

Om Sri Sai Ram

LEELA MOHANA SAI

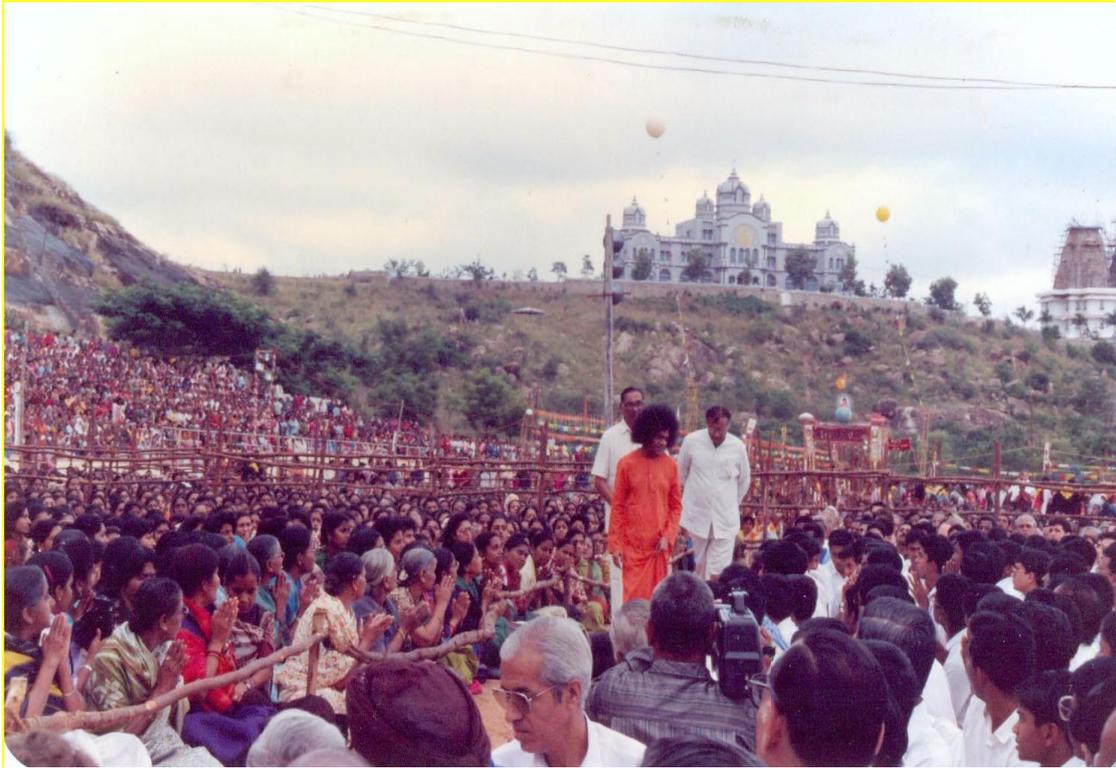
Volume 3



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**TRANSLATED BY
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Leela Mohana Sai (Volume 3)





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Translated from Tamil to English
by
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First Edition: June 2018

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By Author

Love All; Serve All!
Help Ever; Hurt Never!
- Baba

Start the Day with Love
Fill the Day with Love
Spend the Day with Love
End the Day with Love
This is the way to God
- Baba

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Foreword 1

**JUSTICE M. KARPAGA VINAYAGAM (Rtd.)
SENIOR ADVOCATE
Supreme Court of India
(Former Chief Justice of Jharkhand High Court &
Former Chairperson, Appellate Tribunal for Electricity,
Petroleum & Natural Gas, New Delhi)**

I have been asked to write a foreword to this book, Leela Mohana Sai Volume 3, published by T R Sai Mohan.

It is Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba who has given me this opportunity to pen in this foreword the thoughts that went through my mind while I was reading with relish this book. I am grateful to Him for this.

‘LOVE ALL; SERVE ALL’ – This is the taraka mantra (mantra that guides us to cross the worldly life of birth and death) Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has given us. Everything that happens in our life is according to His Wish and Will (Divine Sankalpam).

Whatever happened was Sai’s Sankalpam!
Whatever is happening is Sai’s Sankalpam!
Whatever is going to happen also is Sai’s Sankalpam!

The conviction to accept this tenet is a loving gift from Bhagawan; this gift is enabling us to treat this tenet as statements of fundamental truth in our lives.

What is Sankalpam? It has several meanings – mental strength; desire; thought. But, in the case of Swami, it means:

His Wish!
His Order!
His Command!

It means that Swami’s Sankalpam will succeed unflinching under all circumstances. He has often said:

Mine is not mesmerism;
Mine is not mere miracle;

Mine is not magic;
Mine is genuine Divine Power;
Small minds and limited intellects cannot comprehend them.

By the Grace of Bhagawan, the Author of this book has already published two volumes, Volume 1 and Volume 2. This book is Volume 3.

The miracles narrated in this book are mind-blowing. Even atheists will find these amazing stories jolting, while theists will find these riveting and enhancing their faith!

When we finish reading this book, we will develop a firm conviction that 'Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba will certainly fulfil entreaties and desires of sincere devotees'.

When man is soaked with devotion;
Food becomes Prasadam (Divine gift)!
Going hungry becomes viratham (sacramental fasting)!
Water becomes theertham (sanctified water)!
Music becomes keerthanai (hymns)!
Heart becomes a temple!
Mind becomes sacred!
Man becomes dear to God!

When Swami's devotees do selfless service and when they surrender to Him, their prayers are answered. This is my deep-rooted belief!
This book further enhances that belief!

This book, like a lovely night sky scattered with twinkling and dazzling diamond-like stars, is filled with miracles sparkling and shimmering all over.

Swami often quotes:
Deiva Preethi;
Paapa Bheethi;
Sanga Neethi.
(Love for God;
Fear of Sin;
Morality in Society.)

If we love God, we will be afraid to commit any sin. That will then result in morality flourishing in the society.

I would like to touch briefly on some of the several miracles narrated in this book.

The Author had been to Parthi several times. During every visit, Bhagawan would, without fail, grant him an interview (Private Audience). At the end of the interviews, Swami would apply Holy Ash on his forehead, put

some in his mouth, pat his back, and then open the door of the Interview Room for him to leave.

In addition, in every visit he received Darshan (beholding), Sparshan (touching) and Sambhashan (conversing). Swami would talk to him for a long while and bless him before seeing him off. He is a person who has received Bhagawan's blessings in full measure. This may sound strange, but it is true!

At the time when Swami wanted an aerodrome to be built in Puttaparthi, He set a target date for its completion. There were both local and foreign engineers working on this project, and they worked hard to meet the target.

During the construction phase, work on the runway was hampered by an outcrop of rock sitting on the proposed alignment. The Engineers employed several methods, including rock blasting, but those were not successful in breaking that rock.

The Engineers informed Swami about the problem that they were facing on site. Swami went in His car right up to the offending rock in the worksite, and kicked it two or three times. Then He asked a workman to deliver blows on it with a hammer.

The Engineers were watching it with disbelief! But, what a surprise! As soon as the workman delivered a few hammer blows, the entire granite rock came crumbling down into tiny rubbles.

The Engineers were spellbound by this miracle! The aerodrome was completed on schedule. Sai Sankalpam (His Will) prevailed. This story may sound strange, but it is true!

Varanjaram is a village adjoining the town of Kallakurichchi. The Author was invited by the Varanjaram Sai Samithi to deliver a talk. A lot of people turned up for the talk, and he spoke for a few hours about Swami's miracles. The audience was mesmerised by the stories that the Author narrated. At the end of the talk, they asked, 'Sir, our village is a parched countryside. We depend on rain, nothing but rain, for our living. We will get rice to eat only if there is rain. It has not rained here for two years now. Will your Baba make it rain here?'

The Author didn't know how to respond to them; it was a challenging moment for him.

Immediately, he cried out in his mind to Leela Mohana Sayeesan and pleaded for Him to resolve his predicament. Almost immediately, he got a brain wave. He turned to one of the organisers and asked him how many pocket photos of Swami were available with him. 'Oh, we have a lot, Sir,' he replied. The Author asked him to distribute to everyone in the audience a photo.

'Well, now, with concentration, please take a very good look at Swami's photo. After you do that, close your eyes and see Swami in your mind's eyes,' he told them. Then, he recited a mantra and requested the audience to pray for rain by reciting that mantra 108 times. He assured the residents that Bhagawan would certainly answer their prayers. The meeting ended with that.

The Author returned to Kallakurichchi, had dinner and went to bed. It was early in the morning the next day; time was 5.30 AM. The phone rang. It was a very excited tone at the other end: 'Sa...i Ra...m Sir! I am speaking from the village of Varanjaram. Last night a miracle happened! Exactly as you foretold last night, there was extremely heavy rain in our village! Sai Ram, Sir! It rained only in Varanjaram; there was not even one drop of rain in the surrounding villages. No... doubt, no doubt! Sai Baba is God!' That call was from a Varanjaram resident who could not contain his happiness and gratitude and wanted to share it. The Author was very heartened to hear that. It was Swami's Sankalpam that enabled this miracle to take place. This story may sound strange, but it is true! There are several more such miracles in this book.

All the miracles in this book are very interesting and would help to enhance our faith in Bhagawan and to purify our minds.

I hope and pray that by Bhagawan's Grace this book becomes a popular book and that Sai devotees benefit immensely by reading it.

It is my heartfelt prayer that the Author continue to receive Bhagawan's blessings in abundance.

Thanks & Sai Ram
Love & Regards

Justice M. Karpaga Vinayagam

Foreword 2

Dr V Mohan

**MD, FRCP (Lond, Edin, Glasg & Ireland), Ph D, D Sc (Hon Causa), FNASc,
FASc, FNA, FACE, FTWAS, MACP**

Chairman, Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre

President, Madras Diabetes Research Foundation

Awarded Padma Shri by President of India

Dr B C Roy Award by Medical Board of India &

Dr B R Ambedkar Award by ICMR

I am happy to write a foreword for Sri T R Sai Mohan's Leela Mohana Sai Vol 3. His original name was R Somanathan, but after he became an ardent devotee of our dear Lord, he changed it to T R Sai Mohan. Several Sai devotees have had His Darshan and Sparshan, but amongst all, Sri Sai Mohan's experiences are simply outstanding. By Swami's Grace, he had very close interactions with Him. He was blessed to have received some twenty-five interviews, an enviable number, from Bhagawan. His entire life is studded with Swami's blessings.

Sri T R Sai Mohan has already written his experiences with Swami in two volumes and this is the third volume. He has written about several miracles. One such is how He blessed some simple village folks by answering their prayer for rain. In these present times, when we don't have the physical presence of our dear Bhagawan among us, experiences of staunch devotees like Sri T R Sai Mohan are indeed inspirational and reassuring. From the stories of miracles that have been described, it is very apparent that the devotion Sri Sai Mohan has for Bhagawan is admirable and praiseworthy. He has a cogent style of writing and has written this book from his heart. Though he is 84 years old, he is very fit physically and mentally. We are grateful to Bhagawan for this. He has devoted his time and put in a lot of effort to write this book; it clearly shows the pure devotion and sincere love he has for Bhagawan.

I am certain that this book will inspire readers to become better Sai devotees. It is my earnest wish that Sri Sai Mohan continue to write about more of his Sai experiences and Sai miracles. I am certain that like the previous two volumes, this volume and his future books will inspire the thousands of future readers.

Congratulations and Best Wishes to Sri Sai Mohan!

Om Jai Sai Ram

Dr V. Mohan

Foreword 3

R SRIDHARAN

**Former Principal Private Secretary to the Governor,
Reserve Bank of India, Mumbai and**

**Former Private Secretary to the founding Vice Chancellor,
Central University of Tamil Nadu, Trivaurur**

‘The one who sees no difference among others, and treats all as one;
In his mind the Lord resides as the pure Jivathma (pure soul, with no trace of ego)’.
- (Verse 5297; Thiruvartup) composed by Vallalar (Ramalinga Swamigal)

If we understand the meaning of the above verse and keep it entrenched in our mind, we will very easily comprehend the essence of Sri Sai Mohan’s Leela Mohana Sai Vol 3. I have lived in several cities and have now settled down in Aroor. It is He who allowed me to go from city to city, and it is He who lovingly brought me finally to Aroor. After that, He established for me a very close acquaintance with Sri Sai Mohan, who was living in Arasavanankadu. It was all due to Sayeeshan’s Sankalpam and His blessings.

There is an interesting additional reason for our acquaintance. We both were born in Idaimarutur.

Though I had lived in several cities, it was Thiruvartur that brought both of us together. We developed a close bond the very first time we spoke to each other on the phone itself; I think that it was the wish of our Sai Nathan. This friendship, centred around our Lord, flows like brimming rivers into our hearts. It was my wife, Srimathi Rajalakshmi, who relished, more than I did, reading Vol 1 and Vol 2 of this book. The first two volumes of this book and this volume have been written in exquisite Tamil and in such a manner that readers will find them gripping and interesting even when read repeatedly. The stories in this book are glittered with human qualities of love, concern, kindness and compassion. Unless there is Sri Sathya Sai Nathan’s Grace, it would not be possible to have close interactions with Him, relish those divine moments to the fullest, and write about those experiences. Sri Sai Mohan’s proficiency in Tamil, evident in the simple but elegant style of his writing, is admirable. The stories in the three volumes of this book are flat-out amazing! And, the books are simply so good that readers will find them unputdownable. The divine experiences Sri Sai Mohan and his Mother had with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba made their entire family become His ardent devotees. It was the reward for the merits they earned in their past lives.

This book is full of divine anecdotes that endorse the Author’s solid devotion to Bhagawan. When the unsophisticated, simple minded, innocent peasants of Varanjaram prayed to Swami for rain, it rained! Thus, Sri Sai Mohan was saved from

a very challenging situation! Then, there is the wonderful story of how Swami changed the Author's name from Somanathan to Sai Mohan. Bhagawan blessed Sri Sai Mohan with the knowledge about the grandeur of the 33rd Verse of Soundarya Lahari. Another story of miracle is how Bhagawan created by waving His hand a blueprint that showed how Prasanthi Nilayam would look 30 years hence. Another miracle is how Bhagawan gently kicked a granite rock just a couple of times or so and made it transform into a sandy rock. There are several such mind-blowing miracles in this book. The Author has strung these together and produced, in his inimitable style, a diamond studded ornament for our reading pleasure and privilege. This is a sadhana, a Sai sadhana, he has accomplished; it was possible because he has Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's blessings in abundance.

He is very senior in age. Yet, when it comes to doing humanitarian work, he is like a young person. He would be out participating in Sai activities for long hours, yet he would not have any complaints of tiredness, fatigue etc. Let all of us bring our hands together and pray wholeheartedly to our dear Lord Sai that the Author should live for a hundred years more with sound physical health and excellent mental faculty for him to continue to do humanitarian work.

I do not know the reason why the Author considered me a worthy person to write this message of felicitation. I think that it is because of the Sai-love he has for me. I am grateful to Bhagawan for this opportunity, and with tears of joy in my eyes, I submit this message, written with the limited knowledge I have, at His Lotus Feet!

Om Sri Sai! I Surrender at Your Lotus Feet!

Jai Sai Ram!
Love & Regards
R Sridharan

No Man is rich enough in this world to buy back his past!

HELP EVER! HURT NEVER!

Foreword 4

K SAMPATH

'Bharata Mata' Award Winner (2001)

A Searcher of Medicinal Plants

Keerai Kollai Street

Nagapattinam - 611001

Sri T R Sai Mohan, the one who has been my guide in my spiritual journey, is an ardent devotee of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and worships Him wholeheartedly, and has had the wonderful privilege of being very close to Him and enjoying His miracles and dispensations. His book, *Leela Mohana Sai*, comes in three volumes. I consider this Sai literature a trilogy of historical treatise (prabantha thrayam) of the life of Bhagawan.

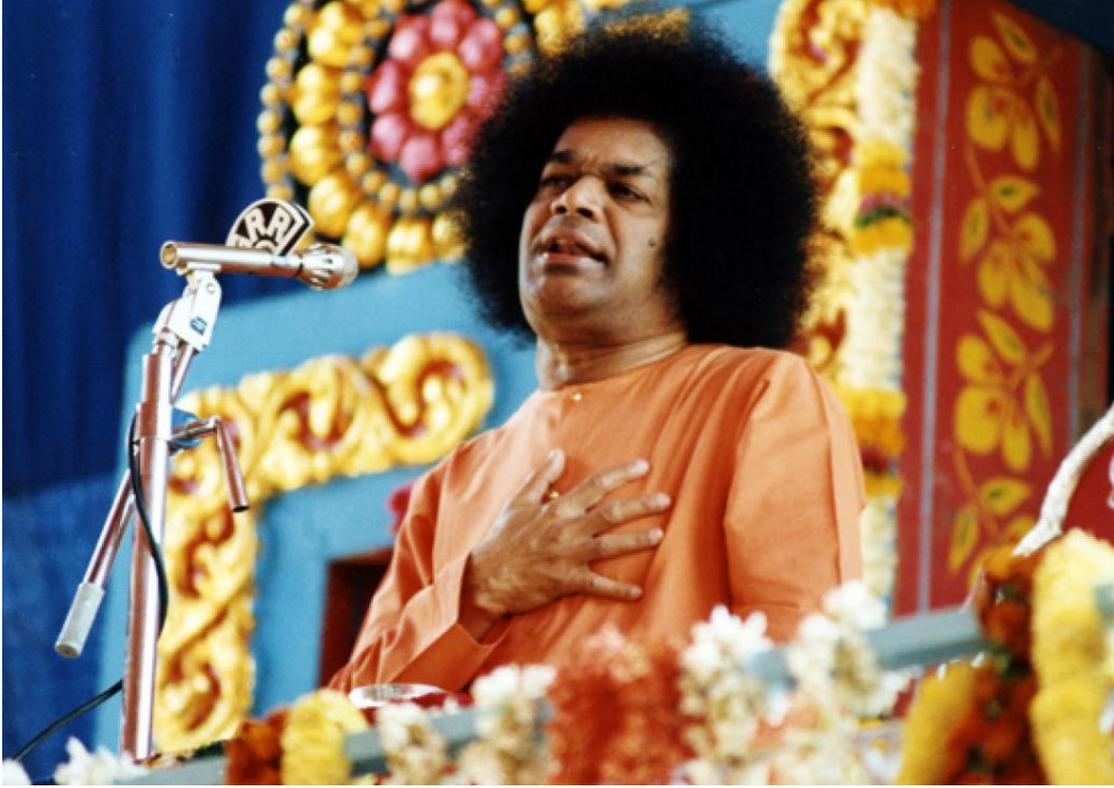
The world learnt about Johnson (Dr Samuel Johnson, English writer) from his friend Boswell (James Boswell); it was Plato who made Socrates's philosophy available to the world; in the same manner, Sri Sai Mohan has written about Swami and enabled the world to know more about Him. Plato wrote 'Plato's Dialogues', which contained the philosophy and teachings of Socrates. Sri Sai Mohan's trilogy of historical treatise, *Leela Mohana Sai*, contains stories of Bhagawan's miracles, teachings and spiritual philosophy.

It is my humble opinion that this book will be of immense help to readers in becoming better humans.

Love & Regards

K Sampath





OM SAI RAM

PREFACE

*"Ulagelaam Unarndu Odarku Ariyavan
Nilavulaaviya Neermali Veniyan
Alagil Jyothiyan Ambalathu Aaduvaan
Malar Chilambadi Vaazhthi Vanguvaam"*

Beyond knowledge and glory of all worlds, He is beyond comprehension;
Crescent moon glides in His matted locks glistened by the Ganges.
Infinite Effulgence is He who dances in the Cosmic Temple;
Let's eulogize and prostrate at His Lotus Feet bedecked with anklet and flowers.

*Anyatha Saranam Nasti Twameva Saranam Mama
Tasmat Karunyabhavena Raksha Raksha Sayeeshwara*

Other than You, refuge there is none; I surrender to You,
Sayeeshwara, the embodiment of compassion; protect me forever and ever.

Sri Sai's sankalpam (heartfelt desire and resolve)!
An expression of His Love, it is!
God is Love; Love is God!
Love personified as an Incarnation amongst us; this is His sankalpam!
Wooed the entire world by performing thousands and thousands of miracles out of sheer Love; Sathya Sai Avatar's sankalpam this is!
The mystiques of His sankalpam; beyond expression are they!
Whatever happens is Sai sankalpam!
Whatever that will happen also is Sai sankalpam!
Like a flower in full bloom, this book, having been released, brings happiness; this is the glorious and gracious sankalpam of Leela Mohana Sai!

Sai Ram

The first two volumes of this book have already been completed and published. They carry the author's name as T R Sai Mohan, but that name belongs only to my physical body. It is the Lord of the Universe, the one who actuates our senses and thus makes our physical body function, who, as stated in the Gayatri Mantra, facilitated my intellect to record useful and relevant facts in my life; thus He, the Super Consciousness (Chaitanya), who is the Master Author (Maha Asiriyan) of these books.

Yes! He is the contents of the book; He is the constituent materials of the physical form of the book; and He is also the One who writes the book. Isn't it so?

In the past, festivals and other events associated with divinity and spirituality were conducted more frequently in several ancient temples. That was the case where I was born, Thiruvidadaimarudur, also. The Patron Deity there is Sri Mahalinga Peruman (Lord Shiva). The residents of Thiruvidadaimarudur always celebrated all the festivals and other events in a very grand manner.

In our religious literature, there is a story of God teaching man to worship himself. It was a traditional practice in the early days to enact the message in that story and to celebrate it as a festival of worship. In that festival, a divine idol would worship another very identical divine idol. There are two perspectives to this; one worshipping another, that appears separately, but which is the same as the one that worships; and, one worshipping itself, but appearing separately.

The spiritual message in this traditional festival is:
'*Yagña bhruth, yagña kruth, yagñee, yagña bhug, yagña saadhanaha*'
This means that He is everything; and He is the one who causes activities to be done.

Yagña bruth – One who is Lord of yagña;

Yagña kruth – One who performs the yagña;
Yagñee – One who is Yagña itself is He;
Yagña bhug – One who is Enjoyer or Protector of Yajña;
Yagña sadhanaha – One to whom Yajña is the approach.

Thus, this verse describes Lord Vishnu and His attributes, which are infinite and universal.

It is on the basis of this verse that I said that while I am the author of the first two volumes of this book, from the spiritual perspective it is Leela Mohana Sai, the One who enables our bodies to function, who is the creator of them.

Four highly respected and spiritual people have honoured Volume 2 of my book by writing Forewords in it.

Two of those people are Dr V R Ganesan, a well-known physician in Valasaravakkam and its neighbourhood, and his wife, Srimati Shanthi Ganesan, Deputy Secretary (now Joint Secretary), Government of Tamil Nadu. I would like to share a few excerpts from the Foreword they wrote out of the love and respect they have for me:

‘He has had a lot more experiences with Sai Nathan! We eagerly await the release of Volume 3 by the grace of Sai the Partheesan!’

‘Sri Sai Mohan has a lot of experiences! What he has shared with us is only some of them! We look forward to his sharing the other experiences also in later books.’

‘May our Bhagawan Baba, the Kali Yuga Avatar, the Almighty, respond to our desire and command Sri Sai Mohan to write Leela Mohana Sai Volume 3; may He also shower on Sri Sai Mohan His blessings in full measure and give him good health for him to carry out the divine command.’

In the Foreword, Dr Ganesan and Srimathi Shanthi Ganesan have included their desire in the form of a prayer to Bhagawan.

True to the old sayings ‘Wishes made with sincere love for others will certainly come to pass’ and ‘Selfless prayers will certainly be answered’, Dr Ganesan’s and Srimathi Shanthi Ganesan’s wish, coupled with their selfless prayer to Bhagawan Baba, enabled me to write Volume 3 even at this rickety old age of 84 and thus achieve something incredible! A wonder!

When I read Dr Ganesan’s and Srimathi Shanthi Ganesan’s desire in their Foreword, I seriously doubted whether writing a book at such an old age of 84 was practically feasible. Much to my surprise, I have now written Volume 3 also; this is a

testimony to the fact that everything happens according to His Will. The fact that I was extremely doubtful whether I would be able to write the third volume is clearly a lesson for me; I still do not seem to have fully acknowledged that everything happens according to His Will.

I congratulate Dr Ganesan and Srimathi Shanthi Ganesan on their foresight in this matter.

I started writing this book in end-June 2017 and desired to release it on Swami's Birthday, 23 November 2017, but because of my commitments in some charitable service projects and also because of my own private commitments, I had to pause the writing work now and then. I, therefore, did not succeed in getting this book printed in time for it to be released on Swami's Birthday. So, I planned to release this book on another suitable auspicious day.

Volume 1 was released by Bhagawan Himself on His 80th Birthday. Volume 2 was also released on a Birthday of Swami. The plan to delay the release of Volume 3 disappointed some Sai devotees. They were of the view that since the first two volumes had the distinction of being launched on Swami's Birthdays, it would be a fitting honour to release the third volume also on Swami's Birthday. After deliberating on it, we took a decision to launch the book by offering my manuscript itself at Swami's Holy Feet on the upcoming Birthday of Him. We made a few copies of my manuscript and, as planned, launched Volume 3 on 23 Nov 2017 at a simple ceremony at the premises of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Nanganallur West, Chennai. Retired Justice Periya Karupiah presided over the ceremony.

You would notice that I use words such as 'I' and 'mine' in my narration. Please do not mistake that as a sign of ego. Our hallowed land Bharat was once ruled by Bharata, but only vicariously, on behalf of his exiled brother Lord Rama, the rightful ruler. He ruled the country with the Holy Padukas (footwear) of Lord Rama installed on the throne. Bharata did so and distinguished himself because he was totally surrendered to Lord Rama and was absolutely free of ego. I have undertaken to write this book with the same mindset of surrender and egolessness.

Some notes on Vol 1:

I made frequent trips since 1960 to pay obeisance to the Parthi Madhurathipathy. I was fortunate to have done so. I have discussed this in the first two volumes of this book.

Here, when I say Madhurathipathy, I do not mean its literal meaning - Lord of Madhurapuri, the birthplace of Lord Krishna; I mean its subtle meaning - Lord who is sweetness personified. Whatever the Lord of Parthi does is full of sweetness and captivates His devotees. Thus, He is Lord of sweetness - Madhurathipathy. I have described in my story 'SRI SAI'S WISH AND WILL FOR CHANGE OF NAME

FROM SOMANATHAN TO SAI MOHAN' in this volume the many facets of sweetness in whatever He did.

I was blessed with close interaction with Bhagawan Sai Baba whenever I visited Parthi. That privilege is something beyond words. I was an eyewitness to several Divine Leelas (Plays) of Bhagawan during those moments. I have described them in Volume 1.

I wrote Volume 1 in Tamil. It has now been translated into English, Telugu, Hindi, Oriya and Malayalam. I understand that it has been translated, in addition, into some more Indian languages also. I have also heard that attempts are afoot to translate it into foreign languages, but I do not have sufficient information at this stage to confirm it.

Sri Sathya Sai Books And Publications Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi, has released an Audio CD of the English translation of Vol 1. I understand that it was the first time the Trust had converted a book on Swami into a CD. I think that it was a token of the love our Compassionate Lord showered on me.

Let me make a few comments on the circumstances that led me to write Volume 2 also.

Volume 1 was a success. It was released by Bhagawan Himself! And, it was translated into English and several other Indian languages. Having achieved so much, I considered that I had done my part. Because of this and because of my lifestyle at that time, I did not plan to do anymore writing.

There was also yet another reason that deterred me from writing any further. I had discussed that in the Endless Epilogue of Volume 1. Should divine experiences from interactions between God and His devotee remain private or could they be shared publicly? This question was troubling me; I was of the view that such experiences should remain private and that acting otherwise would amount to seeking publicity through self-advertising. This was the state of my mind even before I wrote Volume 1, and I was hesitant even to embark on writing that volume itself.

During Lord Krishna's time, the Gopis experienced countless divine leelas (plays) and miracles. Did any Gopi write - in whatever manner records were kept in writing at that time - anything about her sweet experiences? No, not even one single line! I deliberated on this and told myself, 'You also be like the Gopikas,' and concluded that my decision to not write about my divine experiences was valid.

We are fortunate to have received God's gift (Prasadam) of Bhagawatham, a Vedic literature that tells the story of the wonderful proofs of Krishna's divine nature and His suprahuman feats. Although it was possible because Sage Vyasa wrote that

epic, he did so only because of a Divine prompting. We have no records of anyone else having recorded his Divine experiences.

I was not keen to write at all about my experiences with God. Nevertheless, in response to some supervening circumstances that appeared to be an expression of a Divine desire, I wrote Volume 1. However, the difficulties I faced from the time I started writing it till it was released by Bhagawan were daunting. I could not imagine myself going through that ordeal a second time. Therefore, I did not entertain any thought of writing a second book. I have described this in the first chapter of Volume 2. So, what made me write Volume 2?

There were some worldly reasons that made me decide to write Volume 2. Though they are not the only reasons, I would like to narrate them here.

I used to receive congratulatory messages from several people, who included Sai devotees, intellectuals and book publishers, from all over India and who had read Volume 1 in Tamil and in other languages. Most of them emphatically requested me to write another book on my Divine experiences. The most compelling request was from a Sai devotee and poet, Sai Jeyalakshmi. She complimented me saying that after Prof Kasturi's works, it was my book that touched her heart the most; and said that I owed an obligation to write more of my experiences in another book for the benefit of Sai devotees, particularly those of the younger generation.

All these - praises, congratulations and requests - however, did not succeed in motivating me to write a second book. Subsequently, true to the saying 'Nothing happens without a reason,' a couple of things happened, which overwhelmed me with a sense of motivation to write another book.

Sai Jeyalakshmi was keen that my experiences should be made known to the general public. She got in touch with Gnana Bhoomi, a Tamil monthly, and succeeded in getting some of my experiences published in it. I was very happy that more people would derive joy by reading my stories. Meanwhile, one more journal, Mangayar Malar, also published some of my stories. Soon after that, Kalki, another journal, included some of my stories in a special edition.

I was very happy that my writings were being read by several thousands of people and that they would get the privilege of learning about God's incarnation as Sai Baba and about His glories. My writings were getting phenomenal recognition. And, that prompted me to reverse my decision not to write anymore.

Then, something else happened, and that made me desire even more keenly to write more. It was an apparent Divine play (leela) that intimated to me a Divine wish.

One day, during the period when I had published Volume 1 and had decided not to write anymore, I received a telephone call from someone in Andhra Pradesh. The caller introduced him as Raghavan and proceeded straightaway, without waiting for my response, to praise me. He said that God incarnating as a human is a rarer than rare occurrence, and that I was extremely fortunate to have had very close interactions with such an Incarnation and to have experienced His glories and miracles. He praised me further, saying that it was extremely noble of me to have published my experiences in a book as it enabled everyone to learn about the glories and miracles of Bhagawan Sathya Sai Baba and to derive reassurance and joy from them. Then he said something; and, that inspired me and gave me greater enthusiasm to write the second volume.

When he read about Swami and His glories and miracles, he was so engrossed that he even became oblivious of his surroundings. He realised that everything is Sai; there is nothing that is not Sai. At the time he read that book, he was stricken with an ailment that had made him bedridden; he had been so for several months. Then something happened; it was entirely a pleasant surprise! While he was in that ecstatic state after reading the book, he felt a surge of energy and an inner urge that propelled him to get up and walk. And, he succeeded! He, a 70-year-old elderly, was surprised and was elated with happiness. He was grateful that just moments after he finished reading about the glories and miracles of the Compassionate Lord Sai and immersed him single-mindedly in Sai consciousness, Swami rewarded him by showering His blessings and grace on him and made him recover from his chronic ailment instantaneously.

He said that it was the power of the stories in my book that enabled such a miracle to take place in his life. He wanted me to write more such books. In a very endearing tone, he asked me whether I would do so.

It was a turning point in my life. I was one who considered that publishing my experiences with Divinity would amount to self-advertising. But, Sri Raghavan's story, one that is very inspiring and reassuring, presented to me a different perspective; sharing my experiences would benefit the readers and would therefore be a very noble service to the society.

Sharing is caring; isn't writing down, as thought-provoking and attention-grabbing articles, thoughts that spring within our minds for the society to read and benefit from them a marvellous social service? On the other hand, if we do not share our knowledge with others, it would be as useless as a lamp that is within a clay pot.

Sri Raghavan was fully engrossed in the glories of Bhagawan Sathya Sai Baba and was in a blissful mental state in which he was detached from the exterior world. Bhagawan, then, showered His Grace on him and performed a marvellous miracle. Bhagawan cured 70-year-old Sri Raghawan's ailment instantaneously, and he telephoned me to share the happy news and to persuade me to write more books. By

then, it was apparent to me that it was Leela Mohana Sai's Sankalpam (Wish and Will), conveyed to me through Sri Raghavan, that I should write Volume 2.

Our ancestors led their lives in accordance with spiritual and religious rules and social traditions and thus lived a righteous life. They observed the three qualities 'Papa Bheethi; Deiva Preethi; Sanga Neethi' (Fear of Sin; Love of God; Morality in Society) unfailingly. In addition, they revered their ancestors and their achievements; that was why our ancient epics in spiritual and religious literature were given prominence in their lives.

Our elders say that ancient epics are called 'ithihasam', iti ha asa means 'Was it really possible to live in this manner?' - an expression of amazement. We ourselves also find the stories about lives of right conduct led by characters in the epics amazing and awe-inspiring.

Ramayana is one of our oldest and sacred epics. The pious and faithful amongst us do Ramayana parayanam (completing the reading within the prescribed number of days) as a sacrament. This is an age-old practice among Bharatiyas.

Sundara Kanda is one of the chapters in Ramayana. There is a strong belief that those who do parayanam of this chapter with devotion would reap several benefits such as the removal of mental worries, difficulties encountered in life, etc. There are the faithful among us who have done this sacramental reading and have had their prayers answered. This bears testimony to the credibility of such beliefs.

A case in point that all of you are familiar with is the joyful story of Sri Raghavan of Hyderabad. Wasn't it a story of divine magic! He, Sri Raghavan, was engrossed completely while reading about the glories and miracles of God Incarnate Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He was comforted by those divine stories; he felt reassured and was delighted. And, he was in such a mood of jubilation that he even became oblivious of his surroundings. Then, there was that magical moment where he regained his ability to walk - after being bedridden for several months!

The Divine Will of God Incarnate Sri Sathya Sai Baba has no limits. It can achieve anything and everything in all fields. Bhagawan performed leelas (Divine plays and miracles) in the lives of those who had accepted Him as their refuge; such people realised that they had found the treatment for their ailment of 'human birth and worldly life'; the therapy was available in Holy Parthi, and the medication was Bhagawan Himself. The glory of such a compassionate Lord should be written and recorded for the present generation and even the future generations to read and derive comfort, reassurance and happiness. I could feel that the foregoing incidents were Swami's Sankalpam to make me write my next book. So, I decided to write my next book.

Swami, having enabled His Sankalpam to succeed by creating the necessary circumstances to make me decide to write Volume 2 of my book, ensured that I received the necessary help to accomplish my task. To start with, He created circumstances that made me live in a very peaceful and quiet village setting; I found that environment very conducive to express my experiences and thoughts in a cogent manner in my book.

I started writing that book in March 2015 and completed it at around midnight on 09 June of the same year. Bhagawan was with me throughout that period and gave me all the support I required; I felt it throughout the period.

Two Sai devotees from the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Kallakurichchi, volunteered and got the manuscript of Volume 2 converted into an electronic document. Following that, we printed the books and handed them to Sri Sathya Sai Book Trust, Tamil Nadu, on 23 November 2015, Bhagawan's 96th Birthday. Both Vol 1 and Vol 2 of this book are now being sold at Sundaram in Chennai.

At the end of that year, 2015, I received a surprise call from a Sai devotee in Manamadurai; he and his friends took me in their car to Parthi, and I was fortunate to have been able to pay homage to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba at His Mahasamadhi on the New Year's Day of 2016.

I spent almost the entire year of 2016 at Nanganallur and nearby suburbs, and by the grace of Bhagawan, devoted my time to alleviating the misery of the stricken. I have given details of what I did in the (Endless) Epilogue of this volume.

It was Bhagawan's Sankalpam that I should write Volume 3 also; and, I started writing it on 15 June 2017.

In both Vol 1 and Vol 2, I have mentioned, but only briefly, anecdotes on Bhagawan's Divine glory. I ought to have done justice to the several experiences of close interactions I had had with Bhagawan, but I was a novice in writing books and did not have the skill to write in greater detail.

Bhagawan permitted me to experience His miracles and the sheer power of His Divinity. He even shared some Divine mystical principles with me. I did not think that such sacred privileges, granted by God to His devotee, should be made public. This was another reason for my brevity in writing. I have mentioned this in Vol 2.

But now, having written Vol 1 and Vol 2, I have gained self-confidence. It was Swami's Sankalpam that enabled me to put my thoughts down in these two volumes; readers of these books have said that they benefitted by reading them. I am grateful to Bhagawan for enabling me to write in a manner that is appreciated by the readers. I am now confident that I can write about Bhagawan's glory in much greater

detail. It is Swami's Sankalpam that gave me this confidence and the desire to write Volume 3.

Several readers of the first two volumes thirsted to know more about what was written in those books about Swami's miracles and glory. They spoke to me personally to find out those details, and asked that if I decided to write another book, I should include those details also in it. This is also another reason that made me write Volume 3.

I am extremely happy to inform you that, though I am already 84 years old, I have now started writing Volume 3. I am even happier to tell you that in this book, I will be narrating in much greater detail about the privileges and the Divine experiences Leela Mohana Sai blessed me with.

What I have discussed in this book are, briefly, as follows:

Although I am now known to everyone as T R Sai Mohan, the name given by my parents at the time of my birth was R Somanathan. I was born on a Somavaram (Monday) in the month of Karthigai (November). Because I was born on a Somavaram, my parents named me Somanathan.

Since 1962, I am known as T R Sai Mohan. I have described all the divine-orchestrated circumstances that led to that change of name in Chapter 1, titled '**SRI SAI'S DIVINE WILL IN RENAMING SOMANATHAN TO SAI MOHAN**'.

I had finished writing Volume 2 on 09 Jun 2015. At midnight on that day, Purnavathar Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba appeared in my bedroom, sat next to me, and gave me a dissertation on His most important act of compassion and love at Prashanthi Nilayam, which was the granting of Interviews to His devotees. In that, He explained to me the spiritual perspective of the Interview and the Interview Room. I have narrated the story of that divine exposition in Chapter 2, titled '**Inner-view of Swami granting Interview in Prashanthi Nilayam Interview Room**'.

I have written about this experience in Vol 2 also, but it was done in a hurry and hence is lacking in details, and does not do justice to the splendour of the story. At the end of Chapter 2 in this book (Vol 3), I have explained why I could not write this story in detail in Vol 2.

In 1961, which was during the time when Prashanthi Nilayam was a very modest establishment, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba produced a blueprint from nowhere with a mere wave of His hand in the presence of a few of us in the Interview Room; it showed the details of all the buildings that were to come up in 30 years' time. Bhagawan explained to us the details of all the buildings that were to come up. I have narrated the story of this miracle in Chapter 3, titled '**His Divine Will And Determination (Sankalpam)**'.

Before Prashanthi Nilayam was redeveloped as a sprawling modern campus, Bhagawan's residence was located in the upper floor of the Prashanthi Mandir (Temple). Every day, there would be devotees seated from morning till evening on the sandy concourse overlooking the Mandir, praying eagerly to be blessed with opportunities to behold Swami's physical form (Darshan). Swami would lovingly respond to their prayer and step onto the balcony in the upper floor of the Mandir now and then to grant them His Darshan.

One day, in 1963, Swami came out to the balcony, and while granting His Darshan to the devotees, He looked in my direction and called, 'Hey, Suguna! Come here.' Since Suguna is a feminine name, I thought that He was calling a woman who was seated near me. I looked around to see who that person could be. But, Swami looked at me again and said, 'I am calling you. Come up.'

I was overjoyed and rushed to the balcony. Then, He explained to me why He called me Suguna. That was a story full of Divine mystique, known to who else but only Him! I have written this story in Chapter 4, titled '**You Were Suguna When I Was Krishna**'.

One day, in 1964, Swami appeared in my Mother's dream. She asked Swami about the problems that were worrying us and about my future. Swami told her that, because of my earnest desire to advance in spirituality, I would not get married, and that I would devote my time entirely for doing humanitarian work. He further said that, in my later years, I would undertake the renovation of a temple and also perform the consecration ceremony for it.

All what Swami told my Mother came to pass. It is noteworthy that I did the renovation of the tower of a temple of Mother Ambikai and performed the consecration ceremony for it in February, 1988. I was very fortunate to have been blessed with this golden opportunity. I have described everything in detail in Chapter 5, titled '**My Mother's Prophetic Dream; Swami's Words Coming To Pass**'.

Bhagawan made a Divine visit to Thiruchchi during the 3-day period 16 - 18 December, 1966. The entire Thiruchchi was in a celebratory mood during those three days.

Bhagawan agreed to grant an interview to the members of the organising committee that was responsible for organising the 3-day celebration.

Since my Mother was also with me, Swami invited my Mother also for an interview. My Mother was extremely happy that she was getting a personal audience from Swami. During the interview, my Mother asked Swami to bless me for me to get married and settle down in life. But, Swami's response was in the negative; He said that I would not get married, but that I would adopt a girl as my daughter. My Mother was taken aback in shock. What did my Mother ask Swami after that? How

did Swami respond? The entire story is available in Chapter 6, titled '**Bhagawan's Visit To Thiruchchi And My Mother's Fortune To Receive A Divine Interview**'.

In April 2016, I received a telephone call from Brindavan in Whitefield. Bhagawan's ex-students organise a monthly talk at Brindavan, conducted on the 3rd Sunday of every month, under the caption Samarpan. The caller asked me whether I could deliver a Samarpan talk at Brindavan on 19 Jun 2016.

Brindavan! A sacred place where almost every inch of it was sanctified by His Lotus Feet treading on it. And the hall there was where Swami delivered to the whole world, in His sweet voice, countless discourses. I was offered an invitation to deliver a talk in that same hall where Swami delivered discourses. Me delivering a talk at that hallowed venue would be like a little boy prattling. Yet, I did not want to miss that coveted opportunity. What a privilege! What an honour! I readily accepted the invitation.

We stayed on in Brindavan for a couple of days more after the Samarpan talk. During that period we faced some challenges, which ultimately turned out to be blessings of reassurance from Swami. I have written this story in Chapter 7, titled '**Sri Sai's Sankalpam (Wish and Will) To Invite Me To Deliver A Talk At Brindavan, Whitefield**'.

In Volume 2, I have written the story of how, while I was unable to proceed with the printing of the Hindi version of Volume 1, help came unasked, from an unknown source. It was Thangappan, who was working in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, who, out of his ardent devotion to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, singlehandedly undertook the task of getting Volume 1 published in Hindi and succeeded.

In his younger days, he was addicted to alcohol. Bhagawan showered His Grace on him; and in a very miraculous manner rehabilitated him as a respectable member of the society and as a sincere Sai devotee. This story of reassurance is in Chapter 8, titled '**The Chocolate Alchemy - 'Booze' Thangappan Becomes 'Golden' Thangappan**'.

After I had finished writing Volume 2, two Sai devotees from Kallakurichchi volunteered to get it converted as an electronic document. That offer came unasked and was from those who were strangers to me. Because of this offer, I went to Kallakurichchi and stayed there for 40 days.

There were some pleasant experiences, some of which were outright miracles, during that stay. I have written that beautiful story in the last chapter in the book, Chapter 9, titled '**The Prayer Of Villagers At Varanjaram For Rain And Its Immediate Response**'.

There is one more outstanding obligation on my part; it is something I had eagerly awaited; and that is expressing my heartfelt gratitude to all those who were instrumental in getting this book written and to those luminaries who have written congratulatory messages at the beginning of this book.

First and foremost, I offer this book with heartfelt prayers at the Lotus Feet of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Compassionate Lord, whose Sankalpam (Divine Will) enabled me to write this book, in which I had the sacred privilege of singing praises to Him and His glory at my ripe old age of 85 years; who was my invisible inner guide in writing this book; who made several well-wishers to come forward to help me in many ways in fulfilling this task; and who has bestowed on me the honour of being the Author of this Holy Book.

Justice Mr Karpaga Vinayagam, a man of principles and a devout Sai devotee, despite holding high positions and being occupied in worldly affairs, has shown undiminishing love and friendship to me for fifteen years now. When he learnt that I was embarking on writing this book, what he said were words of encouragement: 'Please send me a copy at the very earliest.' The congratulatory message he has written at the beginning of this book is an outward expression of the love he has for me. I pay tribute to the Sai-way of love that this intellectual and noble gentleman shows. Jai Sai Ram!

Another congratulatory message has been written by Dr V Mohan, a renowned Diabetes Specialist. He is well known and recognised not only in Chennai, but in the entire Tamil Nadu as well. I happened to meet him at a social function. When he learnt that I was writing this book, he said that he would like to read it. After he read the book, he has honoured it by writing a congratulatory message. His appreciation of what has been written in this book speaks volumes about his devout devotion to Sai. I am very grateful to him. Jai Sai Ram!

Sri R Sridharan was Principal Private Secretary to the Governor, Reserve Bank of India. He has also held other high-ranking posts and won accolades from leading administrators. He is a devout Sai devotee who has surrendered to Him and lives his life in accordance with Sai principles, particularly, 'Unity in Thought, Word and Deed'. He has a lot of Sai-love for me. I thank him for gracing this book with his congratulatory message. Jai Sai Ram!

The fourth congratulatory message in this book is from Sri K Sampath. We were colleagues at the Railways since 1958. He is more like a younger brother than a friend to me. He is a Tamil poet; he also does research in herbal medicine. On many an occasion he has commended openly and very warmly my devotion to Sai. The message he has written in this book was written of his own volition; I was not expecting one from him, and his message was a pleasant surprise to me. His message is brief but full of deep meaning, and I am encouraged by it. I am very grateful to him. Jai Sai Ram!

I mentioned earlier that there were some well-wishers who helped me in writing this book. I owe my gratitude to them.

One day, I received an SMS text message from 'Sai Ram, Humbleself!' It was from Srimathi Vasugi Sai Ram, a resident of Vadapazhani, Chennai, who was a total stranger to me. She is a goodhearted lady with overflowing enthusiasm to offer her services for the wellbeing of the society. She volunteered to get the manuscript for this book converted as an electronic document. She spent hours on end daily to get this work done; she is an exemplary Karmayogi! I thank her for a job well done. Jai Sai Ram!

Dr Sai Prasanna of Nanganallur is another Sai devotee who played an important role in getting this book published.

Though she was busy in her medical practice and was short of time, because of the love she has for me, her keen altruistic desire to help the society, and, above all, her devout devotion to Leela Mohana Sayeeshan, she herself played the role of coordinator for getting the electronic version of this book proofread by me. She would print sections of the electronic document, as and when they became ready, and get them delivered to me. I would proofread them and make corrections where necessary. After that, she would scan them and send them back to the one who was doing the electronic typing. This was a continuous seva that went on for some time. But, never did I see any signs of grimace on her face; she did that seva with a smiling countenance at all times. She did that at the expense of her commitments in her profession and others. It was truly seva done as a sacrifice. It is not easy under such circumstances to have a smile on your face at all times; it was a godsend, and I learnt a lot from Dr Sai Prasanna; and I am grateful to God for giving me that opportunity to learn. I thank Dr Sai Prasanna for her help, and I pray to the Almighty Sri Leela Mohana Sai that He should bless her with His grace in abundance for her to lead a fulfilling life. Jai Sai Ram!

Dr Ganesan; his wife Srimathi Shanthi (Joint Secretary, Tamil Nadu Government); Sri Nagaraj – he is like an elder brother for me; Siddha Medical Practitioner Jeyaprakash Narayanan; Sri Ramesh - former Convenor of West Nanganallur Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi; his wife Srimathi Hema; and several more Sai devotees encouraged me to write this book and thus played a vital role. I thank all of them. May Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba bless all of them with the very best in their lives and with unbounded happiness. Jai Sai Ram!

Sri Krishnakumar assumed responsibility for getting this book printed and attended to it in earnest; it required him to coordinate with several other parties. He did all that in his stride. He did everything as a Yagna, an offering to God. I am afraid that simply thanking him would appear to be merely going through the motion. I would, instead, be more at ease to ask him to continue to show the same degree of love to me always and in everything. There is no doubt that if

Krishnakumar, who is ever ready and willing to rush to give a helping hand, is ever in difficulty, our Lord Leela Mohana Sai Himself will rush to give a helping hand! My heartfelt best wishes to Krishnakumar.

Sri Jeyakumar - he is like my younger brother - worked very closely with Sri Krishnakumar and provided vital support. His knowledge in the use of computers became useful to ensure a high-quality output from the Printers. He worked with interest and dedication. I thank him warmly. May Sri Leela Mohana Sai bless him with a very bright future.

Forever in Sai Service

With Love

Sai Mohan

Jai Sai Ram!





I

SRI SAI'S DIVINE WILL IN RENAMING SOMANATHAN TO SAI MOHAN

Celebrating the delightful occasion of naming their children is a common practice among parents throughout the world. Some parents choose names according to ancestral beliefs or longstanding practices within the family. The names so chosen may, in some instances, depict the love and blessings of the family's clan-deity (kula deivam), while in some other instances the chosen names may reflect the influence by the societal settings or sentimental events related to the birth of their child. This 'naming ceremony', regardless of the difference in the practices adopted, is an age-old tradition followed by families everywhere.

My family was no exception. When I, the author of this book, was born, my parents and elders in the family derived delight in celebrating my naming ceremony. They named me Somanathan. The reason for choosing that name is interesting.

I was born in *Thiruvidaïmarudur*, a holy village near Kumbakonam, on a Monday (Somavaram) in the month of November (Karthigai) in 1933. Thiruvidaïmarudhur is a sacred town that is renowned for its divine glory. Such is the greatness of this place that all the four prominent saint-poets of Tamil Nadu – The *Nayanmars* (Appar, Sundarar, Sambanthar and Manickavasagar) - had sung hymns (in as early as the 6th Century) in praise of the benevolent powers of The Lord Shiva of Thiruvidaïmarudhur! It also happens to be one of the significant ancient sites of Tamil Nadu.

In the southern part of holy India, there are altogether three such places with the name Marudur, and all three have well known Shiva temples. They are '*Thalaimarudhu*', '*Idaimarudhu*' and '*Kadaimarudhu*' also known as '*Pudaimaruthu*'. Of these, the sacred '*Idaimarudhu*' is in the middle. Hence, it is known as *Thiruvidaïmarudur* (Holy Mid-Village of Marudam Trees). I was born there.

The patron deity of this village is Lord Shiva, worshipped as *Sri Mahalingeswaraswamy*. The Sanskrit name for Thiruvidaïmarudhur is Madhyarjunam! **Arjunam** means marudam trees (botanical name - Terminalia arjuna). In the early days, Thiruvidaïmarudur was forested with marudam trees (Arjun trees), and hence the name Marudur. It is for this reason that the patron deity

of this place is also known as Marudaneshwar, Marudavanar and Madyarjuneshwar. The Sanskrit name '*Madhyarjuneshwara*' is quite famous!

This temple is richly associated with many divine personalities. According to the temple's ancient scriptures, none other than Lord Sri Rama Himself had worshipped the Lord Mahalingeswaraswamy at this temple. To that extent, this place is sacred and laden with ancient history! In our recorded history there are countless anecdotes exemplifying the benediction Mahalingeswaraswamy bestows on His devotees. These anecdotes keep the pious and faithful listeners of them enthralled, making them forget all their worries and yearn to listen to more.

The great spiritual leader Sankara Bhagavathpaada travelled on foot twice across the length and breadth of the nation, from Kerala to Kashmir, to teach and spread the doctrine of Advaita. The ruler of Tanjavur during that period was a staunch follower of Jainism. He rejected and ridiculed Adi Sankara's philosophy. He denounced Shaivism (worshipping of Lord Shiva) and Sankara's Advaita philosophy as 'asathya' (not the Truth).

Sankara was one who worked tirelessly to re-establish Advaita (Oneness). He went great lengths to achieve this. He won every single debate with all who opposed the philosophy, and established the victory banner of Advaita everywhere He won. Unanimously, all the wise men brought their palms together in reverence of Sankara and worshipped Him as the '*incarnation of the Supreme Lord*'. That great Sankara wanted to rid the king of his ignorance. He explained to the king that '*Shaivism is a superior path*' and that Advaita is indeed The Truth.

However, the ruler stubbornly dismissed all counselling. He declared that '*Jainism was the supreme path*' and argued that both Shaivism and Advaita were fallacies and did not aid in one's spiritual ascension. He remained unyielding in his conviction. Nevertheless, owing to Adi Sankara's perseverance, the ruler eventually agreed that the matter be adjudicated by Sri Mahalinga who had installed Himself in the Madhyarjunam temple of Thiruvaidaimaruthur. He also agreed that he would unconditionally accept such a verdict.

Sri Sankara Bhagavathpaada agreed to the ruler's terms. The day of judgement arrived. A large number of wise men and erudite scholars assembled in front of Lord Sri Mahalingeswaraswamy. Adi Sankara headed up to the sanctum of Lord Sri Mahalingeswaraswamy singing, with his heart soaked in devotion and faith, and beseeched the Lord to declare His verdict! The entire congregation completely lost itself in Sankara's melodious pleas in the form of Sanskrit hymns.

Just then, a miracle happened! To the utter amazement of everyone assembled there, from inside the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, right behind the linga statue of Lord Mahalingeswaraswamy an *Abhaya Hastha* (a hand in the benedictory pose) emerged for all to see! The raised palm moved as if it reassured the abundant blessings of Lord Sri Mahalinga. Added to that, a voice was heard, emphatically declaring that "**Advaita is the Truth; Advaita is the Truth!**" This was something that was unheard of and not witnessed by anyone in those days. Thus, everyone gathered there was ecstatic at the resounding final verdict by Lord Mahalingesa Himself that '*Advaita is indeed the ultimate path of Truth*'.

There are many such remarkable stories from the history of this hallowed land. Thiruvidadaimarudur is blessed with a rich spiritual heritage; such is the greatness of this divine place!

I mentioned earlier that I was born on a Monday (Soma Varam) in the month of Kartigai (November). Generally, there are four Mondays in Kartigai. And, in those days, at the Mahalingeswaraswamy Temple the holy yagna of *Shankabhishekam* was performed on all those four Mondays to the main deity.

Since ancient times, *Shankabhishekam* in that temple has always been a grand event. 1008 large and perfectly shaped conch shells are selected with utmost care and neatly placed on a raised platform and filled to the brim with scented water. At an auspicious time, as prescribed by the Vedic almanac, amidst the sacred Vedic chants by learned priests and melodious music played by the temple musicians and in the presence of an august audience of devotees, the chief priest would, with due reverence and respect, pour the scented water, shell after shell over the divine idol of Lord Mahalinga. This ceremonious bathing, called *Shankabhishekam*, of the main deity confers immense blessing and wellbeing for everyone. I was born on one such glorious day. Thus, I had the enviable privilege of being born in a holy place on a holy day. My parents were grateful to God that I was born on a very holy *Somavaram* and decided to perpetuate their gratitude by naming me Somanathan! I have described the customary practices that families follow in naming their children and the tradition my parents and elders followed in naming me Somanathan.

Why did it become necessary to change such a good name? That is the main story, and let me begin with it.

I grew up in the identity of Somanathan, as christened by my family. My school records and related certificates displayed my name as R. Somanathan. My father's name was Ramachandran. So, I was known to everyone as R Somanathan.

It was in the year 1958; I had completed my education and was on the lookout for a job for some time when I was offered employment with the Railways at their office in Tiruchchirapalli.

I searched for a place to stay in that town and came across a room that could be shared among three people. A colleague, another friend and I agreed to stay together in that room. And, that is how our journey as roommates began. All of us were God loving!

The other friend - not my colleague - hailed from an extremely orthodox and devout family. He and I became very good friends. At nights we both would lie down next to each other and always share lots of interesting experiences and stories. Many nights, we used to talk for hours on end until sleep overcame us. My friend would very often mention the name Sathya Sai Baba, about whom I knew nothing, nor had I heard about Him from anyone. Understanding my eagerness to know about Him, my friend described to me that Sathya Sai Baba was God himself, who, just like Rama and Krishna, had taken human birth; that He lived in Puttaparthi in Andhra Pradesh and that people from all over the world went to have His darshan and to pay homage. He

added that Sai Baba also performed miracles, gave discourses for the spiritual advancement of His devotees, and even counselled and helped individuals who went to Him with worldly worries as well as those who went to Him with the thirst for spiritual advancement. He also told me that on a few occasions Sai Baba had appeared from nowhere in his own house in his village and had performed miracles.

When my friend explained to me that Sai Baba was an avatar (incarnate) just like Rama and Krishna, I became innately eager to meet the great Sathya Sai. This was also because I came from a devout family that firmly believed in God. Being a Railways employee, I had the privilege of Railway Passes that allowed me travel concessions. So, I made my maiden journey to Parthi in 1960.

It was an extremely fruitful pilgrimage. That was just my first visit, but yet Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba took me into the interview room and blessed me with a personal audience with Him. And, in that providential pilgrimage, Bhagawan **Sri Leela Mohana Sai** showered upon me the good fortune of experiencing bliss through His *Darshan*(seeing), *Sparshan*(touch) and *Sambhashan* (conversation). I was in euphoria.

After that, I visited Puttaparthi frequently. Every time Baba would grant me an interview and make me very happy with that experience.

From then on, my life was occupied with my office work and recurrent visits to Parthi. I would go there at least once a month. Whenever I went to my village, I would share with my family, with great gusto, all about Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and His miracles.

My parents and my elder brother were proficient in astrology and were quite adept at reading horoscopes. They would often discuss amongst themselves with keen interest the nuances of astrology.

One night, while I was talking to them zealously about Sri Sathya Sai Baba, it prompted my parents to read my horoscope. They said that I would ardently pursue spiritual matters and would attain certain divine experiences over time. However, my elder brother, who had mastery over the finer aspects of astrology, while agreeing with their observations, responded, “Nevertheless, because of evil influences of some planets in his horoscope, he will not be able to achieve complete success in reaching his spiritual goal.”

My mother doubted my elder brother’s observation and said – “What you say might be right. But, when Somu (that was my nickname at home) was eight years old, an expert astrologer (Valluvan) who had thoroughly mastered the astrological verses (in Tamil) by the Siddhars (Ancient Tamil Mystics), happened to look at his horoscope. He said that Somu’s horoscope was an excellent and rare one! He predicted that Somu would attain the wisdom (gnana) to be able to understand the most intricate and complex spiritual secrets quite easily and that he would possess an extraordinary inclination towards mastering arts that encompass divine secrets. That astrologer further said, ‘This little master (Somu) would converse with God! God will always be with him! Towards his advanced age, many would proclaim this master as God! This master’s horoscope is quite precious!’” My mother’s eyes were shining with a drop or

two of tears while she continued: “This is all divine leela. Somu is claiming that Sai Baba is God and is going to see Him frequently. I don’t know what will happen ultimately and what this boy’s future is going to be.” My mother excused herself after that to attend to her chores.

On listening to my mother’s overwhelmed recollections, my heart leapt with enormous excitement! Reason being, in the past I had overheard my parents talk about the many predictions by that Valluvan about me that had already come true! What aroused my curiosity was the fact that a renowned astrologer had predicted when I was just eight, that I too would become proficient in astrology. If I became one, I would also be able to participate with my family in discussions on astrology. So, I decided to embark on that study without further delay.

I gathered all the relevant books from our large collection at home and started reading them. I realised that I was able to understand the concepts quickly and also that whatever I learnt remained etched in my memory. I became very conversant in astrology within a short time; I considered it a divine blessing. According to the astrologer whom my mother had consulted, I would do well in all arts linked to divinity. So, I wanted to become an exponent in two more such arts, numerology and palmistry.

I began reading from various sources on these two topics. True to what that astrologer had predicted, I had no difficulty in understanding what I read and in no time became very proficient in those two fields as well.

Since the astrologer had predicted that I would understand complex divine mysteries quite easily, I began reading books to satisfy my thirst for spiritual advancement. During my quest, I was able to correlate the spectacular esoteric details embedded in ‘*Soundarya Lahari*’ (Waves of Beauty - the hymn composition adoring The Divine Mother) with that of both astrology and numerology. I was able to deduce certain theories from my comparative analysis and learnt them all by heart.

Soundarya Lahari is a hymn of a hundred shlokas (verses) that eulogizes the beauty, grace and munificence of Goddess Parvati / Dakshayani, the consort of Lord Shiva. I had a penchant for learning the most sublime aspects of this great hymn; in particular, the 33rd verse swiftly gripped my interest. Those who chant this verse with single minded devotion by following certain mandated austerities several times daily would derive abundant worldly benefits as well as pleasant spiritual experiences. Thanks to my knowledge in astrology, I noted that these were the same benefits reaped by those who were under the dominance of Planet Venus in their horoscope.

The digits in number 33 when added would result in number 6, which, very interestingly, is the number for Venus in numerology. Even more interesting was the fact that at that time I too was under the planetary influence of Venus (*Sukra Dasai*). And, it became clear to me that it was that very **Leela Mohana Sai’s** Divine Will that had enabled those very unlikely coincidences to occur.

Around that time, one day, I intuitively perceived that Maha Guru Sathya Saieesha Himself had initiated me into that sloka. Thus, I began the yagna of continuously repeating the 33rd verse in my mind . As per the adage (in Tamil) that

'practice of fingers determines the mastery over art and the eloquence in Tamil language depends on the tongue's rehearsal', within a short time I gained expertise in chanting that verse accurately with the exact intonations and syllable stress as needed. This became a habit!

Each verse in the Soundarya Lahari has its own '*yantra*'. (Yantra is a geometrical diagram that represents aspects of the divine. It is like an icon and is a tool for meditation.) Those who wish to derive benefits from Soundarya Lahari should prepare the appropriate yantra strictly as prescribed, place it at the altar or wherever it is conducive for sadhana and recite the corresponding verse. This recitation should be done daily for a prescribed number of times.

So, I prepared the yantra for the 33rd verse very diligently and with absolute reverence, and meticulously chose an auspicious day and time for my prayers. At the chosen auspicious hour, I placed the yantra in the altar while reciting the appropriate prayers and performing the rituals. I then formed a mental picture of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba standing in front of me and blessing me with His Abhaya Hastha. While doing so, I recited repeatedly the 33rd verse till I completed the prescribed number of chants.

I followed this spiritual practice daily with utmost devotion and sincerity. And, lo and behold, within just a few days, I began to have experiences. In accordance with the Tamil proverb 'as is the devotion so is the revelation' ("*Uru era Thiru Erum*"), whenever I closed my eyes even for just a moment, Mother Ambika would immediately appear in my mind's eye. But that vision would then alternate repeatedly with a spectre of phantom-like scary apparitions! Sometimes I even had auditory experiences, both pleasant and unpleasant. I would hear melodious music originating from nowhere outside but arising within myself. It would then alternate repeatedly with a gory combination of wild animals roaring and howling! That was not all. At other times, the very moment I closed my eyes, colourful and beautiful fireworks would appear in my vision, but it would then alternate repeatedly with lightning-like flashes! I had difficulty sleeping. The moment I closed my eyes, I would begin having those incorporeal experiences. Even at my office, if I happened to close my eyes just for a moment while yawning, I would immediately begin to experience those out of the ordinary happenings. This game of hide-and-seek continued even if while blinking I closed my eyes just a moment longer!

All these phenomena were happening inside my mind, eyes and ears! My sleep was getting affected. My office work also was getting impacted! There are people who have undertaken even more severe austerities involving 'japa' and other disciplines for extended durations and yet have not attained such divine experiences. I, on the other hand, was just over a few days and few thousand chants into this spiritual practice. Yet, in such a relatively short time frame, I experienced these divine visions – all of this was because of the good fortune accumulated from my past births. But, I did not have that understanding at the time as I was only 27 years old then!

I had to continue with my work at the office and had to attend to a few of my regular personal responsibilities and obligations too. In this situation, I began to think that this divine vision and experience was becoming a hindrance to my daily living.

I happened to meet a spiritual guru who had in-depth knowledge about even the most complex spiritual matters. I shared with him my experiences and the worry that was bothering me! He listened to me patiently and said that initial obstacles were inevitable and that to derive the full spiritual benefits of reciting the mantras, one should have patience, perseverance and determination. Only such people would have the necessary grit to overcome the initial obstacles. He further told me that I appeared to be someone who lacked the necessary willpower and who was also timid, and that if I continued with the chants, it could lead to disastrous ends. He advised me to stop the chants. I also felt that, given my age and my obligation as an employee in an office, it would be sensible to stop everything. I did so, and almost immediately all the experiences I was having also ceased!

In my later years, I began to realise that I had made a mistake by stopping the chanting. I had given priority to my worldly life, and by doing so I had foolishly spurned away a treasure in the form of spiritual enlightenment. This thought was gnawing at me all the time!

I realised that what my brother had said about my inability to achieve spiritual success because of the maleficent influence of some planets was indeed true! I admired my brother for his mastery in astrology. He considered astrology to be a divine art and pursued it with utmost devotion to God. There was no place for ego, money or selfishness of any kind in his work. Because of this, what he uttered became the 'voice of Divine Grace' (*Arul Vaaku*). And this was proven with my brother's accurate prediction about my spiritual progress! I couldn't stop myself from sincerely appreciating his ability and skill in this regard!

Though I had stopped chanting the 33rd verse, the number 33 had become part and parcel of my life, a new companion! I would encounter that number every now and then in my daily life! If I visited a friend, his house number would invariably be 33! If I happened to travel in a car, its number would most likely add up to 33! The dates of birth of people close to me, in most cases, would add up to 33! In some cases, even their names, when added in the numerological manner, would sum up to 33. Even when I did shopping and checked the bill I received, I would find that the bill number would, in most cases, add up to 33! Sometimes, even the amount I paid would add up to 33! Thus, the number 33 continued its game of peek-a-boo and simply wouldn't let go of me!

The number 33 turned out to be a 'magic number' that whirled around me in my life. Hence, I wished to change my name to be congruent with this numerologically. My then name R. Somanathan added, numerologically, to 38. The ensuing calculation of 38 was number 2, i.e; $3+8=11$, which in turn yielded 2 ($1+1=2$). However, the derived number from my date of birth $27(2+7=9)$ was not, numerologically, compatible with 2 - my former name's number! Moreover, since the sum of all the numbers of my date of birth (day, month and year) resulted in the number 27, I decided in my mind to change my name to position itself in the best fitting magical number 33!

Every time I went to Parthi, Swami would grant me an interview and hug me with a lot of love. Even before I could tell Him my problems and worries, despite the fact that we were living more than 500 km away from Parthi, He would tell me exactly

what was going on in my family. He would then assure me of His Grace, saying, ‘Why fear when I am here?’ Many a time, I would be crying on His shoulder, and He would pat my back, wipe my tears away with His own handkerchief and comfort me saying, ‘Why? Why are you crying? Are you a female?’ After that, He would create Vibuti and smear it on my forehead and also put some in my mouth and assure me that all my worries would be taken care of by Him and that through His Grace all of them would be nullified.

Thereon, whenever I recollected those blissful memories of the Avatar’s all-encompassing love and as I rejoiced in delight, I was reminded of that Valluvan! The astrological predictions he had made to my mother based on my horoscope would come to my mind! His prophetic words “This little master will converse with God!” had indeed turned true! I was amazed at his brilliance and his skilled expertise in even the finer aspects of astrology. And he had foretold all this 20 years ago! Isn’t this a testimony to the wise ideology by our ancestors that ‘man is endowed with divine attributes’?

I had been blessed with the good fortune of experiencing the divine love and warmth of that Great Poornavatar several times. Hence, I had made a resolve to rechristen myself with one of the many names of Leela Mohana Sai, the Lord of Compassion. And, I began to select names that added up to number 33. The name Sai Mohan had a numerological value of 27, which happened to be my birth date, and when I prefixed the initials T.R, they all added up to the number 33! Therefore, I decided in my mind to change my name to T.R. Sai Mohan! Yet, my young heart did not seem to easily muster the conviction required to set aside the name bestowed by my parents and choose another one for myself! I left it at that, and felt that if Lord Sri Leela Mohana Sai willed, then I would have the good fortune of changing my name.

Around that time, I got an opportunity to go to Parthi! I sat in darshan pining for Bhagawan’s grace. As Bhagawan opened the door, He called me in! With infinite joy, I walked inside! The Loving Lord latched the door behind us.

There was a surprise in store for me once I went inside! Out of the blue, Swami startled me with his very first question, “Do you like the number 33? Or do you like that 33rd verse?” I was stupefied!

“How does He know of my eagerness for chanting the 33rd verse of Soundarya Lahari that stemmed out of my sheer interest in astrology, that which had happened at my home 500 km away? On top of that, He has also asked me particularly about my fascination for the number 33! What has he in store for me now? Whatever I have done is out of sheer obsession. I ought to have come straight and surrendered to Him and asked him!” Those were the thoughts flooding my mind. I just uttered “Swami”; I couldn’t say anything any further. I didn’t possess the guts to say anything! My palms that were held together in prayer began to shiver! My heart raced!

Swami said, “You meditated on that sloka because you desired for wealth and such transitory pleasures of life. You did not chant the sloka for lofty goals such as receiving the Lord’s grace. If you had done the japa with the purpose of seeking God’s grace, you would not have experienced such a turmoil. You lacked the eyes of the intellect (arivu deekshinyam) to understand the preciousness of the divine visions you

experienced. Because of that your determination slackened. Therefore, soon you became mentally weary and that is why you gave up the chanting; the merits earned in your previous births could take you only that far!

“Anyway, you haven’t answered my question about your fondness for the number 33?” Saying so, He focussed His impish gaze upon me. Wedged between a hesitant and dizzy state of existence, my hands and legs shivered, unable to take in the divine magnetism of His mischievous look. I remained dumbfounded in front of that Leela Mohana Sai!

Yes! Dear Sai Lovers! Under the shade of his loving glance we feel protected! His scornful glare will impart to us a warning! Our sins will be chased away by His fierce stare which will also safeguard us like an armour, making way for auspicious beginnings! His impish wink will enlighten us about His Omnipresence (His Vishnu Thathva). It would mean ‘I am aware of everything inside your mind, heart and being’! Yet, there are so many myriad ways in which He looks at us. His gestures and expressions are countless to describe! Who can gauge fully that Vishnu who is Everything! Also, about His sweetness!

Swami Is Madhuram

Everything about Swami is a source of happiness. Looking at Him and observing what He does is meditation. Here, I would seek your indulgence to digress and write about what I enjoy about Swami. You too please join me in rejoicing in this sweetness!

Adharam Madhuram! (Mouth) Hey Sai! The mouth through which You delivered countless discourses to make us lead a righteous life is very precious to us and is a source of sweet joy. And, it is that mouth that conversed (Sambhashan) with us and gave us an extremely rare divine blessing. Whatever You uttered was full of love.

Vadhanam Madhuram! (Face) Oh Saiesha! Your face is adorable; with an enchanting smile on Your face, You readily capture the hearts of Your devotees.

Nayanam Madhuram! (Eyes) Oh Sai Krishna! Your eyes are adorable; Your eyes convey Your compassion to the devotees, who in turn get attached to Your captivating eyes.

Hasitham Madhuram! (Smile) Oh Lord Sai! Your smile in itself is a blessing and recipients of those smiles remember them forever as their greatest treasure.

Hridayam Madhuram! (Daya/Merciful Heart) Oh Master Sai! Taking pity upon the helplessness of your devotee, Your tender, merciful heart melts at the plight of Your devotees in distress; it is nothing but sacredly sweet!

Gamanam Madhuram! (Beauty of Gait) Oh Saiesha! Your gait, almost like gentle floating, is beyond compare and immensely adorable.

Hey! Parthi Mathuradhiipatheh! Madhuram, Madhuram!
Mathuradhipatheh not only refers to its literal meaning as the Lord of Mathura! It also conveys that He is the Lord of everything sweet, delightful and pleasant (*Madhuram*)!

Akhilam Madhuram! (Universe) This universe that You have created is indeed sweet! And, it is enriched with even more sweetness because of Your incarnation!

Vachanam Madhuram! (Speech) Oh Lord, with Divine Mother's love, You called us, Your children, with the words 'Brahmananda Swarupalara' ('Embodiments of Brahmananda Swarupa'). Those were spellbinding and very sweet moments in our lives.

Charitham Madhuram! The Story of Thy Life is drenched in divine nectar, dear Sai! Your life is that of a glorious Avatar wherein you undertook phenomenal tasks (the unparalleled humanitarian projects along with individual transformation and societal upliftment)! True to Your declaration 'My Life is My Message', You guided us in leading a righteous life by living Your life exemplarily.

Pramitham Madhuram! Your travelling around the globe (there are many incredible incidents of Swami transcending space and time) has indeed bestowed an eternal sweet happiness!

Lalitham Madhuram! When you glide so gracefully and walk with a gentle sway and a gentle swing, we are lost in that sweet bliss of merely watching your symphony of movement, Oh Sai Krishna!

Salitham Madhuram! Sometimes, You carry on with an air of ease, relaxed and carefree; witnessing that is purely sweet melody!

Renur Madhuram! Every inch of the ground where You stepped on is hallowed. Particularly, the holy land of Puttarparthi is verily fortunate! And that is nothing but everlasting sweetness!

Paaneer Madhuram! Your hands that can create anything by a mere wave and also grant us protection when in the Abhaya Hastha pose are a sheer delight to watch.

Paadham Madhuram! Oh Lord Mahesha! The magnificence of Pada Namaskar experienced by all devotees who prostrate at Thy Lotus Feet is akin to the sweetness of attaining all the pleasures of both the spiritual and the material worlds.

Sakhyam Madhuram! It is a rare blessing that You bestowed upon us when we got to enjoy Thy Divine Friendship! Such a friendship is one of the 'nine forms of devotion'. There is no happiness superior to that obtained by being Your friend. And there is nothing sweeter when You, Lord Saiesha, are our ever-closest friend and companion (*sakha*)!

Geetham Madhuram! You have held your sway upon the masses by your mellifluous singing, Oh Leader of the Aeons! It is even sweeter when Your devotees all over the world derive happiness by listening to Your bhajans and singing along in bliss!

Peetham Madhuram! When You stand behind the microphone and sing bhajans or tirelessly deliver discourses, we become enamoured by You. Now and then, You would take a sip of water. Gripped with devotion we would not want to take our eyes off you! Even that act of sipping water is elegant and graceful; the bhava (feeling) during those moments is indescribably sweet, dearest Lord of Parthi!

Bhuktham Madhuram! The elegance of You partaking food is a sweetness that can be seen nowhere! It is for this very reason that we devotees have kept in our dining rooms the photo of You having food. We see you eating (with us) and turn ecstatic! You fill our hearts, Bhagawan!

Suktham Madhuram! Dear God, Your sweet charming beauty while asleep can be only compared with that of Lord Sri Narayana who reclines upon Vasuki, the serpent!

Rupam Madhuram! The arresting beauty of Thy Form is known only to us as it is we who have adored Thy exquisiteness! Your magnetic beauty attracts one and all. It was just the same as how in the days of Lord Rama, those who watched His shoulder watched nothing but His shoulder only because they were overcome by the power of attraction that emanated from Rama and forgot everything else. Likewise, we have lost ourselves in the admiration of Thy Form, Oh Shiva!

Akhilam Madhuram! Oh Lord, the world, hallowed by Your incarnation, is a place of sweet happiness!

Karanam Madhuram! Oh, Merciful Lord! Your every action is the sweetest of the sweetest!

Smaranam Madhuram! The sweet delight derived by just thinking of You is incomparable, Lord of Parthi!

Samitham Madhuram! Sai Kanna, we are in sweet bliss even if we get to see you doing simply nothing!

Mala Madhuram! The garland on Your neck looks extra beautiful because it is enjoying the privilege of adorning Your neck! Beholding that garland's enhanced beauty is sweet pleasure.

Chitravati Madhuram! The holy river of Chitravati is redolent with Your childhood frolicking and subsequent miracles. The glory of those miracles is laden with sweetness beyond words! That hallowed River Chitravati itself has thus earned the love and admiration of Your devotees. Since it reminds us of your divine leelas, River Chitravati is indeed sweet!

Leela Madhuram! Dear Gracious Lord, Your every divine play brims with sweetness!

Drishtam Madhuram! Since Your mere glance would burn away our bad karma, it can be but only sweetness and nothing else, Dear Bhagawan!

Sishtam Madhuram! All your qualities (called Kalyana Guna - as they bestow nothing but auspiciousness) are saturated with sweetness, Sai Mahesha!

Srishthir Madhuram! – The wave of your hand as well as the manifested object whenever you create it are incredibly sweet to behold Sai Natha!

Palitham Madhuram! – The end-result of listening to Thy words is sweetness! Touching you bestows upon us sweetness! Conversing with You leads to sweetness! Even merely looking at You is a privilege and brings sweetness, Lord of Mathura!

Hey! Parthi Mathurathipatheh! Mathuram, Mathuram! Even thinking of you gives a sweet feeling and brings happiness! Singing Your glory also confers a sweet feeling of bliss! Listening to Your words brings bliss too! Swami! Since each and everything about Yourself is sweet, aren't we, who are Yours and only Yours, also full of sweetness!

I think that if Swami is nothing but sweetness and happiness, we, who are entirely His, also should be full of sweetness and happiness! An inference here is that, 'we too must become full of sweetness once we become Yours!'

But, is it so easy to be full of sweetness and happiness? Only if we lead our lives strictly according to what He has said can we become *madhooram* (*ma* + *dhooram*), i.e. no distance and *madhuram* (sweet).

Oh, it has been one long digression! I had just got carried away while thinking of Him, and that is what led to this dissertation on His glory. Let me get back to the main story.

In the interview room, Swami asked me what my desired new name was.

Wiping off the tears from my cheeks with my fingers, I replied, “Swami, I will change my name only if Your grace and approval are there for it.” Lord Sai Mahesha said, “You tell me your proposed name first.”

Though with some hesitation, with complete devotion I submitted my suggestion to Him, “Baba, with your grace and permission, I’d like to change my name to Sai Mohan!”.

Swami was picking up a basket filled with packets of Vibhuti at that moment. With a blossoming smile He continued, “Ah! What made you think of such a name?”

Bhagawan saw that I was unable to respond immediately and was finding it difficult to express myself. He patted my back and asked encouragingly, “Hmm, go on, express your heart’s desire!” He looked at me with a facial expression that motivated me to speak further!

Encouraged thus by Swami, I continued, “Swami, from the time I had Your darshan for the first time in my life, I am fully devoted to you and I would like to have a name that reflects this divine love I have for You.”

Upon listening to my expression of sincere love from the bottom of my heart, Swami, who was looking at something else, immediately turned to where I was, looked at me intently and questioned in a stern manner, “Will this love for Sai continue forever?”

Swami’s question reassured me that He cared indeed for my love for Him, and I responded very confidently, “I will always have this love for you that is beyond words throughout the entirety of my life, Swami. I am firm about this! Sarvesha, my such a divine love for You will only continue to grow with time and shall never diminish!” With tears welling up in my eyes, I knelt and worshipped His Holy Golden Feet. That personification of compassion (karuna) turned towards me with a pleasing and gentle expression. He placed His benedictory Hand upon my shoulders, and granted His blessing, “Yes! you change your name to Sai Mohan! There are two special aspects in this name. One is that ‘you love Sai’; the other latent import is ‘**Sai loves you**’. You can interpret in both ways. Whenever you mention this name or people call you by this name, tell yourself that it is a reminder to you that I am with you. My blessings are always there for you. I am very happy with this name change and I approve it wholeheartedly!’ That very Leela Mohana Sai Sarvesha then placed His Lotus Hand on my head and blessed me. He then created vibhuti by waving His hand and applied some of it on my forehead and put the rest of it in my mouth before unlocking the door of the interview room and permitting me to leave!

When I was born into this world, destined to be overcome by Maya (illusion), my earthly parents gave a name to this illusory body.

Later, I left behind my attachment for the illusory world as I was transformed by the Divine Love for Sai Madhava. The Divine ‘Father and Mother’ (*Thayumaanavan*) then declared, “*This is another birth for you.*” He bestowed me with a sweet and loving name Sai Mohan. A name that defines our divine sweet love for each other!

I am at a loss for words to express my overwhelming gratitude!

Well, even the most articulative words in a scholar’s dictionary would fail to effectively describe such soul-stirring experiences!

I often recall with amazement the accuracy of what that astrologer (Valluvan) told my mother. He told my mother, ‘God will always be with him’. And, Swami told me in the interview room, ‘Whenever you mention this name (Sai Mohan) or people call you by this name, tell yourself that it is a reminder that I am with you’. How accurate that astrologer was! He was certainly an astrologer par excellence!

What a great fortune I have had! Name changed by God Himself! To think that God, when He decided to descend on earth to accomplish certain things (His sankalpa), He must have included my name change also as one of the items on His agenda! Just can’t believe it! What an honour!

Talking of honour, I am reminded of a somewhat amusing situation. When I informed my employer, the Railways, that I had changed my name, I was told that since I was a Central Government employee, my name change would have to be approved by the First Citizen of the country, The President of India. I could not help laughing within myself about it. When the First of the First Citizen of the Entire Universe Himself had approved my name change, was it really necessary for any more approval? Just a thought that went through my mind.

Jai Sai Ram!



II

An Inner View of the Interview at Prashanthi Nilayam



Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was born in Puttaparthi, in the State of Andhra Pradesh. His abode there, Prashanthi Nilayam, is a sprawling campus that caters very comprehensively to the spiritual hunger of tens of thousands of devotees who throng there daily from almost every country in the world. Every day, Swami would choose a few lucky ones out of those devotees and grant them interviews (private audiences). Devotees considered such interviews as a special blessing from Swami and fervently prayed and hoped for one. There was a room dedicated for such interviews; it was known as the Interview Room. This practice of granting 'Interviews' was unique to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It was not practised by any of the previous incarnations. One day, Swami Himself appeared 'in person' to me and explained to me the philosophical meaning and message of interviews and of the Interview Room. I would like to share that beautiful story with you.

It was midnight on 09 June 2015. It was then that the wonderful privilege of communicating personally with Swami took place. It was a momentous day in my life! He engaged me in His divine sport. It is quite common to say, 'How fortunate is he! He must have done a lot of meritorious deeds in his previous lives,' when we see people

enjoying life with worldly blessings and worldly pleasures. What then can be said about my fortune! I had the unimaginable blessing of Swami Himself coming in person to my bedroom at midnight on that day to explain to me the philosophy behind interviews and the Interview Room. No one had known anything about the inner meaning of the interviews and of the Interview Room till then; even if anyone tried to find out the meaning and the message behind them, he would not have succeeded. But, Swami considered me worthy of receiving that message personally from Him and gave me a spiritual discourse on that day.

With Bhagawan's blessings, Volume 1 of this book was released in Puttaparthi during the time of His 80th Birthday. I thought that I had already done my fair share of Sai seva (service) and had no intention of writing any further books. I have explained this in the Preface to this book (Volume 3).

Time – it plays a wonderful part in everyone's life! It does many things; sometimes it even changes one's mindset; that is why it is common to hear people saying, 'Over time he had a change of heart'.

In my case, I found that days, months and years were simply flying by as though time was swallowing itself! When that reality sank into me, I went through a self-inquiry and that changed my mindset. That, coupled with requests and encouragement from several well-meaning and ardent devotees of Swami, made me roll back my decision to not write any more. How can I withhold the beautiful stories about Him from His devotees? To do so would be unfair and also selfish. I decided to continue penning some more of His infinite glory. That was how the idea of writing Volume 2 of this book originated.

I began to write Volume 2 in March 2015 and completed it at midnight on 09 June 2015. Usually, authors would write something about their after-thoughts in the epilogue at the end of their book. Epilogue - it carries with it a message of closure, like bringing the curtains down. But, is there an end to it when you are talking about God, the endless? Not only that. Can there ever be an end to the seva (service) one can do - in His name; to please Him; as a worship to Him? So, I didn't want to call the closing comments in the book 'Epilogue', but the 'Endless Epilogue'; in other words, the 'endless end'.

Signing off by saying 'Forever In Sai Service' at the end of their book is quite common among Sai devotees who write books on Swami. So, at the bottom of the Endless Epilogue of my book, I also signed off as 'Forever In Sai Service – Your dear Sai Mohan'.

Immediately, my thought process became very busy with the meaning and the significance of the phrase 'Forever In Sai Service'. Didn't that statement, in effect, make a promise to Sai, who is the one without an end, that we would do service without an end - forever? Surely, service to Sai, which is service in the name of Sai, the timeless

one, and done to please Him, has got to be done forever ... and ever. This thought transported me into a state where it was as if I was overwhelmed by a sudden surge of realisation that passed through me like a bright spark. Then and there I made a resolution. I resolved within myself that from that moment onwards, as long as I lived, I would spend every day of my life doing some seva or the other and thus please our dear Sai Nathan.

This is a digression, but a necessary one to understand this story in its proper perspective.

According to Sanskrit scholars, 'Manas' (mind) is the root word for 'Manushyan' (man). It's important to note here that even in English, phonetically, there is a link between 'mind' and 'man'.

Swami has given the most remarkable meaning to the word 'man'. M stands for maya (illusion born out of ignorance), A stands for atman (Inner Self / Spirit) and N for nirvana (Self-realisation). By getting rid of maya and directly realizing the inner-Self, i.e., atman, man can experience the bliss of Self-realisation. Swami has enlightened us that out of all creations, only human beings have this ability to attain Self-realisation!

It is necessary to elucidate on the above as I believe that it is a primary duty of modern authors to enlighten the millennial society about the inner-significance of such esoteric phrases (their subtle imports) that often surface in casual vocabulary. These phrases were meticulously coined by our wise-ancestors following phenomenal efforts. Hence, these terms need to be truly internalized.

The ability to attain Self-realisation as stated above should be the primary goal pursued by serious sadhana (spiritual practices). It is an inevitable truth here that the mind is a fundamental tool in accomplishing such a sadhana.

At this juncture, I would like to add a line or two on what sages have said about the preciousness of human birth. Man is not a physical product, produced by a chemical reaction, but a creation, born with enormous intellectual capacity, so much so that he is able to appreciate that there is a supreme being with omnipotent powers that created him. No other creations have this ability. That is why sages have said in the Vedas (ancient, beginningless, sacred Scriptures) that man - who is endowed with such a powerful mano sakti (mental strength, that also indicates sense control) - is considered as the epitome of creations and as precious as chudamani, the celestial gem!

Man is controlled by his mind; it is the mind that makes or breaks a man! The mind is ever-present and ever-active in man; it has three states of experience, called *Trivastha - avasthaa-traya*; one is *jagratha* (waking state), next is *sushupti* (deep sleep state) and the third is *swapnam* (dream state).

It is during the *jagratha* state that man, using his ability to see and hear (through various sensory perceptions), experiences and interprets the happenings of the exterior world. Thus, man possesses an intellectual capability (Buddhi) to process life situations.

When man processes life situations, he analyses his derived experiences and discriminates between the good and the bad. Based on this, the intellect counsels the mind, instructing it to internalise the lessons learned. When the mind is also inclined to absorb the good and reject the bad, the individual is transformed into a virtuous person. Such a person attempts to 'think good, speak good, do good', thereby converting his good thoughts into good (malice-free) deeds. This becomes *seva*, an action that benefits the society! On the other hand, the one who allows his mind to wallow in bad ways by giving it a free rein with no control and indulges in undesirable deeds becomes an evil person. He squanders the valuable birth bestowed to him and pathetically ruins his life as well as that of others.

It was this thought process that made me make that resolution to 'think good, speak good, do good' and thus devote every moment of my life for Sai *seva*. I made this resolution in my mind, and when I signed-off saying 'Forever in Sai Service; Your dear Sai Mohan' in Volume 2 of my book, I considered it an affirmation in writing of my resolution. I felt at that moment that I had taken an oath in Swami's presence. I consider the day on which I made that resolution, 09 June 2015, an epochal day in my life.

When I signed off at the end of Volume 2, I realised that I had accomplished a gigantic task. Is it easy for anyone to write a book at the ripe old age of 82? Well, believe me, I did it! I was very happy with myself, so happy that I was forgetting myself. I was very proud that I had accomplished something that would make Swami happy; my ego also joined in and began to bloat, but I was not conscious of it then. At that moment, I was simply on top of the world. I had given the world a product of my intellect; a Bhagawatham of the Kali Yuga Avatar for the world to rejoice. Who wouldn't be happy? Why shouldn't I be happy?

The text material of a book is a written expression of the author's personal thoughts, which are shaped by his individual *guna* (trait). (There are three *gunas* in men - *tamo*, *rajas* and *sathvik*). The *guna* of an individual is influenced very much by his own *vasana* (subtle desire) derived from his past karma (actions in his previous births). Whether I was blessed with my Guru's Grace or earned merit by performing benevolent deeds in my past lives, I do not know; nevertheless, I am extremely fortunate to have received this opportunity to write a book - rich with the fragrance of *satvik* (serene; virtuous) *guna* - on the glory of a divine incarnation. Certainly, this rare and coveted opportunity is a supreme blessing that can be earned only by observing arduous penance; isn't it so?

In the Dwapara Yuga, Lord Krishna said, 'I incarnate on earth from age to age' (*Sambhavami yuge yuge*). Accordingly, in this present twentieth century in the Kali

age, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the complete incarnation, hailed reverentially by His devotees as Sai Rama and as Sai Krishna, descended and lived among us. I utilized my knowledge to the fullest extent possible and wrote in the book (Volume 2) my own experiences about our dear Lord's magnificent glory. It was midnight on 09 June 2015 when I completed the writing of the book. I was extremely proud that I had accomplished something phenomenal. In fact, that was the proudest moment ever in my entire life. I couldn't contain my excitement. In that middle of the night, I went up to the rooftop terrace and trotted here and there in overflowing joy while gazing at the countless diamond-like glittering stars and prayed aloud, as loud as possible, with hands folded in prayer: 'Hey Bhagawan! Sai Rama! You have made me a Valmiki! You have made me a Vyasa! Wasn't it Your *sankalpa* (divine will) that, like how those two sages wrote the Ramayana, the Sai Rama Prabhavam, and the Bhagawatham, the Sai Krishna Leelamrutham, I should also write about Your divine glory and grandeur that You have, by coming down to our level and giving us easy and close proximity, enabled us to experience and enjoy? I am longing to offer You, millions and millions of prayers in gratitude. Mahesha! Heh Sai Isha! My guiding companion (*margabandhu*)! Karunakara! Sai Natha! Millions and millions of thanks, my Lord! Sarvesha! Saranagatha Vatsala! (Mother Sai! Saviour of those who take refuge at Your feet!) Divya charanya (The one with the holy lotus feet)! Hey, Sai Krishna! Hey, *neela vanna* (the sky-hued)! You wanted me to write Your story and gave me all the support and encouragement I needed! Alas, You are beyond my reach; how can I reach You to thank You?'

I continued, but by then tears had begun to blind my eyes: 'Hey, Lord! Sai Natha! Are the prayerful cries of this poor devotee reaching You? Do You hear me? Do You hear me ...?'

I was blabbering something after that and was so tired that I sat down on the terrace for some time. By then I was somewhat 'back to normal' and became aware of my surroundings. In that middle of the night, I managed to climb down to my room and went to bed.

What happened after that is the crux of this story. But, I wish to start with a prelude to it by discussing what happened years ago so that you will be able to fully appreciate Swami's message.

Karmic suffering is something that no man can avoid. Not only men, even every Avatar underwent suffering. We have learnt stories after stories about the troubles and suffering the Lord of Vaikunta had to undergo when He incarnated as Sri Rama. Sri Krishna too was no exception. Likewise, even the Kali Yuga Avatar, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, also faced troubles and suffering. Swami Himself told me all about it in one of the interviews He granted me. He considered me a worthy person to hear that story personally from Him. What a fortunate person I was! Surely, I must have done countless meritorious deeds in hundreds and hundreds of my past lives to deserve that blessing.

I had the first Darshan of Swami in 1960. From then on, Swami would grant me an interview whenever I went to Parthi and shower me with His divine love. Those experiences gave me so much happiness that I looked forward to going to Parthi as often as possible.

During each and every interview Swami would embrace me, and while He did so, I would also reciprocate by resting my head on His shoulder. God permitting me to rest my head on His shoulder; really? When such a thought arose within me, I would become very emotional and begin to shed a lot of tears. Swami's robe – soft, very clean and well ironed – would become wet with my tears. I would feel guilty about it and would try to move away from Swami's shoulder. But, Swami would continue to embrace me and comfort me, saying in a soft and sweet compassionate tone, 'That is all right. Don't worry. When I am here, why do you have to cry?' He would gently wipe away the tears streaming down my cheeks with His own handkerchief, tell me about all the worries that were besetting me and my family, and infuse courage in me by assuring that He would take care of all those issues. He, our sweet Lord of Parthi (Parthi puri Madhuradhipan) would, at the end of the interview, create some Vibuthi, apply some on my forehead and put the rest in my mouth and then open the Interview Room door for me to leave.

Even now, when I look back, I find it difficult to believe that God was so close to me. God descending into the earth as an Avatar, and that too as a Purna Avatar (A Total and Consummate Avatar with all His glory), is something extraordinary, rarer than rare; possibly, it happens only once in several thousands of years. And, to be born as such a Purna Avatar's contemporary! A tremendous blessing! I was one such person who was born as His contemporary. I got to hear about Swami's glory and accepted Him as my God. That was my added fortune. I went to see Him and had countless instances of experiencing His *Darshan*, *Sambhashan* and *Sparshan*. What a fortunate person I was! Is there anything more that one could ask for from God! But, Swami didn't stop with that. He would, at times, even show me, very subtly, hints and glimpses of His divine glory.

On one such occasion, I was in a blessedly serene and blissful state of mind with my eyes welling with tears of joy when Swami embraced me and at the end of it when I tried to lift my head from Swami's shoulder, my hand happened to brush the left side of His chest. I was startled at what I felt at that moment. Swami, even without my saying or asking anything, immediately put the question in my mind to rest by saying, 'I am Ardhanarishvara.' After that revelation, I became apprehensive even to go near Him.

(*Ardhanarishvara* is a composite androgynous form of Shiva and his consort Parvati. This form is shown as a fusion of half-male and half-female forms, split down in the centre. The right half is depicted as Shiva, while the left half shows the female form of Parvati.)

At the time when Swami showed His divine glory and some complex divine mysteries to me, I was not mature enough to appreciate the true meaning and the true value of them, mainly because I was just 26 years old then. Now, at this ripe old age of 84, I have come to realise that experiences bestowed on me by Swami were not

attainable even by people practising intense penance and meditation for several thousands of years. But, because of my immaturity at that age of 26, I failed to make the most of those experiences and reap the full spiritual benefits. How foolish I was! This regret pains my heart even now and I would often have to hold back my tears - tears of never-ending pain.

I had discussed earlier about how I cried out, 'Hey, Lord! Sai Natha! Are the prayerful cries of this poor devotee reaching You? Do You hear me? Do You hear me ...?' When I cried out to Swami beseeching him to respond to my prayer, it reminded me of a dreadfully painful episode in Swami's life.

I told you earlier that every Avatar faced troubles and pain during His life as a human. I would like to tell you how Swami Himself underwent such a painful situation.

During one of the early interviews that Swami granted me, He hugged me, allowing me to rest my face on His shoulder. Those days, Swami had a very long and thick mop of hair, and it got in between my face and Swami's shoulder. His hair was very stiff, and I was feeling very ticklish because of it. So, I lifted my face away. Swami knew straightaway what was happening and asked me, 'What? Is it ticklish?' When I hesitantly replied that it was, Swami smiled slightly and told me that the nature and the functions of His hair differed entirely from that of mine. 'My divine principle and the current incarnation I have taken now are full of divine mysteries. Nobody will ever be able to understand Me and My mysteries. I am above and beyond everyone's understanding. You were very close and dear to Me in My Rama Avatar. That is why, I am allowing you close proximity to Me and also sharing some of My mysteries', Swami told me. I was struggling to appreciate the profoundness of what He said.

'One half of My hair is meant for 'broadcasting' while the other half is for 'receiving' news from all the worlds. That is why, unlike your hair, Mine is stiff and pointing upwards', Swami told me and then, in His unique and usual style, continued with His fingers going this way and that way as if He was writing in space and doing something like sending a message in a mystical manner to someone. What Swami told me startled me. Till then I was enjoying the privilege of close proximity to Swami and had somehow treated Him as a human, not as God. What Swami revealed to me was just like only a tiny grain of mustard compared to His entire glory which is larger than even the entire universe and which is immeasurable. How could I have taken Him for granted and treated Him as a human? I was freezing with fear that I had crossed the line in dealing with God. Immediately, as a sign of respect, I stepped back, away from Swami.

Swami knew what was going through my mind. He reached out to my forefinger and pushed it through His thick mop of hair so that I could feel His scalp. I was shocked with what I felt. There was a half a centimeter deep hole-like depression in His skull. I was very concerned with what I felt and overcome with emotion; I cried out 'Swami!' But, Swami was not perturbed. His face was very serene as if there was nothing to worry about.

‘Do you know how this hole-like depression in my head was formed? When I was a young boy and known to everyone as Sathya Narayanan, elders in my family had mistaken My divine powers to be the influence of an evil spirit. They took me to an exorcist to get rid of that perceived evil spirit. He was a heartless and cruel person. He hammered a sharp nail down through my skull and then pulled it out with brute force. A wound in the form of a deep hole was thus formed and blood was gushing out of it in a continuous stream. He was unmindful that he was torturing a very young boy in a manner that even a well-built adult could not have endured. He took out a lime from underneath the statue of Goddess Amman in his premises, sliced it in two, dipped the slices in vermilion and squeezed them into the raw hole in my head. The lime juice caused so much of unimaginable and unbearable pain in me that I felt wave after wave of excruciating pain circulating in my body. I didn’t know what to do. I was in a helpless situation; I collapsed on the ground in pain. Even My family members were finding it difficult to witness My suffering. But, the exorcist was not going to stop.

‘He took a wick that was burning in an oil lamp and inserted it into the raw hole in my head. The heat of the burning wick and the burning sensation from the lime juice further worsened the pain in my body. I wanted to prevent anymore torture and tried to get up. That was it! The exorcist became more angry and gave Me a thundering thrashing on my face while shouting in a roaring manner to the perceived demon, ‘Are you going to leave him or not?’ That hard slap on My face resulted in Me losing the ability to hear through one of My ears. See, I cannot hear through this ear,’ Swami, with a tinge of sadness in His face, told me pointing to an ear.

Swami continued, ‘But, let Me tell you something. Nobody could have survived the torture that was inflicted on Me. If it was Sathya Narayanan who was subjected to that violent abuse and torture, he would not have survived it. But, this body survived all those ordeals simply because it was that of Sai Baba, who has come to serve mankind and to shower His blessings and grace on all’.

Swami was by then His usual self, with a very serene and happy countenance. He created some *Vibuthi* and, as usual, applied some on my forehead and put the rest in my mouth before allowing me to leave the Interview Room.

On the epochal day of 09 June 2015, I cried out to Swami, ‘Do You hear me? Do You hear me ...?’ When I reflected on what I said, it brought very painful memories of what Swami Himself told me in that early interview about the sufferings He underwent and how He lost the use of one ear.

In that thick of the night on that day, 09 June 2015, although I was in my bed, I was not sleepy because I was overcome with excitement over my achievement of writing my second book. With tears of joy, I kept on chanting, ‘Sai Ram, Sai Ram’. I felt a movement in my bed at that time.

What I saw gave me sky-high happiness and excitement. I saw Swami seated next to me. I could feel His soft silk robe; I could feel His mop of hair. In an excited tone, I said, ‘Swami! You have come! How compassionate you are! I cried out saying that You had made me a Valmiki; You had made me a Vyasa; and I wanted to thank You, but that I didn’t know how to reach out to You. I asked You whether You could hear me. And, You, the compassionate one, have come personally in response to my crying out for You! What a fortunate person I am!’

Swami did not appear to be impressed with what I said. He moved away from me and spoke softly in an ethereal (*ashariri*) manner: ‘Hey, mad fellow! What makes you become so egoistic? Have you achieved anything at all? What do you know about writing a book? Do you have the necessary knowledge and the expertise to undertake such a task? Don’t you know that it was I who, by being with you all the time, wrote it through you by guiding your thoughts and by granting you the necessary skills to write? Don’t you know that nothing in this world gets accomplished without My will and without My blessings and grace? Understand that this book has materialised only because that was My *sankalpa* (divine will).’

Swami continued: ‘That aside, why didn’t you write about the inner significance of the Interview Room and the interviews in that book?’

I was struggling to find a suitable response. After some deliberation, in a tone of helplessness, I stuttered: ‘Swami, I do not know anything about it. All what I know is that from the tens of thousands of devotees who throng daily at the Kulwant Hall, You would select a few for interviews and grant them interviews in the interview room. You would bless those fortunate devotees with Darshan, Sambashan and, sometimes, Sparshan also. I do not know anything else, Swami.’

I could hear Swami’s soft ethereal voice: ‘Was granting of interviews practised by Sri Rama?’

‘No, Swami. He did not practise it’, I said in a meek tone.

‘Was it practised by Sri Krishna?’

‘No, Swami’, I replied.

‘Was it practised by Shirdi Sai Baba?’

I got down from my bed, knelt down with my hands folded in prayer, and replied again, ‘No, Swami.’

‘Now do you realise that granting interviews was unique to My Avatar? And, do you know that it was out of My compassion that I granted interviews to devotees chosen from those assembled in the Kulwant Hall? Do you know the spiritual meaning behind all those?’

‘Swami, I have seen You calling devotees for an interview. I do not know the spiritual message behind it, Swami,’ I responded.

Swami then asked me, 'What did I say when I asked a Tamilian to go for the interview?'

'You would say, 'Ullaey Poh', Swami,' I replied. I was not responding in a meek tone anymore. I was happy to hear Swami's voice and also happy that Swami was conversing with me.

Swami continued, 'How did I ask an overseas devotee to go for the interview?'

'You would say, 'Go inside', Swami.'

'Hindi speaking devotees?'

'You would say, 'Anthar chalo', Swami.'

Swami then asked me, how He would ask a Telugu speaking person to go for an interview. I told Him that He would say, '*Lohpalaey Poh*'.

Changing the subject slightly, Swami asked me how God is called in Tamil Nadu. His question caught me unprepared for a brief moment. Swami asked me in an endearing tone 'Don't you know?' Fortunately, I recollected the correct term quickly, and replied, 'Kadavul, Swami.'

'Ah! Kada + ul, that is 'go + in'. Do you realise that both 'ullaey poh' and 'kadavul' mean 'go inside'? And, the one who went inside the Interview Room got My Darshan. That was why I asked My devotees to 'go in', that is 'go within themselves'. Those who go within themselves will see God. I granted interviews so that the devotees would eventually develop that 'inner view'.

'Now, do you understand the inner meaning and the spiritual significance of the Interview Room and interviews? It was because of My love and compassion for My devotees that I granted interviews, something that was not practised by any of the previous Avatars.

'It is not easy for everyone to understand divine mysteries. Some devotees don't even have an interest to understand these mysteries because they don't have the thirst for spirituality. Because of the merits you earned in your previous births, you are thirsting for advancement in spirituality. Because of that and because of divine grace, you are fortunate to have learnt this valuable truth today,' Swami said and vanished into thin air.

I was very happy; God had cared to appear in person and explain to me the significance of the Interview Room and of interviews. Swami wants us to have an inner view. Even in our ancient Sanathana Dharma, it is said, '*bahir mukha durlabhaya; anthar mukha sulabhaya.*' It means that it is easier to find God within us than to find Him in the external world.

I was so happy that night that I could not fall asleep. So, while tears of joy streamed down from my eyes, I spent the night chanting Sai Gayathri. That day was a momentous day for me for more than one reason. I had, earlier on that day, made a resolution to do endless seva. Then, Swami appeared in person. Now, after receiving Swami's discourse on that same day, I consider that day as also the day on which I began the practice of disregarding the ego in me and of searching instead for the real self within me.

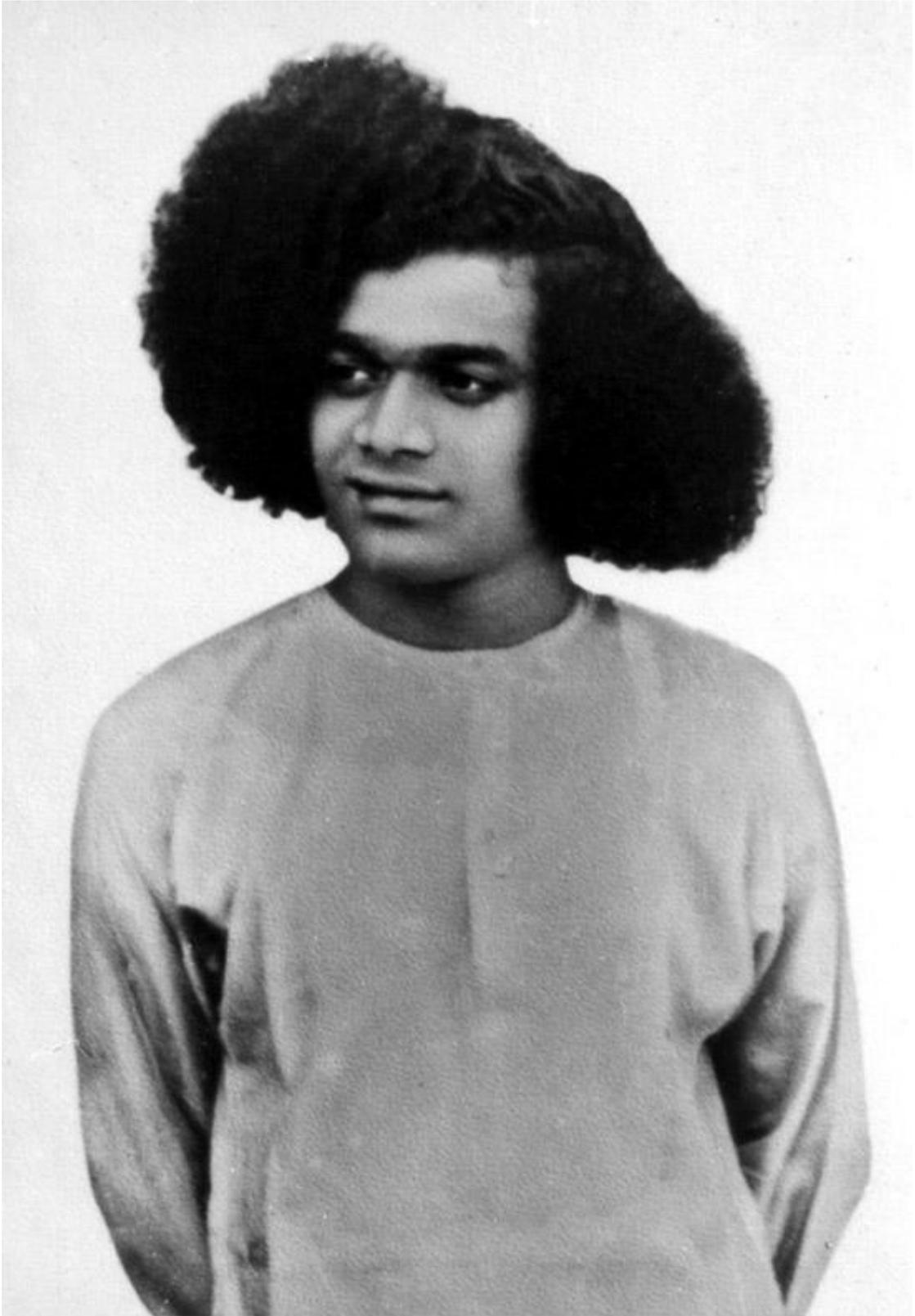
Jai Sai Ram

Note:

On 09 Jun 2015 I was blessed with the experience of coming face-to-face with Bhagawan, but it was already some moments after I had completed the Endless Epilogue for Volume 2 and signed off at its end. I wanted to write this story in Volume 2 of this book itself because the entire story is about that volume. But, I had already given the manuscript for the entire book, except for the Endless Epilogue, to two Sai devotees in Kallakurichchi for them to get it prepared as an electronic document (soft copy). I was at the time living near Kumbakonam, which was quite far from where the two Sai devotees were.

I tried my best to somehow include this story in Volume 2. But, it was a hasty attempt that faced hitches; I could not provide a logical link and therefore could not accommodate the story as a part of any of the stories I had written; further, the printers had some technical issues related to their computers and hence could not accommodate this story. The biggest hitch, however, was that all the details in this story could not be compressed to form a mere part of another story. Nevertheless, I managed to write a very abridged version of this story in pages 173 & 174 of that volume. I am now relieved that I have done justice to the story by writing everything in detail in this Volume.

Jai Sai Ram!





III

‘My Divine Will, Sankalpa’ - A Term That Expresses Magnificence And Auspiciousness

I would like to share with you my personal experiences with Swami’s Sankalpa. His miracles as well as whatever He did to carry out His divine wish and will were, for us, awe inspiring and magnificent miracles; but, for Swami, those were merely His very natural and normal deeds that were characteristic of His divinity.

If all of us and this entire universe are miraculous external manifestations of His glory (mahima), does that not also imply that He Himself is also the very personification of such glory? So, when God comes down as an Avatar in human form, wouldn’t whatever He manifests through His Sankalpa also be full of His glory (mahima) and be amazing to all those who see or hear about it?

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba often said, ‘**My Sankalpa...., My Sankalpa....,**’ but, it is doubtful whether everyone understood the complete meaning of that term. There are several meanings to it - will power, mental determination, purpose, idea, intention, desire, thought, reflection, mind, heart, imagination and plan.

I think that Swami’s use of the term ‘**My Sankalpa**’ has the same connotation as in a couplet in Thiruvalluvar’s Thirukkural:

‘Whatever a person desires, he shall accomplish and attain it as desired, if pursued with a firm and resolute mind.’

(Couplet 666; Thirukkural)

From the above Thirukkural, we understand that if a person with an intense desire resolves wholeheartedly to accomplish a task and sets about it with firm determination, he will gain the necessary mental strength to overcome all obstacles and to persevere with dogged determination, and will thus certainly achieve success.

I think that when Swami talked about His Sankalpa (His will and determination) He also meant the same thing. If man himself can achieve so much through integration of wholehearted desire and resolute determination, how much more could Swami accomplish and how effortless would it be for Him!

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Nathan had spoken about the esoteric truths regarding the glory of His Incarnation on several occasions, but only in a subtle manner. Only occasionally did He speak about them in a crystal-clear manner.

Swami once explained that what He did through His Sankalpa was actually His nature:

‘Mine is no mesmerism, miracle or magic! Mine is genuine Divine Power! Small minds and limited intellects cannot comprehend them! They have no strength or stamina to grasp the magnificence and the majesty! God can do anything! He has all the power in the palm of His hand! My body, like other bodies, is a temporary habitation but My power is eternal, all-pervasive and ever dominant!’

Swami very often said, ‘Nothing happens without My **Sankalpa**’ and, ‘Nobody can stop My **Sankalpa**.’ It is not easy for us, mere humans, to fully comprehend Swami’s **Sankalpa**. I was once fortunate to witness the materialization of a marvellous and mind-blowing **Sankalpa** of Swami. I would like to share that story with you; this too is nothing but Swami’s **Sankalpa**.

In the 60’s I used to go to Parthi - our spiritual capital; our Mathurapuri - frequently. Parthi then was a far cry from the sprawling town that we see now; it was very much a hamlet. There was only one entrance to Prasanthi Nilayam. It was at the same location where the present entrance tower (gopuram entrance) is. But those days the entrance was simply two concrete pillars supporting a tinplate on which ‘Prasanthi Nilayam’ was written in paint.

There was no Ganesha mandir. Instead, Ganesha was installed simply under the peepal (bodhi) tree that is there even now. Even Prasanthi Nilayam itself was very spartan then. The modern conveniences that we see now were not there. Those days, the area occupied by the present day Kulwant Hall was just a sandy concourse. There were trees and shrubberies around that concourse, and devotees who went to Parthi then would fabricate makeshift enclosures behind them to serve as their lodgings. The mandir was the only prominent building then, but that too was a very simple building, unlike the present aesthetically pleasing building - adorned with murals, decorative motifs and reliefs of sculptures. Swami’s accommodation was in the upper floor of that old mandir while the Interview Room was in the ground floor, at the same place where it is now.

To the right of the mandir there were four simple structures linked in one row. The four buildings served as the residence of Sri Kasturi, who was Swami’s Secretary, office of the State Bank, that of the printing press and the Post Office.

There was a narrow lane where the present main road is. There were a couple of roadside tea kiosks, selling chai (tea) and chicory coffee, and another couple of tiny little kiosks with very limited merchandise.

There was no Ganesh Gate as such, but people could walk in and out of Prasanthi Nilayam from there. Every morning, women from the village would be seated at that place, selling milk and curd (yoghurt).

The canteen was just a simple skeletal structure with cuddapah stone slabs secured side by side as some makeshift roof. The slabs did not overlap with each other. Hence, rain water would leak, as if it was pouring, whenever it rained.

I have a strict preference when it comes to having a cup of coffee. I do not enjoy chai or chicory coffee. I enjoy only coffee brewed in the typical South Indian style. Sri Kasturi happened to get to know about my taste and was kind enough to invite me to his residence every morning for a cup of delicious coffee, prepared the South Indian way. I was fortunate even in the case of my accommodation. I happened to befriend a fellow devotee who was working in the printing press. He was using his workplace as his accommodation as well, and was kind enough to let me also stay with him there.

It was 1961. I was in Parthi on a rainy day. I went to the canteen in the morning for breakfast. Rain water was simply pouring into the canteen through the gaps between the loosely secured roof tiles. All those who were there had already chosen the spots where there was no leak from the roof and were eating. When I went, there were no more such spots. I waited for a while, thinking that I could occupy a spot vacated by the next person. But it was taking quite a while, and there was no sign of anyone vacating his spot. So, I decided to have my breakfast from where I was standing.

That day, breakfast was idly, sambar and chutney. Even before I could start eating, rain water that was falling on my plate diluted the sambar and the chutney and was overflowing, leaving only idly and rain water on the plate. I was very frustrated; nevertheless, I grudgingly ate the idly by itself, leaving the rainwater on the plate.

When I was walking back after my breakfast, Sri Kasturi happened to meet me. He must have sensed that something was amiss as my facial expression gave me away. 'What is the matter? You don't look happy. Anything bothering you?', Sri Kasturi asked with a lot of concern. Sri Kasturi and I were very close to each other and would talk freely.

What do I gain by burdening others with my misery? So, very politely I told him, 'Nothing, Sir.' 'Hey! No! Something is bothering you. What is it?', Sri Kasturi asked in a stern tone. I had a lot of respect for him, and thought that it would be impolite if I didn't tell him what happened. So, I told him exactly what happened. I could have stopped with that. But, to my misfortune, in a moment of indiscretion, I continued to

rattle on in a mischievous streak: ‘Mmm... Sir! This person says He is from Vaikunta! Mmm..., but he cannot even provide a leak-proof building!’

‘Finished! Everything is over for me!’: that was what I thought when I saw what happened as soon as I took that swipe at Swami.

As soon as I made that uncalled-for comment, there came Swami! He arrived immediately! Not even a second had lapsed! I started shivering in fear. Swami put His hands on Sri Kasturi’s and my shoulders, and asked Kasturi in a raised stern tone: ‘What did this fellow say? Tell Me....’ Sri Kasturi was a very kind and good-hearted person, and he also used to like me very much. He couldn’t even think of getting me into trouble. ‘No, Swami. Nothing; he was talking to me about his breakfast and about how heavy the rain was. That was all,’ he told Swami.

Sri Kasturi thought that he had done well to save me. But Swami became angry. He raised His voice even more: ‘Hey Kasturi, tell Me the truth. I want to know all that he said.’

Sri Kasturi was reluctant to respond, and that further infuriated Swami. He raised His voice, ‘Kasturi, you know well that I know all that he uttered. Yet, you choose to hide something very important that he said. Umm..., tell me all that he said.’ By then, a number of devotees, mainly senior devotees permanently residing in Parthi, had come there and were standing around us and witnessing the commotion.

Till then I was grateful to Sri Kasturi for taking the trouble to save me, but at that moment he dropped a ton of bricks on my head. He, unable to withstand Swami’s anger, simply came clean: ‘Swami, when he was having breakfast, rainwater poured on his plate and washed away the sambar and the chutney he had on the plate. He ate just plain idly only. He is frustrated about that. So, he said sarcastically that although You are from Vaikunta, You could not even provide a building that was leakproof.’ Sri Kasturi, the renowned orator and dramatist he was, narrated everything beautifully and in explicit detail, but it was like rubbing salt into my wound for me. I was having a very difficult time. Sri Kasturi had fixed me well and truly. At that moment, it was not Sathya Sai Baba in our midst, but Rudra (angry) Sai Baba!

‘Ah..., he! He said so! He..., from Tamil Nadu..., from Tanjavur District... ! He has come here to talk about Me in a demeaning manner! Does he know anything about the power of My **Sankalpa**? Does he know anything about how all My Sankalpas materialize? There isn’t anyone in the whole world and beyond who can understand the power of My **Sankalpa**,’ Swami, raging in anger, continued, ‘Come all of you with Me. I will show you what My **Sankalpa** means.’ Swami then headed back briskly leading all others inside the Interview Room and latched the door after everyone, including poor me, still shivering in fear.

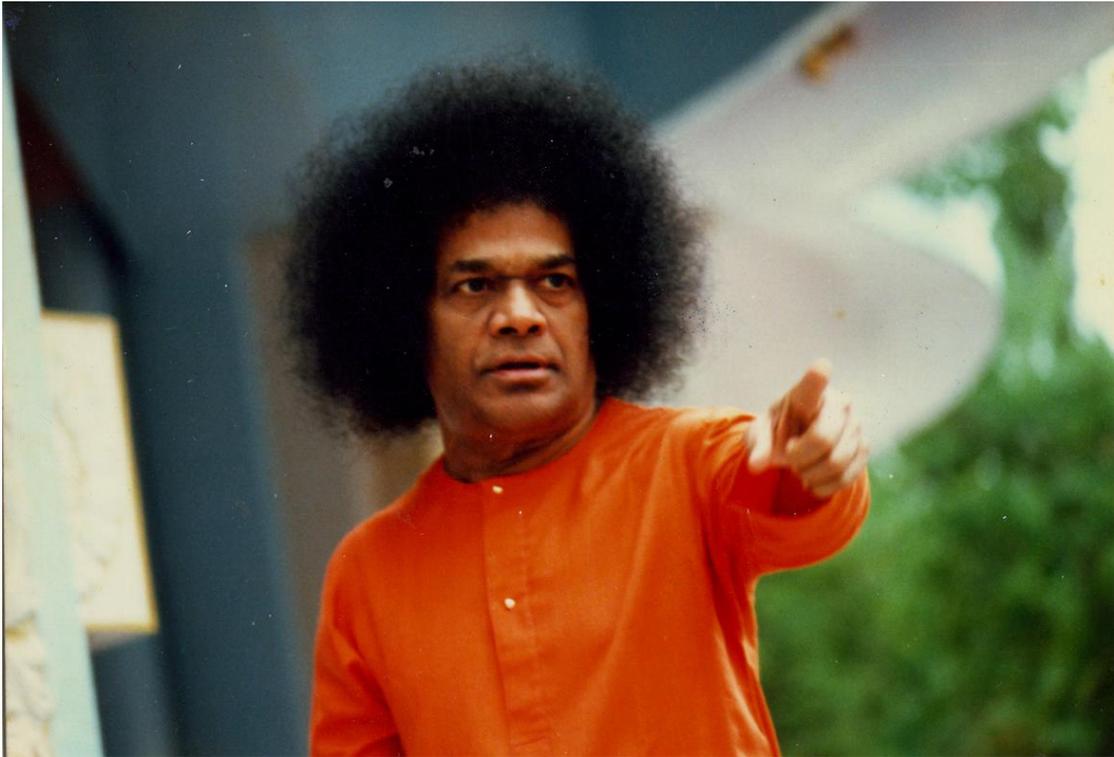
Even inside the Interview Room, I was cursing myself for having been so silly to take a jibe at Swami. My stars must have been mal-aligned at the time. Otherwise, why would I do such a silly thing? Despite my pitiable condition, Swami didn't spare me. Now and then He would stare at Me with anger making my situation all the more worse.

Swami, still angry, roared 'All of you! Now watch My Sankalpa,' He then stretched His right hand out and began to wave it. Within a moment or two, a folder containing a large sheet of thick paper, folded in multiple layers, twelve folds to be exact, fell on the floor. It happened so suddenly that none of us could figure out from where it came. Above us, in that room, there was a concrete slab, which was the floor slab for the upper floor. Certainly, that folder couldn't have fallen from or through that concrete slab. Then, from where did it come? It was beyond us.

That wonderful performance of materialization changed our moods. We considered ourselves blessed to have witnessed that miracle and were awestruck; we were looking at Swami with eyes glued to Him. But Swami was still angry. He turned to me and commanded in a stern and angry tone, 'You mischievous fellow! Unfold that sheet of paper.' With hands still shivering and eyes welling with tears, I opened that sheet of paper, fold by fold. What a surprise, that sheet of paper was so large that it filled almost the entire floor of the Interview Room! It was actually a blueprint that showed architectural views of several buildings.

Swami's countenance changed completely at that moment. With a sweet and enchanting smile on His face, He said, 'This plan shows all the buildings that will come up in Prasanthi Nilayam for the convenience of My devotees. This blueprint was not prepared anywhere in this universe, but from somewhere beyond it. The programme for building these structures will be executed in accordance with My **Sankalpa**.' We were thrilled to hear that announcement and continued to be spellbound, with our palms held together in prayer to Swami.





I was still standing there with my guilt-laden head bent. But Swami lifted my chin up and said, 'Have you now understood at least an iota of My **Sankalpa** and its glory? It is only because you made fun of Me and spoke sarcastically that all of you here have had the opportunity to witness My **Sankalpa** about the blueprint that was printed at a place beyond this universe and about the buildings that will come up in years to come. You told Kasturi that the One from Vaikunta couldn't even build a leak-proof building. It is all right. You did not say so because you saw some deficiency in Me. Instead, it was another form of prayer in which, because of the intense love you have for Me, you found fault with Me. I am not angry with you. On the contrary I have immense merciful love for you. Be happy.' Swami was full of compassion towards me.

Swami was so compassionate that He showed sympathetic understanding and tolerance of my silly and sarcastic remark. He made use of that instance to show us a wee bit of the immense glory (mahima) of His Avatarhood. What a compassion! I wanted to sing in praise of Him, but, alas, I was stuck for fitting words. At that moment, I was jealous of Saint Poets Sambanthar and Navukkarasar, who sang numerous endearing hymns expressing their earnest love and gratitude to God.

I would like to share with you an important aspect about the blueprint Sankalpa of the Poornavatar. Swami created that blueprint in 1961. But the entire works were completed only in the 90's; it took some 30 years to complete the works. Swami had planned everything nearly 30 years ahead and said that the blueprint was produced somewhere else, not in the world that we live in. This gives us a hint of what Swami

meant when He said ‘My **Sankalpa** - a term that represents His acts that were enriched with grace, glory and auspiciousness.’

I have seen the enormous power of Swami’s **Sankalpa** on numerous occasions. The 666th verse in the Thirukkural says that if one sets out to accomplish something wholeheartedly and with a firm and perseverant resolve, he would overcome all obstacles and achieve success. Swami’s **Sankalpa** always materialises despite even huge odds. I have seen that several times. I think that those instances are proof of the validity and the accuracy of the 666th Kural.

In this context, I would like to share with you an instance where Swami’s **Sankalpa** prevailed despite even renowned experts’ opinion that was otherwise. It also happened in the 90’s, when Swami’s blueprint for Prasanthi Nilayam was being transformed into brick and mortar. Swami wanted an airport to be built in Puttaparthi. A team of engineers - all renowned specialists in their respective fields - was working relentlessly to complete the project by the date set by Swami.

The construction of the runway for the Airport ran into obstacles that delayed the project. There was an outcrop of a rock that had to be cleared to make way for the runway. The engineers tried all means – all state-of-the-art techniques - such as using a machine-mounted mechanical breaker and using chemical explosives, but to no avail because the rock was dense and unyielding. With only a few days left for the completion date stipulated by Swami, the engineers had lost all hope of meeting that target date.

They reported the hurdle they faced on site to Swami and pleaded for an extension of time to complete the project. Swami listened to them very patiently, but appeared not concerned about the problem. He told the engineers that it was only a sandstone rock and not granite and that it could be broken very easily. He also told them categorically that it was not necessary to extend the completion date and that, as per His **Sankalpa**, the project would be completed on time. He then asked the engineers to return to the site, and He also followed them.



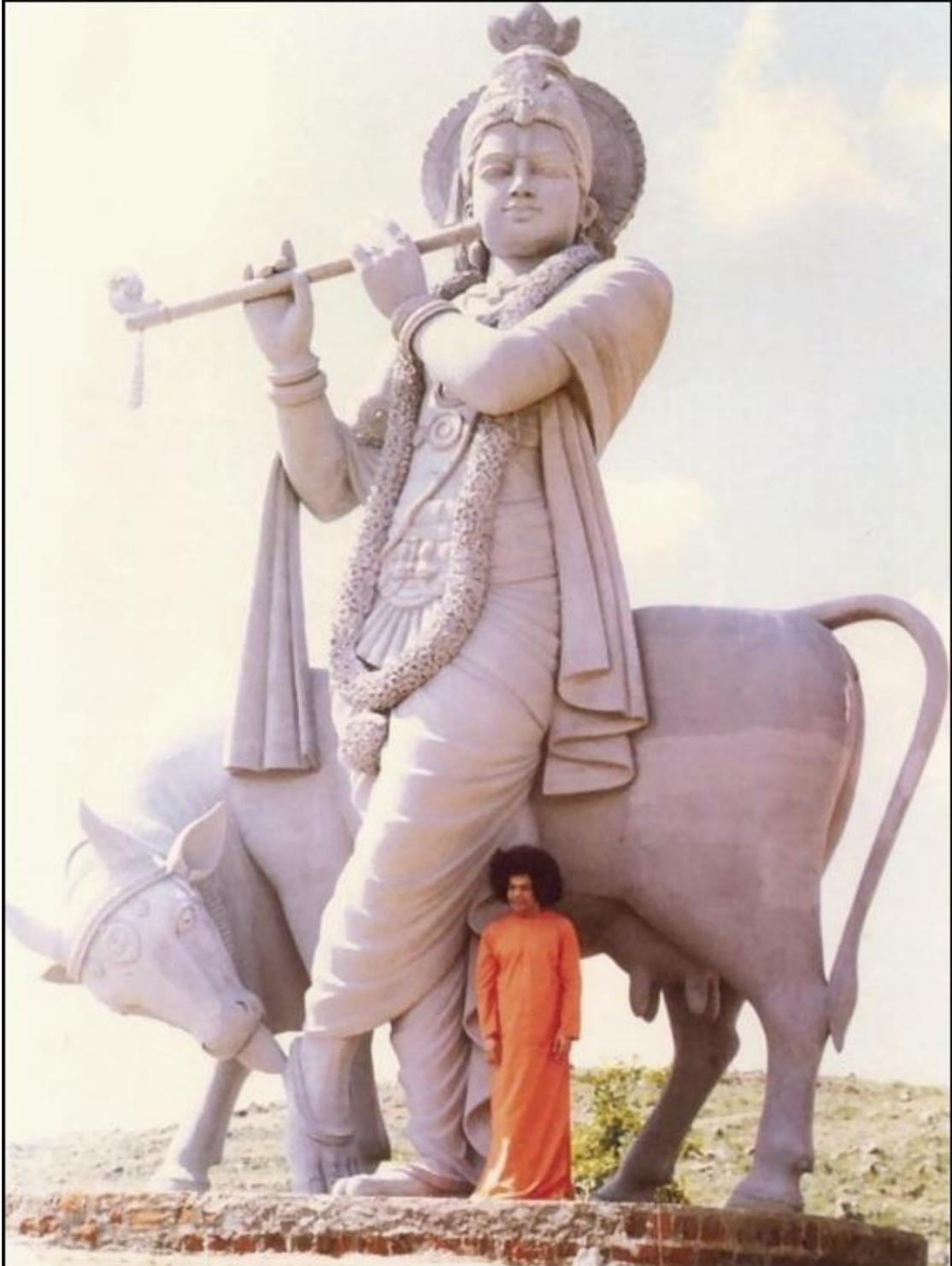
On site, Swami did not even alight from His car. He asked for His car to be driven as close as possible to the granite rock and, while being seated in the car, opened the car door and kicked that rock gently about twice or thrice. He then asked a workman to break that rock with a sledge hammer. The engineers were watching with disbelief and some scepticism at what Swami was doing. They had already employed all available techniques to break the rock, with no success. Yet, Swami was treating the matter very lightly. They felt that Swami was, in a way, debunking their expertise in engineering.

The workman started hammering the rock. It was a moment of disbelief and wonder for everyone; it was a moment of revelation! The workman had hardly given two or three blows and the entire granite rock came crumbling down into tiny rubbles. The engineers were dumbstruck by what they witnessed. It was yet another instance of the power of Leela Mohana Sai's **Sankalpa** prevailing despite experts' opinion. All those who were watching this miracle and Swami's **Sankalpa** manifesting itself were happy that Swami had given them an opportunity to witness it; they considered it a blessing from Swami. It is needless to say that the Airport project was successfully completed on schedule.

Jai Sai Ram!

IV

You Were The Gopika Suguna In My Krishna Avatar



In the early years of Prasanthi Nilayam, the Mandir (temple) was the only large building there. Swami's accommodation, a modest one, was located in the upper floor of that Mandir. Overlooking the Mandir was a vast sandy concourse where the present-day Sai Kulwant Hall is. Devotees would be seated in that concourse from sunrise to sunset, eagerly hoping and praying for Swami's Darshan. During those years, Swami also would reciprocate the love of His devotees by stepping out frequently onto the balcony of the Mandir to grant His Darshan.

It was sometime in 1963. I was at Parthi, and on one of the days I was seated along with other devotees in the sandy concourse, hoping and praying for Swami's Darshan. Swami stepped out onto the balcony within a short time and brought happiness to all of us. Swami then turned towards where I was and summoned, 'Hey, Suguna, come up here.' Since Suguna is a name referring to a female, I turned around to see who Swami could be calling out. Then Swami pointed at me saying, 'I am calling you,'

I was happy that I was getting an opportunity to be near Swami although a bit confused because of the name. Anyway, I hurried up to the balcony with supreme joy.

Swami put His hand on my shoulder and said, 'Are you wondering why I called you Suguna?' It didn't matter at all to me. In fact, I was in supreme bliss for the unexpected opportunity to be near Swami when he beckoned me. I said, 'You can call me by any name Swami. There is always some reason behind whatever You do.' Visibly overwhelmed with joy, I knelt down in front of Swami and managed to whisper, 'Being called by You itself is a blessing. And being called by you to come near You is even a greater blessing, Swami.'

Don't you think that what I said made sense? I was just a nobody in that large congregation, sitting very expectantly for a mere glimpse of Swami. However, Swami rewarded me with much more than that. He summoned me to the balcony to be close to Him. How fortunate I was! What a blessing it was! How did I qualify for it? Certainly, it must have been the reward for penance undertaken by me in countless previous births.

Swami gazed down at me, held my hand very affectionately and lifted me up. Then, He told me: 'During My Krishna avatar (incarnation), when I was very young, I was brought up by foster parents Nandagopan (Nanda) and Yashoda of Gokulam (the village of cowherds). Mother Yashoda had pure motherly love for Krishna. Krishna was her entire world. She dedicated herself to Little Krishna and derived immense bliss attending to his every need. Her love for Him was unsurpassed and immeasurable; it was so pristine in purity and unparalleled in sacrifice.

'Little Krishna's divine beauty that radiated a magnetic charm and the pleasant childish pranks that He always indulged in brought happiness to all, most notably to the Gopas and Gopis (dairy farm lads and damsels) in Gokulam, and captivated their hearts. The love the Gopas and the Gopis had for little Krishna was absolutely unsullied

and pure. Particularly, the love the Gopis had for young Krishna was beyond description. They spent every moment of their lives thinking of Krishna. That love is the best example by far of the love between the Paramathma (God) and the Jivathma (individual). So far, no one else has had such intense selfless love and devotion for God'

I could see Swami showing signs of emotion when He spoke about the Gopis. Wouldn't He? Was He not the very same Krishna of the Dwapara Yuga (eon) who reciprocated the Gopis' love for Him by playing and dancing with them, and who thus showered His Grace on them? Watching Swami, I felt that even though eons (Yugas) had passed, He was still missing that timeless love, that pure and unsurpassed love, of the Gopis.

Almost immediately, Swami composed Himself with a countenance of peace and affection and became His usual self and continued: 'Every Gopi, with no exception, would eagerly look forward to taking little Krishna to her home to dote on Him by feeding Him with butter, milk, yoghurt and several delicious sweets, and would derive immense pleasure from merely watching Little Krishna relishing them. This was happening day after day and yet the Gopis' love for their little Krishna did not show any sign of diminishing.

'Ah..., let Me tell you why I called you Suguna. A newly wed bride named Suguna came to her in-laws' house in Gokulam, the village of cowherds. She found that all the Gopis in Gokulam were completely engrossed with the thoughts of young Krishna and that their lives were centred around Him. Suguna had not seen young Krishna yet, but she was enamoured with what she had heard about His divine leelas (divine play). She thus developed love steeped in devotion, which rapidly evolved to a deep-rooted and supreme devotional love - Krishna Prema , and pined passionately for just one glimpse of young Krishna.

'In the meantime, Mother Yashoda also began to suffer pangs of pain because the Gopis were depriving her of little Krishna. Though Yashoda wanted to dote on her darling child by feeding Him with butter, milk, sweets etc. and by playing with Him, He was hardly seen at home. He would always be in some Gopi's house or the other, enjoying Himself merrily and granting bliss to the Gopis. Mother Yashoda wanted Krishna for herself so that she could shower her maternal love on Him to her heart's content. She asked her husband, Nanda, to erect a fence right around their house so that no Gopi could come to take Krishna away to her home.

'When the fence was erected, the Gopis realised that they had been delivered a deathblow that deprived them of their access to dear Krishna. They were heartbroken.

'Imagine poor Suguna's plight. At least the other Gopis had seen Krishna; not only that, they also had been blessed with His company on numerous occasions. Suguna - poor thing! - she had not even had a glimpse of Krishna. She began to consider herself

the most unfortunate person. She wanted to have at least just a glimpse of Little Krishna. The more she thought about it, the more she became consumed with that desire, to the point of becoming fanatic about it. She was depressed with the thought that her life would be meaningless without at least a glimpse of Little Krishna and undertook a fanatic penance to behold the sight of Little Krishna.

‘The Gopis, though lacking in worldly education and intelligence, were pure at heart and were deeply devoted to Lord Krishna. It was a practice in those days to light the lamp every evening from the house of the Village Head. This tradition had originated from the belief that if they lighted their lamp from the house of a wealthy householder, they would also enjoy a life of prosperity and plenty. Nanda was not only affluent but also a respected Village Head. Every evening ladies used to drop by to light their oil lamps from the one kept in front of Nanda's home.

‘One day, Suguna went to the house of Nanda and Yashoda to light her lamp. And while she was lighting her lamp, she gazed around in search of her lovely Little Krishna with the hope that she would be able to get at least a glimpse of Him somewhere. She was fully absorbed in the thoughts of Krishna, and in the meantime the flame had burnt down the entire lamp that Suguna was holding and had spread onto Suguna's hand and scalded her fingers and palm. Suguna, however, had no body consciousness at all! Meanwhile, Yashoda happened to see this and was aghast. She ran immediately to Suguna and pulled out her blistered and blackened hand from the flame. Suguna had lost her body consciousness in her devotional love for Krishna - Krishna Prema. It was love that was unremitting; it was absolutely pure and entirely devotional. Suguna was not the least concerned about the pain and discomfort her burnt fingers were causing. She merely continued to be happily immersed in the superconscious state (Samadhi) of Krishna consciousness.

‘It was you who was Suguna in the *Dwapara yuga* (eon). You were very close to Me when I was Rama also. You have always had overwhelming love and deep devotion for God. That is why I am rewarding you with close proximity to Me and also with My Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan (opportunities bestowed to the devotee to behold the Divine, touch the Divine and converse with the Divine). It is for this same reason that I called you ‘Suguna’ a while ago.

‘Though you were close to Me when I was Rama and subsequently Krishna, you have no such recollections. No one has the ability to see or remember his past lives. I have not endowed that power to anyone. But I know everyone's past, present and future to the minutest detail. None of you will be able to understand Me,’ Swami - our beloved Leela Mohana Sai, the Supreme Master - concluded in a tone that conveyed supreme authority.

I was overjoyed that Swami had acknowledged my love for God so explicitly. When I recollected that pleasant experience, one thing became very clear; what transpired was nothing but Swami's sankalpam (His wish and will). He called me Suguna and invited me upstairs; then He narrated my life history in my past lives; and

most importantly, He explained very poignantly, the unassailable superiority of the pristinely pure love the Gopis, who were nothing but absolutely unlettered farm maids, had for Krishna. Yes, it was clear to me; it was Swami's sankalpam that I should write what He told me so that His present-day devotees would take to heart the divine message in it and benefit from it. How meticulously has He planned everything! Whatever He did was for the benefit of His devotees. Even the mere act of calling me Suguna was for the benefit of His devotees. What a compassionate Lord!

Another thought came into my mind at that time. What Swami told me about how Suguna felt no pain even though her fingers were scorched reminded me of the ever-popular 'turban clad Tamil poet' Mahakavi Bharathiyar. He sang very beautifully in one of his songs:

‘...

And if I keep my fingers inside a raging fire, son of Nanda;

I feel only that sweet sensation of touching you, son of Nanda.’

Though, this verse makes no explicit mention of Suguna, it subtly depicts that very same episode in all its details, and I believe that the Great Poet was influenced by it when he composed these powerful lines on Krishna Consciousness.

Suguna was in a state of heightened Krishna consciousness. Thus, though the scorching flame had caused physical pain in her body, she thought that she was having the sensation of touching Krishna and hence was in absolute bliss. At around the same time when the turban clad poet, Bharathi, composed a captivating song about it, Suguna herself was reborn as Sai Mohan! What an amazing timing of events in Swami's creations!

Jai Sai Ram!





V

My Mother's Prophetic Dream; Swami's Words Came True

In the first chapter of this book, I mentioned how religious the elders in my family were. They were steadfast in their love for God and observed traditional sacred austerities unfailingly. Every month, on quite a number of days we would conduct spiritual activities such as puja (prayers in an elaborately ritualistic manner) to various deities and parayanam (the ritual of reading scriptures and epics of religious relevance and completing such reading within the stipulated number of days). Even on other days, our home would invariably be suffused with the sounds of hymns, chants and the many songs about the divine. Elders at home used to keep us enthralled with their devotional renditions in praise of various deities. We youngsters in the family were a blessed lot indeed, for we were always surrounded by divine vibrations from the various Sadhanas (spiritual practices) performed by our elders. I was born with the inherent quality of love for God. Further, at home I grew up in a spiritual atmosphere generated by the sacred austerities practised by my elders. Thus, since my young days I have been firmly rooted to God.

The wise would say, 'A good book is your good friend.' That is because a good book would inspire noble thoughts and develop sound intellect in a person. To quench my thirst for the love of God, I would read good books. I developed this habit early, when I was very young. In our home, there was a large collection of books that contained rare information on divinity and spirituality. I read all those books, one after the other, repeatedly.

My voracious reading on divinity and spirituality helped me to understand even difficult concepts effortlessly and to easily grasp even mystical statements shrouded in spiritual mystery and subtle nuances in spirituality. These abilities enabled me to develop an enhanced clarity of mind. I was thus able to train my mind to avoid thoughts arising from egoistic and selfish desires and to instead follow the righteous path. Besides these experiences, I also had the feeling that deep within me someone like a subtle-Guru, though I had neither sought nor desired one such, was guiding me. Through this guidance, I began to experience the unfolding of several new revelations. It was this and the enhanced mental clarity that I had developed that enabled me to have divinely experiences that I had written about in the story of Sri Sai's Divine Will In Renaming Somanathan to Sai Mohan (Chapter 1 of this book).

After my school education, I was employed as an officer at the Railways Office in Tiruchirappalli. It was then that I had the great good fortune of getting to hear about Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I was fortunate to be able to frequently visit Puttaparthi, the hallowed land where Sai lived. I was able to receive His love, blessings and grace in abundance. I must have performed countless benevolent deeds in thousands of my previous births to earn so much in this lifetime. I would often be proud of myself for having performed meritorious deeds in my past lives and reaping the rewards in this birth. But then I would immediately moderate my mood by looking at the matter in a philosophical angle.

Wasn't it He who made me into what I am? It was nothing but His compassion and grace that enabled me to lead many lives of righteousness and love for God. It was He who made me perform meritorious deeds in my past lives. Nothing would have materialized unless it was according to His sankalpam (wish and will). Every time I think of this, I would be overwhelmed with gratitude for Him and there would be tears of joy in my eyes.

Swami had granted me numerous interviews (private audiences) at Prasanthi Nilayam and blessed me with revelations of His supreme magnificence, though only a miniscule aspect of it. During the early days, Swami would, in the Interview Room, ask me to embrace Him. The first couple of times I did so, I was overcome by fear, but when I did so on subsequent occasions, I felt that those embraces gave me exalted bliss and an indescribable feeling of positive changes within me; I was feeling rejuvenated.

In fact, during such Interviews Swami would insist that I embrace Him. I did not understand why He should demand so. Further, I was also puzzled about it.

When I asked some senior devotees in Prasanthi Nilayam for their views on what was puzzling me, they told me that no one had ever experienced what I had. They lauded me saying that I was extremely fortunate to have received such a divine benediction. I discussed it with even Sri Kasturi, Swami's very close devotee. He also told me that I was an extremely fortunate person and that no one else had had such an experience with Swami.

That experience of Swami insisting that I embrace Him lasted only for the first five or six interviews. He did not ask me to embrace Him after that. Why did He insist initially? Why did He stop asking me to embrace Him after that? These questions were puzzling me.

A year after my first interview with Swami, I happened to go home to see my parents. There, I told my mother all that I knew about Sri Sathya Sai Baba and about all the wonderful experiences with Him. My mother was very happy that her son was so fortunate to be blessed with close interactions with Sri Sathya Sai Baba. And, when

I mentioned to her how Swami insisted that I embrace Him, she couldn't control her joyous excitement. The God-loving woman she was, immediately, with streams of joyous tears flowing down and hands folded in prayer, she started calling out aloud each and every God and deity she knew of and expressed her gratitude.

Then, as if she had stumbled on something important, she asked, 'Hey Son, since when did Sai Baba grant you the privilege of embracing Him?'

I told her that it happened about a year ago.

'Ah, you used to suffer from that mysterious fever at least once a month. It appears that you are not afflicted anymore with that mystery fever,' my mother, with a very broad smile and her eyes beaming with happiness, told me.

I was surprised that my mother was talking at that juncture about something unrelated.

Anyway, I told her in a very affectionate tone, 'Yes, of course Amma! I used to be troubled with fever of a mysterious kind at least once a month. Thankfully, I have not had it for the last few months. Anyway, why are you bringing that topic now, Amma?'

'Hey..., what a foolish son you are! You talk always about Sai Baba; you say that He is God; at least once a month you run to Puttaparthi; haven't you understood why Sai Baba insisted that you embrace Him?' My mother, in a trembling tone, as if she was going to break down, continued, 'Every time you embraced Him, He took away a part of your ailment. He continued that practice till you were completely cured. Couldn't you understand that after that Swami stopped asking you to embrace Him? Didn't you realise that for the last few months you did not suffer from that mystery fever? Are you such a fool that you couldn't find the link between all these events?' By then, my mother was crying aloud: 'My son! What a blessed soul you are! Sai Baba allowed you to embrace Him so that He could take over your ailment. He did not want you to suffer; so, He took that suffering upon Himself! Couldn't you understand it, my son! This Sai Baba is none but the Lord of compassion who didn't want my son to suffer! In Him, you have found a Divine Doctor! You are fortunate! And, what a fortunate mother I am, to have given birth to you, my darling child!' My mother, unable to control her feelings of joy and gratitude, continued to cry aloud.

Divine personalities don't always make known what they do to alleviate the sufferings of devotees. Most of the time, we, mere mortals, also lack the intelligence to understand divine dispensations. My mother was so smart, maybe because she was God-crazy, that almost immediately she found the link between my ailment and the act

of embracing Swami. I felt somewhat sheepish. Why didn't I think of all these? After listening to my mother, my devotion towards Swami became more intense.

In every interview, Swami used to bring up the topic of the issues and worries my family was facing. But even before I began to mention these matters, He would say, 'I know..., I know; I know everything.' He would then continue to tell me in detail about our problems and assure me that by His Grace, all of them would be resolved. He would wipe away the tears in my eyes with His own handkerchief and comfort me with the divine assurance, 'Why fear, when I am here?'

Whenever I went home to see my parents, I would share with my mother all the news from Puttaparthi. She would be spellbound listening to my interactions with Swami in those interviews. It was her nature; when my God-loving mother heard anything about the glory of divinity, her face would glow with extra brilliance, and she would forget herself and enter a different world. I am limited by my vocabulary to describe the state of bliss she would enter into; I would derive happiness simply watching her beautiful face radiate happiness. In that state of divine bliss, she would plead in a prayerful tone: 'Sai Rama! Sai Krishna! I am not fortunate to have ever seen You. But the love and compassion You show to the one from my womb is clearly an attestation that I also must have done numerous meritorious deeds in my past lives.' She would be in a state of heightened spiritual excitement by then, and, totally oblivious to the surroundings, she would continue, 'Sai Rama! Lord Sai Krishna! I know, You are the epitome of compassion personified. I know, one day, You will certainly grant this silly devotee of Yours also an opportunity to see Your physical form and be blessed. Sai Rama! Lord Sai Krishna! I know, one day You will answer the prayers of this insignificant devotee of Yours.'

Sometime in 1964, I had a very fulfilling stay at Puttaparthi; from there I went to my hometown to see my parents. My mother was full of excitement when she saw me. 'Hey Somu (my pet name), I had a very divine dream,' she said in an excited tone, with her beautiful eyes opened wider and face shining in happiness.

Here, I am unable to resist mentioning a few words about my mother's beauty. She always had a pleasant and sweet countenance that would remind me of Mother Lakshmi. I would very often compliment her in a playful manner on her beauty. But she would feel uncomfortable about it and respond by staring at me piercingly. It was her way of rebuking me for my mischief. But, not always. Sometimes, she would respond with a sweet and motherly affectionate glance at me. I would then feel that she was acknowledging my compliments with a red-carpet welcome. So, it was a case of mixed experience for me; sometimes painful, sometimes pleasant.

I was impatient to listen to the story about the dream: 'Amma, what was that dream about?'

‘Baba appeared in my dream,’ she said, and immediately closed her wide eyes in devotion and folded her hands in prayer.

I was impatient: ‘OK, continue, Amma.’

She continued: ‘It was about 3 am. I was fast asleep. In my dream, Swami came and sat down in a chair in our living room. I was in the kitchen at that time. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t even know how to welcome Him. I began to tremble. Anyway, I made my way to where He was and said, in a rather unsteady and shivering tone, ‘Swami..., welcome! Welcome..., Swami,’ and knelt down in prayer. Even before I could stand up, Swami started waving His hand and produced Vibuti. You had told me that Swami would wave His hand and produce Vibuti. But, when I saw that happening right in front of my eyes, I didn’t know what to do or what to say. I was overwhelmed with surprise and cried in excitement. Swami was very kind. He looked at me affectionately and said, ‘No...,no! Why do you have to cry...? I have come, haven’t I...? Why do you have to cry then?’

‘Swami applied some of the Vibuti on my forehead and put some in my outstretched palms. I was still shivering in excitement. By then, you walked in. Swami applied Vibuti on your forehead also. I was uncertain about what was expected of me at that moment. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t even know how to attend to Him in a fitting manner. I could only kneel down again and pray at His Lotus Feet.’ At that point, my mother started crying aloud again. I tried to comfort her by stroking her head and patting her back, and told her, ‘Amma, you are narrating only a dream. Why do you have to cry? And, what is the use of crying instead of narrating the rest of the dream?’

Mother wiped her tears away and continued: ‘Swami Himself told me about the problems we were facing and assured that He would see to it that they would all be resolved.’ Then, she paused and looked at me very affectionately, but I could see a strain of sadness in her face. I prompted her, ‘Then, what happened, Amma?’ Hesitantly, she told me, ‘I told you that you had walked in. You were standing in a corner with your hands folded in prayer. I pointed at you and asked Swami, ‘How will this boy’s future be, Swami?’ ‘He will not marry. It is because he is intensely interested in spirituality. Because of this interest, he will always be doing benevolent activities. At one stage, due to his immense devotion, he will have the privilege of conducting the renovation of a temple and performing the consecration ceremony (kumbhabhishekam) for it,’ Swami told me.’

My mother was visibly sad. In the midst of wailing, she kept asking, ‘Will my darling child not get married? Son, what are you going to do?’ I tried to pacify her by saying that it was only a dream and that in real life everything would work out well. She

was not convinced. She cried out her mental agony: ‘No..., you are the one who told me a lot of stories about Swami appearing in dreams and about how whatever Swami said in those dreams became true. What do I do? Will my child not get married?’ She started attending to her household chores while continuing to cry with a heavy heart.

My mind reflected on what Swami said in the dream. I thought: ‘Swami has often said that we should treat His dreams as His visiting cards and as true. If that is so, surely, what Swami told my mother would also materialize. Even if what He said about my marriage becomes true, it doesn’t really matter. But, if what He said about the consecration ceremony comes to pass, I will truly be a very fortunate person. I hope and pray that what Swami said becomes true.’ Then, I began to pray fervently, ‘Oh, Lord Sai! Whatever You say will always be absolutely true; there will not even be a trace of any uncertainty in it. Swami, You are the Lord of Lords! Please see to it that what You said in the dream happens in real life also.’

Time passed. Likewise, my life also carried on. It was now 1983. I was attached to the Railways Office in Chennai and had been asked to go on posting to their office in Tiruchirappalli (Tiruchi). Though I was not happy with that posting, I could not avoid it.

In Tiruchi, after work, I would go to some temple in the city or the suburbs. That was my daily routine. One day, I happened to go to the Uthamar Temple. (It is an ancient temple, believed to have been built in the 8th Century AD). In that temple, the triple moorthys (Hindu trinity) in the Hindu pantheon, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, along with their respective consorts, Saraswathy, Poornavalli and Saundara Parvathi, are installed in individual temples, replete with a tower (gopuram) and sanctum, for each deity. As was my usual practice, I followed the ritual of worshipping at all the temples, one by one.

When I entered the temple of Saundarya Parvathi (also known as Shivashakthi) I felt an unusual experience, as if there was a divine magnetic field that attracted me. I spoke to an Assistant Priest in that temple about what I experienced. From what he told me, I understood that there was a valid reason for my experience. But I do not wish to go into that matter now as it is not relevant to this story.

While talking to me, that Assistant Priest informed me that he and a colleague had just started performing Lalitha Sahasra Namam Archanai the previous Friday for Mother Saundarya Parvathi and that they would continue with it on all Fridays. (Archanai is the chanting of the names and glory of God with devotion. When the archanai contains 1,008 respected names of God, it is called SAHASRA NAMAM. As our resources (time and material) permit, when we do archanai with love, devotion and concentration, we can obtain God's grace and blessings.)

That Assistant Priest further explained that since not many devotees were visiting this Temple, they were very short of income and that he and his team of temple staff were finding it difficult to make ends meet. So, they had embarked on this supplication to ask for Mother Parvathi's grace and blessings to increase the number of devotees visiting the Temple.

When I reflected on the feeling of the divine magnetic pull I felt in this Temple, I thought that there was a mystical link between this Temple and me. Was Mother Parvathi telling me something through that divine magnetic pull? I felt that I should be closely associated with this Temple. I told the Assistant Priest that I would also participate in the archanai on subsequent Fridays.

During those days I had a number of pious friends. I roped in a few of them to join in the archanai. All of them agreed to join me every Friday in performing the archanai. We also decided that while we chanted the 1,008 names of the Mother, the Assistant Priest would do Kunkumam Archanai (offering vermilion powder at the end of the chanting of each of the 1,008 names) for Her. Mr. Sampath, who has written a Congratulatory Message (paratturai) at the beginning of this book, was one of my friends who participated regularly in the archanai. The archanai went on very well every Friday. I would be seated in a corner beholding the Mother's charming physical form in the statue with full concentration and absorbing the divine vibrations from the chanting of the Holy Names. At the end of the archanai, the congregation would sing a few devotional songs and then conclude the day's proceedings with Mangala Arathi (waving of camphor flame in a slow circular fashion) to Mother.

The Friday archanai was such a success that the Temple administration acknowledged us with a lot of respect. We began to be known as the Friday Committee within the Temple administration.

The Friday archanai progressed very well, and when it was time to celebrate its first anniversary, we did it in grand style by inviting 108 sumangalis (women, married and living with their husbands) to perform the archanai by chanting the Mother's 1,008 names and, at the end of it, serving a sumptuous meal for more than 500 devotees.

The Friday archanai continued with intense religious fervour for some three or four years.

Around that time, the Management Committee decided to do a kumbhabhishekam in the Temple.

Kumbhabhishekham (also known as *Samprokshanam*) is a Hindu temple ritual that is believed to homogenize, synergize and unite the mystic powers of the deity. It is part of the consecration ceremony of Hindu temples. Kumbha means the Head and denotes the Shikhara or Crown of the Temple and abhishekham (or *prokshanam*) is ritual

bathing. Kumbhabhishekham is widely celebrated as a festival in South India. On the appointed day and at an auspicious time, the Kumbha is bathed with charged and sanctified holy waters in the sacrificial pot and, by a mystic process, these pranic powers trickle down a silver wire and enter the deity installed inside the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. The deity, which was until then only a granite sculptured stone image, is believed to transform into a vibrant and vivid living representation of the all-powerful God with innate beatitude, grace and grandeur, conferring divine blessings on all devotees.

To make way for the renovation, which is a pre-requisite for the kumbhabhishekam, in accordance with the prescribed ritualistic procedures, the spiritual powers possessed by the deities in the Temple had to be transferred to kalashams (pots containing holy water) placed in balalayams (mini-Temples). The mini-Temples had already been set up, but nothing else happened after that. The Management Committee did not show any interest in proceeding with the renovation work and the kumbhabhishekam. Even under such circumstances, our Friday archanai continued unabated.

One Friday, we were chanting the names of the Mother, and when we were chanting the 500th name or thereabout, I saw something mysterious; the decorative curtain behind Mother Parvati's statue started flapping very prominently, as if it was being blown by a gusty wind. But the air there was very still! Almost simultaneously, I saw the Assistant Priest beginning to act in a bizarre manner. He stopped offering the vermilion powder for the Mother and entered into a trance-like state and began to dance unconsciously. I was quite frightened then.

That Assistant Priest, unconscious of himself, then came charging towards me from the Mother's sanctum, grabbed my hand with unusual and unbearable brute force, and in a very loud and powerful roaring voice demanded: 'You...! I have observed that you always keep your sight fully focused on Me and that your eyes are full of prayerful tears. I know that when you are in My presence, you have no other thoughts but only those of Me, and that you forget yourself when you are in that state of absolute devotion to Me. This Temple is not being managed properly. It is now more than one year since the mini-Temples were set up, but nothing has been done so far to start the renovation work. I want you to undertake this work of renovating my temple tower. Make a promise to Me that you will undertake the renovation work of the tower of My Temple as well as the kumbhabhishekam for My Temple.' His face had turned reddish by then. It was very clear to me that he was possessed by Amman, the Holy Mother. Most of the other devotees who were there were frightened at what was happening and had left the scene.

Even my friends who were reciting the names of the Mother during the archanai were frightened and had left that place. I was just a monthly-paid employee. How could

I undertake the renovation and the kumbhabhishekam of a temple? I wanted to extricate myself from that difficult situation. In a very humble tone, I said, 'Mother, is it right to ask me, a mere monthly-paid employee, to undertake such a massive project when there are several very rich and benevolent people in Tiruchirappalli?' The Amman-possessed Assistant Priest became even more ferocious. His grip of my hand tightened further; it was as if a mechanical vice was gripping my hand. His face became even more reddish. Clearly, the Mother was not pleased with my response.

'No....,' the Mother roared, 'I do not like any money from those racketeers and black money hoarders to be used for the consecration ceremony of My Temple. Even though you have only very little money, you earned it the hard way and in a righteous manner. Your heart is pure, and love flows out from it. I will accept consecration ceremony done only by you, not by others. And that is what will give Me satisfaction. Mm..., make a promise to Me that you will do what I have asked for.'

I was in a dilemma. But, Amman, acting through that Assistant Priest, was not going to take 'no' for an answer. Very suddenly, 'Amman' grabbed me and pushed me very forcefully towards the statue of the Mother. I could not balance myself, and I could not avoid hitting my head on the statue. My head began to bleed profusely. The ferociousness in the Assistant Priest's face did not abate; instead, it only increased. 'Mm..., promise! Promise that you will undertake this holy task,' the Amman-possessed Priest said in an extremely loud voice, and forcefully threw on my face a handful of sanctified vermilion powder from the Mother's Holy Feet.

I just didn't know what to do. My face was covered in vermilion; because I hit the statue while falling, my dress had become stained with large patches of oil and sanctified water. I was in a condition that made me look comical; I badly needed a change of clothes, but I didn't have any.

It was already time to shut the Temple for the day. Some committee members of the Temple had heard about the ongoing commotion and rushed to where we were. They pleaded with me to somehow manage the situation so that Amman's wrath did not escalate. I also felt that I had no choice but to accede to Amman's demand. So, I held the statue of the Mother and promised that I would do as commanded by Her. The Assistant Priest appeared satisfied. His state of trance began to subside very rapidly, and very soon he became the normal Assistant Priest.

The Assistant Priest was very surprised to see my situation, with blood and vermilion on my face, and my clothes that were damp and stained with oil; he was also surprised that a number of the Temple administrators also were there. Very clearly, he was unaware of what had transpired there moments earlier. When he found out from us about how Amman had acted through him, he was wonderstruck.

What had transpired, though it made the Assistant Priest happy, jolted the Temple administrators. They realized that they were incurring divine wrath. As a damage control measure, they wanted to immediately form a committee to carry out the renovation work and the kumbhabhishekam. So, they invited leading personalities in Tiruchi and asked them to volunteer to undertake the execution of activities that were within their means, and formed a committee consisting of all those who volunteered. Soon after that, the Temple administrators made a public announcement of the scheduled date for kumbhabhishekam; almost immediately, renovation work also started.

Since I had already made a promise to Amman that I would do the renovation of the tower and also the kumbhabhishekam for Her Temple, the Temple officials included me also in that committee. And, they assigned to me, in accordance with the promise I had made, the responsibility of renovating Mother Soundrya Parvathi's temple tower and also of carrying out the consecration ceremony.

A fabulously rich person in Tiruchi had, in the meantime, planned to visit that temple. The Temple officials wanted to give him a VIP welcome; they wanted all the members of the Renovation and Kumbhabhishekam Committee also to be there at the Temple to receive that wealthy person with due honours. So, the Temple asked me also, along with the other Committee Members, to be there. When the VIP arrived at the Temple, all of us were introduced to him by its Assistant Commissioner. I was introduced as the person who would be getting the Tower of the Parvathi Amman's Temple renovated. That VIP knew that I was a mere white-collar employee who was earning a very modest monthly salary. His ego got the better of him, and, while looking now and then at me with a sarcastic look, he told the Asst. Commissioner, 'This is a temple that has a number of towers. Renovating this Temple and doing its kumbhabhishekam is a very large project. How can you have monthly-paid employees as Committee Members? Just dissolve the entire Committee immediately. I will undertake the whole project single-handedly. I will send you the full amount of money you require within a week. You can go ahead with all the work immediately.' It was sheer arrogance in full display. Even the way he moved both his hands this way and that way – his body language - while talking was an act of conceit; it was as if he wanted everyone to know that there were four rings in his left hand and one more ring on his right hand; the brilliance of the precious stones in those five rings flashed in all directions when he flailed his hands and made his conduct an act of vanity, which was even more unbecoming.

I was in a daze. While walking out of the Temple along with the others, I thought to myself: 'It is the Holy Mother who wanted me to do the renovation work and the kumbhabhishekam for Her; actually, she stubbornly insisted on it despite my pleas. I was a person who had no faith in stories that there were people who would be possessed by a deity and that as and when it happened, those people would go into a trance. Yet,

that Assistant Priest, while making everyone run away in fear, dragged me to the sanctum and dashed me onto the Mother's statue, and made me promise to Mother that I would undertake the renovation work and the kumbhabhishekam of Her Temple. Was that all staged by the Assistant Priest? Did that Priest take everybody for a ride by pretending to have been possessed by Amman? Are stories about Amman's powers and glory merely made-up ones? Anyway, why should I be unduly concerned about it? As in everything in life, I can see a silver lining in this matter also – a rich person is going to foot the entire cost of the renovation work and the kumbhabhishekam; I, a salaried employee with a modest income, am fortunately relieved of the responsibility that was thrust on me.'

It was some four or five days after the episode at the Temple; I had just finished having my lunch in the office canteen and was browsing through the day's newspaper. A piece of news that was very prominent in it threw me into disbelief and shock. On the previous day, the Rockfort Express train, while running from Chennai to Tiruchi, was hit by a bomb that had been planted in the rail track in Ariyaloor; the first class compartment was the worst hit and had been blasted to pieces. The wealthy VIP from Tiruchi and his wife were passengers in the first-class compartment and had, sadly, lost their lives.

The wealthy person had projected himself with arrogance of wealth at the meeting at the Temple. He had said, 'I will do it single-handedly,'; 'Why do you have monthly-wage earners in the Committee?' etc. How unfortunate was it that it was his pride of wealth, power and status that made him underserving of the coveted privilege of carrying out the renovation of the Temple and performing the kumbhabhishekam!

Eventually, the responsibilities of doing the renovation and performing the kumbhabhishekam for Mother Parvathi were once again thrust on my shoulders. With divine grace and blessings, I discharged my responsibilities well, and succeeded in completing the renovation and the kumbhabhishekam ceremony. I was only a monthly-wage earner. Yet, I managed it somehow! It was a defining moment for me. I realized that we would never understand the actions of divinity; also, we should not question His actions. I also realized that the Assistant Priest was genuinely possessed by Amman; he was not staging a drama. Most of all, I learnt a very valuable lesson; divine sankalpam (wish and will) is unassailable; no one can override it.

Even today, you can find the carved stone commemorative plaque in that Temple attesting to the fact that I completed the renovation work and the kumbhabhishekam ceremony for the Mother's Temple in 1988.

This story began in 1964 and ended in 1988. I had the pleasure of reminding my dear Mother: 'Amma..., In 1964, Leela Mohana Saieshan told you in your dream that I would have the coveted privilege of doing the kumbhabhishekam for a temple. It has

come to pass! Now, 24 years after your dream, I have carried out the kumbhabhishekam ceremony for a temple in Tiruchi.' My mother could not contain her joy. She was ecstatic, and copious streams of tears of joy started flowing from her eyes; I felt that those tears were her abhishekam (anointing) at the Holy Lotus Feet of our dear Leela Mohana Sayeeshan.

Jai Sai Ram!



VI

Bhagawan's Visit To Thiruchi - And My Mother's Fortune To Receive A Divine Interview

We started a Sai Centre, called Sri Sathya Sai Bhajana Mandali, in Thillai Nagar, a suburb of Tiruchi, in May 1964. I played a crucial role in establishing this centre.

I got the privilege of seeing Bhagawan Sri Sayeeshan in person in Puttaparthi way back in 1960 itself. It was indeed a huge blessing. I was a young man then; yet, I was pining for the love of God and thirsting for advancement in spirituality. During every visit, Bhagawan bestowed on me His love and blessings in the form of Dharshan, Sambhashan and Sparshan (opportunities bestowed to the devotee to behold the Divine, converse with the Divine, and touch the Divine). Through those close interactions, Swami, the Lord of the Universe, motivated me to march on with resolute determination on the royal road of righteousness.

He rewarded me with an interview (personal audience) whenever I visited Parthi, and during those moments He would show me, in some way or the other, some aspects of His divine glory; it was like receiving surprise gifts over and above the gift of interviews.

Bhagawan Sathya Sai Baba showered me with His divine love. It was not due to anything but His divine grace. Those days I had the great good fortune of witnessing His divine glory in action at close quarters. I have written about some of them in the first two volumes of this book.

I mentioned earlier that we formed a new Bhajana Mandali in Tiruchi in 1964. By Bhagawan's grace, that Sai Centre launched a number of religious and spiritual service activities. What we did had a benign influence on the society. That inspired Sai devotees to participate with interest in large numbers as volunteers in those activities. The benefits gained by the society caught the attention and the interest of the residents of Tiruchi also; thus, we were quite well known in Tiruchi then.

Our regular service activities, such as Nagar Sangeertan (singing devotional hymns in early mornings on the streets); Nama Sangeertan in houses (repeated recitation of God's name); Narayana Seva (feeding the needy); conducting Swami's Birthday celebrations in a very grand manner on the 23rd of November every year; and performing Sahasra Nama Archanai (chanting 1,008 names of the Divine as a prayer

for the well-being of all), made people in Tiruchi become aware of Bhagawan Sathya Sai Baba and His glory.

Under such circumstances, we, committee members of the Sai Centre, thought that it would be befitting to invite Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to make a divine visit to Thiruchi for the benefit of the residents there. We discussed it at a committee meeting, and a few of us, all committee members, went to Parthi to submit to Swami our prayerful desire.

Swami was kind enough to grant us an interview. We took that opportunity and expressed to Swami that it was our heartfelt prayer and desire that Swami should bless Tiruchi and its residents by making a divine visit there. Swami listened to us, but did not reply. We thought that it could be that Swami did so to test us - to test our sincerity. So, we made visits to Parthi repeatedly, and on every occasion, we prayed to Swami that He should bless Tiruchi by making a divine visit. However, our prayer went unanswered for quite a while. Then, finally, one day Swami made all of us happy; He consented to our request.

Swami made a three-day visit during the period 16–18 December 1966 to Tiruchi.

We made that divine visit an event of grand celebration. We erected in Thillai Nagar a pandal (marquee) with a seating capacity of 50,000, and the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha (an All-India Academy of Vedic Scholars who strive to awaken humanity to the need to attain the Prasanthi (*Supreme Peace*) which has its Nilayam (Abode) in the *Sanathana* Dharma, enshrined in the ancient scriptures of India) conducted several spiritual events on all three days.

Some 100,000 devotees turned up daily to get Swami's Dharshan and to participate in all the proceedings there. Swami reciprocated the love of His devotees by granting them His Dharshan daily. The mood everywhere in the city of Tiruchi was celebratory and joyous, befitting a three-day festival.

At the end of the celebrations, Swami wanted those in charge of organising the entire three-day programme to come for an interview. I was the Coordinating Secretary of the Organising Committee. I sent messages to all the Committee Members to attend the interview.

Swami made all of us happy by granting us the interview, and my mother, who was also there with me at the celebrations, was granted one too.

She was overwhelmed with emotion when she heard that Swami had agreed to grant her an interview. She lost herself in that excitement and was trembling and speechless.

When she approached Swami, her excitement was boundless. Swami went to her straight and patted her back with divine-motherly love and made her feel comfortable. My mother was so touched by that divine gesture that she forgot herself and spontaneously embraced Swami, and poured her heart out and expressed her love and devotion in a tone that was still unsteady and trembling: 'Hey Sarvesha! Sai Natha! They say You are Sai Rama. They say You are Sai Krishna. Certainly, I must have performed countless penances and meritorious deeds in thousands and thousands of my previous births to receive this unimaginable privilege of being able to behold Your physical form with these eyes of mine. What a compassionate one You are! You are showering so much of Your love and grace even on this insignificant devotee!' Still in a state of ecstasy and her face fully wet with rolling tears, she knelt down and kissed and worshipped Swami's Lotus Feet.

Swami, the Compassionate One, acknowledged my mother's sincere love and devotion, and stood still, enjoying her outpouring. My mother, with no sign of any abatement in her state of ecstasy, lunged forward to embrace Bhagawan once again. But I quickly restrained her by holding her back, and whispered, 'No, you shouldn't do that.' Swami did not approve of what I did. He gave me a stare and rebuked, 'Remember, you are only the Organising Committee's Secretary; not for matters between God and His devotee. Move away.'

Yes! That gave my mother a euphoric sense of freedom. Nobody could have restrained her then. She, with tears rolling and oblivious to the surroundings, chanted the Namavali (the prayer of chanting 108 names of Swami) in its entirety, all the 108 lines, line by line in correct sequence while keeping her eyes glued to Swami. It was as if she had offered 108 flowers in prayer at the Holy Feet of Swami, but she did the chanting very fast, like rattling off in a hurry. Swami was enjoying it; there was no sign of any easing in my mother's mood of spiritual high. Swami noticed it, and very lovingly held her hand and asked her to sit on a chair.

My mother considered it impolite to sit while the others were standing; more importantly, while Swami Himself was standing. She just stood in a corner, slowly trying to regain her composure, and with her palms folded prayed, 'Bhagawan, bless this son of mine to get married and settle down in life.'

Swami looked deep into me for a while. Then He told my mother, 'Some unexpected events will take place in his life; due to that he will not marry, but will adopt a girl as his daughter. He will do that as an act of selfless sacrifice for that child's sake, but it will turn out to be something futile. It will become a complicated matter.'

Although Swami conversed with my mother in Tamil, He still used the word 'complicate'. My mother, despite not knowing English, somehow understood the word 'complicate' had some negative connotation to it. She quizzed me - 'Hey, son! Swami said, 'complicate.' What does it mean? Did He mean that there was something unpleasant waiting to happen?' asked my mother, after the interview, with a lot of concern and apprehension.

I did not want her to worry. 'Oh, it is a good word, Amma. Everything will work out well. You don't worry yourself unnecessarily, Amma,' I comforted her.

The truth is, I too was equally concerned about it. I tried to ask Swami about it, but to no avail. Swami went inside His room and locked the door. I tried on several occasions that day to ask Swami what exactly He meant, but He avoided me all the time.

What happened regarding my marriage clearly shows Swami's power of omniscience.

Earlier in 1964 itself, in my mother's dream, Swami had told her that I would not get married. In 1966, He confirmed that to my mother during the interview in Tiruchi. Subsequently, situations arose in my life in such a manner that I could not get married. From this, we get a glimpse of His enigmatic divine power; this Leela Mohana Sai knew everything about everyone of us!

Swami prophesied my future accurately. But Swami's divine powers are not limited to just omniscience only. There is nothing that He cannot do; it is a commonplace experience for millions and millions of His devotees. We are overwhelmed by those experiences. But we must not lose sight of the bigger picture regarding the immeasurable and limitless divine glory; the manifestations of His glory all of us have seen, heard and experienced are, in comparison, only like a grain of mustard in the bigger picture.

While my family experienced very difficult circumstances that did not enable me to get married, some other situations arose and made me take a liking for a particular child, a girl. Over time, that liking increased more and more, and very soon I became extremely attached to her. My love for her was so much that I began to raise her as if she was my daughter, and soon after that, I formally adopted her by performing a homam (A prayer practice of taking an oath with consecrated fire – *agni* - as the witness).

I got her educated and later conducted her wedding celebration in a very grand manner. In due course, she bore two children, a girl and then a boy.

Subsequently, that word ‘complicate’ entered our lives. It crushed all the joy we had and dashed our hopes and dreams. I became a nervous wreck.

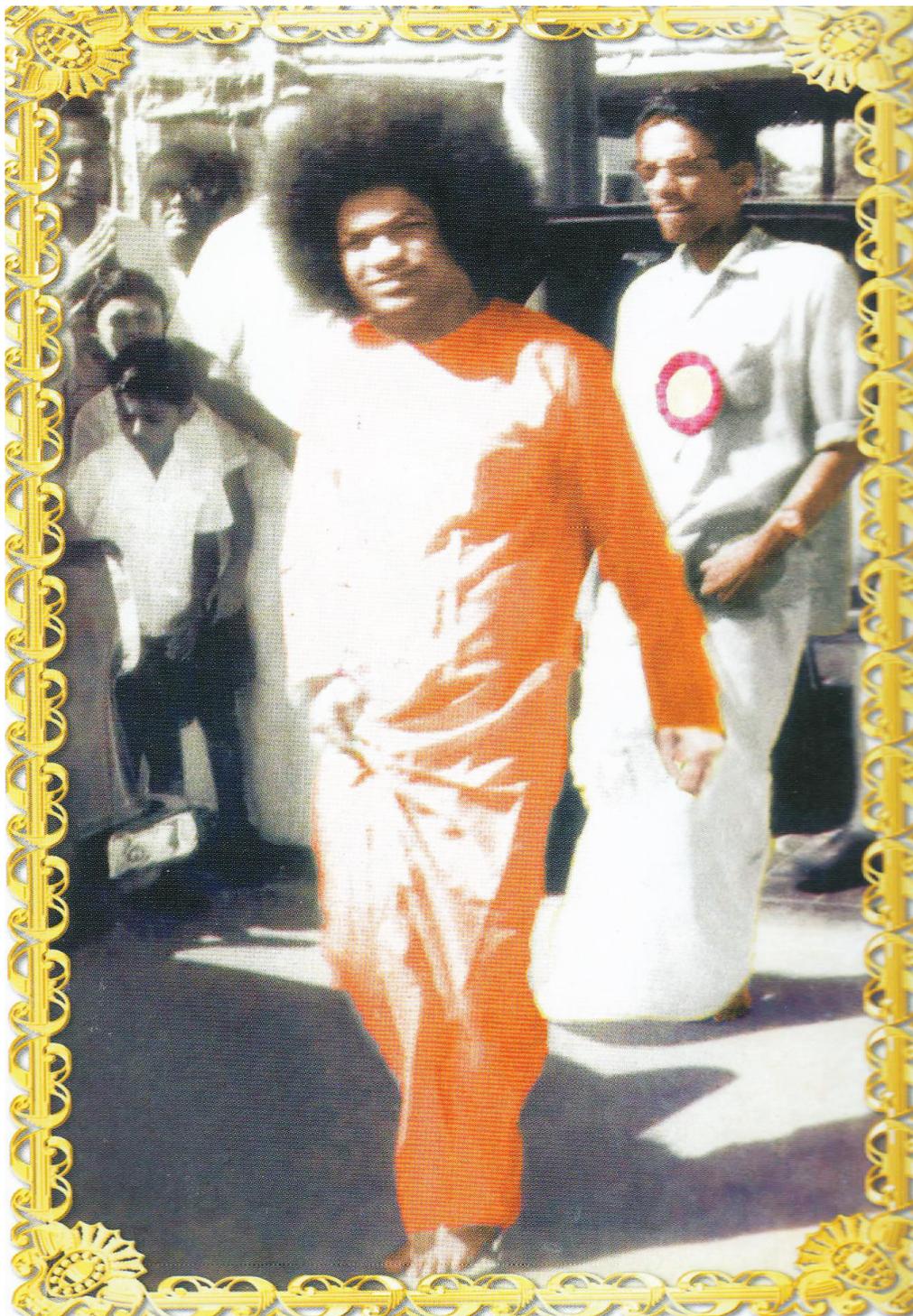
It all started with the girl’s husband coming down suddenly with a very serious ailment.

I could not imagine my daughter becoming a young widow. Therefore, I did not spare any effort to save my son-in-law. I took him to specialist doctors and provided him with all the medical treatment that they prescribed. Despite incurring expenses of several lakhs (hundreds of thousands) of Rupees in providing him the best of treatments, we could not mitigate his ailment. This unyielding battle with that disease went on for two long years.

I took him even to Puttaparthi and got him seated in front of Bhagawan. Although He made quick sweeping glances at the congregation, somehow, He did not acknowledge my son-in-law’s presence. I thus had to very painfully come to the conclusion that it was not Swami’s *sankalpam* (Divine Will) to override what He Himself had foretold my mother, that there would be complications. I also thought that Swami did not want to interfere with my son-in-law’s karma.

Eventually, the dreaded moment arrived. While we watched helplessly, my son-in-law succumbed to that deadly disease. We - my daughter, her children and myself – lost him forever. Thus, that word ‘complicate’ indeed dealt us a cruel blow in our lives.

Jai Sai Ram!



Swami, with the Author walking behind Him (Thiruchi, 1966)

VII

Sri Sai's Sankalpam (Wish and Will) To Invite Me To Deliver A Talk At Brindavan, Whitefield



Volume 2 of this book was released on 23 Nov 2015, Bhagawan's 90th Birthday, and copies of it were handed over to Sundaram in Chennai on the same day for sale. After that, when I was back in my hometown, a village near Kumbakonam, I received a telephone call from Manamadurai. The caller introduced himself as a Sai devotee. He said that he and a few others always spent the New Year's Day at Parthi and that they would like me to join them in the upcoming New Year pilgrimage. He wanted to know whether I would agree. If I did, they would pick me up in their car on 30 Dec 2015 and we would proceed to Parthi.

The offer was simply too good to pass up. Firstly, to be blessed to have Swami's Dharshan at Parthi on a New Year's Day, and secondly, to be driven in comfort right from my doorstep. My cup of joy and bliss was overflowing. I wasted no time in accepting the offer.

Everything went off as planned, and we reached Parthi on 31 December 2015 evening.

On the next day, the New Year's Day, I knelt down at Swami's Sannidhi at Sai Kulwant Hall - the final resting place of Leela Mohana Sai - and, with tears in my eyes, offered my homage and made a sincere plea. I asked for His blessings to enable me to devote all my time during the coming year to do social service projects for the good of the society and to alleviate the misery of the stricken. That was a prayerful request from the bottom of my heart, an entirely selfless request.

We had planned to leave Parthi on 02 January morning. I had intended to go back home, but immediately prior to leaving Parthi, very strangely, I had a spontaneous change of mind - I suddenly wished to go to Chennai instead of going home.

I contacted over the phone a close associate of mine and fellow Sai devotee living in Nanganallur in Chennai and told him about my wish. He warmly welcomed my plan and told me that a comfortable accommodation for me was readily available. He stressed that I should go there as planned.

We left Parthi in the morning and reached Nanganallur in the evening. My very good Manamadurai friends handed me over to my Nanganallur friend and headed homeward.

It was my plan to be in Chennai just for a few days and to proceed home after that. However, Swami had other plans. I found that there were several opportunities to do social service projects to alleviate the misery of the needy and the distressed in the society. That was the case in many suburbs of Chennai, and I felt as if those opportunities were just waiting for me. I was surprised at the way things were happening and how I became the spearhead of those projects. I was very proud of myself. You can call it ego, but the fact is that Swami answered almost immediately my heartfelt and earnest prayer, in the form of a selfless prayer made at, to top it all, His Samadhi (Swami's final resting place) on New Year's Day!

In the Endless Epilogue at the end of this book, I have given details of the relief projects I launched in Chennai and its suburbs.

It was the end of February, and I was still in Nanganallur! At the time, I received a request from Radio Sai to share my Sai experiences over the years with its listeners. Spreading the glory of the Lord is a rare privilege and an obligation; I readily agreed.

The talk was to be broadcast at Sundaram, the abode of the Lord in Chennai. Radio Sai allocated one 30-minute slot for my talk. I had some 55 years of Sai experiences to share. I could not do that in one episode, but Radio Sai found my talk so

interesting and useful, they asked me to continue with a second episode. That second session led to the third, and it recurred till there were, in all, seven episodes of a total duration of 3 ½ hours. The Radio Sai Coordinator at Sundaram told me that usually speakers were allocated just one episode of duration 30 minutes. In some rare cases, where the speaker had very interesting experiences to share, they were allocated more airtime, but till then no one had been allocated more than three episodes. Radio Sai found my talk so spellbinding and useful that they allocated seven episodes for my talks, and the Coordinator congratulated me on it. Can I claim any credit? All praise to Him!

So, now we have my years of experiences with Lord the Incarnate available always as sound waves up in the ether. Anyone, including those from future generations, can listen to the glories of the Lord as told by me at any time by downloading those talks. I am immensely happy that my talks have thus been immortalised and that generations of listeners will get the opportunity to enhance their devotion to God.

Surprisingly, in April 2016, a little after I had finished the seven episodes of Radio Sai talks, I received another invitation. This time, it was from Brindavan in Whitefield. Bhagawan's ex-students organise a monthly talk, conducted on the 3rd Sunday of every month, under the caption Samarpan. It is a platform for students, staff, devotees and alumni to re-connect with their Lord; a platform where senior devotees share their personal experiences with the Lord. The organisers asked me whether I could deliver a Samarpan talk at Brindavan on 19 Jun 2016.

I was very thrilled to receive that invitation. Brindavan! A sacred place where Bhagawan spent a great deal of His time; a place where almost every inch of it was sanctified by His Lotus Feet treading on it. And the hall there, Sai Ramesh Hall, was where Swami delivered to the whole world, in His sweet voice, countless discourses expressing His love and concern for mankind. I was offered an invitation to deliver a talk in that same hall where Swami delivered discourses. What a privilege! What an honour! I never ever expected such a recognition. I readily accepted the invitation.

The organisers of Samarpan were very good hosts. Well before the day of the talk itself, they contacted me to find out my date of arrival, the number of people who would be accompanying me etc. They arranged accommodation for all of us at Gokulam. Even our food was well taken care of. They had arranged with the canteen at Gokulam to provide us with all the meals.

I, along with a few companions, arrived at Brindavan two days prior to the scheduled date for the talk. From the time we reached Brindavan, the Samarpan Organising Committee members and the senior Sai devotees there smothered us with

their love and concern. I used to think, ‘This is the type of love that Swami preached – Sai love! This blessed lot of people are practising what Swami taught them.’

In Brindavan, the Samarpan organisers accord VIP status to Samarpan speakers and those who accompany them. Thus, we enjoyed some rare privileges. Every morning, at the Trayee, Bhagawan’s residence in Brindavan during His physical sojourn, there would be the chanting of Rudram and the performance of Abhishekam (anointing; ritualistic bathing) for the Lingam (Lord Shiva) conducted with sincere devotion by some devotees. Those sacraments were very exclusive; not open to the public. But, we, being VIPs, were granted the privilege of attending them. They were a feast for our eyes; we were thrilled beyond measure. The organisers allowed us to participate in the rituals and prayers conducted in the evenings also at the Trayee. That was an added bonus for us.

I delivered the Samarpan talk on 19 Jun 2016. I spoke about my experiences with Bhagawan. It was in English, lasted some two hours and was attended by about one thousand Sai devotees.

As is the case with any talk, when I finished the talk, a large number of the audience came up to me and thanked and congratulated me. Some even blessed me, and some offered their respectful obeisance. Among those who came to me was a doctor from the Whitefield Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital and his family. Even after the others had left, that family stayed on and desired to talk to me further.

The doctor introduced him as Parasuram. He wanted to talk to me simply because he wanted to soak himself in more and more stories of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s glory. We had a wonderful conversation about our experiences with our Lord. Thus, in that first meeting itself we became very friendly with each other, and he and his family invited us to pay them a visit and to have a meal with them!

Dr Parasuram and his family were an exception. While all the others who felicitated me after my talk left immediately after doing so, just one family, that of Dr Parasuram, stayed on and wanted to talk some more with me. They forged a friendship with us and took us to their home.

Who would have thought that there was a Divine play behind it! Nothing happens without a purpose; God works in mysterious ways! What was Swami’s *sankalpam* (Divine wish and will) in this matter?

A relative of mine in Bangalore had also invited us for a meal. We went there the day before we were to go to Dr Parasuram’s residence. A Sai devotee, his wife and their eight-year-old son were among those who went along with me to my relative’s house.

My relative lived in a multi-storey residential block. When we were there, my friend's son, the 8-year-old boy, wanted to go down and play in the children's play area that was there. His father granted him permission to do so. It was an unfortunate decision.

The boy, while playing, somehow fell down and injured his left elbow very badly. He couldn't bear the pain and was crying inconsolably. This sad incident upset all of us. It was time for lunch, but the boy's hysterical crying was so heart-wrenching that we even lost interest in having lunch.

The boy's crying continued even throughout that night. The parents tried their very best to comfort him, but it was futile. So, the parents also had to spend a sleepless night.

The next day, we went to Dr Parasuram's residence. Dr Parasuram's family was living in quarters allocated for the doctors.

My Sai devotee friend's family, including the injured boy, also was with us. But the boy's pain had not subsided, nor had his crying stopped. Dr Parasuram found out, with a lot of concern, all that had happened to that boy and took him to the Hospital where he worked. But it was a bit late; the Orthopaedic Clinic in that Hospital would normally have closed for the day by then. You can call it luck or call it Divine Providence; the Orthopaedic Surgeon on duty that day had some other additional work to attend to and, so, happened to be still in the Clinic. He immediately got an X-ray examination of the boy's left elbow done, and found that there was a hairline fracture. He, then treated the fracture with the necessary medication and orthopaedic bandaging in the form of a splint.

All of us were extremely grateful to that Orthopaedic Surgeon. We thanked him profusely. The Surgeon was very touched with what we did, but he said something that touched all our hearts much more.

He said, 'Express your gratitude to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I happened to stay back in the Clinic only because there was some other work that I had to attend to. Dr Parasuram brought this boy in the nick of time. If he had delayed even by a few minutes, the Clinic would have been closed for the day and I would have gone home. What made me stay behind was nothing but Divine Providence.

'I want to tell you something more about what has taken place. There is no other medical facility in the neighbourhood where this boy could have received this treatment; this is the only Hospital where this treatment facility is available. If Dr Parasuram had been even just a few minutes late to come here, he would not only have found this Clinic closed for the day, he would also have had to take this boy at least

some 10 km or so away to look for a hospital that had an orthopaedic surgeon on duty. It is most certainly Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's sankalpam (wish and will) that delayed the closing of our Clinic for the day; have no doubt about it.' By then, the Surgeon's eyes were full of tears. We also could not hold back our tears of gratitude and offered our obeisance with our palms together to our Sai, the Compassionate Lord. The boy's parents were extremely relieved that at last their son had received very good medical treatment. We were also relieved to see that the anxiety the parents had to endure since the previous day had now given way to a sense of peace and that they were abundantly grateful to Mother Sai.

All of us went back to Dr Parasuram's house, had an enjoyable meal, and had a very wonderful and unforgettable time chatting about Leela Mohana Sai's glories. Dr Parasuram and his family were fascinated by those stories. While they listened to us with rapt attention, their hearts were melting and eyes were flooding with tears of joy.

I gave the hosts, Dr Parasuram and his family, Vol 1 and Vol 2 of Leela Mohana Sai, which I had written in Tamil. They considered them as God's Prasadam (gift from God) and accepted them with reverence, and said that they looked forward to reading these books as they considered such reading a privilege and a blessing from Swami.

I mentioned to them that Vol 1 of my book had been translated into several Indian languages and into English; that there were unconfirmed news that it was being translated in some foreign languages also; and that Vol 1 in English was available both as a book as well as an audio CD.

Dr Parasuram's wife, Srimathi Haripriya, was listening to the discussion with a lot of interest. Maybe what I said about Vol 1 enhanced her interest; she very spontaneously offered to translate Vol 2 into English and asked whether I would agree. I was very pleasantly surprised. 'Oh, this is how Swami's sankalpam works! It is His sankalpam that Vol 2 should be translated into English. So, He made me deliver a talk at Brindavan, and is now making His chosen translator to volunteer to do the translation. What a meticulous planner Swami is!' I wondered aloud. By then, I was very emotional and my eyes were full of tears. That made all the others also emotional and their eyes also were shedding tears of joy.

I marvelled at the extensive planning that is behind Swami's sankalpam and shared the details of my observation with Dr Parasuram and the others:

'It all started with three Sai devotees from Manamadurai telephoning me from out of the blue and offering to take me with them to Parthi to spend the 2016 New Year's Day there. That was the event that triggered a series of other events which culminated in Dr Parasuram's wife volunteering to translate Vol 2 of my book into English.

‘On New Year’s day, there was an inner prompting in me that encouraged and guided me to kneel down at Swami’s *sannidhi* at Sai Kulwant Hall and pray wholeheartedly for His blessings to enable me to spend all my time in helping the needy in the ensuing year. That was the next event in Swami’s *sankalpam*.

‘After that, there was another unexpected occurrence. Radio Sai in Chennai rang me and invited me to share my Sai experiences with its listeners. What was to be one episode of talk finally became seven episodes. That was the subsequent event in a chain of events.

‘The next event in Leela Mohana Sai’s *sankalpam* was yet another extraordinary event. Swami’s ex-students in Brindavan invited me to deliver a Samarpan talk on 19 Jun 2016.

‘Of all those who came and felicitated me after my Samarpan talk, it was only yourself and your family that wanted to talk to me further and treated me with a lot of love. We became very friendly then onwards. Isn’t this an act of compassion by our Sai Dayaparan? Certainly, Swami knew of the impending accident to the boy. There are no hospitals in the vicinity that provide orthopaedic treatment; it is available only in your Hospital. So, our compassionate Lord arranged for us to get to know each other, and made you take the boy to your Hospital for treatment. His *sankalpam* did not end there. He delayed the Orthopaedic Surgeon in his Clinic so that he could attend to the boy expediently. What a lot of concern Swami has for His devotees! The extent of detailed planning that goes into Swami’s fulfilment of His *sankalpam* is mind-boggling for us, humans!

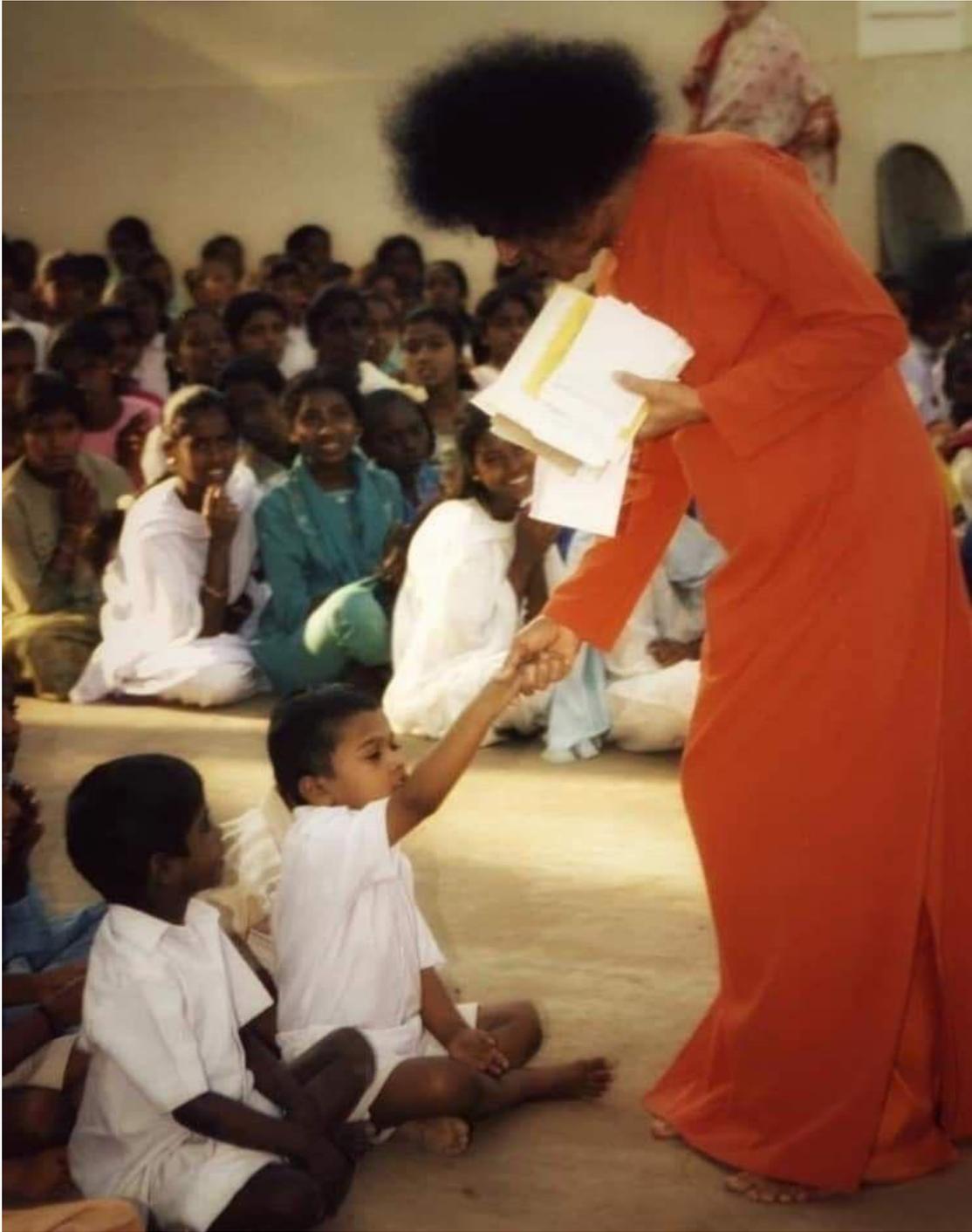
‘And, now we have the grand finale of Swami’s *sankalpam*, where your wife is volunteering to translate Vol 2 of my book into English. This has come about because I gave a Samarpan talk in Brindavan. I played no part at all in receiving that invitation from the ex-students of Swami; it was a very unexpected and a fortuitous happening. This is how Swami’s *sankalpam* works!’

The Samarpan talk I delivered on 19 Jun 2016 in Brindavan is available in YouTube under the caption *Samarpan #62*.

Jai Sai Ram!



The Author delivering the Samarpan talk at Brindavan



VIII

The Chocolate Alchemy - The Sai Miracle Of 'Spirits' Thangappan Transforming Into 'Spiritual' Thangappan

Thangappan is the main character in this story. I have written about him and his principled life of devotion to Sri Sai in Leela Mohana Sai Vol 2. However, it was only subsequently that I got to know Thangappan quite intimately, and it was only then that I realized that my comments about him were an absolute understatement of the qualities of the man; he is a towering man of moral rectitude while the way I described him was a mere molehill. I was a person who used to wonder whether there were really paragons of virtue, and when I met one such person in Thangappan, I considered it my great fortune!

Thangappan is from Tamil Nadu, but he was working in Indore in Madhya Pradesh. He happened to read Vol 1 of my book in Tamil and rang me to congratulate and wish me. He was a stranger to me, and that was the first time he spoke to me. He was an ardent Sai devotee and derived joy from talking to me frequently. I also enjoyed his company and looked forward to talking to him. We clicked very well and were quite at home with each other. I had heard of elders talking about past life connections and how relationships built in those lives were carried forward to the present life. I felt certain that the acquaintanceship of Thangappan was one such connection. In my conversations with him, I could sense that he was a caring man with sincere love. I considered it my obligation to announce to everyone those excellent qualities of him, and in Vol 2 of my book I wrote, 'No one else has shown me as much love as he has done. I learnt from him how to exchange sincere love with each other.'

That was the time when I had, despite several obstacles, managed to get Vol 1 of my book in Tamil translated into Hindi and to get it transformed as a document in electronic form in a computer. Achieving all that was very tough for me. Even to reach that far, I had to work very hard. Now, to get the book printed? It was not something within my means. I hesitated to even think of that.

In the meantime, I received a call; a very familiar call, but this time it was from Chennai itself. Thangappan had come to Chennai from Indore and wanted to meet up with me. The date was 23 Nov 2007. It didn't take me very long after that to realize that, once again, Sai sankalpam was in play!

During our conversation, I shared with him the status of the Hindi translation of Vol 1 of my book. I told him that getting the Hindi translation done and then converting it as an electronic document were very difficult tasks for me, and that I did not want to even think of proceeding to print that book. Thangappan did not even bat an eyelid. He volunteered with enthusiasm to undertake the entire responsibility to get the book printed. Some things are easier said than done. But, Thangappan considered that a very large number of Sai devotees would benefit from the book in Hindi, and so he wasted no time after that. True to his word (Varthai), he worked tirelessly and selflessly and achieved what he desired. I was at that time reminded of the 664th Kural, and within myself I thought that Thangappan threw a challenge to that Kural, which is as follows, and had emerged victorious:

*'To say (how an act is to be performed) is (indeed) easy for any one;
but far difficult is it to do according to what has been said.'*

In the earlier paragraph, I used the word 'varthai' (word). In Sanskrit, it is vartha. Vartha has one more meaning – God. Why am I saying all these now? If we say something, if we promise something, we must at all costs stand by that and act in accordance with it and thus uphold our dignity. Bhagawan Sayeeshan told us the same thing repeatedly in a catchy manner:

'Manas ekam, Vasas ekam, Karman ekam; Mahathmanam!

Manas anyath, Vasas anyath, Karma anyath; Durathmanam!'

(Think good, Speak good, Do good; The one who practises this with consistency is a Mahathma (noble soul)!

The one who acts with inconsistency by thinking something, speaking something else and doing even something else is an evil soul (Durathma)!

This consistency in Thought, Word and Deed is known as Tri Karana Suddhi in our ancient Vedas. In Bhagawat Gita, Lord Krishna has said that He resides in the hearts of those who practise Tri Karana Suddhi. We call those who conduct themselves with consistency in their Thought, Word and Deed 'Sathyavan' (embodiments of truth).

One will be treading the path that leads him to Divinity if his thoughts are always pure, without blemish; if such thoughts are translated into speech that is always pure; and if he acts strictly according to such speech. Bhagawan Baba's words of encouragement to us on this subject are as follows:

'Learn to speak what you feel and do what you speak.

That will be your THAPAS (spiritual penance) to please Me.'

Consistency in Thought, Word and Deed is such a vital moral virtue that has to be practised by mankind that Bhagawan, when He was a mere 12-year-old youngster,

spread that message through a play, which he wrote and directed, titled ‘Cheppinattu Chesthara?’ (Do Deeds Follow Words?)

This moral high ground, though it sounds good, has a painful truth behind it. That play, Cheppinattu Chesthara, is staged very often by Bal Vikas students (young children in the Sai Baba Centres) all over the world. There would be thunderous clapping in appreciation at the end of the play. However, it is doubtful whether due attention to the message conveyed is given by the teachers who painstakingly train the students to act well in the play, the spectators who clap thunderously in appreciation, the *seva dals* (volunteer helpers) or even the Sai organisation’s office bearers. The truth is that we are still leading a life divorced from truth and reality; we are deceiving ourselves as well as others by living a life of falsity, yet we are proud about our lives. Painful!

Is there anyone, be it a volunteer who devotes his time in Sai activities or an office bearer in the Sai organisation, who can state in the presence of Swami that he has never done anything that was not consistent with what he spoke? In my opinion, if there is anyone who can declare that his actions have always been consistent with what he spoke, only such a person would be eligible to call himself a Sai devotee and would meet Swami’s expectations. At this juncture, it would be worth recalling that once Swami said, ‘I have yet to come across a true devotee.’

I have given a mini treatise on the word ‘*varthai*’. It is important to bear in mind that *varthai* means word as well as God. Therefore, we should treat our words as Godly. If we act according to what we say, then God will be happy with us; He will shower His blessings and Grace on us. Those who wish to advance in spirituality should do some mental-cleansing by imbibing this type of fundamental moral values. It is Thangappan’s action that made me write all these. He told me that he would get the Hindi version of Vol 1 of my book printed. He told me this when he was in Chennai. After that he returned to Indore, the city where he was working at the time. Yet, neither did he forget his promise nor did he drag his feet on that matter. He went about in earnest to honourably fulfil his promise. I have no doubt that what he did must have made Swami immensely happy.

Thangappan faced difficulties and obstacles in getting the Hindi version of Vol 1 printed. But, does gold lose its quality even if it is heated in a furnace? Thangappan took everything in his stride and delivered what he promised. I have given details of that in Vol 2 of this book.

Let us now proceed to the main story.

From the title of this story, readers would know that Thangappan became ‘Spirits’ Thangappan at some point in time and that subsequently a Sai miracle, a

chocolate alchemy, transformed him to ‘Spiritual’ Thangappan. What was the miracle that the chocolate performed? Let us listen to that in Thangappan’s own words:

‘I am a graduate in a field related to textiles. After completing my studies, I joined a textile factory in Bangalore. That was in 1993. I had a few relatives living in Bangalore. Therefore, I did not have any difficulties in living in Bangalore and working there.

‘In the meantime, two of my friends also found employment in Bangalore and came there. We decided to stay together, and found a room on rent, located not far from our workplaces. We were young; none of us was married.

‘I come from a reasonably well-to-do family. We are known in our hometown as a family that leads a very principled life, and thus our family is well respected by everyone. My father is a Gandhian (one who practises Gandhi’s philosophies) and leads a virtuous life.

‘We, the three of us, all bachelors, had no worries or any responsibilities. Life in Bangalore for us was very enjoyable. But, alas, not for long.

‘One day, a stranger accompanied one of my roommates and gained entry into our room - and into our lives! The stranger was a devil hidden inside a bottle which our roommate had brought inside our room. Yes, that devil was actually ...alcohol! That devil which had put our roommate under its spell had no difficulty in making the other two of us also succumb to it.’

While listening to Thangappan, my mind recalled the 202nd Kural:

‘From evil springs forth more evil.

Therefore, evil is to be feared even more than fire.’

Though such wonderful educational maxims are available to guide us in our life, unfortunately, people don’t take the trouble to even understand them. Even among those who do understand, how many have really taken them to heart and practised them in their lives? Alcohol is controlling and ruining countless lives in this cherished and hallowed Motherland of ours. If the author of Thirukkural were alive today, he would be so depressed to see this that he also would drink to drown his sorrows and thus ruin himself to death.

Now, let us continue with Thangappan’s story in his own words:

‘Our lives were going downhill day by day. Alcohol had taken control of our lives; we had no lives of our own. After work, by the time we returned to our room – I mean, by the time we somehow managed to return to our room, to be more accurate - we would be so drunk that we had only an extremely hazy idea of what was happening.

We would be blabbering; our attire would be grubby and our conduct disgusting to others.

‘We had enough money with us; we had no responsibilities that had to be discharged; and there was no one to question us about our behaviour.

‘We were growing by leaps and bounds – growing, sadly, in addiction. We were escalating in our life of addiction by consuming more and more alcohol over time.

‘Weekends would be like festival days, in the negative sense, for us. Since Sunday was an off-day, we would drink excessively on Saturday. That drinking session would normally go on till about 3 AM on Sunday morning. We would be by then, in the jargon of drinkers, ‘full...’. On such occasions, we would be unaware of what we were wearing; often we would be only scantily dressed. We would talk about everything and everybody, but it would mostly be nonsensical and incoherent. In our drunken stupor, we would simply collapse and fall asleep, but not on our beds. Only the next morning would we realize where we had slept. Quite often, the three of us happened to sleep together, with one resting his head or his legs on another’s chest.

‘This life, in which we were held captive by alcohol, went on for some one and a half years.

‘In the meantime, a family friend, Chinnappa, paid a visit to us. We spoke at length about various matters. One such matter was a new phenomenon called Sathya Sai Baba. He told us with exuberance that Sathya Sai Baba was none other than God in human form and that performing amazing miracles was commonplace for Him.

‘What Chinnappa told us did not impress me. I considered that claiming Sathya Sai Baba as God was laughable. I would often argue with Chinnappa that it was foolish to claim a man to be God.

‘Chinnappa used to call on us now and then. Somehow, from us, he also picked up the habit of drinking. And, he started drinking together with us.

‘One night, Chinnappa was drinking with us. He was quite drunk. He said that Sathya Sai Baba had come to Whitefield and that he wanted to go with a relative of him to Whitefield for His Darshan. Chinnappa lived in the same suburb where we lived, Jaya Nagar. It was midnight then. Nevertheless, Chinnappa got on to his two-wheeler and returned home.

‘We went to sleep after that, but I woke up at 3.30 AM and was not able to fall asleep after that. I felt that there was an overpowering inner prompting in me that made

me get up and go to the bathroom. Again, the inner prompting made me brush my teeth and take a shower. I dressed up after that.

‘I woke up one of my roommates and asked him to keep company with me to go to Chinnappa’s house. Because I insisted, he obliged. We went to Chinnappa’s house in my two-wheeler.

‘Chinnappa was fast asleep. I woke him up and asked him to accompany us to Whitefield. Chinnappa was reluctant because he was very tired, but I insisted on it. And, so he finally agreed. Four of us, my friend and myself in my vehicle, and Chinnappa and his mother-in-law in his vehicle, left for Whitefield. It was about 6 AM when we reached Brindavan, Sai Baba’s Ashram in Whitefield.

‘Brindavan then was not as developed as it is now. There were not many buildings. Devotees sat on a sandy ground.

‘There were about a thousand devotees on the day we went there. There was a clear line of segregation; men were seated on one side while ladies were on the other side.

‘At about 7 AM, Sai Baba emerged from His residence and came to where we were. All the devotees there were overjoyed and began to pray with folded hands. But it was not my cup of tea, and I was only amused to see what was going on.

‘Some devotees had brought chocolates and sweets in plates for blessing by Sai Baba. He blessed them and, while continuing to walk, threw some to the congregation in a random manner. When He reached where I was, He stood still for quite a while, and His robe, soft and silky, was brushing against me. Then, for a moment or two, He looked deep into me, and very casually allowed a chocolate from His hand to fall on my lap. I was somewhat impolite; I ate that chocolate then and there, right in front of Sai Baba. After that, He began to continue to walk towards the others.

‘I was the only one who received chocolate from Sai Baba; the others who went with me did not get it. He allowed His robe to brush against me for some time; He looked deep into me; and He allowed a chocolate to fall down from His hand on my lap. How silly I was then! I was not grateful that I had received such blessings from Him. I was not even appreciative of what He had done. Just like a child, I ate that chocolate as soon as it was given to me. It was very uncivilized behaviour! But I didn’t realize it then. I think that it was all because I had a luxurious upbringing at home. But now, it pains my heart when I recall that incident.

‘I have told you so far only the background to the main story. Let me now begin with the main story, which is about how Sai Baba’s miracle unfolded.

‘All of us returned to our residences after that Darshan. On the same day, in the night, my friends invited me to join them, as usual, to go to the bar. It was then that I realized that I had lost that craving for alcohol. And, I had that inner prompting that made me decline my friends’ invitation. My friends could not understand my behaviour, and they tried to speculate on what had happened to me. But I was not the least interested in their comments. That was not all; I was not interested even in finding out what caused the change in my behaviour.

‘On subsequent Saturdays, when my friends binge drank in our room, I would stay there for a while, pretending to enjoy their company, but afterwards I would go out somewhere. My friends suspected initially that I went out because I wanted to drink alone; they even spied on me to see whether I was going to a pub.

‘I myself was somewhat surprised at the sudden change in my behaviour. I did not know what caused it. Very silly of me! I had not even an inkling that Sai Baba’s chocolate might have had a miraculous effect of some kind on me.

‘Near where we lived in Jaya Nagar, there is a Hanuman Temple. I developed a liking to go there in the evenings. Even then, I did not even think that Sai Baba’s chocolate was causing changes in my mind.

‘In the meantime, I received a job offer to join a factory in Bhilwara. That was quite an unexpected offer. I wanted a change in my job so that I could advance in my career. So, quite some time ago, I applied for that job in Bhilwara. I didn’t get a response for it, but now, as if it were from out of the blue, I received that offer. I gladly accepted the offer and settled down well in the new job, in a totally new environment. Receiving the offer; after that, starting work in Bhilwara – all these – all these! - took place within just seven days – yes, seven days only! - after getting the chocolate from Sai Baba! But, did I link the chocolate with the new job? No..., such a thing didn’t even cross my mind! How dull-witted I was!

‘I learnt that there was a Sathya Sai Seva Samithi (Sai Centre) in Bhilwara. One day, I went there and participated in the prayers. I enjoyed it and so began to go there regularly. I got to know the office-bearers there and began to participate in its service activities. I found that I enjoyed the bhajans (devotional songs) sung by the devotees in that Centre. I also wanted to sing like them. So, I learnt to sing those bhajans and became a competent singer with a fine voice. Thus, I was getting interested and getting involved in matters that I was not interested in previously. Something from deep within me was prompting me to get involved in spiritual activities, and I was enjoying those activities. I myself could see that I had become a changed man. The devotees in that Centre would, from time to time, have sharing sessions (Sathsang) in which they would discuss the glory of Sathya Sai Baba and His miracles. Everyone would listen to those

discussions with rapt attention; those were spellbinding moments for us, and we cherished those.

‘Some devotees shared their experiences where Swami performed miracles to wean them from their bad activities and to make them become respectable members of the society. Such stories touched everyone’s heart and made them become even more grateful to Sai Baba, the Compassionate Lord.

‘Then – it was only then! – that the penny dropped for me. I realized, with gratitude and eyes full of tears, that Sai Baba had performed a miracle on me; it was that miracle-chocolate from the Divine Hands that made a total change in my life. With that chocolate, He pulled me out of the dark and stinking gutter that I was living in and placed me in a bright and divine garden. From then on, my love for Sai Baba grew like a waxing moon. I now lead a very decent life, guided by Sai Baba’s teachings. I can now say with confidence that I lead a righteous life. I think that the author of this book, Sri T.R. Sai Mohan, has heaped praises on me at the beginning of this story because he is also impressed with the way I lead my life.

‘When young Prahlada was hurled down from a mountaintop, Lord Vishnu rushed and caught him with His Divine Hands and saved him. Unlike Prahlada, I was not a person who was devoted to God. Yet, when I was sliding downhill in my life that was addicted to alcohol, Sai Baba saved me. This is a miracle performed out of sheer compassion by Sai Baba. I do not think that I deserved it. The author asked me to share this beautiful story of Sai Baba’s compassion and love with all of you. I am grateful to the respected author for giving me this opportunity to share my story and to express my feelings towards Sai Baba.

‘Compassion of Sai Baba – that is the main theme of my story that I have stated above. Sai Baba staged everything in a meticulously planned sequence of events. It started with my first job. I could have been employed in Tamil Nadu itself or in some other part of India. But I was employed in Bangalore, which is very close to Whitefield, where Sai Baba’s Ashram is. Next to happen was that three of us, all bachelors, rented a room and stayed together, and we became addicted to alcohol. Then, I got to know about Sathya Sai Baba from Chinnappa. One day, Chinnappa said that he was going to Brindavan for Sai Baba’s Darshan. My inner self prompted me to get up early in the morning, have a shower, go to Chinnappa’s house and, after successfully persuading him, to go with him to Brindavan. During Darshan, Sai Baba gave me a chocolate.

‘After I ate that chocolate, I lost the craving for alcohol. That was a miracle! Then, within seven days after eating that chocolate, I received an unexpected job offer, and left Bangalore for Bhilwara, and started working there. That was also a miracle! I think that Sai Baba was so compassionate that He did not want me to be anywhere near my old roommates in Bangalore because of the risk that I could be influenced by them

once again to succumb to alcohol. That was why, Sai Baba took me far away, to Bhilwara. At Bhilwara, He introduced me to the Sai Centre there and made me participate in its service activities. He made me listen to discussions at that Centre on His glory and His miracles. Then came the grand finale! – the last scene in the meticulously planned drama. Through the discussions on His miracles, He made me understand that it was that chocolate He gave me that triggered a series of events culminating in my becoming a devotee of Him and leading a very respectable life in the society.’

Jai Sai Ram

Author’s Note:

We have heard the story of the miraculous alchemy of ‘Spirits’ Thangappan transforming into ‘Spiritual’ Thangappan in his own words.

Let me make some additional comments.

Leela Mohana Sai performed countless miracles for the benefit of His devotees. Devotees from all parts of the world flocked in large numbers to see Him. Actually, for most people, it was the miracles that He performed that drew them to Him.

In this modern world, God assumed human form and lived among us. Thus, He gave us the unbelievable privilege of having been His contemporaries. He performed countless miracles for our benefit. Such miracles were a delight to us.

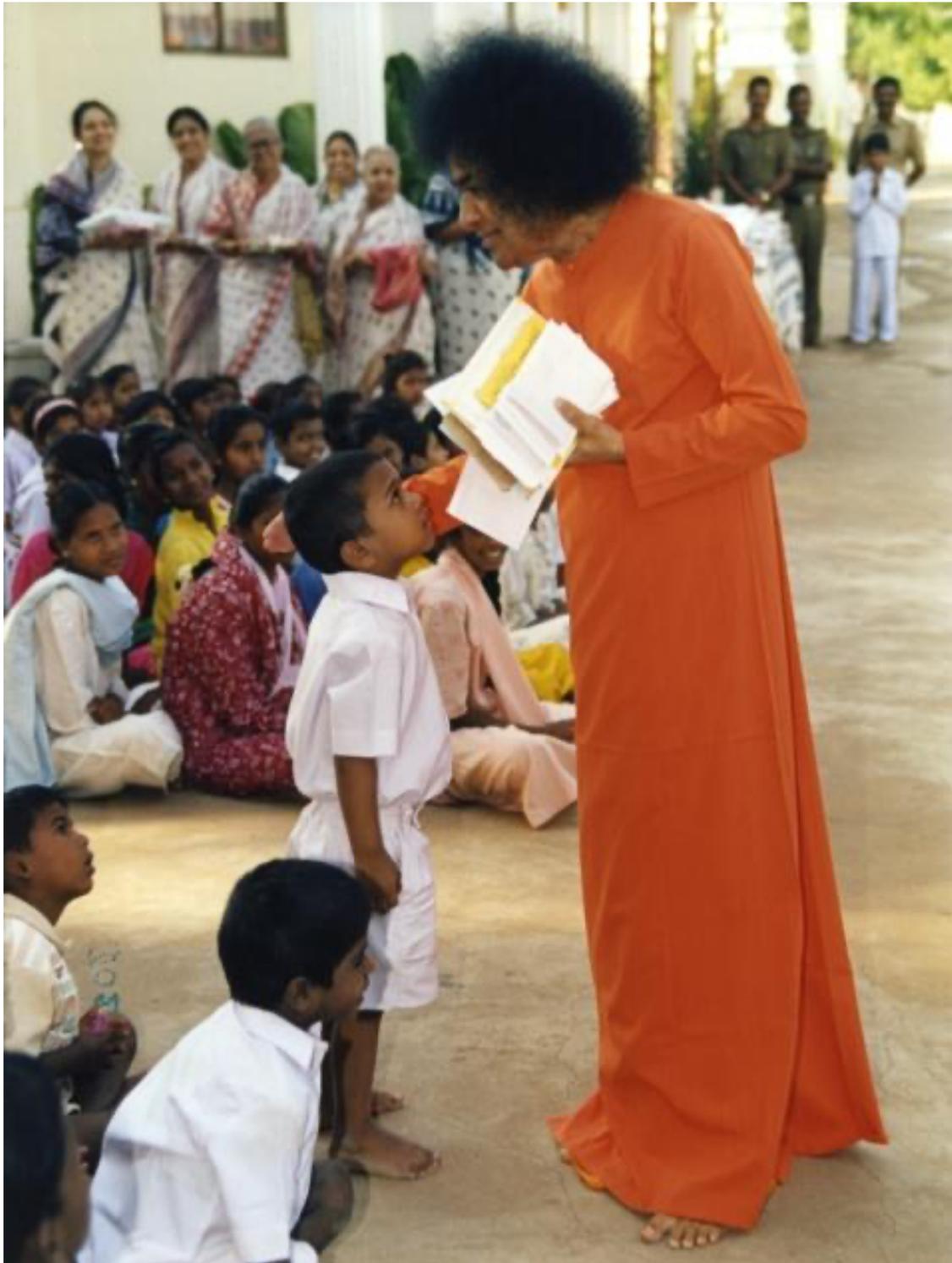
We listened To His own voice, heard a lot about Him, beheld Him, conversed with Him and touched Him. We watched Him perform miracles, commonest of which was the manifesting of Holy Ash. Shouldn’t we leave behind our stories to the future generations? I am writing this book so that it would serve as heritage from our generation to the future generations.

Books on Sai Baba have been written by many from many countries and in many languages. Many world-renowned people have written books on Him. I am just a little man compared to them; like the squirrel who also carried earth on its back when Lord Rama was constructing the bridge to Lanka. Making this minnow also stand shoulder to shoulder with the greats who have written about Sai Baba – it is yet another instance of Sai sankalpam (wish and will) of our Compassionate Lord. There are countless stories about Sai Baba’s miracles. I have written this story so that His devotees would get to hear one additional story about the power of Swami’s miracles and to thus increase their faith in Him. Although the main theme of this story is the power of His miracles, for the sake of completeness, I have given details of the background to it also.

Om Sri Sai Ram

It is my humble request that you be focused on the main message in this story – just be focused on the part of the story that would enhance your faith in Him - and not digress into the details of the background to the story.

Jai Sai Ram!





IX

The Prayer Of Villagers At Varanjaram For Rain

I had finished writing Vol 2 of my book and was trying to get it converted into an electronic document in a computer. Out of the blue, two Sai devotees from the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi (Sai Centre) at Kallakurichchi happened to hear about it and volunteered to get it done.

That work of computerisation of Vol 2 was progressing well at Kallakurichchi, but there was no suitable person there to proofread the computerised text. Therefore, I myself had to go to Kallakurichchi to attend to that.

I had to remain at Kallakurichchi for some forty days. The Sai devotees there showered their love towards me and attended to all my needs with care and concern.

They gave me several opportunities to give talks at their Sai Centre and were enthralled to hear about my experiences with Sai Baba. Thus, I became a very respected figure there. Not only Sai devotees there, but even some others, including some prominent personalities, treated me with a lot of respect. My book was being computerised at Liberty Printers, a printing shop at the marketplace at Kallakurichchi. I would go there daily to proofread.

There were some more Sai Centres operating in the vicinity of Kallakurichchi, viz. Varanjaram, Mamandur and Hemaperu. The Convenors of those Centres became my acquaintances and gave me opportunities to give talks at their Centres also.

There was something very interesting about the talk at the Varanjaram Sai Centre. Varanjaram is about 20 km from Kallakurichchi. The Convenor of the Varanjaram Sai Centre wanted me to give a talk at that Centre on the glories of the Sai Avatar (incarnation). On the day of the talk, Sai devotees from that Centre picked me up from where I was staying in Kallakurichchi and drove me to the venue of the talk. While travelling, after some time had lapsed, we passed through a place where there were a number of loudspeakers hailing repeatedly, 'The illustrious dignitary is arriving,' I asked my hosts what that place was and who the illustrious person was. 'We have just entered the border of the village of Varanjaram, and you are that illustrious person, Sir. The organisers of the talk are announcing your arrival to the public,' one

of the hosts in the car told me in a very respectful manner. The residents of Varanjaram, though they had never seen me previously, had so much of respect and love for me! I was very touched. They took me into the village in a ceremonial procession. Varanjaram is just a hamlet with a population of about 300. The people there were living below the poverty line.

They were very happy to see me and showed unmitigated love and respect for me. It was quite clear that they were all unlettered; however, the young children there were attending school. From the way those children kept looking at me, I thought that they were drawing some inspiration from me. The venue for the talk was the Pillayar Temple there. The organisers had taken the trouble to provide a table and a chair for me and a mike for my use. Almost the entire village had assembled there.

The organisers had arranged for me to participate in the prayers at the Temple before my talk. After the prayers were over, the organisers made an announcement that my talk would commence.

I noticed that in the audience there was no sense of discipline that had to be maintained at a talk. So, before I set out to give my talk, I requested them to maintain silence and to sit down in an orderly fashion. Immediately, all of them complied.

I spoke: 'God took human birth under the name of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He resided in His Ashram called Prasanthi Nilayam in Puttaparthi, a township in Andhra Pradesh. Prasanthi means peace and quiet. God resides only where there is absolute silence. All of you should make this place also a Prasanthi Nilayam by maintaining absolute silence and contemplating on Sathya Sai Baba with devotion. Do you understand me? Please maintain silence and listen to what I say. I am going to tell you about Sathya Sai Baba and His glories and miracles. Accept Him as God and offer your devotional prayers to Him while listening to me. Will you do that?'

The response from the audience, unsophisticated village folks, was resounding: 'Yes, we will observe silence. Certainly, we will conduct ourselves the way you have asked us to do.'

In my talk, I spoke about a miracle of Sathya Sai Baba to which I was an eye witness. What I said was, briefly, as follows:

'It was 1964. One day, Bhagawan announced to those at the Ashram that there would be a very heavy rainfall in the night. Though it was a very clear day, after about two hours, it did indeed rain cats and dogs. Night had fallen by then and it was dark; there were floods practically everywhere. A five-year-old girl had got lost in the floods, but her parents were unaware of it. They realised it only in the morning next day. They cried and wailed in agony; when Swami heard that commotion, He came out and asked the parents to search for their daughter in a well within the Prasanthi Nilayam

compound. The parents rushed to that well. There, they came across a most unexpected miracle! They found their daughter inside the well. The miracle did not end there; the parents found that she was alive and well, hale and hearty!

There was loud applause from the audience when they heard that reassuring story of miracle and Divine compassion. In the meantime, an elderly lady from the audience put up her hand and said, 'Sir, can I ask you something?' 'Yes, most certainly. Please don't hesitate to ask anything,' I responded.

She continued: 'When the weather was very clear and there was no imminent sign of rain, Baba said that there was going to be a very heavy shower, and indeed it rained two hours later. Things happened exactly as what Baba said. If Baba has so much of power, we should certainly worship Him as God. Likewise, when that child was missing, Baba asked the parents to look for that child in a nearby well. And, the child was found there. Not only that. Even though that child had spent several hours inside that well, she was found to be alive and well. It was definitely a miracle performed by Baba. If Baba is so powerful and so loving and compassionate, we must accept that He is God. These stories strengthen our faith, and we will lead our lives with the conviction that He is God. I am saying all this because I have an entreaty to be made to Baba. Our village is a parched countryside. We depend on rain, nothing but rain, for our living. We will get rice to eat only if there is rain. It has not rained here for two years now. Will your Baba make it rain here? How should we pray to him to get this dispensation from Him? Please tell us how we can get some rain in our village.'

I was taken aback by that request. I narrated that miracle that happened many years ago, but that elderly lady said that the villagers wanted the same miracle to happen in their village also. I didn't know how to respond to her; it was a challenging moment for me.

Immediately, I cried out in my mind to our Leela Mohana Sayeesan and pleaded for Him to resolve my predicament: 'Sayeesa! It was Your sankalpam that I should be a witness to several of your miracles. I shared Your glory with these residents because I wanted them to benefit from it. I did it with a pure heart; it was a selfless act that I performed. Now, how should I respond to this lady? Sayeesa! You are residing within me! I beg You to show me a way out of this difficult situation. Please rescue me from this dilemma.'

Almost immediately, I got a brain wave. I turned to one of the organisers who accompanied me in the car and asked him how many pocket photos of Swami were available with him. 'Oh, we have a lot, Sir,' he told me. I asked him to distribute to everyone in the audience a photo.

I asked the audience, 'Sai Ram! Have all of you received a photo of Sai Baba?' All of them held Swami's photo high up and replied affirmatively in one voice.

I told them, 'Now, all of you, please listen to me carefully. Recall a town or any other place that you went to recently. And, recall a temple or the marketplace or some such place that you saw there. Now, if you closed your eyes and tried, would you see a mental picture of exactly what you saw?' 'Certainly we will be able to see a mental picture,' all of them responded.

'Well, now, with concentration, please take a very good look at Swami's photo. After you do that, close your eyes and see whether you are able to visualise what you saw in the photo. Please tell me whether you are now able to see Swami in your mind's eyes,' I told them. All of them religiously followed my instructions; they looked at the photo with concentration; then, they closed their eyes. All of them, again in one voice, said, 'Yes! We are able to see Sai Baba clearly in our minds.'

I continued: 'Very good! You have now imprinted Sai Baba in your minds. Likewise, keep Him always in your hearts also. Hereafter, whenever you think of Him, you will see Him in your mental eyes. He has now entered your hearts and is now your favourite God (Ishta Devata). Hereafter, treat Him as the dearest of your relatives, friends and Gurus and accept Him as your dearest God. And, be sincere in your devotion to Him. Ask Him whatever you want. He will answer your prayers!' By then, I myself had become very enthusiastic and visibly excited because I had managed to achieve so much in increasing the faith those residents had for Swami. The audience also responded positively; I saw their faces smiling and radiating happiness.

But at that moment something happened to dampen my enthusiasm; mentally I said in frustration, 'Oh! No!'. What happened was that that elderly lady had got up again! She reminded me: 'Sir! You have said quite a lot, but you have not answered me. Is there any way we can get rain in this village?' I didn't hesitate even for a moment. I told her, in a very confident tone, 'Swami will certainly bless this village with rain.' But, that lady was not satisfied to take that as an answer. 'Sai Ram Sir! How will that happen? Please be specific,' she insisted.

I told the audience that they must do exactly what I asked them to do. In a chorus, all of them said, 'Sai Ram Sir! Yes, we will do so. Please tell us what we should do.'

I told them, 'Do you remember, I told you that if you close your eyes and contemplate on Sai Baba, He will appear in your mind's eyes? Now, I am going to ask all of you to close your eyes; think of Sai Baba; and visualise His physical form in your mind's eyes. After that, I will recite a mantra (sacred formula) through the mike. All of you should keep repeating that mantra while continuing to keep your eyes closed. Do all of you agree to follow me?'

‘Sai Ram! We will certainly follow you and chant the mantra while keeping our eyes closed,’ all of them responded.

I asked them to close their eyes and visualise Swami in their minds’ eyes and continued: ‘Are all of you able to see Swami within yourselves now?’ All of them, with their eyes closed, answered enthusiastically that they were able to visualise Swami. I continued: ‘Very good! Now, don’t open your eyes. Just repeat after me.’

I then chanted ‘Aum Sri Sai Ram’ 108 times. The congregation followed me and chanted that mantra repeatedly. From their tone, I could feel that they were chanting that mantra with pure devotion. At the end of it, I asked the congregation to open their eyes.

Immediately, that elderly lady got up, again!

The Elderly Lady: Sai Ram Sir! Will it rain?

Me: Yes, it will.

TEL: When?

Me: Tonight itself.

When I told her that, I did so with a lot of confidence; I had that feeling that Swami would do something.

TEL: Are you sure?

Me: Baba will never forsake those who have faith in Him. Have faith! It will certainly rain tonight!

The congregation was very happy. All of them milled around me and offered me their obeisance. Further, at their request, I applied the sacred ash (vibuthi) on their foreheads. It was very clear to me that in their eyes, I was Sai Baba’s Messenger!

When the entire proceedings were over, my hosts drove me back to Kallakurichchi. I had my dinner and after that went to bed.

Usually, when I sleep, I would keep my handphone under my pillow. My phone rang. It was early in the morning the next day; time was 5.30 AM. I answered: ‘Sai Ram! Sai Mohan speaking.’

It was a very excited tone at the other end: ‘Sa...i Ra...m Sir! I am speaking from the village of Varanjaram. Last night a miracle happened! Exactly as you foretold last night, there was extremely heavy rain in our village! Sai Ram, Sir! It rained only in Varanjaram; there was not even one drop of rain in the surrounding villages. No... doubt, no doubt! Sai Baba is God!’ That call was from a Varanjaram resident who could not contain his happiness and gratitude and wanted to share it with me.

It was not only the Varanjaram residents who were happy and grateful; I also was. Swami, our Deena Dayala – the One who showers His mercy on the forlorn - had answered the sincere prayers of those pure-hearted souls and performed a marvellous

miracle – rain for the first time in two years! I also could not contain my happiness and gratitude. I spent most part of the morning that day contemplating on Him and chanting the Sai Gayathri Mantra.

While I was in Kallakurichchi, several more such unexpected events – miracles – took place, and I happened to be associated with them in one way or the other. That made me a very popular figure. Everyone was friendly with me and treated me with a lot of respect and love.

While I was still in Kallakurichchi, the Sai devotees there came up with a proposal to celebrate in a grand fashion Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's 90th Birthday on 23 November 2015. They discussed that with me with a view to getting guidance from me.

The organisers desired to mount a beautifully decorated picture of Swami on the back of an elephant and take it on a procession to all parts of Kallakurichchi; play Kerala Pancha Vadyam (music played by a band consisting of five music instruments played by artistes from Kerala) during the procession; distribute laddu (a ball-shaped sweet) to all those who come to witness the procession – about 5,000 laddus would have to be prepared for that; and distribute packets of titbits to all – about 2,000 packets would have to be prepared for that. They had one more desire; to provide either a woollen blanket or a woollen sweater to the patients warded at the public (free) hospital in Kallakurichchi.

The Spiritual Convenor of that Sai Centre told me that the total cost of the celebration would be about Rs 100,000.

The Committee Members of that Sai Centre deliberated on the proposal and decided to proceed with it. They also decided to convene a meeting with all the Sai devotees in that Centre to inform them about that proposal and to request their cooperation to proceed with it. On the date scheduled for that meeting, all the Sai devotees in that Centre assembled at the compound of the Centre. I was the first to address them. I said:

‘God took human birth on 23 November 1926 and lived among us. For all of us, Sai devotees, November 23 is a joyous day and a day of celebration. This year, we will be celebrating the commencement of the 90th year of God's Advent. We should treat this holy and joyous occasion as if it is a celebration in our own home and participate in it wholeheartedly. Let us all jointly make this such a grand celebration that all those who see it would marvel at it.

‘The organisers of this celebration will explain to you the programme for the celebration. The Committee Members have proposed to mount a beautifully decorated

picture of Swami on an elephant and go on a procession to all parts of Kallakurichchi so that a very large number of people would get Swami's Darshan. This is something that no other Sai Centre has done so far. The Committee Members have come up with this proposal in their devotional fervour. I congratulate them on their sincere devotion. For such a grand celebration to be a resounding success and to be a talk of the town, cooperation and support from each and every one of you is vitally important. I have been living in your midst for more than forty days now. You have showed a lot of love and respect to me. These are all due to nothing but Swami's sankalpam. I have delivered talks several times in your Centre. That is also His sankalpam. I have shared with you several stories about the glories and the miracles of Bhagawan Sathya Sai Baba. All of you listened to those stories with sincere devotion. They were possible only because of Swami's sankalpam. Therefore, you should consider yourself fortunate. I am quite senior in age. I know that you will listen to me. That is why, I have come forward to address you and seek your full support for this worthy proposal.

'Your Spiritual Convenor will give you more details about this proposal. It will cost about Rs 100,000 to execute this proposal. Please treat this celebration as your own celebration in your own family and donate whatever amount of money that is within your means. I have asked the organisers to spread a silk cloth at the altar. Please consider that you are giving the money to Swami and make your donations with due devotion.'

After I concluded my talk, the Spiritual Convenor gave all the details, including the breakdown of the cost of each individual item, in his address. After that, he invited the congregation to come forward to make their donations.

At the end of it, the Committee Members collected the donations and found that what the Sai devotees donated far exceeded the estimated cost of Rs 100,000. Everyone was happy to hear this news and was grateful to Bhagawan for such an encouraging start for the celebrations.

The organisers made inquiries about getting an elephant for the procession and found that there was someone in Sri Rangam who hired out elephants for such services. The organisers proceeded to finalise a deal with that person and paid him an initial amount.

In the meantime, the Centre Convenor had applied to the Police Department for permission for an elephant to be used in the procession on Swami's Birthday. However, over this issue of granting a permit for the use of an elephant, there was, sadly, an exchange of words between a prominent person in the Sai Centre and the Police Officer who was dealing with the matter. Unfortunately, because of this, the Police Officer refused to grant permission. This stalemate continued for quite some time.

It was 22 November 2015, just one day before Swami's Birthday. Yet, there was no permit for the use of an elephant. I happened to hear about it on that day. I was very keen to somehow get the permit issued on that day itself. I sought an appointment to see the relevant Police Officer's superior officer, the DSP. It was granted. I explained to him the noble purpose of the proposed procession. I also told him that we had already paid the owner of an elephant in Sri Ranganam thousands of rupees and that the elephant was already at the Kallakurichchi border. I requested him to review the matter. But, he was neither understanding nor helpful. He maintained that the authority of issuing permits for the use of elephants in processions had been delegated to the Police Officer who had already rejected that application, and that he did not consider it appropriate for himself to interfere into it and to overrule it.

He did not stop at that. He asked me why I, an outsider, was getting involved in the local matters of Kallakurichchi. He asked me not to waste his time and to deal with the same relevant Police Officer himself.

Vol 2 of my book in Tamil had been published at around the same time, and fortunately I happened to have a copy of it with me when I was in that Police Station. At the beginning of that book, there are Congratulatory Messages from dignitaries. One is from a onetime Chief Justice of Jharkhand High Court, another from a Justice of the Chennai High Court and one more from a Deputy Secretary to the Tamil Nadu Government.

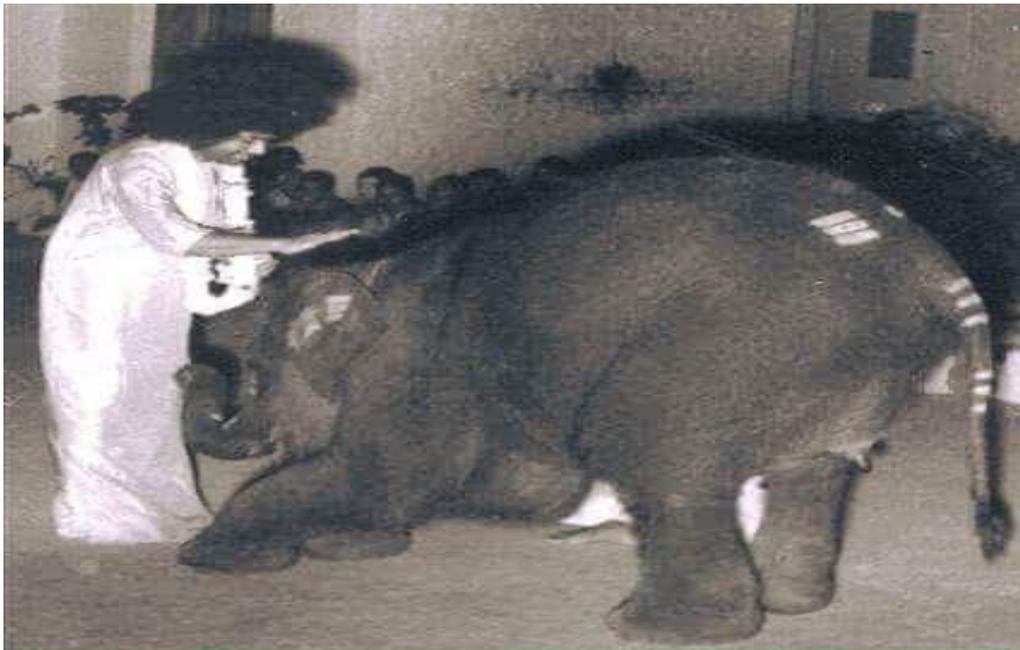
I showed my book to the DSP and told him, 'Bhagawan Sai Baba was God in human form. He granted me the rare privilege of being an eye witness to His Divine leelas and miracles. The dignitaries who have written Congratulatory Messages in my book are people who have sincere devotion to Baba and have heard from me my own experiences with the Divine. That is why they have honoured this book by contributing their Congratulatory Messages. It so happens that I am in Kallakurichchi now to attend to a different matter. The Sai devotees here have asked me to guide them in organising Swami's 90th Birthday celebrations in a grand manner. In my own little way, I am trying to help them. This is just a humble contribution from me. It is in this context that I am now in front of you, trying to get a permit for the use of an elephant. I can, straight away, get in touch with the Deputy Secretary to the Tamil Nadu Government who has written a Congratulatory Message and ask him to talk to you. Would you talk to him?'

The DSP looked at the messages in the book and the credentials of the dignitaries who had contributed them. Phew! He wasted no time after that! Immediately, he granted the permit for the use of an elephant.

What made the DSP change his stance so suddenly? Was it the names of those dignitaries, or was it because I asked him whether he would talk to the Tamil Nadu Government Deputy Secretary? I am not sure, but I am sure that it was yet another glorious leela (Divine play) of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

I told the DSP, 'In my own way, I am trying to help them. This is my humble contribution.' Swami has very clearly rewarded my humility and sincerity by making me the person who eventually obtained the permit from the Police. The Kallakurichchi residents were very grateful to me for what I did. Swami did not stop at rewarding me only. He rewarded the sincere and pure devotion of the Kallakurichchi residents also. He rewarded them by enabling the celebration to be a very grand success! The procession with Swami's picture on an elephant was a memorable event! The music played by the Kerala Pancha Vadyam further heightened the celebratory mood! Even the distribution of laddus - 5,000 of them! - was an enjoyable event. Everybody relished them and that brought happiness to all! It was truly a grand celebration; a reward from Swami for the sincere devotion of the pure-hearted Kallakurichchi Sai devotees!

Jai Sai Ram!



The Endless Epilogue



In the Endless Epilogue of Vol 2 of this book, I shared that we should do service endlessly to God, the Endless. It is certainly our dear Leela Mohana Sayeeshan's Sankalpam (Divine Will and Wish) that I should continue the service of spreading His glory, and so, without stopping with Vol 2, I proceeded to write Vol 3 also and have now completed it. Writing about His glories has been a very pleasant journey for me. It has been a privilege too.

In Bharat, our glorious land, we have people practising different customs and traditions on matters that are worldly, spiritual and religious, depending on the culture of their community and their individual preferences.

Those who are religious and traditional would read spiritual scriptures and epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata regularly; some would recite the Vedas or recite chapters from the Gita; some others would engage themselves daily in performing customs such as prayers; and there are some who would go to temples regularly, to make entreaties to God or to mark the fulfilment of a spiritual vow such as fasting. And, there are also some who would go to temples merely as a routine activity.

All the foregoing practices are noble deeds that yield enhanced welfare for the society. However, such good deeds, if done for selfish gains by those who are tainted with selfishness and are not disposed to giving a helping hand to those who are in need or to providing a shoulder to cry on, will not yield any benefits. Such people may be engaging in such spiritual and religious activities thinking that they would yield some benefits, but in the absence of noble feelings and intentions, they are reduced to karma (activities) done merely mechanically.

In this world, we cannot refrain ourselves from doing karma (activities). 'Karma' is understood by some to mean the final rites performed for a departed soul. But every action that we perform during our lifetime, from birth to death, is also called "karma". Even the involuntary process of breathing, the inhaling and the exhaling, that we do non-stop throughout our lifetime is also a karma. That is why this world we live in, is referred in our Scriptures as Karma Bhumi (Land of Activity).

Our society has categorized some karma as Sath-karma (benign activity) and some others as Dush-karma (malignant activity). And, it is strongly believed that Sath-karma would earn merit and yield happiness, while Dush-karma would earn demerit and yield misery. This is not entirely correct. What is important in determining whether an action is a Sath-karma or a Dush-karma are the circumstances under which that action is performed, and the feeling and the intention of the doer. Without understanding this important caveat, our society blindly practises Sath-karma believing that they would earn merit and yield happiness.

Let us consider '*anna-danam*', feeding the poor, as an example for understanding this philosophy. If we feed the poor with the sole intention of alleviating their hunger, it is a noble act. On the other hand, if we do the same act with a hidden selfish desire, such as gaining publicity, it is only an innocuous act, neither a Sathkarma nor a Dushkarma.

However, if a person feeding the poor happens to be arrogant or hurts the feelings of those being fed by being rude to them or expressing resentment at them, then that same act of feeding would not count as a Sath-karma and not even as an innocuous act; it would on the contrary, be reduced to a Dush-karma, earning demerits and misery for that person. Therefore, during such occasions, it is important to be gracious and also to be grateful to the poor that gather to receive the food.

I would like to discuss one more example to elucidate the philosophy of karma. If a thief breaks into a house and happens to kill a resident there when confronted, we would call it an evil act (Dush-karma). But, when a soldier risks his own life and fights selflessly to defend his country and kills several enemy soldiers at the battle-front, we laud it as an act of sacrifice and as a noble act.

In determining whether an act is a noble one or an evil one, philosophers have, based on the analysis of examples such as the two above, established that it is the intention and not the act that counts. This is why, I said at the beginning of this discussion that those who are selfish and do not care for the well-being of the distressed will not derive any benefits by doing Sath-karma.

Swami Himself has told us the same in the following quotation:

‘Na japamsi, na thirthanam, na sastranam, yatha nahi samsara sagarothare sath bhavanam, sevanam, vinah?’

The meaning of this is that whether you do japa (prayers), go on pilgrimages or recite the Scriptures regularly, unless you have pure thoughts and pure intentions, all these activities will be useless. Even your life itself will be a waste. Here, pure thoughts and pure intentions mean thoughts and intentions that do not have any trace of ego or selfishness.

Sanyasa Suktam, a Vedic chant from Kaivalya Upanishad has also spoken about such pure thoughts and pure intentions.

‘Na Karmana, Na Prajaya, Dhanena Tyage Naike Amrithatva Ma nashuhu’.

This means,

‘Neither by actions, nor by (acquiring) progeny and wealth, but by sacrifice alone can one attain immortality’.

Here, sacrifice refers to actions carried out by one without any trace of ego or selfishness. Our dear Lord Sai also has reiterated this:

‘Renouncing one’s possessions is not sacrifice; giving up our personal comforts and desires for the sake of the society and our fellow beings is true sacrifice’.

Man carries out worldly activities at the prompting of his mind. It is mind again that propels man to develop worldly desires and bondages, which cause him to succumb to his six enemies, viz. kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya - lust, anger, greed, illusion, pride and envy. Man, thus is enveloped by confusion and misery, and hence is unable to realise his inherent divinity and his blissful true self. Such is the role the mind plays in man’s life.

The mind is holding man as its mere puppet and has rendered him a powerless and selfish being. Our Bhagawan wants us to free ourselves from the clutches of the six enemies and lead selfless lives motivated by good thoughts and intentions. He reminded us of the saying ‘Paropakartham idam shareeram’ - the body, with its senses-mind-brain complex has been awarded to you to be used for helping the helpless – and stressed it further with His catchy and ubiquitous clarion call ‘Love All; Serve All! Help Ever; Hurt Never!’

Love all! – Loving another being is a human quality.

Serve all! – Serving others is a fundamental requirement in our lives.

Help ever! – Helping others is human culture.

Hurt never! – Never hurting others is very good behaviour.

Of this 8-word dictum from Swami, I have adopted four words as my motto in life – ‘Help ever! Hurt never!’ Since several years ago, I am living a life that practises this motto to the very best of my ability.

As a first step towards succeeding in living up to this motto, I discipline my mind so that it would always have pure thoughts. I, therefore, practise as far as possible a life that has no likes or dislikes to worldly things and has no attachment to anyone, be it family members or others.

Swami has said that we should behave towards others as we would like them to behave towards us; that if we consider any act done by others as unacceptable, we too should never commit those acts; and that we should treat others with the same degree of respect and courtesy that we would like them to treat us with. I consider this as a golden maxim and always deal with others in a very pleasant manner and show them due respect and courtesy.

In this context, I am conscious of the 504th Kural, which is as follows:
Weigh a man's merits and weigh his demerits;
Then judge him according to the greater.

And Swami has, on this subject, said that we should not be so petty minded that we see nothing but only the defects in others. Therefore, in my dealings with others, I place emphasis on their positive traits and not so much on their negative ones.

When I deal with others, I avoid expecting anything from them. Instead, I always look for opportunities to be of some help to them. I think that such a practice enriches the quality of our life.

Another practice that I have adopted to enrich the quality of my life is avoiding the company of those who waste time by engaging in unnecessary talking. If I think that by conversing with a person I would learn more on matters that I consider are vital for man's progress in becoming, in the true sense, a better human being, I would, with extreme delight, do so. On the other hand, if that person wants to jabber about matters of the world that would not benefit me in any way, I would avoid him. I do so mainly because Swami Himself has said that in the company of water, iron corrodes, while it becomes purer in the company of fire.

I am very conscious of the 664th Kural, which is as follows:
‘To say (how an act is to be performed) is (indeed) easy for anyone;
but far more difficult it is to do according to what has been said.’

I always give my very best to do what I say, and derive pleasure in accomplishing it even under trying circumstances. Underscoring the importance of

living a life of consistency between words and deeds, Swami Himself, when he was a youngster, produced a play titled ‘Cheppinattu Chesthara?’ – Do deeds follow words? – and played the main character’s role in it. I consider Swami’s message in that play as my watchword.

There is one more guiding principle that I adhere to: ‘*Daiva Preethi; Papa Bheethi*’ (Love for God; Fear of Sin). Swami has also emphasised this by saying that we should hold on to our good conduct unwaveringly and that we should never shape our conduct with an eye on the opinion of others.

On dealing with our mind, Bhagawan has told us, ‘Mind is a bad master; but a good servant.’ I keep myself alert at all times to ensuring that I do not become subservient to the ‘bad master’ and to instead make the ‘good servant’ a better servant. I do so because this is what our Bhagawan, our Guru (Spiritual Master; the one who teaches the path of destroying Moha or Delusion), has asked us to do. We should always follow what the Guru asks us to do; Saint Thirumoolar has also emphasised in a verse in his Thirumanthiram the importance of following the dictates of the Guru. I remind myself of that verse, which is as follows, often so that I do not allow my mind to go wayward:

தெளிவு குருவின் திருமேனி காண்டல்
தெளிவு குருவின் திருநாமஞ் செப்பல்
தெளிவு குருவின் திருவார்த்தை கேட்டல்
தெளிவு குருவுரு சிந்தித்தல் தானே.

By beholding the Guru's form one gets clarity;
By chanting the Guru's name one gets clarity;
By listening to the Guru's words one gets clarity;
By contemplating on the Guru's form one gets clarity.

From this verse, I understand that our organs of eyes, mouth and ears should be controlled to carry out tasks only related to our Guru. Where our eyes, mouth and ears have to be used in matters that are our worldly needs, we should exercise control so that we do not indulge in such needs beyond what is required. I find this verse a useful guide for me in controlling my mind and my organs; it helps to transform the ‘bad master’ to a ‘good servant’ and the wayward senses to harmless and obedient ones.

In the Endless Epilogue of Vol 1 of my book, I commented on this subject of maintaining mental discipline and controlling our sense organs as follows:

‘If we can train our eyes, tongue and ears to be disciplined to do only what is good, our mind will achieve the state of calmness; and then it will long only for the Grace of God. In such a state, we will not require the company of anything external for us to be in bliss; we will find that our mind would like to remain in the subtle company of our sense organs, which have been trained to do only what is good. Those who

perform meditation in solitary confinement experience the same state of mind as this. I draw support for my line of thinking from the following verse in Adi Sankaracharya's Baja Govindam:

*satsangatve nissangatvam nissangatve nirmohatvam,
nirmohatve niscalatattvam niscalatattve jivanmuktiH.*

Through the company of the wise and the good, there arises non-attachment; from non-attachment comes freedom from delusion; where there is freedom from delusion, there is abundance in self-knowledge, which leads to freedom while alive.

I am grateful to Jagatguru Adi Sankaracharya for this explanation.

Bhagawan has said that it is more difficult to share in others' happiness than in their misery and that yet we should learn to practise the former. Of the thousands and thousands of advice given by Bhagawan, I find this most useful; it has been a beacon of light that has guided me to become a pure-hearted being.

Almost all spiritual masters have advised that we should empathise with those who are in misery by sharing in their grief. But, generally, people sympathise with those in grief only if they are relatives or friends. Even then, in most cases, such sharing of grief is done merely to go along with the social norms. Worse still, there are people who would even pass inhospitable comments about the grieving party.

No one, other than Swami, has said anything about the need to share in others' happiness. Swami is the only one who has given this advice that when others are happy, we should be equally happy for them. This is a necessary practice for us to rid ourselves of jealousy, a vile enemy within us, and to develop equal-mindedness, and thus lead a life of bliss. Only Swami can give such counsel that would put us on the fast track to becoming ideal human beings.

Swami has repeatedly said 'Love All; Serve All.' He wants us to be ideal human beings by loving others sincerely and selflessly and not with any hidden desires or any other agenda. This is the expectation Swami has from us. He repeatedly expressed this expectation of Him in a compelling dictum: 'Your life is My message.'

So far, I have mentioned the steps I have adopted in my personal life to rid my mind of all its defects. I am not in a position to advise others regarding how they should lead their lives. Therefore, I have confined my narrative only to steps that I have adopted in my personal life to cleanse my mind and thus make it pure. I have done this sharing with noble intentions; it is my sincere hope that at least some of those who read this would also develop the desire to cleanse their minds and put into practice the steps that I have stated above.

There are some more steps that I have adopted to further improve my inner personality. If I write about all those steps, this article will, true to its title 'Endless Epilogue', go on and on endlessly. Therefore, let me stop my comments here and proceed to the rest of the comments that I wish to make.

In this book, I have written the story of my visit to Parthi on the 2016 New Year's Day. During the morning Darshan on that day, I knelt down at the Mahasamadhi, the Sai sannidi, of Leela Mohana Sai and, with tears in my eyes, offered my homage and made a sincere entreaty. I asked for His blessings to enable me to devote all my time during that entire year to do social service projects for the good of the society and to alleviate the misery of the stricken. That was a prayerful request from the bottom of my heart; an entirely selfless request. Our beloved Swami responded to it very promptly. He presented to me several opportunities to provide relief to the stricken. I succeeded in achieving a great deal in helping the needy. The way things were happening and the results that our efforts were producing took everyone by surprise; I myself also found them unbelievable. I would like to now share some of those stories.

In my story about how my name changed from Somanathan to Sai Mohan, I spoke about my practice of reciting mantras when I was a youngster. Such good practices are now, in my senior years, yielding fruits. For couples who are childless yet, I would perform prayers and give them sanctified Holy Ash. Quite a number of such couples have now been blessed with children. This is nothing but Sai sankalpam (Divine will and wish). Whenever I recall those pleasant experiences, my eyes would be filled with tears of joy, and in my mind I would kneel down at the Holy Feet of our ever-compassionate Mother Sai and offer my gratitude.

After the New Year's Day Darshan at Parthi on 1st January 2016, I left the next day for Nanganallur in Chennai. Contrary to my plans, things happened in such a way that I ended up spending a large part of that year at both Nanganallur and Villivakkam, which is also in Chennai.

During that period I came across several families that were in distress. Through intense prayers, I succeeded in relieving those families from their misery. Everyone was surprised at the results. All the glory belongs to our Compassionate Sayeeshan!

I wish to describe an episode that happened, based on my recollections, in February 2016.

A couple in Nanganallur were trying their best to find a suitable husband for their daughter, but there was no success. They were met only with disappointment after disappointment. On occasions, even after a suitable partner with a matching horoscope was found, the proposal would fizzle out. Since I was conversant in reading horoscopes, the dejected parents consulted me.

The girl's horoscope had very severe Sevvai dhosham (blemish from the influence of the planet Mars).

I advised the parents that to nullify the blemish, a homam (ritual of offering oblation to sanctified fire) should be conducted for the planet Mars. But, they were not people of means and expressed their inability to do this homam. So, as an alternative, I suggested that they could perform a Subramanya Laksharchchanai (reciting Lord Subramanya's names 100,000 times – collectively – and making offerings after reciting each name). The parents agreed to it.

There was a Veda Parayana (Chanting of the Scriptures) group in Nanganallur that used to recite the Vedas during special occasions at the houses of residents there. They agreed to perform the Laksharchchanai, and we managed to get everything organised within a mere two days' time and carried out the Laksharchchanai very successfully.

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Grace! Within seven days, to the utmost delight of the parents, they found a very good partner for their daughter. At around the same time, the girl found employment also. They are now living very happily. The glory is our Lord Leela Mohana Sayeeshan's!

There was another case. Because of blemishes in their horoscopes, the children in a family were unable to get married. I advised that family to perform religious rituals to nullify the evil effects of the blemishes in the children's horoscopes. And, very soon after those rituals were conducted, the children got married. This was the talk of the town in Nanganallur at that time and everyone marvelled at the compassionate Lord Sayeeshan's Divine dispensation.

Swami made use of me to perform miracles in Nanganallur. I think that it was Swami's response to the sincere prayer I made at His Maha Samadi on the New Year's Day of 2016. I would like to relate a few more of those miracles.

This story is about one of two brothers, both of whom were affluent and jointly owned a business. He, the elder of the two, was suspected to be stricken with cancer in his thigh. Specialist doctors at the Chennai Apollo Hospital carried out tests and confirmed the bad news. Following that, specialists at the Chennai Ramachandra Hospital repeated the tests. It was again bad news! The patient was advised to go for surgery, and he was admitted to the Ramachandra Hospital. I knew both the brothers well. So, when I heard that the cancer-stricken brother had been admitted to the Ramachandra Hospital, I visited him. I had in my possession Holy Ash that I had sanctified with Divine vibrations from the chanting of powerful spiritual mantras (spiritual formulae). 'Bhagawan Sri Sai Nathan will certainly shower His blessings and

grace upon you. You do not have to worry,' I told him and comforted him and his family. Then, I recited some powerful mantras that provide relief from ailments and while doing so put some of the sanctified Holy Ash in the patient's mouth and applied the rest on the afflicted part of his thigh. I returned home after that.

The surgery was scheduled to take place the next day. The surgeons carried out, as part of the pre-surgery routine, yet another scan on that day.

Miracle! Fabulous miracle! That latest scan showed no signs of cancer at all! Scans done some two or three days earlier showed cancer; yet, the latest scan showed that everything was normal.

This story again was the talk of the town in Nanganallur. All the residents were overjoyed with the news and praised the glory of our dear Lord Sai.

Sai devotees in Chennai and its suburbs have a lot of love for me. They wanted to celebrate my 84th birthday, which fell on 27 Nov 2016, in a grand manner and felicitate me. They organised a meeting on that day at the premises of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Nanganallur West, Chennai. The main person who was responsible for organising the celebration was that Samithi's former Convenor Mr Ramesh. The meeting was presided by Retired Justice Periya Karuppiah.

The younger brother of the one who was suspected of cancer was one of the speakers at that meeting. He narrated in detail the entire story:

'The first two scans on my brother showed cancer; after he was admitted for surgery he received Holy Ash that was sanctified with mantras; a scan done after that showed that there was no sign of cancer. 'Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has showered His blessings and grace on us through the sanctified Holy Ash that Sri Sai Mohan gave my brother.

'Sri Sai Mohan has 'ananya bhakthi' (unremitting love; total devotion to One and One only) for Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It is the phenomenal power of that love that made the sanctified Holy Ash given by Sri Sai Mohan to my brother on the day before the scheduled day for surgery become a Sarva Sanjeevani (a cure-all herbal plant mentioned in the Ramayana; panacea) and totally eradicate the deadly disease of cancer in him.

'May Sri Sai Mohan's devotion for Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba grow more and more; may he receive more and more of blessings and grace from our Bhagawan; may he live a long and healthy life so that the society will receive more benefits from him; this is my heartfelt prayer to our Mother Sai'

The speaker spoke from his heart and was visibly overwhelmed with joy and excitement by the time he finished his speech. The entire audience, including the President, Retired Justice Periya Karupiah, were very moved and put their hands together in obeisance to our Mother Sai.

There was one more such miraculous divine act (leela) of our Leela Mohana Sayeeshan that took place at Nanganallur in Chennai. This story is about a young girl who had a lump growing in her throat. Her mother was herself a doctor and so she herself was treating her daughter.

The girl's grandmother too was a doctor, quite renowned in her profession. She had an agonising fear that the child could be having the much-dreaded ailment of cancer and so she arranged for a needle biopsy test of the lump to be carried out.

Unfortunately, the test results brought unbearable grief to everyone; the lump was cancerous!

The child's mother, a person of noble qualities, had a lot of regards and love for me and rock steady faith and devotion to Sai. 'Without Sai I am a non-entity' was her motto in life. It was also the bedrock of her constantly expanding love, faith and devotion to Bhagawan!

I happened to be outstation at the time this medical tragedy devastated the child's family. The mother, stricken with heart-wrenching grief, telephoned me as soon as the test results were known and told me everything about the calamity that had befallen them and cried out in mental agony, 'Please pray for my child and also do whatever else that could be done to somehow cure my child's illness.'

I comforted the mother by saying, 'Swami will never forsake us! Have firm faith in Him! Don't lose heart. What is required of you now is to be courageous.' In addition, I gave her a short mantra (spiritual formula) through the phone and asked her to recite it repeatedly. At the same time, I got in touch with my Sai-devotee friends in Nanganallur and requested them to do collective prayers for the child's recovery by reciting the same mantra I gave the child's mother. Some 25 to 30 of the Nanganallur Sai-devotee friends rallied enthusiastically to offer their services to the pressing need to somehow save the child. They did this spiritual seva with sincere dedication and collectively did non-stop repeated chanting of the mantra for some two and a half hours daily. I also recited the mantra daily from where I was.

Meanwhile, a second biopsy test was carried out on the lump in the child's neck. Unfortunately, it was sad news again; the results confirmed the earlier test results that the growth was cancerous.

Nevertheless, the collective prayer of reciting the mantra continued unabated. And, everyone continued to pray to Bhagawan with the attitude of complete faith and complete surrender.

Again, the child was subjected to a third biopsy test, but this time the biopsy specimen was sent to the Chennai Cancer Institute for examination.

To the relief and delight of all who reposed their absolute faith in Bhagawan and prayed to Him with utmost sincerity, it was good news this time; the Cancer Institute found no sign of cancer in the specimen!

It was very clear that Swami had demonstrated that it was not the child's mother or her grandmother, both doctors, but He, the Vaidyanatha Leela Mohana Sai - the matchless and most superior doctor - who could cancel the cancer.

There was yet another similar case, but this time it was the case of a TB patient. When I was living in Chennai in the '70s, I became very fond of the child of a friend of mine. That child also was fond of me. Our attachment was so strong that that child lived alternately in his parents' house for some time and then in my house for some time. This practice went on for some years; later, because of change of circumstances, that bonding had to be discontinued.

Years later, in 2016 I spent the entire year in Chennai. During that time, in July I happened to see that boy in his parents' house. I had seen that boy a few years earlier also. He was a handsome adult then. But, in 2016 he was a mere bag of bones. There was sadness on the faces of the parents. They told me that the boy was suffering from TB.

The boy was bare-chested then and something caught my attention. He was 43 years old at that time; yet he was not wearing a *poonool* (sacred thread). His father, while trying his best to suppress his mental anguish, told me that he just did not have the means to conduct the *upanayanam* ceremony (the rite of passage of the sacred thread ceremony). I was very pained to hear that. I comforted the parents by undertaking to conduct that ceremony myself. I organised everything that was necessary for this ritual. With the help of a lot of Sai devotees, the ceremony was conducted in a fairly grand scale on 14 July 2016 at the Nanganallur (West) Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi premises. I am grateful to our dear Lord Leela Mohana Sai for giving me this opportunity to do such a good deed to a truly needy family.

Even at the ceremony, the boy's parents were preoccupied with their son's illness. While doing my best to comfort them, I took out the sanctified Holy Ash that I was carrying with me and, while mentally reciting some mantras for the curing of ailments, applied it all over his body. After that I kissed his body here and there and

assured the parents that Bhagawan would certainly shower His Grace on their son and cure him from his affliction.

A few days later, that boy went for his routine medical appointment. His physician, after doing the routine tests and examinations, with a surprised look on his face, asked him, 'Did you take some other medicine? I don't see any trace of TB in you!'

The glory is His! Our compassionate Lord Leela Mohana Sai had completely cured that boy of TB.

Quite a number of people have benefitted from the sanctified Holy Ash I have given them. This has been possible only because of Bhagawan's grace and compassion. He has chosen me merely as an instrument of His; I have no other role. There is a story behind this phenomenon of sanctified Holy Ash. Let me narrate it.

In Vol 1 of my book, in the story titled 'The Lord of the Yagnas', I had shared that Swami referred to my Mother and Grandmother as those who led their lives with utmost propriety and asked me to bring for Him a substantial amount of the Holy Ash that they normally prepared around the time of Maha Shivarathri. My Mother and Grandmother were delighted to hear this from me. They considered preparing Holy Ash for Swami a Yagna (a method of worship in which offerings are made to God through the sacred Fire, which acts as a medium). They prepared a substantial quantity of Holy Ash and, considering it as our sacred offering to Swami, I took it to Parthi.

The word Yagna is a combination of two words – yath and gna. Yath means 'The one who is the fundamental source of this Universe'. Gna means 'Where is that person?' So, yagna is a practice done as an attempt to understand Him.

There are two types of yagna; Brahma Yagna and Karma Yagna. Contemplating, with purity in our mind, on God all the time is Brahma Yagna. Doing anything as a sacrifice – where the doer sacrifices his desires and worldly comforts for the benefit of others – is Karma Yagna.

While they were preparing the Holy Ash, my Mother and Grandmother were in constant contemplation of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the fundamental source of this Universe. Thus, my Mother's and Grandmother's yagna of preparing the Holy Ash was both a Brahma Yagna and a Karma Yagna. It was our Compassionate Lord's sankalpam (Divine will and wish) that enabled both of them to perform this sacred yagna. Bhagawan Himself told me that what my Mother and Grandmother did was a yagna. I have given the details of this in Vol 1 of my book.

Though I took a large quantity of Holy Ash to Parthi, Swami did not show any interest in it.

Yet, when I give sanctified Holy Ash to those who are facing difficulties, miracles happen. It is very clear that Bhagawan's Grace and Blessings are reaching those in distress through the sanctified Holy Ash that I give them. I am saying all this at this juncture to emphasise that I do not claim any credit in this. I have no powers and cannot claim to have achieved anything. The glory is His!

Here is yet another Divine Play – a miracle!

I have already written Volumes 1 and 2 of this book and published them. I am now nearing the completion of Volume 3. A large number of people have read the first two volumes of my book and, through them, have got to know about me. Moreover, every time a childless couple become proud parents after receiving sanctified Holy Ash from me, the news spreads far and wide and more and more people get to know about me. As a result of all these, a very large number of people with worries come to see me daily and pour their hearts out. I would comfort them and at the same time counsel them also: 'Don't worry. Bhagawan will certainly relieve you of your distress. Pray sincerely and ardently to Him; nothing can be achieved by sharing your worries with me. Pray for His Grace. You have to put in your own effort in this matter. Whatever effort I put in on your behalf will never be sufficient.' Those people would accept my words as gospel and assure me that they would do exactly as what I told them; I would always give them Holy Ash before they took their leave. A very large number of those people subsequently informed me that their prayers had been answered by Leela Mohana Sai in a miraculous manner!

One of those who saw me was a Sai devotee from Jolarpettai. She had got to know about me through the first two volumes of my book. When I saw her, sadness was very evident on her face. She was crying while pouring out her family problems. Her main worry was that her husband had deserted her and gone away although there was no fault on her part. It was already two and a half years since he left. In the midst of full-throated wailing, that Sai devotee asked me whether Bhagawan would solve her problems.

I counselled and comforted her for quite a while and gave her some sanctified Holy Ash. Then I applied some Holy Ash on her forehead and told her not to worry and that her husband would certainly take her back. I could see in her face that she was very relieved. What she told me affirmed it; she told me that she felt relieved of her mental agony and that fresh hopes were beginning to sprout.

I wrote down a couple of powerful mantras (spiritual formulae) and asked her to chant them as many times as possible daily; in addition, I asked her to do Likitha Japam (the written version of repeated chanting of the mantras; the mantra is written

down in lines like sentences) of those mantras 108 times. Then, I counselled her again; I told her that she should avoid pouring out her problems into others' ears and that instead she should submit her entreaties, with sincerity and devotion, to Bhagawan and beg for His Grace and Blessings. I comforted her further by assuring her that I myself would also pray for her and her husband to live together happily and that I would allocate a specific time in my daily routine for it. She was very touched to hear this.

She considered living alone, instead of living with the spouse, meaningless; she wanted to re-join with her husband at all costs. So, she very religiously followed all what I asked her to do; she chanted the mantras hundreds and hundreds of times and wrote the Likitha Japam 108 times daily. She would ring me frequently and tell me that she was having absolute faith in my words of consolation and assurances to her; she would also keep me updated about the progress she was making in the chanting and the writing of the mantras I had given her.

Very recently, I received a call. It was from her; she sounded full of excitement. 'Sai Ram! Sai Ram! Wonderful news! It is like a miracle for me! My husband telephoned,' she was rattling off nonstop and continued, 'and he wants to live with me again. Through you, Bhagawan Sai Baba has answered my prayers and given me a fresh start in my life. I am grateful to you. I will never forget you in my life. You are like God to me.'

When her nonstop talking stopped at last, I responded: 'Leela Mohana Sai will never forsake those who have placed their faith in Him. Hold fast to Him and continue to pray daily with sincerity and devotion. And, my best wishes are there for you and your husband to live together happily.'

Ah! I ought to have mentioned earlier itself about an even greater miracle. I had forgotten to do so.

It was the 20th of October 2016, Avatar Day – (The revelation of Divinity took place on the 20th of October 1940 when Sathya Narayana Raju, at the age of fourteen declared in the presence of His parents, "I am no longer your Sathya; I am Sai." It was a historic moment for humanity.)

That was the time when there was a lot of excitement about the many miracles Swami had performed through the sanctified Holy Ash I had given to those who were in need. A Sai devotee invited me home to have a meal. When I went there, I was greeted with 'Sai Ram..., Sai Ram...' from a gathering of people. I was surprised that there were so many people; I thought that they were possibly members of the family that was hosting me. The lady of the house offered me a seat.

The moment I sat down, one by one, all of them came up to me, paid their homage, and requested that I apply Holy Ash on their foreheads. While I was applying the Holy Ash, they poured out their problems to me. Some were childless; others had some similar worries. ‘Sai Ram! We have all heard from a lot of your beneficiaries that if we cry out our problems and worries to you, and if we get Vibuti Prasadam (offering of Holy Ash) from you, our problems and worries would be solved very quickly. That is why we are here. Sai Ram! Please pray for us,’ they pleaded.

‘Pray to Bhagawan Baba. Tell Him all your problems and ask Him to shower His Grace on you. He will do what is necessary. I will also pray on your behalf. Don’t lose heart. Be happy,’ I told them and boosted their morale.

Just then, a lady, overcome by sorrow and was weeping, came running and held my feet in reverence to me. She was so grief-stricken that she remained in that position instead of getting up. I asked her to get up and then asked her the reason for her sadness.

She pointed at the boy, a 20-year-old, who was next to her and said: ‘This is my son. He is a victim of Multiple Sclerosis, a nerve debilitating disease. He is suffering from it for the past two and a half years. He requires an injection of an imported drug weekly to keep him going. He is given that injection every Saturday; it costs Rs 8,000. If this injection is not administered before the ensuing Monday, he would suffer seriously from fits.

‘Over the past two and a half years we have spent about Rs 10 Lakhs (Rs 1,000,000). My husband will retire in about four or five years’ time. We don’t know how we can find the money for my son’s treatment after my husband’s retirement. Even though we have spent about Rs 10 lakhs so far, there is no improvement at all in my son’s condition.’

It was painful to listen to her story. With sadness visible all over her face, she cried: ‘Sai Ram! Please do something to cure my son of this dreaded disease. Sai Ram!’

I was taken aback with that request. ‘Sai Ram! I am not a doctor to provide treatment for ailments,’ I told her. But the matter did not end with that.

‘Sai Ram! Yes, we all know that you are not a doctor. But, all of us know that when you made entreaties to the ‘doctor of all doctors’ and gave Holy Ash to the afflicted, those people were cured of their afflictions. Everybody knows about those miracles. We have complete faith in you. That is why I have brought my son to you. Please pray for him; also, apply Holy Ash on him. We will do all what you ask us to do,’ the poor mother said, sobbing with tears streaming down. I was in a dilemma. I racked my brain intently to find a way to appease the mother.

Fortunately, I happened to recall overhearing a conversation about a month earlier. It was between my friend K Sampath, who has written a congratulatory message at the beginning of this book, and his friend Srinivasan of Kavitha Printers, Erode. They discussed the use of a medicinal oil to treat those afflicted with nerve related ailments and the procedure for preparing it. When I recalled that, which took place a month earlier, I understood it was indeed by Divine providence that a conversation between two friends took place on that same topic, that I happened to overhear it, and that I was able to recall it at that crucial moment.

At the same time, what the mother told me, that they had faith in me and that they would do whatever I asked them to do, made me want to somehow do something to relieve that family of its worry. Although I knew nothing about medicine, I felt as if there was an inner prompting from within me to consider that medicinal oil as therapy for that boy. So, I asked the mother whether they would agree to give the boy a medicinal oil therapy.

The mother promptly said, ‘Sai Ram! We have already told you that we will do whatever you say. Please tell us; we will do that.’ I described to the mother about the oil therapy and about how to prepare that oil. That family gladly accepted what I told them and proceeded to make that oil. I also helped them now and then in preparing it. And, the oil was finally ready. And, it was 27 Nov 2016, my birthday!

Several Sai devotees had, with love and respect for me, organised a function to felicitate me on my birthday. I requested the mother and the son also to attend the function; I asked them to bring the medicinal oil also.

Towards the end of that function, that devoted and loving mother came up and asked that I myself should administer the first dose of the medicine for her son. While praying to Bhagawan intently and chanting a specific mantra for curing serious ailments, I asked the boy to open his mouth and gave him the first dose of the medicine. Thereafter, the mother gave that medicine daily to her son.

That boy used to go to Bangalore every six months for examination and treatment by a specialist doctor. The next appointment that was due was in three months’ time after the boy started the oil therapy.

When the boy went to Bangalore for that appointment and underwent the routine tests and examinations, a surprise, an unbelievable and pleasant surprise, greeted everyone. The doctor, with a look of surprise in his face, asked, ‘Did you give him any other medicine?’ The mother didn’t open her mouth; maybe she knew that doctors do not like Western medicine to be mixed with other medicines. The doctor continued to express his surprise: ‘For the last two and a half years we had treated him with injections, but there was no improvement in him. Now, all of a sudden, I don’t find

even a trace of the ailment in your son. This healing has taken place in a sudden manner. This is an unexplainable surprise! This is posing a challenge to our medical practice.’

What a turn of events! That the boy was completely cured was a joyous news to his family. Further, they didn’t have to spend that large sum of money, monthly Rs.38,000, anymore on medical treatment. This is yet another of the thousands and thousands of miracles our Compassionate Lord Leela Mohana Sai has performed to provide relief and happiness to those who were stricken with misery. The glory is His!

I wanted to know more about how Multiple Sclerosis affects the body and whether there was any known cure for it. I did a Google search, and the following is what I found:

‘All about Multiple Sclerosis – What is it?’

‘It has been scientifically determined that Multiple Sclerosis can potentially debilitate a person. This means that the body’s immune system attacks the sheath that protects the nerves. Once this sheath is damaged, or totally destroyed, the normal communication between the person’s brain and the rest of the body is interfered. This condition results in deterioration that can never be reversed.’

I was a mere Railways employee; I knew nothing about this dreaded disease Multiple Sclerosis; and I knew nothing about medicines. It so happened that I overheard a conversation between two friends on a herbal oil treatment for some other ailment. I did not know whether that oil could be administered as treatment for Multiple Sclerosis; I did not even know whether that oil would have any ill effects on the patient’s body. But, I was in no mood to deliberate on those matters; it was mainly because of that distraught and helpless mother’s cry, ‘Sai Ram! We will do whatever you say,’ tugged at my heartstrings and overwhelmed me with selfless love for that family; that caused an inner prompting within me to boldly take that decision to prescribe the oil treatment to that boy. I think that the inner prompting I had was Divine-ordained; that was why that oil transformed into a panacea (sarva sanjeevini); and that the inner prompting, activated by selfless love, was Sathya Sai Dhanvantri (Hindu God of Medicine).

I mentioned earlier in this book that ‘Help Ever; Hurt Never’ is my motto. I have been living in compliance with that motto for several years now. Within my limited means, I do social service activities for the good of the society. A lot of people come to me with their problems and worries and seek my counsel and guidance. I deal with them with humility and pray for them wholeheartedly. I do not stop with that; if there is anything that those who come to see me have to do physically, I help them in whatever way I can in such activities also. I do all these with pure selfless love; I am proud to say this.

The phenomenon of the advent of a Complete and Full Incarnation (Poorna Avatar) takes place extremely rarely; it happens once in a long long while even when time is measured in divine years. Such an event took place in my lifetime. I was very

fortunate to have heard about it; in addition, I was blessed with the privilege of going to Puttaparthi frequently and enjoying Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan with the Divine. Isn't this an unbelievable blessing!

There are thousands and thousands all over the world who acknowledge Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and worship Him, and they identify themselves as 'Sai devotees'. But, it is not so easy to become a Sai devotee. We become one such only when we live up to His expectations. Through His more than a thousand discourses, He has given us thousands and thousands of pieces of advice and injunctions for right living and to thus live up to His expectations. If we live strictly according to Swami's most important commandment 'Love All; Serve All! Help Ever; Hurt Never!' and if we do so with no ego or any expectations but with pure selfless love, we can then stand tall and very confidently claim to be Sai devotees indeed. And, only if we observe sincerity and selflessness in the manner in which we serve the society, others would also acknowledge that we are Sai devotees.

We always hear people proudly saying, 'I am a very frequent visitor to Puttaparthi', 'I like doing service (seva) in Puttaparthi', 'I never miss attending bhajans (devotional singing) in our Sai Centre', 'Our Centre's Nagar Sangeerthan (singing devotional songs in early mornings on the streets) will not take place without me being there', 'I am the one who packs the most amount of parcels of food for Narayana Seva (feeding the needy)', 'If it is anything to do with Sai Baba, I am always there in the forefront', etc. If those people who say such things act without sincere selfless love but with the expectation of some reward such as publicity or act in an egoistic manner, all their statements will become empty statements. It is therefore extremely important for office bearers in Sai organisations to be pure-hearted and good natured.

Bhagawan Leela Mohana Sai established Sai organisations because through them He wanted the whole world to get to know about His:

glory;

advice in the form of discourses to warn about the danger of man stooping to the level of a beast by acting very egoistically and selfishly and thus hurting others, and to guide man to conduct himself always on the right path by awakening the innate divinity in him; and contribution to the world in the form of projects and programmes.

At this juncture, I would like to quote what our dear Bhagawan advised on 21 October 1961 regarding the formation of Samithis (SSSSO).

'I am launching Samithis. Convenors of Samithis should facilitate the implementation of activities similar to what I undertake at the universal level for the benefit of mankind.'

So, Swami has entrusted the Convenors with the responsibility of motivating more and more devotees to participate in Service activities and through such selfless service to recognise their inherent Divinity. In this context, Swami has said:

‘Ninety out of a hundred among you have not clearly understood the purpose for which I have allowed you to form these Organisations. It is not to give some people places of authority or power, or for ensuring fame and publicity for Me. It is to build upon the earth the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men on strong foundations. All the items of work are aimed at expanding your heart and purifying it.’

It was Swami’s Divine Plan to establish Sai centres and other related Sai organisations. There are convenors and other office bearers with specific duties appointed within these organisations to lead and guide the devotees in furthering their spiritual progress.

It is vital for the convenors and other office bearers to conduct themselves with due decorum. They should at all times be conscious that they are representing a spiritual organisation that is unparalleled, and take pains to rid themselves of petty-minded behaviour by subjecting themselves to frequent self-audit. They should practise at all times the five most important human values – Sathya (Truth); Dharma (Right Conduct); Shanthi (Peace); Prema (Love); and Ahimsa (Non-violence). It is needless to say that of these five values, prema (love) is the most important value for office bearers in Sai organisations. Another obvious requirement is that those who are occupying a high position in the society and those who are rich should, if they accept the responsibility of being an office bearer, guard themselves from exhibiting any sign of snobbishness; they should, regardless of their standing in the society, serve others with humility.

In this context, I am reminded of the 973rd Thirukkural:
Thought of lofty lineage, not great are mean souls;
Thought of lowly birth, not lowly are high souls.

Those office bearers who are of high standing in the society should take to heart this Kural and conduct themselves with no ego or arrogance but only sincere love and thus be high souls in the true sense; likewise, those from the lower strata in the society should conduct themselves in a principled and respectable manner. If everyone conducts himself in this manner, with no room for any superiority or inferiority complex but gathers under the one single banner of ‘Sai Devotee’ as an equal with everyone else, the quality of the service he does and the sacrifices he makes would be exalted and be very desirable. These are thoughts that are arising from deep within me, one who had the sacred privilege of doing service right at the Holy Feet of the Supreme Avatar Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba from His young days itself.

Bhagawan Himself emphasised how service done to help others is enriched in its value when it is done as a sacrifice and narrated a Chinna Katha (Short Story) to drive home the message. That story is below:

There was a God-loving person who, with no concern for his own comforts and needs, spent all his time in helping those who were in need; he was compassionate towards all beings as a form of service to the Lord. Every day he travelled the streets to serve the destitute and the handicapped and returned home late in the night. He was spending almost his entire lifetime in doing service to others, but eventually old age caught up with him. Yet, undaunted he was, and continued to serve for the benefit of others; his was a life of 'Help Ever'.

One day, an Angel, with a long list in its hands, came down and settled on this good Samaritan's rooftop. He, a pious man, paid his respects to the Angel and asked what it was writing in that long list. 'I have been commanded by the Lord to make a list of all those who love Him; accordingly, I have collected those names,' replied the Angel.

The do-gooder became very eager; with due humility and respect, he told his name to the Angel and enquired, 'Is my name also there...? At least at the end of that list...?' The Angel searched through the list and said, 'Sorry..., your name is not in this list.'

The Samaritan comforted himself: Maybe the Lord is not completely pleased with the service I do to help those in need. That is why my name is not on the list of those who love God. Anyway, it is all His Will!

He did not lose heart at the turn of events. He just continued with his mission of helping others to the very best of his ability.

Then, on another day, that same Angel appeared suddenly on the rooftop of that altruist. But, this time, the Angel held a very short list, with just a few names. The altruist asked, 'It is a very short list unlike the long one you had last time. What is the reason?'

With a sweet smile, the Angel replied, 'The list I brought earlier had the names of those who loved God; there were many names. That was because it is very common for people to love God; there are a lot of such people. But, this list in my hand now has the names of those whom God loves. God loves those who carry out activities with purity and sincerity to bring relief and happiness to others; such people show selfless love to others. Such people are extremely rare and therefore this list is short.'

‘When I was not on the list of those who love God, there is no hope of my name being in this very short list of those whom God loves. Nevertheless, like any other human, I am also curious. Would you kindly check whether my name is in this list,’ the Samaritan asked with a lot of apprehension.

Angel: Sorry, I have forgotten your name. What did you say your name was?

Samaritan: Abou Ben Adhem

Angel: Ah! Yours is at the top of this list! You are living in full accord with God’s expectation; you are a man of good conduct, with no feeling of pride. You do good deeds to others selflessly and as a sacred offering to God by sacrificing your own comforts and desires. You have thus earned the top position in this list. I bless you!

At Parthi, on a holy day in the ‘60s, Bhagawan narrated this short story and said, ‘Help offered to the needy people becomes very sacred if it is done with no egoistic feelings; such activities please God.’ Thanks to merits I earned by doing good deeds in my previous births, I had the privilege of being in Parthi on that day and of hearing it from God Himself.

If those who proclaim themselves as Sai devotees have sincere love for Him and live up to His expectations by helping those who are in need, and in doing so, act with no egoistic feelings, but with unity in ‘Thought, Word and Deed’ and with sincere and selfless love for all, it is certain that our Leela Mohana Sai would love them.

If anyone does a public-spirited deed and by doing so happens to be proud or egoistic about it, such deed would fail to be a yagna (sacred offering to God) and God would not acknowledge such a deed. It is vitally important to understand very clearly when our public-spirited deeds would qualify as yagna and thus earn the approbation of Bhagawan Leela Mohana Sai.

I have written all these comments as a response to my own eagerness to see that Sai organisations continue to grow. Those who claim themselves as Sai devotees should take pains to ensure that their conduct does not tarnish Lord Sathya Sai’s glory; they should conduct themselves as role models and bring added glory to the organisations.

These are comments from an 84-year-old, one who is an ardent Sai devotee for several decades and who has had spiritual experiences. Please do not look at my comments in any inappropriate perspective such as one that is clouded by ego. I have shared my comments with you with good intentions; I humbly request office bearers as well as others to accept these comments in that perspective.

My comments are relevant not only for the current organisations, but also for the future ones.

This Endless Epilogue, true to what it purports, is getting longer and longer. May I mention just one or two more matters and bring it to a close?

During the period 16 – 19 May 1968, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba conducted the First Sai World Conference in Mumbai. Convenors of several hundreds of Sai Centres from the entire world participated in it. I represented the Thillai Nagar Sai Centre in Tiruchchi at that conference. There were several talks delivered by very knowledgeable people on all the three days. One day, there was a practical session on Jyothi (Flame) Meditation. It was conducted by none other than Swami Himself! A lamp had been placed at one corner of the hall for all of us to meditate on its flame. There were a few hundreds of participants in that hall. Out of all those people, Swami pointed at me and asked me to sit in front of the flame and to follow His instructions. Needless to say, I was extremely happy and proud that I learnt Jyothi Meditation directly from God Himself!

I have given greater details about the First Sai World Conference in Vol 1 of my book, under the caption ‘The Embodiment of Love’.

After that personal coaching Bhagawan gave me, I continued to practise Jyothi Meditation at home. My mother, who didn’t know anything about the spiritual benefits of it, was afraid that I would walk away from home and become a sanyasi (ascetic). By imposing obstacles, she discouraged me from practising meditation. Nevertheless, I pursued it with resolute determination.

One day I had a wonderful experience. I was seated on a chair in front of a flame and doing Jyothi Meditation. All of a sudden, I entered an altogether different state of consciousness. I do not know whether it was because I was practising Jyothi Meditation in earnest or because I was trained personally by Bhagawan in Mumbai and thus earned His grace; I lost my body consciousness. My external senses became inactive and I was having an extremely pleasant and soothing divine feeling. While in that state, I then levitated almost a coconut tree high. But, my physical body was still on the chair. It was my ‘true self’ that had levitated. I could see up to about 10 km very clearly what was happening; it was like watching a video show. I was in pure happiness; that experience is something that is impossible to be described in words. I think that the feeling of happiness could be said to be close to that of one who gained ownership of Karpaga Virudcham (a wish fulfilling divine tree) and Kama Dhenu (a miraculous ‘cow of plenty’ who provides her owner whatever he desires); it could as well be said to be close to the happiness of King Baghirathan when, through rigorous penance, he won the prize of River Ganges’s descent from the heavens.

My karma! Maybe, I was not destined to enjoy that divine bliss for long. My mother saw me in very deep meditation on the chair. Out of her motherly love for me, she wanted me to stop my meditation and so pushed me aside. She thought that she was pushing me; she was not aware that it was a body with no consciousness that was on

the chair. That body simply collapsed on the floor because it had no consciousness to offer any resistance. Immediately, the true self in me descended down and entered my body. I then regained all my external senses, and I began to feel a lot of pain in my body because of the fall.

After that incident, on several occasions I tried to meditate. However, there was no success. That reminded me of what my astrologer brother told me years ago; that because of some ill-influence of certain planets, I would not succeed very much in spirituality.

Although I have not been able to experience that feeling of bliss subsequently, what I experienced that day is entrenched well and truly within me and constantly motivates my inner self to progress in spirituality. Nothing happens without Lord Sai's grace!

During my long stay in Nanganallur, Chennai, in 2016, a lot of miracles took place. At the human level, in other people's mind, I was the man behind them. However, it is far from the truth. It was Leela Mohana Sayeeshan's grace that enabled those miracles (or divine leelas – divine plays) to happen. This is a subtle truth which we should be ever aware of.

Something that happened recently, on the 7th of February 2017, in Madurai is a very good story that would increase our understanding of this subtle truth.

In this book, I have written the story 'The Chocolate Alchemy - 'Booze' Thangappan Becomes 'Golden' Thangappan'. Sri Thangappan's wife, Srimati Theiva Lakshmi, is a resident of Chennai. Her devotion to Bhagawan is rock solid. She is an extremely good-natured lady and treats me with a lot of respect and love.

For 12 years now, her sister-in-law is in a vegetative coma. She is in Madurai, in the care of her parents. She is fed food, fluids and medicine through a thin tube that passes through the skin and into the stomach.

Srimati Theiva Lakshmi asked me whether I could conduct prayers and anything else necessary to plead for divine grace and divine intervention for her sister-in-law to regain consciousness.

In response to her request, I arranged for 25 devotees from the Veda Parayana (Recitation of the Scriptures) Team in Nanganallur to chant a very powerful mantra for the curing of ailments. That chanting session was conducted on the 20th of January 2017; the team chanted that mantra, collectively, a lakh (100,000) times. During that chanting session, I did the appropriate rituals for the divine vibrations that emanated there to be absorbed and entrenched into what I had planned to administer to the patient

– a powdered herbal medicine for ailments related to nerves in the brain; a herbal oil; and sanctified Holy Ash. After that, on the 7th of February, I went along with Srimati Theiva Lakshmi to Madurai.

From the Madurai Airport, we went by car to the patient's house. The patient's mother was the first to see us. While welcoming us, she was busy trying to do something else also. She then requested us politely to wait a moment at the doorstep. In the meantime, her husband, who had gone out returned just then, garlanded me and draped a shawl on me, signifying a very warm welcome for a distinguished person.

At that precise moment, something very pleasant and very extraordinary happened! There was a loud chanting of 'Om Sri Bhagawan Sathya Sai Babaya Namah' in that house, and that chanting continued repeatedly.

The mother staggered with surprise and said, 'Ha! What a miracle! What a miracle! I just don't know what to say about this. I have no explanation for this.' Her face was wet with streams of tears, and she was trembling in devotional excitement.

'We have an electronic mantra chanter that repeatedly recites mantras. We have set that to play 'Om Namah Shivaya' in the morning, daily. It has never played any other mantras so far, nor has any of us ever meddled with it. When I saw you alighting from the car, I thought that your visit is an auspicious occasion and wanted to welcome you while the divine mantra 'Om Namah Shivaya' was chanted in the background to further enhance the divine ambience. So, as soon as I saw you, I ran to that electronic chanter and tried to start it, but it didn't work. I tried and tried, but there was no success. In the meantime, you had walked up to the doorstep, and so I left that chanter as it was and came running to welcome you. And then, at the precise moment my husband welcomed you ceremonially, this chanter started working. What made it work at that precise moment! It is a miracle! And, out of the several mantras that are stored in that chanter, it played 'Om Sri Bhagawan Sathya Sai Babaya Namah', a mantra that we have never played in this house. Isn't this a miracle of miracles! Sai Ram! Sai Ram! This is nothing but the Compassionate Lord's divine play (Thiruvilayadal),' said that mother, speaking very fast and nonstop, in an excited tone, and with tears flowing nonstop.

She continued, 'You are an elderly person. Yet, you have taken the trouble to come here all the way from Chennai to help our bedridden daughter, though we are strangers to you. Bhagawan made our chanter chant 'Om Sri Bhagawan Sathya Sai Babaya Namah' as you entered our house. From this, we very clearly understand that Lord Sai is showering His blessings and grace on us through you. And, there is one more thing that we understand; this God, Bhagawan Sai Baba, is ever present in all of us (Sarvantharyami). Sai Ram!'

Yes, that our Leela Mohana Sai is everywhere and that it is validated by the countless miracles He performs all over the world, day after day, is very well known in the whole Sai-world.

A Nanganallur resident, Mr Sankara Subramanyan, learnt Vedas – the meaning as well as the proper pronunciation and intonation – at Sundaram, the abode of Bhagawan in Chennai, from a Sai devotee who was very conversant in them, and wanted more people to learn what he had learnt and derive the benefits of chanting the Vedas. So, he, in turn, trained about forty seekers of divinity in Nanganallur, with no expectation of any reward. Often, on auspicious days, this group of forty would jointly recite Vedas as a sacred offering to God.

In all the benevolent deeds I undertook to provide relief to those who were in distress, this group of forty public-spirited seekers of divinity, took the trouble to support me by participating in them. In what I did to mitigate the distress of the suffering, this group of forty played a vital role by reciting the Vedas. These goodhearted forty people deserve commendation for that. Actually, what they did was a sacred yagna (offering); their sincerity and dedication are beyond words, beyond commendations!

When that group recited the Vedas, the sacred vibrations from the Vedas spread far beyond the venue when the pronunciation required them to raise their intonation; the entire neighbourhood received the holy vibrations. Those divine moments gave us wonderful, spellbinding, feelings. Such experiences are rarely found elsewhere.

On New Year's Day in 2016, I prayed at Bhagawan's Mahasamadhi and asked Him to bless me with opportunities to help those who were in need in the ensuing year; there was no ulterior motive behind it; it was a sincere prayer to win His love. I think He gave me more than what I imagined. I, a mere retired Railways employee, with no expertise in anything, a nondescript, am today well known for the several good deeds I performed, almost all of those associated with Sai miracles! From this, we can learn two lessons: Our Leela Mohana Sai most certainly listens to each and every prayer of ours; and what He gives depends very much on our mindset and intentions.

I bring this book to a close with two statements of our Lord Sayeeshan that endorse my comments on seva (service to the needy):

- (1) This human birth is a rare chance; use it for spreading joy! If you give joy to others, you yourself will be joyful!
- (2) See Me in everything; that is the way to please Me. God is resident in every heart; so, if you serve anyone, that service reaches the God within him. It brings to you the grace of God.

Nanganallur, Chennai
Forever in Sai Service
TR Sai Mohan
23 Nov 2017

SARVA DHARMA PRAYER

*Om Tat Sat Sri Narayana Tum
Purushottama Guru Tum
Siddha Buddha Tum Skanda Vinayaka
Savita Pavaka Tum (2)*

*Brahma Mazda Tum Yahve Shakti Tum
Yesu Pita Prabhu Tum
Rudra Vishnu Tum Rama Krishna Tum
Rahima Tao Tum (2)*

*Vasudeva Go-Vishvarupa Tum
Chidananda Hari Tum
Advitiya Tu Akala Nirbhaya
Atmalinga Shiva Tum (2)*

Meaning:

Om Thou art that, Thou art Narayana, God, in the form of man;
Thou art the Embodiment of perfection and the perfect master;
Thou art enlightened Buddha;
Thou art Subramanya and Ganesha, the remover of obstacles;

Thou art the Sun-fire;
Thou art Brahma, the Creator; Mazda, the Great One;
Thou art Jehovah and the Divine Mother, the creative Energy;
O Lord! Thou art the Father of Jesus;

Thou art Rudhra, the Transformer, and Vishnu, the Preserver;
Thou art Rama and Krishna;
Thou art Rahim, all kindness, always giving and expanding;
Thou art the Tao;

Thou art Vasudeva, the Sustenance of all, omnipotent and omnipresent;
Thou art Hari, Destroyer of illusion, the blissful Spirit;
Thou art unparalleled, beyond time and fearless of adversities;
Thou art Shiva, Creator of the lingam, Symbol of the formless Absolute.

Controlling the Ego – Prayer to Sri Sai

Namaste Namaste Guru Maharaaj

Om Sri Sai Ram

*Sadguru Sri Sathya Sai Maharaaj
Sharanam Sharanam Sri Saisha
Saashthanga Sharanam Sarvesha
Namaste Namaste Guru Maharaaj
Sadguru Sri Sathya Sai Maharaaj*

Salutation to the King of kings, our Sadguru (Beloved Swami) who is known
as Sri Sathya Sai.

I'm offering my six senses and six organs at His lotus feet who knows
everything.

Bow to that almighty Sadguru who is the master of all the beings and all the
worlds.

Salutation to the King of kings, our Sadguru (Beloved Swami) who is known
as Sri Sathya Sai.

Sri Sathya Sai Mangala Arati

*Om Jai Jagadeesha Harey Swami
Sathya Sai Harey Bhaktha Janaa Samrakshaka (2)
Parthi Maheshwara
Om Jai Jagadeesha Harey*

*Sashi Vadanaa Sree Karaa Sarva Praana Pathey
Swami Sarva Praana Pathey
Aashritha Kalpa Latheeka (2)
Aapadh Bandhava
Om Jai Jagadeesha Harey*

*Mata Pitha Guru Dhaivamu Mari Anthayu Neevey
Swami Mari Anthayu Neevey
Naada Brahma Jagan Natha (2)
Naagendraa Shayana
Om Jai Jagadeesha Harey*

*Omkaara Roopa Ojaswi Om Sai Mahadeva
Sathya Sai Mahadeva
Mangala Arathi Anduko (2)
Mandhara Giridhari
Om Jai Jagadeesha Harey*

*Narayana Narayana Om Sathya
Narayana Narayana Narayana Om*

*Narayana Narayana Om Sathya
Narayana Narayana Om Sathya
Narayana Narayana Om
Om Jai Sadguru Deva (3)*

Victory to Lord of Universe, Lord Sathya Sai, Who destroys grief, evil, and miseries of life and Who guards and protects devotees. Victory to Lord of Lords – Lord of Parthi.

O Graceful and Charming as a full moon! O Auspicious One! O Lord Sai! Thou art the Indweller and life-force of all Beings; the wish-fulfilling divine creeper to those who have surrendered to Thee; and kinsman, protector, and friend in times of distress and calamities. Victory to Lord of Universe.

O Lord Sai! Thou art Mother, Father, noble Teacher, Supreme Divinity, and everything to us. O Lord Universe! Thou art Primeval Sound and art reclined on coiled serpent.

O Splendorous One! O Lord of Lords — Lord Sai! Thy Form is Pranava. We pray Thee to accept the auspicious waving of flame of light (signifying the removal of ignorance). Victory to Thee, O Lord of Universe, Resident of Mandhar mountain – Lord Giridhari.

Chant the name of Lord Sathya Sai Narayana, Whose Form is Pranava. Victory to Noble Teacher and Supreme Lord Sai, Sathya Sai.

Asato Ma Sat Gamaya

*Om Asato Maa Sat-Gamaya |
Tamaso Maa Jyotir-Gamaya |
Mrtyor-Maa Amrtam Gamaya |
Om Shaantih Shaantih ShaantiH ||*

*Lead us from the unreal to the real
Lead us from darkness to light
Lead us from death to immortality
Aum peace, peace, peace!*

Prayer To Sri Sayee For Universal Wellbeing

Mangalam Gurudevaya Mangalam Sathya Sayeene
Mangalam Vishwa Karmane
Mangalam Veda Vedyaya Mangalam Gnanadayeene
Mangalam Prema Roopaya Mangalam Shanthidayeene
Mangalam Poojya Pradaaya Mangalam Parthi Vasine
Mangalam Shiva Shakthi Roopaya
Mangalam Mangalam Sri Sathya Sai Ramaya
Mangalam!

Bestow Auspiciousness upon Us,
O' Divine Guru, Bhagwan Sathya Sai Baba
The Maker (or Creator) of the Universe
The One who is known by the Knowledge (Vedas)
The Bestower Of Wisdom
The Manifest Form of Love, The Bestower Of Peace
The Venerable Bestower, The Lord Who Manifested In Parthi
The Lord in the Shiva - Shakti,
Bestow unending Auspiciousness upon Us,
O' Lord Shri Sathya Sai Rama..
Auspiciousness Always!

Prayer for Universal Happiness

*Samastha LokaH Sukhino Bhavanthu!
Samastha LokaH Sukhino Bhavanthu!
Samastha LokaH Sukhino Bhavanthu!
Om Shanthi Shanthi ShanthiH!*

Let all the worlds (and thereby all the beings in the worlds) be happy.

Vibuti Mantra

*Paramam Pavithram Baba Vibhuthim
Paramam Vichitram Leela Vibhuthim
Paramartha Ishtartha Moksha Pradhanam
Baba Vibhuthim Idam Asrayami!*

Sacred Holy and Supreme is Baba's Vibhuthi
Pouring Forth in brilliant stream, this play of Vibhuthi
So auspicious is its might, it grants liberation
Baba's Vibhuthi, its power protects me!

Jai Sai Ram!

