exception and must have the strong will power in his grace. "WANT" or "LACK" should not bother us as we are aware of that nothing is obtained without BABA's grace and whatever we really need is provided by him at the right time. BABA is the ruler of our lives. Irrespective of the onerous responsibilities one has to shoulder, Baba's devotees live without fear or anxiety as they know that whatever will happen will be at His Will and whatever one enjoys is gifted by BABA. There shall be no want in the house of my devotees

11. Na samadhi numdiye nenu sarvakaryamulanu nirvahintunu

I manage all the duties from my Samadhi only. **THAT IS THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH. BABA IS THE DIVINE POWER. HE IS FORMLESS. BABA IS EVERYWHERE. BABA IS THE SOLE PROPRIETOR OF THE UNIVERSE. SO WHAT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO HIM? BABA PROMISED US WITH THESE ELEVEN INTELLIGIBLE PROSE TEXTS (VACHANALU means "that which is ") AND HE IS ALWAYS KEEPING UP TO HIS PROMISE. LET US ALL BEING A SINLGE FAMILY OF Sai Nilayam SATSANG PROMISE BABA THAT WE WILL TRY TO FOLLOW EVERY WORD OF HIS AND PROVE TO BE HIS TRUE DISCIPLES TILL OUR LAST BREATH. LET US ALL MAKE THE EFFORTS PUT IN BY AMMA AND UNLCE FRUITFUL BY MAKING THEM FEEL PROUD THAT THEY HAVE MADE THIS Sai Nilayam SATSANG AN ABODE OF GOD.**

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 58

SIVA LINGAM

This chapter narrates the story of how Baba enabled Prasanna to follow her ancestral tradition of worshipping the seven incarnations of the Goddess.

The seven forms of the Goddess worshipped by her family were:

1. THALUPULAMMA AMMAVARU
2. MAJJIGOWRAMMA AMMAVARU
3. PYDI THALLI AMMAVARU
4. NOOKALAMMA AMMAVARU
5. DHAARA GANGAMMA
6. MODU KONDAMMA
7. KANAKA DURGAMMA

1. THALUPULAMMA AMMAVARU: As per Baba's instructions Prasanna, and her husband Srinivas Sastry, along with Murali, Padma, Lakshmi all together embarked on this pilgrimage. First, they went to THALUPULAMMA AMMAVARU near Tuni, Andhra Pradesh. Near the temple, a stream of water was flowing downhill like a small waterfall, and breaking down on the rocks. When Prasanna extended her arms into this cascading water fall, a Tri-Shulam (a weapon attributed to Lord Shiva, also call a Trident) magically appeared in her hands.

During the return journey, the *Goddess* possessed Prasanna's body, and the entire car began to be mysteriously filled with Turmeric and Kumkum. After coming home, following Baba's instructions, Prasanna gave Thambulam to some married women present there. Unfortunately, Padma missed the opportunity, and she felt bad about it. Then when the *Goddess* possessed Prasanna, nobody was present to give Thambulam and appease the Goddess, so when they went to the other temples Baba instructed that Prasanna be given Thambulam.

2. MAJJIGYRAMMA AMMAVARU: This ancient and holy temple is in Rayagada, Orrisa. After the entourage finished taking the Goddess' darshan and began to return along with Prasanna, Turmeric, out of the blue, began falling down. The members collected what they could and proceeded to the next temple.

3. PYDI THALLI AMMAVARU: This temple, located in Vizianagaram, was the next destination. Here too they worshipped the presiding deity, and continued their journey to the next temple.

4. DHAARA GANGAMMA: The temple of DHAARA GANGAMMA is present in the town of S.KOTA. The group had the opportunity to have a beautiful darshan of Goddess Gangamma.

5. MODU KONDAMMA: Then they reached the shrine of MODU KONDAMMA. While they were having the darshan of MULA-VIRAAT, the toe rings (METTELU) appeared near the Goddess's feet. The NALLA-POOSALU vanished too, and could not be found on her neck. After worship, Prasanna sat in the temple while the rest of the party went to have refreshments. During this time Srinivas Sastry asked Padma, whether she gave Thambulam to Prasanna or not. She said she forgot to do so. She immediately ran into the temple to offer Thambulam to Prasanna. Padma gave the thambulam to Prasanna and requested her to accept it, but Prasanna asked her to first offer it first to the Goddess, and later give it to her.

Padma went inside the temple and offered the thambulam to the Goddess and asked the priest to give it back to her. The priest, said in a surprised voice, “Oh Wait, I cannot find the Siva Lingam over here.” and gave the thambulam back to her after offering it to Prasanna. Padma came back and applied Kumkum to Prasanna on her forehead and gave the Thambulam.

The time was already 7:30 pm, and the darkness of night descends quite rapidly over the hills and Ghats than it does at other places. Since it was very dark, everybody decided to take the main road, and not the ghat road. Also, the ghat road was prone to surprise attacks by Naxalites. But Prasanna declared that they would travel by the Ghat road. This decision frightened Padma and the driver, and they were worried whether they would reach home safely or not.

On both sides of the road, Naxalites were sitting and the car occupants, were very anxious to reach the main road. Fortunately, no untoward thing happened. A rich and fragrant smell of Udi began to fill the car. Baba accompanied them in the form of the Udi, to assure them that all was going to be well. The fragrance of the Udi, calmed everybody’s nerves. This further boosted their faith in Baba, and gave them the confidence that Baba is present everywhere, and that he will always take care of his devotees.

Padma told Prasanna that when she went inside the temple to offer thambulam, the priest did not find the SIVA LINGAM and he appeared quite tense. While they were taking darshan, Padma also saw an old lady performing Abhishekam to that SIVA LINGAM and keeping it inside the temple. Prasanna replied that the SIVALINGAM went to Sai Nilayam. Padma didn’t know what to make of that reply. She quickly asked, “What about the nalla poosalu?” Prasanna told her that even they went to Sai Nilayam. (During the early years, Uyyala Baba was inside the Puja room).

This strange turn of events only added fuel to Padma’s curiosity! She was anxious to return home, and see for herself. After completing the pilgrimage of the remaining temples, they returned. When the party reached home around 2am and opened the door, they found the entire house was filled with the scent of HOMAM. The doors of the puja room, were found to be open, and present in the hands of UYYALA Baba were the SIVALINGAM and the Nalla Poosalu – each in one hand! Padma was surprised and overwhelmed by these experiences, especially witnessing them first hand! This is how

When Prasanna was searching for NALLA POOSALU, AMMAVARU told that ”NENE THEESANU, SUDDHI CHESI NAA KODUKU THO PANPUTHANU”. (I(Goddess) will sanctify them, and send them through my son (Baba)). When Prasanna was thinking, whom AMMAVARU was referring to as her son, she realized that it was none other than SADGURU Sri Sai Baba. If Padma would have not gone inside the temple to offer the thambulam, she would not have known that the SIVA LINGAM was missing. Had Prasanna conveyed the Goddess’s message that the Siva Lingam was sent to Sai Nilayam by the Goddess herself, it would have been hard for people to accept it. It was likely that a number of opinions would have come to be, and unnecessary comments passed. But Baba would never let such a thing happen. Prasanna, Srinivas and Sai Nilayam are dearest to Baba. He would never let any ill cast its shadow on either of them. Baba proved to all witnessing the events that, everything is done as per his divine will. It is nearly impossible for one to witness divine miracles in the modern day especially with the number of charlatans and false prophets on rise!

True devotees don’t need to witness miracles to believe in the existence of God. They just feel his presence in the deepest depths of their heart. Only those who have hopelessly lost themselves completely in the world of illusory sense and bodily enjoyments to the extent that they no longer remember that they are made in the image of God, need to witness true miracles, to make them

realize their folly. These miracles, serve the purpose of bringing them back onto the path of God and Spirituality.

John 20:29 of the Bible has the exact thing, “Jesus Saith to him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Which means, my true disciples are those who believe in me without seeking the proof of my existence; those who believe in me only after seeing me or my miracles are the average disciples.

However, it is nobody’s fault for the power of Maya is such! Baba’s miracles are only for the sole purposes of rekindling true devotion and faith in the devotees’ hearts. It helps reestablish and recognize the fact that not a leaf moves without Baba’s grace. With focused efforts and determination, we can effortlessly move from the worship of Sagun Brahma to Nirgun Brahma. Baba has himself said that, as man has got a form body etc., it is natural and easy for him to worship God with form. (Chapter XI, Sri Sai Satcharitra)

Let us strive to become true devotees of Baba, and realize the kingdom of heaven within ourselves. Let us pray to him with pure love and devotion and request him to life the veils of ignorance and free us from the grip of Maya, and thereby realize our true nature, which is nothing but Sat-Chit-Anand. Let us meditate on Baba’s beautiful form for at least 15-30 minutes every day. This is one of the surest ways of calming the endless stream of thoughts, and establish a garden of peace within ourselves, in the process expand our consciousness and pray to Baba with a renewed vigor and enthusiasm.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 59

QUALITIES OF DEVOTEES

This chapter touches upon the qualities of devotees as told by Baba on September 14th, 2015 at Sai Nilayam.

On Monday, September 14th, 2015, Baba described five qualities which hinder spiritual progress, and therefore it was quintessential for everybody to recognize and rid themselves of them.
They are as follows:
1. EGO
2. CRITICIZING OTHERS.
3. I
4. MINE
5. SRADDHA.

As long as, a person is egotistic, and always identifies himself with the body and thinks of 'I' as opposed to `we` (unity), and is always concerned with accumulating possessions for himself ("Everything should be mine"), and lacks Sraddha, and always indulges in criticism of others can never attain spiritual progress. He would be ruining his own progress. Therefore, for anybody interested in making spiritual progress must surrender the ego at Baba's feet, give up criticism of others in favor of chanting God's name with Sraddha. When a person thus transforms himself, Baba will shower him with blessings and guide him.

Sai Nilayam Satsang:

This Satsang exists on account of Baba's grace and the selfless service carried out by Prasanna and Srinivas. Every devotee comes to Sai Nilayam with different problems in life. Some devotees who have already found a solution are grateful to Baba, and visit regularly out of love, bhakti, devotion and faith in Baba. Baba means everything to them. The devotees who are suffering from problems, prefer to convey their troubles to Baba through Prasanna, with the hope of receiving a quick solution from Baba. As most people are not comfortable making their problem known to all those present, they prefer having a private conversation with Prasanna. They usually wait until everybody leaves. Prasanna enquires about the devotee's welfare and listens to them with great patience and care. She once again conveys the message to Baba seeking a quick resolution. After Baba gives a message or instructions, she conveys the same to the devotee. As evident from the various devotees' experiences, those who stick to Baba's message always find themselves happy and content.

1. Some people come and continue with the Sai Nilayam Satsang even after the resolution of their troubles by Baba's blessings. They are grateful to Baba and will always remain his devotees.

2. Some come with problems, and they disappear once the issue is solved only to knock on the door when they find themselves amid another problem. They are never grateful to Baba. Such devotees may never find true contentment in life because they are after Baba for having their issues resolved, and not out of true faith and devotion. But no one is to be blamed, for it is karma that causes a leech to suck on blood and not the pure milk from a cow's udder!

3. These belong to the other another kind. They have many problems, if they get a solution they are happy and come to Baba, if the problem is not resolved they will not come to Baba and this process continues in their lives! They are forever stuck in a loop! We only pray that they reform themselves and sow the seeds of pure love and devotion in their hearts.

Devotees must have Sraddha and Saburi, and hold on to Baba for He is our sole refuge. Whatever is needed shall be provided by Him. Let us exercise spirituality in everything we do in our everyday lives, and let us not restrict spirituality to the four walls of a Puja room or to the premises of a temple.

HOW IS THE SATHSANG RUNNING SUCCESSFULLY?

SAT means "TRUTH" and SANGA means "COMPANY". A Satsang, is a group of like-minded and pious individuals, who have dedicated themselves towards singing the glory of the Lord's name and are ever-determined to render selfless service to the society. In Sai Nilayam Satsang everything is guided by Baba through Prasanna and Srinivas. For the Satsang to be successful in all aspects, Baba has allotted certain duties to certain individuals based mainly on their Sraddha and Saburi, their commitment to the work, and finally based on their natural tendencies.

Below is a list of disciples who were chosen by Baba himself:

1. Shankar: Baba allotted him the duty of singing Bhajans. The bhajans and kirtans chosen by Shankar are easily understood by all those who are present. Both Elders and small children enjoy joining these bhajans. Most children of the Satsang often remember the different bhajans and kirtans that are sung there. For example, even after reaching her house, Kruthi cannot stop singing "JAI BOLO HANUMAN KI"! This is the reason devotees like his bhajan and sing along with him when he does the bhajans!

2. Jaya: Baba selected her for dressing up Ammavaru. Baba once said "NEE PILLALINI NEEVU ELAGA ALANKARANA CHESTHAVO ALAGE CHEYALI". When Jaya ties a sari to Sri Anagha Devi, it looks very beautiful and none can match her finesse and expertise. She has the patience to make Sri Anagha Devi look divinely beautiful by adorning her in the best way possible!

3. Kavitha: Baba allotted her the duty of performing the holy bath to Sri Dattatreya Swami. It takes great love and affection to perform this for it takes several hours to do it in the right way. Since she has that dedication and determination, Baba gave her that job. It's not that easy to bring that glow to his face! The next you are amazed by the divine glow His face, remember to thank the devotees for the hours of work that went to achieving it!

4. Prasanna: Baba told her to she was responsible for giving the holy bath to Sri Anagha Devi. Prasanna sets aside several hours every Wednesday for bathing Sri Anagha Devi! Later the post bath activities require few more hours.

5. Srinivas Sastry: Baba gave him the duty of giving Baba the holy bath, decorating him and along with everything else in the Puja room. He ensures that everything is perfect and sees to it that the entire puja room is pleasing to look at.

In all, about seven to eight hours are dedicated towards cleaning and decorating the Puja room on Wednesdays. On Thursdays when devotees visit Sai Nilayam, they are enamored to see the Puja room decorated so beautifully.

6. Lakshmi: Baba gave her the duty of cooking food for everyone on Thursdays and on all major festivals, which would be an impossible task without her. She also handles cleaning the all the silver items used during puja, along with lending Prasanna a helping hand in keeping the Sai Nilayam premises neat and tidy. After serving faithfully for several years, she has now left the service to pursue other interests.

7.Narayana: Baba gave him the duty of performing pujas on all major festivals and getting pujas done for other devotees who come to Sai Nilayam. Baba knows that he alone can do it and no one else!

This way Baba allotted different duties to different persons based on their sraddha, saburi, dedication, commitment, capability and natural tendencies. Baba knows whom to select and whom not to. Efficiently performing these duties, is by no means children's play. Only those who have sheer grit and determination, and above all an unfailing love for God alone can do it. In this manner, the Satsang is running successfully because of involvement of many people donning several responsibilities.

When devotees come to Sai Nilayam, they get a solution to their problem from Baba through Prasanna. They come to move closer to God by participating in the various Puja ceremonies which take place there. Beautiful lessons of life and many golden words are revealed by Baba to the devotees. Prasanna and Srinivas are spearheading the various activities that are undertaken at Sai Nilayam. These include various philanthropic programmes like Annadaanam, Vidyadaanam and Vasthra daanam etc. It is a rare opportunity for devotees to take part in such activities without being subject to irrelevant appropriations based on caste creed religion and so on.

If we go to a temple, we are not even allowed to touch the priest let alone the Idol of the presiding deity! Where as in Sai Nilayam we go and perform all the rituals and touch all the deities. Has anyone touched a Sri Chakram in their life? They say that except in temples it's not allowed anywhere else, but today few some devotees have it in their homes and all other devotees do the Sri Chakram puja in Sai Nilayam by touching it. This was made possible only because Baba's grace and His love for his devotees.

Anupama is witness to the above statement She says, "I have personally experienced this in Kasi, when we went to the Kasi Visalakshi Goddess temple, the priest did not allow anybody to touch the Sri Chakram and if we want to perform a puja one had to pay Rs.300. Then I felt so grateful towards Baba, that we are so blessed that Goddess graced the Sai Nilayam Satsang devotees' homes in the form of Sri Chakram, as per her wish. There are no rules and restrictions when it comes to performing Puja, like wearing only white clothes to our Satsang as it happens in other places. At Sai Nilayam Satsang, it is the purity of heart which matters and everything else is insignificant."

What Anupama says is very true. For Sai Nilayam Satsang follows in the footsteps of Baba's teachings and guidance. The various teachings of Baba are related to the devotees through Prasanna and Srinivas, who explain put the teachings into simple words and practical ways with which we can correlate with the activities that take place in our daily life. Speech should always be delivered in easy words so that it can be understood and assimilated by everybody.

We are all still toddlers in the spiritual path. (Ex: If a teacher, teaches kindergartners university level courses, would they understand?) It is as simple as that. Devotees who come cannot spend hours together listening to speeches because they succumb to the various responsibilities to be handled at home which is also equally important. (Which happens to be one downside of being a Gruhasta! A burden which Sanyasi's are free from!) Baba said that once we are in GRUHASTHU ASHRAM (family life) we must fulfill all our responsibilities without fail. To be more specific, Baba said "One must attend to one's worldly responsibilities attentively, while discharging them dispassionately." Thus, at Sai Nilayam, everything is taught practically, which is also in a way to bring about a change in our mental faculties which facilitate our rapid spiritual progress.

In Sai Nilayam Satsang, the reason behind the grand success of every event undertaken is due to Baba's blessings. When Baba conveys a message, Prasanna and Srinivas take great care to inform the same to everybody and take into account, their ideas opinions and feedback. This allows a participation from all devotees. Thus, based on the several inputs, the task is divided into smaller subtasks and allotted to devotees based on their interests. Many may think that what do they sit and talk for hours together? The answer to this is that all activities undertaken here are on account of the devotees' love for Baba. This is not done as a mere formality. The devotees sit and discuss, and plan out everything down to the minutest detail. Finally, they come up with a plan of execution, and after seeking Baba's blessings they go ahead to implement it. No devotee is forced to participate, nor is anyone left out. Everything is voluntary and the devotees are free to choose. This level of camaraderie in the Satsang makes Sai Nilayam one of a kind Satsang. Those who have the eyes, can see the spiritual grandeur of Sai Nilayam.

We are lucky to have the continuous support and guidance of humble and extraordinary individuals like Prasanna and Srinivas in our lives. They never think about their own welfare. They are always concerned about the welfare of others. Whenever any devotee is in trouble, they approach them without the slightest hesitation. Because such is the nature of the bonding and affection they have towards everybody. Most people are more comfortable discussing their issues with Prasanna and Srinivas, than they are with their own parents. The love they have for everybody is such! They are always there for all the devotees. Baba's grace allows them to be as pious as they are. Through them we get the opportunity to maintain a deep personal relationship with Baba. All are the same in their eyes!

They spend more time with the devotees than they do with their own children. This is because they know that Baba will take care of everything. Only those who have an unlimited and unbounded love towards Baba can do so. Most people would panic should they be asked to forget their children for a few hours! The example Prasanna and Srinivas set to the devotees is that, if one has faith in Baba and surrenders oneself at his feet then he would have nothing to worry about. Baba will attend to the welfare of such a devotee. He who seeks God first, receives the gifts from heaven, earth and beyond.

Anupama recounted a small example in this context," Earlier, I was talking to Prasanna on phone, she told me that Sri Hanuman possessed Srinivas and there was message related to Kruthi. Prasanna told me that Baba had told Srinivas that a puja was to be performed on the name of Kruthi with 1116 vadas (also called Gari, made with lentils). As Sai Nilayam was completely full Prasanna did not have the space to go and listen to what Baba was trying to tell about Kruthi through Srinivas.

She was telling me that she felt sad that maybe she was not able to capture the complete message. That day I realized that No other person would be so selfless and care so much about another. Only Prasanna and Srinivas can do such a thing. May be their love, devotion and selfless service is what keeps Baba in Sai Nilayam!"

Indeed, we are lucky to be in their company. Let us pray that we too can lead a meaningful life such as theirs.

Regarding criticism, Baba said that "Before we criticize others we must realize our own draw backs, which we are blind to. When you criticize others, you take on their karma. So, leave off criticism of others, and instead chant God's name. Good or bad, what is ours, is ours".

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 60

AMARNATH PILGRIMAGE

This chapter describes how Baba made Prasanna, Srinivas and other Sai Nilayam devotees successfully complete one of the most difficult pilgrimages.

One day, Baba gave the following message: "*If you go on pilgrimages your karma phalam will be reduced*." Kavitha and Shankar never went to any place other than Tirupati (Sri Venkateshwara Swamy's abode) and Puttaparthi (Sri Satya Sai Baba's abode). But Baba's grace enabled them to go on many pilgrimages accompanying Prasanna and Srinivas. Baba would tell Prasanna what places were to be seen, when they were to embark on the journey, and when to return, along with all the details required for a successful pilgrimage.

Baba would plan the trip in such a way that one could see more places in less time and with limited expenditure. One of the most difficult pilgrimages was the Amarnath Yatra. As per Baba's instructions Prasanna and Srinivas were accompanied by Kavitha and Shankar. Ram Gopal and Devi who married recently wanted to call it quits due to personal reasons and they wanted to file for divorce. When they visited Sai Nilayam, Baba helped them rekindle their love and affection for one another. Devi was suffering from certain health problems and because of which doctors said that she cannot conceive. Later he secured a job with Tata Cell towers, and both husband and wife were happy just because of Baba.

Prasanna and Srinivas also helped them a lot in making them understand the importance of relations, which helped them to reduce their misunderstandings. They also wanted to go along with Prasanna and Srinivas, but Baba said that if they chose to tag along, Devi would have to face many health issues during the trip. But they did not listen. They wanted to go during Ashaadam to some place and said that they can do such sort of difficult trips only with them and they asked Prasanna. Prasanna said that it was up them and that the decision was theirs as Baba had already said no to them. Ram Gopal prayed to Baba that he was ready to suffer any difficulty on behalf of Devi, and therefore prayed that the burden be transferred to him. All were ready to travel.

Baba said that Amarnath darshan should happen on July 5^{th,} 2010 so they all started on 26-6-2010 as per Baba's instruction. All of them began their journey on the Bhubaneshwar express, from Bhubaneshwar to Delhi, and from there, to Kashmir. Due to Baba's planning, there was no waste of time at all. They started from Vizag and reached Bhubaneshwar by 7am, and in the afternoon, they were ready to board the Rajadhani express. During this interval, they all took bath and visited an old Shiva temple in Bhubaneshwar as per Baba's instruction. They reached Delhi at 10am on the next day. Their next train was the Jammu express, which was due to depart at night 9pm. During this break Baba made them touch all the important places in Delhi (India gate, Parliament, Indira Gandhi Samadhi, Rashtrapathi Bhavan). They started by the night train and reached Jammu the next day morning. Once in Jammu, except for Prasanna and Srinivas, the rest of the party went for sightseeing and returned by 4pm. Prasanna and Srinivas stayed back to make arrangements for the vehicle. They had already visited most of the places in the past. Baba advised them regarding which vehicle they were to choose, how much money they were to spend, in other words Baba guided them in all matters down to the minutest of details. Those who have accompanied Prasanna and Srinivas on any journey can attest to the veracity of the above statement. By the time the party returned from their excursion, Prasanna and Srinivas had arranged for a Toyota Innova for their trip to Amarnath.

First Baba told them to take the darshan of the Divine Mother's Shakthipeet at Sri Vaishno Devi Matha temple. The route to this temple was through the hills, and the preferred choice of commute was through riding horseback or by helicopter. They all took horses and reached there before nightfall. The next day during the early hours (called Brahma Muhurtham) they had the darshan of Goddess. Baba gave all of them the luck to see the most famous Shaktipeet which is very difficult and a rare opportunity. Lakhs of people do not get such an opportunity even after several lifetimes. After the darshan the Devi was cured of her infertility.

From there Baba told Prasanna to go and take the darshan of *Siva Kori*. This shrine is inaccessible to most people, and the trek is quite challenging. The shrine is located deep inside a network of caves, and the high-altitude results in sparse levels of oxygen which makes breathing very difficult. The Shiva Lingam present here is ***Swayambhoo***, meaning it came to exist by Lord Shiva's grace and was not established by any Sage or Rishi or Muni. Unbeknownst to most people, there is a secret route from this cave system to reach Amarnath, with the route starting at Siva Kori. Only highly advanced Rishis and Siddhulu can take this route, and if humans take this path, there is no coming back. So, they were informed by the locals. According to legend, Lord Shiva took Sri Parvathi Devi through this route to the Amarnath Mountain.

From *Siva Kori* began the Amarnath yatra. The entire way is secured by army and military personnel to protect civilians and the sovereignty of India against terrorists and anti-social elements. Their trip started with a full security check. Back in 2010, the services around Amarnath were rather scarce. In such high altitude mountainous areas, the weather changes from sunny to snowfall to torrential rain within a matter of minutes. As such the Amarnath Yatra was laden with such uncertainties. Should the weather take an unfavorable turn, pilgrims would have no place to seek shelter. If the trekking routes are inundated by a mudslide or a landslide, the journey would be halted. The safety of the pilgrims is entirely in the hands of Baba Bholenath! All that the devotees can do is pray with pure hearts and whole heartedly chant 'Har Har Mahadev'. Although delicious Food is available through Langars, there are no shelters or restrooms on the way. The Langars etc. are usually sponsored by businessmen and well to do people who believe that they will receive the blessings and grace of Lord Shiva if they give food to all the devotees who come for the pilgrimage. The food which Sai Nilayam devotees ate was very tasty. All cuisines were available, and they ate this prasad to their heart's content. Those serving the food brim with joy because on account of the devotees they got the opportunity to serve them!

As Ram Gopal wished that his wife should be healthy and he will bear the sufferings, he suddenly started suffering from severe fever. He did not like the food on the way nor did he eat any food. On one hand were the freezing temperatures, on the other hand was his fever which made all food seem unpalatable. Since he couldn't eat any food, he felt tired, hungry and cold. There were no hospitals to admit him into, but there were make shift tents inside which there were doctors to prescribe medicines etc.

Kashmir is called heaven on earth. The beauty of Kashmir cannot be expressed in words. It is covered in lush greenery and in tall evergreen trees. On the other side are the awe inspiring majestic snow-capped mountains, with rivulets and streams of fresh clear water flowing through them. The serenity and tranquility of the place fills the heart with joys never felt before. While enjoying and appreciating the beautiful sceneries, the party finally reached Baltal with great effort.

From that point onwards due to safety reasons, whether the pilgrims can continue further or not, is at the sole discretion of the military. In that cold climate they stayed in a tent that night and there were lot of centipedes and various other insects which created a lot of fear and discomfort among

the occupants. On the way they saw the place where Lord Shiva left Nandheeswarudu, along with the place where He left the Rudrakshas. Early next morning around 3 am, they started on the penultimate leg of the journey riding horseback, except for Ram Gopal who went with a Doli. The previous day due to a landslide many people died and the journey was halted. All the relatives of the Sai Nilayam party were quite worried.

On the way, there is a cave called ADHURANADHUNI CAVE (The place where Lord Shiva told Parvathi the secret of this creation). He left Rudrakshas, Nandi, Moon, Seshnag, Ganga, Trisulamand along the way. One can have the good fortune of taking darshan of these along the way to the Amarnath Cave. At 3am on July 5th they embarked on the last leg of the journey for taking darshan of AMARNATH MANCHU LINGAM (Ice Shiva Lingam) and they reached by 8am, without any difficulties. At the time of their journey, the entire route was only four feet wide with mountains on one side, and near vertical drops gorges falling into the valleys on the other side. This narrow mountain path was shared by a two traffic by those going, and by those coming back by foot, on horseback, and pallakis or dolis.

It created a lot of fear and happiness at the same time witnessing GOD's creation. The hooves of the horses are considered equal to Lord Shiva because on misstep by the horse or a lost footing would mean the horse, the guide and the rider would go tumbling down to their deaths. They reached there safely, after which they took a bath and went for darshan. The entire way was full of water and the water was very cold. After taking bath, they must trek 2 kms to the cave and upon reaching the cave, they are required to remove their shoes and socks.

There was another couple who wanted to go along with them on the Amarnath Pilgrimage. They were Rajesh and Rama. Since he had to take care of his business, he could not come take the extended trip, so they came by flight and helicopter on different days. All of them meeting will highly impossible because of weather and on account of the different modes of transport.

Rama and Rajesh also reached Amarnath the same day. They were ahead of the Sai Nilayam party by only thirty people. Rajesh was coming down the steps to take prasad and met Prasanna and everybody. They were pleasantly surprised by this strange co-incidence. Baba fulfilled Rama 's wish, which was to travel to Amarnath along with Prasanna and Srinivas. All together they started to the cave. Lord Shiva gave them darshan in the form of 10 feet tall MANCHU LINGAM (Ice Lingam). Just beside was Parvathi Devi's MANCHU LINGAM.

A stray thought passed Kavitha's mind, "Did we take all the trouble to come all the way only to worship an Ice formation resembling a Siva Lingam?" Just as this thought was passing in her mind, they the opportunity to take a second darshan, and this time Kavitha broke down into incessant tears. All members of the Sai Nilayam Satsang party witnessed Lord Shiva sitting there, and the images of Sri Vinayaka and Omkaram appeared in the MANCHU LINGAM. The air was suddenly filled with the sweet-smelling fragrance of Udi. They felt extremely happy at the strange turn of events. There they saw a pair of pigeons which are believed to have been living together of several years now. These pigeons have been observed to stay alive inside the cave even during severe snowstorms when the cave is closed shut with no access to food.

Ram Gopal finished taking darshan while seated in the Doli, and while returning he felt like killing himself by jumping from the top of those mountains because his health condition was deteriorating and it only kept getting worse. He repented for not listening to Baba's words. Timid as he was, he immediately said neve in my life will I ask you to give me the suffering of someone else to me! I

repent for what I have done, please rescue me and put an end to my suffering. Strangely enough, as soon as he said this, Devi developed the fever and he felt better almost instantaneously.

After darshan they returned to Kashmir. One day they stayed in a boat house. They went to the temple of Lord Shiva which was consecrated by Sri Adi Shankaracharya, and while returning they went to GOWRI KUND. Parvathi Devi performed penance to marry Lord Shiva at Gowri Kund. There is a beautiful water fall here, and legend has it that Goddess Parvathi Devi bathed there and went inside the cave and performed strict penance.

After everybody finished taking darshan, nimble footed Prasanna was a little ahead of everybody else. Suddenly her chunni became heavy and she felt a reeling sensation of being drawn backwards and she managed to sit down on a big stone nearby. They all ran and saw that the chunni was full of UDI and there was a *GOWRI DEVI IDOL* in it. It looked as if the puja was done to idol just a few minutes ago and there was a flower on it. Everybody was shocked and shaken by a miracle of this magnitude. Having witnessed it in such a holy place, left profound impressions on them. This holy idol now adorns the puja room at Sai Nilayam, and during Sravana month special pujas are conducted on all four Fridays.

All the idols in SAI NILAYAM are SWAYAMBHU. When they were about to return in two days Baba gave a message to take darshan of the following shakti peethams - Jwalamukhi, Chinthapurni, Nayanadevi, Kurukshetram as they may never have the opportunity or bodily strength to do so. After all the darshans, they reached Delhi at midnight and early next morning they boarded the Rajadhani express and returned home safely.

While returning from Amarnath, Baba gave a message that Ram Gopal and his wife will gradually stop coming to Sai Nilayam. After coming back, they performed the ANAGHA DEVI Vratham and Devi conceived and delivered a girl child. His words are always true and they stopped coming to Sai Nilayam after that. It appears that they forgot Baba who helped them during the most crucial situations. Later they came again during some problems and Baba told them to be stay alert for the next six months.

After getting a solution to their problems, they once again stopped taking Baba’s darshan. While human beings are all endowed with free will and the right to exercise it, they should keep in mind that association with God and spirituality further enhances their overall growth and brings them more prosperity. Devotees should not fall slaves to ego and deviate from the path. Baba is always welcoming devotees with open arms. Those who reform themselves and seek refuge in Baba will have fulfilling lives, and those who don’t will experience the joys and sorrows lashed out at them by their own karma.

This is how Baba enabled the party to complete a successful pilgrimage of one of the toughest and riskiest of pilgrimages in India. Baba loves his devotees and always looks after their welfare. Let us pray to him with love and devotion and seek his guidance at every step of our lives.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 61

MANASAROVAR PILGRIMAGE

This chapter describes how Baba enabled Sai Nilayam devotees to successfully complete the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, which is the most challenging of all pilgrimages on planet earth!

Most people believe that this yatra is a second birth to those who make it through successfully. Sai Nilayam devotees say that Baba was with them throughout the journey, guiding them breath by breath and step by step.

Mount Kailash is believed to be the celestial abode of God Shiva and Goddess Parvathi. The spectacularly picturesque landscape, snowcapped mountains, and an altitude of 15,000ft result in an exhilarating experience for the pilgrim, filling his heart with awe and wonder. The air is crisp reverberating with tangible piety. Mount Kailash is the monarch of the majestic Himalayas. Millions of devotees yearn to lay their eyes on this grand spectacle to satiate their unquenched spiritual longing that has built up since lifetimes! Numerous places on earth have been sanctified and venerated by the spiritual prowess of God realized saints, but the infinite spiritual grandeur of Mount Kailash is beyond the limited descriptive power of words. The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra is a journey of a lifetime, and merely glancing at the mountain's resplendence, leaves every cell of the body and soul scintillating with the magnetic divinity of God Shiva and Goddess Parvathi.

Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar are a witness to time, and have existed untouched by the vagaries of nature. For millennia, devotees have thronged to witness this abode of Lord Shiva seeking salvation from their mundane existence. Anybody stepping foot there can instantly experience the universality and unity of all existence, and that everything that exists is but energy resonating with the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva. Devotees experience an overwhelming sense of joy and unbounded love emanate from the region. This is not a placebo effect and millions of devotees have testified to this fact. This pilgrimage is of great spiritual and mystical significance transcending the boundaries of the space time continuum.

The lake Manasarovar is located at an altitude of approximately 15,000ft, and Mount Kailash is located at an altitude of 22,000ft. The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra is the toughest of all pilgrimages, and is not for the faint hearted.

Manasarovar Lake with KAILASH Mountain

In Hinduism, Lake Mansarovar is a personification of purity, and anyone who drinks water from the lake will go to the abode of Shiva after death. The power of the pilgrimage is such that it can free one from the bondage of karma and relive him from the endless cycle of births and deaths.

When viewing the mountain from the south, one can clearly see the striking resemblance it has with the three-eye Shiva. On viewing the mountain from the west reflects the presence of the Nagaraja – Vasuki, who is said to have wrapped himself around Mount Kailash, which in turn was used for churning the ancient ocean of milk. This happened during the battle between the Gods and the Demons.

Mount KAILASH

Mt. Kailash (also known as the 'Sumeru Parvat' in Hindu mythology) provides a spiritually enriching, naturally unique and a truly rewarding journey of a lifetime. The region is held in the highest regard across Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and Bons. The entire region oozes with the nectar of spirituality. Mount Kailash is said to hold the stairway to heaven, and other worlds beyond. This enchanting cosmic journey is an inner journey to the soul, to the very essence of creation and existence, and finally into oneness with the non-dual.

The story behind the Sai Nilayam Manasarovar yatra, is an interesting one. It wasn't something that was planned out of the blue. Baba gave a vision of *Brahma Kamalam* to Prasanna and told that he would take her to Kailash Manasarovar. This happened two years ago. Ever since Baba has been reminding her to make necessary arrangements, but somehow, she kept postponing it due to one reason or another. In the year 2014 Baba finalized the date for the Manasarovar trip. He gave a message stating that "*IPPUDU VELLAKA POTHE IKA JEEVITHAM LO VELLALERU*" (It is either now or

never. You will not get another opportunity in this life!). So, saying Baba declared that they should plan to reach Manasarovar by the 14th of May 2014. This day was auspicious for it was also the Vaisakha Pournami.

Srinivas promptly began looking up various travel packages and suddenly Prasanna remembered her family friend Lama and sent him a mail seeking his suggestions regarding the how to go about the Kailash Manasarovar yatra. Lama recommended Samrat Travels. Srinivas had a quick word with them and it was decided to go with the same agency. This Samrat Travels turned out to be sent by Baba, for it helped them save forty thousand rupees per family.

The journey started on May 9th, 2014. This was exactly fifteen days from the date of Baba's message. Given how challenging and risky the journey was going to be, Baba ultimately decided who would go and who wouldn't. Srinivas, Prasanna, Bharathi, Shankar, Kavitha, Lakshmi, Narayana, Sujatha, Kameswar Rao and Anupama received Baba's approval. Generally, Kavitha does not go on any trip without first consulting Baba. Baba okayed her travel, but neither Kavitha nor Shankar possessed passports. Also, Shankar was also not present as he had to accompany his son for the GRE examinations. They were in great dilemma regarding how they were to obtain their passports on such a tight deadline, and to add to their misery the next two days were public holidays.

They felt hopeless, and wanted to drop out. But Baba said that if they gave it a shot, they would get their passports. All the passports had to be sent a week in advance through the travel agent to Nepal and from there they had to be submitted in the Chinese embassy for obtaining the permit. Everybody handed over the passports while Anupama and Suresh sent it through courier. There was only one day left to send the passports and Shankar went to the passport office and pleaded his case with them. They generously agreed to his requests, and assured that their passports would be printed and dispatched the same evening. Shankar requested for them to be handed over to him owing the urgency of the situation. However, they disagreed saying they could not violate the law, but they provided him with the passport numbers! Srinivas Sastry gave the passport numbers to the travel agent along with their passports, and miraculously everybody received their permits. The last names on the list were that of Shankar and Kavitha. This is how Baba took care of the passports and permits, and artfully made for proper arrangements.

As for Anupama and Suresh, they too received the passports with approved permits. Suresh's organization didn't agree to provide a leave of fifteen days, so he decided to stay back. At that point in time they were not stable financially, so that put a question mark on if this was even going to be possible. But Anupama had immense trust in Baba. She told Suresh not to have doubting tendencies, but to have implicit faith in Baba. She further added that since she had such faith in Baba, he would arrange for her in one way or another. Prasanna, Srinivas and Shankar came forward to support them financially. Suresh had in his account a certain amount which he kept aside for the payment of land which he borrowed from his sister. Anupama shared this news with Prasanna who told them not to worry about the payment of the land and instead spend it on this exhilarating spiritual journey, which would be well worth the amount of money. They would gain something far more superior by God's grace. Baba guided all devotees to make them physically and mentally fit for the journey. He made everybody take up walking long distances regularly. He also instructed what to carry, what not to carry made everybody ready for the tour. Thus, with all arrangements being made for, the party was ready to embark on this enchanting journey to the abode of Lord Shiva.

Baba was meticulous in planning the whole trip. He instructed the devotees to first reach Nepal by flight so that they would conserve a lot of time and energy. Since everybody travelled by flight they were all fresh and energetic, without the slightest sign of fatigue. They also saved many days in the

process. Upon reaching Nepal, they first visited the Pasupatinath temple along with some Buddhist temples. They also had to opportunity of viewing Mount Everest, Kanchenjunga and Mount K2. Luck was on their side. The clear blue skies allowed them to glimpse at the snake-hood like formation in the mountain ranges.

In Nepal, Prasanna and Srinivas's family friend (Laama) caught up with them and provided them with all the information. He helped them shop for various items needed for the Manasarovar Yatra. It is worth mentioning that Baba himself had provided this list before the journey. Laama served as the medium. The list also included items that were required for performing homam at Lake Manasarovar. Laama helped them purchase some of the best woolen wear required for the trip.

An interesting backstory is that when Prasanna and Srinivas first recalled that their friend Laama was living in Nepal, they did not have his phone number. This was because it had been years since they last exchanged numbers, and time took its toll and the number and its memory both disappeared. However, Prasanna and Srinivas made a diligent search for it and finally found it. At first, they were hesitant to call the number because it could have very well changed, but nevertheless they decided to make the call. With Baba's grace Laama happened to be using the same number and their joy knew no bounds. This Laama was an affluent person, yet his demeanor was kind humble and honest. Peace be unto him!

The next day morning they started towards Manasarovar by bus. The first leg of the journey was from Nepal to Tibet, where all travelers settled down at the Base Camp in Nyalam. This base camp has a very important purpose. At higher altitudes, if the body is not given sufficient time to acclimatize to the thin air and lower levels of oxygen and pressure, and instead the body is made to ascend the altitude, the heart and lungs would collapse due to respiratory failure triggered by acute altitude sickness. Therefore, by settling down at the base camp for a day allows the body to adapt itself to the new surroundings with notable sparse levels of oxygen. The temperatures are usually below freezing, and they often take the toll on south Indians who are more used to warmer humid climates! So, the Sai Nilayam party was struggling with the bone biting mind numbing. The thick jackets and thermal wear provided little to no resistance to the cold.

As previously warned by Baba, Prasanna had a hard time breathing. Immediately Srinivas rushed to the paramedics who assured him not to worry as this was a common occurrence among most people who were not used to such high altitudes But, the severity of the breathlessness increased and Srinivas went and brought portable oxygen cylinders. Slowly Prasanna started breathing through them. Then suddenly Baba possessed her and asked the devotees present to read Sri Sai Satcharitra. Unfortunately, none of then carried the book. This could be termed as a lack of Shraddha. The devotees chided themselves for not carrying the book with them. They silently prayed to Baba to make everything all right.

With Baba's grace, Prasanna started feeling better. Soon after which they were served hot meals. But the severe cold and discomfort killed their appetite due to which they couldn't eat to their hearts' content. On the next day they had to climb a mountain and those who could adjust to the oxygen levels would be continuing further and the others would have no choice but to stay behind because they would be scaling higher and higher until they are at around 15000-20000ft where Lake Manasarovar and Mount Kailash are located. Many people from other travels fell sick and couldn't continue any further. Fortunately for Sai Nilayam devotees, they placed their entire trust in Baba and Baba ensured their safety at every step.

Anupama related the following, “We started from Nyalam by bus and reached the Tibetan- Chinese border where further checking was done to enter Chinese-occupied-Tibetan region. After the checking process was done, we started from there riding in Chinese buses and were escorted by military personnel. Finally, we reached Manasarovar on Vaisakha Sudha Pournami.

The temperatures were deadly, and far below zero. The strong gusts of wind and snow only made matters worse. To say that everybody was suffering terribly would be an understatement. Now everybody was struggling was oxygen, and they therefore had to rely on the portable artificial supplies of oxygen. Yet the scenic views, stunning landscapes and pristine mountains of snow raised everybody’s spirits and brought new life back to their fatigued bodies. There was stark contrast between the virgin lands here compared to the concrete jungles in which we are accustomed to living in. For once, all those present there felt an instant connection with their inner selves.

It is believed that on Vaisakha Suddha Pournami at Brahma Muhurtham, Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi take bath in the Holy waters of Lake Manasarovar, and give darshan to the faithful devotees. Generous Baba made them aware of the exact time at which they were to be present there to have a holy darshan of Shiva Parvathulu! So, we all went out at the appropriate time, and wonder of wonders they witnessed brilliant light pulsating with indescribably pure cosmic energy. The devotees shed tears of bliss as they bathed in its brilliance. The devotees found themselves closer to the kingdom of God as wave after wave of divinity drenched them in pure joy. They distinctly recall witness beautiful celestial swans peacefully gliding on the waters of Lake Manasarovar. Some were golden in color. Narayana took a holy bath during the Brahma Muhurtham and was getting things ready for the Homam as per Baba’s instructions.”

Around 8am in the morning, the remaining members of the party bathed in the fresh ice-cold waters of Lake Manasarovar which had a cleansing effect on both body and soul. Suddenly they felt the karmic burden of several lifetimes vanish into thin air. A profound sense of peace set in thereafter. Bharathi was among the first in the party to plunge into the cold water of this mountainous lake. Certain devotees experienced their heartbeat stop due to the frigid temperatures, but Baba’s blessings ensured that their hearts continued to beat! Any practitioner of western science would panic at the sight of this activity for they would expect instant death by hypothermia! But little do they know that science is but a slave of the divinity, hence the devotees were untouched by its effects!

Narayana performed Rudrabhishekam while the remaining members performed Abhishekham over the Sri Chakram with the holy water. Attentive readers can recall from early chapters that Anupama and Narayana owned huge Sri Chakrams. Hence, they couldn’t carry it with them on this journey. Baba instructed them not to do so. Baba asked them to carry the holy water in bottles and perform the Abhishekham upon reaching their houses. During the puja, as per Baba’s message Prasanna and everybody brought new saris to offer to the Goddess. But there Prasanna received another message in a vision that if anybody wished they could offer Gold or Silver to the Goddess and that she would bless them. Immediately the devotees proceeded to collect whatever they wished to offer at the feet of the Goddess, and put it in Prasanna’s hand.

Prasanna offered them into the waters of Lake Manasarovar and requested the Goddess to accept their humble offerings. Soon after which the Goddess appeared to Prasanna adorning everything that was offered with a pure conscience. From Lake Manasarovar one can view the spell binding Mount Kailash in all its raw glory. While the puja was going, Baba gave various instructions regarding the various forms of God which can be seen on the snow-covered peaks of Mt. Kailash. The devotees

could see Vinayaka, Siva Parvathulu and Trimurthulu. After the puja concluded, they all packed and started on the final leg of the journey, to Mount Kailash.

The final base camp was near Mount Kailash. Anybody who has gone mountaineering can attest to the fact that high altitude winds and temperatures are ruthless and unforgiving! At an altitude of nearly 21000 ft. combined with blizzard like conditions made existence miserable for everyone. The polar temperatures redefined the word freezing! Such frosty conditions make breathing nearly impossible for ordinary people. Anupama and Srinivas would run for obtaining portable oxygen packs as they were required by almost everybody in the party. Baba graciously guided everybody regarding their health, allowing them to take required rest.

Those who are able, can proceed to complete a *Parikrama* (circumambulating) of Mount Kailash. The others are required to stay back at Base Camp. The Sai Nilayam party had to finalize the arrangements; who was going to finish the *Parikrama* by foot, and who all were going to be doing it on horseback and so on. All transactions were final, and there are no refunds once you make the payment! To the curious readers, riding a wild horse for 48kms on a rocky terrain at 21000ft is not as fun as it would seem!

As per Baba's instructions it was decided that Anupama and Narayana would go by walk and rest would ride horseback. Lakshmi and Bharathi stayed back, and for good reason. During the early hours of the next day, all the devotees once again had the good fortune of witnessing the brilliant divine light piercing through the sky into the vast infinite of the cosmos. Thus, they had the darshan of Lord Shiva in the form of a pulsating mass of light, and of Goddess Parvathi Devi in the waters of Lake Manasarovar. (The lake can be clearly seen from the base camp at Mount Kailash.)

After reaching *Yama Dwar,* Laskhmi and Bharathi returned after crossing it. Anupama and Narayana started by walk. But for the rest of the party to reach the horses entailed walking a distance of 4 kms! The oxygen levels at this altitude were practically nil, and everybody was already feeling it's effects, especially without the presence of any specialized high-altitude suits or masks. Baba, gave Srinivas the energy to walk up to the horses. There he managed to convince one person to lend his vehicle so that Prasanna and the others could make it. The persona agreed, and finally everybody reached their horses.

During the *Parikrama* they had the darshan of Sri Vinayaka and his Mushikam, Seshnag, and Ardhanaareshwarulu, Sri Nandi, Sri Hanuman, and at last that of Shiva Parvathulu gracefully seated on a boulder. Every mountain is in the form of God. It is the real nature. While walking there was water that was frozen and Prasanna told us that it is the water from the JATAJUTAM (Locks) of Lord Shiva. Anupama and Narayana drank its water as holy Teertha. As per Baba's message the Sai Nilayam party reached the Kailash mountain in about 5 hours, while all others took 10 hours. They stayed there for some time (it was the place where SHIVA-PARVATHULU stay) and the temperature was -20 degrees Celsius. These sub-zero freezing temperatures were turning hot food into ice cold food within a matter of seconds. Baba instructed Anupama and Narayana to take tablets so that they would not fall sick and instructed everyone only drink mineral water.

By mistake Narayana consumed some water because of which he fell sick after two days and the treatment also was instructed by Baba which was to be taken for four days. Anupama says, "The Kailash mountain was amazing to look at. It was sparkling in hues of gold and silver, reflecting the rays of the afternoon sun. During the early hours of the next day we had the darshan of *Shiva-Parvathulu*. We could distinctly hear the *Damarukam*. The sounds were crystal clear. Baba gave a message that we all had to do the Lalitha Parayana there and we all followed it. Upon completing it,

we all started the return journey to the base camp. While returning, Narayana and I had to come by walk and rest all by horses. But I began wondering if I have any strength left to return by walk? The journey had taken toll on her, and Prasanna wasn't feeling any better. She was in no condition to ride the horse. But I surrendered these thoughts and Baba's feet and put my entire trust in him. I knew that he would not let down his devotees, and he would work his mysterious ways.

Luckily a co-traveler who came along with us by walk during the *Parikrama* was talking to a driver of a Land Cruiser and he called me and asked whether we are interested in accompanying them back to the base camp. I jumped with joy. They driver agreed to take both the ladies. Narayana mounted Prasanna's horse, and thus they all returned to base camp in good health."

From there they swiftly reached Nepal. Only a day after they had finished doing the *Parikrama*, it was halted indefinitely as few devotees died due to a lack of oxygen. Sai Nilayam devotees thanked Baba for his love and affection towards them. In Nepal they went visited the *Manokamana Devi Temple".* It is also a Shaktipeet. The presence of the Goddess is tangible at this temple. After bidding goodbye to Nepal, they returned to India. This is how Baba's blessings enabled them to complete one of the most arduous and challenging pilgrimage – The Kailash Manasarovar Yatra.

If not for Baba's blessings and the hard work of Prasanna and Srinivas, this beautiful journey of a lifetime would have never happened. Baba's words are never untrue, "*Ippudu Vellaka Pothe Ika Jeevitham Lo Vellaleru*". Though there were some hurdles along the way, Baba's grace allowed them to overcome all of them and have a successful journey and have darshan of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvathi.

When the party finally returned home, everybody was surprised at how healthy they were! Baba's ways are mysterious and his grace can accomplish the most impossible things in the most improbable ways. Let us surrender our heart and soul to Baba and make him our sole refuge.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 62

PILGRIMAGE TRIP OF DATTA KSHETRAS.

This chapter describes how Baba made Prasanna and Srinivas go on a pilgrimage to all the Datta Kshetras.

Baba always said that "*Pilgrimages do away with one's past karma, and the fruits thereof*." One cannot agree more with the statement. Over the numerous births and deaths across the innumerable lifeforms that we manifest in, and all the results of the actions which accumulate over lifetimes, one cannot say for sure what or when or how one is going to reap the fruits of such complex karma. All we know is that we are lucky to have Baba's company, and fortunate to have the realization and desire to free ourselves from this cycle of birth, death, sorrow, suffering and hopes of happiness.

The power of a saint's company is such, that it makes dispassion descend over the individual in an effortless manner, and opens our eyes to the reality. Holy temples and other places of worship are equally significant for they were established by such eminent saints, and the spiritual energy of the saint sanctifies the place along with the helpless masses that are drawn to it during the centuries past, and during the centuries to come. Due to the combined spiritual and positive energy echoing from such holy places results in purification of the body and soul of whomsoever steps foot in its premises.

Baba, being an incarnation of God, and Para Brahma himself, had great love for his devotees and wanted them to break free from the bondage of karma. However, a Guru can only act as a guide to the yearning disciple, but the truth is for the disciple to learn for himself. Try however much the Guru would like, if the disciple is not in a state to receive the instructions, putting a bar of gold in front of him would still not make him grasp its significance as he would think of it to be a worthless piece of metal due to his ignorance. Thus, in order to realize the truth, one must remove the veil of ignorance masking his eyes through constant sadhana. What better way to accomplish this if not through Meditation, Satsang, Pilgrimages and Bhagwan-Namasmaran? Therefore, Baba regularly made devotees embark on holy pilgrimages leaving behind their ego and their superficial busy lives.

Although the concept of Karma is beyond the ken of our intellect, it would suffice to know that karma is unforgiving and it would collect its debt. However, its effects are visible only on those who identify themselves with the body. Karma whips those who forget their true nature, which is -Sat-Chit-Anand, and reduce themselves to the level of animals. To overcome karma, one must first burn it through the aforementioned methods, and finally become free effects by realizing God.

The Datta Kshetras are of great spiritual, mystical and philosophical significance. Since it wouldn't do justice to confine the universe-like expansive greatness of these Datta Kshetras to a few pages in a book, interested readers are requested to read 'Sri Guru Charitra' written by Pujya Acharya Sri Ekkirala Bharadwaja. This one-of-a-kind work of wisdom spectacularly documents the life and history of Sri Dattatreya Swami, his incarnations, and finally the significance of the Datta Kshetras.

Lord Dattatreya was the first manifestation, also called Adi Guru. in the Guru tradition. His later incarnations or Avataars are:

1. Shripad Shri Vallabha

2. Shri Narasimha Saraswati

3. Shri Swami Samarth of Akkalkot

4. Shri Manik Prabhu

5. Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi

Digambara Digambara Sri Pada Vallabha Digambara,

Digambara Digambara, Avadhuta Chintana Digambara.

Sadgurus are an embodiment of the infinite existence, infinite knowledge and infinite bliss who incarnate in the human body for the sake of their devotees. According to the Guru Gita,

The form of Guru is the root of meditation,
The feet of the Guru are the root of worship,
The teachings of the Guru are the root of all hymns and
The Grace of the Guru is the root of salvation.

The Sadgurus, are born at different times in different places and with different cultural backgrounds. The recurring theme among Saints and Sadguru's who are God realized, or are incarnations of God, is that they take birth only for dedicating their lives in the selfless service of devotees with the sole agenda of uplifting them and helping them realize their true nature. Therefore, anybody who has had the opportunity of visiting and prostrating themselves at the various Datta Kshetras is indeed fortunate, and definitely has with him a good store of merits from past lives and present. Only those with pure hearts and good karma get the opportunity to visit such holy places. This is by no means an exaggeration, but a timeless truth. As is characteristic of Baba, he enabled other devotees to accompany Prasanna and Srinivas on their journey to these holy places. Let us see how.

In 2011, Baba instructed Prasanna and Srinivas to go to visit the Datta Kshetras. Shankar, Kavitha, Sujatha and Kameswar Rao accompanied them. Everything that has happened and everything that is bound to happen is known to Baba. It was not until later that the devotees of Sai Nilayam realized the reason behind this sudden visit to the holy Datta Kshetras.

During April 2011, the party set out on their journey, and first reached *Pitapuram* where they took the darshan of his Holiness Shri Paada Sri Vallabha Swami. This is the birth place of Dattatreya Swami. He was brought up by Smt. Sumathi and Sri. Appala Raja Sharma. Once again, reading the Guru Charitra is highly recommended to understand the beautiful story behind this incarnation. In Pitapuram there is also the Shakti Peet of *Sri Puruthika Devi*. After taking her darshan, they continued towards Hyderabad to reach *Kuruvapuram.*

It is located in the Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, bordering the Krishna river. To reach this temple, one has no option but to cross the river using a Theppa, (a small round boat). This is an ancient temple, which stood the test of time. As such, there are very limited facilities at this temple. Suddenly you will find yourself immersing in nature and becoming one with it as you sleep in the open courtyards of the temple, eat in banana leaves and bath in the fresh river water. The food served is the prasad prepared with great love and affection by the temple priest. The food is really tasty, and you will keep wanting more. What can't God's grace accomplish? In all honesty, it is impossible for one to go to any of these Datta Kshetras of their own accord. The journey is challenging and only those who have the Guru's grace get invited. Though it was not on the original itinerary, Baba made the Sai Nilayam party visit other Swayambhu (self-existent/self-manifested) Temples.

Baba's planning was impeccable at every step of the journey. Even today, when devotees recall all these affectionate moments, they break down into tears overwhelmed by Baba's love for them. The next stop during the journey was at the Kolhapur Mahalakshmi temple which is another ShaktiPeet. Here, the devotees are made to offer their prayers from the mandap, and they are not allowed into the Garbha Gudi. Prasanna felt sad as they didn't have the opportunity to perform the Devi's beloved Kumkum Puja. Just as this thought passed her mind, dark red Kumkum just started to manifest itself in profuse quantities in Prasanna's hands.

From there their journey took them to Oundha Nagnath and Parli Vaidhyanadh which are two of the twelve Jyothirlingams. The next stop was at Pandharipur where they had the darshan of Panduranga who is none other than Sri Krishna! They also had the good fortune of worshipping Tuljapur's Bhavani Devi. It is one of the Upashaktipeet. Baba said to Prasanna, "if you worship the Goddess in your puja room you will see all works being accomplished successfully"

Next, they halted at Audumber, which is another prominent Datta Kshetra. By the time they alighted at Audumber, it was late in the evening. As mentioned earlier, the Datta Kshetras date back several millennia and centuries, as such they aren't easily accessible. It was Lord Dattatreya's wish that only those who are really seeking shall have his darshan, therefore the development around these ancient temples is usually little to none.

By the time they reached place, it was quite deserted. This made them wonder if nobody is present how will we ever come to know of this place's greatness? Thinking in this manner, they began wandering here and there when they caught sight of an elderly gentleman calmly seated under a tree. They were astonished by his poise and saint like demeanor. Even today, they distinctly recall how fair he was, like milk and marble, and wearing nothing except for a dhoti. He was seated cross-legged, with a big tilak adorning his forehead.

Srinivas approached him and introduced himself along with the rest of the party. After which he requested the gentleman if he could shed some light on the greatness and significance of this holy place. The elderly man spoke for half an hour and told them how a human must behave during his life time. As is customary for disciples to offer dakshina of some sort to the Guru, they too wanted to offer something to the gentleman for sharing his wisdom. But as they were carrying nothing but money, they kindly requested him to accept it. He politely refused saying that he was in want for nothing. He never wanted anything of anybody even during the prime of his youth and power, and neither did he now and reaffirmed that God is the sole savior. Baba instructed Prasanna to bow at his feet and seek his blessings. So, she did, and the rest of the party followed suit. With his consent, they photograph of him, and another with all of them together.

When they finally reached their next destination, Akkalkot, they saw the photograph of Sri Akkalkot Maharaj for the very first time which brought them onto their knees, like they were hit by a one-thousand-ton juggernaut. Looking at the photo of Maharaji they froze in their footsteps and tears started rolling down their cheeks, and their throats choked with emotion, and their hearts were filled with gratitude. The elderly saint like gentleman who appeared to them in *Audumber*, and interacted with them, bore an uncanny resemblance to Sri Akkalkot Maharaj. In fact, Maharaj-Ji himself appeared to them in human form and gave them darshan ahead of their journey. He was none other than the veritable Dattatreya Swami who appeared in Akkalkot Maharaj-Ji's form and blessed them. The entire temple was filled with the photographs of this gentleman, whom they now knew to be Sri Akkalkot Maharaj.

When they entered the main temple, seeing the beautiful life like statue of Sri Akkalkot Maharaj-Ji gave them goosebumps while also filling them with immense joy. They thanked Baba for his blessings, for no ordinary individual could have borne witness to such an extraordinary miracle of seeing Maharaj-Ji in flesh! At the beginning of the journey, when Baba first told Prasanna that Sri Dattatreya Swami would himself appear to them and given them darshan at one of the pilgrimages, she didn't know what to make of it so she didn't give it much thought. But after the realization dawned upon them, they suddenly realized the greatness of Baba's words.

From *Akkalkot* they reached *Gangapur*. In Gangapur, they worshipped the *Holy Nirguna Feet* of Sri Dattatreya Swami. Something that sets the pilgrimage of Datta Kshetras apart, is that Sri Dattatreya Swami himself will appear to in some form at one or all the Datta Kshetras and seek *Bhiksha or Dakshina* from you, and burn your karma. Another uniqueness is that all the Datta Kshetras are located on the banks of the Krishna river, therefore every Datta bhakta cleanses his body and soul by taking a holy dip in this holy river, which presages time! It is said that taking a holy dip in the waters of Krishna will ease one's mental and physical problems.

The final Datta Kshetram was the blessed Shirdi! Baba instructed the party to take his darshan upon reaching Shirdi. Baba possessed Prasanna during the *Shej Aarthi* which commenced at 10:30pm. If some devotee forgot the lyrics, Baba would sing along and help him recollect the lyrics. Baba asked Kavitha to offer *milk cream* (*Venna in Telugu*) during the *Kakad Arathi which begins at 04:30am.* Kavitha didn't know how or from where to obtain this Venna, especially in a place she was unfamiliar with. So all members of the party set about searching for it and they went from shop to shop, and after a diligent search they finally found one diary shop which had fresh *Venna.*

But as they were scheduled to return to Vizag the following day, they were unsure how they were going to offer *Venna* to Baba during the *Kakad Arathi*. Fortunately, Srinivas Sastry happened to know one of the Sri Shirdi Sai Sansthan Trustees. This board member enabled them to obtain tickets for the Kakad Arathi, and so then went took darshan, offered namaskars along with the *Venna* that was requested. They were very lucky to take Baba's darshan from such close proximity. There were only three other people who were ahead of them. They were none other than the family members of Mahalsapathi, who as a custom, offer first offer Naivedyam to Baba. The Sai Nilayam party's turn came next, and they offered the cream to Baba, who gave it back to them as prasad. After the darshan, Kavitha came out and sat there. A dog appeared out of nowhere and with great relish devoured the cream from Kavitha's hands. Thus, Baba once again accepted her devotion and her Naivedyam. The dog was none other than Baba, thereby proving the fact that Baba is an *Antaryami,* who resides in the hearts of all beings.

Once on a Guru Pournami day Kavitha brought milk, curd and cream to offer them to Baba and kept it outside in the verandah in Sai Nilayam as cleaning was going inside. A dog just happened to come upstairs and was standing near the offerings. Zippy began barking, as if he were greeting the dog. Prasanna asked Zippy to go inside, and asked Kavitha to feed the dog milk. But by that time Kavitha had already absentmindedly shooed away the dog. Baba told Prasanna - *I came to drink milk and Kavitha kicked me out without appeasing my hunger*. When Kavitha came was made aware of this, she felt instant regret at her fallacy, and her inability to see Baba in all beings. So, she sincerely apologized to Baba. Baba is there in all living beings. Even today when she recalls this incident, she feels very bad.

In the Sai Satcharitra, a similar story is mentioned. Once when Lakshmi Bai was in Baba's presence, He says to her, "Mai, I am feeling hungry", and off she goes saying "Baba, I will be back with food". After she returns with roti and vegetables and offers them to Baba, He offers the roti/bread to a

hungry dog nearby. Laskshmi Bai, out of her love for Baba protests saying "With great difficulty I made the bread and brought them for you, but why did you not eat it and instead offered it to the dog? All my efforts are now unfruitful". Baba soothes her saying, "Why do you complain in vain? the appeasement of the dog's hunger is the appeasement of my hunger. God lives in your heart and he also lives in all beings. Always remember this and feed the hungry first." Through this beautiful lesson Baba once again drove home the principle that we are all made in the image of God, and that we are all one and the same, and part of the same universal cosmic consciousness or Brahma. All that we see and experience in the outer world through our senses is nothing but the effect of Maya or the illusory cosmic power of Hari. Only those who withdraw their senses from the outside world, and instead focus deep within themselves begin to realize this universal truth.

The next stop in the journey was at Mahur, where they had opportunity of worshipping the *Eka Veera Devi* Temple. This temple happens to be one of the Shaktipeeths, and the cosmic vibrations can be profoundly felt by those sensitive to its spiritual energy and waves. Following Baba's directions, they next halted to take darshan of *Sri Dattatreya Swami Adhirbhas*than followed by a trip to the holy *Atri Anasuya* temple.

On 4th June 2010, Kavitha had the good fortune of accompanying Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry on a trip to *Srisailam, Allampuri, Draksharamam, Pithapuram*, and *Maha Nandi*. She was always desirous of taking darshan of all the *Shaktipeeths* too, and Baba granted her wishes! Not only did she visit the *Shaktipeeths*, but Baba's blessings enabled her to complete a pilgrimage of the holy, timeless and ageless *Jyothir Lingams*!

Baba made them take the darshan of *Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy* and *Bramharambika Devi*, and *Maha Nandi* in Srisailam, Kurnool District, AP. Next, they took darshan of *Allampuri Jogulamba* darshan in the same region. On 31-10-2010 Baba gave a message that "*Srini , Shankar Thalupulamma Thalli, Satyanarayana Swamy darshanam thakshanam*". So, they started that very same evening, it was raining cats and dogs, and the visibility was near zero and the roads were flooded with water. Nobody can travel in those climatic conditions. But Srinivas Sastry (like Shama) started immediately without second thoughts as Baba said (Thakshanam i.e immediately). Just like his wife, Prasanna, he too had implicit faith in Baba. By the time they reached Thalupulamma Thalli temple, the road was filled with knee-deep water, and the temple was minutes away from being closed. But they managed to get in, and as there was no electricity, the only source of lighting was earthen lamps. In the golden glimmer of those lamps they had the most beautiful darshan of the Goddess!

From there they reached Annavaram where they completed the darshan and reached home safely by around midnight. Like mentioned at various points in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, "He calls one to Himself also makes the proper arrangements!" Baba did the same in this case! Such is Baba's love for his devotees.

Baba always wants wished for his devotees to fulfill oaths that they had taken. On 24-12-2009, Baba gave them a message to go and have the darshan of *Sri Venkateswara Swami* at *Tirupathi* by walk. Prasanna and Kavitha, both had taken this oath in the past to climb the Tirumala - Tirupathi hills by foot. Baba reminded them of their oaths, and made them fulfill them.

During the year 2012, Baba told them to visit Arunachalam on the auspicious day of Karthika Pournami. In Arunachalam, Lord Shiva manifested himself as the Agni Lingam. Srinivas Sastry, Prasanna, Kavitha, Shankar, Narayana & family, Suresh & Anupama all started from Chennai by bus and reached Arunachalam by 8pm. After lighting lamps in front of the temple, they started the Girivanam. Girivanam refers to circumambulating around the holy hill, one time.

They were to walk barefoot for 18kms, and the scorching summer heat was in no mood to cool down! After walking for less than an hour, the whole party was dog-tired and unable to move any further. Prasanna was suffering from a disc problem, and was not able to walk any further and Kavitha was on the same boat. As the clock struck 11, they had hardly walked 2 to 2.5 kms and there was an endless road ahead of them.

On the night of Karthika Pournami they light the "AKHANDA DEEPAM "on the top of the hill in Arunachalam. It is believed that at this moment, Lord Shiva comes out of the temple and manifests himself as the divine light, fulfilling the wishes of his devotees who have been eagerly waiting for his darshan. Everybody takes part in the Girivanam, all the while being guided by the Akhanda Deepam atop the hill. This enchanting light, with celestial hues can be seen from every point on the During the early hours (i.e. Brahma Muhurtham) Lord Shiva retires back into the temple's sanctum-sanctorum.

Kavitha and Prasanna couldn't walk any further. While they were all trying to regain their energies, suddenly Prasanna caught hold of Srinivas's hand and started walking very fast. There was a visible change in her persona, like she had been possessed by the divinity, and that the Lord Shiva's cosmic energy channeling through her was giving her the super strength needed to finish the Pradakshina around the hill. Anupama says, "We never realized where they had left. We all were under the impression that they will be would be walking slowly, and therefore only few feet ahead of us. But the opposite turned out to be the case. They had just disappeared into thin air – all within fraction of seconds. Nobody could find neither Prasanna nor Srinivas Sastry. They were worried as they were not able to make sense of what had just transpired. So, they started running and sprinting in the hopes of finding them and catching up with them. Even before they realized they had completed the Pradakshina. Like super humans, this group of middle age somethings successfully chased through12kms within two hours!"

Later they came to know that earlier Baba had possessed Prasanna. On the way they came across a Baba temple and everybody went inside for his darshan. Udi appeared out of nowhere on Prasanna's dress chunni, after which Baba left her and she became so weak that she couldn't walk anymore. Baba had told that everybody was to complete the Girivanam by 3am (Brahma Muhurtam) as Lord Shiva would retire back into the temple after that. Baba's grace enabled all Sai Nilayam devotees to complete it at the nick of time! Strangely enough, the AKHANDA DEEPAM was had disappeared without trace after 3pm. Everything is the Lord's leela!

Baba told them to give *Dakshina* to a person, and Srinivas offered the same to that person. Later Baba told them that the person was none other than *God Shani*. They considered themselves blessed for having the opportunity to be in His presence. From there they reached the temple where they took darshan and then returned to Chennai.

Later Baba instructed them to visit the temple of Sri Subramanyam Swami. All the reservations to various places were taken care of beforehand. They started from Chennai went to Kancheepuram and from there Baba told them to start for Subramanyam Swami temple following lunch. But, caught up in shopping they got late. When they reached the Temple, it was already closed and the authorities informed that they would re-open only at 6 pm. The conundrum was that their train to Mysore was due to depart Chennai Central at 10pm on the same day. All the luggage was in the house at Chennai.

They prayed to Baba for direction. Baba gave a message to go and request tickets for special darshan. Then Anupama went and came to know that the *Abhishekam* was going on and that they

could take a ticket and witness it in person. Immediately they bought tickets, took darshan and rushed back to catch the train bound for Mysore. It was already 7 pm, and there were hardly three hours left to reach the Chennai Central station, and they were still in Kancheepuram! They thought of going to Tambaram for collecting their luggage, and to reach Chennai Central from there. But an elderly man appeared from the crowd, and told them that there was a local train headed towards Chennai Central which would drop them off at their destination within an hour!

They thanked the elderly man for his timely advice, and quickly caught the local train which dropped them off on time. Then Baba gave a message that Srinivas Sastry and Anupama were to transport all the luggage. They ran, and ran and ran, shuttling between the station and their home until all the luggage arrived. Everybody was very tensed as they were in a race against time! Baba's grace was such, that just as they reached Tambaram they found an Auto waiting for them which drove them home. Upon reaching home they packed all the luggage, and Srinivas Sastry, Suresh and Anupama started back to the Chennai Central Station. Upon reaching the station they realized that they managed to effortlessly pack and carry 16 bags! How they managed to do it they do not know, but they do know that Baba's grace enabled them to win this race against time and board the train on time.

Caught up in the distractions of shopping, they had inadvertently deviated from Baba's message thereby burdening themselves with the miseries of Karma! But kind-hearted Baba guided them and put them back on the right path. They managed to arrive at the station five minutes before the train's scheduled departure time! They were unable to come out this tensed filled actioned packed adventure for almost an hour or so. When the restlessness finally disappeared, they suddenly realized how the elderly man knew about their destination, and how he happened to approach them at the opportune moment! Then they realized that the elderly man was Baba himself who manifested to guide his devotees.

Finally they reached Mysore where they worshipped *Goddess Chamundeswari Devi*. This temple is also a holy Shakti Peet. Later they went on a sightseeing tour Mysore palace and from there they went to Sringeri by bus. They reached there by morning, and after refreshing themselves they took darshan of *Goddess Saradamba*. Here Prasanna was blessed with an *Annapoorna Devi* idol, which can today be found adorning the puja room of Sai Nilayam. They also visited Hornad(*Sri Annapoorna devi*) followed by a darshan of Lord Sri Krishna in Udipi .

After the eventful trip drew to a conclusion, everybody returned to their respective homes in sound health, taking with them the enchanting experiences showered upon them by the divine.

This is how Baba guides earnest devotees on all holy pilgrimages and trips. One must have Shraddha and Saburi, and Baba will tend to everything else. Devotees must have a deep-rooted love for Him along with implicit faith and urgency in tactfully executing his instructions. Then the whole journey will be a beautiful ride. Baba has incarnated for the sake of his devotees, and he will always look after their welfare.

With Baba's blessings, those who find an inner calling drawing them towards holy place must definitely undertake these pilgrimages, as it brings one closer to the divinity while also purifying the body and soul, and reducing the karma accumulated over present and past lifetimes.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 63

EXPERIENCES OF SRINIVASA DURING HANUMA CHALISA

This chapter describes how Baba blessed Srinivasa and his family.

Baba instructed that for forty-one consecutive days, Hanuman Chalisa, Hanuman Dandakam and Hanuman Ashtotharam were to be performed at Sai Nilayam. So, all devotees came together to participate in this event. Unfortunately, Srinivas could not make it on the first day as he was not aware of the proceedings. But soon he came to learn about these events, and from the second day onwards he and his family began participating without fail.

On July 9th,2015 they got the opportunity to perform the puja. On that day they reached Sai Nilayam at 5:20pm to perform the *Bala Hanuman Puja*. They set all the required puja items in the puja room. Srinivas Sastry asked them to put the garland of betel leaves around Sri Hanuman. During the second day of Hanuman puja, Srinivas had a vision of Hanuman tying anklets to his feet and smiling. While having that vision, he felt as if somebody was violently shaking his body.

This was the reason behind them purchasing and offering a pair of anklets, along with other puja items, to Sri Hanuman. Mrs. Srinivas then put those anklets on Sri Hanuman. Later Prasanna put a garland of vadas around the neck of Hanuman, as he was very fond of them. As per Baba's message, Prasanna later informed everyone present that "Sri Hanuman is not accepting any Naivedyam today" and asked them to leave their respective offerings outside the Puja room. She asked Sudha to perform the puja while Srinivas was asked to stay in meditation once inside the puja room.

She told them to sit inside as long as they wanted and pray adding that nobody would disturb them. Srinivas felt a little apprehensive, as this was this his first time in such a setting. In order for them to have a deep and profound experience, and for enabling to immerse themselves in the divinity, and finally to remove all distractions, the brightness of the lights was reduced i.e. the lights were dimmed. Prasanna gave Srinivas a chair and asked him to make himself comfortable.

At exactly 6pm, the couple sat down in the puja room. As directed by Prasanna, Srinivas offered Namaskarams to Sri Sai Baba, Sri Hanuman, Sri Dattatreya Swami, and Sri Anagha Devi. The puja began with *Hanuman Ashtotram.* For the first 10 or 11 mantras, he was conscious of the mantra chanting that was going on and, also of the surroundings. But after that he found himself separated from everything, and it seemed like time ceased to exist and he was just present in that moment. Then he had a vision of Sri Hanuman smiling at him. Suddenly he found himself wondering what was happening to him. He knew it was real yet he knew this was happening on a different plane, if you will. He was heard saying *Rama, Rama*, *Rama* softly and it appeared as if his body was here but his mind, soul and the reality he was experiencing were happening on an unknown plane. A subtle saint like calmness took over him as if he had been possessed by some divine spirit. At which point Sri Hanuman came and sat on his right lap and was tapping him on his right thigh, and when Srinivas looked at his beloved deity with dreamy eyes, Hanuman sat on his shoulder. Hanuman touched his cheeks and was gesturing with His eyes. Srinivas asked him "What is it Swami?" Then Hanuman said, "Shall we go around on a fun flight?" Srinivas nodded his head in agreement.

Srinivas suddenly found himself feeling weightless as Lord Hanuman took him to the skies, and within moments they were flying in the air, travelling at speeds beyond his perception. After some time, Lord Hanuman gently lowered him on a snow-capped mountain peak. Sri Hanuman asked him to play and explore the place for some time. Srinivas went around and came back to Sri Hanuman, who asked him to hold his *Gadha* (*Mace*). So Srinivas held the *Gadha*. Later Hanuman put the *Gadha*

in a vertical position and asked Srinivas to extend his hands. When he held his arms forward and opened his palms, Sri Hanuman materialized a ***light blue coloured slate-like*** object on his palms. This object was mesmerizing to look at, and it was glowing with DIVINE LIGHT. Srinivas humbly asked Sri Hanuman, "Swami as you have given me this object, may I keep it?" Sri Hanuman replied, "There is still time for that. Once you have sufficiently evolved, you will get to keep it. You are not ready yet." So saying Hanuman put him on His shoulders, and at a dazzling speed flew both to another enchanting place, the entrance of which was a magnificent and gargantuan structure made with glistening gold. They were at a *Simha Dwaram*.

Hanuman made him sit there and He stood with his *Gadha* in an upright position. The place was permeating with indescribable peace, and the whole place was illumined by gently a pulsating celestial light that was soaking everything in its purity. Srinivas asked, "Swami what is this place? " , to which Sri Hanuman replied, " This is the second *Simha Dwaram,* a gateway to the TRI-LOKALU (Three worlds) and began flying them both on another journey. While they were thus travelling Srinivas saw another *Divine Being* who was radiating with angelic light energy, by their side. This *divine personage* asked, "*Anjaneya (another name of Sri Hanuman) where are you taking my devotee*?"

Suddenly distant memories began flooding Srinivas's mind who then realized that He was none other than Sri Shirdi Sai Baba himself. Shivers ran through his body, and his hairs stood on their end! Sri Hanuman replied, "Rama, I am taking him to Lanka to show him all my Leelas". Baba outright rejected this proposal, and made it clear He was not to take Srinivas to Lanka and that he was to be brought back to the same place where he was seated until then. Visibly upset, Hanuman began kicking up stones which flew high up into the sky before falling into the sea. Baba asked Him "Why the insanity?" Then Hanuman, with a mischievous and naughty look on his face, said "These are monkey acts!"

He recounted the following: Baba saw me and asked Do you know from where you came from? I said, No. Baba showed him how he and his family met with a terrible accident. Srinivas was present there alongside Baba, and he was witnessing the deadly accident unfold in front of his eyes. The outcome of such an accident should have been undoubtedly fatal. Baba showed him how he and his family fought death and came back to life. As a result of Baba's transcendental and miraculous powers, he was witnessing it from a third person perspective, and everything was happening in that moment.

Baba then began to narrate the story of how he and his family were brought back to life at Amma's bidding. (Baba referred to Prasanna as "*Amma"* or mother) Baba then told how she made earnest and adamant pleas for resuscitating them back to life. A lot of to and fro, happened between Prasanna and Baba, but she was unrelenting and Baba had to finally concede to her pure hearted appeals and agreed to save them.

When Prasanna received a call from Sudha, Prasanna said to Baba, "*Save all of them from the Jaws of death and take them home safely*". But Baba protested saying, "I am not to interfere, every person's suffering is on account of his own Karma, from the past, or present. Baba further added that, nobody can be saved from the effects of *Karma Phalam*, it must be endured and be done with it therefore as per their karma all three were bound to leave their bodies. Prasanna did not agree to it. She continued making her case with Baba and requested Baba for a very long time. Baba finally said that two can stay, one person must go, you choose who stays and who leaves. Prasanna said that it was an unacceptable stance, and that at least for Sudha's sake all of them must be brought back because she was devout and regularly visited Sai Nilayam for Baba's

darshan. With tearful eyes, Prasanna beseeched Baba. Baba cast one glance in her direction and said "Your wish shall be fulfilled. All of them will be brought back to life". So Baba's word at Prasanna's earnest requests brought Srinivas and his family back to life. Such is the power of faith, prayer and Baba's grace. When Baba said that he can rewrite one's destiny, he literally meant it. One must have such faith in him, or be under the wings of a selfless, pious and pure hearted Maha-Bhakt like Prasanna.

Srinivas and his family say that "Our biological mother gave birth to us, but Prasanna gave us a rebirth, a second lease of life. Our lives were on verge of vaporizing like camphor on fire, but her care and concern combined with Baba's infinite blessings prevent the flame of our lives from extinguishing. We dread to even think about it. We will forever be grateful to Baba and Prasanna.

While Baba was thus speaking to Srinivas, he saw Prasanna appear near the right shoulder of Baba, and her face was gleaming with divinity. Baba then professed the following, "The many miracles which I work at Sai Nilayam for the sake of my devotees, is several manifold greater than the miracles I worked for my devotees during my stay in Shirdi. In this Mandir (Sai Nilayam) I walked with bloodied feet, and with feet of Udi and saved many devotees. In this Nilayam, I am making it rain Udi and making incessant streams of Honey flow like tears of happiness.

On 5-9-2015 which was an Ashtami, Baba gave a message that *Rama Rakshas* (fifty-one in number) were to be given to devotees whose birth fell in certain specific birth stars. These *Rama Rakshas* were kept in the Puja room. But Baba showed him a total of fifty-four rakshas. The puja commenced at exactly 6 pm. Then, with baskets of Appalu, Vadalu, Lemons, Beetelnut leaves and various fruits the *Sri Rama Raksha Puja* was performed. First Prasanna took 12 rakshas and put them in puja room and performed puja to them with Sindhuram. She thought of taking four out of twelve Rakshas, but she didn't. Baba told Srinivas that she did not take even one Raksha. Baba explained," *I am her Raksha, then why does she need another?*

Then Srinivasa asked Baba, "When Prasanna is always indulged in doing self-less service and is always concerned with the welfare of so many devotees, then why did her own son suffer from illness?". Baba replied "I myself took care of her son, and was with him all along. His suffering was my suffering." Prasanna also knew this. Baba further added, "In future, this Sai Nilayam Mandiram is going to embody *"Nitya Kalyanamu Paccha Thoranami" i.e* this temple is going to become a place of constant joy and festive celebration.

Irrespective of whether somebody is born as a human on account of his karma, or whether God himself manifests in human form – for the sake of his devotees, once someone takes up the human form, he is bound by its limitations so long as he identifies himself with the gross body. Therefore, most humans are subject to the sufferings of the body. Great Yogis and self-realized beings on the other hand can choose whether they want to suffer or not. Usually this suffering is also for the sake of taking on devotees' sufferings and burning their karma. So kind are Saints!

Baba said, "For my sake, Srinivas Sastry and Prasanna often sacrifice their sleep, health and pleasures for ensuring there is no interruption in their service. In fact, in their minds there is no other thought but that of dedicating themselves at my feet through endless service. They are so immersed in love for me, that not once do they ever think of their own well-being. I am the only thought that exists in their world. So pure is their devotion towards me. Their service is self-less and pure, and the service they render is driven by love, and they never think of capitalizing for their own monetary benefits. Indeed, these two are two of my truest devotees, for they indulge in several

altruistic and humanitarian programs like Annadaanam, Vidyadaanam, and Vastradaanam on a continual basis."

Baba continued, "Despite witnessing countless miracles, several devotees are still shackled by *Agyanam.* They are not willing to drop their veils of ignorance and shallow thinking, and come to terms with the reality. How long do they want to continue like this, and how far can this take them? Even after witnessing the light, if one is not drawn towards it in vain is such a life. Caught in the whirlpools of ego, they are unable to recognize or even acknowledge the miracles taking place right in front of their eyes. Very soon, I will make them realize the truth by opening their eyes once and for all. Sometimes Srinivas Sastry feels disappointed and begins wondering "Are all these necessary for us, what can we do for an unwilling devotee who is unwilling to come out straight, who is unwilling to be truthful to themselves, and who is ever engrossed in stoking his ego and then gratifying the same?" but due to Prasanna's patience and love, he doesn't think about them and returns to doing Seva. Srinivas Sastry's point is valid, but we must look upon all with love and compassion. For even the erring devotee, on account of ignorance and karma accumulated from past births may not be aware of his faults, and coming face to face with one's mistakes and faults is the toughest thing to do. Only God's grace and their self-effort can save them from getting annihilated by Maya.

Many devotees who seek refuge in Sai Nilayam often think in different ways. It is a basic human tendency, and nobody is to blame for that, for the ignorant are not aware of their ignorance. Baba said to Srinivasa "Prasanna acts as the medium for my messages to the devotees. All my messages are given through her". But only few devotees take her words as sweet nectar while others consider them to be bitter and distasteful. One's state of mind determines one's perceptive abilities. An angry person finds fault in the whole world, while a truly happy person sees the same world as the blissful kingdom of heaven. Depending upon how their spiritual maturity, and the state of their consciousness, not from the narrow westernized medical point of view, but from the spiritual state of knowingness, do people receive and spot the messages. Only a jeweler can spot the difference between a diamond and a worthless stone. To a monkey, it is no different from any other rock. In a similar way, those whose consciousness and awareness has expanded, can perceive and feel God's presence, the ignorant lot cannot identify Him even if He were to knock on their door and profess that He was none other than the Lord Almighty. But what can anybody do? The effects of ignorance and karma accumulated over lifetimes has such vicious grip on man's mind, which blinds him from realizing his true nature which is Sat-Chit-Anand. So irrespective of whether a particular devotee follows or agrees with Prasanna's message or not is not the concern. The truth is ultimate, and whatever Prasanna conveys, are nothing but the words of Baba himself. Baba's ways are mysterious and inscrutable is all we know.

Srinivasa asked Baba, "From the time I met with the accident, not even a single bill has been cleared till date". Then Baba said, "Do you want all the bills to be cleared at once or one at time? Have patience, everything will be taken care of." When he asked Baba about his children, Baba replied saying that "I will take care of them, why do you worry about them, both of you stay happy and content. (Maybe because Srinivas didn't enquire about Sudha, Baba used "both" and asked both of them to be happy)."

Baba continued, "Shackled to fetters of ignorance, a lot many people are living in shadows of darkness. With the hope of bringing them all onto the path of enlightenment and to bathe them in the divine light, I'm sharing these valuable words. Remember to discharge your worldly duties with concentration and attention but without having the least attachment to them. Leaving behind the responsibilities of the world is not a pretext for spirituality. True Spirituality can be seen permeating

all aspects of life as it is all-pervading, and not limited to the four walls of your place of worship. Prioritize what really matters to you, and don't indulge in anything else. Take time out for performing your Sadhana and Satsang. Do not criticize anybody. Keep your attention on God, and always do Bhagwan Namasmaran. All paths lead to the same final destination. Choose whichever path is in tune with your mental faculties and state of mind. But do not deviate from it. Remember that your level of consciousness, is what draws you onto a particular path. Once on a path, stay true to it. Do not discuss with anything. Thousand people will have thousand opinions. You stick to your path and have full faith in God."

For those who feel lonely even after having family friends and relatives around them, this Sai Nilayam will be your palace of peace and happiness.

A request to all devotees:

TALK GOOD. LISTEN GOOD. DO GOOD. SEE GOOD.

Let your Bhakti and devotion in Baba be just as sweet and tasty as the succulent fruits you eat.

We conclude the chapter by summarizing the various things shown to Srinivasa by Sri Hanuman:

Anjaneya Swami Ramudu thana villu ni ekkabetti banamu tho guri petti nappudu, Anjaneya Swami velli aa guri pettina villuni krindaki dimparu. Apudu Sri Rama Chandrudu kopamutho kurchunaru. Kontha sepu ee villuni ekki petti vunte mullokalu vidwamsaaniki guri ayyavi ani thalachi Anjaneyuni akkuna cherchukunaru. Appatanunchi Anjaneyudu ante apparamyna prema Sri Ramachandruni ki.

Sri Rama Chandrudu niluvatha vigrahamutho ban vachasutho naaku darsanam iccharu. Sanjeevini Parvathamunu Hanumanthudu elaaga ethukoni vachi Lakshmanudini ela brathikincharo naaku kallaki kattinatluga chupincharu.jaambhavanthudu Sri Krishnudiki ichina Samanthaka Mani gurunchi chupincharu. Pallana grovi Sri Krishnudu darsanam icharu.

Baba mandiram lo nenu rojulu vrundi pujinchabadi thadupari nenu yadha sthananiki vellina kuda nenumandiram lone thiruguthu sevalu andukuntanu.

Kaalakku gajjelu katta aanandamaduthu egiri egiri padda o bhaktha Anjaneya seva chese bhakthulaku vega brova ravayya. Anjaneya ravayya,bhaktha Anjaneya ravayya Sanjeeva raaya raavayya.

Baba is the God. Nothing is impossible to Him. The Universe exists due to his wishes. We are fortunate to know your miracles and be in your company. Your stories and company remove our fears and apprehensions. Your ways and miracles are unfathomable. Your grace has rewritten the lives of millions of people and brought joy onto their faces. Always look favorably upon us, and let our minds be ever steady and engrossed in your beautiful ecstatic form.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 64

UJJAIN PILGRIMAGE

This chapter describes how Baba blessed few lucky devotees of Sai Nilayam to accompany Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry on a pilgrimage to Ujjain.

IMPORTANCE OF UJJAIN:

Ujjain (also known as Ujjain, Ujjayini, Avanti, Avantika, Avantikapuri) is an ancient city of the Malwa region in central India. It is located on the eastern bank of the Kshipra River which is today a part of the state of Madhya Pradesh. In ancient times the city was called Ujjayini. As mentioned in the Mahabharata epic, Ujjayini was the capital of the Avanti Kingdom.

Mahakaleshwar is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas which is believed to be *Swayambhoo* (manifested on its own) deriving currents of power (shakti) from within. The other lingams were ritually established and consecrated by sages with mantra-shakti. Kaal refers to time, or more specifically one's time of passing away. The meaning of Mahakala means one who is the kind of time, or the one who is beyond life and death and time. According to Hinduism, Mahakala refers to the ultimate form of Shiva, as he is the destroyer of all elements. There is nothing beyond him, no element, no dimensions, not even time. That is why He is Maha (greatest) Kaal (time). It is believed that during the ancient times, the astronomical calculations for the entire world were done taking Ujjain as the centre of earth owing to its spiritual and divine grandeur.

The idol of Mahakaleshwar is known to be facing the south (Dakshina Murthy), a unique feature among the twelve Jyotirlingas. The idol of Omkareshwar Shiva is consecrated in the sanctum above the Mahakaleshwar shrine. The images of Ganesh, Parvati and Karthikeya are present facing the west, north and the east directions of the sanctum. To the south is the idol of Nandi. The idol of Nagachandreshwar on the third floor is open for darshan only on the day of Nag Panchami. On the day of Maha Shivaratri, a huge fair is held near the temple and worship goes on throughout the night. The rituals of Bhasm-Aarti (Bhasma Harathi) and Jalabhishek at the Mahakaleshwar temple are quite renowned, and are performed very early in the morning. The devotees who apply a day in advance, are allowed into temple only if they are dressed in traditional attire (saree and dhoti).

Mahakala also has several references to the feminine form of the supreme power in the form of Goddess Kali. The Mahakali Temple is one of the 18 Shakti Peethams. They are believed to seat of Shakti. As Lord Shiva carried the body Sri Sati Devi and wandered about in great agony, various parts of her body fell at various places. The power emanating at this Shaktipeet is on account of Sati Devi's powers. The upper lip of Goddess Sati fell at this place. It is believed that Goddess Sati's elbow fell at the very spot where Harsiddhi temple of Ujjain was later built. The temple has two unique pine shaped iron lamp stands 15 feet tall, and are lit every evening. In Harsiddhi Mata temple, idols of Goddess Annapurna and Goddess Saraswati are also present and worshipped.

There is another temple in Ujjain belonging to Goddess Kalika. As per mythology, Kalidasa was illiterate and foolish, but he worshipped Goddess Kalika with great sincerity. The Goddess was pleased by his devotion and blessed him with literary skills. Later Kalidasa became an exceptionally talented poet.

Another temple of Goddess Chamunda Devi (form of Goddess Durga) can be found in Ujjain. Goddess Chamunda Devi is one of seven Matrikas; she killed two demons Chanda and Munda, hence her name – Chamunda Devi.

The temple website of Ujjain Mahakaleshwar provides some very beautiful details:

The temple is three-storied. In the lowest, middle and uppermost parts are respectively installed the lingams of Mahakalesvara, Omkaresvara and Nagachandresvara. The pilgrims and the visitors can only have the glimpse of Nagachandresvara on the festive of Naga Panchami. A very large-sized Kunda(ghat/tank) named Koti Tirtha also exists in the temple-complex. The Kunda is built in the sarvatobhadra style. The Kunda and its water both are treated as very celestial. On the path adjoining the stairs of the Kunda, may be seen many images representing the sculptural grandeur of the temple built during the Paramara period. In the east of the Kunda is a large-sized Veranda in which there is the entrance to the path leading to the garbhagrha. In the northern side of the verandah, in a cell, the images of Sri Rama and goddess Avantika are worshipped. In the southern side of the main shrine, there stand many small Saivite temples built during the Shinde regime among these the temple of Virddha Mahakalesvara, Anadi Kalpesvara and Saptarshi are prominent and are the remarkable pieces of architecture.

The lingam of Mahakalesvara is colossus. The silver-plated Naga Jaladhari and the inscribed and esoteric silver-plate covering the roof of the garbhagrha add extra grandeur to the shrine. Besides Jyotirlinga, attractive and small-sized images of Ganesa, Kartikeya and Paravati can be seen in the garbhagrha. All around the walls classical eulogies in the praise of Lord Siva are exhibited. The Nanda Dipa always remains lit. In the exit-path, there is a wide hall in which a most attractive metal quoted stone Nandi, in the sitting humble pose may be witnessed. The courtyard just opposite to the Omkaresvara temple add much to the magnanimity of the temple-complex. Just adjoining to this temple, there are two pillared projections facing the east and adding a lot to the architecture of the temple. The temple of Mahakalesvara is a planned admixture of the Bhumija, Chalukya and Maratha styles of architecture. The sikhara with the mini-srngas is very peculiar. In previous years its upper part has been covered with gold plate.

*As seen earlier, the present temple of Mahakala was built during the 4th – 5th decades of Eighteenth century. Simultaneously the religious-minded nobles of Maratha community also built many a temple in the temple-complex. During this period many ancient traditions such as worship abhisheka, arati, sawari (procession) in the Sravana month, Harihara-milana etc, were also revived. These are still continuing with joyful ceremony and devotional enthusiasm. The Bhasmarti in early morning, Mahasivaratri, Pancha-Krosi Yatra, Somavati Amavasya etc. are special religious occasions interwoven with the rituals of the temple. Proper repairs and rejuvanation of the temple-complex is done at the time of the Kumbha Parva. In the year 1980, a separate mandapam was constructed to facilitate the visitors. In 1992, Madhya Pradesh Government and Ujjain Development Authority exclusively contributed special repairs and made provisions for the stay of pilgrims. The same process is also being followed at the time of the forthcoming Simhastha. (*http://dic.mp.nic.in/ujjain/mahakal/*)*

In 2011 Prasanna, Srinivas Sastry, Shankar and family, Narayana and family, and Lalitha went to Ujjain to take darshan of Mahakalheswar Jyothirlingam and Mahankali Shaktipeeth. This was in accordance with Baba's instructions. The Mahakalheswar Jyothirlingam is one among the twelve jyothirlingams. After taking darshan of Mahakaleswar, Baba told Prasanna to take the witness the Bhasma-Abhishekham. The party had to take the tickets on the previous day and by early hours around 2am, they were be there for darshan. The holy bath to Lord Shiva is done with Ganges water and then Abhishekham is done with *Bhasmam (Holy Ashes)*.

Bhasmabhishekham performed here is indeed performed with the real *Bhasm* – ashes obtained from the burning dead body of the person who passed away on the previous day. This *Bhasm* is

brought by the *Kaati Kapari* tied in a black cloth, around 2.30AM to the temple. The *Bhasmabhishekham* is done by the *Kaati Kapari,* and the priests read the *Namakam, Chamakam, the Damarukam is played, the echoes from the ringing bells reverberate in the hallways. The overpowering presence of divinity permeates through the whole temple premises.* Devotees say that during those moments they find themselves lost in indescribable joys all the while remaining detached from materialistic longings. The *Pallu* of the sari is required to be covering the face and the rule is strictly enforced, and devotees are expected to follow the norm. But Prasanna and other female devotees could see through their saris. Only in Mahakaleswar one can witness the *Bhasmabhishekham* while it is being performed, as this is done in the presence of the devotees. Such an opportunity is a rarity at other Jyothirlingams. Many are unaware of the *Bhasmabhishekham,* but Sai Nilayam devotees had the good fortune to know about it due to Baba's grace.

After Abhishekham they decorate Lord Shiva with various items such as dry fruits and other things. Devotees also get the opportunity of touching the Jyothirlingam, and seeking Lord Shiva's blessings. When Kavitha touched it, she broke down into tears as she experienced the unmistakable presence of her father embracing her. (Her father is not in this world anymore).

The other important temple located here is the temple of *Kala Bhairava*. Around this temple, there are no fruit or flower shops. All that can be found here are liquor shops. The tradition of the temple is that the liquor is offered to *Kaala Bhairava Swami.* He accepts a little and later the same liquor is distributed as prasad to the devotees. While this may come across as weird or oddly peculiar, this is the custom practiced here!

Later they went to the temple of *Goddess Maha Kaali*. As mentioned earlier, this is a Shaktipeet. They purchased flowers turmeric and kumkum , and the shopkeeper arranged their respective baskets so that they could carry all the items inside the temple. After the puja was over, the priest returned their Puja baskets. All baskets returned were light, but Prasanna's bowl seemed unusually heavy. When they went back to return the baskets/bowls to the shopkeeper a They went back to the shop to return the bowl and found a "*Saligramam*" – a sacred black coloured stone, usually worshipped by Vaishnavites. It was prasad given to Prasanna by the Goddess herself. Sharp-eyed devotees can catch a glimpse of this *Saligramam adorning the Sai Nilayam* Puja room alongside the *Shiva Lingam.* Both of which are *Swayambhoo* – manifested on account of God Almighty's divine will.

Baba often laid great importance on *Gruhastu Ashram* and the responsibilities to be handled while in it. Small children seldom fancy pilgrimages given how much uncertainty can be associated with them on several occasions. Also, children may not have the energy to stay out from sunrise to sunset. First, we must make them happy by showing them places where they find joy after which they can be taken to the holy places so that they slowly develop devotion towards God.

Anupama says that "[sic] Baba *teaches everything practically. He is Unique. He makes spiritual life interesting and easy by making us correlate everything with our daily lives. What meritorious deeds we must have done in our previous births to be blessed with such an opportunity in this life!*

The next story shows how Baba clubbed pilgrimages and recreation trips together and how it happened in the case of Shankar and family.

Their elder son, Swaroop landed a job in L&T and their second son completed his intermediate education and intended to move to Chennai for his further education. Then Baba gave a message "*NALUGURU KALASI SANTOSHAM GA GADAPA MANU CHAALAA KAALAM VARAKU AVAKASAM RADU*" (Shankar , Kavitha , Swaroop and Sandeep, four of you go together on a vacation and happily

spend time together. Such an opportunity will not come for a long time. Where they were to go was also decided by Baba.

"On June 5th, 2013 Prasanna, Srinivas Sastry along with Shankar and family were ready to visit the Kamakhya Devi temple (Shaktipeet) in Guwahati (Assam, North Eastern India). From there to Siliguri where Prasanna's son Karthik working for State Bank of India. While on the same journey, they also visited the Zero Point Himalayan Range, Gangtok, and Darjeeling. From there Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry returned to Vizag while Shankar and family headed towards Kasi.

They never had the thought of going on a recreational tour, that too all four of them together! But Baba planned it and made them enjoy the entire trip and even today they recall the sweet memories from that trip. Nobody but Baba can plan and take care of devotees! If not for Baba, who else will take care of us like a father, mother, Guru, friend, philosopher and as God Almighty? Baba and his ways are inexplicable, and are out of bounds of the limited capabilities of our intellect and mind. Baba is our guiding light on a dark night. Nothing can ever describe his great and compassionate ways.

Baba, being an Antaryami, knows what is best for us. Baba never approved meaningless Puja and rituals. Baba always said that Love, Sraddha, Knowledge are the essence of our lives. All these qualities lead us to Him, but He teaches all these in an interesting and practical way.

As per Baba's instructions they all started on 6-5-2013 to Guwahati and finished taking darshan of Sri Kamakhya Shaktipeet. The Goddess's vulva or Yoni is believed to have fallen here. The statue of the Goddess is situated deep inside a cave, and after climbing down a flight of stairs one reaches the Garbha Gudi or the Sanctum Sanctorum. The place where this idol of Sri Kamakhya Devi is present, there water can be seen bubbling out of the earth. The water thus washing Her feet (*Arghya*) is later distributed as *Teerth or Holy Water* to the devotees. Those who have had the good fortune of visiting his holy place can affirm how sweet this water tastes! For the first time in your lives, you will experience drinking nectarine water!

Anupama says, "(Kavitha 's son) Sandeep took an oath that if his Dad bought him an Iphone he would return for taking the Devi's darshan. Sandeep revealed this to us after he got his hands on an Iphone. Another unique feature of the Kamakhya Devi Temple is that it remains closed four days before the *Aashada pournami*. During that time the water in the lake present inside temple turns red in colour. This doesn't happen at any other Shaktipeet. After they re-open, the entire temple can be found to be scattered with *Tantrikulu* and no one knows from they come and where or how they disappear. Devotees are not allowed to have darshan during this time."

An idol of Lord Shiva can be found in the middle of river that flows on top of the mountain. According to mythology, this was the very spot where Lord Shiva turned Manmadhudu to ashes with his third eye, and with the blessings of Goddess Manmadhudu He attained an invisible form. Baba's blessings enabled the Sai Nilayam devotees to have darshan of such a spiritual and historically significant temple. Their next stop was at Siliguri where they stayed at Karthik's house. Later they visited several recreational places and the children felt very happy. As mentioned earlier this was in accordance with Baba's instructions, or else they would have never known these places in their lives!

When they reached Gangtok, they were enchanted by the magnificent Mt.Kanchenjunga which was lit up by the early morning rays of the sun causing it to glimmer gloriously in gold and diamonds. This is therefore called sunrise hill, and if one were to reach there by 2:30 or 3:00 am, they can witness this beautiful spectacle and savour it to their heart's content. Due to the altitude of the place you feel as if the sun is present rather close to you, shining its soft light on you. The rays coming from the

sun look like gentle flashes coming from a digital camera. The whole place resonates with an unearthly aura, and hundreds and thousands of people huddle together to catch a glimpse of these magical moments!

Their next stop was at Darjeeling where they visited all the various Buddhist temples, tea estates, rode on the biggest ropeway(cable-car) in India before finally returning to Siliguri. From there Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry returned to Vizag and they started to Kasi as per Baba's instructions. Suddenly they found themselves moving from below freezing temperatures near the Himalayas to the blistering hot temperatures of Kasi where the sun is unapologetically hot and harsh. Luckily for them, an acquaintance and Sai Nilayam devotee helped book an air-conditioned room. They witnessed the Ganga Arathi in all its spiritual grandeur, took a bath in all the Ghats, had darshan of the Kala Bahairava temple located nearby. They even visited Gaya Mangalya Gowrika Devi temple, and Prayan Madhaveswari Devi temple. Both happen to be Shaktipeeths. After which they returned home safely.

As Baba had planned the trip right from the beginning, and because they obediently followed his instructions, the trip went without a hitch. It is nearly impossible to visit such holy places present at two extremes of India that too in such a short time span. All devotees must therefore have implicit faith and trust in Baba, leave aside their wayward thinking, surrender their ego at His feet, then He is bound to take care of us at every step of our lives. Human intellect is capable of only a limited amount of reasoning and foresight, but Baba is an Antaryami, the inner dweller of all, He knows what is best for us all. Let us drop our burdens and surrender ourselves to Him. He will show us the path.

Soon after that, Swaroop was to join Larsen & Tubro on 7-7-2013. Then Baba told them to visit darshan of Kalahasthi, Kanipaakam, Sripuram, and Kancheepuram. So, He made them start from Vizag on 29-6-2013.

Baba further instructed that after completing their darshan at Sri Kalahasthi, they were to perform Rahu-Kethu in Shankar's name; At Kanipaakam Abhishekam was to be performed in Swaroop's name, followed by a stop at Sri Lakshmi Devi temple in Sri Puramand, then at Kancheepuram and finally at Chennai. Kanipaakam is famous for the Vinayaka Temple. As Swaroop's joining date was almost a week away, they thought visiting Arunachalam. While they were thinking such, Baba gave a message through Prasanna that they were to visit the Sri Rama Linganatha Swamy Temple at Sri Rameshwaram – one of the 12 Jyothirlingas, and one of the Char-Dhams. Dwarka, Puri, Badrinath, and Rameshwaram together form the Char-Dham. Dham means pilgrimage. It is believed those who whole heartedly worship at these four places get salvation.

Shankar, Kavitha, Swaroop and Sandeep completed the pilgrimage, and Swaroop reported to his office on 07-07-2013 while the rest returned home.

If you are wondering why Baba sent them on this pilgrimage a week before Swaroop's joining date, it was because Baba had knowledge of the auspicious *Thidi* and *Nakshatram*. Why did Baba send them to Kanipaakam? It was because Sri Vinayaka removes all obstacles, and thus by Baba making Swaroop perform the Vinayaka Puja he was assured a smooth start to his career, without any hurdles or difficulties. As mentioned in an early chapter, Baba already knew that Swaroop was going to be posted in Kashmir. The trip to Kancheepuram was to obtain Goddess Kamkhya Devi's blessings. He sent them to Rameswaram to get the complete fruit of Kasi trip as all of them who go to Kasi will go to Rameswaram.

A visit to Kasi Vishwanath is deemed complete only if the devotee also visits the Rameshwaram Ramalinganatha Swamy temple. It is customary to carry the Ganges water from Kasi and perform Abhishekham of the Shiva Lingam at Rameshwaram. According to mythology, Sri Rama Chandra Murthy consecrated the Shiva Lingam here after the Ramayana War with Lankadhipati Raavan (Who is considered to be the greatest devotee of Lord Shiva). From Rameshwaram, the Vanar Sena with the help of Hanuman and other devotees helped build a bridge made of stones to Sri Lanka. Interested readers should definitely read the great epic Sri Ramayana.

Those who have not visited Rameshwaram, should definitely seek God's blessings to enable them to visit this holy place. The trip to Rameshwaram is a spectacular one of a kind journey made possible by the might of the legendary Indian Railways. Rameshwaram is a city on Pamban Island, and as the name suggests it happens to be physically outside the Indian subcontinent separated by the Indian Ocean on one side and by the Bay of Bengal on the other. The structural genius of Indian Railways enabled them to build the world famous `Pamban Bridge` - a 2065m long cantilever megastructure over Palk Strait connecting this sister island with the Indian mainland. With endless stretches of water in every direction, travelling by train on this bridge is bound to leave one in awe and wonder. The experience becomes more beautiful if you were to travel there during a full moon night or a no moon night! While the Shiva Lingam itself was established by Sri Rama during Treta Yuga, this beautiful temple was believed to have been established in the 12th century.

Devotees who have the strength should get in line for darshan by 1 or 2am. The temple opens at 4 am and the first score of devotees get the opportunity of a life time of witnessing the Abhishekham to the `Spatika Shiva Lingam`. The glimmering Shiva Lingam is magical to look at, and one can experience tangible waves of divine energy emanating from it which purify the body mind and soul, drawing us closer to God and Spirituality. It is a sight to behold, and something one would not forget for lifetimes to come.

Pamban Bridge, Rameshwaram. August 2016. Courtesy: Vivek Mangipudi

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 65-67

EXPERIENCES OF KAVITHA IN SAI NILAYAM

This chapter is about Kavitha and her family, and how Baba blessed them and how He was with them at every step of their lives. A few instances are given below

We begin with the story of Kavitha, and how she was led onto the path of Spirituality by engaging her in the worship of Sri Dattatreya Swami. As noted in early chapters, Baba had instructed Sai Nilayam devotees to commence a Parayan reading of the Sri Sai Satcahritra. During this period, Kavitha was a frequent visitor. Prasanna used to prepare food from items given as Bhiksha. One day Prasanna came out of the kitchen and gave the Sai Satcharitra book to Kavitha and asked her to read 11th chapter (as per Baba's instructions). That was the first instance in her life, when Baba touched her life and drew her onto the path of spirituality. Again after a few minutes Prasanna came and gave her the Sri Paada Vallabha Swami book and asked her to read the Siddha Mangala Stotram. She didn't like it because the names of persons were mentioned in the stotram. When she would visit Baba temple she would often wonder why the idol of Sri Dattatreya Swami had three heads. At that point in time, she didn't know any better.

After a few days Prasanna's mother came to Sai Nilayam. She then stayed in Pithapuram for few days, completed the Sri Paada Vallabha Swami Parayana after which she purchased some copies of the same title to distribute among Sai Nilayam devotees. Then she gave one book to Kavitha with a message "With Love, Prasanna". Then Kavitha wondered, "Why is she giving me? It should be given to people who are going to read it. What am I going to do with it?" She accepted the book and put it in the library and forgot about all about it. The Parayana reading which lasted 51 days drew to a conclusion with Bhajans and Satsang.

One day in the evening after the Vishnu Parayana reading session, Prasanna gave her *pani puri* (Gol Gappa or Puchka) and asked her to eat them saying "You don't know after how long you will have an opportunity like this!" She did not understand what was implied. Then, Prasanna told her "Baba told you to lead a simple lifestyle for forty one days while not visiting anybody's house, not eating out, and faithfully reading the Sri Paada Vallabha Swami Parayana." This is how Sri Dattatreya Swami blessed her.

After she began reading it she developed great reverence for the book therefore towards Sri Dattatreya Swami, so much so that she began to voraciously read other books on His life. After forty one days, on an Ashtami Baba made them perform the AnghaDatta Vratam for the very first time in their lives. Until that point in time, they had no idea about performing Vratams, nor about the Book. This is how Baba gently draws his devotees onto the path of spirituality, and once the devotees taste the sweetness of spirituality Baba gives them deep experiences so that they will stay focused on that path. Baba always guides his devotees.

On the same day in Sai Nilayam, the approach area between the entrance gate and the main entrance to Sai Nilayam where Baba photos are present, was found covered in turmeric. Scribbled in this turmeric were the words, *OM SRI ANAGHA DATTAYA NAMAH*, and the turmeric pieces lying beside seemed to indicate they were used from writing. Witnessing this miracle left a profound impact on Kavita, who has ever since taken to the chanting of the mantra. Later she was she was blessed with His darshan at Pitapuram, and later she visited all the Datta Kshetras. She never wished or sought anything from Baba for herself, but always wished for the welfare of everyone. To confirm her faith Baba later gave a message assuring "*I will take responsibility of Shankarudu's Children*"(Shankar is Kavitha's husband).

Baba always liked devotees who always chanted his name or sang bhajans. He used to say that those who always think about Me and chant "SAI,SAI", I will remove their sins of speech and hearing. I will always be with them who always remember me. In those days in Shirdi, late 1800 and early 1900s, Das Ganu Maharaj used to sing the keertans of Baba. In Sai Nilayam Shankar was given the responsibility of conducting Bhajans and Kirtans!

Shankar has always liked singing bhajans since early childhood. On Karthika Suddha Ekadasi he sang two bhajans in Sai Nilayam. Later when the Parayana started on 26-11-2008 there was a message from Baba in Puja. Written in kumkum was a terse message: "*Daily Shankar Bhajan*". Starting that day, the bhajans continued till 12-1-2009. During Bhajan Baba used to appear in various forms and sit among the devotees. Baba would often manifest through small children as children are very pure hearted, and they are considered equal to God. When Baba would descend over them, they would suddenly start behaving very differently. Those around them could clearly noticeable a discernible change in their persona. These children never knew what was happening while Baba blessed everyone through them. Baba used to like the bhajan "Entha hai, Entha hai ee Roju" (How happy is it today). During the bhajan He would often give *Udi* to all the devotees through Prasanna.

Baba knows the past, present and future, and He always alerts his devotees and makes them fulfill their responsibilities. He also makes us aware of our last days and turns our mind towards God. Baba did just that in the case of Rama, who was Shankar's fourth sister. She had a daughter and son. They used to frequently visit Sai Nilayam, and they had immense faith and trust in Baba. After remaining childless for nearly fourteen years after marriage, through Baba's grace they welcomed a daughter!

Rama often suffered from failing health, and she always had only one wish, and that was to witness her daughter's marriage before her passing away. In the process she would be fulfilling her duty and receiving the *punyam* from performing Kanyadaanam. Once when they came to Sai Nilayam, when Baba abruptly gave them the following message "Marriage has to be performed before October". October was only three months away.

They were unsure what to do as their daughter was still enrolled in university pursuing her graduation. Shortly afterwards, Rama was diagnosed with heart enlargement and the doctors advised her to undergo surgery. But Baba said that there was no need of surgery adding that it would be a waste of money. Baba told, "Ask her to come daily and sit in front of me and take *Udi* as medicine." During Dussera the marriage was fixed but they could not perform the marriage until December. Her health deteriorated and she was bed-ridden. With great difficulty she performed the kanyadhanam. After that she retired to her bedroom unable to attend any of post marriage rituals and formalities.

In the month of January 2013 she left her bodily palace and passed away peacefully. Two days before she died her family members admitted her to the hospital. When Shankar and Kavitha went to the hospital they had a call from Prasanna. They were conveyed a message from Baba " [sic] Before she leaves this world give her turmeric and kumkum as a token of love to a girl from her mother's house. She will leave this world happily with the strength that she has a family." They immediately went back from the hospital, bought a sari, blouse, bangles, turmeric, kumkum and gave it to her while still in the ICU. She accepted it waved her hand to Kavitha and went into coma. The next day was a Thursday when she left this earth. Baba asked Kavitha to knit a rose garland and to put it around his neck on behalf of Rama. Baba told Rama 's daughter "Your mother will come back to you in one year" and the same she delivered a baby boy and he was brought to Sai Nilayam for the cradle ceremony! Such is the power of Baba's words!

As mentioned several times in preceding chapters, if devotees were to lay their entire trust in Baba and surrender their ego and their burdens into His hands, He will take care of everything. The Sai Satcharitra documents countless instances where Baba cured many diseases using natural treatments, which according to science would exaggerate the disease. To quote from the Sai Satcharitra, "Baba cured the redness of eyes of a devotee using BEEBA (Carpus anacardium) and in another case Dr.Pillai where he was cured of ring worms without any treatment and was relieved from the pain by pecking of a crow – in the form of Abdul the boy who used to sweep the floor of the Masjid." In a similar fashion, at Sai Nilayam Baba always took care of all devotees. Here are some more experiences of Kavitha and how Baba took care of her health.

Kavitha used to suffer from several health problems. Then somebody told her to wear an Emrald ring which would help her. Her husband got it prepared in gold and the stone was covered on all sides with gold. One day when the *Parayan*a was going on she noticed that the stone was loose and moving around a bit. She consulted her husband who told her it was nothing be concerned about! Later when she went upstairs to bring his spectacles and while returning back the ring rubbed against the wall and the stone fell off, but she did not notice that. After some time she realized that the stone was missing so she began searching for it.

After some time she heard a voice saying "You do not need the ring anymore". Then she kept the ring in a silver bowl not informing anybody. In the evening Prasanna came to Kavitha 's house and told her that Baba said there is no need of this anymore. Baba told her to exchange the ring for eleven ceremonial gold flowers. On January 13th (Bhogi) Baba gave the opportunity to eight couples to perform puja to Lakshmi Devi with kumkum and those eleven gold flowers. The number eleven indicated His Ekadasi Sutras. The money got by exchanging the ring exactly equaled the sum required for purchasing the golden flowers. Following Baba's instructions, she stopped wearing the ring because Baba has been taking care of her health.

She used to suffer from sinusitis and was operated for the same in 2007. But she never knew that having undergone surgery once she required to undergo the same once every four years for the rest of her life. Later the problem intensified to such an extent that she wouldn't be able to breathe properly. She used many homeopathic medicines but there was no positive effect and finally the doctor advised her to go to Chennai and get the surgery done there. Then Baba suggested her to go to Nature Cure. She went there and took the treatments like Cold Tub bath, Hot Tub bath, Steaming and within a month's time without any allopathic or ayurvedic medicines the sinus subsided and disappeared altogether. Jai Baba Ki!

In Dhanurmaasam all Sai Nilayam devotees would undertake the Vishnu Sahasra Parayanam. One day Kavitha could not go as she was having severe cold and headache. Prasanna called her told her that Baba has given prasad in the puja room, please come and take it. She searched for it but found nothing.

There was a glass of water near Baba's feet but it was in wheatish in colour and was very thick. She asked Prasanna, but she said they have not offered anything and asked her to taste it. The minute she tasted it she felt like she was going to throw up. It was a mixture of camphor, ayurvedic herbal powder, tulasi and was bitter and sour to taste. She drank it with great difficulty as per His instructions. Within ten minutes the headache was gone and she regained strength and will power to perform the Vishnu Parayana. Till date she has never forgotten the taste of this medicine prepared by Baba.

In 2011, a few days before Dussera , Kavitha had a pain in her neck which was leading to headache. She thought that it may have been caused by an improper sleeping position. That day was a Thursday and they had bhajan at their relative's house. Before Aartahi Prasanna called her and informed that Baba had given her the following message: "Go out only after attending Aarathi and taking Baba's darshan in Sai Nilayam" They finished aarthi and went to the bhajan and were there till 8.30PM when they got a call from Sai Nilayam asking them to return immediately. They immediately came there and were amazed to see that the entire puja room was filled with fragrant and scented Udi. The exotic and celestial notes emanating from the Udi sent shivers through all present and a fresh dose of life filled their bodies.

Baba told them to take the UDI and asked Shankar to take Dhisti of the puja room. (A small ritual performed to negate the effects of evil-eye). Kavitha was visibly shaken and frightened and thought that some deadly event was about to transpire- why else would Baba have given such profuse quantities of Udi? The next day onwards an unknown infection started surfacing on her neck, and it was hurting all the nerves , there were visible swellings on the head and she was in severe pain. Then Baba enquired through Prasanna "*IT WILL TAKE ONE WEEK FOR IT TO GET CURED, CAN KAVITHA BEAR IT? SHE SAID SHE WILL BEAR THE PAIN. AGAIN HE GAVE A CONCOCTION OF AYURVEDIC HERBS FOR HER TO DRINK AND ALSO TOLD HER TO EAT TULASI. HE TOLD HER TO MASSAGE WITH ICE."*

The entire infection later started curing, and lead to formation of bubbles. Exactly one week later her maladies started disappearing. All the devotees who came to Sai Nilayam knew about this. Baba also said if she could no longer bear the pain, she was to consult a doctor and Prasanna also advised her. But she had the full trust in Baba and did not go to any doctor, and she was happy that Baba has taken care of her like a mother does for a child. Baba saved her while delivering Sandeep. Even today when she does not feel well, Baba alerts her before the problem sets in. In 2013 Baba told her to reduce her weight by 12kgs and that He was not to be held responsible for her suffering should she not follow his instructions. But she could not lose weight. In 2014 the sinus increased and she had to get operated upon. The doctor told her that she needs to get operated within a week's time and as per Baba's instructions they went ahead with the surgery.

For those who follow Sarvasya Saranagathi (complete self surrender) Baba will always take care of them. He will himself carry all their burdens.

See the compassion of Baba towards devotees. Baba always said that the more you thought of Him the faster they could reach Him. This is how He made Kavitha spend more time in Sai Nilayam and put her on the path of Spirituality.

Before the consecration of Baba's statue, there used be a big photo of Baba in the Puja room. There were many other photos of Hanuman, Satyanarayana Swamy, Anagha Devi, Sri Venkateswara Swamy and many more. Prasanna would beautifully decorate them with flowers. When the Parayana was going on Kavitha used to make a garland of roses with twelve flowers and offer Naivadhyam daily. One day a devotee went to her house and told her that Baba told her not to bring any flowers or naivadhyam. As she did not follow His instructions and He was not going to accept any naivedhyam offered by her. She was shocked and did not understand as to what happened. She stopped taking flowers and naivedhyam and used to be in tears during the Bhajan not knowing what folly she had unwittingly committed.

Prasanna also did not ask her why she has stopped bringing them. One day Baba showered Udi in Dwarakamai and there were impressions of eleven feet. All were arranging flowers on his feet and

then Prasanna asked her “Why are you not coming Kavitha?” Then she replied “Baba has told me not to offer flowers or naivedyam?” Prasanna was surprised and asked her “Who told you so?” Kavitha told her that one lady had informed her about this. Then Prasanna realized the mixup that had happened! She clarified to Kavitha that when she and her husband, Srinivas Sastry were discussing about a message given to another devotee, this lady showed up and thought it was for Kavitha and miscommunicated! Kavitha broke down into tears of joy!

That day the entire puja room was filled with turmeric and the photo of Baba, of its own accord, came near the door of the *Puja* room and for two days nobody could enter the puja room. Later each day a devotee was given the chance of decorating the puja room. They could stay in the room as long as they want and do meditation and Baba used to give positive energy and used to reduce their troubles. That was the time she learned making garlands for Baba. Forget about making garlands, until that day she never knew how to thread a needle! But today she makes some of the most beautiful garlands for Baba. Spending time in Baba’s presence is not an everyday opportunity, only those who have great store of merits and good karma are able to do so.

When the Parayana was going on in the year 2008 and 2009, it started with five members and later increased to 150 members. She used to think “Look how many devotees flock to Baba!” But later she realized that not all were true devotees of Baba. After the Sai Satcharitra Parayana many of the devotees stopped coming. After the consecration of Baba’s statue, he used to accept naivedhyam offered in the Dwarakamai. After a few days He stopped accepting the naivedhyam. He gave the following message “ *Now you will see that only my true devotees will come to my abode. There will be no sign of the inquisitive lot who come here only for the purpose of witnessing miracles”.* Later Baba began giving messages in *Udi*. Baba’s miracles became infrequent and gradually He started focusing all the devotees towards the spiritual path. In other words, he started a school in the temple.

Baba may visit our homes in any form. Let us see how he came to Kavitha ’s house when the parayana was going on in Sai Nilayam. Daily many devotees (nearly one hundred) used to visit Sai Nilayam so Prasanna would clean the house during the afternoons. Now cleaning and keep a house tidy is no easy task especially if it is frequented by hundreds of devotees on a everyday basis. The task becomes a herculean one if it involves feeding hundreds of devotees at Sai Nilayam for fifty one consecutive days! Only Baba’s grace grants the devotees with necessary strength to do the service. Prasanna would often sacrifice her sleep at night so as not to miss Baba’s messages, and there were several devotees eagerly waiting to hear Baba’s message.

One day Baba told Prasanna to go and sit in meditation inside Dwarakamai. While in meditation a photo fell into her lap and it was completely covered in UDI. To her surprise the UDI did not sprinkle at all. He told her “*GIVE IT TO SIVA PARVATHULU*”. Prasanna and Srinivas went and gave it to them and asked them to take off the UDI to see what photo it was. Shankar cleared the *Udi* and there was a one of a kind unique photo of “ *Baba seated on a stone, with Brahma Vishnu and Maheswar on top of him.”* That day Kavitha did not understand the significance of the photo but later realized that it was none other than Sri Dattatreya Swamy who visited them in that form.

Baba’s photo which can be seen in the hall today, used to previously adorn the Puja room. Baba used to accept naivedhyam, and also used to give *Udi* through that photo and messages also used to be written in *Udi*. All the devotees used to obtain the pictures from Shirdi through anyone who going there, and later put them in Sai Nilayam and then they used to take it. Once Srinivas Sastry’s relative brought one from Shirdi and kept it in Dwarakamai to take it home. Suddenly Prasanna brought the photo and kept in Shankar ’s hand and asked for five rupees. He did not have money and he went to

the watchman, asked him and gave it to Prasanna. She told him to get it laminated immediately and bring it to Sai Nilayam. She kept the photo in the *Puja* room. They also arranged bedding and sleeping arrangements for Baba. They used put this photo to sleep on the bed, and by morning the photo used to have Kova(sweet-meat made of milk) near the mouth. Baba used to eat it. One should never consider pictures of Baba to be merely photographs, He may come to us in any form and He is omnipresent omniscient and omnipotent.

The photo of Baba with a coconut in front of him was also given to them the same way. That photo was given to Prasanna by someone devotee. She hung it on the wall in Dwarakamai. Baba showed many miracles through that photo. He used to play with Shama, the photo used be in a sleeping position on the bedding, nectarine honey used to trickle from the photo, He used partake of the naivedhyams offered by devotees. Baba once gave a message to Prasanna saying that "Whosoever first steps foot in Sai Nilayam the day of Bhogi (13-1-2009) as a couple, the photo must be given to them." Shankar and Kavitha happened to be that lucky couple!--

On 18-01-2010, Baba gave a message written in UDI "*Sankara, Anna Lotu Teerchu"* Dwarakamai. Prasanna had five brothers and Shankar had an equal number of brothers. But due to some personal reasons they did not share much bonding. Baba always said that the "His true devotees who come to Sai Nilayam will be their soulmates". That is how Baba made Shankar and Prasanna brother and sister. For Deepthi's marriage they had not much of bonding, but Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry treated Shankar and Kavitha as her part of their own family and followed all the formalities as is usually done to own brothers.

Once Baba told Kavitha and her younger son, Sandeep to wear *spatika mala*. Immediately Srinivas Sastry placed an order for the same from Haridwar one in gold chain and the other in silver. Some ignorant devotees not knowing the strength of Baba's words and the spatika mala, started poking fun at them saying, "Don't you have anything other than this to wear? Later Baba will tell you to wear Rudraksha Mala, are you going to wear that too?" . One day she was angry and complained to Baba, "Everyone is making fun of me after you told me to wear it. I am removing and I do not want it" Moments later, she received a phone call from Prasanna saying, "*If you take joy in wearing it, keep it, otherwise I'm not going to force you to wear it. However if you were to wear it faithfully you will soon catch its significance.*" Shortly afterwards she caught an allergy, and it subsided on account of the *spatika mala* and Baba's blessings*.* After that she stopped wearing it.

At first, for one reason or another, Kavitha never garlanded Baba's idol. Once she thought of adorning him with artificial flowers but Baba did not agree to it. Then Baba through Prasanna gave her Rudrakshas to adorn Him.

Baba never expects anything from us except love, faith and trust. If we surrender our ego and our five senses at His feet, He will guide us across the oceans. Sraddha and Saburi are all that is needed from us. Nothing is impossible for Baba. He is the creator of the Universe. Let the devotees read this stories with faith and devotion and immerse themselves in the pure love of Baba. He is always ready to answer our prayers, but have enough patience to wait for Him to answer.

Let our faith in His holy feet be firm and steady.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTERS 68 & 69

EXPERIENCES OF SHANKAR IN SAI NILAYAM

This chapter once again highlights how Baba takes care of His devotees, and the experiences of Shankar are given as an example.

The following stories tell us how Baba was by Shankar's side, and how He took care of his health. One day around lunch time in Sai Nilayam a certain quantity of *Udi* materialized in Prasanna's hand, which she proceeded to give Shankar asking him to use it daily. After a few days Shankar suffered from severe ear pain and he consulted an ENT specialist. Some tests were done, and he was prescribed medicines to be used over a week. The doctor remarked that singing songs could be one reason behind this adding that there was no guarantee that the medication would provide him with any relief.

After a week Shankar and Kavitha went for the scheduled check-up. The doctor asked Kavitha to come inside the operation theatre and showed her the report. The doctor declared "I do not know which God you placed your trust in, but that God has saved Shankar from a dangerous situation." The doctor confided that Shankar's hearing issues were rather serious, and as per the preliminary observations and reports, Shankar's case was rather bleak due to which it would lead to a gradual loss of hearing over time. Such cases are usually not cured, and there was no known cure. The doctors were surprised to notice the sudden recovery, and how both the malady and the symptoms both vanished at once. After returning home Baba gave Shankar the following message "*Do not sing for three months.*" This is how Baba saved Shankar from a major problem.

In July of 2015 Shankar suffered from some ailment of the throat. There was inflammation in his throat due to which it was completely blocked and he couldn't talk and everybody assumed it was due to cold and phlegm and used medicines but of there was no improvement. Then they consulted a doctor who informed that the nerves of his throat were affected by an infection and told him avoid singing songs for a few months. Baba also advised him to be careful. With Baba's grace, he was allowed to sing only once a week on Thursdays. But Shankar's world was desolate without him singing bhajans and he felt very sad. But a few days of caution for recovery was better than being unable to sing at all with damaged vocals cords. Therefore, Baba's advice had to be followed. Today Shankar does not sing bhajans anywhere but at Sai Nilayam.

How Baba ultimately saved Shankar from what would have been his untimely death:

Baba always protects his devotees from all sides. A detailed account of Baba's promises has been covered in a previous chapter: *Ekadasi Sutralu*. All beings are looked upon equally by Baba. He always takes great care of devotees who place their entire faith and trust in him. As evident from earlier chapters, Baba had always guided Shankar and family in all aspects including their health. They do not what good deeds they must done or wat good karma they must have amassed in their previous lives that Baba loves them so much and looks after their well-being. Although Baba is God Himself, Kavitha reveres Baba like her own father whom she loved the most. She exhibits and surrenders all emotions of love, anger, misery to Baba alone. On account of her unbounded love for Baba, she feels at home sharing everything with Him.

On May 1st 2012, Baba gave another message to Shankar. It was as follows, "*Sankaradu Prathi Moodu Nelalaku Amaavasya Mundu Vache Sanivaaram ,Mandapalli Velli Saneeswarunuki Abhiskekam Cheyinchaali Oka Samvathsaram Paatu. Tharuvatha Sani Manchi Chesthundhi*", which translates to "Once every three months, on the Saturday before *Amavaasya (No Moon Day)* Shankar

was to perform Lord Shaneeshwar's Abhishekham at the temple in Mandapalli. This was to be done for one year and Shankar receive the blessings of Lord Shani. Following Baba's message, they would go to Mandapalli at the appropriate time and perform Abhishekham. On October 11th 2012, Baba gave the following message, "Shankar is no longer required to visit Mandapalli".

Around July of the same year, Baba had another message for Shankar and Kavitha, "Twice a week, on days of your choice you are to perform Baba Paalabhishekham, and partake the same after the Abhishekham. Both wife and husband were to perform this Abhishekham for two years without any breaks. Shankar selected Monday and Saturday for performing Abhishekam and continued to do so until 2014. While three months were still remaining Baba one day told them that they were not required to perform the Abhishekham any longer. They did not know why He asked them to stop?

Then Prasanna called them and asked them to have Shankar's horoscope examined by Nishtala Raman, an astrologist. After studying his horoscope, Raman informed them that all bad phases of their life were over and that they had nothing to worry about. This was probably why Baba told them not to perform the Abhishekham anymore. The Astrologer also informed him that the past two years of his life was overshadowed by the influences of *Raahu and Ketu* (These planets indicate the imminent death of the individual!) and has since come to an end. The rest of his life was going to be a bed of roses. By making Shankar perform Paalabhishekham, He destroyed his Griha Dosham. By making them partake the milk as prasad, Baba blessed them with health and prosperity. In Shirdi Baba used to take on the various maladies of the devotees and while giving them happiness in return. Baba continued to do the same at Sai Nilayam. Baba continues to protect His devotees and while looking after their welfare.

On March-04-2013 Baba gave this message in UDI "*9 Sapthahalu Chesina Variki, udhyogam, Vivaaham, Vyapaaram, Santhanam.Naa Sankalpam.Sraddha, Bhakthi, Oorpu.*" Devotees who undertake a parayana reading for nine consecutive weeks will be blessed with whatever they wish for."

That day all the devotees who were present started the parayana. Prasanna asked Kavitha to start the Parayana. By the month of May everybody completed their Sapthaham. Baba informed everybody of the good that happened in their lives after the completion of the Sapthah. Then Kavitha began wondering, "What good has happened to me and my family?" She couldn't think of anything really important had happened to her during and after the parayana. Baba opened her eyes by giving her the following message: "NINE *SAPTHAHAALU CHESTHE ANDARIKI ANNI AYYAYI. MEEKU EMI AVVALEDA? SANKARUDU LENI ILLU OOHINCHUKOMANU? AVASARAM BATTI NENU AADHUKOLEDHA? MEERU THESUKUNNA NIRNAYAALAKU DIVYA ANUGRAHAM LEKAPOTHE, SANKARUDU IPUDU VUNNA PARISTHITHI BATTI ANNI PUNYA KSHETRAALU PAMPAANU*" The veils of her ignorance were thus destroyed, and Baba made them realize the truth while looking at things in the way they were.

Indeed the devotees are very lucky to be in the presence of Baba, and even more fortunate to know about Baba. Unlucky ones do not get such an opportunity. We exist due to Baba's grace, then how can we ever repay Him? All we can do is shed our ego and pray to Him with pure love and devotion.

How Baba enabled Shankar to lead a life per his liking:

Shankar had lost all interest in the job he was doing. The organization he was working for went under debts and a case was pending in the court. The head of the organization stopped thinking about the status and left it to the hands of the employees. Shankar did not want to take the salary without working. The other employees used to ridicule him asking why when he is was worried

about accepting pay without working. But Shankar was a staunch devotee of Baba so he knew better. He was going to lead a moral life guided by Baba.

During that period Baba made them invest in the business of Rajesh . All the responsibilities were guided by Baba himself. This was a shipping organization and Baba made them buy vehicles. The beauty of leaving everything into Baba's hands is that He takes care of everything. That is what happened in Shankar and Rajesh's case too. Baba had given them all the necessary guidance down to the minutest details like how many hours the vehicles are going to work, how much revenue was going to be generated and so on. Baba told Shankar to join as an accountant in the organization was it was in need of an accountant. After working for two years he quit the job as he didn't want to work there any longer. Fortunately by then his children had completed their education so he was free of responsibilities. Free from everything he was ready to dedicate the rest of his life in Baba's seva.

How Baba averted a financial crisis:

Shankar's ancestral home was located close to Sai Nilayam. This belonged to his parents, and was given to him and his brothers. Baba advised them to sell his half, deposit the amount in bank so that he could lead a happy life through the interest earned. But his brothers were not interested in selling that property. His brother wanted to stay in that house, so he decided to give the house for development and then give Shankar his rightful share. Thus a three storeyed house came to be.

The ground floor was to serve commercial needs, and the money obtained after selling the second floor was to be used for development of the house and the third floor was to be occupied his brother. Shankar's relatives blamed Kavitha and accused her of being the conspirator behind the wanting to sell this ancestral property which was located at a prime location.

Because of this gossip she started thinking too much and came into the folds of Maya, and ended up deviating from Baba's message. They decided to retain the commercial complex in the ground floor for themselves. Baba will always keep supporting us as per our interests and decisions, just like Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar says, "You make the choice, I will give my blessings"!

Had they followed Baba's message their life would have been a bed of roses. If we ask Baba to support us for a decision taken by us, Baba will bless our endeavors but it will not be without obstacles or hardships on account of our karma. However Gracious Baba will always be there to hold our hand and make us walk without falling down. Because of the change in their decision they had to face many problems. The person to whom they sold the land did not pay them the entire amount as he did not get the approval from Greater Visakha Municipal Corporation for obtaining the occupancy certificate. Thus the entire construction project came to a standstill owing to a lack of funds. Now see Baba's mysterious ways! Suddenly it turned out that one devotee who frequently visited Sai Nilayam happened to have a friend in GVMC and through him the entire process was completed without spending any money or paying any bribes. This was possible only due to Baba's grace, otherwise what painful crisis they would have been stuck in!

Baba determines the Gruha Pravesham Muhurtam (House Warming Ceremony):

After the construction was over Baba finalized the muhurtham for Gruha Pravesam. The message was "*MAGHAMAASAM AMRUTHA GHADIYALLO SASTHROKTHAMGA*" The time was fixed at 4.20A.M and He declared that there was no need to consult anybody else regarding this matter. Baba also instructed that after the puja at least 100 people should be fed (Anna Saanthi). That was in

November 2011 and they did not have any panchaangam to see what day it was. Later they came to know through a dairy that it was Bhishma Ekadashi and the date was 3-2-2012 and the time was 4.20AM. This is considered to be the most auspicous of all muhurtams. The time and date are of special significance. Kavitha wished that Baba and Goddess should grace their house and bless it.

On the previous day Baba gave the following message to Prasanna during Aarthi. “A path of flowers leading to the Puja location should be arranged.” The priests came from Annavaram and were the relatives of Srinivas Sastry. The Gruha Pravesam ceremony went without a hitch. Kavitha kept thinking the whole day whether Baba and Goddess graced their house or not? Then Prasanna called her and told that both of them came and blessed them. Before Prasanna started from home Baba gave the prasadam while informing that during *PURNAHUTHI* He would come and bless them. Thus they started from Kavita ’s house itself. Then she went into the Puja room to find that the entire crown of goddess was covered in brilliant crimson-red kumkum.

Baba determines the rent:

After the Gruha Pravesam renting out the complex was proving to be quite difficult. They did not know what price ask. Then Baba gave a message “They will pay ten times more rent than what they got before (before the development)”. Previously they used to earn Rs.3300. Within a month it was rented out to Muthoot finance on a lease for 10 years and it was agreed upon that the rent was going to be Rs.33000! In this manner Baba not only saved them from a severe financial crisis, but also enabled them to earn a fixed decent income for a duration of 10 years! Such is Baba’s love and mercy for His devotees!

Baba then told them what they lost because of their deviation from His message. Because they wanted to retain the ground floor Shankar had to pay Rs. 5,00,000 as compensation to his brother. The registration process cost them Rs.2,50,000. If they had sold the house as per Baba’s instructions and if the money had been deposited into the bank instead, they would have earned Rs.70,000 per month. Since they did not follow Baba’s message, they suffered loss in two ways. This was the result of their own doing, and therefore had to suffer the consequences.

One was regarding the house and the other was related to Swaroop- for which she was responsible. Although Baba had explicitly instructed that Swaroop was to pursue higher education looking at her son’s disappointment she begged Baba to grant him a job. When he went to L&T for interview she asked Baba that it would be nice if he gets selected and as per her wish Baba gave a job in L&T. Kavitha and Swaroop both decided to opt for the job and not pursue higher education. He was posted in Jammu and nobody knew that he was silently suffering! Then Baba gave the following message on 24-7-2013:

1. Swaroop is feeling depressed.

2. Everybody is leaving. He will become alone as everyone who joined along with him left the job.

3. Bharani birth star the period of time is not good and Swaroop’s was the same.

4. Need to try for another job in four months, but the internet was very slow in Jammu - a restricted area. So applying for jobs also was difficult. Attending the interview will be difficult. From Jammu going to the work place was six hours of journey.

5. This is the reason I (Baba) told him to study. He did not listen and Kavitha agreed to all his terms.

Baba always guides us for our own sakes. His instructions are pregnant with meaning. His instructions help us escape the clutches of destiny and karma. Those who follow it will be happy, the

others will be forced to endure the consequences good or bad due to their choices. By not following Baba's instructions, Swaroop had to lose one year of his career, and not selling the house led to reduction in the income.

"VEPA PUVVU CHEDUGA VUNNA THARUVATHA MAAMIDI PANDU VALE MADHURAM GA VUNTUNDI". As said by Baba.

As per the instructions of Baba they invested in Rajesh 's company and Shankar also got a job in that and made him earn additional income. Shankar used to have a strong intention of quitting the job and spend the rest of his life in Baba's service. In this regard, Baba gave the following message on 5-7-2012:

"*UDHYOGAM MAANEYAALANTE VYAPAARAM PRATHI BANDHAKAM----EE ROJU NIRNAYAM.ADI VADHILESTHE SAANTHI, SUKHAM, SOWKHYAM VASTHAYI ANUKUNTE RENDITI NUNDI THOLIGI POVACHU.MANESI NANDU VALLA ETUVANTI NASHTAM KALAGADU.ARDHE VASTHUNDHI. DEENI VALLA BHARYA, BHARTHA , PILLALU AANDOLANA AVASARAM LEDU.DHINTLO ETUVANTI MOHAMAATAM AVASARAM LEDHU.INKO AARU NELALA VARAKU VYAPAARAM LO ETUVANTI LAABHAALU RAAVU. 50 SAMVATHSARAMULAKU DYVA DHYANAM, VYRAAGYAM, SUKHA SANTOSHAALU VUNDAALI. SUKHA SANTOSHAALU LENAPPUDU DYVA DHYANAM RAADU. AARDHIKAMGA ETUVANTI IBBANDULU LEVU*".

Baba told them to think carefully and take a decision. Shankar came home and discussed it with wife and children. He said that he will go by their decision. They felt that his happiness was their happiness. The entire family told Shankar to make the final call, and that they would support him. Srinivas Sastry and Prasanna told him to think about his decision carefully. By then he had made a firm resolution to quit the job and informed Rajesh that he would be quitting in the month of March 2013. Baba told that he can resign the job in June (Pushya maasam). Since that day they never had any problems. After such experiences they began following Baba's instructions with great reverence.

All these stories only prove that Baba words are never untrue. Whatever He instructs is only for a reason which one may or may not immediately understand. Inscrutable are His ways. Therefore devotees should inculcate the habits of Sraddha and Saburi, do their duty whole heartedly and leave the rest to Baba's hands. Let him be the captain our ships. He will safely and happily take us to the final destination.

Let us therefore surrender ourselves at His Holy feet and pray unto Him from the bottom of our hearts!

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 70

BHIKSHA BY PRASANNA

This chapter narrates how Baba made Prasanna collect and accept Bhiksha from devotees residing outside Vizag.

As mentioned in early chapters, Baba instructed Prasanna to collect Bhiksha. She used to collect it from devotees living in and around Sai Nilayam. In the process the devotees' *Karma Phalam* (effects of fruits of karma) were reduced. In the year 2010 Baba gave the following message in *Udi*:

"9 PITAPURAM, VIJAY INTLO BHIKSHA, BASA

10 Doctor PADMAJA, KAVITHA BHIKSHA, MANI KURUVAPURAM,

13 KONDA BABU,

14 PREETHI,

15 SRAVAN".

Written in turmeric were the following words, "*MEE MUGGURU KAVITHA PRAYAANAM*" (Three of you and Kavitha do Parayanam).

As per Baba's instructions they all started on 9th and reached Pitapuram. There they took darshan of *Sri Kukkuteswara Swami*, *Sri Dattatreya Swami* and the *Goddess,* after which they continued the journey to Hyderabad. They reached before nightfall and stayed in Vijay's house. That night the entire house was found to be filled with layers of *Udi*. On the next day Prasanna accepted Bhiksha from Vijay. Later they visited Dr. Padmaja's house for Bhiksha and Baba made *Udi* fall near the entrance of the house. (The Bhiksha had to be collected from outside the house). From there they went to the house of a devotee named Kavitha and she came out from the puja room to provide Bhiksha and when she returned the puja room was found to be filled with *Udi*. When she was giving Bhiksha it fell off her hands. (Anupama says, "[sic] Baba knew before itself that he had to reduce the karma but still some devotes fall under the influences of Maya). The next stop was at Mani's house, there they sat in the puja room for some time, collected the Bhiksha and started to Kuruvapuram where Annadhanam happens regularly.

In Shirdi Baba used to accept Bhiksha from a few houses only. If others would give it unasked for, he would reject it. When the party was leaving, one devotee gave them Bhiksha in a carry bag to offer it in Kuruvapuram, without Baba asking her. Kavitha could not reject it as she thought that the devotee would feel bad. That devotee was a relative of Srinivas Sastry. After getting into the car she informed Prasanna. Then Prasanna asked "why did you take it?" Bhiksha accepted means we are taking the karma phalam and it can only be done by Baba alone. Then Kavitha felt a little scared. On the way there were police checking the cars and when asked, Srinivas Sastry opened the car to show them and the bag of Bhiksha fell down and scattered on the ground. In other words, the unasked for Bhiksha met its due fate. That devotee had not followed Baba's instructions, and wrongly blamed Baba. Baba said that she has to face the consequences of her actions.

The Bhiksha collected was given to a great Saint at Kuruvapuram. This saint had dedicated his life in the service of the needy. Kuruvapuram does not have many facilities and the food(prasad) given by the priest is the only food available to all the devotees and Baba made them give the Bhiksha at such a holy place. What greater act of service than Annadaanam?

After coming to Vizag they went to Konda babu 's house in Srikakulam. This Kondababu was the owner of Nagavali hotel. Only few months back his wife had passed away due to which he was depressed all the time. That day, Baba gave *Udi* in the bedroom where his wife used to sleep. It was an assurance by Baba that He was always there for him, - no matter what. They did bhajan in the evening, took Bhiksha and returned to Vizag.

On 14th Prasanna took Bhiksha from Preethi's house and gave her *Udi* as prasad. To take Bhiksha from Sravan's house many devotees accompanied too. They went upstairs into the puja room and all the steps were found to be covered in *Udi* with impressions of Baba's feet on them. Baba instructed that Sravan was to be brought upstairs and made to walk in the foot prints of Him(Baba). In other words, Baba took the Bhiksha from the hands of Sravan.

Baba took Bhiksha from everyone's house and in return gave them prasad of either *Udi* or *Gandham* (*Sandalwood*). Why did He do so? This was done to make everyone realize that it was Baba Himself who was collecting the Bhiksha while destroying the devotees' various sins and bad karma, and Prasanna was Baba's chosen medium. By blessing them with *Udi,* he was reinforcing their faith in Him. Baba gave the confidence to all the devotees that He is always there for them through all phases of their life.

On the level of human mind and intellect, proof is always needed for faith. Without that the mind finds it hard to come to terms with the truth. Therefore, Baba always gives just enough needed to sow the seeds of faith in the devotees' hearts. Once the devotee is firmly established on the path of spirituality, he/she will transcend the limitations of mind and body, and dissolve themselves in the Ultimate Reality or Truth. Continuously chanting Baba's name is the surest way of shedding our veils of ego and ignorance and destroying our sins. Chanting the *Sai Naam* will take us closer to Him, and with His blessings we will become one with Him.

How lucky we all are to have the most precious gift of being in close contact with Sai Nilayam and be in Baba's presence!

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 71

EXPERIENCES OF SARASWATHI

This chapter describes how Saraswathi received Baba's blessings and how she became a part of the Sai Nilayam Satsang.

Baba's miracles sow the seeds of bhakti, love and devotion in the hearts of the devotees. As mentioned in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, listening to stories of Saints purifies one's mind and soul. These stories help devotees free themselves from the clutches of Maya, and realize the ultimate truth. Baba's love for his devotees is unlimited and unbounded. As an incarnation of God, He set an example for His devotees to follow by showing that God's love is not reserved for the elite few, but that it is all encompassing where all beings are one and the same without regard to form shape caste creed religion or gender and so on. Baba answers the prayers of all devotees. Unfortunately a majority of devotees across all generations have neither Sraddha nor Saburi. In today's world abound with instant gratifications, people say their prayers to God but never wait patiently for His answers. Baba always asked His devotees to imbibe the qualities of Sraddha and Saburi. Devotees who follow Baba's instructions have all their desires, - material as well as spiritua,l fulfilled.

From the time in Baba graced Sai Nilayam, countless miracles took place here. Saraswathi was fortunate to have witnessed several of them. Every miracle witnessed by her further strengthened her faith in Baba which in turn gave her indescribable joys. The *Udi* given by Baba in Sai Nilayam from the Dhuni itself, and innumerable people can testify to its efficacy and its miraculous healing powers – which is due to Baba's grace. The *Udi* has helped cure people's diseases, bringing normalcy back into their lives, and finally in many cases it has saved people who were on their deathbeds. On every Thursday Sai Nilayam devotees are blessed with the opportunity to perform Abhishekam and Archana followed by Bhajan or Satsang. Rare are places of worship which are devoid of all bureaucracy, and the sole focus is on God realization and nothing else, and where devotees get such close contact with God they worship. Sai Nilayam is truly an unique place. Only Baba's blessings, the tireless efforts of Prasanna and Srinivas, and the love of the devotees has made this possible.

Previously mornings in Sai Nilayam were dedicated to Kakad Aarathi followed by Annadanam and parayana while Baba Abhishekam was performed during the evenings. Saraswathi and her family lived on top floor of the same building where Sai Nilayam is located. Her mother-in-law who was 93 years old, also stayed with her. One day due to her mother-in-law's illness Saraswathi couldn't be physically present for the Abhishekam but her mind was filled with thoughts of Baba and was continuously chanting His name. Then Prasanna called her and asked her to come and take Baba's darshan. Immediately she came down where she was met by a message for her Dwarakamai. It was written in *Udi*, she was surprised and had no words. Overcome by joy, streams of tears began rolling down her cheeks. She was left speechless.

Baba gave the following message in UDI "*SARASWATH Amma, KODALI GA NEE KARTHVYAM NIRVARTHINCHU, ANTHIMA DASA LO VUNNA AA THALLI SEVA CHESTHE AA PUNYAPHALAANI NEE BIDDALAKU PANCHUTHANU. AA THALLI SEVA CHESTHE NAAKU CHESINATLE*." (Dear Saraswathi, as a daughter-in-law do fulfill your duties and responsibilities towards your mother-in-law. The good karma or punyam obtained by rendering service to those who are in the final moments of their life shall be reaped by your children. Serving your mother-in-law is the same as serving me.)

She couldn't believe her good fortune. Baba was there to guide her at every step of her life. She always took great care of her mother-in-law, and Baba's message reinforced her will do to do it even better and with more love and passion. From that day onwards she began giving the *Udi* to her

mother-in-law taking care of her with great love and affection. Baba is always true to His words and He blessed Saraswathi's three daughters with suitable husbands and happy lives.

Her husband used to face a lot of pressure at work. Instead of worrying or taking the matter into their own hands, they left the burden to Baba, for He is the wire-puller of the world and not a leaf moves without His grace. The only qualities Sraddha and Saburi is what we need to get the grace and blessings of Baba . Devotees of Sai Nilayam have a rather personal relationship with Baba. They say that when they sit in front of Baba they are overcome with emotion and gratitude. They feel that this Baba is "their Baba" who had manifested himself in Sai Nilayam for the upliftment of the devotees. Baba has said that Sai Nilayam was Dwarakamai.

Saraswathi once kept her copy of *Sripada Srivallabha Swamy* book near the feet of Baba and the next day when she went to Sai Nilayam to collect it, she found that Baba had blessed her with prasad in the form of Turmeric and Kumkum mixture on page 40 of that book. In that chapter the importance of Sri Rajarajeswari Devi, whose temple can be found in Pitapuram, was mentioned. Sri Rajarajeswari Devi was the family Goddess of Saraswathi and her family. This incident further strengthened her faith in Baba.

On another occasion, Baba gave her a message in *Udi* which she wouldn't forget for a lifetime, "*SARASWATHI Amma, SRI MERU PUJA NIRVARTHINCHU, NEE ABHEESHTAM NERAVERU THUNDHI*." She wondered whether she was really worthy of Baba's grace. Then Saraswathi was made to perform puja to the first *SRI MERU* that came to Sai Nilayam during Dussehra.

Srinivas Sastry and Prasanna are younger to her in age but the bhakti, love, faith and trust they have towards Baba is awe inspiring and is bound to steal the hearts of one and all. They follow and execute every message of Baba paying great attention to detail; everybody is equal in their eyes, they are always concerned about the well being of others, they listen to the devotees' problems and concerns with great patience and care without expecting anything in return. They are indeed true devotees of Baba following in His footsteps. Baba has blessed them by blessing Sai Nilayam with his presence. These are all the most important qualities devotees should try to inculcate.

When Saraswathi 's third daughter Bhanu Priya was pregnant, the love and support Srinivas Sastry and Prasanna extended will be never forgotten by her in this life. After admitting her daughter in hospital the doctors said that it will take more time for delivery. Her daughter has lot of respect and trust towards Prasanna. She wanted to see Prasanna before her delivery so immediately Prasanna , Srinivas Sastry, Jaya and Kavitha went to the hospital, met her and gave her the strength that Baba is always there for His devotees who trust him. Prasanna stayed by her side until Bhanu Priya delivered the baby at 10 PM. They will forever remain indebted to Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry.

Story of Saraswathi's niece, Shalini:

Saraswathi 's sister was also a devotee of Baba; she always inquired about the developments at Sai Nilayam. Prasanna's word is Veda Vaaku to them. When Saraswathi 's mother was in hospital Baba gave a message that "*AAME ANTHIMA DASA, SUVAASINI GA PASUPU KUMKUMATHO PAMPISTHANU*". During Navarathri celebrations turmeric, kumkum, thambulam, prasad that were offered to Sri Anagha Devi were asked to be kept beside Saraswathi 's mother. By that time she was already in a coma. Lalitha Parayanam was going in Sai Nilayam at that time when they received a call that her mother was in a serious condition. Once she heard that,she went to Sai Nilayam and Prasanna gave her *Udi* and told Saraswathi that if she doesn't go now she will not be able to see her mother again for the last time. They started immediately and her mother passed away the next day.

Once Joga Rao went for a health checkup as he was wanted to go to the Amarnath Pilgrimage. The doctors did the angiogram and were suspicious if there was block in his heart. The entire family was depressed. Then when they went for taking Baba's darshan and Prasanna told them," There is nothing to worry, everything will be fine." When they went to Bangalore on a vacation to meet their children, they took their father to a hospital and they said everything is normal and he just needs to use medicines! Baba's grace thwarted a dangerous situation!

The relationship devotees maintain with Baba should always be based on trust and not on our circumstances. Devotees should make conscious efforts to ensure that they bring about a permanent change in themselves, and that their worship and piety is not limited to the four walls of the Puja room or to the premises of a Temple. The change in the devotees should be everlasting and it should reflect in everything they do. Anupama says, " [sic] We should all change our behavior following Baba's teachings. All these changes help us climb the steps of the spiritual ladder, which will finally lead us to the door of Moksha or Salvation." This is indeed true.

Devotees shouldn't just like or only pray to Baba. They should incorporate His teachings in their everyday activities and follow in his footsteps. The greatest way in which we can give back to our Guru and God is through the consistent practice of the philosophies disseminated by them. The veritable proof of which lies in the noticeable change in one's persona and the quality of life thereafter. For the welfare of all devotees, the following must be kept in mind:

1. We should correct ourselves following Baba's guidance.

2. We should always be optimistic, and never encourage a pessimistic attitude.

3. We should always admit our mistakes and remain free of ego.

4. To achieve our goals we must choose the right path following Baba's advice.

5. The help and support of the Sadguru Sri Shirdi Sai Baba is most important to achieve our goals. Doing Seva to our Sadguru and dedicating ourselves to the Sadguru is the only way to reach our goal.

6. The Sadguru will always be there for His devotees in an invisible form. We should realize that and have infinite Sraddha and Saburi towards Him, while garnering an unbounded love for Him.

7. We have to be free from egoism..

8. Always study the Sri Sai Satcharitra with attention and grasp the underlying messages.

9. We must always be happy to serve the poor, needy and helpless people.

If we follow all these guidelines, we are sure to move closer to Baba and receive His blessings.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 72

EXPERIENCES OF VIJAY IN SAI NILAYAM

In this chapter we will discuss the experiences of Vijay who stays in Hyderabad and the experiences he has with Sai Nilayam.

Vijay is Kavitha's brother. When the parayana was going in 2009 for the first time he came to Sai Nilayam.He used to work in Infotech. Due to some reasons he lost job and it was during that time he came to Sai Nilayam. BABA gave a message "CHINTHA VALADHU BHAARAM NAADI". Since that time Vijay was blessed by BABA many times.

When the parayana was going in the afternoon all the devotees kept the naivadhyam in the bedroom and were asked to close the doors.After parayana was over the naivadhyams which were offered to BABA used to be in a plate all mixed together.Even the juice used to be mixed with rice items.BABA used to take all the foods mixed together in Shirdi and the same way he used to do in Sai Nilayam.Vijay used to have a thought in his mind that the naivadhyam offered to BABA and once accepted by BABA, if it was given to him as prasad as long as he was in Sai Nilayam he would be utmost lucky and happy.Then immediately amma told Vijay that as long as he is in Sai Nilayam "You have to eat the prasadam of BABA." BABA knows the intentions of all devotees and will never let them feel dissapointed and will always fulfill the wishes.When eating he used to know how BABA will test his devotees. BABA used to mix all the rice, sambar, juices, curries, what all were offered used be mixed and as per his wish he used to eat them happily even if it was very difficult.

When he was in Sai Nilayam BABA told him to try for jobs and even if the job was not corresponding to his experience he was asked to join .Vijay started searching for another job.Later he got a job with salary 15000 and he joined in Hyderabad.They bought a house and they had a home loan with ICICI and they had to pay the monthly installement.The salary was less and the how to manage the responsibilities was the biggest question.See how BABA helped him out.Vijay's wife Lalitha had a house in Vizag. During marriage her parents told that quarter of the property will be given to her.BABA told her to take eleven lakhs as per share and leave the property to her family. Since her family were also devotees of BABA they all accepted the proposal..Then Lalitha's family gave her the amount and BABA told Vijay to pay the amount in the bank and the rest to deposit in the bank on the name of his children. BABA's planning cannot be understood by ignorant human mind. BABA saved Vijay from the tensions and helped in maintaining his health.

Vijay had a thought in his mind that BABA must come to their house in Hyderabad.BABA told to accept bhiksha in Vijay's house and give it in Kuruvapuram.As per the date fixed by BABA amma, uncle, Kavitha garu and Karthik had to stay in Vijay's house and the next day take bhiksha and go to Kuruvapuram.They slept and woke up in the morning and when they were about to start, BABA gave UDI in the room where amma slept.BABA told them to keep the UDI as raksha(protector).Whenever they used to go to Hyderabad BABA used to tell them to stay in Vijay's house.

The second time when Lalitha was pregnant she prayed BABA that she should be free from any hurdles during her pregnancy.BABA told her to do job and all the problems related to health will subside.Vijay's second son was born on 29-4-2010.Doctors told Lalitha to join in the hospital two days before the delivery date.But BABA told her to eat prasad on Thursday and then go to the hospital and the baby was delivered on the same day at 6.30PM. On May 9th they named the child as SAI TEJAS.He slept in BABA's UYYALA (cradle) and BABA blessed him with UDI.On May 9th 2010, it was Ekadasi and after naming, BABA gave a message in UDI after 12PM "CHINNA TIRUPATHI AADI DEVUNI DARSHANAM."Sastry uncle, amma and all started and had the darshan of Venkateswara

swamy at 9PM.As per BABA's instruction Vijay got a nice job in BANK OF AMERICA.Lalitha got a job in the school where her children study.Now they are happy and are lading a tension free life.BABA told Vijay to take the responsibility of his mother.His mother is a devotee in Brahma kumari trust.They medidate on Lord Shiva without a form.They have lot of restrictions.She has a strong intention that all her children should be devotees of Shiva.BABA told him to fulfill his mothers wish and where ever he is BABA will take care of him.(As told by BABA). By the words of his mother he cannot come to Sai Nilayam but his thoughts are always filled with BABA .

BABA will always want and will see that his devotees are happy.He will never betray them.But we must have the Sraddha and Saburi towards him,that's all see the way our life would be.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 73

EXPERIENCES OF RAMA & RAJESH IN SAI NILAYAM

This chapters narrates the story of how Rama and her family received Baba's blessings at Sai Nilayam.

Rama and her family are among the regular devotees who frequent Sai Nilayam. Baba saved them from many obstacles in life. Rajesh (Rama's husband) runs a business in partnership. Once there were some disputes within the organization. The other business partner tried to cheat Rajesh by trying to sell the organization to a third party while falsely claiming that the business was not doing well. This partner generally looked after the internal work at the organization, and Rajesh attended to the external aspects of the business. This gentleman had a sweet tongue and soon brought all the employees of the organization under his words and influence, and soon began propagating falsehoods about the state of the organization.

Devastated and dejected by the unfortunate developments at the company, Rajesh thought of quitting the business. Then Baba gave a message that "Everything will be fine in a week's time." Baba's assurance livened up Rajesh. Baba further instructed Rajesh to take over the business. But at that time Rajesh did not have required financial strength to take over the entire business so he was in a dilemma not knowing what to do. Due to Baba's grace, the third party came to know realize the truth and the unscrupulous partner had no choice but to leave the organization. This is how Baba saved them and helped them by retaining control over the organization. The employees were happy and grateful too.

On another occasion Baba saved the life of Rama 's younger uncle (*Chinna Movayya*). Once this uncle, was not feeling well and was on his death bed. Doctors said there was no hope for recovery and that death was imminent. That day was a Guru Pournami and Rama went to Sai Nilayam for darshan. She prayed unto Baba that her uncle should recover and He should save his wife from unbearable agony that would otherwise befall her already depressed self. She prayed His blessings should shower everybody in joy happiness.

That day Prasanna was possessed by Baba and when Rama was praying Prasanna (Baba) turned back and remarked, "Is anybody praying for health-related problems, if that is the case please tell me." Rama knew that the request was directed towards her but she couldn't get herself to divulge the truth in front of everybody. She gathered that Prasanna was possessed by Baba but she was doubting whether Prasanna's response would be accurate if she answered back. Then Prasanna turned back and asked a devotee, Murali, sitting right behind Rama "Did you ask? "and Murali replied that it was not him. Then Rama quickly made an earnest supplication to Baba saying, "Baba you know everything, you yourself reveal the truth and save me from embarrassment." Then Prasanna beckoned Rama towards her, and gave her *Udi* and told to mix it with water and give it to the patient as soon as possible. She immediately ran to the hospital and gave *Udi* mixed with water to her uncle to drink. To everybody's amazement, he was found to have completely recovered was seen sitting on the bed as if he was oblivious to the fact that he was fighting death until the previous day. His wife broke down into tears knowing that Baba had saved her husband. Both wife and husband's faith in Baba grew stronger from that day onwards.

Isn't it wonderful how kind and merciful Baba is? He saved not only Rajesh and Rama, but also their relatives!

How many more miracles does one need to witness to move from doubt to devotion? Baba is Omnipresent Omnipotent and Omniscient. While living in flesh in Shirdi he gave health wealth and prosperity to many a devotee, so he did to the several devotees of Sai Nilayam. Baba knows everything: the past, the present and the future. Miracles are only an introduction to the infinite reality. What lies beyond the level of miracles is the boundless. But until devotees move beyond the realms of miracles and seeing is believing and progress spiritually, they cannot perceive or realize this timeless truth glorified in countless spiritual texts, even though it has been staring right into their faces all along. Miracles are like beacons of light in the middle of the sea which act as guides to the lost sailor. Miracles serve the purpose of providing direction to inner soul which has lost its path shrouded by veils of ignorance from endless births and deaths. When the realization finally dawns upon the devotee, it is a beautiful experience knowing that you are one with the Universe, and your true nature is Sat Chit Anand, and that the entire universe exists on account of God's love and grace alone.

Baba is the supreme power, who graciously guides us from ignorance to knowledge. Baba's love enables us to successfully fulfill the duties of our lives all the while remaining focused on the ultimate goal of our lives which is Self-Realization. Let us surrender our body mind and soul at the feet of Baba. Let him direct the story of our lives. Let us forever be attentive and meditative on Baba.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 74

SRI DATTATREYA SWAMI

This chapter briefly discusses the story of Sri Dattatreya Swami.

Interested readers are requested to read the book ‘Sri Guru Charitra’ which details the beautiful life and history of Sri Dattatreya Swami in its entirety. In this chapter a summary is attempted to bring the new reader up to speed and also to act as a backdrop for the next chapter.

'Shri Guru Charitra' is the biography or life history of 'Shri Guru Dattatreya' (an incarnation of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara). It was originally written in the Ovi verse (a Marathi Metre) in Marathi by Shri Saraswati Gangadhar, whose ancestor Sayamdev had personally lived and served with devotion, Guru Narasimha Saraswati, an incarnation of Shri Dattatreya about 600 years ago. It was later translated into Sanskrit by Shri Vasudevananda Saraswati (Sri Tembye Swamy), who is regarded by many as an incarnation of Shri Dattatreya Swami and lived about a hundred years ago. It has been later translated into several other languages. This book is regarded as equal to the Divine, capable of blessing one and all who read it with devotion and reverence.

Shri Dattatreya took birth at the Ashram of Atri and Anasuya in very very old times (Krita Yuga) and it is believed that his two incarnations namely Shripada Shri Vallabha and Shri Narasimha Saraswati had taken place in the Deccan in about the 14th and 15th Century (A.D.) respectively. Shri Manikya Prabhu, Shri Akkalkot Maharaj, Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi and Shri Vasudevananda Saraswati are some of the great Saints who are believed to be the Avatars (incarnations) or Amsas (taking a part of His powers) of Shri Dattatreya. It deals with the greatness of Guru and establishes that Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Maheshwara, why, it proclaims, Guru is identical with Para Brahma, Who is considered the Origin of all including the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. Since Sri Dattatreya is also an incarnation of the three Deities, He is revered as the Aadi Guru (The first Guru). Shri Dattatreya is an Avinash Avatar, i.e. He did not shed His body after completion of His earthly mission, unlike other Incarnations like Sri Rama, Sri Krishna etc., but continues to exist in the ageless and timeless physical form – protecting his devotees at all times and looking after their welfare. His only mission is to help all His devotees burn the veils of Maya and cross this Ocean of Worldly existence.

Siddha Muni Guides Namdharak**:**

A devotee of Shri Guru by name Namdharak, greatly troubled by domestic miseries, left home and started on foot with the intense desire of seeing Shri Guru. While on his way, he was praying to Shri Guru all the time. Being tired of walking, he sat down under a tree and soon he fell asleep. In his dream, he saw a being with dreadlocks, ash markings all over the body and a face full of kindness. He soon recognized him to be Shri Guru, who applied ashes to his forehead and placed His blessing hand on his head. Namdharak was greatly amazed to see the dream. He awoke and began to proceed further on his path. While going he was all the time thinking about this dream which he had seen the previous night. While walking thus, his eyes caught glimpse of an individual walking in his directions who bore striking resemblance to Shri Guru who had appeared in his dream. With humility, he prostrated himself before him and said, "You are my mother and father. Kindly favor me - an orphan child. Kindly tell me your name and place of residence."

The Siddha Muni said, "I am a Yogi. I live on earth and in heaven also. I have been visiting holy places and now I have come here. I am a disciple of Shri Guru Narasimha Saraswathi, who resides at Gangapur near Sangam (Different from *Triveni Sangam* a confluence of the rivers Ganga Yamuna

flowing on the surface, and Saraswati flowing underground at Prayag), the meeting place of the Bhima and Amaraja rivers. He is in the incarnation of the Tri-Murthi and was always found in meditation. He has come to this earth for the salvation of His devotees. His devotees get food, cows and other wealth in abundance. Hearing this Namdharak asked him, "Though my forefathers have been devotees of Shri Guru for generations, why should I be in such a deplorable state? Will you kindly satisfy me in this respect?" Shri Siddha said,"You say that you worship Shri Guru and yet complain about adversities. Then it seems that you are not worshiping Shri Guru wholeheartedly. Even if Shri Vishnu or Shri Shiva is angry with His devotee, Shri Guru can surely protect him. But if Shri Guru is enraged, even Shri Vishnu or Shiva cannot protect him!"

Birth of Shri Dattatreya Swami**:**

"In the first instance there was all water everywhere. Then an egg `Hiranya garbha' (with Gold(Hiranya) inside) came into existence. Universe has come out of it. Due to `Rajas' Brahma came into existence. He is known as Hiranyagarbha. It broke into two hemispheres & the earth & the sky came into existence. Brahma thus created 14 Bhuvans, 10 directions, mind, speech, time, six enemies such as desire, anger lust avarice etc. Brahma created seven sons (manas putras) namely, 1. Marichi, 2. Atri, 3. Angiras, 4. Pulasti, 5. Pulaha, 6. Kratu and 7. Vasishta. Of these, Shri Guru took birth in the house of Anasuya & Atri. Anasuya (one who is devoid of hatred) was the devoted wife of Atri Rishi.

The following is taken from Sri Ekkirala Bharadwaja's Sri Guru Charitra, Chapter III:

"Now I wish to know why Sree Guru who is Parabrahman (the Absolute) has taken birth as a human being on earth", said Namadharaka.

"Son, you are blessed indeed. God's grace is on you. That is why you are son strongly impelled to know about him. This devotion shall eventually liberate you. Your faith does stir up my joy too. Earlier, I roamed the whole of this earth, but no one ever asked me to narrate the stories of Sree Guru. After so long, only you have asked me about these. Just as the ocean swells at the sight of the full-moon, at the sight of an eager devotee like you, my urge to expound the same wells up within my heart. Now listen carefully," said Siddha and went on: "Sree Guru is infinite and so is his divine sport. One does not know where to start the narration of his divine acts. That is why, unless you question me specifically, it is not easy to commence the narration. However, it is never possible to express the full significance of his leelas in speech.

The Vedas describe the Supreme as the One, failing to reach whom our speech and mind turn back upon them selves. That is, his divine play can neither be comprehended fully by the intellect, nor its implication conveyed by language. Listening to or reading the stories of Sree Guru's miracles is like a boat with which one can easily cross the ocean of misery ridden phenomenal existence. During the age of Kali, men are irreligious. Such do not understand this truth and are therefore lost in this ocean. Incessant cravings for pleasure are the ceaseless waves in it; such passions as lust and greed are the frightening creatures that infest it; the inarticulate cries of pain and sorrow of creatures constitute the roar of the surf. In order to take us safely across such an unfathomable and boundless ocean, the Guru is the helmsman. God's i.e, the guru's grace is the favorable wind. Owing to your meritorious actions of your past lives, you have got all the means necessary to cross it without much struggle. So make sure, you do so quickly. Now I shall recount the stories of Sree Guru'. So saying, Siddha led Namadharaka to the confluence of rivers Bheema and Amaraja, and both of them sat under the peepul tree beneath which, long ago, Sree Guru himself lived. As the boon bestowing Sree

Guru sat under it, that tree too acquired the blessed power and hence may be considered as a veritable Kalpa vriksha, the wish-fulfilling tree. Then Siddha went on.

"My son Namadharaka, human beings are of three kinds; those given to sensual pleasures; the seekers after enlightenment; and the enlightened (or the liberated). The story of Sree Guru (i.e., Sree Guru Charitra) is the sole refuge of all these. The seekers of worldly pleasures gain them either by studying or listening to it. For seekers after liberation, it is the excellent remedy to cure the illness of ignorance. The liberated ones derive supreme bliss by listening to it. It is thus their very life. The full significance and efficacy of Sree Guru Charitra is something which transcends our limited powers of intellectual understanding and verbal communication. However much we recount it, there remains much that is never revealed, unless one is spiritually awakened to it by divine grace. Once there was a terrible universal deluge and the whole world was submerged by a huge flood of water. Then Lord Narayana by floating on the coils of the divine serpent, Adisesha (lit., what remains as essence when Al forms are dissolved) and was in his yogic trance. Desirous of projecting the world again, he manifested (the creative grace) Maya and originated Brahma the creator from it. In order to promote the creative process, Brahma too, by an act of will, created the seven great seers, Mareechi, Atri, Ribhu, Pulasthya, Pulaha, Angirasa and Daksha. Of these sages Atri happened to be the one to whom Lord Datta was born. Anasuya the wife of the great sage Atri became famous for her devotion to her husband (paativratya). Such was her spiritual power that the hard, uneven earth turned soft and smooth for her as she walked about. Even the scorching sun and blazing fire turned cool in regard to her. The god of wind dared not blow except as a pleasant breeze for her sake. The gods presiding over nature's forces were afraid that they would loose their dignity if they defied her greatness and so sought refuge from Lord Vishnu, the Sustainer of all existence.

Once sage Narada who freely moves about the three worlds, visited the abodes of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva and proclaimed the spiritual eminence of Anasuya which was a result of her intense, unrivalled devotion to her husband and of her unfaltering vow of hospitality to visitors. Hearing this, the consorts of the divine Trinity, i.e., Saraswathi, Lakshmi, and Parvati felt jealous of her and wept. When their husbands tried to console them, they insisted that they should find an occasion to curse Anasuya Devi, or trap her in a moral dilemma and see that her greatness does not exceed their own. So the three gods went to the hermitage of sage Atri, disguised as three random guests (athithis). Anasuya welcomed the guests with due respect and seated them.

As per her vow of dutifulness, she said, 'Holy Sirs, you have sanctified our hermitage by your holy visit. I heartily welcome you. Please say what I could do for you. The master of the hermitage, sage Atri, has gone to the forest to perform his austerity (tapas): The guests told her that they were all very hungry and cannot wait till her husband returned home. They wanted to have food immediately. She went in and after making proper arrangements, invited them for lunch. Then the guests said, 'Holy one! Unless you take off your clothes and serve us food in your nakedness, we shall not eat but go away hungry!' On hearing their words, she smiled to herself and reflected thus: 'I am totally purified by the long association with the holy sage, Atri. What harm can the God of Lust ever do to me? So need fear nothing. If I do not comply with their precondition, they would go away after laying a curse on me for having failed in my duty and my promise to feed them. As they have sought food from my hands, I look upon them as my own children and not as strangers and grown up men!'

Having decided thus, she said to them, 'Sirs, shall do as you wish. Come and have your lunch!' Then she did accordingly. At once, by virtue of her superior spiritual power, the three divine guests were transformed into infants! At the sight of them, holy motherly love welled up in her heart so intensely that her bosom experienced lactation. She happily suckled them and the three infants were

immensely satisfied. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, as though exhausted with their tasks of Creation, Sustaining and Destruction had all enjoyed perfect rest in her lap! Then Anasuya realized that they were the holy trinity and was very happy. She put them in a cradle and rocked it, singing a lullaby recounting the whole incident. Sage Atri who was on his way home heard the song from a distance and he knew what had transpired. On reaching the hermitage, he glorified the trinity thus: "Oh thou Supreme Spirit! You are the ultimate cause for Creation, Preservation and Destruction. You are the witness of the whole universe, the omni-present, all pervading essence of all existence. You are Lord Vishnu. You are indeed the Reality. But by your divine sport, you manifested yourself as the holy trinity for your won play. Though the universe is a projection of nescience of your real essence, it is not distinct from you. Only when perceived through the illusory sense of I and mine', it looks distinct from you."

As he sang thus, even while the three infants were in front of him, they also appeared before him in their original forms and wanted him to seek a boon from them. He then looked meaningfully at his wife and said, 'My dear, these holy ones cannot be reached even by the mind. They appeared here only by the power of your devotion. Tell them of your heart's wish.' She replied,' my lord, you were created by Brahma for the promotion of the phenomenon of creation. Therefore, I shall be pleased if you pray to the one Lord that has appeared as this trinity to live here as our sons.' Sage Atri did so. And the One Spirit, manifest as the trio said, 'Oh wise sage, offer myself to you henceforth as your adopted son. Hence I am Datta'. Owing to the power of Anasuya's devotion, the divine trinity continued to live at the hermitage as her children. At the same time, they also left for their celestial abodes in their subtle forms and were united with their consorts.

As Lord Vishnu gave himself up completely, the sage named Brahma who was charming as Chandra, infant Siva as Durvasa and Vishnu as Datta. *The children of Atri are called Aatreyas. Thus, in order to denote that Datta was his son, he came to be called as Dattatreya.* He is indeed the Supreme Lord himself, the goal of Vedas. He is of the nature of Reality - Awareness - Bliss. He is the master of yoga and wisdom, the wish fulfiller of his devotees and is ever ready to bless them at their mere thought of Him. He wanders all over the creation. Durvasa was choleric in temperament. Still, he blesses others. Chandra sustains the worlds.

The Supreme Spirit, henceforth known as Dattatreya, is indeed unbound by phenomenal existence. Yet, in deference to a curse bid on him once by sage Durvasa, he ever abides on earth, assuming different human forms. This he does out of compassion for the creatures on earth and for the gods. There were avatars of the Lord earlier too, but all of them, after completing their mission, left off those forms and returned to their one essence. In order to bless his devotees, the Lord had incarnated as Lord Dattatreya, yet he did not, like the other avatars, leave the earthly plane of existence after accomplishing his divine mission. I shall illustrate the difference.

The incarnation of Sree Rama was intended for the destruction of the demon king Ravana. The avatar of Sree Krishna was intended for the annihilation of King Duryodhana and his wicked train. So, after the completion of those missions, Sree Rama and Sree Krishna had cast off their physical bodies and left for their heavenly abode. But the avatar of Dattatreya was intended for the welfare of all creatures. As this mission has to be carried out as long as creation exists, he does not lay down his body and leave for his heavenly realm but goes on wandering from place to place. Thus Dattatreya is the eternal avatar of god's spirit of self dedication to the salvation of all creatures. He manifests himself perennially at the perfect saints of all religions of the world.

As Siddha thus went on enumerating the unique features of the avatar of Datta, Namadharaka expressed one of his doubts thus: "Sir, Durvasa, by laying a curse on Dattatreya, has indeed done

immense good to all creatures! If he was not cursed to wander about for the welfare of all, Lord Datta too would have laid down his physical body like the other avatars, after the fulfillment of his limited mission. But tell me, why at all, Durvasa cursed him. Besides, how could the curse affect him who is ever above all manifestation?

Siddha replied, "Son, the Supreme Lord is indeed ever un manifest, but when invoked by the power of devotion of the faithful ones, he manifests himself on earth out of compassion for them. He is full of the spirit of endurance. Durvasa once cursed king Ambarisha who was a devotee of Vishnu. Then Dattatreya requested Durvasa to transfer the curse to him, as he is has pledged to take over himself the sufferings of his devotees. Durvasa did so. And thereby curse accrued to Vishnu who manifested himself as Dattatreya. I shall recount the details of the story.

Long ago, there was a king named Ambarisha who honored his guests as the veritable forms of Lord Vishnu. He scrupulously observed the vow of ekadasi (the eleventh lunar day from either full or new moon day). The vow consists of fasting on ekadasi and breaking the fast before noon on the next day of dwadasi (lit. `The twelfth day).

Once sage Durvasa wanted to test the righteousness of Ambarisha and arrived at his palace with a large retinue of disciples on the morning of a dwadasi and demanded food for all of them. Ambarisha happily invited them all for lunch. Durvasa then went to the river for ablutions and deliberately delayed his return to catch the King in the horns of a dilemma. If, in order to fulfill his vow, he were to break his fast without waiting for the guest, it would amount to disrespecting the latter, according to the religious law. As a way out of the dilemma, Ambarisha sipped a little holy water (teertha). For, the act may be interpreted as breaking the fast without insulting the guest. The next minute, Durvasa arrived and was wild with rage. He said, `as per the letter of the holy law, you have taken the holy water as food, leaving us, the holy guests' and cursed Ambarisha thus, "May you, in every one of your births, wander about without an abode!"

The correlation between the curse and the error committed to deserve it is that Ambarisha could not await, in patience, the arrival of the guest and the curse ordains that its victim should like wise be deprived of any stability and comfort in all his future births. Ambarisha being an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu, the latter appeared on the scene and said," Oh Durvasa, you being a great rishi, your curse cannot go in vain. But my devotee Ambarisha cannot stand it either. And it is my promise that I bear the burden of my faithful. You modify the curse so that I could suffer it in his stead." Durvasa pondered for a while; 'This Lord Vishnu is not easily accessible to devotees on earth. Hence it is for the good of Al if He, instead of Ambarisha, should wander about this earth'. So he modified his curse accordingly. It is for this reason that the Lord Vishnu as Dattatreya has been wandering about in different forms all over this earth.

The same Lord, as described in the Puranas, manifested himself earlier as the Divine Fish, the Divine Tortoise and others. Even in this age of kali, he manifested himself twice. Even though these two avatars cannot be seen by the naked eyes of ordinary mortals in this wicked age, they respond to the call of devotees even to-day.

In this age of Kali, even the good which is conceived of in the mind bears fruit within a limited time, whereas in the case of sin, only when it is acted upon does it produce its fruit. It is only because, in the age of Kali, this facility exists, that the Lord did not prevent the spirit of Kali from manifesting himself on earth. How blessed are those, Oh Namadharaka, who live in a virtuous manner without allowing even a single evil thought even in this Kali age!"

This is how Sri Dattatreya Swami manifested Himself on Earth for the sake of his devotees.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 75

DATTATREYA SWAMI -THE ESSENCE OF THE DIVINE TRINITY

This chapter delves into more aspects of Sri Dattatreya Swami, how He renounced the universe and other facts.

Sri Dattatreya Swami is specially worshipped on his birthday, Sri Datta Jayanti. When Lord Dattatreya was a child of five years, many old sages spotted his greatness and started insisting that He was bound to show them the path of Yoga. This child, Datta, wanted to test them. He disappeared into a pond and remained there for one hundred years. Some of the sages waited for Him on the banks of the pond while the infant Datta was in a state of complete Samadhi for one hundred years. Even after coming out of the pond He continued to test the sages. Dattatreya who was 105 years old then, brought out His yogic energy through his Brahma Randhra (*an astral orifice found in the center of the skull, through which yogis can leave the physical body*), and gave it the form of a woman. Because the energy came out from him, he was its natural owner. He declared her to be his consort. In order to test the sages, she drank wine and started dancing. She was born as a youthful woman. Seeing her drink wine, some of the sages called her *Madhumati*. Others called her '*Nadee*' because her dance resembled the dancing movements of a flooded river. Still others realized that She was none other than the Yogic Energy of Lord Dattatreya and prayed to him. Some others went away.

Then Lord Dattatreya came out of Samadhi. She now appeared or took the form of an ascetic. Lord Dattatreya named her Anagha. Those who called her *Madhumati* and *Nadee* had identified her as one who possessed sin. But, she was sinless. Therefore, Dattatreya had named her Anagha (Sinless, Pure). Those who had recognized her to be the energy of Dattatreya, obtained the true vision of the Lord and were able to transcend all sorrows of this world and the next. In other words, because of Anagha, their sorrows (Agha or sin and sorrow) disappeared. This was another reason why Dattatreya named her Anagha (one who removes sorrows).

Dattatreya left home at an early age wandering as a *Digambara* (one who does not identify with the physical body, therefore dons no clothes) in search of the Absolute Reality or Brahma. He seems to have spent most of his life wandering in the area between and including North Karnataka, through Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, and into Gujarat as far as the Narmada River. He attained realization at a town, now known as *Gangapura* in Karnataka. The original footprints of Datta are believed to be located on the lonely peak at ***Girnar***. The *Tripura-Rahasya* refers to the disciple Parasurama finding Dattatreya lost in a transcendental state of meditation on top of the Gandhamadana mountain. Lord Dattatreya did tapas for 12,000 years on Mt.Girnar. Swami Vivekananda mentioned that for Hindus Mt Girnar is considered holy as it was blessed by Sri Dattatreya Swami's presence for over twelve millennia and the place resonates with his holy vibrations.

Appearance of Dattatreya:

Shri Dattatreya is portrayed in different ways in different traditions among the Hindus. However, the most commonly portrayed image is the one having six hands; the lowest two hands holding a Mala (garland) and a Kamandalu (water pot). The middle two hands are shown holding the sacred

Shankha (Conch) and Chakra (Discus). Occasionally, portraits also show him holding the Gadha (Mace). He is also shown as accompanied by 4 dogs and a cow.

Significance of the Form of Dattatreya:
Dattatreya is shown having 3 heads and a form that embodies and personifies peace and serenity. In the present Kali Yuga, it is only through pure, divine love, that one can go beyond just being poised and attain that type of calmness and serenity. Only those extremely Dharmic (righteous) can follow the fourfold path of Yoga and go ahead to discover the Absolute Truth. Guru Datta radiates that very love and compassion, thereby emanating that peace and love from his person.

The 3 heads of Shri Guru Datta are said to embody his identity and essence of the Devas of the Trinity, namely, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwar. He is also the one who has transcended the 3 qualities or the Triguna and is one with the Sublime Energy of the Absolute Guru. Therefore, he is also regarded as the Divine Teacher or the Divine Guru.

Sri Dattatreya six hands:

Dattatreya is most often shown as having 6 hands, each holding the Sankha, the Chakra, the Gada, the Trishul (Trident), the Kamandalu (water pot) and the Begging Bowl.

The Shankha:

The Shankha or the Conch is the one that resonates with the Naada, the divine sound “Om or Aum”. Those who lead an austere life and practices penance and meditate with great love, focus and attention can hear different six to seven distinct sounds, like bells, rushing water, a nightingale’s voice or the buzzing of the bees, a melodious flute, or a combination thereof depending upon the individuals’ ability to perceive. The advanced practitioner of meditation can hear the roaring sound of “Om or Aum” which drowns all other sounds, and expands and spreads through the meditators body before engulfing him and the entire creation in its waves. This OM is the word of God and forms the very root of all existence. During periods of intense meditation, one can experience the joy of dissolving in the sound of Om. That is when you are in divine communion with God, in those moments anything and everything you wish for or seek from God manifest themselves in the physical world bestowing upon the seeker- health, wealth prosperity and all the riches he could have ever dreamed of. However, it is easier said than done, and it requires the being to be humble, and devoid of ego and to be assiduous in his or her efforts towards making progress.

"Sam" and "Kham" together stand for Jupiter and Saturn. Saturn stands forms the basis of knowledge spiritual expansion, which is ultimately bestowed by Jupiter. Likewise, the teacher too is responsible for first awakening the need for gaining knowledge in the student and then helping him or her seek extensive training to achieve the same. The necessity of a Guru is of quintessential importance due to the mystic and esoteric nature of the Ultimate Truth. Readers are requested to read the chapter – *In Quest of God and Guru, Chapter XII, Sri Sai Satcharitra-* which provides a beautiful explanation.

The Chakra:
The Chakra, the Discus or the Wheel stands for time or the Kalachakra. The teacher presides over this factor too, by training the student to gain knowledge regarding the time factor, also teaching him to adapt equally to both good and bad times in his life, without getting affected by either. Developing a sense of timelessness leads the follower to Ananda or bliss.

The Gada:

The Gada or the Mace is symbolic of pride. Pride or Ego or the feeling of 'I' must be sacrificed in order to walk the path of the Truth. Dattatreya leads his followers with love and compassion, gently nudging them when they err from the path of Dharma, reminding them to put down their pride and develop love and compassion for fellow beings, thereby experiencing spiritual enlightenment. There are countless instances in the history of time where the simple and humble devotees whose hearts are filled with love, and know nothing about ego or Ahamkara, attain enlightenment even without trying while those who consider themselves intellectually superior to others and who practice austerity of decades together but lacking the love or devotion seldom attain Enlightenment. Only after they shed their ignorance and surrender themselves heart and soul at the Lord's feet do they receive His blessings. This is not to say that the Lord Almighty is picky or biased towards who receives his blessings or not. This is absolutely false. God loves all beings equally and always. His blessings are always present, but it is the human body, mind and ego which come in between preventing him from tuning into God's frequency, so to say, and receiving his blessings. A simple example to illustrate this would be the instance of a Television. Even though there are 100 channels, you cannot watch a given unless you are tuned into that particular channel but that is not to say that the remaining 99 channels are absent. This was told by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

The Mace also symbolizes the inverted form of the cerebro-spinal system in our bodies. Guru Datta holding the mace indicates him reversing human conditioning, to free the devotee of his ignorance, finally leading him toward enlightenment. This is one reason why great emphasis is laid on keeping the spine erect and the head parallel to the ground. The subtle energies or *Prana* flow through the spinal cord with the medulla oblangata acting as the point of entry of this divine energy or life force which keeps us alive and well. In instances where an individual's brain or spinal cord is damaged, almost always end up paralyzed or in a vegetative state or a coma.

This topic is immensely huge and it would be unfair to limit it to a few paragraphs. Interested devotees should read books like *Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramahansa Yogananda, The Holy Science by Sri Yukteshwar Giri, and Be Here Now by Ram Dass* among other books which provide striking insight into this topic and shine light upon these timeless truths about the nature of the human body. Those who have the eyes, can find the diamonds and the immense knowledge that is contained in the Sri Sai Satcharitra. Those who read it with faith and devotion can find these pearls from the deepest depths of the book.

Those who do not practice any form of devotion or meditation, or anybody who hasn't had an experience with the divine will find everything mentioned in these books very hard to comprehend or come to terms with, and will most likely end up brushing it aside as the invention of some creative mind. On the other hand, those who have had at least some kind of divine experience or those who sincerely meditate daily or practice intense devotion and love towards Baba or any form of God they believe in can attest to the timeless truths. To those wondering whether or no they had this experience, the simple answer is that when this experience happens, you will instantly recognize it because it is so revealing and so beautiful.

The Kamalandu:

The Kamandalu or the little water pot indicates that Guru Datta is, in fact, the life carrier. He bestows a good and long life on the student, so that it can aid him in his spiritual journey; his journey along the Path of the Truth. The Master breathes this life-force into his student, thereby helping him perform his daily Yogic practices, finally raising his Kundalini and giving him the moksha that he seeks.

The Begging Bowl:

Finally, the begging bowl that Lord Datta holds; signifies that He begs his followers to donate their ego, limitations, pride, negativity, evil thoughts and sickness to him, thereby enabling them free from the same. Guru Dattatreya then drinks down this "poison" and helps his bhaktas become liberated from all forms of negativity and evil, thereby putting them more firmly on the path towards enlightenment. Incidentally, Lord Shiva is also sometimes portrayed to be carrying a begging bowl for the same reason.

The Four Dogs:

Shri Guru Datta is commonly portrayed as being accompanied by 4 dogs of 4 different colors. These 4 dogs represent the following:

- The 4 Vedas: Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda
- The 4 Yugas: Satya or Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and Kali Yuga
- The 4 states of the Word: Para (beyond), Pasyanti (perception); Madhyama (conception), Vaikhari (vocal)
- The 4 states of Existence: Existence, Awareness, Thought and Speech or Action.

In the pre-Vedic era, dogs were regarded as auspicious symbols. Later, it was believed that deities assumed the form of dogs. These animals were also often linked to fidelity and Veera, the quality of great courage, closely associated with warriors. Dogs can be both wild and tame, thereby representing the qualities of fidelity and devotion.

The dog is one of the most sublime symbols of the Vedic system. The dog is capable of sharp auditory abilities and has a perception far more advanced than that of human beings. They are also always alert and receptive to sound (teaching). Therefore, this is the first prerequisite for one to become a good disciple.

The ability to listen and listen to the subtle is what leads the seeker to the Voice of Silence or the Voice of the Divine. This Anahata Naada (that which cannot be heard by the ordinary auditory sense) is what leads the seeker to the Heart Centre, thereby enabling him or her perceives the Sound of the Divine One. This is the sound of Aum or Om, one hears when one meditates intently.

Cultivating silence and awareness helps one form impressions in the subtle plane. The dog again represents this orientation and the impression at higher levels of existence. The dog is also capable of great love and compassion, which is far beyond the comprehension of human beings. Cultivating these qualities helps human beings go beyond their physical and bodily limitations to finally realize the Absolute Truth.

THE COW:

Datta is also accompanied by a white cow - in fact, the cow is protected by the deity. According to Vedic tradition, the cow embodies creation, which nourishes its beings with its milk. Drinking the cow's milk, therefore, is symbolic of receiving that nourishment from the creative cosmic forces; also indicating growth, satiation, contentment, health and joy. The cow embodies the nurturing aspect of the Universe and hence, it is given the utmost respect in Hinduism. The cow is also referenced to as `Kamadhenu` or the wish fulfilling celestial cow.

In this system of thought and philosophy, anything that can create is accorded the same respect as that of the cow. Hence, Hinduism stipulates that the feminine form - women, the planet Earth, the solar system and the entire cosmic system be given paramount respect. It is for this very reason that Datta is shown protecting and nurturing the cow, which bestows happiness, peace, health and joy.

In Datta Sampradaya (Tradition) the first avatar was *Sripada Sreevallabha Swamy* and the second was Shri Narasimha Saraswati. The third being Shri Swami Samarth more popularly known as Shri Akkalkot Maharaj, and the fourth being Shri Manikya Prabhu and the fifth Sai Baba of Shirdi. They are Datta avatars or incarnations of Sri Dattatreya Swami.

For a complete account on the Life and teachings of Sri Dattatreya Swami, readers are encouraged to read Sri Guru Charitra.

The Dattatreya Swami Mantra is:

OM AVVADHOOTAAYA VIDH MAHE

ATRI PUTRYA DHEEMAHI

THANNO DATTA PRACHODAYAATH

Repeatedly chanting or reciting this mantra will remove all sins and is the safe boat(*Taaraka*) that enables the devotees to cross this ocean of life with success.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 76

ARRIVAL OF DATTATREYA SWAMI IN SAI NILAYAM

This chapter describes the story behind the consecration of Sri Dattatreya Swami Idol at Sai Nilayam.

After the consecration of Sri Anagha Devi in Sai Nilayam most devotees were unaware of Sri Anagha Devi as that was the first they had ever heard about her. One day, Baba told that as Sri Anagha Devi had set foot in Sai Nilayam, so arrangements for the arrival and consecration of Sri Dattatreya Swamy must be made. As described in the previous chapter, Anagha Devi is nothing but the manifestation of Sri Dattatreya Swami. Baba further instructed that Sri Dattatreya Swami's idol's posture must be identical to Anagha Devi's Idol's posture- sitting on a lotus with one leg folded. Then Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry placed an order for the idol in Hyderabad and as per Baba's instructions there were three families that contributed towards the preparation of the idol.

Then after a few days one Mr. Chakravarti called Srinivas Sastry and informed that the idol was ready and they could come and collect it. Then Baba gave a message that "Along with all the people involved in bringing the idol of Sri Anagha Devi, those who contributed towards the idol shall also accompany on the trip for bringing the idol of Sri Dattatreya Swami to Sai Nilayam. Then Srinivas Sastry, Prasanna, Kavitha, Shankar and Anupama all started to Hyderabad. Baba also stated that Narayana was to accompany because he had to perform Sri Chakram Puja in Swetha's (Prasanna's niece) house in Hyderabad. So, they all began their journey during the early hours travelling in Narayana 's car, they reached Hyderabad by 9pm on the same day.

While travelling Baba possessed Prasanna and told that the idol should be taken to Kuruvapuram and kept inside the main temple and the puja should be performed. He also instructed which families were going to be sitting or present for the consecration programme (namely, Srinivas Sastry and Prasanna, Shankar and Kavitha, Suresh and Anupama). Baba further instructed that Kavitha and Shankar would be performing the Kalyanam of Dattatreya Swami and Anagha Devi (performing the Kanyadhanam). Baba said that Narayana was to donate pearls which would be used for *Thalambraalu* (*MUTHYALA THALAMBRALU*) and a white *Pattu Sari* for Anagha Devi. It was determined that the consecration would take place in *Maagha Masam*.

Baba also gave names of few people from Hyderabad who would be travelling alongside the Sai Nilayam party during the final leg of the journey from Hyderabad to Kuruvapuram. These people were Vijay, Rama and Yugandhar. After reaching Hyderabad that night they all stayed in Swetha's house and the next day during early hours Narayana performed the puja and they all started to the place where the idol was carved, that is the workshop. Generally, nobody looks into the eyes of the idol before consecration, but Prasanna saw the eyes before consecration itself. It was a timeless electrifying moment. The idol was handed over to the party, and as per Baba's instructions Yugandhar, Rama and Vijay gathered at one place and the rest of the party started towards Kuruvapuram. Yugandhar and Vijay came alone but Rama brought her children along with her.

The party reached Kuruvapuram by evening. As mentioned in earlier chapters, the facilities are quite sparse at most Datta Kshetras due to their anachronistic nature. The temples were established long before the earliest modern civilizations came to exist. Kuruvapuram was no different. To reach the temple one must cross the Krishna river in a small boat. The Sai Nilayam party carried the Dattatreya Swami idol in the boat and reached the other side of the Krishna river. There they gave a holy bath to Sri Dattatreya Swami in the river, and then took Him inside the temple following Baba's instructions.

They party also took a dip in the holy waters. When they were bathing Sri Dattatreya Swami in the holy waters, dark grey colored Udi resembling the Shirdi Dhuni Udi started materializing in Prasanna's hands. They thanked Baba for His blessings, and applied the UDI to their foreheads and entered the temple. Srinivas Sastry spoke with the temple authorities and the Dattatreya Swami idol was put inside the temple. Then something mind boggling happened. The priest all alone proceeded to carry the idol of Sri Dattatreya Swami which weighing over 108Kgs (238lb) along with the Cow and Chaturvadas which he put inside the Garbha Gudi (Sanctum Sanctorum).

The priest kept the idol on the *Swayambhoo* place of *Sri Paada Sri Vallabha Swami* in Kuruvapuram. This is of great significance, and means that the Dattatreya Swami idol was equivalent to the Sri Paada Sri Vallabha Swami Himself. That evening being a Thursday they were lucky enough to watch the spectacular Pallaki Seva of *Sri Paada Sri Vallabha Swami. This is done by carrying the Utsav idol of Sri Paada Sri Vallabha Swami which is then taken in procession around the temple.* All of those present participated in the Pallaki Seva and Prasanna was also walking along with all other devotees. During that Pallaki Seva some unfamiliar person came and gave Prasanna a "*Bhagwat Gita Book and a Small Cloth Full of Broken Rice (Atukulu Or Poha)*". Later the man was nowhere to be found. He had disappeared just as mysteriously as he had appeared. The book was blessed. Upon opening the book, it was found to contain *Tulasi leaves*, *akshinthalu* (*charged and blessed turmeric rice*) and *Kumkum*. Later they ate the Prasadam of *Sri Paada Sri Vallabha Swami* given in the temple and proceeded to sleep there in the temple.

Next day they woke up early in the morning took bath in the river and got ready for the early morning Arathi. They were all stunned and amazed to look at the Dattatreya Swami idol in the Garbha Gudi. The Idol was glimmering with hues of yellow gold, and the entire *Garbha Gudi* was looked so beautiful, as if it was made for Dattatreya Swami himself. After the puja the priest gave the idol wrapped in *Pattu Vasthram*. Then they started back to Vizag. Narayana's car was not in a good condition. When he was trying to go fast Baba used to tell Prasanna that the speed limit was not to cross 40kmph! Even if by mistake Narayana crossed the speed limit Prasanna would be immediately informed by Baba that Narayana was going fast. Then Baba gave a message that "He made them travel in that car to make Narayana realize that the condition of the car was not nice and Baba told that the car needs to be sold immediately otherwise it would turn out to be hazardous in future. Then the next day morning they reached Sai Nilayam by 10 am.

On the day they reached Sai Nilayam, it was thronged by eager devotees waiting to take darshan of Sri Dattatreya Swami. All devotees present, performed Abhishekham with milk and later Dattatreya Swami was kept in a thatched box filled with rice grains.

On 13th February of 2012, Sri Dattatreya Swami's idol was consecrated. On 14th February of 2012 *Sri Anagha Dattula Kalyanam* was fixed on a *Shubamuhurtham*. Six Veda pandits came from Annavaram and performed the consecration ceremony. The programme lasted three days. The first day was dedicated to Sri Vigneshwara and the Navagraha pujas, the second day saw the consecration of Sri Dattatreya Swami followed by Purnahuthi, and the last day concluded with the Anagha Dattula Kalyanam. On the day of Purnahuthi, Sri Dattatreya Swami appeared in the fire of the Homam and blessed them all.

The topic of how Kavitha and Shankar were unfamiliar with the Kanyadaanam and other details have been dealt with in detail in an earlier chapter. Here a short summary will be attempted. Kavitha did not know the formalities that were to be followed while performing the marriage of a girl (Anagha Devi). They asked the pandits and they were provided all the necessary details. Once they were up to speed with everything that was needed for performing the Kanyadaanam, they Kalyanam was

performed with great pomp and celebration. The *Gothra Naamalu* of Shankar and Kavitha were also chanted.

Kavitha always felt sad as she didn't have a daughter to perform the Kanyadaanam, but Merciful Baba fulfilled her wish by making them perform the Kanyadaanam of the *Tri Shakthi Swaroopini* making her their daughter. Baba gave a message that "*JEEVITHAM LO IKA KANYADAANAM CHESE AVASARAM LEDU*!"

Rajesh and Rama performed the Kalyanam inside the puja room on behalf of all other devotees and after that that "*SAARE* (items given to a girl after marriage)" were also given to Sri Anagha Devi on by all the devotees who looked upon her as their daughter.

After the entire ceremony was over the broken rice (Atukulu) which was given in Kuruvapuram to Prasanna was distributed to all as prasad. This is how Baba guided all devotees of Sai Nilayam in making the Dattatreya Swami consecration and Anagha Dattula Kalyanam a grand success! All the participants received the blessings of all the Gods and Goddesses! Sai Nilayam devotees were indeed very lucky to have the wonderful opportunity of attending and taking part in the consecration ceremony. Only Baba's blessings enabled this to happen.

Even the *Vedas* have failed to describe the greatness of the Lord, so has the thousand tongued *Seshnag* then how can our small intellects ever fathom the grandeur of the Lord Almighty, and how can words created by us mere mortals ever describe the infinitude of Baba's grace and love towards His devotees. All we can do is surrender ourselves at His holy feet and seek his blessings.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 77

MIRACLES OF DATTATREYA SWAMI IN SAI NILAYAM

The previous chapter described how Dattatreya Swami graced Sai Nilayam with his permanent presence, and how the Anagha Dattatreya Kalyanam was held. This chapter deals with the various miracles experienced by the devotees of Sri Dattatreya Swami.

This miracle took place before the consecration of Dattatreya Swami. A devotee of Baba by name Murthy used visit Sai Nilayam. His son Ravi and his wife who lived in the UK could not have children for ten years. They consulted many doctors but their case seemed hopeless. So, they came to Sai Nilayam as a final resort, and Baba gave a message that "They were to perform Sri Anagha Devi Vratham and read Devi Khadgamala during the early hours (*Amrutha Ghadiyalu*) for six months. After that his wife conceived. When the time came, she was not able to deliver the baby even though she was in labour. Then as per Baba's instructions Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry sent them a pencil sketch of Sri Dattatreya Swami from India and the minute she saw the photo she delivered the baby. Out of their gratitude towards Baba and Sri Dattatreya Swami, they included Datta as a part of their son's name.

After the consecration of Dattatreya Swami as per Baba's instructions Kavitha was given the precious chance of giving Him the holy bath on every Wednesday in Sai Nilayam and dressing Him and ornamenting him, just like parents do to their children. Indeed, it was Baba's grace that Kavitha had this opportunity of a lifetime to serve Dattatreya Swami. This is so because obtaining the blessings of Sri Dattatreya Swami is quite hard. Only the most pious and clean hearted devotees get such an opportunity.

As described in chapter 74, Dattatreya is made up of two words: Datta + Atreya. Datta means adopted or donated. As He was adopted by or given to Atri Muni, He came to be called as Dattatreya. Recall that Datta was none other than Lord Vishnu himself. Those devoted to Him heart and soul will soon realize the ultimate truth that "You are the Soul, you are God, you are Sat-Chit-Anand." Really Kavitha is very fortunate to do such Seva in her life. Before that as per Baba's instructions she first studied Dattasthravam and grasped the meaning of it, then she visited all the Datta Kshetras, then for 41 days she was in *deeksha* and did Sri Datta Parayanam. After parayana they performed Sri Anagha-Datta Vratham and later played an active role in the Sri Dattatreya Swami consecration, followed by the Anagha Datta Kalyanam. Finally, all their selfless efforts bore fruit and manifested in the form of receiving Adi Guru Sri Dattatreya Swami's blessings while given the golden opportunity of serving him and doing Seva.

From that day onwards Kavitha garnered a special affection towards Dattatreya Swami. She always considered Him as her son, even though He was an incarnation of the Tri-Murthy or the Holy Trinity. Because of those strong feelings and overpowering emotions, she always wanted to do the *Seva* from the bottom of her heart without expecting anything in return. Sri Dattatreya showered mercy on her accordingly.

She gives the holy bath to Dattatreya Swami just like she does for her children. If she is gloomy or filled with anxiety then even after bathing Him, the idol can be seen to be lacking the usual radiance. If Dattatreya Swami wants to intimate her about any important issue His entire body becomes sticky with black soot and the face loses its sheen and shine. He would throw his ornaments and ask her to bathe him again. Kavitha often says that although she is clearly ineligible to be handle this responsibility, she undertakes it because this was a gift from Sri Dattatreya Swami himself, and the other devotees should therefore forgive her shortcomings. During Dussehra when the Sri Anagha

Devi Abhishekham was being performed, at the same time Kavitha was asked to perform Abhishekham to Sri Dattatreya Swami with Panchamruthalu, fruit juices, rice(anna-Abhishekham) as per His instructions.

One day after the Abhishekham was over and the cleaning process was being done along with the fruit juices and rice, Dattatreya swami lost his wedding ring. Kavitha felt very sad. She cleaned the entire room of water and the items which fell down during the Abhishekham. She thought the ring was lost and after she finished ornamenting him she noticed that the ring was just beside him! Another day after bathing him Kavitha dressed him and forgot to put the ornaments and returned home. Jaya dressed the Devi and ornamented her and left home. Immediately Dattatreya Swami threw His ear rings outside the puja room. Then Prasanna called her and told that she left Him without ornamentation and he is throwing his ear rings! Such love between the deity and the devotee! She asked her to come down and see and immediately Kavitha ran down to Sai Nilayam. She immediately ornamented him and while she was coming out the finger ring came down from the air and fell down! Then Kavitha understood that "without ornamenting me if you go will I tolerate it, No?" Then He said *Shraddha* should always be there.

In 2013 after Karthik's marriage Prasanna's mother left the world. All of them went to Hyderabad. During that time Vykunta Ekadashi was celebrated by all the devotees in Sai Nilayam. The next day morning when Shankar went down to light the lamp in the puja room there was *Udi* near Dattatreya Swami and Anagha Devi. That day Srinivas Sastry came back from Hyderabad. Then Baba gave a message that the *Udi* must be distributed to all devotees who visit on New Year Year's Eve.

On *Margasira Pournami* Dattatreya Swami Jayanthi is celebrated. Kavitha did not know about it. Then Prasanna called her and told that it is Dattatreya Swami's birthday and everybody is coming for taking His darshan except herself. Then she immediately went down and Prasanna told her "Do what all you like to do for your Dattatreya Swami and in the evening, we will do bhajan. Then Kavitha offered some flowers at His feet and ordered a cake which was delivered by 4pm. Then after the bhajan was over the cake which was kept in puja room looked the same from the outside but from the inside it appeared as if somebody had scooped it by hand. On the cake there was an impression of the Lord's feet. Then Prasanna told that Baba has given prasad under the *Padukas* of Baba in the puja room. (Recall that devotees pour rice over these padukas. The story of the padukas has been previously dealt with in an earlier chapter) She told that the prasad was to be taken by Swaroop and Anusha. When Kavitha went and saw there was *Dhuni Udi* under the *padukas*. The padukas of Dattatreya which were made with flowers on that day, under them there was *Udi* under the flowers and the entire *Udi* was given to Swaroop and it would last him during his stay in the United States while pursuing his higher education.

In 2014 on Sri Rama Navami Baba gave a message asking the devotees to decorate Him as Lord Rama, and it was to be done by Narayana as he is a devotee of Lord Rama and he decorated Baba like Sri Rama. That day Baba told them to perform the Sri Sai Vratham and three persons had to sit for the puja, but the count went to five. The reason for the increased count from two to five was two extra Vinayaka made of turmeric were left and once it is prepared they should not be left without performing puja. Then all the five started performing the Sai Vratham which was converted to Sri Sita Ramula Kalyanam by Baba! Prasanna brought the pearls, mixed it with rice and then all the devotees went inside the puja room and put them as Thalambralu on Sri Anagha Devi and Sri Dattatreya Swami.

As mentioned earlier, Dattatreya Swami is none other than the Trinity or Tri-Murthi so he is a form of Narayana. Baba made all the devotees realize the universal truth that all incarnations of God are

one and the same. After that Baba told them to go to Bhadrachalam. The Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy temple is a South Indian Hindu temple dedicated to Rama, the seventh incarnation of the god Vishnu. It is located on the shores of the Godavari River in the town of Bhadrachalam, a part of the *Bhadradri Kotthagudem* district. Bhadrachalam or Bhadradri temple is considered to be one of the Divya Kshetrams of Godavari and is also revered as Dakshina Ayodhya. According to the legend, Vishnu appeared to Meru's son Bhadra as Rama to answer the latter's prayers. However, Vishnu forgot that Rama was a mortal human and appeared as *Vaikuntha Rama* with four hands. Sita and Lakshmana form part of the temple's moolavar.

They started by 3pm in the afternoon and reached by 9pm. Once they got down from the car, they saw the procession of Sita Devi and Lord Rama which is performed after the Kalyanam. There itself they got the darshan, offered the flowers and later went to the main temple and once darshan was over the temple was closed!

This is how Baba made them perform *Sri Sita Ramula Kalyanam* at Sai Nilayam and on the same day they had the darshan of *Sri Sita Ramulu* at *Bhadrachalam*. Be it Baba or Sri Rama or Sri Dattatreya Swami or Sri Anagha Devi, devotees must realize that God is one and the same and only his manifestations and incarnations tend to create the illusion to the human mind that they are all different from one another. Since all human beings are different, and so are the different times in human history, so God incarnates accordingly and appropriately so as not to perturb the sincere devotee and helps put that devotee on the path to self-realization. As is amply evident by now, Baba teaches His devotees everything practically and easily by which they can balance their household responsibilities without losing focus of the spiritual path.

Devotees should stick to their choice of deity, and pray to that incarnation of God with pure love and devotion. Then He is sure to save them. Millions of devotees attest to the fact that Baba is "*Pilichina ventaney palikey Devudu" (He who attends to his devotees' calls instantaneously).* To us Baba is our only God. Everything else is but His expression and His Incarnation.

Let us surrender ourselves to this Merciful Sadguru Sai Nath Maharaj!

Bolo Sai Nath Maharaj Ki Jai!

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 78

DATTATREYA SWAMI'S TEACHERS

This chapter describes the twenty-four Gurus of Dattatreya Swami as narrated by Bhagwan Sri Krishna to Uddhava, *Sri Bhagavat Purana Canto 11 Chapter 7.*

Devotees are requested to undertake a reading of the Srimad Bhagavatam or the Bhagavat Purana. Shri Krishna Bhagwan narrates the story of Lord Dattatreya's 24 Gurus, in His final teaching to his dear friend Uddhava. This teaching is also known as The Uddhava Gita.

Sri Dattatreya gained enlightenment by observing the world, which provided Him with 24 teachers. These taught Him the futility of mundane attachments, the benefits of contemplation and forbearance, and a path towards the spiritual self-realization of the Supreme Brahman. Sri Dattatreya, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is featured in several Puranas where His teachings involve direct challenges to the pretensions and prejudices of the learner. His core message is "always dive deep into the ocean and get the pearls of truth and wisdom, and do not be satisfied by the ripples and waves on the surface": the Earth is sacred, an aspect of God, and a puzzle that challenges the spiritual self to awaken to its true nature.

Yadu, who was well versed in the dharma, once saw a young brahmin mendicant wandering around unafraid of anything and took the opportunity to ask him questions Sri Yadu said: 'How did you acquire this extraordinary intelligence, oh brahmin? How can you, fully cognizant not being engaged in any work, travel the world with the confidence of a child? People who are religious, work for an income, gratify their senses and pursue knowledge, are normally endeavoring for the purpose of opulence, a good name and a long life. You however, capable, learned, experienced, handsome and eloquent as you are, are not a doer and do not desire a thing, like a stupefied, maddened, ghostly creature.

Everyone burns in the forest fire of lust and greed, but you stand, to be free from the fire, like an elephant in the Ganges and are not burned. We ask you, oh brahmin, to please tell us what the cause is of the inner happiness that you, living all by yourself, experience without any form of material enjoyment? '

The Supreme Lord said: 'The brahmin thus being asked and honored by the greatly fortunate and intelligent Yadu, who out of his respect for brahmins humbly bowed his head, then spoke. The honorable brahmin said: 'There are many spiritual masters I took shelter of by my intelligence, oh King. Having learned to understand through them I now, being freed, wander around in this world. Please listen to their description. The earth, the air, the sky, the water, the fire, the moon and the sun, the pigeon, the python, the sea, the moth, the honeybee and the elephant, the honey thief, the deer, the fish, the prostitute [Pingalâ], the osprey and the child, the girl, the arrow maker, the serpent, the spider and the wasp, are my twenty-four spiritual masters, oh King. From studying their actions, I in this life have learned everything about the Self. (36) Listen oh son of Nâhusha [or Yayâti], oh tiger among men, I will tell you what I have learned from each of them separately.

Quoting from the Bhagavat Purana Canto 11 Chapter 7 Slokas 33:35:

pṛthivī vāyur ākāśam
āpo 'gniś candramā raviḥ
kapoto 'jagaraḥ sindhuḥ
pataṅgo madhukṛd gajaḥ

madhu-hā hariṇo mīnaḥ
piṅgalā kuraro 'rbhakaḥ
kumārī śara-kṛt sarpa
ūrṇanābhiḥ supeśakṛt

ete me guravo rājan
catur-viṁśatir āśritāḥ
śikṣā vṛttibhir eteṣām
anvaśikṣam ihātmanaḥ

The word by word translation of the above slokas are:

pṛthivī — the earth; vāyuḥ — the air; ākāśam — the sky; āpaḥ — the water; agniḥ — the fire; candramāḥ — the moon; raviḥ — the sun; kapotaḥ — the pigeon; ajagaraḥ — the python; sindhuḥ — the sea; pataṅgaḥ — the moth; madhu-kṛt — the honeybee; gajaḥ — the elephant; madhu-hā — the honey thief; hariṇaḥ — the deer; mīnaḥ — the fish; piṅgalā — the prostitute named Piṅgalā; kuraraḥ — the kurara bird; arbhakaḥ — the child; kumārī — the young girl; śara-kṛt — the arrow maker; sarpaḥ — the serpent; ūrṇa-nābhiḥ — the spider; supeśa-kṛt — the wasp; ete — these; me — me; guravaḥ — spiritual masters; rājan — O King; catuḥ-viṁśatiḥ — twenty-four; āśritāḥ — taken shelter of; śikṣā — instruction; vṛttibhiḥ — from the activities; eteṣām — of them; anvaśikṣam — I have properly learned; iha — in this life; ātmanaḥ — about the self.

These were the 24 teachers of Lord Dattatreya. Each will be described in detail in the next section.

Sri Dattatreya's 24 Gurus

1. **The Earth** (SB 11.7.37-38) is steadfast in its duties and steady in its cycles. The Earth teaches forebearance, to remain undisturbed even while oppressed (Ambikananda, 2000). In general, it accepts the injuries done by humans and continues to provide crops, etc. to the best of its ability (Sivananda, 1999). "A sober person should understand that his/her aggressors are acting helplessly under the control of God, and thus should never be distracted from progress on his/her own path" (Prabhupada 1977, SB 11.7.37 – Translation). Hence, the Earth teaches "dharma," the value of steadfast perseverance on the path of duty, equipoise, and forgiveness (Keshavadas, 1982).

2. **The Wind** (SB 11.7.39-41) passes through the world like Truth, unchanged and unattached. Equally, like Truth, it has the capacity to disturb as it swirls about the objects of the material world. "When the wind blows in many directions at once, the atmosphere becomes agitated. Similarly, if the mind is constantly attracted and repelled by material objects ... it will be impossible to think of the Absolute Truth" (Prabhupdada, 1977 - SB 11.7.40 – Purport). Hence, the wind teaches the value of freedom and of staying clear of worldly disturbances.

3. **The Sky** (SB 11.7.42-43) teaches that the Self, like the sky, has no boundaries and is beyond the reach of material nature (Tapasyananda, 1982). Sometimes, clouds cover the sky but the sky above is unaffected (Keshavadas, 1982). "When the mind is spotlessly clear like a cloudless blue sky, one can see the actual form of the Personality of Godhead" (Prabhupdada, 1977; SB 11.7.42-43 – Purport). Sri Dattatreya adds: "Know all objects of material perception to be empty, like Space, Know the Pure One as neither bound nor free. The nectar of knowledge, undifferentiated, like the sky" (Avadhuta Gita 3.7). The fragmentary self, trapped in materiality, awaits reunion with the Universal Self. The boundless sky is an eternal reminder of this essential Unity.

4. **The Waters** (SB 11.7.44) serve all without pride and purify those who bathe. They preserve and give life, which is why the Vedas speak of them as the God Narayana-Vishnu (Padma Purana 6.127.3 et seq.). "Just as pure water is transparent, a saintly person transparently manifests the Personality of Godhead" (Prabhupdada, 1977; SB11.7.44 – Purport). Pure and holy people are like the sacred Ganga, which purifies by sight, contact, and praise (Tapasyananda, 1982). The lesson is that purification comes from association with purity.

5. **Fire** (SB 11.7.45-47; also Avadhuta Upanisad 9) purifies what it consumes and its qualities are not sullied by contact with the material world (Ambikananda, 2000). "I am the fire than burns the sins of the sinless" (Avadhuta Gita 3.10). The knowledge of a teacher is also like fire, which lies latent in fuel like the Supreme in all creation, and blazes to life when conditions are right for the purification of the world (Tagare & Shastri, 1994; Tapasyananda, 1982). Elsewhere, Rabindranath Tagore urges educators and learners to see themselves as "Visvakarmas," world-makers, while, in line with the aspirations of environmental education for sustainable development, Sri Dattatreya urges teachers to use the fire of learning to purify the Earthly body of God (Nelson, 1998). He adds: "One should not even consider the quality of the teacher but only the essence of that which is taught. Does not a boat, though devoid or paint and beauty, still ferry passengers?" (Avadhuta Gita 2.1-2).

6. **The Moon** (SB 11.7.48) waxes and wanes but remains unchanged. There is only one moon, no matter how many names its different phases receive. The world tends to hide single truths beneath a welter of discrete names but "when intelligence is thus divided, it ceases to be all comprehending" (Avadhuta Gita 2.21-22). Of course, the teaching also refers to metempsychosis, the belief that, like the Moon, "the soul is a continuous reality, although material bodies appear and disappear constantly" through birth, death, then reincarnation (Prabhupada, 1977; SB 11.7.49 – Purport).

7. **The Sun** (SB 11.7.49) is reflected in a million puddles; each reflection seems different but it is the same Sun. Equally, the spirit seems to be contained within different bodies but, in reality, is the same in all (Sivananda, 1999). One's self is constant, a fragment of the greater Self, that answers to many names and is deluded into thinking it is different. In fact, Nature and Spirit have the same essence, the all-encompassing Brahman-Vishnu. The Sun's second lesson is that while it drives the hydrological cycle, the climate, and the entire biosphere, releasing its gifts to the needy at the proper time, it does not do this for personal gain (Tapasyananda, 1982; Avadhuta Upanisad 9). Similarly, the teacher should act from a sense of duty, not avarice.

8. **The Pigeons** (Kapota) (SB 11.7.52-74) warn against developing obsessive love or attachments in the transient material world. A devoted pair of lovebirds raises a brood of young who become entrapped in a net by a hunter. Unable to live without their children, the parents join the young in the hunter's trap. Similarly, those who focus on transient things may be destroyed by their loss.

Sri Dattatreya reinforces this difficult teaching by taking His own body as 25th teacher. He points out that even this, upon which so much energy was expended, is a temporary possession, destined to be consumed by other creatures after its death (also Padma Purana 6.126.4-18). "After many reincarnations, achieving a human body is a rare privilege for this alone yearned to know the Truth of its own Nature and ... might be used to achieve liberation" (Ambikananda, 2000, p. 52). However, human life, a door to God-realization, is wasted upon those who, being distracted by attachments in the material world, neglect their spiritual development (Keshavadas, 1982; Tagare & Shastri, 1994).

9. **A Python** (SB 11.8.1-4) eats whatever comes its way and is satisfied. Its teaching is not to run in pursuit of worldly things, but to limit desires and learn to accept what life brings. Mahatma Gandhi, of course, developed his concept of limited wants into Sarvodaya, the pioneering political economy

of sustainability (Doctor, 1967). However, Srila Prabhupada extends the Python's message of self-regulation and acceptance into one of reflection. "If by God's arrangement one is forced to suffer material hardship, then one should think, "Due to my past sinful activity I am now being punished. In this way, God is mercifully making me humble" ... one must accept the Personality of Godhead as the supreme controller" (Prabhupada, 1977; SB 11.8.3 – Purport).

10. **The Bumblebee** (SB 11.8.9-12) actively seeks material benefits in the world. However, it does this with discretion, taking only what it needs from each flower. It collects food from all flowers, high and low, large and small, as a scholar should seek wisdom from a range of scriptural authorities (Tapasyananda, 1982). However, it burdens none and even helps them achieve their purpose through pollination, much as a teacher should live gently upon the Earth and help others realize their true goals—but unlike the bee, the wise person should not store up material treasures.

11. **The Beekeeper** (SB 11.8.15-16) profits by honeybees, who may work themselves to death to build up a horde of material wealth: honey. "Wealth ... can bring only pain ... wealth horded waits only to fill the thief's pockets" (Ambikananda, 2000, p. 43).

12. **The Hawk** (Kurara) (SB 11.9.1-2) picks up some food and is then attacked by other, bigger birds. When it gives up the food, it is left in peace. The message, again, is that worldly possessions are a source of trouble. Happiness and enlightenment belong to one who lives simply and seeks only spiritual goals. "Why do you desire affluence? You have no wealth, you have no wife, you have nothing that is thy own? This is the nectar of Supreme Knowledge" (Avadhuta Gita 3.38).

13. **The Ocean** (SB 11.8.5-6; also Avadhuta Upanisad 10), like the Supreme, is limitless, timeless, and lucid at the surface, yet so deep that nothing disturbs its lower waters. It receives a million rivers yet remains unchanged. Equally, the wise should seek equipoise, be absorbed by the ocean of Godhead, and remain unperturbed by the river-like inputs of the senses. Elsewhere, Sri Dattatreya teaches that a spiritual aspirant should begin by cultivating a mental white blanket to cover the noise from the bodily senses and then striving to unite with the essence of each element in turn, beginning with the earth, to enter the minds of all things—a process analogous to ecological Self-realization (Markandeya Purana 40. 15-22; cf. Haigh, 2006).

14. **The Moth** (SB 11.8.7-8) is the first of a series of gurus that expose the pitfalls of the senses. Here, sight destroys reason just as it destroys the moth that flirts with a flame, so one should control the senses and dwell in God rather than the world (Keshavadas, 1982).

15. **The Elephant** (SB 11.8.13-14) is lured into a pit by the scent of its mate and then fettered, enslaved, and tormented by the mahout's goad. Lord Krishna calls lust an all-devouring enemy (Bhagavadgita 3.37-39). Srila Prabhupada reflects, "one should remain aloof from sense gratification in the form of sex pleasure; otherwise, there is no possibility of understanding the spiritual world" (Prabhupada, 1977, SB 11.13 – Purport).

16. **The Deer** (SB 11.8.17-18) is driven into nets by the sounds of the beaters. Keshavadas (1982) suggests that vulgar music and entertainment should be avoided, but sacred music and dance is beneficial. However, the deer is driven by fear, another obsession and distraction that helps veil the spirit in illusion. Sri Dattatreya adds: "Here is the One, without purity and impurity, without whole or part. Why do you, who are in union with that identity, feel grief or fear?" (Avadhuta Gita 5.8).

17. **The Fish** (SB 11.8.19-21) rushes to its death lured by greed, the bait of food (Tapasyananda, 1982). Keshavadas (1982) suggests that if the desire for food is controlled, so the other senses are controlled automatically.

18. **Pingala** (SB 11.8.22-44), the prostitute, after a bad evening, becomes disgusted with her life, her body, and transient pleasures. Realizing the oneness of the Self, hoping for the mercy of the God-within, she decides to change her ways, renounce worldly things, and devote her life to the Lord. "Expectations of this world and the people in it are the sources of our greatest misery, Pingala let these go and retired in peace" (Ambikananda, 2000, p. 47).

Pingala's rejection of her ancient profession is also warning to all who prostitute their time, body, self-respect, and principles in the name of a career or money-making activities. Equally, it cautions those who ruin their lives by rat-racing after prizes, promotions, etc. During a bout of illness caused by overwork, the author found a cartoon on a colleague's door which read: "The graveyards are full of indispensable people." Most of the dead are soon forgotten, so what did their work achieve? Ultimately, there is only One that needs to be pleased, who also advises that surrendered service in the world is a sure way ahead (SB 11.11.22-25).

19. **The Child** (SB 11.9.3-4) lives in innocent bliss. Of course, "both the fool and the devotee may be said to be peaceful ... they are free from the ordinary anxiety of the materially ambitious ... [but a] fool's peace is like ... dead stone, whereas a devotee's satisfaction is based on perfect knowledge" (Prabhupada, 1977, SB 119.4 – Purport).

20. **The Maiden** (SB 11.9.3-4) is the first of three teachers who illustrate the importance of focus and screening out the clatter of the material world. The maiden is surprised by guests who she must feed. She has to grind grain for them in secret lest she expose her parents' poverty, but as she works, her arm bangles jangle. To keep silence, she breaks all but one on each wrist and continues working. Company is a distraction (Shirdibaba.org, 2003). "Give up the association of those who are not devoted to the Supreme Lord. This is the actual lesson to be learned" suggests Srila Prabhupada (1977, SB 11.9.10 – Purport).

21. **The Snake** (SB 11.9.14-15) lives alone in an abandoned hole and avoids humans' company. Those seeking Self-realization "should abide in the cave of their own heart" (Keshavadas, 1982, p. 15).

22. **The Arrowsmith** (SB 11.9.11-13) focuses so completely on his work that he fails to notice the fanfare as a King processes past his doorway. Total concentration is the way to achieve Self-realization.

23. **The Spider** (SB 11.9.16-21) builds a beautiful web and then, a day or two later, consumes and destroys that same web. So, the Supreme exudes each material universe and after a while draws it back into the Self. The Supreme Self has no desires and is beyond the reach of cause and effect. However, people make webs from their own ideas and become entangled in them, so the wise abandon all worldly thoughts (Sivananda, 1999).

24. **The Caterpillar** (SB 11.9.22-24) that the wasp takes and keeps in its nest, in time, becomes like the wasp. Equally "we come to be that upon which the mind is set" (Maitri Upanishad 6, 34, v 3). "Whatever an embodied being sets its mind upon, that we become" (Ambikananda, 2000, p. 52). "If one constantly meditates upon the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one will achieve a spiritual body just like that of the Lord" (Prabhupada, 1977, SB 11.9.22 – Purport).

Summarizing, the Earth displays forbearance and steadfastness, and the wind the freedom of Truth. The Sun, Moon, and Ocean emphasize the unchanging nature of Truth, and that everything is a manifestation of the one eternal Truth. The boundless sky and the deep unperturbed Ocean reassure that the spiritual Self is beyond materiality. The spider reminds that everything in the

material world is transient. The moth, elephant, deer, and fish warn against the distractions of desire.

The lovebird pigeons, honeybee, hawk, and Pingala warn against building worldly attachments, while Pingala demonstrates that anyone can change their course. The child's happiness evokes the happiness of freedom from material care. The python and bumblebee emphasize the benefits of living simply. Fire and water attest to the power of the teacher to purify the world, while the learner is guided by the maiden and the snake who avoid distraction, the arrowsmith who demonstrates focus, and the caterpillar which teaches that by concentrating on God, one can return to Godhead, which is the ultimate goal. (Ref Martin Haigh, Canadian Journal of Env. Edu. 2007)

Further Lord Dattatreya explains what he has learned from his own body.

"My Body teaches me Gyan (knowledge) and Vairagya (detachment). Birth and death are along with it. It means that if we hold on to this body then we must bear sorrows. Although it helps to think about Tattwa (elements) still I never consider it mine." To please whatever body, the living being is always busy in desiring many things, incurs Karma (deeds) and collects wealth with great difficulties; the same body is destroyed after its time is completed.

Thus, it is incumbent on all spiritual seekers to give up all attachment to the body in order to attain Moksha or liberation or salvation.

Now we must realize that the *Adi Guru* Sri Dattatyreya Swami himself learnt so much from nature in which he found 24 Gurus. These principles are not hard to follow, and are something which all spiritual aspirants can practice and imbibe over time. To follow in the footsteps of Sri Dattatreya Swami, we must have determination, dedication and discipline, and most importantly the grace of the Lord. Self-Realization is the ultimate goal of all humans, and every action we perform in our life subtly guides us in that direction. Deep within, oneness with the universal spirit is our true essence, and not amount of ignorance or karma can keep us bonded to the body. Sooner or later the veils of ignorance lift off, all attachments disappear, and finally with God's grace we become one with God – Sat Chit Anand.

Luckily for us we have Baba as our teacher and guiding light who is ever present with us at every step of our lives. Simply chanting His name "Sai, Sai Sai" with single minded focus and attention on Him is the easiest and surest way of breaking free from the cycle of births and deaths. Very fortunate are people in whom the quest for the Truth or God has kindled, for millions of people spend lifetimes in ignorance before the first iota of grace touches them. Let us therefore drop our laziness, and every habit which is not conducive to spiritual progress, inculcate the qualities of Sraddha and Saburi, and whole heartedly surrender ourselves at the Feet of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 79

STORY OF VISHNU DATTA

This chapter narrates the story of Vishnudatta, his qualities, and how they helped him obtain Sri Dattatreya Swami's darshan.

In the last few chapters it was shown how challenging it is to obtain the grace of Sri Dattatreya Swami, and how devotees must lead an austere life with the sole focus on God before receiving the opportunity of being blessed by Sri Dattatreya Swami. Only those who give it their everything can ever hope to experience this oneness with God.

Vishnu Datta was a Brahmin by birth. His wife was Susheela. Both of them were very pious, and they led a very simple life while whole heartedly discharging their worldly responsibilities. Due to God's grace, they had everything that was needed to lead a happy life. They were not in want of anything, and were happy with what they had. As a part of his daily routine Vishnudatta used to offer food under a tree after Vaishya Devam.

One day after offering food he a heard voice calling him "Vishnu Datta, Vishanu Datta". He turned back to see who it was when he saw a crow calling him and was surprised to see a talking crow, but later he was shocked to see that it was a Demon (Brahma Rakshasi) which took the form of crow. He was frightened and began running towards his house. But the Demon would not let him go, and tried to pacify him. The demon asked, "Vishnu Datta, why are afraid? Please do not be afraid, I want to talk to you. I am mean you no harm." Hearing this he stopped and asked him, "Who are you?" The demon replied, "Can't you see? I am a demon, but I will bow to you."

Then Vishnu Datta thought to himself "While this demon's external appearance is very scary to look at, its words are very sweet". Then the demon goes on to say, "Vishnu Datta, you have been very kind to me, and have fed me every day. I have been eating the food which you have been daily offering at the tree after Vaishya Devam. I am demon and for many years now, I have been living on this tree. Eating your offerings every day have resulted in the destruction of all my devilish qualities. However, my appearance remained unchanged. You have cleansed my being. I owe you a lot, I shall fulfill any wish of yours."

Then Vishnu Datta says that he has not done anything especially for him, but that it was a part of his daily routine which he had followed and he had no wish to ask of and he was happy for him. But the demon would not leave him and insists that he ask for a wish so that he may fulfill it and even out his karma. Otherwise being indebted to him (Vishnudatta), he(Demon) would be stuck in this form or another and be lost in the countless cycle of births and deaths. This part of the story highlights how one must be with grateful to any help they receive from another. Then Vishnu Datta calls his wife and asks her if she has any wish. Both contemplate for some time, and finally request the demon that they would consider themselves blessed if they can be given the darshan of Sri Dattatreya Swami. The demon gets scared and says it is very difficult but since he has asked him he will try fulfilling it. Vishnu Datta replies, "If it is really not possible please do not take the trouble and you may go. I do not want to trouble you with a desire that cannot be fulfilled." But the demon assures that he will fulfill his wish but adds that to get the grace of Dattatreya Swami is not that easy. He promises Vishnu Datta he will take him to Dattatreya Swami three times and he must attain him during that time. Then Vishnu Datta agrees to it and says as humans we shall put in our genuine efforts.

The first time the demon takes him to place and shows him a person who is completely drunk and says, “He is Datatreya Swami, go and hold his feet and do not leave him”. Then Vishnu Datta thinks “What this man, he is a drunkard and is going against the rituals, how can he be Dattatreya Swami? Is the demon cheating me?” He tries to go but fails because of various thoughts in his mind. The second time the demon takes him to a burial ground and shows a man over there (the undertaker-one who takes care of the burial ground). Vishnu Datta holds the feet of that person with great fear, but fails this time too.

He gets disappointed and tells his wife that he couldn’t get the grace of Dattatreya Swami. “It is all because of my ignorance. Even after practicing penance for several years he was still enveloped by Maya due to which he failed to recognize Sri Dattatreya during the first two encounters. Although the demon showed him Sri Dattatreya Swami on both the occasions, He was caught up in the external appearances, and failed recognize the Universal Spirit of Sri Dattatreya Swami within. Owing to his identification with the mortal body, he could not identify the truth that it is the soul which is eternal – beyond life and death.

The third time Vishnu Datta makes a strong determination in his mind that in this attempt he will succeed and will not bow his head to any desire, and will not leave the feet of Swami, failing which he vows to shed his body. The demon takes him and shows a person who was completely drunk and Vishnu Datta holds his feet tight. How much ever that person tries to free him from the clutches of Vishnu datta, he does not leave him. Vishnu Datta says that “You are my Saviour, I will not leave you, even if you torture me or kill me.”

Seeing this Sri Dattatreya Swami gets overwhelmed and reveals to him His True Form in all its celestial glory. He asks Vishnu Datta “Why did you take so much pain to have my darshan and why are you so desirous of having my darshan?” Vishnu Datta bows in front of him and asks Dattatreya swami “Swami it took me so many years to blessed with your darshan”. Swami tells him that He is happy with his devotion, and blesses him that all his wishes should be fulfilled. Swami asks him to wish for anything but Vishnu Datta says “What is there to wish for when my entire heart is filled with you only? I am sorry.

Swami says, “Since I am giving you a boon, you must wish for something”. Vishnu Datta starts thinking and finally per his wife’s wish, they invite Swami to grace their house with His presence as a bhoktha (one who is invited to dine at his home) in relation to his father’ funeral ceremony. Swami agrees to it. Then the next day Dattatreya Swami arrives at their house. They make all the arrangements for the lunch and Vishnu Datta invites Swami inside the house, who then asks him to decorate the asan (a place to sit and eat) which was arranged for Him.

When they were about to serve him with food, he asks for the second guest. They are shocked as they did not invite any other guest but Him. Then Vishnu Datta’s wife asks him to give the holy bath to Swami and in the meantime the second guest will arrive. She goes inside and invokes the *GOD OF WATER* and He gives her the boon that He himself would be arriving as the second guest. After they finish making arrangements for the two guests, Swami asks “Isn’t the Bhoktha in the *Vishnu Sthanam* coming or have you not invited anyone as the third guest?”

Then Vishnu Datta goes inside and informs his wife. She invokes the *GOD OF FIRE* and He arrives as the third guest. Then they complete all the rituals and serve the guests with food. After completion of food Dattatreya Swami blesses them and asks them to wish for anything they want as he had decided to bless them with a boon. Both Vishnu Datta and his wife start thinking about what wish they should seek? They tell Swami that they do not have anything, but Swami insists that they think

of something. Then on thinking they ask for the welfare of the demon. They say that because of him they had the privilege of having his darshan and he should be freed from his evil birth. Then Swami tells them that he (the demon) had already attained *Kalpaantha Brahmaloka Prapthi* for the help he has done to them. What can I give him?

So Swami asks them wish for any other thing and that it was a must. But the couple say that they do not have any desire. Then Dattatreya Swami says "Oh! Exemplary Couple, I am glad seeing you, come closer to me. How much ever you try don't you have desires? How blessed you are? I will give you a boon as you do not have any desire." Then Swami blesses them "Because of the rituals you have performed all your fore fathers will attain Heaven permanently". Then Swami tells him "Vishnu Datta can't you think about the welfare of the world with the energy you have attained through penance?"

Your name itself signifies that *You Are Equal To Me*. You shouldn't waste your energy unnecessarily." From today you will be my representative in taking over the responsibility of the welfare of the poor people." (The word poor in this context means not in terms of money but it refers to anybody whose spiritual reserves are empty). This is my order and I will give you an *Upadesh* of one *Unique Mantra*. The energy of this mantra can be tolerated only by people like you and not by others. With the effect of this mantra you can serve the poor and needy, helpless, unfortunate people and other devotees by carrying their burdens, helping the living beings considering them as your own family and must be an exemplary person who shows the way by leading and advising, and by setting an example."

Dattatreya swami discoursed the following mantra to him. It was as follows:

SREE DATTA STAVAM

DATTATREYAM MAHAATMAANAM | VARADAM BHAKTA VATSALAM |
PRAPANNARTHI HARAM VANDE | SMARTHRUGAAMI SANOVATHU |
"I pray to Lord Dattatreya, great divine spirit, who confers boons and protects the devotees, who removes afflictions immediately of those who remember Him with faith".

DEENABANDHUM KRIPA SINDHUM | SARVA KAARANA KAARANAM |
SARVA RAKSHAA KARAM VANDE | SMARTHRUGAAMI SANOVATHU
"I pray to Lord Dattatreya, who is a friend of the poor, a sea of compassion, cause of all causes and the
protector of all those who remember Him sincerely".

SARANAAGATHA DEENARTHRA | PARITRAANA PARAAYANAM |
NARAAYANAM VIBHUM VANDE | SMARTHRUGAAMI SANOVATHU |
"I pray to Lord Dattatreya, who is a shelter for the poor and afflicted and who grants deliverance immediately to those having firm devotion in him and remember him sincerely."

SARVAANARDHA HARAM DEVAM | SARVA MANGALA MANGALAM |
SARVA KLESA HARAM VANDE | SMARTHRUGAAMI SANOVATHU |
"I pray to Lord Dattatreya, who is the destroyer of all useless and harmful things and giver of all auspicious objects, the remover of all afflictions of those who remember Him sincerely."

BRAHMANYAM DHARMA TATVAGNAM | BHAKTHA KEERTHI VIVARDHANAM |
BHAKTHABHEESTA PRADAM VANDE | SMARTHRUGAAMI SANOVATHU |
"I pray to Lord Dattatreya, well versed in the Vedas, knower of the essence of religion, who causes to increase the fame of His devotees who is giver of whatever is needed by the devotees who remember Him sincerely."

SOSHANAM PAAPA PANKASYA | DEEPANAM GNAANA THEJASA |
THAAPA PRASAMANAM VANDE | SMARTHRUGAAMI SANOVATHU |
" I pray to Lord Dattatreya who removes the quagmire of sins, lights up the flame of wisdom, calms down distress and torment of those who remember Him sincerely."

SARVA ROGA PRASAMANAM | SARVA PEEDA NIVAARANAM |
VIPADUDHARANAM VANDE | SMARTHRUGAAMI SANOVATHU |
"I pray to Lord Dattatreya who cures all diseases, heals all pain and removes all calamities of those who remember Him sincerely."

JANMA SAMSAARA BHANDUGNAM | SWAROOPANANDA DAAYAKAM |
NISREYASA PADAM VANDE | SMARTHRUGAAMI SANOVATHU |
" I pray to Lord Dattatreya who is most excellent and liberates from the cycle of birth and death in this world and who is the giver of bliss to those who remember Him sincerely."

JAYA LAABHA YASA KAAMAHA | DAATHURDATTA SYAYASTAVAM |
BHOGAMOKSHA PRADASYEMAM | PRAPATETH SAKRUTHEBHAVETH |
"Those who recite this eulogy of Lord Dattatreya regularly and with faith, become wise and attain victory, fame, fulfillment of all worldly desires and achievements and finally get liberation from the bondage of life."
|| SREE DATTA SARANAM MAMA ||

There are several beautiful takeaways from this story.

1. Always think about the welfare of others
2. We must always have gratitude towards anyone who helps us.
3. Once you give a word, you should not go back on it. Therefore, we must think before we talk. Speech is silver, but silence is golden.
4. Be free of all desires. Never wish for anything. Be happy with what you have.

Once a man/woman is free of all desires, likes and dislikes, and makes God the sole object of their thoughts and deeds, he or she will be blessed with the darshan of God. Each day one must think about what is a necessity and what is a luxury, and slowly renounce all the luxuries, and become free from all attachments. Once such a devotee makes sufficient progress with Sraddha and Saburi, he is then put to severe tests by Swami. Being humans, we could very easily fall prey to Maya, therefore we must wrap ourselves around our Sadguru Shirdi Sai Baba's feet. He is sure to take us straight to the destination.

OM SAI RAM

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CHAPTER 80

MORE DEVOTEE EXPERIENCES AT SAI NILAYAM

This chapter describes how Shyamala and Lakshmi were blessed by Baba in Sai Nilayam.

Baba said that this Sai Nilayam was "*Dwarakamai*" and all the devotees who come will be freed from the shackles of their life based upon the faith and trust they have in Baba. Just like in Shirdi where Baba used to guide all the devotees and take care of everything in their lives, in Sai Nilayam too Baba

has done it equally, and perhaps even more so than what He did in Shirdi. The innumerable experiences of the devotees attest to the veracity of the above statement.

1. Shyamala: She was a devotee of Baba and visited Sai Nilayam for taking His darshan. Like many other devotees the primary purpose of her visit was regarding her son's marriage. Later with the blessings of Baba her son was married and her daughter in law went to the United States after the wedding. There she started pursuing her M.S. After a few days her son lost his job and we all can imagine the emotional and financial turmoil that this would cause, especially when the couple was newly-wed. She called Prasanna and Baba gave them the following message "Do nine saptahs parayana and he will get a job within five months. Upon securing the job they were to conduct Annadaanam in Sai Nilayam."
   As per the instructions, they did the nine saptahs and he secured a job within five months, and shortly afterwards Shyamala came and organized the Annadaanam and fulfilled her vow. Now the couple has a baby and are happily settled in U.S.
2. Lakshmi: She was the main chef of Sai Nilayam, and every Annadaanam programme that involved cooking at Sai Nilayam was taken care of by her until she left the service in 2018. She is among the select few who is constantly in Baba's service. She primarily helps with cooking and with keeping Sai Nilayam tidy. Though she is not a literate and doesn't know any rituals but she is a true devotee as she does endless service in various ways. Of the different ways in which devotees participate, doing service is the hardest because it involves physical work and exertion. Without love in the heart service cannot be done. Anybody can donate food, clothes or money. Service cannot be performed by everybody.

   Initially when Lakshmi started working as the domestic help in Sai Nilayam, she once got into an argument and left the job. But every Thursday she used to drop milk packets at the gate for Baba Abhishekam. After she left the job she lost peace of mind and suffered from many hurdles for a period of five months. Then Baba gave a message "*Naaku Seva Chese Bhagyam Lakshmi Ki Maatrame Vundi*. (*The good fortune of serving me is entrusted to only Lakshmi.*)" Then she again came back to work realizing her mistake and from that day until very 2018 she has been serving at Sai Nilayam.

   Baba instructed that during Dussehra one day she must perform her puja and as per his instructions she followed it. She brings lots of Tulasi and different varieties of flowers from Simhachalam and performs the entire puja with Tulasi leaves. She also buys a sari to the Goddess irrespective of the cost and never thinks of it as a burden or expense. She offers everything with love and devotion. One year during Dussehra after the puja, Baba told that He gave prasad to Lakshmi. Then after puja the next day when they removed all the Tulasi the necklace of Baba which is made of red stones (Kempu stones) was under it and as per Baba's instructions was given to Lakshmi. Baba thus confirmed her faith in Him!

Once Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry went out of station and Lakshmi was cleaning the house as usual. Then she a heard a voice saying that "*EPUDU NEE PANI CHESUKOVADAME GAANI, NAAKU MANCHI NEELU KUDA PETTAVA.* (*Are you only concerned with cleaning the house? Aren't you going to give me a glass of water to drink?*)" Hearing this Lakshmi got frightened, she offered a glass of water in the puja room, locked the door and left. On many occasions, she heard the sound of clinking anklets in Sai Nilayam. Every year she cooks for all the devotees in Sai Nilayam during Dussehra Navaratrulu. She starts working at 2AM in the morning and ends at 12 am

during the next day. Only Baba gives her the strength to dedicate herself in endless service, patiently attending to all the devotees' needs with love.

This is a praiseworthy characteristic, and all devotees should try to imbibe it. This is what Baba desires of all his devotees irrespective of the responsibility they take up. Baba is not concerned with anybody's occupation. Princes and paupers, are all the same to him. What is wanted true love, devotion and trust in Baba. Baba ensured that she was well taken care of. He instructed that for her tireless efforts during Dussehra she must be liberally compensated by all the devotees.

During the following year, Baba told Prasanna to gift Lakshmi with a silver plate and glass to offer food and water to the Goddess. Generally, most people tend to have prejudiced biases towards others, especially towards those taking up jobs which most others are not willing to do. Due to ego and superiority complex, those who are well off tend to discriminate against those who are less fortunate and do not accord them with enough respect. Such devotees should make haste and bring about a change in themselves immediately. Let us not forget that everything in the world is pervaded by the Lord himself, and we are nobody to judge. Hasn't Baba said that everything, living or non-living, is a creation of God, and that God dwells within all of them? Thus if your love your family but despise the rest of the world is not a devotee of Baba, and clearly has a misplaced and incorrect understanding of the world. If one were to tear away all the outer identifications, we are all just beings who have the same soul. Those doing menial jobs should be regarded the highest respect. The whole society runs smoothly because of them. Baba has proved through example, that we must always take care of others first, feed the poor and hungry and only then attend to ourselves. He who does this with love and selflessly becomes the Lord's beloved. Lakshmi is blessed to be in Sai Nilayam, and Baba takes care of her and her family in all regards.

Remember, Baba is Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient and eternal. He dwells in the hearts of all. Place your complete trust in Him and He will be by your side at every point in your life. Baba is all pervading. He will take care of everything. What is needed is unbounded love and gratitude towards to Him.

Baba never got any work done for free, and He set an example for others to follow in this regard. He always paid those involved liberally. As noted towards the end of chapters 18 &19 in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, "If the remuneration for labour is paid promptly and satisfactorily, the work will be turn out better and everybody will be happy."

Everyone is same in the eyes of Baba. Due to our past merits and de-merits, only the occupation varies but all are still servants of God. We should never discriminate people based on their work and income. Everybody is dependent on others in one way or the other and without the support of that person we will not be able to complete the work, so we should never mistreat anybody. Let us treat everybody will love and respect.

Baba always said that "Service to mankind is Service to God". Let us practice this in our everyday lives.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 81

DEVOTEE BLESSED WITH VISION IN SAI NILAYAM

This chapter describes how one lucky devotee was blessed with a vision in Sai Nilayam.

In Shirdi Baba used to cure various the various diseases of His devotees by prescribing them medicines, while himself suffering unbearable pain. His divine power and spiritual perfection helped cure incurable diseases of His devotees. Due to this His fame spread far and wide, and came to be known as a Hakim or Doctor. While some unfortunate people thought of Him as only a doctor, the fortunate ones saw Him for who He was – Para Brahma Swaroopam. Indeed He has taken birth as a human on for the sake of His devotees, and for freeing them from the clutches of Karma.

Good or Bad, everything that comes our way is due our past actions or karma stretching across numerous lifetimes and numerous forms. However we are unaware of our past actions. Baba on the other hand, the Antaryami, knows the past present and future, the innermost thoughts and everything else because He is all pervading. Only a Guru's grace can lift the veils of our ignorance and free us from the effects of karma. How soon or how late one receives His blessings is dependent upon that Bhakta's Sraddha, Saburi and self-effort. In Sai Nilayam, Baba removed the various miseries of the devotees in different ways. As noted through countless miracles described in earlier chapters, in some cases Baba administered Udi as the infallible solution, in other cases He gave theertham mixed with various ayurvedic herbs and so on. His ways will always remain inscrutable, and what ever action He chooses is always the best .

Let us now move to the main story of this chapter. Before the consecration of Sri Sai Baba's Marble Statue in Sai Nilayam, Baba saved a devotee by giving him a vision. This gentleman was a devotee of Baba and was working in Indian Railways. Once somebody poured acid in his eyes when he was asking them to get down the train as they had no tickets. He lost his vision. Then he threw away all the pictures of Baba in his house out of anger because his entire life was turning into a disaster – right in front of his eyes. Only a blind man can understand the unbearable agony of not having the vision to see. Suddenly the whole becomes dark.

After a few days he met some Guruji who said that he will bring back his vision with the spiritual energy he has and it will cost him three lakhs rupees. He couldn't afford so much money, and there was no way of telling whether the person was a charlatan or if he was indeed blessed by God. Now see the miracle of Baba. Somehow due to Baba's grace this man came to know about Sai Nilayam and of the miracles taking place there. With the help of someone, He came there and stood by the entrance, strangely he could see Prasanna in the hall through the window near the gate. He was shocked and started thinking "How am I able to see her when my vision is lost?" He could not believe what was going on.

Then he went inside and prayed to Baba. As mentioned earlier, this took place before Baba's consecration in Sai Nilayam. Back in those days, a giant life size picture of Baba adorned the Puja room. Then Baba gave a message that "He will regain 50 percent his vision". Then that man went to *Vishaka Eye Hospital (*Pedda Waltair, VSKP*)* and consulted the doctors. They said that through Laser Technology they can treat him but they was no guarantee of any recovery. The fees was ten thousand rupees which were to be paid after the surgery. Then he went ahead with the surgery and during the surgery he witnessed a *DIVINE LIGHT* shining brilliantly in his eyes which engulfed everything – within and without. He was drenched in its divinity. This was none other than Baba himself – Sat-Chit-Anand.

After the surgery he mentioned to the doctors that he saw a *Divine Light* in his eyes. The doctors were also shocked to hear this. The doctors did not take the fees of ten thousand as he was a poor man. Later after removing the bandages he got 50 percent of the vision as per Baba's instructions. Then he came to Sai Nilayam and apologized to Baba for throwing away His pictures and brought a new picture and left home with happiness and gratitude towards Baba. When devotees came to hear of this miracle, their hair stood on the end, shivers ran down their spine, and they had goosebumps all over the body. They felt humbled realizing and witnessing the limitless powers and grace of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba.

How did the man see this *Divine Light* when he was anesthetized and he could not see or feel any pain? This is was purely a miracle of Baba saving his devotee. To have a vision of Baba it is not the touch or the eyes that are important but It is our faith and trust in him and when we have these in us Baba will make himself appear. Usually one has to lead a life of celibacy and austerity, and practice advanced techniques of meditation for prolonged periods of time before being blessed with the vision of the divine light, and the cosmic sound of Om. But here is an instance that once again proves that having faith in the Guru is all that is needed to cross the ocean of existence, and to progress both materially and spiritually. Let us ceaselessly chant Sai Naam day and night. He is sure to bless us with everything we could have ever dreamed of.

In another incident there were two sisters who became blind at the age of fifteen years due to an acute case of progressive ocular de-generative disease of the eyes. They consulted many doctors but was of no use and they were informed that unfortunately there was no treatment for their condition. Their father had passed away, and their mother alone was there to take care of them. They once came to Sai Nilayam regarding their problem and Baba gave a message that" One of the sisters will get little vision and also told them to take the treatment in Kerala." As per his instructions they followed his words and one of the sisters's regained some vision and was later married to a boy from Dubai. Why one sister was blessed with partial vision, and why the other showed no improvement, we will never know. Karma is quite a complex phenomenon. We never know the fruits of which karma pop up where. It is better to be suffer and get done with the Karma once and for all. We don't know why something happens or why something doesn't happen. Meanwhile we can only pray that the sisters pour their heart and soul into praying to Baba, and surrendering themselves at His feet. All we know is that His grace can bring the dead back to life, His grace can give Moksha or Salvation. Baba's grace can make the impossible happen. Let us all pray unto Him with purity of heart and surrender ourselves at His feet.

This is how Baba always saves His devotees from troubles. He is always our well wisher and never expects from us anything except love and gratitude, and an ego free intellect. So what can we give Him? Nothing except following His path, sharing His Leelas and stories, participating in Bhajan and Satsang, doing service to the society and thereby proving ourselves as His true devotees. Difficulties are there only to test our faith, and to push us to our limits so that we may grow and expand and transform into something beautiful. Gold doesn't form without melting the ores. Only after all the veils are burnt and destroyed do we realize our true selves, and come in contact with the Omnipresent Spirit. We may have many hurdles while accomplishing them but implicit faith and trust in Baba will come to our aid in overcoming those hurdles.

Let us therefore make Baba the sole object of our wakeful and dream states.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 82

EXPERIENCES OF CHANDRASEKHAR IN SAI NILAYAM

Chandrasekhar's various experiences at Sai Nilayam are described in this chapter.

Chandarsekhar & family's first introduction to Sai Nilayam was through another devotee named Ammaji. Ever since their first visit, Baba has showed them countless miracles. This confirmed their faith in Baba, along with bringing about a change in their personalities. Baba's grace enabled them to stand strong during the toughest of times.

During the early days when Chandrasekhar and his wife used to visit Sai Nilayam, the naivedyams brought by the devotees used to be offered in the master bedroom (*Dwarakamai*). It was in the *Dwarakamai* where Baba used to give messages in *Udi* to the various devotees. Then Chandrasekhar formed the opinion in his mind that, "Baba will give messages only to those devotees whose name He knows." The next day when all the devotees were offering the naivedyam in Dwarakamai, Chandrasekhar was late and his wife told him to go fast and put it inside as the door would be closed at exactly 6pm. Then Prasanna remarked " Chandrasekhar , Why are you in a hurry to keep the naivedyam and come out?" He was shocked as Prasanna called him by his name, and they hadn't been acquainted yet. This was only his second visit, and was one among the crowd, so he was even more surprised and wondered how was it that she came to know his name. It was Baba (through Prasanna) who called him out, making him realize His Omniscience and Omnipresence, and that He was the inner ruler of All. Chandrasekhar says that the little egoism which he had was totally removed by Baba.

The first issue that was solved was their son Neeraj's marriage. Chandrasekhar was searching for a bride for his son and he wanted the age difference between the boy and the girl to be less than two years so that they would get along well. But none of the proposals were suiting their needs. Then one day they informed Prasanna about their son's marriage and lamented about the delay that was happening. Then Baba gave a message that "He will get a girl with date of birth in 1990's and told them the birth star also." Then Chandrasekhar started thinking and still continued with the search for a girl matching their age gap criterion. But nothing was successful and finally they went and saw a girl which their son also liked and the girl's date of birth was in 1990's and the same birth star as foretold by Baba. Baba's words are always true and He will show us the way such that His words are fulfilled and if we are delaying in following His message or instructions, it's our own destiny and poor fate. He also cannot save us then! If you visit a doctor, but don't take the prescribed course of medication, then what can the doctor do?

In the year 2015 during the month of September when the *Hanuman Puja* was being performed in Sai Nilayam they recovered the money which they had invested in some chit-funds over fifteen years ago. During the early 2000's Chandrasekhar had invested in some chit company with the idea that it would mature just in time for their children's marriage. Unfortunately the company shut shop, and he had to go to court for settlement. The court gave a decree in the year 2008 that they will get the money but they never got it and finally left the hopes on it. But with the blessings of Baba there was a sudden turn of events, and the got the money in 2015. They felt very happy.

Their daughter, Geetha, bought a flat in the year 2007 and the builder said that the flat will be handed over by 2009. They paid the full amount but they never got the flat. They had invested several lakhs of hard earned rupees, and were therefore very concerned. Once again, this issue was also taken care of by Baba's grace. In the month of September 2015 during the Hanuman Puja she got the V.U.D.A (Visakha Urban Development Authority) approved flat registered.

Baba protects and saves his devotees from all sides. Devotees should therefore pray to Him with pure love and devotion, and leave aside all their worries. No matter what the situation is, and no matter how difficult or impossible the situation is, never lose your trust in Baba. Be patient and pray to Him with pure love love and devotion.

The more earnest is your prayer, the sooner Baba will respond to it. Faith can move mountains was not said without reason!

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTERS 83 & 84

EXPERIENCES OF SHANTHI IN SAI NILAYAM

Shanthi's various experiences at Sai Nilayam are described in this chapter.

It is a known fact that God is always there to support His devotees and make them walk in the right path. To achieve this objective, God fulfils their wishes and desires so that they become detached to them and become free of desires they can focus all their strengths on attaining God. The various miracles experienced by the devotees at Sai Nilayam are a testimony to this fact. The love, care and concern which Baba exhibits towards His devotees is beyond the descriptive power of words. Shanthi says that she considers herself fortunate for being a part of Sai Nilayam Satsang and being so close to Baba.

Before narrating her various experiences at Sai Nilayam a short note of the bonding between Mohan & family, with Srinivas Sastry & Prasanna will be described. They went to Doha in the year 2000 and till 2001 they had no Telugu speaking friends. The meeting between Mohan and Srinivas Sastry has already been narrated in Chapter 19. From the time Shanthi and Prasanna became friends, the formers devotional feeling towards God increased. Being in the company of holy and pious people has that effect. It re-kindles a fire in the heart, and it touches the soul which subconsciously draws us towards God or our true nature.

Previously too, she was a Baba devotee but after becoming friends with Prasanna she regularly started going to bhajans on Thursdays. Once Prasanna suggested to Shanthi that why don't they themselves start doing bhajans? Shanthi also felt it was a noble thought and the following week they did bhajan in their house in Doha. If one week it was held at Prasanna & Srinivas Sastry's residence, the following weeks were held at Shanthi, Radhika and Guptha's houses respectively. In Shanthi 's house they had only a picture of Baba but she used to have a strong wish that it would be nice if she had Baba's idol. Her husband asked his friend to bring an idol of Baba from Dubai because in Doha they do not get idols of Gods. Then, Mohan 's friend called him and told him that Baba's idol is not available in Dubai also and then they started thinking how they were to obtain and bring Baba's idol home. Then, his friend bought an idol of Baba made with gold, and gave them. The joy she experienced was out of this world. She couldn't hold back her tears and they flowed incessantly. Then, Prasanna told her that she was very lucky to have a gold statue of Baba grace their house. Even today they offer puja to the idol and they assert that Baba brought them all the prosperity in life.

Every Thursday Baba bhajan used to happen without any hindrance, and Annadaanam was also undertaken by all the devotees. They used to do bhajan (singing Leelas and glories of the Lord) every week for three to four hours continuously irrespective of the age group of the members. After the conclusion of the bhajan, the fragrance of Udi could be felt permeating the entire house. All the participants actively took part in the Bhajan, sometimes leading, and at other times following. Shanthi feels that they are blessed by Baba who has given them an opportunity to participate in bhajans along with Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the power of a Satsang is amazing. It drenches everybody present near and far in the divine vibrations and helping them experience God's love. They have not only learnt the path of devotion but also learnt many practical things of the world like, how to raise children, helping the poor and needy, Annadaanam, Vidyadaanam, and always being grateful to people who help us and many more good habits which have helped them grow and progress in their spiritual life.

The help done by Mohan may be thought of as very small but the greatness of Prasanna and Srinivas lies in their remembering the help they have done to them all through their life. She feels that the help done by her is nothing in front of what Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry have done for them. This way their friendship continued till 2006. Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry left Doha in 2006 and settled in India. Although at first Mohan and Shanthi were sad because they were leaving, but upon thinking deeply about it, they realized today that the reason for them (Prasanna & Srinivas) to leave Doha is to start such a great spiritual movement (Sai Nilayam Satsang). While in Doha they were always eager about their children and they sacrificed a lot for them and seeing them other parents learnt a lot too.

Shanthi says that Prasanna and Srinivas are great and noble persons because of the deeds they have done. Prasanna used to help the workers in her organization by giving them money to eat food because sometimes the sponsor used to ignore the workers by not even giving them money to eat. (The immigrant working class in the middle east are not treated very well.) Then, Prasanna used to talk to the sponsor considering the issue like her own responsibility, about the workers and see to it that they did the needful. The service to mankind which they have started long ago is still being continued till date and Shanthi says that having soul mates like them is a real blessing from Baba.

Now let us see how Shanthi entered Sai Nilayam for the first time. In 2010 she developed a cyst in her uterus. She consulted a doctor in Doha and they said that the cyst was very big and it needs to be operated upon and that it will be a major surgery. But already having undergone three surgeries, she was weak both physically and mentally and a fear began developing within her. The doctors advised her not to delay as it would be dangerous and fixed the date of surgery four days from the day of consultation and Shanthi obtained the insurance approval too. But she wanted to get a second opinion, and wanted to undergo a second check-up in India. Immediately she put two chits in front of Baba one written as Doha and the other as India and when she picked up it was India. She spoke to her husband and started to India immediately but she wanted to go to Sai Nilayam and take darshan of Baba before doing anything else. After she booked a ticket to Vizag, she consulted a doctor in India and did a scanning and said that there was no cyst!! Then, he told Shanthi, “I do not know why the report from Doha is positive”, and he told her to go for a rescan. Then, the scan center folks informed that there was a small cyst. The doctor told her to go to Vizag and once back, we will decide whether a surgery needs to be done or not. Then, Santhi and her children started for Vizag and they reached on Thursday. Thursday is a day dedicated exclusively to Baba, and all the various programs are done in Sai Nilayam, just as they are done in Shirdi. Once can imagine what a busy day Thursdays at Sai Nilayam can be. But even with the busy schedule Prasanna & Srinivas went to the airport to pick them after serving the poor and needy through the Annadaanam program. There were four Annadaanam packets left in the car and they made their family (Shanthi & Mohan) to donate it. Baba made them do his most favourite and chaste deed, Annadaanam even before they step foot in Sai Nilayam!

After entering Sai Nilayam she had a feeling of pleasantness in her mind, an overpowering sense of calmness transcended over her whole body and then she immediately realized that she has entered a temple and not Prasanna’s house as she had assumed till that moment. After the darshan of Baba she lost the fear in her mind and that evening they sat in the puja room and did puja. Later they participated in the bhajan. Sitting in the puja room and staring at Baba Santhi could not control her tears and was engrossed in the bhajan along with all the devotees. The happiness she experienced looking at all the devotees made her feel like staying in Sai Nilayam forever.

After bhajan she showed her reports to Srinivas Sastry. He said that “It is a little complicated but Baba is there. He will take care of everything just leave the burden onto him”. Then, Srinivas Sastry

kept the reports in the Dwarakamai on the table and closed the doors. Then, they all went to beach and reached home at night 12. They opened the main door and the entire house was filled with the fragrance of UDI. Srinivas Sastry went inside and called loudly “Prasanna, Prasanna! come here and look at this” Santhi did not understand what happened and stood at the same place in a state of shock. The entire table where the medical file was kept was found covered in thick layers of fragrant Udi, and the page where the report was written was also filled with Udi.

The next ten days she was fortunate to witness & experience the miracles of Baba. The next day as per Baba’s instructions Santhi did the Anagha Devi puja and after puja she had a pleasant feeling in her mind as if all the burdens simply vanished and they ceased to exist. After the puja the image of Goddess appeared in turmeric and Kumkum. She was amazed to see it and she had a feeling whether it is true or a dream and later one more incident took place which touched her heart. Generally, after the puja is over they close the puja room and that day they did the same. After a few minutes the apartment complex’ watchman’s wife came and asked Prasanna for *Udi* as her husband was suffering from severe fever. Prasanna went and searched but the *Udi* present outside the puja room was over and she had to go inside the puja room but it was closed and shouldn’t be opened. She then opened the door and gave her UDI because she felt that health was most important. That day Santhi understood that Baba will never have any restrictions to help a person who is in real need of His blessings and humanity is the most important in one’s life. In Sai Nilayam there is no distinction of any sort between devotees. All are one and the same in the eyes of Baba. Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry follow the same principle of equality, and all devotees are accorded the same respect.

On the third day Santhi experienced another miracle. In Dwarakamai the Baba photo was covered with UDI by the time she had come to Sai Nilayam and the UDI was given by Baba to a devotee. That day Baba gave a message on one of the pages of the medical file where the test report was positive in UDI:” CHINTHA *VALADU AMMA (Leave all anxieties and worries)*” and Prasanna explained the message as “do not worry there is no need of any operation”. She had goose bumps after witnessing all these miracles first hand. After seeing the miracles, the first feelings Santhi had was “Baba you have showed so much of pity on me, am I really worthy of all your grace and mercy? I will bow to your feet any number of times for the compassion you have shown towards me. Immediately Sastry, Prasanna, Santhi and her children did bhajan as a token of gratitude. Then, Srinivas Sastry told them all the miracles that are happening in Sai Nilayam and all those present were overwhelmed by emotion. The time was around two in the morning but they did not feel like sleeping. Then, finally they all were about to go to bed and Santhi took her son to the rest room. Then, Prasanna called her and asked “Santhi what did you ask Baba, He is making it rain *Udi*”. Then, Santhi came out to see that there was *Udi* right from the door of the rest room all the way till the Dwarakamai. Once they went inside Dwarakamai *Udi* was literally raining from the ceiling and the entire bed, all the reports and everything there was covered in Udi. They couldn’t believe what they were seeing. Fine fragrant and divine Udi kept falling down like the gentle August rain or like a light snow drizzle. She asked Baba in the evening during bhajan to give *Udi* as prasad and for that He rained *Udi* on them. What more does one need to understand the love and compassion Baba has towards us? If you ask Baba for a flower, He will give you a garden.

Santhi was desirous of worshipping Baba in the Dwarakamai with sandal tilak (tripundra) on his forehead, but it was covered with *Udi*. The next day when she woke up and went inside Dwarakamai she was surprise to see that Srinivas Sastry removed all the *Udi* and was applying Chandan tilak to Baba. Then, Shanti asked Srinivas Sastry why was the *Udi* removed? Srinivas Sastry replied that Baba instructed them to give the *Udi* to an old person who was not feeling well and to apply sandal tilak to

His forehead. Then, Santhi thought that her wish was fulfilled again by Baba! On the fourth day also, Baba read her mind and made her fulfill her oath by bringing the truth out of Prasanna's words. Santhi had an oath that was to be fulfilled in Arasavalli. She wanted to go that day but as Prasanna was not feeling well she did not inform them. Then, after some time Prasanna asked her "Why Santhi, do you have any oath to be fulfilled? Baba is telling me that you need to fulfill it. Please tell me" Then, she told Prasanna about her oath and the time was evening five. They had to get a driver and the temple closes at eight pm in the night. But Srinivas Sastry never deviates from Baba's message, and with the grace of Baba a driver was arranged. The driver was suffering with fever but still he came and they all finished their darshan and immediately after which the temple was closed. All this appeared like a plan of Baba. Yes, of course it's the truth, if you leave all your burdens to him he will take the responsibility of fulfilling all our needs and will take care of us at every second of our lives.

On the fifth day Santhi 's daughter (Supradeepa) was blessed by Baba. It was her birthday and it is a tradition in Sai Nilayam to cut the cake in Baba's presence. Srinivas Sastry Uncle, and Supri bought a cake, kept it in Dwarakamai and closed the doors. When they opened the door, the entire cake was found to be covered with *Udi*, the cake was cut and a piece was kept aside by Baba. Supri was so happy she kept telling that Baba blessed her and that was her best birthday. Santhi used to attend the bhajan of Puttaparthi Satya Sai Baba, and that day as per Baba's instructions she went to Kavitha 's house and attended the bhajan which gave her immense joy.

On the seventh day Baba gave a message that Santhi along with her children must go and take the darshan at Devipuram. She felt very pleasant seeing the surroundings as it filled with trees, and there was a cool and pleasant breeze blowing gently, and most importantly the spiritual vibrations of the place fill us with purity. They had the darshan of the Goddess they understood the importance of Triveni Kalpam puja which is done over there. The puja gives us positive energy and gives health both mentally and physically. That day Santhi and her children participated in the puja. After the puja she felt the lightness mentally and physically.

On the next day Baba made Santhi handle the responsibilities of the devotees coming to Sai Nilayam and later Annadaanam. Srinivas Sastry and Prasanna had to go to Hyderabad for attending the wedding of their niece. They did not want to leave Santhi nor they were allowing her to go to Chennai saying that they (Mohan & Santhi) had come to stay for ten days and so they should not go. Then, Shankar and Kavitha convinced Prasanna and Srinivas that they will take care of Santhi. After that they left for Hyderabad. Srinivas Sastry and Prasanna took care of them like their own children and they will never forget that in their life. Because of them Santhi had the opportunity to have the darshan of Baba and for all the good deeds they do, they should always be blessed with health, prosperity and what all Baba wants to bless them with. The next day the bhajan and Annadaanam were managed by Shankar and Kavitha and while Kavitha was telling the devotees about the miracles Santhi felt that all these devotees were utmost lucky to stay so close to Sai Nilayam.

The day before they started to Chennai another miracle took place. That night Sandeep (Kavitha 's son) and Santhi 's son slept in the master bedroom and Santhi and her daughter were in the second bedroom. They were talking about Baba's miracles and Sandeep was explaining the various experiences he was blessed with by Baba. Santhi was very happy with the way Sandeep was explaining the experience. Baba likes children a lot and all the children in Sai Nilayam are very lucky to grow under the guidance of Baba. He instructs and corrects the children in terms of behavior, health and education as these are most important at their age.

After they slept Santhi suddenly heard somebody knocking the door. First, she thought it was her son, but the door was not locked and if it was her son he would have come inside directly, later she thought it was her hallucination but she could hear the sounds clearly and Zippy was also barking. Despite all the commotion, nobody woke up. She did not have the courage to open the door and just tried to sleep chanting Baba's and after a few minutes the sounds stopped. She came to know the answer only after reaching Chennai. There she found Rs.2500 had disappeared. Santhi vowed that she would donate towards Annadaanam, Vasthradhaanam and Vidyadaanam. She gave the Vasthradhaanam and Vidyadaanam money but forgot to give for Annadaanam. Then, Prasanna told her maybe it was Baba who came to ask her for the same, and as nobody was there to talk to Him, He accepted the money from her bag and an amount of rupees two thousand five hundred was missing from her hand bag!

Kavitha said one day, Santhi you are very lucky that Baba came and took Dakshina from you, even if we give Him He doesn't accept. This way Baba made her contribute towards good deeds. They started the next day to Chennai and both her children felt very sad to leave Sai Nilayam and Sai was crying and didn't want to board the flight. Even today if they come to India they come to Vizag for the taking Baba's darshan at Sai Nilayam. The experiences they had were so profound, that they became very staunch devotees of Baba.

Baba will pull his devotees from any distance to him, like a sparrow with its feet tied to a string. We must surrender everything to Him, and have Sraddha and Saburi. With His grace, all our endeavours will become successful. Baba has been drawing His devotees to Himself from far and wide to Sai Nilayam, and fulfilling all their desires.

There is no end to Baba's miracles, they are never ending. May *Sai Naam* be ever present on our lips, and His holy feet in our mind, and let our hearts be filled with earnest love and devotion towards Him.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 85

MORE DEVOTEE EXPERIENCES

This chapter describes how some more devotees were blessed by Baba and are well settled in life. The experiences of Malathi, Yamini, Anusha and Sunitha will be narrated.

As mentioned in the Sri Sai Satcharitra, Baba is the sole proprietor of the universe. If you were to tightly hold on to him Sraddha and Saburi, He will free us from all the shackles of life and will make us walk in the right path which will finally lead to attaining salvation. As humans we all tend to have several desires and wishes which crop up everyday day. But Baba will fulfill only those wishes which will make our life beautiful, and which are in line with the Divine plan.

1**. Malathi**: She was a devotee of Baba and she used to come to Sai Nilayam. She loved a boy and wanted to get married to him but her parents did not agree to the marriage. She used to come and tell Prasanna all her problems and Baba sad that the boy was good and she can get married to him. How much ever she tried it was of no avail in convincing her parents. The boy was well settled and with the blessings of Baba he received a nice job at a higher designation in Vijaywada. He used to love the girl very much and he also came to take darshan many times. Once Baba gave the message to everybody to do the Sai Satcharitra Parayana for nine weeks (nine saptahs) and during that time Malathi also successfully completed her nine weeks. She tried in vain for two years to get the approval of her parents. Later with the blessings of Baba her parents agreed to their marriage. Today they are happily married and they also have a beautiful baby.

Everyone who trusts Baba will be promptly taken care of. Baba will never let them down in their lives because He will always be there for us supporting us and standing by our side. Now a few points to be noted are the girl Malathi had the patience to wait to get married to the boy whom she loved so much. She trusted Baba's words and had the faith that He will make it happen. The same way she did not hurt her parents by taking any wrong decision, with Baba's blessings she convinced her parents to agree to her proposal, and finally she got married to the love of her life. God is Love. Love permeates the whole universe. True love is beautiful. True love will always find a way of becoming one with itself. So once again it is to be remembered that Sraddha and Saburi must be exercised in every aspect of our lives. Hasn't Baba told, "This Saburi will ferry you across the ocean of mundane existence. (Chapter X, Sri Sai Satcharitra)"

2. **Yamini** : She was Anupama's sister. She was a staunch devotee of Baba and sometimes visited Sai Nilayam. With the blessings of Baba she was married to suitable boy who was very caring and understanding of her. During the final days of her pregnancy she went to take Baba's darshan along with her mother. Then Baba gave a mind numbing message " Get admitted in the hospital immediately. The umbilical cord has wrapped itself around the infant's neck and if delayed it could prove fatal for the infant, she will deliver the baby in the next two days." But everybody in her family knew that there were still at least ten more days for the expected delivery date. But following Baba's instructions they went to the hospital and the doctor told them that there were still ten days to her delivery. But since they went to the hospital, she got herself checked. Suddenly her labour pains started, and the doctor approved her request for admission. True to Baba's words, she delivered on the very next day proving the predictions of the doctors wrong. The hospital staff were surprised and they asked how was it that they made to the hospital on time! Such is Baba's grace! He not only saved the mother, but also the infant was not born yet.

All this is a testament to Baba's love, care, concern and affection towards his devotees. Those who place their trust in Him are sure to be saved. The higher the trust , the better and faster the result.

The other important takeaway is that one should implicitly carry out or execute Baba's instructions. Baba declared, "My words are pregnant with meaning, and hollow (Chapter 28, Sri Sai Satcharitra). Let us therefore execute His instructions verbatim, and without a second thoughts.

3. **Anusha**: She was another devotee of Baba who came to Sai Nilayam because she did not have children. She was an employee in Central government. Both husband and wife consulted many doctors for the want of children. On the day she came to take Baba's darshan He gave a message "Both husband and wife should drink *Udi* mixed with water." They followed the message, and within two months she conceived and later delivered a baby boy and today they are very happy! Once again the efficacy of *Udi* and the power of belief in Baba were proved.

4. **Sunitha**: She was a friend of Anusha. She was also employed with the Central government, and was stationed in Hyderabad. She also had issues regarding bearing children. When she came to Sai Nilayam Baba gave a message "She will conceive, and after that she has to be in rest for six months and asked her to quit the job." She followed His message, and once she conceived she resigned the job and later delivered a baby boy and is now very happy.

From all these stories, the key takeaways are:

1. Follow Baba's instructions blindly, without a second thought.

2. Have infinite Sraddha and Saburi towards Baba.

3. Baba will always support the altruistic thoughts, which then lead us onto the right path.

4. To gain somethings in life we must sacrifice some other things. Remember, by sacrificing, you are giving up something smaller in return for something greater and something more precious.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 86

DESCRIPTION OF ANAGHA DEVI IN SAI NILAYAM

This chapter describes how Sri Anagha Devi provided instructions to prior to her arrival in Sai Nilayam.

What does Anagha mean?

Sri Dattatreya Swami had christened her *Anagha* meaning Sinless and Pure. Those who had recognized her to be the energy of Dattatreya, obtained the true vision of the Lord and were able to transcend all sorrows. In other words, because of Her all their sorrows (Agha or sin and sorrow) disappeared. This was another reason why Dattatreya named her as Anagha (one who removes sorrows). Those sages who could comprehend this truth saw her as the manifestation of energy of Dattatreya Swami (*Antharleenam ga vuntaru i.e present as the inner essence*) and were therefore able to attain great peace and prosperity. Those who could realize that the Almighty was the driving force beneath all beings, and that the Lord Almighty being the form of fundamental energy could transcend affinity and aversion. They alone could experience unalloyed bliss.

Lord Dattatreya has taken number of forms & incarnations for protecting and guiding the people in the world. One of the most prominent forms or incarnation is that of Sri Anagha Devi. Lord Dattatreya along with Anagha Devi form the divine couple. Sri Anagha Devi - Dattatreya is the Trinity God - Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara and his consort Sri Anagha Devi is the Trishakthi Swaroopini - the combined form of Sri Mahalakshmi, Devi Saraswathi & Devi Parvathi. An earnest prayer to Sri Anagha Devi is most powerful. If one prays sincerely with devotion to Sri Anagha Laxmi Devi along with Sri Anagha Dattatreya Swami with flowers or kumkum or turmeric or Chandan (sandalwood paste) or Akshintalu, the Divine will grant you abundant prosperity.

The divine truth is that Sri Anagha Devi is a manifestation of the Divine Energy, and her form and being exists as the subtle inner Self of Sri Dattatreya Swami. For this reason, she can never be referred to as the wife of Dattatreya Swami in common terms. In reality, She is one with Him. She is the cosmic energy which has taken human form for the sake of saving the beings from the clutches of Maya. The repeated and frequent use of Maya should not be considered a digression. It is a fundamental truth, and those making progress on the spiritual journey can truly grasp its significance. Since human beings have a form it is easy for them to relate to anything that has form, and therefore the scriptures sometimes refer to Sri Anagha Devi as the wife of Sri Dattatreya Swami. All forms of God, are nothing but the transcendental all permeating all-pervading conscious cosmic light energy. Those who were lucky enough to glimpse at this reality either by accident or by the grace of the Almighty, can attest to the fact that they experience a beautiful all engulfing light that fill the body with a blissful and endless joy, making all other joys irrelevant. Whether God must be referred to as Nirgun, or Sagun, and if Sagun whether to refer to God as Masculine or Feminine or *Ardha Nareeshwar* (half-man half woman) has been a much-debated topic since time immemorial. However, all discussions arise only on account of Ego (Sri Sai Satcharitra Chapter 3) and serve no purpose in matters of spirituality. The ultimate truth always remains the same, it can only be experienced and cannot be proven in the human realms. Only a qualified Sadguru like Sri Sai Baba, Sri Nrsimha Saraswati, Sri Swami Samarth of Akkalkot and so on can only help us realize the deeper dimensions within us, and ultimate aid us in seeing the light.

Now reverting to the main story, let us see how Sri Anagha Devi instructed Prasanna regarding the how her idol was to be carved for being consecrated in Sai Nilayam. Sometime after the consecration of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba in Sai Nilayam, once the Goddess possessed Prasanna and asked

her to get Her idol carved and have it consecrated in Sai Nilayam. Then Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry placed an order for Sri Anagha Devi idol in Hyderabad on 12-03-2011. On the next day during the early hours of 13-2-2011 at 3.30 am the Goddess possessed Prasanna and instructed her the about the specifications for getting Her idol carved.

They were as follows:

1. The waist, thighs, and feet should be very gentle, elegant and innocent like that of a five year of child. (Remember children are considered equal to God on account of the pure minds.)
2. The feet should be adorned by Shankam and Chakram. Wasn't that the manner in which I appeared in your vision.
3. The second toe and the big toe should be of the same proportions, or the second toe should be shorter than the big toe. (These words were being told by Dattatreya Swami to Ammavaru, and She in turn was conveying the same to Prasanna.)
4. The Mangala Sutras was to be prepared by eleven members.

Then Srinivas Sastry called the sculptor's workshop in Hyderabad and told them the of the rigid guidelines they were to follow while carving the idol. As per the instructions, Sri Anagha Devi's idol was to be prepared at a height of three feet but for some reason, it was not carved at the required height. It them about took five months to complete the carving, after which Chakravarthi called Srinivas Sastry on 24.8.2011 and asked them to collect the idol. Then as per Baba's instruction Prasanna, Srinivas and Kavitha went to bring Her home. Few days before the idol was brought to Sai Nilayam, the Goddess gave the following message "Kavitha must give Thambulam to me along with White Pattu Sari having a red border". Then Kavitha bought all the necessary items for the thambulam along with the sari. They had to start by car and wanted driver Raju to come but as it was his wife's delivery time he was in a dilemma whether to accompany the Sai Nilayam party or to accompany his wife. Then Goddess gave a message that "Raju is coming to bring Me; his wife will be fine. There is nothing to worry about". Then Raju decided to come and they reached Hyderabad. Kavitha tied the white pattu sari to *Anagha Devi* after taking Her from the workshop. They started back and reached Sai Nilayam. Raju's wife was in labour, but after he came back and went to the hospital she delivered a healthy baby. A word given by the Divine Mother will always be true.

During the journey when they were wondering where to place the Sri Anagha Devi idol in Sai Nilayam and decided to place her in an open box made of leaves (Butta). Then the Goddess gave a message that "*KAALA-BHAIRAVUDUNI AAPALERU (Kala Bhairav cannot be contained).*" She instructed them to place Her in a box filled with rice grains (Dhaanyam). Immediately they called Bharathamma and asked to her to arrange for two rice bags by the time they reached Sai Nilayam. After reaching Sai Nilayam, they placed her in the box after completely filling it with rice grains. After a few days red Kumkum water started oozing out of the box. Nobody knew what it was and why the water was oozing. They couldn't take Her idol out of the box until the consecration.

Then they started deciding on the *Muhurtham* for the consecration ceremony. They consulted several pandits but they told that there were no auspicious dates for the consecration. Then Goddess gave a message that "I have graced Sai Nilayam of my own accord, why do I need an auspicious day for consecration? It will be done in *Vaisaakha maasam* on the 17th". On the day of consecration when they took out the *Idol* from the rice grains it was found fully covered with *Kumkum* and *Turmeric* and the entire white sari was filled with a mixed colour of yellow and red.

Then as per Her instructions, the consecration was completed on the first day of Dussehra Navarathri's in 2011.

Before the consecration, the Divine Mother, informed that She needs somebody to perform Her pujas on all major festivals. Then Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry were thinking how they were to get the right person and later Goddess herself selected the right individual for this task who was none other than Narayana. What followed next has already been dealt with in the chapter on Narayana's experiences. Ever since, he as been performing the Devi's Puja with great joy.

Many devotees have a doubt that if Goddess was consecrated whether *MAHA NAIVADHYAM* was to be offered or not. To this Goddess replied through Prasanna "*Parva Dhinaalo Matrame Maha Naivadhyam Pettavalenu. Migilina Dinamulu Pallu, Kobbarikaayi, Pedathe Chaalu.*" (Only during the festive season Maha Naivedyam is to be offered. Fruits, Coconuts and other things can be offered during regular days.), thereby making everybody realize the universal truth that the intention and purity of heart is more important than blindly following rules like some drill land as if they were dogmatic principles. The highest precedence is laid bhakti, everything else comes next.

Shri Krishna Bhagwan has said the following in The Bhagwad Gita IX-26:

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patram—a leaf; *puspam*—a flower; *phalam*—a fruit; *toyam*—water; *yah*—whoever; *me*—unto Me; *bhaktya*—with devotion; *prayacchati*—offers; *tat*—that; *aham*—I; *bhakti-upahrtam*—offered in devotion; *asnami*—accept; *prayata-atmanah*—of one in pure consciousness.

Which means, □□□ □□□ □□□□□ □□□ □□□□□ □□ □□□ □□□□ □□□□, □□□□□, *फल*□□ *जल*□□□□□□ □□□□ □□, □□ □□□ □□□ □□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□ /

Whosoever offers to me a leaf or a flower or a fruit, or water or any offering with bhakti and devotion, I shall accept that pious man's offering.

What is relevant here is that people shouldn't assume that certain norms and customs must be followed in a robotic fashion just because the Goddess has now graced Sai Nilayam. Before, now and forever, all that matters is Bhakti. However, this should not be misconstrued and capitalized upon as an opportunity for abandoning religious and spiritual duties. Every ritual, and procedure has its own deep significance, therefore one must simply discharge their responsibilities consciously, devoutly and dispassionately.

The entire universe was created by GOD, so really we need not offer anything, but out of our happiness and gratitude we offer everything we prepare at home to the Creator. Internal purity can be achieved only by conquering the bad qualities like lust anger, greed, illusion, pride, envy (arishad vargas) which every human being has from the time they are born on this earth. If we try to overcome these then we need not offer anything to the creator. When that point of spiritual development happens, you become one with God as you are no longer under the control of the Ego. If a person is a prisoner of the arishad vargas his life is totally governed by the destiny or the effects of karma. As a person progresses on the path of self-realization His illusions and ignorance start

peeling away, and therefore He or She is no longer under the grips of Destiny. Time, Space, Destiny and everything else cease to exist when that happens. Addictions to bodily pleasures is caused by our attachment to the sense pleasures whose bonds with us stay intact unless we take control, and decide to be the Ruler of them all recognizing that God has given us all these pleasures not so that we can become their slaves, but so that we can grow stronger and stronger and have them under our control. But even after knowing all these we often find ourselves enveloped by Maya which causes us great distress. Which is why at the slightest hint of Maya taking control over us, we must dissociate ourselves from the situation and invoke the Lord's blessings.

After the consecration of Sri Anagha Devi, several new changes took place in Sai Nilayam. All of which were implemented as per her instructions. They were as follows:

1. *"Garbha Gudi Lopaliki Amaavari Aagnya Lekunda Vellakudadu."*
2. *"Dussera Navatrulo Pattu Vasthram Thapanasariga Dharinchaali."*
3. *"Kireetam Vundakudadu, Sikha Kanipinchaali"*
4. *"Naa Koduku Leelalu Kramam Ga Thaguthaayai"*
5. *"Bhakthula Namakkam Sraddha Pai Vaari Korikalu Theere Nirnayam Vuntundhi."*
6. *"Everikyna Sarpa Roopam Lo Gaani,Ammavaari Roopam Lo Gaani Darshanam Isthe Vaalu Ammavarini Intlo Petukovachu."*
7. *"Anaghaashtami Rojuna Anagha Devi Vratham Cheya Valenu."*

The devotees should enter the sanctum sanctorum (garbha gudi) only if allowed by the Divine Mother. The naivedyams which used to be offered in Dwarakamai were also reduced. The naivedhyams are now offered in the puja room and only when instructed by Baba they are to be kept in Dwarakamai. The number of obvious miracles would gradually decrease. (This is a reference or signal towards progressing towards inner development.) Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry wanted to get a crown prepared for Sri Anagha Devi, just like Baba's but they did not ornament her with a crown.

The reason for all these instructions is to make us learn various human values and morals of life which in turn will help us in changing our mental ability and finally effect the purification of the mind. Once the purification is effected climbing the ladder of spirituality will be easy. All these are possible under the guidance of *Guru* and we are all most fortunate to have SADGURU "Shirdi Sai Baba" who is guiding us towards attaining all the traits necessary for reaching the abode of the Divine Mother (*TRI SHAKTHI SWAROOPINI*).

SIGNIFICANCE OF ANAGHA DEVI VRATAHAM: This Vratham is performed on ANAGHAASHTAMI day. The significance of the Vratham was told by Sri Dattatreya Swami himself. Now going into the main story as to how this Vratham came into the effect. There was a Prince by name Karthaveeryarjuna. Kartavirya was son of Kritavirya, king of the Haihayas with capital at Mahishamati which is on the banks of Narmada River in the current state of Madhya Pradesh. Karthaveeryarjuna at birth had no limbs. He grew and at the time of taking throne he could not accept it as he had no limbs. The saints try to convince him but he does not accept the throne and rule the country. He says, "What eligibility do I have to rule the country?" Do you think I can do justice to the people in the country without limbs? Is this Dharma? He says that he will rule the country the day he can do all by himself following Dharma and having the strength to protect the state from enemies. But out of greed for power he was not going to let down the country. Then the saint advices him to seek the help of Sri Dattatreya Swami but he also tells him that obtaining the grace of him is very difficult. Then

Karthaveeryarjuna tells that however difficult it maybe, I will succeed and come to rule the country with peace and make it prosperous.

Then he went on a quest to the Sahyadri mountain and worshipped the Sri Dattatreya and asked his blessings with love, devotion and bhakti. Lord Dattatreya will always test the intensity of the devotion of the devotees. King Karthaveerya succeeded in the tests put by Lord Dattatreya. Dattatreya finally appeared and blessed his devotee with a thousand powerful hands and a golden Chariot that went wheresoever he willed it to go. He was also given several boons from Lord Dattatreya. Under his rule

1. Dharma would always flourish in his country.
2. He wanted to know the inner thoughts of the people.
3. He wanted to conquest the earth.
4. The power of restraining wrong by justice
5. Invincibility from enemies
6. Death at the hands of a man who was more powerful than himself
7. By him this earth was perfectly governed," and of him it is said: -"No other king shall ever equal Kartaveerya in regard to sacrifices, liberality, austerities, courtesy, and self-restraint."

Then Dattayreya Swami says that he is wishing for "*ANIMAADHI ASHTA SIDDULU*" and obtaining them wass not that easy. It is possible only for people who do "Rigorous Penance". But since you have wished for it I will show you the way so that your wish will be fulfilled quickly. Dattatreya Swami tells him about SRI *ANAGHA* who is the undercurrent energy within himself and their children are *ASHTA SIDDHULU*. On a *Margasira Bahula Ashtami* worship me along with *ANAGHA DEVI* and all the sins will be reduced and your desires will be fulfilled. This is called *ANAGHA DEVI VRATHAM.*

Karthaveeryarjuna performed the Vratham and he ruled for 85,000 years with unbroken health, prosperity, strength, and valour. Anybody who performs this Vratham will be blessed with health, children and all success in their life. Many devotees performed the Anagha Devi Vratham in Sai Nilayam and were blessed with children. All your wishes will come true.

Sri Anagha Devi also taught Her *MOOLA MANTRAM* to all the devotees in Sai Nilayam which will be narrated in the next chapter.

Since 2011 all the activities have been guided by *Sri Sai Baba and Sri Anagha Devi* in Sai Nilayam. Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry follow and share the instructions with the devotees, and implement it without any second thoughts thereby aiding in the spiritual upliftment of all participants. This is how *Sri Anagha Devi* came to Sai Nilayam and today Her significance is known to many devotees because of Sai Nilayam or else no one would have heard of her. Truly the Divine reveals itself only where there is devotion.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 87

ANAGHA DEVI MANTRAM

This chapter sheds light on the very potent Sri Anagha Devi mantra, which was taught to all devotees, and whose meaning was explained in Sai Nilayam as propounded in *Sri Paada Sree Vallabha Swamy Charitra*.

***OM KAALI, THARA, CHINAMASTA, SHODASI MAHESWARI, BHUVANESWARI, TRIPURA BHARAIVI, DHUMRAVATHI, BHAGALA MUKHI, MATHANGI, KAMALALAYA, DASA MAHA VIDHYA SWAROOPINI ANAGHA DEVI NAMOSTHUTHE*.**

These ten constitute the 10 *Maha Vidyas* of the *Devi*:

1.The first form, **Kaali**

Maha Kaali is the beginning of all 'vidyas'. Her manifestations of vidyas are called Maha Vidyas. Once in Himalayas, Gods praised Maha Maya in the 'ashram' of Matangi Muni. Maa Ambika gave darshan as 'Matanga' woman. As she was in black colour, she was named 'Kaali'. She killed demons called Sumbha and Nisumbha. As Kaali is in blue form, she is also referred to as 'Thara'. People worship Kaali to get the fruit of 'Yoga Sadhana' in a short period of few days or months, which would otherwise take many years. But during the days of 'sadhana' while attracting Kaali power into the body, the sadhaka will have to experience unbearable burning and pain.

2. The second vidya is '**Thara**': She always grants liberation. She will give fulfillment to life. So the name of Thara has become famous. She is also called by the name 'Neela Saraswathi'. As she protects devotees from frightening calamities, she is also worshipped by yogis in the form of 'Ugra Thara'. Vasishta Maharshi was a great 'upasaka' of 'Thara'. The night of the nineth day in the first half of the month of 'Chaitram', is called 'Thara Raathri'.

3. The Third form is **Chinna Masta**: This is the most secret form. Devi once went to Mandakini River for bathing along with Her companions Jaya and Vijaya. After taking bath, she was tortured by extreme hunger (Kshudhagni) and became black in colour. Her companions asked her for food. A compassionate Devi cut her head with a sword and the severed head fell in her left hand. From her neck, three streams of blood flowed. Her companions drank two streams of blood and Devi Herself drank the third stream. From that day onwards, she became famous as '*Chinna Mastha*'. Hiranya Kasyapa and others were 'upasakas' of '*Chinna Mastha*'.

4. The fourth form is **Shodasi Maheswari** : Her heart is full of kindness. people who take shelter under her, will have '*Gyanam*' in their hands. All the mantras tantras and others in the universe, worship this 'Maha Vidya Shakti'. Vedas also cannot describe her. When pleased, this 'Maha Shakti' fulfils all the desires of devotees. Worshiping this 'Bhagavathi' will give wealth and liberation also.

5. The fifth form is **Bhuvaneswari Devi**: It is said that all the seven crores of Maha Mantras can be found to be always in her worship. Starting from *Kaali tatwam*(tatwam - essence), up to *Kamala tatwam*, there are ten states. Bhuvaneswari gets expressed and takes the form of 'Brahmanda'. At the time of '*Pralaya (great cosmic deluge)*', from Kamala (i.e. expressed Brahmanda), she slowly merges into the form of '*Kaali*' and transforms into '*Moola Prakruti*' (the seed form). That is why she is called, '*Janma Daatri*' (one who gives birth) of '*Kaala (time)*'.

6. The sixth form is **Tripura Bhairavi**: The power which can pacify the situations arising out of Kaala's presence is called Tripura Bhairavi. This Tripura Bhairavi is said to be the power not different from Narsimha Bhagawan. In this creation, transformation always keeps happening. The root causes of

this are attraction and repulsion. They keep happening at every moment. This Tripura Bhairavi's name in the night is '*Kaala Rathri (night)*'. Bhairava's name is Kaala Bhairava. My coming avathar 'Nrsimha Saraswathi' will be the combined form of these two. For Maha Yogis that is the combined Tripura Bhairavi – Kala Bhairava avatar.

7. The seventh form is **Dhoomavathi** : This Dhoomavathi is indeed '*Ugra Thara*'. By surrendering to her, one's calamities will be destroyed, and one gets wealth and prosperity. In Vedas, she is described as the one who removes famine and distress. But she is the one responsible for all the pitiable states of hunger, poverty and quarrels of *Jivas*. With Her grace, all troubles will be driven away.

8. The eight form is **Bhagala Mukhi** : This Mother is worshipped for removing the misfortunes that cause grief in the country and community, and also the worldly and unworldly calamities, and to subdue enemies. Firstly *Brahmadeva* did 'upasana' of *Bhagala Maha Vidya*. Vishnu Bhagawan and Parasuram are also worshippers of Bhagala Mukhi. For a long time the Sri Venkateshwara Swami idol in Tirumala was worshipped as ***Bhagala Mukhi***.

9. The ninth form is **Mathangi** : Mathangi has got the power to make the life of a householder happy and to give the four 'purushardhas' (dharma, ardha, kama and moksha). She is also called the daughter of '*Mathanga*' Mahamuni.

10. The tenth form is **Kamalalaya** : She is the representative of 'plenty'. As she is worshipped by Bhargavas, therefore she has got the name Bhargavi. By Her grace, one gets landlordship and great fame. She represents material wealth. She is also called *Padmavathi Devi*. She is the cohort of Sri Venkateswara Maha Prabhu in Tirumala.

For people who worship Anagha Devi, the combined form of Dasa Maha Vidyas and Anagha, her Prabhu, their children 'Astha Siddhis' will grant them their grace. If you do 'Anagha Asthami' on the eight day (Asthami) in the second half of every month, all your desires will be fulfilled. After reading the '*Sri Pada Sri Vallabha Charithamrutham*', if one does '*Sri Anagha Ashtami Vratham*' on Ashtami in the first or second half of the month and gives food to 11 people or utilizes the equivalent money for feeding one gets immediate results. Such is the power of the Divine Mother.

This is meaning of the Moola Mantram of Anagha Devi which all the devotees chant eleven times daily upon instruction from Sri Anagha Devi in Sai Nilayam. In Sai Nilayam all the devotees are given the opportunity to participate in *Sri Anagha Devi Vratham* and also in the *Sri Anagha Devi Puja* as per the instructions of Goddess.

Indeed fortunate are the devotees of Sai Nilayam where they are guided in every way possible while fully experiencing and realizing the infinite divinity in all the infinite expressions. Blessed is Sai Nilayam where devotees learn the essence of the beautiful scriptures in a simple and practical way thereby rapidly progressing on their spiritual journey. Rare are the places which are overflowing with divine presence which guides them at every step of their lives ultimately leading to Self-Realization. Baba at Sai Nilayam kindles the true inner calling of devotees which sets them on the path most conducive to the individuals' path to self-realization. By fulfilling all their wishes, the devotees slowly become desireless and submit themselves at the feet of God marveling at His infiniteness. Finally when they become devoid of ego and overcome all hindrances, Baba walks them on the shortcut to self-realization, which is the goal of every human being. The sooner they attain it, the luckier they are.

Through the kind hearted souls of Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry, Baba has been guiding countless devotees on the path to Godhood. Of the various paths to God Realization, the path of chanting the Lord's name is the easiest path. Let us therefore perpetually chant Sai Naam, and realize the goal of our lives.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 88

SIGNIFICANCE OF DUSSERA NAVARATHRIS

This chapter describes the significance of the Navarathri celebrations.

While some might be aware of the all the details surrounding the dussehra navarathulu, there are others who may have been celebrating it but are not aware of the significance. This chapter makes a humble attempt at trying to summarize this topic. Few things that will be touched upon are – the different types of Navarathris, - which incarnations are worshipped on what day, and so on. This is attempted through the grace of the Goddess and Baba.

As the name suggests, Navaratri stands translates to "nine nights". Each day is dedicated to one form or incarnation of Goddess Durga Mata, and the celebrations culminate with Dussehra on the tenth day. The underlying principle is the victory of good over evil. There are two mythological tales behind this victory celebration of good over evil. The first one is about Goddess Durga's victory over demon Mahishasura, due to which she is also called Mahishasura-Mardhini (One who killed Mahishasura). The second is associated with Lord Ram, who fought a war for 10 days with Demon king Ravana in Lanka to bring back Sita. Ravana was killed by Ram on the tenth day, and is celebrated as Vijayadashami.

The beginning of spring and the beginning of autumn are considered to be important junctions of climatic and solar influences. These are the seasons when there are the highest chances of contagious diseases and natural imbalances. These two periods are taken as sacred opportunities for the worship of the Divine Mother Durga. The dates of the festival are determined according to the lunar calendar on which each woman follows tradition to wear nine colours of dress on Navaratri. Navaratri represents a celebration of the Goddess (the feminine power). Navaratri or Navadurga Parva happens to be the most auspicious and unique period of devotional sadhanas and worship of Shakti (the sublime, ultimate, absolute creative energy) which dates back to prehistoric times before the dawn of the Vedic era.

Dussehra is crude form of the actual Sanskrit words `Dasa`- Ten and `Hara` - defeat, meaning defeating the ten. In the war fought by Sri Rama, the seventh incarnation of Sri Vishnu, against Raavan, Raavan is often depicted as having 10 heads. There are various deeper philosophical and esoteric explanations and interpretations of the 10 heads and Ramayana. Those interested should read Adhyatma Ramayana. In short the 10 heads can be compared to one who is of superior intellect, but deluded by ego forgets his/her true form and only when some great Avatar comes and beheads the ego driven intellect, does one realize one's true nature which is Sat-Chit-Anand. Therefore the term Dussehra – one who defeated ten. It was on the 10^{th} day of the war that Sri Rama defeated Sri Raavan.

The second story originates from how Goddess Durga Devi led a battle against Mahishasur and it lasted for nine days and nine nights. Durga Maata killed Mahishasur on the tenth day. Therefore, different manifestations of Goddess Durga are worshipped during the nine-day long Navratri festival each year. Wherein the tenth day is dedicated to Durga as Vijaydashmi. The feminine power is worshipped and celebrated during the festival of Navratri. On the tenth day, the idol of goddess Durga is immersed in a river or a lake. This can also be interpreted from a philosophical or spiritual standpoint of view. Mahishasur can be thought of as a person with 10 inner demons – lust, greed, avarice, ego and so on. Each day the Goddess took on a different form, to annihilate or free Mahisasur from his subtle inner enemies. Finally on the tenth day, once all these inner enemies are destroyed, She sets him free making him realize that he is one with God. The act of immersing the

Devi Idol in rivers and seas, represents cooling off the means which was employed in destroying the subtle inner enemies.

It is believed that during the first three days of the Puja, all participants' *Tamasic* qualities burn away in the holy power of the Divine Mother, the next three days result in the annihilation of the *Rajasic qualities* and during the last three days the most subtle qualities which are *Sattwic qualities disappear.* In other words we become detached from these qualities, and therefore we no longer relate ourselves to it. (Ref: Sri Sri Ravi Shankar & Bhanu Didi, Art of Living, Festival of nine nights.2016.)

Traditions of Navarathri:

Navaratri is celebrated Four times a year. They are Vasanta Navaratri, Ashadha Navaratri, the Sharan Navaratri, and Paush/Magha Navaratri. Of these, the Sharan Navaratri in the month of Puratashi and the Vasanta Navaratri during the Vasanta kala are the most important.

Vasanta Navaratri: Vasanta Navaratri, it's nine days are dedicated to the nine forms of Shakti (Mother Goddess) in the month of Chaitra (March–April) .The beginning of this Navaratri also marks the start of the new year as per the Hindu mythology and in simple words it is celebrated from the start of Ugadi.

Sharan Navaratri: This is the most important of the Navaratris. It is simply called Maha Navaratri (the Great Navaratri) .The sharan navaratri commences on the first day (pratipada) of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Ashvin. The festival is celebrated for nine nights once every year during the beginning of October, although as the dates of the festival are determined according to the lunar calendar, the festival may be held for a day more or a day less.

During this navarathri the *DIVINE MOTHER* (Adi Parashakti) is worshipped in various incarnations and blesses the devotees immensely.

The nine incarnations which are worshipped in Andhra Pradesh, Southern India are BALA, GAYATHRI, ANNAPURNA, LALITHA, MAHALAKSHMI, SARASWATHI, DURGA, MAHISHASURA MARDHINI and RAJA RAJESWARI where as in other parts of India She is worshipped as SAILAPUTHRI, BRAHMACHAARINI, CHANDRAGHANTA, KUSHMANDA, SKANDAMATHA, KATHYAYINI, KALARAATHRI,MAHA GOWRI and SIDDHI DHATRI and all are called *NAVA DURGA*.

After the nine days the tenth day is called Vijayadasami which means Vijaya – Victory and Dasami - ten. So it is the victory on the tenth day. What is the victory about? This has already been discussed in the previous pages.

The ten qualities or characteristics which are destroyed by one's faithful participation in the rituals are:

1. Kama vasana (Lust)
2. Krodha (Anger)

3. Moha (Attraction)
4. Lobha (Greed)
5. Mada (Over Pride)
6. Matsara (Jealousy)
7. Swartha (Selfishness)
8. Anyaaya (Injustice)
9. Amanavata (Cruelty)
10. Ahankara (Ego).

To get rid of all these bad qualities from humans we need the blessings of Goddess(Shakti). That is the reason during Navarathri's worshipping Goddess is of utmost importance. As mentioned in an earlier chapter. The grace of Goddess is most unique. What cannot be achieved by penance over millions of years can be achieved by gaining Mother Divine's celestial blessings.

During those 10 days the air is supercharged with divine vibrations. Those who chant mantras, and take part whole heartedly can experience higher states of consciousness. Due to the positivity in the air, all *Dharma-badh* wishes are fulfilled.

According to a Hindu tradition, it is believed that there are three major forms in which Goddess Durga manifested herself, namely, Mahasaraswati, Mahalakshmi and Mahakali who are the active energies (Shakti) of Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra respectively (without these goddesses the gods will lose all their powers).

These three forms of Durga further manifested in three more forms each, and thus emerged the nine forms of Durga, which are collectively called Navadurga or Nine Durgas:

Devi Maa Shailputri - The Navratri commences with the 1st night devoted to the puja of Maa "Shailputri". "Shail" means mountains; "Parvati", the daughter of king of Mountains Himavan, is known as "Shailputri". Her 2 hands, display a trident and a lotus. She is mounted upon a bull.

Devi Maa Brahmacharini - One hand holds a "Kumbha" or water port and the other rosary. She personifies love and loyalty. Maa Brahmacharini is a store-house of knowledge and wisdom. Rudraksha is her most adorned ornament.

Devi Maa Chandraghanta - Worshipped on the 3rd night this Maa Durga "Shakti" is astride a tiger, displays a golden hue to Her skin, possesses ten hands and 3 eyes. Eight of Her hands display weapons while the remaining two are respectively in the mudras of gestures of boon giving and stopping harm. Chandra + Ghanta, meaning supreme bliss and knowledge, showering peace and serenity, like cool breeze in a moonlit night.

Devi Maa Kushmanda - The 4th night begins the worship of Maa "Kushmanda", possessed of eight arms, holding weapons and a mala or rosary. Her mount is a tiger and She emanates a solar like

aura. "Kumbh Bhand" means to see cosmic vivacity in Pindi shape or knowledge of cosmic intricacies in human race. The abode of Maa "Kushmanda" is in Bhimaparvat.

Devi Maa Skandamata - Using a lion as a vehicle She holds her son, "Skand" in her lap while displaying 3 eyes and 4 hands; two hands hold lotuses while the other 2 hands respectively display defending and granting gestures. Its said, by the mercy of Maa "Skandmata", even the idiot becomes an ocean of knowledge such as "Kalidas".

Devi Maa Katyayani - As mother, Maa "Katyayani" stayed in the Ashram of sage Katyayan for penance, hence She named as "Katyayani". This 6th Shakti is also astride a lion with 3 eyes and 4 arms. One left hand holds a weapon and the other a lotus. The other 2 hands respectively display defending and granting gestures. Her complexion is golden coloured.

Devi Maa Kalaratri - Black skin with bountiful and lustrous hair and 4 hands, 2 clutching a cleaver and a torch, while the remaining 2 are in the mudras of "giving" and "protecting". She is mounted upon a Donkey. The destroyer of darkness and ignorance, Maa "Kalaratri" is the seventh form of Nav-Durga meaning scourer of darkness; enemy of darkness. Maa Kalaratri's famous shrine is in Calcutta.

Devi Maa Mahagauri - Four arms with the fairest complexion of all the Durga Shaktis. Peace and compassion radiate from Her being and She is often dressed in a white or green sari. She holds a drum and a trident and is often depicted riding a bull. Maa "Mahagauri can be seen in a temple at Kankhal near pilgrim centre Haridwar.

Devi Maa Siddhidatri - Ensconced upon a lotus, most commonly, with 4 arms, and is the possessor of 26 different wishes to grant Her bhakts. Maa Siddhidatri's famous pilgrim centre, is located in Nanda Parvat in the Himalayas.

The nine manifestations of Maa Durga that are worshiped with fervor during Navratri, are believed to lift divine spirit in us to help us overcome obstacles and get liberated from unnecessary qualities to be filled with new freedom and purity.

All these nine names of Goddesses are decribed in "Devi Kavacha" of the Chandipatha scripture. Also called The Devi Mahatmyam or Devi Mahatmya ("Glory of the Goddess") it is a Hindu religious text describing the victory of the goddess Durga over the demon Mahishasura. As part of the Markandeya Purana, it is one of the Puranas or secondary Hindu scriptures, and was composed in Sanskrit around c. 400-500 CE, with authorship attributed to the sage (Rishi) Markandeya. Devi Mahatmyam is also known as the Durga Saptashati or Chandi Patha.

The other important work that focuses on veneration of the divine feminine is Devi Bhagavata Purana, also known as Shrimad Devi Bhagvatam or the Devi Bhagavatam. (Ref Merike Taza. Lilleoru. 2018)

In Sai Nilayam Navarathri's are celebrated with great fervour. The celebrations began in the year 2011. At Sai Nilayam, the Prasanna and Srinivas, with the help of other devotees participate in serving the poor and needy. All this is made possible only due to Sri Anagha Devi's grace, who is very compassionate towards all Her devotees. She provides all instructions. If we step one foot, GOD will step ten feet towards us and this statement has been proved in Sai Nilayam. The first Navarathri's were performed with limited knowledge of worshipping the Goddess, but She kept guiding us, while making all the devotees in the various aspects of performing the Puja, all of which aid in fulfilling our desires, and help in reducing the devotees' karma phalam.

Those who get the opportunity should definitely try to visit and participate in the Navaratri Celebrations at Sai Nilayam and immerse themselves in the divinity and obtain the grace of the Holy Mother Durga Mata!

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 89

THE START OF DUSSERA NAVARATHRI IN SAI NILAYAM.

The previous chapter described the story and significance of the Navartri's. This chapter will focus on how the Navarathri celebrations started in Sai Nilayam and how they were performed during the first year.

In the year 2011 on the first day of Navarathri's Anagha Devi idol consecration was done with huge pomp and the remaining eight days were also celebrated in Sai Nilayam. On 28-9-2011, *Aswayaja Suddha Padyami*, Sri Anagha Devi was taken out of the rice grains in which She was placed for a period of one month as per Her instructions. After bringing Her out the *Panchamrutha Abhishekam* was performed and various other rituals and then consecration was formally completed by the Veda Pandits who came from Annavaram.

After completion, Goddess was seen shimmering with *Divine Lustre*. The love filled radiance emanating from Her face made the devotees feel as if the Goddess was saying "*I have come for saving all of you*". As mentioned in an earlier chapter Sri Anagha Devi herself instructed that Narayana would be responsible for proper conduct of the various Puja programs during all major festivals. Narayana was very devoted to the Goddess, and he always worshipped her during Navarathri's at his home every year. On the day consecration he came to Sai Nilayam in the morning and after the entire programme was over he thought in his mind "Sri Anagha Devi is consecrated here, so worship has to be done. They both do not know about the rituals and once consecration is done everything has to be performed as per vedic sastras. I perform puja to Goddess during Navarathri's every year with Sahasram at home following all the traditions. Then why can't I perform the worship here instead of at my home". He requested Prasanna's consent to do the same. Prasanna immediately agreed to it. On the same day he started with the Anagha Devi Puja along with *Sahasranama Archana* in the evening. Since all the formal procedures were completed in the morning he did not do the Ganapathi Puja and started with the *Sahasram*. As described in the chapter on Narayana's experiences at Sai Nilayam, the Goddess made him realize his folly when She asked him, "Won't you worship my son, Siddhi Vinayaka?" He corrected himself thereafter.

On the next day morning when Narayana was doing puja by chanting Lalitha Sahasram with *Beeja-aksharralu*, the Divine Mother blessed him by showering pearls on him. Lalitha Sahasram was performed in the morning and the *Devi Khadgamala* with turmeric and kumkum was undertaken in the evenings by all the devotees. It was the first year of Saran Navarathri and devotees participated with great love and devotion. On the last day of Navarathri's the *Divine Mother* possessed Prasanna in the evening when Khadmala was going on and at that time She was sitting beside Narayana in the Puja Mandir. Sri Anagha Devi asked "*Today is Mahishasura mardhini avathaaram kadaa, Mahishasura mardhini stotram chaduvu (Today is the incarnation of Mahishasura Mardhini, why don't you chant the Mahishasura Mardhini Mantra?)*". When Narayana began chanting, She began moving to the rhythm acknowledging the devotees' earnest prayers.

After that She asked "*Naa kumarudu puja cheyaledemi*? (Why didn't you perform the Puja of my Son (Vinayaka))" "*Pasupu kumkumalu antaru kada pasupu veyaledhu emi*? (Isn't it called Pasupu Kumkum Puja, then why aren't you offering Kumkum?)" and so saying the Divine Mother made a surplus amount of holy Turmeric appear in the hands of Prasanna.

With these two questions She gently reminded everybody of the importance of starting any holy event only after performing the *Siddhi Vinayaka Puja*, and how devotees are required to offer both kumkum and turmeric during the Sri Chakram Puja. There is a very deep and profound significance of

every element and aspect of the Puja and also the various rituals. The meanings of which can be found in the oceans of knowledge such as Sri Devi Bhagawatam, the Vedas, The Upanishads and other holy scriptures. (The author of the first edition (pilot) Anupama Sabbavarpu makes no mention of the significance. The author of the second and current edition, Vivek Mangipudi considers himself not knowledgeable enough to add notes regarding this topic, and therefore begs the readers pardon. He will make an effort to understand the grasp the significance of these topics, and make conscious effort into incorporating them in future revisions of the book.)

Then She lovingly asked Narayana, "*Ee thappulanu dhidhu koni padakundu samvathsaraalu ilaage navarathrulu nirvarthisthava nana*?"(Will you correct your mistakes and perform my navarathri's for eleven years, my dear son?). What love between the Divine mother and the devotee! She further added, "During the next year, Vasthra-alankarana (dressing, decorations and adornments) should be done by Jaya." In Sai Nilayam none of the simple devotees had knowledge about rituals except performing Puja at home. Even Narayana never knew how to perform major rituals. But She is the Mother of the Universe, what is not possible for her? Her grace can accomplish anything and everything. So She she filled the hearts of all devotees with love, increased their Sraddha and Bhakthi, taught them the right way of executing the various rituals with great love and patience.

The devotees of Sai Nilayam are indeed fortunate. What more can they even dream of desiring when they are constantly in the service of the Divine?

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 90

SECOND YEAR OF DUSSERA NAVARATRI 2012

This chapter will give the second year of Dussehra Navaratri celebrations at Sai Nilayam.

The first year of Navaratris celebrations were performed with simplicity in terms of worshipping and the decorations in Sai Nilayam but in the second-year greater emphasis was placed on Navaratri celebrations. Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry along with other devotees put in a great deal of efforts towards making it a grand spectacle. On all the nine days the *Divine Mother* (Sri Anagha Devi) was ornamented highlighting and complementing the particular incarnation. Every day Sahasram and ashtotharams were performed based on the incarnation of the Sri Anagha Devi. The morning sessions, were dedicated to Sahasram and in the evening pujas were performed with Kumkum with many devotees participating in all the programmes.

Pujas related to all the nine incarnations Bala, Gayathri, Annapurna, Mahalakshmi, Lalitha, Saraswathi, Durga, RajaRajeswari were performed following all the ancient sacred Vedic procedures. During the worship, Sri Anagha Devi gave many instructions which devotees and participants would have otherwise never known. She taught them the right of doing the various parts of the puja.

On the first day of Navaratris, Sri Anagha Devi gave a message that “Do not use the Kumkum that has a black tinge to it. Only use red colour Kumkum for puja”.

Another day during puja when Archana was being performed, Sri Anagha Devi said that “The stalks of the chrysanthemum (*chaamanthi*) flowers are pricking me.” Till that day devotees never paid any thought to removing the thorny and irritable stalks while performing puja. After Her instructions, this incident never reoccurred. Through these messages, She made the devotees realize that She was very much present there in the idol, and it was not a lifeless block of earth. Therefore, She was to be cared for properly, like she was a child. As such, due diligence must be made in all matters, and She is to be taken care of just as we would take care of ourselves.

It is not uncommon to see people compromising when it comes to matters of God, but when it comes to themselves they cannot bear anything that is as per their expectations. For instance, they would think it is fine to skip going to the temple or arriving late for puja, but when it comes to going to the movies, they take great care to make it on time to the theatre so as not to miss the trailers! We want the finest for ourselves but on many occasions, we tend to make do when it comes to the matters of the Divine. It should not be the case. We must give the highest importance to God, and only then to ourselves.

One day, she instructed “Offer either one or three varieties of fruits as Naivedyam”. Until that point in time, the devotees used offer any number of varieties and quantities as an offering. From that time onwards, devotees followed Her advice. Generally, while doing puja with Kumkum or flowers some people use all fingers, but Sri Anagha Devi corrected them by telling them that “While performing Archana with Kumkum or flowers one must only use the two middle fingers and the thumb of the right hand. We shouldn’t use the fore finger or the little finger.”

The *Divine Mother*, also guided the devotees by saying that “While applying tilak to Her or any married woman (as is customary in India) one must use the ring finger and not the thumb” A lot of the devotees were in the habit of using the thumb or the middle finger for applying the tilak. Now they were made aware of the right procedure. During Navaratris, one day She gave the following message “You did not apply tilak before starting the puja.” Unless and until tilak was applied Sri Anagha Devi never used to possess Prasanna.

When it was the day of the *Sri Annapurna Devi* incarnation, Anupama and her mother were sitting inside the puja room and performing the Sahasram with flowers. Narayana was sitting outside the room and was guiding them with the necessary procedures to be followed. Suddenly Prasanna entered the puja mandir and sat beside them, and started performing the puja. She asked them to perform the puja using rice grains and not flowers. Sri Anagha Devi had possessed Prasanna at that time. The entire idol of Anagha Devi was filled with rice grains and those rice grains were distributed to all the devotees and were asked to be mixed with the rice grains they have at home. Sri Anagha Devi made them realize the significance of the Annapurna Devi incarnation, *Annam* means food. Therefore, one should always feed the poor and hungry.

That year Anupama, was given the first picture of Anagha Devi which was laminated and previously adorned Sai Nilayam for many years. Prasanna asked Anupama to keep to the photo in whichever bedroom Sai Anagha (Anupama's daughter) sleeps, now and forever. Anupama had the following to say with regard to how she received the *Divine Mother's blessings. She says [sic]," You* all know how Anagha was operated for her hearing problem. After one year of her surgery there was a recall letter from Cochlear that the implant which was used during surgery is a failing and if not implanted it needs to be returned and they would provide the upgraded implant. But we had no chances because she was already implanted. Then fear started developing within us but the only trust was Anagha Devi. One of the child who was operated along with Sai Anagha had a failure in one of her ears. I informed Prasanna Aunty and she said that everything will be taken care by GOD. On the first day of Navaratris I was sitting in front of Anagha Prasanna and crying as to why all this was happening? I asked her 'I have given her your name as per your instructions, you only have to protect her all her life'. Immediately Prasanna Aunty came out and brought the laminated photo of the *Divine Mother, Sri Anagha Devi* and gave it to me. She told that Sri Anagha Devi has asked her to give it to Sai Anagha and to keep it in the bedroom where she sleeps. From that day Sri Anagha Devi gave me the courage and confidence that she would take care of the child all her life. What more do I want? What more does Sai Anagha need? We are indeed very blessed to have the Merciful Mother's love and grave."

The number miracles that take place at Sai Nilayam are countless. There is not a time or place or any occasion required. Miracles take place when needed. It is the veritable truth. Many devotees experienced many more miracles. Narrating all those miracles and devotees' experiences would make the size of the book unbounded. But effort has been made to include as many experiences as possible.

Concluding, in this way during all the nine days Sri Anagha Devi came to Sai Nilayam and guided them in every procedure for performing the puja, teaching them new things with love and patience like a mother teaches her children. That is the reason A *MOTHER IS CALLED THE FIRST GURU* and She is the MOTHER OF THE UNIVERSE.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 91 & 92

SRI CHAKRAM

This chapter describes the significance of the Sri Chakram, and the importance of the Khadgamala Stotram when worshipping the Sri Chakram.

What is Sri Chakra? What is in it for me?

The following is directly quoted from the article by the Respected **Sri Amritananda Natha Saraswati (Prahlada Sasty) of Devipuram, AP, India.**

"*For thousands of years, sages in India and other parts of the world meditated to discover the sacred (=self organising) life principles, how to enhance happiness, and how to reduce misery in life. Sri Chakra appeared or arose in their visions. It combined geometry, sounds and life to channel the*

nameless, formless powers of God. Sri Chakra is a Yantra, and is also called Sri Yantra. Sri Chakra is the symbol of the space-time, in union with the life-energy or life-force. It is worshipped in couples: Universe-God, Saraswati-Brahma, Lakshmi-Vishnu, Shakti-Siva, Radha-Krishna, Woman-Man.

The body of every person is also a temple enlivened by the Goddess called life in it. We don't see life itself, except through persons or entities having it. So, when we worship a person, it is the life in it which experiences the worship. The best forms of Sri Chakras therefore are living persons. Clitoris looks like a small penis and tip of penis look like a Yoni. So Women have the attributes of Siva while Men have attributes of Shakti. Limbs of persons are adored as places where powers of God/dess reside. Yoni and Linga as creative powers, navel and chest as nourishing powers, and neck and eyes as symbols of absoring powers.

Such external worship is the gateway to internal meditative form of worship. It is the king of yantras with nine layers of Shaktis (powers) covering the light of God in the forms of stars, lotuses and squares containing powers, passions and beauties. Their unmasked beauty and razor sharp intellects earned them a nickname- khadgamala- a garland of swords. They cut off and pierce through all limiting ideas of I and mine to release your unbounded bliss of God. Learn the secret teachings of Sa-maya (=Shakti's happiness) Dakshina (=Shiva's happiness) or Kaula (=Both happiness's) and Vama(=offering self in fire) acharas, and finally Ananda Bhairavis of devotees forming into a self empowering mandalas of Sri Chakras. The Guru at the center of such a circle is called Maha Mandaleswara.

Meditate on names and forms of Avarana (covering) Devis as you go inwards to get the following.

Layers of coverings in Sri Chakra:

*1. **Square**- 10 siddhis, 8 passions, 10 gestures. Use them to enjoy astral powers.*

*2. **Lotus of 16 petals**. Time is divided into 16 lunar days, each day bringing a special dream gift.*

*3. **Lotus of 8 petals**. Let go of inhibitions. Offer fruits of all your actions to Goddess.*

*4. **Star of 14**. Powers ruling the worlds place their riches at your feet.*

*5. **Outer star of 10**. These airy spirits blow away poverty.*

*6. **Inner star of 10**. They defend you from enemies.*

*7. **Star of 8**. They eliminate diseases.*

*8. **Triangle**. They teach secrets of controlling lust, enhancing wisdom and manifesting visions.*

*9. **Circle or point**. Take you to unending powers beyond mind. Merge with infinite peace, bliss and light of union with Shiva-Shakti.*

The Sri Chakra is referred to as the King of Yantras, and therefore referred to as the Chakra Raja. It is the genetic code of the cosmos. Wherever it is present, it brings order, peace, happiness, health, wealth and everything else. It is considered as an object of Feng Shui, pyramid and holiness in various religions. Just keeping it in the home itself is a great blessing, because it connects itself to the other major Yantras in the world. It is intelligent. Once it is taken from a proper Guru, who is well intentioned, it can give unbounded happiness and every good thing in life.

To get everything stated here, Guruji's grace is necessary followed by your untiring effort.

The role of a Guru is to enlighten you. The Sri Chakra is an oceanic subject, confusingly intricate. You should learn one and after practicing it for at least a week, move on the next level. There are innumerable side attractions on spiritual journey. Guru is like a compass, guiding you through his mantra about what to enjoy and what to avoid. Seek Guru's guidance astrally with his mantra.Worship, chanting of mantras and remembering the myriad attributes of the Goddess are all means for the movement from darkness of ignorance to the light of unlimited awareness. The Guru is the gateway to surrender the individual's pettiness into the largess of cosmic life. When all is one, the duality Disciple-Guru cannot exist; they are just one God. But they enjoy their separate roles in the drama of life. Guru worships the disciple as guru, because of the God in the disciple. In that very process, empowerment happens."

The following were obtained from one, Lal Baba. They are being produced as is, without any alterations or modifications.

"*In the square or the outer most enclosure of Srichakra, there are four cardinal and four intermediate directions and one up and one down – totaling 10. There are so many Mudra Shaktis, Matrukas and Siddhis in these enclosures. We now focus on Ashta Matrukas, who are in the directions and the intermediate directions. They are Brahmi, Maheshwari, Kowmari, Vaishnavi, Varahi, Mahendri, Chamunda and Mahalakshmi. Their names and associations tell us how and why they are useful as intermediaries, to give us the grace of Para Shakti.*

Brahmi *- is Brahma's Atma Shakti – Saraswati, who symbolizes creativity in all forms, music and knowledge. In all efforts that improve the quality of life in this direction, for education, learning and creativity, worship of Brahmi is recommended.*

Maheshwari *- is the Goddess of Shiva, who represents Mahat Tatwa. She brings Mahat Tatwa under control. So, for those who aspire greatness, through any means, through business or enterprise in various forms, which need insistence on the right things being done at the right time by the right people and the insistence that the things should not be done in the wrong ways and where it needs a little bit of aggression to preserve the competitive edge. For such actions, propitiating Maheshwari is recommended.*

Kowmari - *is the Atma Shakti of Kumara, Skanda – Ganesha's brother, whose wives are Valli and Devasena. He is Shanmukha, the Kundalini Shakti itself. He resides at all the six chakras balancing them and he is the leader of the armed forces of the Devas. He is also related to Naga Dosha, because Kundalini is serpent power. By propitiating Kowmari by worshipping the Yoni, the seat of Kundalini as Nagashakti, wellness hormones are generated. Conditions suitable for conception are created thereby. So worship of Kowmari is recommended for couples who want to get santana or progeny.*

Vaishnavi - *She is the Shakti of Vishnu, whose nature is Maya. Maya means Hreem kAra. It is involvement in the world. So Vishnu's Atma Shakti, Vaishnavi who is one form of Lakshmi, creates these illusions of Samsara, is best for improvement of one's relationships in life. There is a relationship between husband and wife, between friends and all kinds of relationships. For improvement in the quality of relationship and establishment of harmony, propitiating Vaishnavi would be very useful.*

Varahi - *is the commandant of armed forces of Lalita Devi. Residing at Ajna chakra, she is able to give a command, ajna, to various armed forces to quell the enemies. Although it can be used for negative purposes, the positive use of Varahi is to treat the various diseases and internal enemies like kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya and they have to be brought under our control. So, Varahi can be used effectively for controlling the diseases and improving the quality of life. It can be done for the sake of others also by chanting Sankalpam with their names and doing Japa or Prokshana of Varahi Mantra, and relief will be there for the person. It would be especially useful for the application in respect of bringing relief to terminally ill patients, like for those suffering from Cancer and Aids.*

Mahendri - *is Indra's Atma Shakti. Indra is the God of Rain. He sends his thunderbolt, Vajra to seed the clouds and bring the rain, which fertilizes the earth. So, all our desires regarding the well being of crops, controlling the floods, natural calamities, anything related to rain and water and fertilization of the earth is best handled by worshipping Indra's Atma Shakti – Mahendri. It protects the crops and gives better dairy products and is useful for the people in the agro industry. It is also useful for environmental control.*

Chamunda - *"Chamunda Shava Vahana" – she lives in cemeteries, rides on corpse, bringing into life. Propitiating this war Goddess Chamunda, who is a form of Chandi, absolutely controls all evils done to you and eliminates that evil. Chamunda is helpful for this.*

Mahalakshmi *- is the wealth of Sri Mannarayana. She is the cosmic awareness, which shuns the pettiness in every aspect. So, she represents the infinite wealth of the Lord and removes poverty of all kinds. Ashta Aishwaryas and Ashta Lakshmis – are all under her control and they all obey her commands. It is appropriate to propitiate her to get a feel for the spiritual wealth of the Lord. She not only gives material benefits, but also gives the right frame of mind to take you to the oceanic, infinite antaryami consciousness of the Lord.*

So, these are the eight Matrukas. Brahmi is in East. Maheshwari to South, Kowmari to West, Vaishnavi to North, Varahi to South East, Mahendri to Southwest, Chamunda to North West and

Maha Lakshmi to North East. These goddesses are located on the square enclosure of the Sri Yantra. It is good to do Abhishekam to these Goddesses in the Sri Yantra. Srichakra is the abode of 108 Shaktis."

The worship of the Sri Chakra is central to the Shri Vidya system of Hindu worship. Four isosceles triangles with the apices upwards, representing Shiva or the Masculine. Five isosceles triangles with the apices downward,representing Shakti or Female.

The Nine Triangles' association is also called *NavaYoni Chakra*.Thus the Sri Yantra also represents the union of Masculine and Feminine Divine. These nine triangles are of various sizes and intersect with one another. In the middle is the power point (bindu), visualizing the highest, the invisible, elusive centre from which the entire figure and the cosmos expand. The triangles are enclosed by two rows of (8 and 16) petals, representing the lotus of creation and reproductive vital force. The broken lines of the outer frame denote the figure to be a sanctuary with four openings to the regions of the universe".

Together the nine triangles are interlaced in such a way as to form 43 smaller triangles in a web symbolic of the entire cosmos or a womb symbolic of creation. Together they express *Advaita* or non-duality. This is surrounded by a lotus of eight petals, a lotus of sixteen petals, and an earth square resembling a temple with four doors.

The Shri Chakra is also known as the Nav Chakra because it can also be seen as having nine levels. “Nine” comes from “Nau or Nava” ofSanskrit.

Each level corresponds to a Mudra, a Yogini, and a specific form of the deity Tripura Sundari along with her mantra. These levels starting from the outside or bottom layer are:

Trailokya Mohan or Bhupar, a square of three lines with four portals

Sarva Aasa Paripurak, a sixteen-petal lotus

Sarva Sankshobahan, an eight-petal lotus

Sarva Saubhagyadayak, composed of fourteen small triangles

Sara Arthasadhak, composed of ten small triangles

Sarva Rakshakar, composed of ten small triangles

Sarva Rogahar, composed of eight small triangles

Sarva Siddhiprada, composed of 1 small triangle

Sarva Anandamay, composed of a point or bindu

Khadgamala, significance and relation to Sri Chakram:

The following has been obtained from an article by the Kamakoti Mandal.

Khadgamala is not merely a Stotra or a hymn but is a Mala Mantra which invokes Sri Mahatripurasundari along with all her Avarana Devatas. It is a very powerful invocation. The complete fruit of performing Navavarana is assured to the Sadhaka who simply chants this Mala Mantra. There are many types and levels of worship of the Devi(s) of the Sri Chakra. The Khadgamala is the simplest way. It is simply reciting the names of all the Devis of the Sri Chakra. The following is the sequence in which the names should be recited. It is very good for all round protection and progress. If recited when you are tired and exhausted, it is an excellent rejuvenator of the body, mind and the soul.

Khadga means a sword and mala means a garland. Sword cuts the head, separating body from mind. It can be interpreted also as wisdom, which separates, categorizes, and classifies. So it is a symbol of knowledge. Khadgamala is about imagining a garland of ideas, nourishing and protecting them and putting life into them.

The Divine mother Life imagined that there should be time, and time came to be. She chose to be the space, the womb, in which time can move. Time and space going in whirls make matter. Time and space also provided the ground for vibrations of energy in the form of light. Light preserves the present moment. The light was Sarasvati. Time - space - matter was classified by Her great will into life, sky, air, fire, water and earth and their properties in seed form. The Divine Mother imagined 14 stable worlds in an atom, and 14 worlds in cosmos. Then she felt this was enough and put a sphere around it.

So far the creation had all the richness of variety, forms of Lakshmi, but there was no action because time was like space refusing to move. Everything was light. She created a great movement to time. Then time began to flow making all motions possible. She made the earth to move around the sun making years and moon around earth making the lunar month. Only if Life is coupled to time any

form of experience can occur. Two examples illustrate this. 1. We have life but we don't feel flowing time in sleep. 2. We have no life but time is flowing. In both these cases there is no experience. So life has to be in continuous union with flowing time in order to have any experience. Sometimes Life would separate from time and then there would be no experience but rest.

Then she limited the fields of cosmic awareness making an individual. The individual separated from cosmos and said," I am so and so and these are mine and these are not mine." There was fear and desire about what is not mine. If I did not get what I wanted, I felt helpless, angry and needed power. If I get the desired object I was greedy and would not let it go. I deluded into feeling I can't live without it. I had the pride that I had it, and nobody else had it. I was jealous that others had things I did not have. I was worried what I had would go away. All these passions: fear, desire, anger, greed, attachment, delusion , pride, jealousy, spring from the original separation of myself from the world.

I was worried that I would die, and how can I go on after my life? I discovered food for extending my life. I discovered also that I could create new life forms through pleasure. So, sex was like hunger, nourishing my need to extend myself beyond death. The Divine Mother took the form of Kundalini and chose birth channel as her coiled abode ready to uncoil and strike to transcend life and realizing my potential to be a cosmic being in space and time, before creation of life. The Khadgamala is the equation I=World=Beyond. Regular practice protects you, nourishes you, and takes you beyond. It fulfils all wishes, more than you desire, instantly. Therein lies its power.

As you are reciting each name, a portion of Sri Chakra should spring up in your imagination. The power comes from intensifying concentration to visualize the form, hear the sound, feel the touch, taste, and smell of the divine perfume of the Goddess manifesting that part of the ever youthful Goddess. You can sit in front of each of the sculptures in Devipuram to get training into such visualizations. The Goddess loves fun. She is deeply in love with You, making You into the Siva Tattva.

Summarizing, The Sri Yantra, also known as The Sri Chakra, is called the mother of all Yantras because all the other yantras derive from it. In its three dimensional forms Sri Yantra is said to represent Mount Meru, the cosmic mountain at the center of the universe.

The Sri Yantra is conceived as a place of spiritual pilgrimage. It is a representation of the cosmos at the macrocosmic level and of the human body at the microcosmic level (each of the circuits correspond to a chakra of the body).

The Sri Yantra is a configuration of nine interlocking triangles, surrounded by two circles of lotus petals with the whole encased within a gated frame, called the "earth citadel". The nine interlocking triangles centered around the bindu (the central point of the yantra) are drawn by the superimposition of five downward pointing triangles, representing Shakti ; the female principle and four upright triangles, representing Shiva ; the male principle. The nine interlocking triangles form forty three small triangles each housing a presiding deity associated with particular aspects of existence.

Man's spiritual journey from the stage of material existence to the ultimate enlightenment is mapped on the Sri Yantra. The spiritual journey is taken as a pilgrimage in which every step is an ascent to the center, a movement beyond one's limited existence, and every level is nearer to the goal. Such a journey is mapped in stages, and each of these stages corresponds with one of the circuits of which the Sri Yantra is composed from the outer plane to the bindu in the center. Each circuit in Sri Yantra corresponds to one of the chakras in the human body. An ever rotating and expanding Sri Yantra represents the Universe. The Sri Yantra is a tool to give a vision of the totality of existence, so that the adept may internalize its symbols for the ultimate realization of his unity with

the cosmos. As seen from the photo of the Sri Yantra, the design is very intricate, and It is not the creation of someone's intellect or merely symbolic of Vedanta's central lessons, but the geometry, sages say, appeared to self-realized yogis in states of samadhi or superconsciousness.

The goal of contemplating the Sri Yantra is that the adept can rediscover his or her primordial sources. The circuits symbolically indicate the successive phases in the process of becoming of with the Infinity. Sri Yantra maps a seeker's spiritual journey from the earthly plane to final enlightenment; from the outer rectangles to the central dot, i.e. center of the Universe, the place of origin and unity where one merges with the supreme consciousness.

The temple at Sringeri is believed to house the perfect Sri Chakram or Sri Yantra. This was the site of the first math established by Adi Shankaracharya.

From the above descriptions, one can imagine the divine power contained in the Sri Chakram, and the chanting of the Khadgamala. There all devotees should make an attempt at obtaining a genuine Sri Chakram blessed by an adept Guru. It is said that the mere presence of this Yantra is conducive to peace prosperity and wealth.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 93 & 94

ARRIVAL OF SRI CHAKRAM IN SAI NILAYAM

Let us see how Sai Nilayam was graced by Sri Chakram's presence, and later how it arrived in the homes of the other devotees due to the grace of the Divine Mother.

During the very early days, there was no Sri Chakram in Sai Nilayam. One day Baba gave a message. He drew a picture of Sri Chakram in turmeric and wrote the words *ABHEESTA SIDDI RASTHU*. Then Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry began wondering how they were to obtain this Sri Chakram Yantra. Then Baba himself suggested that they were to go to Devipuram. Then they went there and met one **Mr.Prahlada Sastry** who was given the title ***Amritananda Natha Saraswati*** by the Goddess. They asked him about the Sri Chakram and after learning of its significance, they bought it and brought it to Sai Nilayam. Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry had a few doubts and Guruji cleared them. Few points from the discussion are mentioned here:

1. Our body itself is a Sri Chakram. Then Guruji asked Srinivas Sastry how many people lived their house and He said four. The Guruji then replied then four of you are four Sri Chakrams in the house.
2. Can the Sri Chakram be kept anywhere, and does it always needs to be worshipped? Then Guruji said it can be kept anywhere even in a shop even If the puja cannot be performed. Under certain circumstances the Sri Chakram absorbs the positive energy from the nearest Sri Chakram. That is so, because when one obtains the Sri Chakram from the hands of an Blessed Guru, it is found to be resonating with the energy of the Guru and the divinity. Thus when such a consecrated Sri Chakram is placed in our house, everything in its vicinity is blessed with this energy.
3. Sri Chakram is like a bank. In a bank you deposit money and collect interest, and similarly by worshipping Sri Chakram prayers are deposited and punyam is reaped.

Today devotees can see the beautiful and enchanting Sri Chakram gracing Sai Nilayam. Before the consecration of Anagha Devi, the Goddess gave a message that "The a Sri Chakram made in gold must be consecrated along with Her Idol." Then immediately Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry wanted to place an order for it. Then Kavitha contributed a five grams gold coin as she was not able to contribute any money towards the idol. After the Gold Sri Chakram was ready, it was placed along with Goddess' Idol in Sai Nilayam. Later Goddess instructed Prasanna" Keep the Gold Sri Chakram along with the Panchaloham Sri Chakram so that all the devotees coming to Sai Nilayam also will be benefitted by worshipping it." A Sri Chakram made of gold is more powerful (it means it liberates and radiates more positive energy).

Now let us see how the devotees were blessed by Anagha Devi, who came to their homes in the form of Sri Chakram.

Previously in Sai Nilayam Lalitha parayanam used be performed every Friday by group of devotees as per the instructions of Anangha Devi. In the year 2013 on one Friday Anagha Devi gave a message that " All the devotees who attended the Lalitha parayana that day should obtain a Sri Chakram and worship the same at home". But nobody knew what a Sri Chakram was or what was its significance was or where they were to find it. So Srinivas Sastry took the initiative, and began gathering information for obtaining the required number of Sri Chakrams. It was discovered that Devipuram was the ultimate destination for getting their hands on authentic Sri Chakrams. Further, Anagha

Devi added, “Obtain the Sri Chakrams from Devipuram. The Prana Prathistha must be done by Devipuram Guruji.”

She further said, “Sri Chakrams should arrive in Sai Nilayam by Ugadi, and after the puja everybody could take them to their homes”. Ugadi was right around the corner, and devotees made haste and went to Devi Puram. The story of how Anupama was blessed with the Sri Chakram, and before that how she wished for Prasanna to accompany her has already been described in Chapter 17, page 1. The continuation of the events that followed are mentioned below.

Anupama says, “[sic] When we reached there and went to meet the Guruji, He saw me and asked “Anupama what are you doing?”. I was shocked to hear my name from his mouth because that was the first time I went. We bowed to his feet and he gave me the Sri Chakram and did the Prana Prathista. Later he asked us to go to Kamakhya Devi temple and get the Vinayaka Puja completed. While the puja was going on a lady came there and told that Guruji got a message from Goddess that `Kalavaahini puja has to be performed to Anupama.` Then they performed the puja and then we started back home. While in the car the Sri Chakram was on Prasanna’s lap and after a few minutes she told me that this Sri Chakram is very powerful and has many vibrations and gradually it became very heavy. ”

Importance of Kalavaahini: The importance of Kalavahini is that it cleans and purifies the internal system and removes the negative energy from us. Having been thus purified, one becomes qualified to worship the Sri Chakram.

There weren’t enough Sri Chakrams for the other devotees. Srinivas then found out from Devipuram that they have could be ordered from the Sri Vidhya Trust in Bangalore. Then Guruji gave them the contact information of the trust andSrinivas Sastry spoke to them regarding the Sri Chakrams. They informed that they would not be able to give all of them at a time and the others can be delivered only after Ugadi as they had to first deliver to a group from London. But Srinivas Sastry requested them and they said that they will see if it is possible. Then one day Srinivas Sastry had a call from Sri Vidhya Trust that the London order had been cancelled and therefore they could have all the Sri Chakrams. They dispatched the order and all the Sri Chakrams arrived on time.

On the day of Ugadi the Puja began during the hours of Brahma Muhurtam following the message from Anagha Devi. A few couples who had taken the Sri Chakram arrived in the early hours. During the puja, the Goddess possessed Prasanna and performed Abhishekam with milk, kumkum and turmeric waters while chanting mantras. After that the Goddess said “This is Kalavahini puja. Now you all have become eligibile to perform Puja to Sri Chakram”.

Even though the *Divine Mother* had herself given the opportunity and eligibility to perform the Sri Chakra Puja many people still had their doubts. Then as per Anagha Devi’s message, all devotees went to meet Prahlaada Sastry (Devipuram Guruji). Devipuram is of special significance. The Guruji was blessed by the Goddess, and dispassion descended over him at that moment after which he dedicated his entire life in the service of God. The significance is that Guruji had the entire temple constructed in the form of Sri Chakram. Thus Devipuram is a mega Sri Chakra Yantra resonating with Goddess’ energies. All doubts vanished after meeting with the Guru.

The first thing He said was “Your body itself is a Sri Chakram and the lifecurrent is the Goddess. So just the way you clean your body daily, in the same way you must clean Her (Sri Chakra) by bathing”.

If you have a Sri Chakram at home, what procedures and rules should be followed?

To which Guruji replied that “The way you love yourself, love everybody in this world”. That alone is enough.

While explaining about the importance of Sri Chakram, He gave an excellent example. “[sic] Supposing you deposit money in your bank account and save them, when you are in need of it you will withdraw them. In the same way while performing Puja to Sri Chakram we are depositing punyam and when we are in difficulties that punyam will save us by helping us to overcome the difficulty. Such great importance is given to the Sri Chakram.” A detailed description has been provided on the chapter on significance of Sri Chakram. Devotees are indeed blessed to be in the presence of Baba, and the Divine Mother.

Baba instructed that all the children also must do Sri Chakram puja from their childhood which would lead to the accumulation of the good karma or punyam which will act as a shield against the vicissitudes of life for generations to come. A suitable example for this is Prasanna niece, Swetha who came to Sai Nilayam from Hyderabad. That day Baba gave a message “The Sri Chakram which is there in your father in laws house is not being worshipped and so it has lost all its energy. When he was there he used to perform rituals daily. If you bring that to your house and start worshipping all your problems will be solved.” As per the message Swetha and her husband brought the Sri Chakram to their house and started performing the Sri Chakram Puja.

Prior to obtaining the Sri Dattatreya Swami Idol from Kuruvapuram, Baba asked Narayana to perform all the rituals in line with the Sasthras to Sri Chakram. The lucky devotees had the opportunity of witnessing this puja. Soon after that they regularly started worshipping the Sri Chakram, and slowly all their problems began disappearing.

Sri Amritananda Natha Saraswati i.e Devi Puram Guruji once told Prasanna and all the people who have Sri Chakram to come to Devipuran on four Pournamis, along with the Sri Chakram to perform puja so that the power of it will increase and amplify. But they could go only two times. Once they all went to Devipuram with the Sri Chakrams to perform puja, and that day after the puja was completed Prasanna’s Sri Chakram was totally covered with flowers and the priest said that they can leave it as the flowers should not be disturbed and they asked Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry to come again and collect it later. Later when they went to collect the Sri Chakram, they were given the message by the Goddess to perform the Triveni Kalpam puja. That day Prasanna asked all the couples to go to Devipuram on separate days and perform the Puja. All devotees acted accordingly, as it was the instruction from Goddess.

After a few days Guruji taught them all the *GURUMANTAALU* which is required to be chanted while worshipping Sri Chakram and all the devotees learnt the same, and incorporated it into their daily routine.

Chanting mantras is offering prayers to various forms of *God*. It is customary to first offer our first prayers to Ganapathi. After that mantras are chanted praising and invoking the various incarnations of God via *Bija-Aksharalu*.

1. Guru Mantra – (We bow to the feet of Dattatreya Swami and Anagha Devi)
2. Ganapathi Mantra
3. Subramanyam Swami Mantra
4. Chamundi Mantra
5. Sri Krishna Mantra

6. Dattatreya Mantra
7. Shiva Mantra
8. Lalitha Mantra
9. Bala Mantra

Irrespective of what belief one might have regarding the rituals that surround the Sri Chakram, most of them are dogmatic beliefs. There are not many rules and regulations with regard to the Sri Chakram. Still, it is advisable to maintain a spiritual life after the Sri Chakram graces one's house. Along with Sraddha and Saburi, Purity of mind is all that is needed. After a certain period of ardent worship, one becomes attuned to the divine frequency of the Sri Chakram which further brings about a beautiful change in one's life. One must always chant the Lord's name until it becomes his or her second nature. The thoughts in our mind manifest as actions. Let us therfore always think of Baba and the Divine Mother, and all incarnations, which are nothing but the infinite expressions of the One Universal Spirit. Soon all our impressions will vanish, and we will become one with the Divinity.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 95

THIRD YEAR OF DUSSERA NAVARATHRI 2013

This chapter provides a detailed description of third year Dussehra Navarathri celebrations, the various changes to the programmes, how the different arrangements took place, and the changes to the Pujas and other rituals.

In Sai Nilayam the Navarathri celebrations began one month before Dussehra! All the devotees started participating and contributing towards arranging the various parts of the would be festival. Things were going on this way when a miracle took place on the 14th of September 2013. At 9:26pm on the same day, a message was sent from Narayana's mobile Prasanna's mobile. The message was as follows, "***NAVARATRULLO AMMANI SAAKHAMBARIGA THOMIDI MANDHI SUVAASINULU PUJINCHALI. SAPTHA RUSHI AAVAHANA CHEYALI.***" (During the Navarathri's the Godess or Divine Mother, must be worshipped in the form of Sakharambika (an incarnation of Sri Parvati Devi.) Nine pious women must perform the Puja. The great *Saptah Rishi's holy presence should be invoked.)*

A quick detour will be taken to provide the story of Sakhambari Maata or Sakhambari Devi.

The story of Shakambhari is told in Chapter 28 of the Sri Devi Bhagavatam Purana, titled, "On the glory of Shatakshi Devi". Also, in The Devi Mahatmyam, her story is told in Chapter 11 and in the Ardha Moorty Rahasyam (The Secret of the Manifestations), - an addendum to the Devi Mahatyam.

The Demon Durgam had acquired all four books of total knowledge (The Veda) from Lord Brahma through penance. He also received a boon from Lord Brahma that caused all the pujas, yajnas and havis that were offered to the gods to reach him instead, making him invincible. Durgam became very arrogant and started tormenting the whole world. As a consequence, it did not rain for one hundred years and the whole world was hit by a very severe drought.

The rishis and munis took refuge in the caves of the Himalayas, and meditated upon the Supreme Devi. The Goddess appeared in front of them bearing a wonderful form. She had countless eyes that gave her the name Shatakshi, and was carrying grain, cereals, vegetables, greens, fruits and other herbs and because of this was called Shakambhari, (Shakha means vegetarian or plant based). The Goddess was so moved by their plight that tears rolled down from Her eyes for nine continuous days and nights. The tears became a river, which ended the drought. The rishis and munis and the gods then requested that she recover the Vedas, which were in possession of Durgam. Durgam discovered through his messengers that people were living happily and overcome by mad anger, immediately attacked with a large army.

The Goddess protected the frail rishis, munis, gods and others by putting up a huge wall of fire around them, and then letting her discus or Chakra hover around it at lightning fast speed. There ensued a tremendous battle between the Devi and Durgam. From Her body manifested the ten most powerful powers which had never before existed in the universe before Dasha-Mahaavidya along with 64,000 other Goddesses. At last the Goddess Shatakshi/Shakambhari killed Durgam with her trident and recovered the Vedas from his possession. At that very moment all the mantras and japas that the rishis, munis and gods had performed earlier but had been absorbed by the demon Durgam transformed into the bright light of a 10,000 suns and entered the Devi. She then handed over the Vedas to the deities. Ishwari is also knowns as Durga because she killed the demon Durgam.

Travelling back to Sai Nilayam and picking up where we left off, seeing this message Prasanna called Narayana during the early hours at around 3 AM and asked him about the message. He was shocked to hear this and said "What? Me sending a message?" and while wondering "Why would I do that so

late in the night?" he checked his mobile to find that he had the same message from Prasanna's mobile at the same time (9:26 PM.) Both were left in shock and surprise wondering how such an incident could have happened! This was the miracle that happened and Goddess herself gave a intimation of the pujas that were to be performed during the Navarathri's celebration. This occurrence was one of the highlights of the 2013 Dussera Navarathri celebrations.

But how to perform the *Saptharushi Aawahana Puja* was the question! Neither Narayana nor the other simple devotees had any clue regarding the formalities to be followed here. He began exploring various religious texts with the hopes of gathering the necessary information for performing the puja. Dussehra was fast approaching when the Goddess gave a message that the *Kumari and Suvasini* puja were to be performed. The Navarathri's commenced with the *Panch Amrutha Abhishekam* being performed over the Goddess. This was the very first time this was done, and was a new addition. It was not done during the first two years.

Daily during the *Brahma Muhurtham (which falls around 96 minutes before sunrise),* after the conclusion of Ganapathi Puja the idol of Anagha Devi was brought out of the *sanctum sanctorum* and the Abhishekam was performed in the hall. All the devotees were blessed with the opportunity of performing *Abhishekam* with *Panchamruthalu*, Turmeric, Kumkum, Vibhuti and Fruit Juices, and they used to enjoy their presence around the Goddess from the bottom of their hearts. The chanting of Veda Mantras would take place with great fervour and passion. The Abhishekam program lasted roughly around two hours. After *Abhishekam* devotees turned their attention to decorating and adorning Baba, Angha Devi and Dattatreya Swami with new dresses, flowers and ornaments.

Lakshmi and Annapurna used to read the *Durga Sapthasathi* as per the instructions of the Goddess. On the first day, the Goddess made all the devotees perform the *Kumari Puja* to nine girls, and all the girls participated actively. One devotee Yugandhar's daughter who was five years was dressed in all white clothes and was jumping and moving gracefully in between the devotees and it was ***Bala Tripura Sundari Devi*** who gave darshan in the form of that child. In the evening devotees performed the Pasupu- Kumkum Puja. During the Kumari Puja, the Goddess gave a message "*BE CALM, THE SOUNDS OF THE COVERS IS COMING. NARAYANUDU SHOULD NOT TALK WHILE CHANTING THE MANTRA*"

On the second day the Goddess gave the following message in the morning "*The Vratham related to today's incarnation must be performed.* .That day it was the incarnation of Sri Gayathri Devi and none knew how to perform the Gayathri Devi Vratham. That the puja was to be performed by Suresh and Anupama. The same day Goddess gave instructions that " *The Gayatri Mantra must be discoursed to Sursesh.* " Narayana hesitated to volunteer because "Only a Guru is eligible to initiate another individual with the Gayatri Mantra." Then Prasanna declated, "Here, the Goddess is everyone's Guru". When Goddess herself gave the instruction no one can deny it and thus the puja started. The mantra was discoursed to Suresh. Anupama offered the Thambulam to all the NavaDurgas with great Sraddha. Then Goddess gave a message that "*I thought of giving darshan but the KALASA AAVAHANA has not been done. So read the story of Gouthama, and complete the Vratham.*" As per her instructions Narayana read the story from Devi Bhagawatham. After the puja was over and they were bowing to Goddess; the Thambulam of the Nava Durgas was nowhere to be seen. It simply vanished into thin air. The devotees acknowledged that the Goddess had accepted it. As the Goddess said that the *Kalasa Avahana* was not done Narayana fasted the whole day and in the evening he once again made them perform the *Gayathri Vratham* , this time following all the procedures!

On the third day was the *Sri Annapurna Devi* incarnation. After the *abhishekam* was over in the morning, the Goddess gave a message "*PUT RICE IN A BOWL AND PUT IT INSIDE THE PUJA ROOM AND AFTER THE PUJA THEY CAN TAKE IT AND MIX IT WITH THE RICE THEY HAVE AT HOME. THERE WILL BE NO SCARCITY OF FOOD AND CLOTHES IN YOUR HOMES*". The devotees acted accordingly. *Sahasranaama Archana* and *Kumkum Archana* were performed with great festive spirit. While the Puja was being performed, the Goddess gave a message "*EVERY BODY OFFER DAKSHINA AS PER YOUR WISH, LORD SHIVA WILL ACCEPT THE BHIKSHA*". In the evening, the Suvasini Puja was performed..

The fourth day was the Mahalakshmi Incarnation. In tune with the functions of the other days, the Abhishekam was performed, and then a message appeared "*MAHALAKSHMI VRATHAM*". After the Abhishekam, the Goddess was decorated as *SAAKHAMBARI* and this is called the *SAAKHAMBARI AVATHARAM*. Narayana knew only about the *Varalakshmi Vratham* but not about the *Mahalakshmi Vratham so he* was tensed and then Saraswathi came and gave the book "*MAHALAKSHMI VRATHAM*" which was found lying in her house. The Kalasa was decorated with *Swastik* mark, *Omkaram*, with the four lines symbolizing the four Vedas. All the devotees came together and performed the *Sampatkari Mahalakshmi Vratham*. In the evening, all the unmarried girls performed the *Kathyani Vratham* and many of them were married within a span of one year!

The fifth day incarnation was *Lalitha Tripura Sundari Devi*. They performed the Saptha Rushi Avaahana Puja that day. But until the previous day Narayana was clueless about the procedures to be followed. But the kind Divine Mother made the necessary arrangements to get the book which had all the procedures. The book was *Rushi Panchami Vratha Vidhaanam* and it was sent from Tirupathi. On the previous day all the devotees stayed up till twelve in the night and drew the *Sarvatho Bhadra Mandalam* and *Durga Navaavarana Yantram* using different coloured rice. The next day while the *Abhishekam* was going on, Baba gave an important message "The rice involved, was used was from the Padhukas and therefore cannot be used for performing the Puja. Clean up everything and re do it again."

After the Puja concluded, the devotees patiently sat for three hours and drew both the *Sarvatho Bhadra Mandalam* and *Durga Navaavarana Yantram* again. When it comes to the matters of the Divine, time should not be a concern. In the evening the puja started, and It started raining heavily and the weather took a pleasant turn. The Goddess instructed that everybody should gain knowledge of the Saptha Rushi Avaahana. Then Narayana explained the importance and then started the puja. Seven couples performed the puja for commemorating the seven Rushi's and later on the *Navaavarana Yantram Goddess was worshipped.*

The sixth day belonged to the incarnation of Goddess Saraswathi. That day is important for those born in the birth star "Mula". That day the morning puja was performed by Shankar and Kavitha. As per the instructions from Goddess, the *Saraswathi Vratham* was performed by the children. More than fifty children participated in the puja with bhakthi and sraddha. The children told the story of Ganapathi in English and Prasanna distributed pens, pencils and books to all the children. Along with them *Saraswathi Prardhana* was given to them written on papers. That night the Goddess gave a message "*I told you to perform Vratham but only ashtotharam was performed*". In hindsight, the most likely reason behind this could have been that Narayana must have assumed that the asthothram was the vratham or that he was unaware of the procedures for conducting the *Saraswathi Vratham*. Sastry searched for the Vratham books and they were found in Sai Nilayam.

The next day was Durgaashtami I.e the eighth day which is dedicated to the Goddess Durga. This was a memorable and most important day because all the devotees who were blessed with Sri Chakram

were asked to bring them to Sai Nilayam for performing puja. Ten Sri Chakrams were arranged in the hall. Since Prasanna was exhausted due to her being possessed by the Goddess from the last ten days, the Goddess gave a message that "I will possess another devotee and not Prasanna." During the puja She possessed Sunitha and said to Narayana "*NARAYANA, READ THE NINE ASHTOTHARAMS.*" The Goddess enjoyed his reading. She then showered flowers on all the devotees and blessed them. All the devotees performed Puja using turmeric and Kumkum to the Sri Chakrams and the entire kumkum formed a heap and on it the image of Goddess could be seen. The devotees drank deeply from the beautiful image.

On Maha Navami was the last day and the pujas were performed in the morning, and the evening was dedicated to *Sahasranaama-Archana*. In the evening, all the devotees performed *Sahasranaama-archana* to the Sri Chakram with thousand flowers of different varieties, and Lakshmi performed with Puja using Tulasi leaves to Baba, Anagha Devi and Dattatreya Swami. The tulasi used for puja formed the shape of "*SESHANAG, AND RESEMBLED A SNAKE WITH AN OPEN HOOD*". Everyone was amazed to see that.

On the day of Lalaitha's puja, the Goddess possessed Prasanna and performed puja to Lalitha! The sari that adorned the Goddess, was given to Narayana 's daughter (Manisha) and was asked to wear it on her wedding day.

The last day was Dussehara or Vijaydashami - the day when Baba took Mahasamadhi. In the morning, everybody read the parayana, and in the evening Shankar lead the bhajan.

Thus came to an end the beautiful Navarathri celebrations which were performed on a grand scale. Devotees couldn't believe, 10 days had come to pass. The day used to begin at 3AM and end at 1PM daily. All the devotees participated actively in Pujas, but the most difficult part of arranging all the necessary items for the rituals was primarily done by Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry. They were accompanied by other individuals who had dedicated their lives in the service of God.

Earnest devotees were blessed by the Goddess. K*umkum*, Turmeric, Chandan that was given by Goddess was distributed among all the devotees. All the pujas that prove beneficial in reducing *Karma Phalam* were taught by the Goddess to Her children and She made them perform the puja for their own welfare. Who can be more compassionate than her, the Divine Mother? She excused all the mistakes that the devotees had done during the Puja, and kept guiding them with great love and patience. This is the reason she is called *Mother of the Universe*.

All the devotees related to Sai Nilayam are very lucky for they had the opportunity of participating in all the various holy programs throughout the years. Such close contact with the Divinity wouldn't have been possible elsewhere. The devotees must therefore dedicate their whole hearted efforts in this journey and seek to make the best use of these opportunities to attain spiritual perfection.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 96

FOURTH YEAR OF DUSSEHRA & NAVARATHRI CELEBRATIONS 2014

This chapter describes how the fourth year of Navaratri celebrations took place.

After three years of celebrations, the devotees became accustomed to the various programs ans rituals they were to prepare for and participate in. Thus preparations began for the Kumari, Suvasini, Saptharushi Aavahana, Gayathri, Mahalakshmi and Saakhambari Pujas respectively. The Suvasini Puja was moved from the fifth day to the first day because the Goddess had advised that "From the third day the cheerfulness would decrease and therefore the Suvasini Puja was to be performed on the first day". The first day after the Ganapathi puja, the Goddess was brought outside the sanctum sanctorum and Abhishekam was performed. The devotees applied oil, gave a holy bath and then performed Abhishekam with Panchamruthalu, Turmeric, Kumkum, Chandan, Sugandha Dravyaalu and fruit juices. Lakshmi and Annapurna started the Sapthasathi Parayana, Durga ashtakam and Argala Stotram in tune with what they had done during the previous year. Later Suvasini puja was performed to eleven married women. This year the Suvasini puja was performed with sixty four upachaaralu.

The second day was dedicated to Bala Tripura Sundari and when the Abhishekam was being performed Goddess gave two instructions. They were as follows: "While performing Abhishekam the Mangalsutras and the dress should be present, and the Siva Lingam must be placed along with her during the process of Abhishekam." After the Abhishekam was over she gave another instruction "After the slaying of the demons, for enabling the Goddess to be at peace, Annabhishekam must be performed. Thus a regular Abhishekam was followed by Annabhisekham to appease and propitiate the Goddess, which was followed by the Sahasranama Archana. In the evening Bala Tripura Sundari Puja was performed by making small children sit in the puja, and they were worshipped as representative of the Goddess. All the children enjoyed taking part in the puja.

The next day celebrated the Gayathri Devi incarnation. After the Abhishekam, the Goddess gave a message "Yesterday in the Bala Tripura Sundari Puja there was a mistake, the norm was not followed. You did not show Sraddha towards the Puja, and it was conducted in a hurry because you weren't willing to sacrifice one hour of sleep. The maids working in the kitchen are working continuously from early morning till midnight, and still they are always smiling. I like them more than anyone". This message sent shivers through all the devotees in Sai Nilayam". Prasanna was furious and disappointed because of the lapse in the Puja. Narayana became silent, and his cheerfulness had disappeared. He too felt bad about the negligence that had crept into the Puja. All devotees decided to perform the Puja with more attention.

As per the instructions, the rest of the days were dedicated to the incarnations, and the following Pujas were performed: *Mahalakshmi Vratham, Sahasranama Archana,Lalitha Vratham. Kathyayani, Saptharushi Aavahana, Saraswathi Vratham , Saraswathi puja in the evening with children, Saakhambari Adornment, Annapurna Devi Sahasranama Archana and in the evenings kumkum puja was performed*.

On the last three days, Sri Chakrams were brought to Sai Nilayam. On Thursday, Goddess gave a message that all the men were to perform the Puja to Sri Chakram. All willing men, performed the Kumkum Puja. Durga Ashtami in Sai Nilayam was a spectacle worth beholding. On that day, a ver important Archana was performed. The entire puja room was arranged with lamps and Anagha Devi

was looking beautiful under the shimmer and glimmer of the golden rays from the lamps. During the Puja, the Goddess possessed Prasanna and She opened her mouth and her tongue was seen protruding out and was blood red in colour. In this way, the Goddess gave darshan to all the devotees.

On Vijay Dasami, as per the instructions of the Goddess, three married women participated in the Triveni Kalpam puja. Krishna Prasad's mother from Hyderabad, along with Annapurna and Lakshmi were made to sit and the Puja was performed by the devotees. The puja was performed and the mantras were recited as per the procedures learnt through the Devipuram Guruji. All the three ladies were considered to be forms of the Goddess, and they were worshipped thus. During the puja, all the three were blessed with the vision of the Goddess. In the evening bhajan was performed by Shankar. As per instructions from Baba the song "*ACHYUTHAM KESHAVAM SAI NARAYAM*" was sung by all the devotees. After that Baba gave a message "Narayana performed all the rituals very well. Even If one were to give one lakh rupees, even then you wouldn't get a person like that.

During the 2014 Navarathri's, the Goddess taught all the children many good things which would do them good if they were inculcated, imbibed and followed. As the divine mother of the entire universe, she was instructing her children for a mother is the happiest when she sees her children wise and well behaved.

If the Goddess or Baba give any instructions or one experiences a miracle, they all accept it as their words and are happy because they are being profited from following those instructions. Baba and Goddess, convey all the messages and instructions through Prasanna. Whatever harsh or unpleasant words are directed towards us, are only aimed at our evil state of mind at that point. They are never aimed at one's being. A mirror merely reflects your image. If your state of mind is unpleasant, that spreads across to others like a sore infection, and you are met by your own harshness. Therefore one must always try to be content, and happy, and free from all worries. This will encourage and spread happiness to those around, therefore making everything joyous and stress-free.

Thus, as predicted by the Goddess, after three days the cheerfulness did reduce, once again proving the fact that She was beyond time and space, and knew the past present and future of everybody and everything. She could have stopped it and avoided this mishap from happening but then would the participants have learnt the importance of attentively performing puja? Would they have corrected themselves otherwise? Would humbleness have reigned supreme instead of Egoism otherwise? Mysterious are the ways of God, and we as mere mortals can only bear witness to the events that unfold in our presence. Let us stay clear of the habit of forming opinions and impressions, and instead place our complete faith in Baba, making Him the centre of all our thoughts. He is sure to show us the way.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 97

EXPERIENCE OF JAYA

How Jaya was blessed by Sri Anagha Devi is described in this chapter.

From the beginning Jaya was dedicated to the devotional path and the sraddha she has is because of her parents and she is very much thankful to them. According to her God means only Goddess (*The Divine Mother*) and she knew no other God but Her. She had lots of love and devotion towards Sri Santoshi Matha. That is the reason why even today, Fridays- which are dedicated to *The Divine Feminine,* are very important to her. She performs Puja with great love and devotion and never compromises on any matter related to the Goddess. On Fridays she performs the puja in a special manner, and she has stuck to the practice for many years now. Even though she used to perform pujas, she never knew any mantras. Later from one fellow devotee, Saraswathi, she learnt the Lalitha Sahasram and the Devi Khadgamala and for that she says that she is forever indebted to Saraswathi.

After coming to Sai Nilayam and after Baba consecration, all the devotees in the Satsang began gaining knowledge related to spiritual topics, which led to the enhancement of devotion and sraddha and along with an excitement to learn many more topics related to *God*. Later because of Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry they started reading many more spiritual books which led to a beautiful transformation within themselves. They learnt many topics like Anagha Devi Moola Mantram, Vishnu Sahasram and many more under their guidance and the devotees consider themselves fortunate for having the opportunity of being guided by them so patiently.

Every year Navaratri's happen in Sai Nilayam. During the first Navarathris only the face of Goddess was decorated in such a way that it looked like a Goddess who has been consecrated and was worshipped as Anagha Devi. There were eight other faces of Goddess which were ornamented the same way and were worshipped as Ashtalakshmi's and the Dussehra Navaratri's were performed magnificently! After a few days, as per the instructions of the Goddess to Prasanna, Jaya kept a Sri Chakram in her house and started doing Kumkum puja daily.

During Dussehra once when Jaya was doing Kumkum puja she had a thought in her mind that it would be nice if she could give thambulam to all the married women along with turmeric and Kumkum, and her wish was fulfilled. That day Prasanna was possessed by the Goddess and said the following words to Jaya:" Wear this sari and come to Devipuram for my darshan". Then Jaya understood the importance of giving thambulam to married women, and how much the Goddess encouraged the traditions. The sari given to Jaya by Goddess has a special importance. Previously when Guru Charitra Parayana was going on in Sai Nilayam, that particular book of Guru Charitra was safe guarded in that sari. The sari was therefore saturated with the divine cosmic vibrations. The same sari was given by the Goddess to Jaya and the Goddess has given her the precious opportunity to tie a sari to her in the puja room on every Wednesday. That day Jaya wore the sari, and along with Prasanna and Srinivas Sastry, they visited Devipuram and had the darshan of Sri Raja Rajeswari Devi. That day Goddess's face was seen shimmering and glimmering in golden yellow, as if turmeric was applied to her face. (Generally, Sri Raja Rajeswari Devi is not yellow in colour). Again, they took darshan many times but they couldn't see that nice golden yellow color on her face. After the darshan when they were returning Goddess possessed Prasanna and balls of turmeric balls appeared in her hand. These were which were given to Jaya as per the instructions of the Goddess. Jaya has kept them safely till date. After Dussehra, the Ashtalakshmi's who were ornamented were given to eight devotees as per the instructions of Goddess and one was given to Jaya. She considers Her to be

her daughter and named her “Sri Lalitha. (Note, Jaya & Shankar were blessed with two boys, but no girls.) As per the message of the Goddess they started reading Lalitha Parayana on every Friday all together (*samuhikam ga*) in all the houses where Goddess (*Ashtalakshmi’s*) went.

During that time the discussions for consecration of Goddess in Sai Nilayam were happening and Baba gave a message that “*RENDU SAMVATHSARAMULU NUNDI KRAMAM THAPPAKA CHALLANI SAMARPINCHE VAALU ARHULU*”. Nobody understood the meaning of this message, but later they realized through Prasanna that *CHALLANI* means Buttermilk. Jaya used to offer butter milk to Baba in the afternoons during Arathi. The consecration was done by three couples. From the time of consecration Jaya has been tying the sari to Sri Anagha Devi, and has been ornately decorating the Divine Mother’s Idol. She considers herself most fortunate for very few people get the chance to perform such Seva. In other temples and places of worship, there is a sense of exclusivity and the devotees seldom get to touch the Idol or perform Seva, but in Sai Nilayam Baba and the Goddess have given the opportunity to Jaya and other devotees. As per the instructions three persons were selected to tie the sari for Anagha Devi. Kavitha, Jaya and Rama for a period of three years and is being continued by Jaya till date.

These are the feelings of Jaya towards Sri Anagha Devi. Anupama says, “The only thing we have to learn is that there should be no differentiation when we are decorating GOD. If we are going out how do we get ready? How do we adorn our children? In the same way we must treat the Goddess as our child and we must have the patience to make Her look utmost beautiful. It is how our mind thinks about Goddess. If we think that She is with us, we will take her to be ours. To get the blessings of her we must have the Sraddha and Saburi. We are very lucky to be associated with Sai Nilayam where we can see and perform many pujas which can never be possible in any other temple. So, let us all utilize this opportunity to learn many good things in life which will help us in realizing the ultimate and the eternal truth.”

Indeed, the devotees of Sai Nilayam Satsang are blessed for spiritual practices go hand in hand with their Sadhana, Bhajan and Satsang. Thereby resulting in a well-rounded spiritual and personal growth.

OM SAI RAM

DEVOTEE EXPERIENCES ON GURU POURNIMA @SAI NILAYAM JULY 19TH 2016

Here, I Vivek Mangipudi (author of this book), recount the experiences that, my Mother – Durga Visalakshi and I had during the recent Guru Pournima celebrations at Sri Sai Nilayam.

On the afternoon of Wednesday, July 13th 2016, My Mum and I, had just arrived in Visakhapatnam from Bhubaneshwar. We had planned on visiting Sri Sai Nilayam, in the morning of the following day, to lend a hand toward packing Prasadam for Annadanam. But by the time we had reached Sai Nilayam, all the food had already been packed and put into bags, and was ready for distribution. After taking Baba's Darshan, we instead decided to help with the distribution for Annadaan. Following which, it was agreed that we would stay at Shri Sai Nilayam for the 'Mid-day Haarati'.

Only the previous day, My Mum and I had expressed our interest and desire to have some wonderful vegetable biryani, but had quickly forgotten all about it, as we got quite engaged between running errands, and tending to phone calls for renting out our house. On the very day, neither my Mum nor I had time for breakfast, and had left for Sai Nilayam in a haste. Just as we arrived, Sastry uncle had almost magically asked us, if we had breakfast, and offered us Prasadam. To our absolute delight, the Prasadam that day was steaming hot vegetable biryani with onion raita, which we happily partook.

Soon it was 12:15, Mid-day Haarati commenced. Lead by Srinivas Sastry Uncle, the Haarati was sung with great fervour and other devotees joined voices in harmony. Soon after the Haarati concluded, Prasanna Aunty who was in meditation in the adjoining room, emerged. Through Prasanna Aunty, Baba had delivered the message that on the Holy Day of Guru Pournima, **Ganesh Puja, Sri Dattatreya Asthotram & Sahasram, Shri Sai Baba Asthotram & Sahasram and Shri Anagha Devi Asthotram were to be performed in the above order upon conclusion of the Morning Haarati.** It is a well-known fact that Shri Sai Baba, was very fond of roses and lilies. Hence it was agreed that these flowers would be used for performing the various Asthotrams and Sahasrams.

Days passed by quickly, and it was already Monday July 18th, 2016. After an entire day and a half, the search for fresh roses and lilies was still in vain. Having returned home disappointed, and just when all hope seemed lost for procuring flowers, Mum had a call with **Kavita aunty** and, aunty almost instantly arranged for a big bag of lilies. Another bag of roses was to be made available on the day of Guru Pournima. We were both delighted and happy that Shri Sai Baba had so wonderfully taken care of this.

On the Day of Guru Pournima, the Morning Haarati began at 05:30 am and, led by Srinivas Sastry Uncle, it was sung in unison with great enthusiasm, piety and fervour. This was followed by Palabhishekam, which was performed over the Idols of Shri Sai Baba, Shri Dattatreya Swamy and Shri Anagha Devi. After which some devotees dispersed for a quick breakfast/Prasadam in the adjoining flat, other devotees were busy helping Sastry Uncle and Prasanna Aunty with the necessary arrangements for the upcoming Poojas.

The Siddhi Vinayak Puja was first in line, and was followed by Sri Dattatreya Swamy Asthotram. All of the Poojas were lead from the forefront by Sri Srinivas Sastry Uncle. What transpired next, during the Dattatreya Swamy Sahasram is something I will never forget for the rest of my life. Prasanna Aunty, who was directly in my line of sight, and seated barely 3-4 feet away from me, suddenly sat upright, and her face flushed with an unearthly aura, and it appeared as if, only her body was there but she wasn't, and an entirely different force had descended over her, as a mystical calmness and bliss swept across her entire body. All of this was visibly perceptible. And, suddenly she started chanting 'Om Sainathaya Namah' with such fierceness and with such passion, that the entire room

reverberated with its power and everybody followed suit with equal devotion and urgency. Everybody was convinced that the divine spirit of Shri Sai Baba had descended over Prasanna Aunty.

This episode which lasted only about 15-20 seconds, left me in an inexplicable bliss for the remainder of the Sahasram. As I watched the events unfold, for the first time in my life, I had absolutely felt nothing, and it was as if my conscience had separated from my body and soul and, that I, in every respect was purely a viewer and not a participant. At first a sense of fear and anxiety took over me, before being overpowered by an overwhelming and blissful peace. All my thoughts vanished, just as had, my tiredness, and with it, everything else.

Only moments before this event transpired, my mind was clouded with various unholy thoughts. While I was quite devout and had firm faith in Baba, I certainly did not have the patience to sit out the long customary Poojas and other rituals. The large number of people in the house, the heavy and humid air, the weather, the sweating, and my thick shirt over my tee, were all together making me uncomfortable, tired and claustrophobic, and there was a sense of urgency to leave and catch a breath of fresh air. For some reason I felt, that the rituals were quite unnecessary and that, Faith was all that mattered, and that it took precedence over all else. But since they were ordained by Baba himself, I decided to sit out the events anyway.

While these thoughts were passing through my mind, Prasanna Aunty suddenly directed me to offer flowers inside the Garbha Gudi. This came as a sudden surprise as I wasn't expecting to be called and least of all I hadn't expected to be seated in front of Baba. At the same time, I was also embarrassed, as all of my flowers had almost run out and the Sai Sahasram had only just begun.

Fortunately, Prasanna Aunty came to my rescue as she thrust a big bag of lovely roses into my hands for performing the Pooja. As I entered the Garbha Gudi, I was welcomed by a jet of cool ac, and It was a huge relief from the heat outside. I was especially surprised, as Baba had just put an end to my woes of sweating and suffocation, and had done so in the sweetest way possible. It was almost as if Baba had, all the while been listening to my thoughts, and decided to address them.

As the Sahasram continued, some devotees were allowed to sit inside the Garbha Gudi for a few minutes while others were allowed to sit for a few more, but no more nor no less. All of it depended on Baba's will. I held my heart in my mouth, as I knew it would soon be my turn too. But half way through the Sahasram, when nothing had happened and I was not called out, I felt quite content and more than fortunate to have had the opportunity to serve baba for so long. But then suddenly, I felt a hand over my shoulder, and all the joy turned to sorrow, but I was greatly surprised to see that that it was my Mum who was there and she gently whispered 'you are blessed', as she passed me vibhuti and mentioned that Prasanna Aunty had instructed that it be given to me as per baba's orders. All I could do was smile heartily at my good fortune, and I thanked my Mum.

Another miracle that happened during the Pooja was, that every time we were about to run out of flowers, someone would miraculously give us more flowers, without us ever having to ask for them.

That evening we returned to Shri Sai Nilayam, to head out for pallaki seva at the Shri suvarna Shiridi Sai Temple in Sontyam, which was located at about 20 miles from the city. Just as we reached the staircase of Shri Sai Nilayam, we were met by a rich yet mild and divine fragrance, and we followed the scent back into Shri Sai Nilayam where the fragrance was even more crisp and splendid.

As Sastry Uncle turned on the lights in the Garbha Gudi, we stood still and watched in awe as we tried to digest what we had just witnessed. Every single statute inside the Garbha Gudi was smeared with generous amounts of Udi, and there was udi all over the flowers, and everywhere inside the

Garbha Gudi. There was so much udi, that Sastry uncle could not set foot inside the Garbha Gudi for the fear of stepping foot on the Udi. Second what we noticed was that the baba statue which was sitting upright during the puja, was now magically in a blissful pose with its back against a bed of flowers. The sight reminded me of Baba and Lendi Bagh from Sri Sai Satcharitra. It was an absolute delight to watch Baba resting playfully in a bed of flowers.

After viewing photos taken during the Pooja, neither were there so many flowers, nor was there the udi, nor was statue of Baba in that position. It was evident that all of the events were miracles of Shri sai baba himself.

When I had first come, I had come without any expectations, I felt quite humbled to have had the opportunity to witness these miracles first hand.

This was my first experience, and it was truly overwhelming and a spiritually uplifting one.

CHAPTER 98

BABA's PREACHINGS

This chapter summarizes the various teachings and preachings given by Baba in Sai Nilayam., the underlying message, and what devotees must learn from them. Baba wants His devotees to inculcate, imbibe and follow these principles and teachings in their everyday lives.

PREACHINGS OF Baba:

1. **NANNU NAMMI KOLICHINA VAARIKI EPUDU ANYAAYAM JARAGADHU**.

No devotee who places his entire trust in Baba, will be ever subject to any injustice or the vagaries and vicissitudes of life. Those who have faith and trust in Baba and who always worship Him with love, devotion and bhakti, such a devotee's mind will never fall victim to crooked or unpleasant thoughts. Baba's grace will ensure that only spiritually uplifting and morally conducive thoughts take birth in their minds, all of which will eventually lead them on the path of salvation, and finally taken them to the final Abode, which the scriptures refer to as the Vishnu Paada. When such devotees congregate and participate in Satsang, the positive vibrations will spread to others present nearby too thereby making the society a happy and peaceful place.

2. **NAA SAMADHI NUNDI NENU PALUKU CHUNDEDHUNU**.

I will answer and protect my devotees from my Samadhi. I have left the bodily form but my ever lasting soul will always protect you from my Samadhi. If any devotee keeping these words in mind meditates on the "*Formless or Nirgun Brahma*", they can experience the truth in His words. The Samadhi is of a "*Divine Godly Personage*", the *SUPREME POWER or Para Brahma.* Generally one tends to remember *God* only during difficult times, but if we were to remember Baba during both difficult and happy times, He will always be with us at every step and second of our lives. In *Sai Nilayam*, Baba fulfills every devotee's wish through Prasanna, guiding them in every step and helping them attend to their worldly duties and responsibilities while not losing focus of their spiritual journey.

3. NAA SAANIDHYAMUNU PRASADHINCHU CHUNDUNU.

Baba always said that having *Sraddha* and *Saburi* are all that is required to cross the ocean of mundane existence. He who has *Saburi or patience,* can be assured of swift and steady spiritual progress. A person who is patient, is not swayed by changes in life. He or she will remain ever steady on the spiritual journey. Patience gives birth to love, devotion, compassion and gratitude. When all these sprout within us, we begin relating to everybody as our own. There will no longer be you and me, they and them or other distinctions. Suddenly the truth will dawn upon the seeker, and will naturally begin to see the whole world as one. With Baba's blessings, the earnest seeker will finally realize the Ultimate.

3. **NANNU NAMMI BHAARAM NAAPAI VEYANDI,CHINTHA VALADU**

Have faith in me and leave your burdens on me and I will carry them. Due to our ignorance, more often than not we falsely identify ourselves with the body on the material plane. And due to ego, we form the opinion or impression that we are the "doer" and we are the witness to the results thereby; which is a blunder. Due to our association with our mistaken identity, we end up carrying burdens lifetimes after lifetimes. But Baba has shown devotees the easier way out. Baba said, "Stop carrying all your burdens – mental,physical and

emotional. Drop them all, and entrust them to me. I will carry your burdens. Never assume responsibility for any action."

Baba further said that, " You need not worry or concern yourselves with the responsibility of doership. I am the `CREATOR, PRESERVER and the DESTROYER` I am the driving force behind the living and non living, the moving and the stationary. I am everything. Learn not to be the active participant but to be the witness in every situation, and have a single pointed focus on God and God alone. Drop all other thoughts. I will take you to your destination. "

Therefore, dropping all our base ideas and thoughts, exercising restraint and self-control we must drop all our burdens, and forever meditate on Baba's Sagun or Nirgun form. Baba will make our life's journey beautiful. Baba conveys all messages through Prasanna & Srinivas Sastry. Some of them may not be in tune with your expectations, or impressions in your mind. But learn to drop your thoughts and ideas, and simply follow the instructions. A smooth journey is guaranteed. Countless examples and instances have been mentioned in the previous chapters of the effect of following and not following Baba's words. Let us therefore drop our ideas, and completely surrender ourselves to our Guru and God, Sri Shirdi Sai Baba. We must do *Sarvasva Sharanagati.*

Recall the following from the Bhagvad Gita:
Absorb thy mind in Me; become My devotee; resign all things to Me; bow down to Me. Thou art dear to Me, so in truth do I promise thee: Thou shalt attain Me! Forsaking all other dharmas (duties), remember Me alone.

4. **SADAA NANNU SMARINCHE VAARIKI NENU RUNAGRASTHUDANU.**
   Chanting 'Sai Sai Sai' is the guaranteed and easiest way to salvation. Baba has said, those who perpetually chant "SAI, SAI, SAI ", day & night, them I beset on all sides and take care of them. To such a devotee I will answer every prayer of His or Her. I will be indebted to them. I will fulfill all their wishes.
   Baba has asserted firmly that the remembrance of his name will destroy the sins of speech and hearing and give unlimited happiness, pleasure and calmness to the mind. (Sri Sai Satcharitra.) Generally people say in the last hour of death it is very difficult to get the name of God out of our mouth and that is true. During the last moments of death of body (remember that the soul is immortal), one is overcome by an emotional deluge, and flooded by memories of this life and the previous ones. Suddenly the thoughts of unfulfilled wishes or desires cloud the mind, falsely leading one to believe in the unreal. Since it is not possible for everybody to think of God during the last moments, we must make it our second nature through daily practice. Human nature is that, if we give it a thought, it will always think about it and the same way if we give the thought of always remembering the name "SAI", it will remember it, and get tuned to it and in every breath of ours we will chant His holy name.

5. **NAA EKADHASA SUTHRAMULU PAATINCHANDI.**
   All keep the my Eleven teachings (*Ekadasi Sutraalu*) in mind and exercise them at every opportunity.

6. **PREMAKU, OORPUKI NENU KATTUBADI VUNTAA. KOPAMU, DVESHAMU VUNNA NENU VUNDANU.**

Baba said that He is always present where there is perpetual love and patience. He always said that his devotees must have the patience & faith in Him and always love the living beings in this world as he exists in them all. Where there is anger and hatred Baba will never stay there. So devotees must give up all unworthy qualities of lust, greed, angry, avarice and other spiritually damaging instincts. Let us becomes incarnates of love, and love all like we love ourselves. Baba will then reside right in our hearts!

7. BHAARAMU NAADI, BHADYATHA NERA VERCHANDI, CHINTHAVALADU.

This message was given by Baba in SAI NILAYAM on 15th July, 2009.

It means, leave the burden onto me and stop worrying, you only do your duty with all your strenghts.

It is worth mentioning the following beautiful verse from the Bhagwad Gita:

Karmanye vadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadachana,
Ma Karmaphalaheturbhurma Te Sangostvakarmani

The above sloka translates to , "*You have the right to work onlybut never to its fruits.*
Let not the fruits of action be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction."

What ever ashram (phase) of life you are in, you must do your duty consciously. Spirituality should not be used as an excuse for abandoning one's worldly responsibilities. One who practices spirituality can be seen implementing it in everything he or she does. One who abandons one's duties, with the hopes of pursuing spirituality will seldom succeed. Because spirituality is not an exclusive pursuit, it is an inclusive pursuit, and it is a journey within ourselves to the real Self inside us. Spirituality is not limited to the four walls of a puja room or the premises of a temple. True spirituality can be seen permeating all aspects of life, and it does so very beautifully. The infectious joy of spirituality emanating from a person can be sensed from miles away.

In short, do not wish or seek or have likes or dislikes for anything. Renounce everything and offer both your good and bad as an oblation to the merciful God. Do your duty. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, leave the burden on Him and He will give you the fruit of the efforts you have put in, along with everlasting peace and happiness. Most of what you receive in life are predetermined and are a result of your past actions or karma. Which is why Baba said, "Good or Bad, what is ours is with us, and theirs, with them! (Chapter XLV Sri Sai Satcharitra)". However those who repent, and surrender themselves at the feet of the Lord sure to be saved. Their fates will be re-written for the better. Have an unshakable trust in Baba, and you will bear witness to impossible miracles.

8. NENU CHUPINA MAARGAMU SARI AYINADHI.

This message was given by Baba in SAI NILAYAM on 16th August, 2009.

"The path I show is always the right path." Baba will always guide His devotees in the path that will lead to success, happiness, peacefulness, detachment from materialistic things of the world and finally it will help us to attain or become one with the *Divine Light* (Baba or Brahma). Let us therefore sincerely adhere to Baba's guidance, and stay happy in our lives.

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 99

BABA's PREACHINGS IN SAI NILAYAM - II

This chapter is a continuation of Baba's preachings.

The previous chapter ended at point number nine. Some more points will be discussed in this chapter.

10. ***NAA CHARITRA EVERYTHE BHAKTI, PREMATHO SAPTHAHAMU CHESEDARO, VAARI BHAARAM NENU VAHISTHANU, VAARI BHAKTI, NAMAKKAM PAI AADHARAPADI VUNAADHI. GURU POURNIMA ROJUNA SAAMUHIKA PAARAYANAM CHEYANDI. VIJAYA DASAMI ROJU NUNDI NAVARATHRULU PARAYANAM CHEYANDI. NAA CHARANA PUJA KU NITHYAM PIDIKEDU BIYYAM SAMARPINCHI PEDALAKU VEYYANDI. NEE PAAPA KARMALANU NENU SWEEKARINCHI NAA PUNYA PHALAMUNU NEEKU ISTHANU.***

Whoever undertakes an ardent and faithful study of the Sri Sai Satcharitra Parayana and completes it within one week, that devotee's burden's shall be borne by me. The fruit obtained thereof will be directly proportional to the devotee's level of bhakti and devotion. On Guru Pournima do a collective reading (saamuhikam) of the Sri Sai Satcharitra in a group or satsang setting. Starting on Vijayadasami, i.e Dussehra, do a parayana reading of the Sai Satcharitra for nine days.

Always offer handfuls of rice over Baba's holy feet (*Paadukalu*). The rice thus collected should be distributed (*Annadaanam*) among the poor and needy. Baba always laid great emphasis on feeding the poor and hungry, and according to several ancient texts Annadaanam is the highest form of service. The good karma obtained from Annadaanam is immense. Baba will then bless your devotion and take on your various burdens and responsibilities and keep you free of worry. Baba will bless you in all ways possible.

11. **GURUVUKU BHAKTI THO SAMARPINCHE PHALAM, PUSHPAM, DAKSHINA ADI VRUDHA KARCHU ANUKUNE VAALAKI NAA ANUGRAHAM VRUDHAA? NEE ALANKARANA VRUDHA KAADA?**

Those who think that whatever they have was obtained of their self-efforts is caught in a great delusion. Therefore anybody who thinks several times before offering anything to the Guru will only go to further perdition. The great truth is that everything we have is on account of God's grace. Nothing is really ours. Baba has made this abundantly clear through several examples. One should whole heartedly surrender their mind and body to the service of the Guru. Baba has told several times, that He accepts only the debt an individual owns, and by accepting it He frees that devotee from its clutches. Money is the greatest bar to spiritual progress due to the vicious grip it has over us. Baba has also told that He gives back 10 to 100 times of everything that is whole heartedly offered to Him as Dakshina. By giving back generously towards the greater cause, we not only gain great Punya, but also we become detached from money and finally become dispassionate. God will always give back a thousand times of whatever a devotee offers to him. He is the Lord Almighty, what can we ever give back to Him? Everything we have is on account of His grace.

Too often people get caught up in the illusion that if they donate or give either in kind or deed, that their store of wealth etc will reduce. It is in the best interests of such individuals to wake up from the illusion and set their line of thinking straight. There is nothing greater than selflessly giving back to the Lord Almighty. Does one think twice before exhausting resources on countless trivial pleasures aimed at the gratification of the senses? No. Unfortunately many people think of God as a

commodity, on whose door they can knock during times of difficulties and forget Him afterwards. Most people ask God for the fulfillment of wishes which are totally irrelevant from a cosmic point of view, and thus waste lifetimes after lifetimes focusing on everything but realizing the ultimate truth.

As mentioned in the Sai Satcharitra Chapter 32, Baba has himself said, “The skill of my Fakir, the Leela of my Lord and the aptitude of my Sarkar is quite unique. My Sarkar says, “Take Take”. His treasury (spiritual wealth) is full, and overflowing. The blessed child of a true mother must dig and take with him or her cartloads of this spiritual wealth. But most people don’t attend to the meaning of my words.”

Let us therefore give with magnanimity and stay blessed.

12. **ANDARIKI BRATHAKADAM NERPANDI. THALLI THANDRULU EPPUDU VENAKAALE VUNDARU**.

Teach everybody how to live. Your parents will not always be there with you to take care of you. Parents must impart wisdom to their children in a simple way, arrange circumstances for the children to grow up spiritually and be gravitated towards God Realization as time passes. Spiritually fulfilling life an existential necessity in modern day. With millions of distractions around us to drag us off the track and break our attention spans and deviate us from the true goal of our lives, the onus lies on the parents and teachers more than ever before towards ensuring that their wards grow up to be responsible and peaceful and content citizens who are themselves full of love and spread the same everywhere they go. As parents we always want to be over protective about our children.

A person who is brought up in a naturally spiritual environment, will grow up to be champions of peace and development. Therefore Parents should focus their strengths on bringing up their children in a moralistic fashion. After a period of time, they will themselves become attuned to this and slowly start discerning the real from the unreal. When this happens wisdom dawns within them, they receive Baba’s blessings and therefore will never lose focus of the ultimate goal of every human life – which is attaining God realization. Thus they will not be swayed or influenced by the vagaries of life, and they will face every situation favourable or not with a smile on their face and become more mature and God loving.

13. **GURUVU YOKKA BADHYATHA SISHYU NUNI KAAPADADAME**.

The responsibility of the Guru is to always protect his disciples. Baba has always said that He would always take care of His devotees. With Sraddha and Saburi, accompanied by Baba’s blessings there is nothing that we cannot achieve in life. Therefore knowing full well that Baba would beset us on all sides, we should surrender ourselves at His feet and dispassionately discharge our duties. No calamity will ever befall us.

14. **DHAIRYAVANTHULA THONE NENU VUNTANU.**

Baba will always be there with those who are courageous at heart. In other words Baba answers the prayers of those who have immense Sraddha and Saburi, and therefore are never affected by the difficulties in life. In during testing times, such devotees will stand still placing their full faith in Baba. With faith in Baba, all of us can become courageous.

15. **EDUREEDHADAM NERCHUKOVALI. AMAYAKATHVAM VUNDAKUDADU.**

Stand for what is right. Spirituality is not a mask for foolishness or stupidity. One must always fight for what is right. Practicing spiritual living should not mean you become gullible and get kicked around like a football. Always stand your ground. God is always in support of what is right. Learn to

be strong and fight against the difficulties in life. Learn to swim against the strong currents of difficulties and reach the shores of success.

16**. KARMA PHALAANI BATTE SAMSYALU VASTHAYI. SAMASYALU VASTHE KRUNGI POVADAM KANNA EDIRINCHI DHAIRYAM GA VUNDALI.**

Good or Bad, all events that we become part of or experience are a direct result of your past karma accumulated over countless lives. Therefore don't be perturbed by difficulties. You have yourself brought it upon yourself. Face them and conquer them with courage and faith it God, and be done with it. Your courage and faith should be able to move mountains, and it should always be bigger and stronger than the most impossible of life's difficulties. Never succumb to the difficulties in life. Self Pity is like quick sand that will swallow you whole and make spiritual progress impossible. Control your emotions by practising meditation and praying to God.

17. **DVESHAM EVARI MEEDA VUNDAKODADU.**

Never exhibit hatred towards anybody. Only have love towards everybody. Everybody is made in the image of God. We are all one and the same. Saying you love God but you dislike your neighbour is a paradoxical oxymoron. Such a thing is not possible. Everything you see is a reflection of your own self. If you are happy inside you will see the whole world happy. But if you are sad and grumpy inside the whole world appears to be your tormentor. If somebody says something harsh to you, do not retaliate. Simply forgive the individual's ignorance and chant God's name. Learn to perpetually have Sai Naam on your lips. Then all your thoughts will be pacified and you will become indifferent towards everybody. Slowly as more and more people evolve and advance spiritually they will learn to see the whole world as their own, no different from themselves. When such a day arrives, hatred envy and jealousy will cease to exist and everybody will be bathed in God's eternal love and everybody would become one with Him.

We don't need to study the Vedas, nor gain mastery over any other forms of worship. Baba's Leelas are pregnant with meaning and provide to us all the knowledge and wisdom contained in the scriptures to us in a simple form. The simple remembering of Baba's name combined with meditation, service and satsang will ensure a speedy spiritual progress.

The only question you must ask yourself is are you willing take life after life and go through everything you went through in this life? Or Do you want to renounce everything and attain God realization?

OM SAI RAM

CHAPTER 100

BABA's PREACHINGS IN SAI NILAYAM - III

This chapter is part three of the series on Baba's Preachings.

18. UPADHRAVAALU NENE SRUSHTINCHI NENE AAPUTHANU.

Unfavourable conditions and situations are created due to God's will and the same are warded off by God's will.

This drives home the truths described in the Isho Upanishad that God pervades all creation and existence. We are merely witnesses to the events that unfolding in front of us. We are merely characters in the play called life. This has been beautifully described in chapter XX of Sri Sai Satcharitra where Das Ganu's doubts are cleared by the maid servant. The essence of the story is that as everything is pervaded by God, we must wholeheartedly accept everything. Sufferings or miseries are a way of burning away our Karma.

Baba's love for His devotees is unfathomable. Baba is the Paramatma. He is the controller of the Universe. He will never let His devotees suffer. His grace can vaporize lifetimes of karma. Without Baba's grace an individual would have to endure and suffer unspeakable horrors. But His grace prevents us from having to undergo such a painful exercise. His grace ensures that devotees only suffer so much so that they can grow stronger and overcome it.

All the various tests and challenges we are put through are only to make us overcome our weaknesses and come face to face with our vicious qualities, if any. Once we realize the truth and learn our lesson, the difficulties will themselves disappear. When all our impressions finally fade away, we will attain God Realization and acknowledge the truth that we are one with Baba.

19. **ADRUSHTAM OKASAARE TALUPU TADUTHUNDI, NANNU NAMMI NA VAARIKI EPUDU APAJAYAM LEDU.**

Opportunity and Good Luck knocks the door only once. Those who place their entire trust in Baba will never face any defeat. Let us therefore preach and practice Baba's teachings in our everyday lives and live life to our full potential with His grace.

20. **THEERTHA YAATRALU KARMA PHALAANI THAGISTHAYI.**

Pilgrimages to holy places reduce the effect of karma.

The importance and significance of stepping foot in holy places has already been described in detail in the various chapters. One cannot sufficiently underscore the importance of visiting Holy places. The Shiridi Sai Baba Samadhi Mandir, The Dwadas Jyotirlingas, The Datta Kshetras, The Shakti Peeths, The Bada Char Dham (Badrinath, Dwarka, Puri-Jagganath, Rameshwaram-Ramalinganathaswamy), The Chota Char Dham (Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri, Gangotri), The Amarnath Yatra, The Vaishno Devi Temple, The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra and other holy places all have held utmost spiritual significance for millenia, and will continue to do so until the end of time. They are spiritually supercharged with the divine cosmic vibrations, obtaining God's blessings there is easier. The power of the places is such. Therefore people must put an end to frivolous expenditures, and instead save money and visit as many holy places as possible and soak themsleves in God's bliss.

Although one may not be fully aware of everything, it is enough to know that all the different puja karyakram and rituals, worship and offerings to the various incarnations of God each have their own

unique effect. All of which aid us in reducing our karma and freeing us from the cluthces of karma, and thereby helping us move closer to God. As our karma gets destroyed, we become free from its effects. In many cases, the magnitude of the problem or difficulty is seen to be reduced drastically.

Therefore let us place our entire trust in God, and pray that we are blessed with the opportunity of visiting as many holy places as possible.

21. **EE INTIKI (SAI NILAYAM) EVARYNA SUDHA MYNA MANUSUTHO RAVALI. EE INTINI CHUPINCHINDI NENU.**

Anybody stepping foot in Sai Nilayam has to do so with purity of heart and thought. Whoever steps foot in Sai Nilyam is only on due to my grace.

Let us therefore drop our wayward thinking, our negative thoughts and emotions before entering Sai Nilayam and soak ourselves in its pristine positive vibrations.

22. **KOPAM DENIKI PARISHKAARAM KADU. PREMA, OORPUTHO JEEVITHAM CHAKKA DHIDHU KOVAALI.**

Anger and madness is never a solution to any problem. With Love and patience one must correct life. Baba always taught that one must never get annoyed or influenced by any problems. The bigger the problem, the stronger our faith in Baba and our resolve should be. The power of Sraddha and Saburi can melt even the toughest of difficulties by providing us the solution to them. Let us therefore not be overwhelmed by any problem. Let us learn to be a witness and not an active participant.

23. **INKOKARI JEEVITHAM PAI EVARIKI ADHIKAARAM LEDU. AATMA THAPPA EVERIKI HAKKU LEDU.**

Nobody has the power over another's life. The soul is sole director of one's life. It alone knows what is best for this body.

What is implied here is that one must always lead a spiritual life and become sensitive enough to listen to the soul's true calling and guidance. When this is done we will always do the right set of things which will put on the highway to our final destination. Those who are out of touch with their inner calling can be seen aimlessly navigating though life like vagabonds, being thrown and tossed around like a sail-less boat on choppy waters.

Those who listen to the true inner calling will lead full and content lives.

24. **CHIVARIKI EDI SASWATHAM KAADU. ANTHA KALAVA VALASINDHI NAALONE.**

Nothing lasts forever. In the end everything merges and becomes one with Baba.

Not realizing this ultimate truth, people slave aways lifetimes getting addicted to sense pleasures and growing attached to anything and everything that provides sense gratification. Parents become attached to children. Lovers become attached to one another. Others become attached to libertine lifestyles. The list is endless. All of which is no way helpful in aiding us in our spiritual growth. Acknowledging that human life is short and precious, one must place their entire attention on God, and God alone. In the end He is the only one who will come to our aid for helping us achieve Salvation. When the ultimate goal of life is God-Realization, and everyone must sooner or later become one with God (I.e realize their true nature) why not make a conscious effort towards becoming one with God, as opposed to doing it unconsciously?

Let us therefore consciously drop the body (attaining oneness with God through Bhakti and Meditation) and not let the body drop us (death due to abusing ones body or oldage)!

25. **SAASWATHAMYNA AANAMDHAM KOSAM THAPANAPADU. KALALOKUDA EVERINI BHADAPETTAKU.**

Yearn for everlasting joy and bliss. Never hurt anybody even in your dreams.

The everlasting bliss is nothing but the state of Samadhi where we become one with Baba. All the various sensual pleasures were given to humans not so that they could succumb to them and become enslaved by them, but so that we realize that we hold power over them, and not the other way around. Too many people get lost in the world of sense gratifications, and lose focus of the final goal of their lives. Remember except God-Realization, there is no other joy that lasts forever. All material joys last trifling moments, they never provide everlasting contentment or happiness, at best they provide a hope for such a joy but always fail to deliver. Even the tastiest of dishes lose their taste after they are swallowed. Even your favourite item will bore you to death if served every day and night. The divine bliss attained and experienced during divine communion with God transcends time and space and provides everlasting joy. This is the reason those who have been fortunate enough to experience states of Samadhi, will never fall back to their mundane lifestyles. The joy experienced in inexplicable.

26. **VIDHYA VILUVA THELUSUKO. GNYAYAM KOSAM VIDHYA. NEE VRUTTHI VIKASAANIKI VIDHYA AVASARAM. KRUSHI, PATTUDHALA VUNTE NAA SAHAKAARAM.**

Know the importance of Study & knowledge. Knowledge should aid in attaining Gyanam. Knowledge is necessary for professional enhancement. Wherever there is determination and hard-work, there Baba's blessings are ever present.

God's greatest gift to humans is knowledge. One must exercise wisdom and put this knowledge to proper use such that it helps one successfully accomplish all duties related to the various stations in life, all the while remaining focused on our spiritual path. Everything we do should directly or indirectly result in our spiritual enhancement. This knowledge should be employed towards differentiating between the real and the unreal. Ultimately ever action you perform is towards destroying the ignorance inherited from countless lives so that you realize your self which is **Sat Chit Anand**.

Whether you want to search for God after suffering for several more lives before becoming fed up with the mundane life or you want to right away acknowledge this undeniable truth and immediately begin your pursuit of the God Realization is up to the individual. Pursuit here is not referred to in its literal meaning, but is used figuratively. Although we are all nothing but images of God, and though there is no difference between us and the Guru and God, and even though we are not the body but the Supreme Universal Cosmic Conscious Spirit or Sat Chit Anand, it is our ignorance which falsely leads us to believe that we are the body. Which is why once we stop looking outside for answers and start looking deep within us we realize the truth and it reveals itself to us during the silent depths of meditation or during ecstatic moments experienced during Satsang or Bhajan , or when God's grace causes endless streams of joyful tears to roll down our cheeks. When this happens you will know it. The experience is indescribable. Suddenly you will only start being or existing. It is like time comes to a stop.

Even if a million-dollar diamond is present in front of a monkey, it will will not recognize it and will most likely end up using it for breaking open peanuts! Without God's grace nothing is possible.

However, the moment this realization dawns within you your quest for the truth will begin. The more earnest your search, the sooner God will bless you. When you are ready, He will setup an encounter with a Holy Personage who will guide you with the rest of the journey.

The question for consideration is this, Do you want to lead another life going through the tantrums, miseries and helplessness during infancy and old age, the anger and confusion during adolescence, the painful heartbreaks and the broken promises, the drudgery of mindlessly studying from kindergarten till your Masters or Doctoral degree, the monotonous life of working in an office till retirement, the pain of having to put up with the idiosyncrasies of your children and spouse, the ridiculousness of your relatives, and all the various activities which pull you deeper and deeper into a whirlpool of miseries and attachments?, or Have you had enough already, and are willing to conquer the five senses, lust greed and anger, and become completely dispassionate and single pointedly focus on God realization and free yourself once and for all?

Thus we must constantly and consciously determine whether something we are indulging in is spiritually beneficial or detrimental and choose wisely. This life will not come again, neither will the opportunity. There is no knowing if your next life will be one of a human being or not, there is no knowing whether you will be accorded the same number of opportunities or not. There is no guarantee you would be drawn to God in that life either. Let bygones be bygones. The past will not come back. The future is not guaranteed. All that you have is the present, the now. Everything that exists is in the now. Don't let God Realization – the ultimate goal of your life, become a distant dream.

Have complete trust in God. Make efforts, and conquer all your weaknesses. Assiduously practice meditation on God, dedicate yourself to serving the society at every opportunity. Purify your soul by taking part in Bhajans and Satsang, pilgrimages to holy places, and always have Sai Naam on your lips. Slowly the whole world will take the form of God. You will become impervious to pain and pleasure. You will grow beyond the pair of opposites, and finally with God's grace you will experience Advaita. Once you achieve this, work even more harder towards drawing more people onto this path, *for there is no other in this world but you, and everything you see, and experience is just a reflection of your self and a play of the cosmic consciousness. It is you who are in all forms and beings.* [Asthavakra Gita].

OM SAI RAM