



SAI NEWSLETTER

Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Centre of Toronto - York

**"It is only through love that man can
acquire peace"
- Baba**

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A FEW WORDS

‘Thought, Word and Deed’ the practice of which, Swami says always is an important component for our spiritual progress. The easiest way to interpret is - **Say what you Think, and Do what you Say.**

As noted in previous issues, the newsletter can only exist with your contributions. For those who have never contributed yet, we look forward to your participation in our newsletter. For those who have contributed, please continue to do so.

We thank all the contributors for submitting articles for this issue, on time.

All contributions must be sent to the Editor, Dr. Venkata R. Neralla, via e-mail or on a 3 ½” diskette, in Word format.

Please ensure that the contributions are sent on time.

- *Dr. Venkata Neralla*

The deadline for submissions to the next Newsletter is:

1 March 2006.

**He who is known as Allah by Muslims,
As Jehovah by Christian aspirants,
As the Lotus-eyed Lord by the worshippers of Vishnu,
As Sambhu, by those who revere Siva,
In whatever way He is worshipped, He gladly responds,
Grants the grace of fame and fortune,
And showers happiness and joy.
He is the One,
The Supreme Self. Know Him as Paramatma.**

- Baba

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“Hands that help are holier than lips that pray.”

- Baba

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DAWN OF HUMANS IN ANIMAL KINGDOM



We are fortunate to have inherited a treasure of *Vedic scriptures, hymns and treatises*. Most of the Hindus are more serene and thoughtfully religious. They have a pure, more independent and impersonal knowledge of God. The Indian culture and civilization are so unique that it has resisted the onslaught of foreign invasions. At the same time the foreigners are attempting to adopt Indian culture. Hindus believe with conviction that *Vedic scriptures* contain a sensible account of God. The sacred scriptures highlight innumerable paths to comprehend the purpose of life and it is said that by forgetting ourselves we will be drawn nearer to God. An analogy between lower groups of chordate animals namely fish and an advanced chordate namely man with reference to the exploitation of the Nature and adaptability to their respective vicinity is given in the following poetic verse:

“Fishes are born in water; Man is born in Tao. If fishes, born in water; Seek the deep shadow; Of pond and pool; All their needs; Are contented.

If man, born in Tao; Sinks into the deep shadow; Of non-action; To forget aggression; And apprehension; He lacks nothing; His life is secure.” - LaoTsze, 2005

During the summer of 2005, I went to a place called Chitrakoot. This place has a significance in one of our puranas namely Ramayana. Lord Rama as per the wish of His father was supposed to

have spent time in and around Chitrakoot forest along with His brother Lakshmana and mother Seeta. I visited the Rama Darshan museum. To my astonishment, I saw the Ramayana translated into Russian, Japanese, and many other foreign languages. Thus, the scriptures of Hinduism spread across the ocean.

Since time immemorial, Indian culture witnessed the role of sacred teachers (Gurus) in moulding the responsibilities of growing children. Our Indians are blessed for having been brought into the fold of Gurus. Guru helps us to learn: What is life? What is the role of man? What is the hidden significance of human existence? How to be devoid of inhuman and animal attributes to have a peaceful life? Guru feels an obligation towards disciples by directing them to study well to understand and nourish life. He shows plenty of paths to make us busy and useful to our environs. One such path is: “Sathyannaasti parodharmah.” - means that there is no greater righteousness than truth. This is the guiding principle of both science and spirituality. Search for truth; “Sathyaanveshana” is the objective of Science. Science comprehends observation, inference and verification by experimentation and a scientist is the one who continuously pursues the path of science.

Thus, our cultural heritage bestows us all with an opportunity to inhabit spiritual habitat, namely serene environs. Therefore, it is very much of our obligation to contemplate on the principles of life. It is also very much our concern to advocate to our fellow beings the path of life. Certainly we are not far from the rest of the world in the adversities of life. The benefits with which we are bestowed by our motherland weigh more than the adversities that circumvent the people in the rest of the world. With these observations, we can interpret the essence of the Sanskrit statement namely, Janthunam Nara Janma Durlabham.

The above statement also implies that the man is a species within the Animal kingdom. The word ‘Nara’ in Sanskrit means man. The word ‘Naram’ in Telugu language means nerve. The nerve is a bundle of axons. They are the components of neurons, the so-called nerve cells. It has been shown through the human genome project, that there are more than 3100 genes functioning in the nerve cells of the brain. This is the maximum number at work in a cell. Whereas, only 8 genes, have been reported to function in the red blood cell. Nevertheless, the number of genes functioning in an animal nerve cell in a brain must have been adequately less and intricately less complex, possibly half, just to maintain the basic functions namely, propagation of nerve impulse, taxis, imprinting, reflex actions and innate behaviour rather than perception, reception and accommodation (George Gaylord Simpson 1955). Despite 95% similarity in the total genome between man and the ape, there is an enormous difference in the cognitive behavior and understanding of life between these two genus. Even the cranial capacity (brain volume) of immediate ancestors of man viz., Homo hidelbergensis: 700 cc, Homo erectus: 1000 cc and Homo sapiens: 1400 cc. Thus, humans are far surpassing in the neural network and gene expression as compared to their immediate predecessors. These attributes reveal that man is bestowed with a refined and unique architectural neural network supplemented with molecular framework for the boosting up of his fellowmen. Neural network and molecular framework complement each other without conflict and the same confers the feel of the vicinity to serve the fellow beings.

Man spends his childhood in pranks and play, his boyhood in sports and games, his youth in pleasure and pursuit, his middle age in plans and schemes, and his old age in hospitals and nursing homes. He feels that he has no time for anything else. Incessantly, he fills time with work and worry. He has no peace. He finds no spare time for sitting quiet at one place. Most of the time he is in

delusion and estimates the life as simple as follows:

“Life is like arithmetic; Friends to add; Enemies to subtract; Joys to multiply and; Sorrows to divide.” - Ravindra P Shoroff., 1977.

In this way men are totally ignoring the purpose of their life. They are totally unaware that they are the privileged and predominant species on the earth. Man is bestowed with a long life span and analytical skills and forbearance for getting himself involved in service activities. He then passes on skills and knowledge to fellow beings and lives gregariously to spread the message of God. Vidwan Sarvatra Pujitah. The highest gift of knowledge, being given to us by none other than our saints through scriptures, is the spiritual knowledge that accompanies us throughout an individual life and also generations.

The Sanskrit statement, Janthunam Nara Janma Durlabham is not only for us but also for our Indian predecessors. Our seers and sages have elaborated on the significance of human life and have written about it. At the same time it reminds us to contemplate that we are part of the biological world. Even before the advent of organic evolution and Charles Darwin concept of Natural Selection, (Bernard R Kogan,1960) this statement of Janthunam Nara Janma Durlabham had been quite popular in Indian ethos, i.e., Hindus have accepted God’s creation of the animal world. During the time of Aristotle, the western lifestyle and philosophy advocated that humans were unique and never the products of biological evolution. Thus, Hinduism while accepting the phenomenon of evolution has placed man in the precious apex position in the hierarchy of animal groups with all the attributes bestowed on him to refine God’s creation. Thus, we can define Man as follows: Man is the product of biological evolution sharing a majority of phenotypic attributes with his biological predecessor and a unique

genotype with a spiritual approach towards life.

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- Prof. S. Krupanidhi

Unity of Faiths

Let the different faiths exist, let them flourish; let the glory of God be sung in all languages in a variety of tunes. That should be the ideal. Respect the differences between the faiths and recognize them as valid so far as they do not extinguish the flame of unity.

I have come to light the lamp of love in your hearts, to see that it shines day by day with added luster. I have come to tell you of this universal, unitary faith, this spiritual principle, this path of love, this duty of love, this obligation to love. Every religion teaches man to fill his being with the glory of God and to evict the pettiness of conceit. It trains him in the methods of detachment and discernment, so that he may aim high and attain spiritual liberation. Believe that all hearts are motivated by the one and only God; that all faiths glorify the one and only one God; that all names in all languages and all forms man can conceive denote the one and only God. His adoration is best done by means of love. Cultivate that attitude of oneness

between men of all creeds and all countries. That is message of love I bring. That is the message I wish you to take to heart.

Religion is of immense help in fostering the integral development of the human personality. It underlines the unity in diversity. True religion is the attainment of the purity of mind and heart. Every religion has its own precepts and principles. But no religion preaches hatred, untruth or unrighteousness. 'speak the truth', 'practise righteousness' enjoin the Upanishads. Similar sacred injunctions are to be found in all the other religions too. Thus all religions emphasise the human values and serve as beacons for the proper progress and development of mankind. They all facilitate the manifestation of the divinity inherent in man.

All religions have emphasised the same truths in their basic teachings, but few people try to understand the inner import of religions. Out of a narrow feeling that one's own religion is superior and the other faiths are inferior, members of different religions are developing hatred towards members of other faiths and acting like demons.

Such narrow attitude should be given up totally. All should develop the awareness that though names and forms may differ, the essential truth is one in all religions.

The truth proclaimed by all religions is one and the same. All have a common ultimate goal. All religions aim at promoting righteous conduct by transforming the mental attitude of man, thereby bringing about harmony of body, mind and intellect.

- Baba



Children's Corner

MESSAGE FROM SWAMI

One should not mind good or bad,
joy or sorrow,
good or bad reputation.
All one has to have is firm faith that all
your actions are sacred,
good for society's welfare,
and then nothing can shake you.

- Sathya Sai Baba

TWINKLE

Sai Ram and Neighs to you all!

Hello! It's me, Twinkle again!
GUESS WHAT!?! You will *never*
believe what I did. (wink, wink) I flew, I
flew! (Flap, flap!) Just joking! I...I...I
went on a plane! Ooooooops, I'm
getting ahead of myself (I'd better catch
up!). Anyways, here is how it all came
about:

Last month, while I was resting
in the shade of a large tree, a small bird
landed on my shaggy back. I turned my
head curiously to look at it.

"Hello," I greeted

"Tweet, tweet!" the bird chirped,
"You are Twinkle, are you not?"

I neighed, "Indeed!"

The bird shook his feathers,
"Baba told the pigeon, the pigeon told
the crow, the crow told the seagull, the
seagull told the turtle, the turtle told the
whale, the whale told another turtle, this
turtle told a duck, the duck told the
redwing blackbird, the redwing
blackbird told a Canada goose, and the

Canada goose told me, a wee finch, that
Baba wants you to visit him," the finch
recited.

I shook my head in
bewilderment (dear me!) But I quickly
grew excited. Baba wants to see me, a
little Shetland pony! Hee, hee!

"Tomorrow," the finch began,
"you must leave."

"Ooooooh! Yikes!" I screeched.

"And you know what?" the finch
said in a hushed voice, "You are going
to fly!"

"Fly? But I have no wings!" I
realized, looking at my shaggy, wingless
back. "Are you going to cook up
something special so that I will sprout
wings?"

The finch let out a song of
laughter. "No, no, Twinkle. You are
going to fly in a plane!"

I felt a huge buck building
within me. Oh! But I have to contain it!
The bird is on me!

"Bird, Bird! Please get off! Get
off!" I called out in alarm.

Bewildered, the bird flew off and landed on the fence post. Immediately, my hindquarters launched into huge, powerful bucks. I bucked and bucked until I could buck no longer. Oh, boy! The effort!

“Are you okay, Twinkle?” the finch asked in concern.

I sighed. “Just fine, just fine.”

“So then tomorrow, I’ll bring you to the airport?” the finch clarified.

Recovered from my bucking fit, I replied, “Yes! Yes!”

Then, I said goodbye to the finch and waited eagerly for tomorrow to come.

Oh, I have to tell you about my flying expedition (not to the North Pole, by the way!). Oh, the building was scary! I had to go inside! People stared at me and some ran away! (Am I *that* scary?) I looked around to see if there were any other ponies or horses, but no, I was the only equine around. Then I had to stand in a line (quite a new concept to me) with ropes on the sides (my flight instinct!). And why on earth was the person behind and in front standing about five feet away? (I’m so small and cute, harmless, really). When it was my turn, I went up to the counter and the person behind the desk jumped two feet in the air! (I seem to be causing a ruckus!) I neighed and the person quickly nodded his head and scribbled something down, gesturing me to go, go, go! Fast! (Oh, and by the way, I almost trotted in the airport! Good thing I didn’t, or else everyone would evacuate!) Then I had to pass through a doorway without a door in the middle of the room (what on earth was that?). Afterwards, I went through a long tunnel and onto the plane. I asked this person, who was rolling a trolley with trays, where my seat was. The human mare took a fright and hastily pointed up ahead.

“Business class! Up ahead!” she said and rushed into the kitchen.

Then I heard her exclaim to the chefs. “I saw a pony on the plane!” Meanwhile, I walked up to an area with large, plushy seats, fancy lamps, and colourful flowers. Where was I supposed to sit? Surely not on those chairs! Ah! I saw it! Made especially for me! (Oh!) It was a kind of stall. For once, I did not mind being confined in a stall, because I was going to fly! (I will fly in the sky just for You...) Oh, and they fed me fresh grass, hay, and best of all, chocolate! And I flew! (But the plane did not flap its wings! I was watching!)

Then I arrived in India.



The next day, I went to darshan and lined up. (I’m an old hand at this!) I was the first in line! I watched as the seva dahl walked around with his jingling bag. When he came to me, he was reluctant to give me the bag. Therefore, I just took a step forward and shoved my muzzle in the bag. (The seva dahl almost yelped!) And guess what? I picked number one! (Pony magic!) I pranced into the hall, with people running behind me. I went inside and stood quietly in the front row, prepared to meditate. I took a deep breath and closed my eyes. In no time, I was in deep meditation. During my meditation, I heard music. Was Baba coming? I opened one eye and peeked, but closed it back immediately. (Oops. I am

supposed to be meditating!) Therefore, I concentrated on the music like the good Shetland pony I am, and the music lulled me to the land of angels. A loud shshshshshshshshshsh interrupted my meditation. I popped open my eyes. Oh! He is coming! There! I watched Baba give darshan with my almost 300 degree vision. I waited as still as a pony can be for Baba to come to me. Then slowly, ever so slowly, He came to me. Chills ran up and down my spine. I nickered. Baba smiled and rumbled my lush, shaggy forelock. He motioned for me to go into the interview room. Forgetting where I was, I cantered right into it. (Oops.)

Once Baba entered the interview room, he addressed me.

“Twinkle, my pony,” he said, “You’ve carried out your mission and have twinkled like a star to many. You have also learned many lessons, but you still have many more to learn. Keep on, keep on.” Baba paused and waved His hand in blessing. “I have called for you, because you are going to perform seva. ‘Service to man is service to God’.

I shuddered with delight. I could not wait to begin. (On I go with my spiritual progress.)

It was a hot November day when I went out with Baba to a poor village. I never saw so many people! (There was a sea of them!) They were all lined up in rows. Up on my strong, pony back, Baba placed a bundle with leaf plates (oh, I so wanted to eat them!). As I walked up and down the rows, I stopped by each person. I turned my head and took one of the plates from the bundle on my back with my mouth and placed it in front of the villager. While Baba served the food, I went to a group of children, who were played on the earth. When they saw me, they gave shrieks of delight (Ooooh! Ponies rule!). They petted me (Ooooh! How good it feels!). They caressed me! They laughed! They even tried to get on my back! (Ooooh!

Such fun!) Then I walked among the villagers, stopping now and then beside a particular villager. I allowed them to pet me, scratch me, and talk to me. I listened intently, turning my wee ears towards every sound. But the day ended too soon. Baba approached me and told me it was time to go. As we walked together, Baba spoke, "Do you know, Twinkle, what you did today?"

"Seva!" I replied.

"Yes, you helped give food to the hungry, but most importantly, you provided them with joy, fun, and comfort," Baba informed me.

I nodded, realizing that I learned a great lesson. (The pony sage in me is coming out!)

On our drive back, (and yes, I got to ride in a truck! How it rumbled and grumbled! It was so scary, but fun!) Baba told me the following: "We should not aspire for acclaim and praise from those around us, but do service only to secure the grace of God and not for any other reward from anyone. For service is divine; service makes life worthwhile; service is the best way to use one's skills, intelligence, strength and resources. Selfless, sincere service is therefore to be welcomed and practiced. Each act of service is a step toward the Goal of Liberation. You are not doing service for others. You are doing it always for yourselves, to the God in you, the God who is equally present in others; God is the resident in every heart; so, serve any one. That service reaches the God within him; it brings on you the Grace of God. Service is a life-time program; it knows no rest or respite. This body has been given to you so that you may devote its strength and skills to the service of brother-man. Serve man, until you see God in all men; then, what you do will be elevated as Worship."

I listened, my brain expanding with spirituality. (I hope it doesn't become too big!)

Over the next few days, as I was staying in the ashram, there was great activity in the air. Throngs of human mares, stallions, and foals came. What in the world was going on?!? So, one day, I approached a seva dahl and asked him in the pony tongue, "what is going on?". The seva dahl just ignored me and walked away (hey!). Therefore, I walked to a random human mare and asked her. She, instead, took hold of her human foals and ran. So then, I tried asking a human foal, but the human foal just petted me and left. Confused and bewildered, I wandered around the ashram. I was just beginning to get hungry when I spotted a stray cat.

"Catty, catty, catty!" I hollered.

The cat turned his head around, "Meow?"

"What is going on?" I asked.

"Baba's birthday is in a few days!" the cat replied before scurrying away.

I bucked and twirled in excitement and gobbled up plenty of grass. I have decided. I am going to do a performance for Baba's birthday! From then onwards, in every spare moment, I went to the garden and found a quiet, open area. Here, I decided to practice my performance. I spent hours and hours improving my gaits, perfecting my movements, and making my performance spectacular.

I felt that I had to notify someone about my performance for Baba's birthday in order to make sure that I got a spot in the program. So, I tried telling a number of human mares and stallions, but no one seemed to understand. (Has anyone learned the pony tongue?) Sadly, I was unable to tell anyone. Nevertheless, I continued to practice, without much hope that I would perform.

One day, I was sitting in darshan and witnessing intensive preparation for presentations to come. As I waited for

Baba, I became very disappointed and worried. As the program was about to begin, I watched as Baba whispered something into a human stallion's ear, then took his seat. Then lo and behold, I heard a voice over the loudspeaker.

"The first item on the program will be a special solo performance," the voice began, (about what, I wondered?) "by Twinkle, a Shetland pony." Excitement built up in me (I hope I don't get electrified!). I leaped over the people's heads, much to their fright, and made a grand entrance onto the stage. I stopped and faced Baba. I bent on one fore knee and stuck out my other foreleg, bending low in a majestic bow. Then, upon rising, I let out an exuberant neigh, signaling the beginning of my performance. I trotted in a circle, then smoothly transitioned to a magnificent canter. I did figure-eights, serpentines, circles, and diagonal movements. I then paused in the centre and did an amazing leap on my hind legs. After more trot and canter figures, I stopped in the centre and rose on my hind legs in a breath-taking levade. As I slowly descended on all fours, applaud erupted from the crowd.

I went back to my seat in a state of ecstasy. As I watched the other performances, I realized that there really was no reason for me to worry about whether I would be able to perform or not. (What a silly pony I am!) I could have prayed to Baba! And of course, Baba knows everything! (By the way, I *knew* that!)

The next day, with my lush, flaxen mane and tail, my short, little legs, and my shaggy, chestnut coat, I went to the airport for another thrilling ride home.

Back at home, as I grazed peacefully in my pasture, I went into deep meditation. In that moment when I was deep within myself, I had a realization. (Oooh, I'm on my way to sainthood!) I must always do seva and remember that Baba knows everything. (I'd better keep my pony brain intact!)

But more importantly, I must continue to be the star that twinkles among all people and animals, guiding them on the right path, just as Baba had instructed me to do on my first visit.

Now everyone, please stand for my national anthem...

Twinkle, Twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.
Twinkle, Twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are.

Sai Ram and neighs to you all!

P.S. You're welcome to join me on any of my seva activities and India trips.

- *Francesca and Emmanuela*

The Legend of the Poinsettia

Maria and Pablo lived in a tiny village in Mexico. Because Christmas time at their house did not include many gifts, Maria and Pablo looked forward to the Christmas festivities at the village church with great joy and anticipation. To honor the birth of Christ, the church displayed a beautiful manger that drew crowds of admirers. Villagers walked miles to admire the manger, bringing lovely, expensive gifts for the Baby Jesus. As Maria and Pablo watched the villagers place their gifts in the soft hay around the manger, they felt sad. They had no money to buy gifts for their family and no money to buy a gift for the Baby Jesus. One Christmas Eve, Maria and Pablo walked to the church for that evening's services, wishing desperately that they had a gift to bring. Just then, a soft glowing light shone through the darkness, and the shadowy outline of an angel appeared above them.

Maria and Pablo were afraid, but the angel comforted them, instructing them to pick some of the short green weeds that were growing by the road. They should bring the plants to the church, the angel explained, and place them near the manger as their gift to the Baby Jesus. Then just as quickly as she had appeared, the angel was gone, leaving Maria and Pablo on the road looking up into the dark sky. Confused but excited, the children filled their arms with large bunches of the green weeds and hurried to the church.

When the children entered the church, many of the villagers turned to stare. As Maria and Pablo began placing the weeds around the manger, some of the villagers laughed at them. "Why are those children putting weeds by the manger?" they asked each other. Maria and Pablo began to feel embarrassed and ashamed of their gift to the Baby Jesus, but they stood bravely near the manger, placing the plants on the soft hay, as the angel had instructed.

Suddenly, the dull green leaves on the tops of the plants began to turn a beautiful shade of red, surrounding the Baby with beautiful blooms. The laughing villagers became silent as they watched the green plants transform into the lovely star-shaped crimson flowers we call poinsettias. As they watched the weeds bloom before their eyes, Maria and Pablo knew they had no reason to be ashamed anymore. They had given the Baby Jesus the only gift they could - and it was the most beautiful gift of all.

Today, poinsettias are a traditional symbol of Christmas, thanks to young Maria and Pablo and their special gifts to the Baby Jesus.

The Orphanage

On a day in July, Bhagavan somehow started talking about the orphanage. You know, about 61 orphans have been adopted by Bhagavan. He is taking care of them. Bhagavan provides them with food and clothing, a place to live and an education. Bhagavan has also deposited

one lakh of rupees in every child's name in a fixed deposit account. After completing their studies, this money (along with the accrued interest) will enable them to get a good start in life.

You should have seen the boys on the day of their arrival. It was such a wonderful sight! Bhagavan gave each boy a beautiful quality suitcase. Each suitcase was full. There was a cup, a plate, a mirror, toothpaste, a brush, underwear and clothes. Everything that a boy might need was in that suitcase. He gave one suitcase to each boy. The excited boys opened their suitcases, counted the number of things, closed the suitcases, and then opened the suitcases again! (*Laughter*)

While strolling around the Round buildings on an evening walk, I peeped through the windows and noticed that the boys were extremely happy, looking at the suitcases given to them by Bhagavan. My nature is to share with Swami whatever I see. So I said, "Swami, the boys are very excited. "

Bhagavan said, "It seems that an initial expense of two crores has been spent for this project, including the amount deposited for each boy. "

"Swami, isn't that excessive? Is it necessary?" Swami replied: "Yes, it is very necessary!"

And then He made a very important statement for everyone: "Whatever I say, I do. Whatever I do, I say. Whatever I do, whatever I say, is just one and the same. I don't say one thing and do something different. I don't do one thing and say something different. No! Whatever I say and do are exactly the same. I am full of Truth. That is My way of life. "

It is important for all of us to understand this, so that there will be harmony or unity of thought, word and deed.

(Excerpt from Anil Kumar's Pearls of Wisdom)

REFLECTIONS ON SEVA

The Seva wing rolled out a unique competition for the SSE children at our Centre beginning in July and ending in November. Each SSE child was requested to participate in at least 4 service activities and reflect on their experience through a essay which was judged and prizes awarded during Swami's Birthday Celebration.

Following are the essays received from two of our SSE children:

Reflections on Seva – essay 1

Sairam ! My name is Sai Sumithra Voora , I am 9 years old and I go to group 2B in our centre.

I have attended many seva activities conducted by our centre namely Narayan Seva, Wheel Chair Clinic, Park clean-up, Norwood Nursing home, Carefree Lodge and I also had the unique opportunity to serve in my school (Sathya Sai School) at the recent renovation.

Each and every activity we attended had a very positive impact on my family and me. For example when I do park clean up with my Dad I realize how important it is for us to keep our Mother Earth clean and tidy. Another example is when I am involved in cleaning Wheel Chairs I learnt how lucky we are to have a healthy life, this way I can use my hands and legs to help and serve the needy.

The seva activity, which had the greatest impact on my family and me, was my recent visit to Norwood Nursing Home. My fellow SSE students and me sang “ You are my Sunshine” on listening to this song a old grandma requested the nurse to bring her to the Main hall where we were singing for other grandma's and grandpa's, and then she

asked us to sing the song once again. While we were singing she joined along with us and she started crying then she asked us if she can sing a solo .After she sang she asked all of us if she did a good job and we all said yes. When we finished and about to leave the nurse told us that she never came out of her room for many months and when she heard us sing she called the nurse to bring her out near us. This incident really touched me and my family. I will remember this for many years to come.

All these activities connect to Swami's teachings. Swami always says “ Love All Serve All” and “ Help Ever Hurt Never”. When I sing, clean, pick-up litter, serve the hungry I demonstrate “Love All Serve All” and “Help Ever Hurt Never”.

The lesson I learnt from these activities is how fortunate and blessed we are to have things some people do not have such as legs to walk on, food to eat, a home to live and a family to love you. I also learnt that seva requires sacrifice. I sacrificed my morning kids T.V shows to go to the Park clean up or other activities.

We should always thank Swami and be useful in helping others!

Jai Sai Ram !

(Contributed by Sai Sumithra Voora)

Reflections on Seva – essay 2

Sai Ram, my name is Amar Lad. In this essay I am going to talk to you about my experiences during the seva activities at the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre of Toronto York. Before I talk about all my experiences, I am going to talk a bit about myself. I am 13 years old and in grade 8. I am in my second

year of group 3 in the SSE program at the centre. My family and I are devotees of Bhagavan Baba and are active members in the Sai organization. We attend satsang every Sunday and participate in all about all of the activities including; picnics, park clean ups, tree planting, and visits to Norwood Nursing Home. I will be explaining my experiences about some of these.

First, on July 24th 2005, my parents, brother and I went to the wheelchair clinic. We cleaned a lot of wheelchairs. The people were very happy to get their wheelchairs cleaned. It was fun. I couldn't believe that food could get stuck in such tiny places where it's so hard to clean! But I still got every bit of it and made it spotless. I had a lot of fun and I felt good for cleaning many chairs for others. This relates to Baba's teachings because Baba says Love All Serve All.

The second seva experience I had was on August 20th 2005 while helping at the Sathya Sai school with my grandfather, parents and brother. At first we were at the picnic but then since the area was so wet and mucky because of the storm the day before, we all went to the school to help there. At first I mopped only for a minute because I decided to go to the other unit and help take all the long, light, aluminum panels outside. After that I did other little jobs like picking up garbage. Then we left for home feeling good because we helped to get the school renovated in time.

The third time I did seva I also went to the Sathya Sai school but this time with my brother, dad and Vinod uncle on August 27th 2005. I helped paint in many places. I painted a door, 1/2 – 3/4 of a wall and in a room. I also scraped the floor in one of the rooms to get the glue off the tiles. I learned that when you paint, you should always go in straight lines. When we left, I felt super because

I knew the school was even closer to opening on time.

My fourth seva experience was also at the school with my dad. I painted the final borders in the front entranceway. While doing this, my lines became much straighter and neat. Then I went into the 2nd room to sand down the area near the window as it had been filled earlier. My dad showed me how to sand properly. I was sanding in straight line, but he told me to sand in circles as in made it smoother that way. After sanding I put on the primer paint, then the yellow final paint. After cleaning up I went home feeling happy that I accomplished so much.

My last seva experience was on September 11th 2005 at Norwood Nursing Home. I went with my parents and brother. We got there late and at first I thought they were on the 2nd floor, but found that they were finishing off the 1st floor. I sang the rest of the songs before we went to the 2nd floor. I sang all the songs except for a few which I couldn't. I had a really superb time. I enjoyed seeing the happy looks on the residents' faces. This relates to Swami's teachings because Baba says hands that help are holier than lips that pray.

Overall I had a seva filled summer. In July I went to the wheelchair clinic, in August I helped at the Sathya Sai School 3 times in less than 2 weeks and in September I went to Norwood Nursing Home. I enjoy seva and I recommend in joining in some. There are so many opportunities at the centre. That is my essay on reflections on seva.

(Contributed by Amar Lad)

SEVA WING

SWAMI'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

Celebrating Through Service.

As part of Swami's 80th Birthday the Seva wing planned several activities at the centre.

Blood Donation:

The Seva wings Goal was to donate a minimum of 80 pints of blood, so far we have reached only 25 pints, all those eligible please donate to achieve this goal.

Park Clean up:

A summer activity, our way of thanking Mother Earth, this last summer 3 sessions were held to pick up the litter at the park our centre has adopted in Markham.

Wheel Chair cleaning:

We had a couple of sessions since April, our centre members take this opportunity to clean wheel chairs of our less privileged brothers and sisters.

Seva At the Sathya Sai School:

Many of our centre members were actively involved in the moving and renovation at the new location of the Sathya Sai School this summer.

Ongoing Seva Activities:

Narayana Seva

Nursing Home Visits : Norwood Nursing Home And Carefree Lodge.

Recognition:

The City of Markham presented our centre with 2 certificates to recognize our centre's role in maintaining the James Edward Park in Markham.

Help Wanted:

Volunteers required for all projects.

Interested members please contact any of the Seva wing coordinators.

Lessons that Jesus taught and symbolised

The birthday of every great person is celebrated by those who adore and follow him. This day being the birthday of Jesus is a holiday when offices and factories do not work. It is not sanctified as a holy day. People attend the church and join the rituals but return home to revel, drink and dance. The Cross is forgotten when the Christmas season is on. The day must be dedicated to the purification of one's passions and emotions through meditation on the virtues and values that Jesus held forth.

Today, man runs after desires; he does not pursue ideals. He yearns for long life, not for a life lived in God. He does not recognise or follow the footprints of the great. Man has reduced himself to the position of a servant of the household who has no means of knowing where the master has treasured his most precious gems. If he is the master, he ought to know. But having failed to rise to that status, he is unaware of the treasure he can command. Each one has to examine for himself whether he is clinging to trinkets or conserving gems. A lamp kept on mound illumines the area; if kept in a pit, it is as if it were not. A virtue that is practised is a lamp that shines for all; good thoughts and good deeds have a way of influencing others. The gems of wisdom, the light of intuitive experience should not be kept away from fellow-men. They have to be shared, even at the cost of one's life. That was the lesson Jesus taught and symbolised.

- Baba

UPCOMING FESTIVALS

Festivals explained – Hanukkah

Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, is a joyful holiday that commemorates a miraculous event that occurred in ancient Jerusalem in the year 165 BCE. Perhaps, Hanukkah was the world's first recorded celebration of religious freedom taking place when the Jews regained possession of their Temple and vanquished their Syrian oppressors.

Throughout history, Jews have often struggled for religious freedom, a plight that had its beginnings in Jerusalem long before Christ was born. Under the unpleasant rule of Antiochus Epiphanes, the King of Syria, the Jews were forced to worship Greek gods and Greek idols that were brought into their temple against their will.

Determined to revolt, the Jews, led by a revered leader named Judas Maccabee, defeated the Syrians in a famous battle. This was the first time the Jews actually armed themselves with weapons to fight for their religious freedom. They chased the Syrian army out of Jerusalem and turned their attention to restoring their desecrated Temple and its damaged contents.

Large menorah resumes its proud place

First, the Jews removed all the Greek idols and devoted themselves to cleaning out all traces of their oppressors. The large *menorah*, or candelabra, once again stood proudly in its place in the open court, and the altar was cleansed for the traditional Sabbath offering of shewbread (The twelve loaves of unleavened bread).

Next, they searched through the ruins to find the holy olive oil to re-light their Eternal Light that, even to this day, always hangs above the altar. Fortunately, they found a single cruse of consecrated oil and re-lit the Eternal

Light, knowing that there was only enough oil to last a single day.

Then, a miracle happened! That single little bottle of oil kept on burning, and burning--one day, two days, three days, until it finally went out after eight days! Judas Maccabee proclaimed a special eight-day festival to commemorate the miracle of the lights and called it Hanukkah, meaning "dedication."

Festivals explained - Sankranti

"From this day of the Tropic of Capricorn, Makara Sankramana as it is called, the Sun appears to move from South to North, and so, this solstice day is celebrated as an auspicious festival since ages. But, you are concerned more with your own journey, which is nearing its end with every sunrise.

You yearn to escape the consequences of birth and the aftermath of death. You desire peace and joy; for this, you have to cleanse the mind so effectively that it is well nigh eliminated. This is possible only when you identify yourself with the Atma rather than with the body which is the casket of the Atma, earned as a reward for one's activities of mind and body."

"The day of Sankranti has a special significance. Sankranti means 'Sam' coming together, 'Kranti' means a radical change. The Sun into Makara Rashi (Tropic of Capricorn) heralds the beginning of a great change from this day. It marks the entry into a Divine phase. It signifies the attempt to turn man's mind towards God. It is the day when we pray to the Sun, who is the presiding deity for the eyes, to direct our vision to the pure, and holy, the sacred and the Divine. The Makara month is holier than all other months. It is the day when man dedicates his activities for the higher purpose of attaining Divinity, by following the Northward path, the Uttarayana, the Nobler path. The Sun itself is seen to take it from this day. We have to effect a remarkable, spiritual

transformation in the world on this day. Only then has the observance of Makara Sankranti a meaning. External changes with no change in one's outlook and attitude will not signify 'Kranti' (Radical Change)."

Discourse: Makara Sankranti, Jan 14, 1985

Upcoming Events

Date: 25 December 2005

Event: Christmas Day
(Celebrated at the Sivajis' residence at 10:00 a.m. on the 25th)

Date: 26 December 2005

Event: Hanukkah

Date: 31 December 2005

Event: New Year's Eve
(Sathsang and more at the Sivajis' residence!)

Date: 5 January 2006

Event: Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday

Date: 6 January 2005

Event: Epiphany

Date: 14 January 2005

Event: Sankranti

Date: 26 February 2006

Event: Mahasivarathi

WEBSITE of our Centre

Please visit our elegantly designed site at:

www.sathyasaitoronto.org

For more information or comments, contact us at:

feedback@sathyasaitoronto.org

Please do not forget to BOOKMARK our website on your browser!

**Let us keep the flame of sharing
burning bright!**