



SAMASTHA LOKA SUKHINO BHAVANTU

From Team Venugaanam

We are delighted to bring you the 27th edition of Venugaanam this October. As we enter the festival of Navarathri, we bring excerpts from Swami's Divine Discourse highlighting the significance of Dussera. Read this to know the divine meaning of Dussehra .

In Atmajyothi, we continue with a new series of discussions on Narada Bhakthi Sutras. These Sutras or aphorisms contain the secret of true devotion and highlight its glory.

T R Mist continues the new serialized story "the Night" which is bound to keep you hooked on. This issue begins with the episode entitled *The Game of Shadows*.

Lalita shares her views on service and how most of us tend to put off this most essential aspect of our life for later citing personal requirements.

Breaking rules has become the order of the day and Bhargav brings out this trend humorously in the article- *No Rear View Mirror*.

Sowmya Roopa shares some special insights as part of her interactions with Bhagavan in the series entitled *Golden Moments*.

Venugaanam

Sai Krushna Charitable
Trust Newsletter



October, 2013

IN THIS ISSUE

1. *From Team Venugaanam*.....P1
2. *Swami's discourse*.....P2
3. *Atmajyothi*.....P4
4. *SKM update*.....P5
5. *Comfort Zones*.....P7
6. *The Night_ Game of Shadows*....P8
7. *No Rear View Mirror*.....P11
8. *Golden Moments*.....P12

Sai Krushna Mandir is now bustling with activity as the four children have made it their home. To know more about the latest at SKM and how you can volunteer, read the SKM update.

We are happy to have your feedback on how to make 'Venugaanam' a better communication tool. Please mail us at contactus@saikrushnamandir.org . Do feel free to share with us your articles, thoughts and ideas. We pray to Swami to bless all the children and inmates so that they may all come up to His expectations. May Swami turn our lives into a celebration of His message of love, sharing and caring.

With All our Prema,
Team Venugaanam

The True Spirit of Dussera

A Divine Discourses by Bhagawan Shri Sathya Sai Baba during Vijay Dasami day, October 6, 1992

The celebration of Dasara in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba every year is unique as it is accompanied by a week-long sacred *yagna* (sacrifice). Even more significant is the fact Bhagavan often speaks on many occasions during this celebration revealing many salient spiritual truths. One such discourse was delivered on October 6, 1992, on the last day of the celebration, called Vijaya Dasami Day. Here is an extract from that profound message. Let us recapitulate these words of Bhagavan as we rejoice in the Dasara celebrations of this year which starts from the 3rd of this month.

All things in the cosmos are limbs of the body of Vishnu (God). Hence, no one should have any aversion to anything in the universe. You should not hate anyone, because the same Divine is present in you and in everything in the universe.

The cosmos has three forms: the gross, the subtle and the causal. The physical universe represents the gross form. The subtle form is the mind, and subtler than the mind is the *Atma*.

The Five Kosas or Inner Coverings of Man

A human being has five sheaths. These five sheaths have been grouped into three. The gross sheath is the *Annamaya Kosa* (the food sheath). The three *Kosas*, *Praanamaya* (vital breath), *Manomaya* (the mental sheath) and the *Vijnanamaya* (the intellectual sheath) together constitute the subtle sheath.

The causal sheath is the *Anandamaya Kosa* (the Bliss sheath). Even the last sheath does not represent total bliss, because there is a higher entity above the *Anandamaya Kosa*. This is known as *Mahakaarana* or supra-causal entity. This is the *atmic* principle.

Every human being has these *Tripuras* (three cities). The three *puras* (cities) are the body, the mind and the heart. Because every individual has these three, he/she is called *Tripurasundari* (endowed with the beauty of the three worlds). Since the *Prakruthi* (Nature) element, which is feminine in nature, is present in greater measure in the body, it is termed as *Sundari* (a beautiful lady).

The Spiritual Truth of Dasara Festival

During the Navarathri (also called as Dasara) festival, *Tripurasundari* (Goddess) is worshipped. Unfortunately, from ancient times people have been observing only the external forms of worship without understanding the inner significance of these festivals. The entire cosmos is a temple; the Lord pervades the cosmos.

Prakruthi (Nature) teaches the spiritual truth about Navarathri. The Lord has to be realised through *sadhana* (spiritual practice). *Sadhana* does not mean adoring God in a particular place or form. It means thinking of God in all that you do wherever you may be. One may ask if this is possible. And the answer is that it is possible by dedicating every action to God.

During the Navarathri festival, there is a form of worship called *Angaarpana Puja*. In this form of worship, all the limbs of the body are offered to the Divine in a spirit of surrender (*Sharanaagathi*). Surrender means offering everything to the Divine and giving up the idea of separation between oneself and the Divine. There can be no true surrender if there is a sense of separation. There must be the conviction that it is the same Divine who dwells in all beings - *Eko Vasee Sarvabhutha-antharaathma*.

The True Meaning of Angaarpana Puja

In the performance of *Angaarpana Puja*, there is a form of self-deception. When a devotee says, "Nethram

Samarpanyaami" (I offer my eyes to the Lord) and offers only a flower to the Lord, he is indulging in a kind of deception. The proper way would be to say that he is offering a flower.

Actually, *manthras* (verses) like "*Nethram Samarpanyaami*" are intended to indicate that one is using his eyes only to see God. The real significance of the *Manthra* is that you think of the divine in whatever you see or do.

Therefore, the true meaning of the *Angaarpana Puja* is to declare that you offer all your limbs in the service of the Lord. This means that whatever work you do should be done as an offering to God.

Nowadays, selfishness is rampant among devotees and they love God not for God's sake, but only to get their selfish desires fulfilled. As long as selfishness prevails, the Divine cannot be understood.

The Navarathri festival should be used as an occasion to examine one's own nature, whether it is human, animal or demonic, and strive to transform the animal nature to the human, and divinize the human nature. Wisdom cannot be acquired from outside. It has to be won through inward *Sadhana*.

Atmajyothi

by Shri Lakshminarayan Aithal

Lakshminarayan Aithal has served for over 3 decades in Swami's institution and is the former Principal of the Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Institutions at Muddenahalli. Inspired by Swami's direct message to study the Upanishads, he first learnt Sanskrit and then studied the direct works of Adi Shankaracharya and Swami. Sincere perseverance led him to the reality of Aham Brahmasmi and He realized and experienced Swami's words: "I am God and so are you". He shares the import of the Upanishadic teachings with us in this series of articles.

TWO FORMS OF DEVOTION.

Offering a leaf, a flower, a fruit, etc. with Love to God and worshipping Him through – studying scripture, chanting hymns of praise, etc. are endowed with a part of love; therefore, it is also called devotion. But, this scripture doesn't deal with that devotion; forgetting all external objects, if the excellent love is established on God, this Great Love itself is the real Devotion. In order to indicate this itself characteristic features of devotion is told : परमप्रेमरूपा, Form of Supreme Love.

Devotion shown through worshipping, chanting, etc. towards God is called the secondary one (गौणभक्ति). The first aphorism tells : भक्तिं व्याख्यास्यामः, we clearly explain devotion. The word 'devotion' is primarily the Supreme One of the form of excellent love; still, as a king comes with his retinue, so this

scripture has also explained the secondary devotion not as its main aim; and the main aim of the scripture is the Supreme Devotion. The first meaning of the word भक्ति is the Supreme Love towards the Supreme Self, the God. This, itself, is the subject matter of this scripture.

MEANING OF THE WORD 'तु'

In the aphorism, सा तु (But that devotion), the 'तु' (but) word is employed to indicate relief to all probable objections that may arise on भक्ति, the topic of the scripture. In the pretext of explaining the meaning of the words of the aphorism, we have cleared the already raised such objections. In the next aphorism, a relief will be given for another objection.

In the present moment, there is a profit to the readers if they reflect upon the sublime meaning of the four words of the aphorism : सा त्वस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा. An aphorism means this :-

अल्पाक्षरमसन्दिग्धं सारवद्विश्वतो मुखम् ।
अस्तोभमनवद्यमं च सूत्रं सूत्रविदो विदुः ॥

According to this token sentence (लक्षणवाक्य) of learned men, an aphorism should have following characteristics : (1) It should have minimum number of words; (2) regarding meaning no doubt should raise; (3) there should be a substance (सार) in the meaning; (4) many meanings should be indicated by a single word; (5) vain or meaningless words should not be included; (6) and, there should be no fault in the meaning of a sentence.

Thus the united meaning of the two aphorisms can be said briefly : Devotion is the Supreme Love itself in God; the highest achievement of life can be had through that devotion; and we explain that devotion with all its auxiliaries.

AN OBJECTION REGARDING DEVOTION

11. It is said that there is no defect of love of external objects in the Supreme Love regarding God. Objects are not everlasting, therefore if they are lost there is grief either in acquiring them, or in protecting them; and, there is affliction even in relieving the difficulty of the mind. But, the गीता tells about God as follows : नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः (गी. 3-34). According to this- God is Eternal, all Pervading one and He has a steady Form; and

He doesn't move from one place to another. Therefore the excellent Love in Him may yield Supreme Bliss. But, is not love a condition of the mind? A condition remains till the other one rises; and there is no hope of retaining the same condition forever, isn't it? This being the case, how can a love-condition which has a beginning and an end give everlasting bliss? If not, then, how can be the highest achievement of life?

Even this objection is answered by the word रूपा (form) from the compound word परमप्रेमरूपा (form of Supreme Love). This is told briefly : Though the devotion is in the form of love-condition but the Supreme Love is not a mere love-condition which is familiar to us all. It's Own Form itself is different from the worldly love-condition. That is explained in the next aphorism :- अमृतस्वरूपा च ॥3॥

And that is also having an Immortal Form.

There is a difference between worldly famous love and devotion : In the world, love is a mental condition which originates by the connection of objects in the vicinity of sense-organs. There arises a mental condition according to the form of an object. When the sensual objects are known, the following conditions are formed : Uncertainty (विकल्प) of the object, doubting it (संशय), certainty about it (निश्चय) and egoistically attaching to it. Similarly – कामः सङ्कल्पो विचिकित्सा श्रद्धाऽश्रद्धा धृतिरधृतिर्हीर्भोरित्येतत्सर्वं मन एव ॥बृ. 1-5-3॥ Desire (काम), will (संकल्प), doubt (संशय), faith (श्रद्धा), lack of faith (अश्रद्धा).

Update from Sai Krushna Mandir

September turned out to be a really busy month at Sai Krushna Mandir. With the blessings of Bhagawan Baba, trustee Vinod Cartic got married to Poornima on September 15 at Puttaparthi. The couple celebrated their union through a Sai SathyaNarayana Puja and Grama seva on September 19, 2013. The villagers of Hosadoddi, and teachers and children of the Sharavathi Kannada Higher Primary school welcomed and blessed the couple.

The children of Sai Krushna Mandir enjoyed the wedding at Puttaparthi. They were especially thrilled when they had darshan of Swami's Samadhi at Prashanti Nilayam and heard their favourite bhajans being sung by a large group of devotees.

One of the members Dr. Jitesh Patel flew down from London to be a part of the wedding and visit Sai Krushna Mandir. He was very happy with the way the building had turned out and the affection shown by the children. The children were overjoyed with the books and cookies he brought for them from London.

After all the fun and frolicking came the dreaded exams. And like all children, they developed a new-found interest in bhajans, cleaning, stories, sleeping early and everything else except studying 😊. With much coaxing, cajoling, and pleading, they sailed through the exams. On September 29th, with a heavy heart, we bid the children good bye as they left for their respective homes to spend the Dussera holidays with their guardians.

The silence and peace at Sai Krushna Mandir can be compared to the calm after the storm. But it only makes us realize what an integral part these children have become of our lives and we eagerly await their arrival.

We thank all the donors and volunteers who have been generously contributing towards daily expenses to run the children's home, construction, setting up an RO drinking water system, solar lighting and maintenance of the building. We are also grateful to the volunteers who have devoted time to buying groceries, spending time with the children and helping them learn and catch up with their curriculum. We invite applications for a caretaker who will be paid suitably as per their experience and ability. Support staff families would be provided suitable accommodation and their children would be given appropriate educational facilities also.

We look forward to all your active involvement and participation in this God given opportunity. We also welcome



Phase 1 & 2

Sai Krushna Mandir

you to come and visit the site and participate in the activities of Sai Krushna Mandir. We pray that Swami's grace

will crown our genuine intentions and He will continue to guide and bless the children and residents to live in a happy home and grow to His ideals.

Below are some photos of the Grama Seva and other events that took place last month:



Comfort Zones and Cozy Cocoons

Contributed by Lalita Rao

Lalita is a keen member of the SKM team and has been driving the activities and administrative tasks with great enthusiasm. Here she shares some of her thoughts and ideas on service.

I read an article on Dailygood.org recently that made me sit up and think. Thoughts and questions popped up and zinged into each other at top speed in my brain:

- When you wake up in the morning, what inspires you to act? to do something different? to change the world? to (most importantly, for me) get OUT of your comfort zone in order to accomplish something? What level of sacrifice are you game for, in order to serve and bring peace, joy, love and happiness to others (that are not your family and friends)?

The person who set off an avalanche of thoughts and questions is [Maggie Doyne](#), featured in the *Dailygood* article. At 18, she woke up one morning and decided that rather than go to college, she would travel the world during her 'gap year' (the year between high school and college). She ended up in war torn areas of Nepal and stayed. Seeing the impoverished children breaking stone to sell for food, and rummaging through garbage to collect discarded items, did something to her. Before she knew it, she had opened an orphanage, started the Kopila Valley school and now, runs a Foundation called [The BlinkNow Foundation](#). At 23, she is 'mother' to 40 kids in the orphanage and 300 in the school. You can read details of the story on any of the links given here. *I believe that with the blink of an eye, we can all make a difference*, she says. Maggie called her parents and had them wire her \$5000 - her entire savings from part time jobs - and spent it on building up the school.

Even as admiration for this youngster grew rapidly with every sentence I read, my head continued to be crowded with emotions and questions vying with each other. Prime among them was the question: how did she **do** that? Not in her town, city or even country. She went to a distant country, 8000 miles away, in a war torn and impoverished region, and set up an institution to house and educate scores of needy kids? How did she **do** that? Darn, I can babysit for two hours and want a four hour nap at the end of it.

Crazy, Cute or Inspiring?

Outlier stories run the risk of being too crazy, too cute and too... unattainable! But there is nothing of the 'too good to be true' in her story. She is the real thing.

And that bothered me. A lot. Not because she is the real thing, but because I might not be. When Swami says, '*seva cheyyandi, seva cheyyandi*', we say yes, yes, yes, imitating our Swami very well. But when it comes to actual executing, that darned comfort zone - it pushes us deeper and deeper into a cocoon of comfort and safety.

[This is an odd place for a disclaimer, but here it is: when I say 'we' and 'us' it is just an expression of collective sentiment. No slight intended, or implied, to the large numbers of readers who don't fall into this category of cocoon dwellers].

We have all these conditions that have to be met before we can serve. Here are a few top of the chart conditions --

safety
security
sanitation
distance
transport
time
interest
skill set fit
should not be too distressing
not too dirty
no other competing interests
no commitment required

....and so the list goes on. Service of convenience. A popular concept you might have heard of is that of the 'one-off service projects'. That is, you can sign up for a one time commitment of 2-4 hours to do a service project. It fulfills our desire to do service without a long term **Commitment**. That C word!! Combines well with a P word - Phobia. This is why Maggie's story made me

uncomfortable - in a strange inspiring kind of way. Her's is a story of Commitment paired with the S word - Sacrifice. Of personal comfort, needs, wants. Who is kidding that this might have been an easy and fun 'project' for her? Only the good things show up in the article, I am sure. What did she get out of it, she was asked. Her answer: *I get a bursting heart and 300 of the happiest most amazing little*

kiddos in the universe; hugs every day, lots of laughs, family games [...], too many Birthday parties to count, and more love than I could have ever imagined.

Comfort zones and cozy cocoons wouldn't have given her this experience. Something to learn from, and be inspired.

The Night

by T.R. Mist

T.R Mist is a resident of Puttaparthi and would be contributing a serialized story "The Night". The third part of the story is continued here.

The Game of Shadows

Days passed ...lifeless, listless. While returning from work one day...wait did I mention about the work I do. Not yet, but this seems to be a good opportunity. I work in one of the sections of the great formless municipality. A puny cog in the gigantic wheel, which keeps turning and turning without going anywhere.

People tell me I have a respectable job. I harbor no such delusions. For the record I am a truth checker. I go through volumes and volumes of municipal documents and point out mistakes and lies and set them right. It is needless to say that truth is relative, and what the truth is, is decided by the top echelons of the municipality. The nameless and formless.

So 'the suns' are as good as the Sun who never disappeared He just manifested Himself through the smaller suns, and they are to be referred as 'the suns' only and any other name given to them amounts disrespecting the Sun himself who never disappeared.

The word 'eclipse' is only about hiding something small and never can ever be applied to the objects larger than a palm of a human hand. The Sun was never eclipsed he just manifested Himself through 'the suns' and anyway nothing bigger than a human hand can ever be eclipsed.

'Warmth' is a word to be used exclusively with the heat

generated by the 'suns' or the gas heaters in the houses and nothing else. Warmth can also be associated with green houses where food is grown.

'Beauty' is a word only to be used with reference to the lights in the marketplace and physical beauty of the human beings and never ever something so obsolete as a thing as 'nature'.

'Brilliance' is a word to be used exclusively with the lights in the marketplace and sun parlours and never can be attributed to anything else least of all things from the past or obsolete.

'Life giver' is the municipality and cannot be referred to or attributed to anything else.

To be 'happy' is a feeling one gets by having good life with family under the 'the suns'. There can be no such thing as being happy without the family and 'the suns'.

I am sure you must have got a hang of it. The people in the office knew my preference to stay on the fringes, which I attributed to a fictitious medical condition of skin pigmentation and not being completely able to bear the brilliance of 'the suns'. Some of them were definitely suspicious that I belonged to that non-conformist lot of the population, which had this strange obsession for the

return of the Sun, but the higher ups never bothered till I did my job well. There were, however, always ways to get back at them. Like when I changed the sentence: "the Municipality has passed a resolution to set up more suns" to "The esteemed holy Life giver MUNICIPALITY which has no equal in this universe has passed a resolution in all the goodness of their glowing hearts to provide greater brilliance to the city by setting up more 'the suns'". I would sometimes be called and counseled to keep my adoration for the municipality less obvious. To which I would shoot back saying, they were telling me to commit blasphemy and would add, inducing myself into a mild hysteria, that what I had done was right. The bosses would look at each other, raise their eyebrows, nod a bit and then agree and I would find a quiet corner of the office toilet and break into subdued guffaws.

I knew I needed to guard myself cause there were definitely some smart heads around, so I knew when to overdo and when not, so that it could be dismissed as a spontaneous yet reoccurring bout of zealous adoration.

Now I feel I need to go back to what happened a few days ago. I returned home as the light globs were fading, I had a plan to go out for coffee at the Sunshine Café, one of the few places in the whole city which was free of pretense. I went home had a bath, it was already dark by then. The streets lights were diligently lighting up the already deserted streets. I crossed the adjacent street and hurried down the road ahead, my boots pounding the cold stones of the pavement with their rhythmic clacks when a sudden gust of wind hit me from an alley on my left, which almost snatched the coat from me. I walked ahead adjusting my coat in disgust then I jolted to a stop. I thought I saw something. A silhouette or a shadow, something that looked human? No, just some shadow, I had had enough of this game of silhouettes and shadows with K a few days ago, my mind was playing tricks on me now. The clack of my boots resumed on the pavement.

"Come back", a voice said from the alley. It sounded mysterious, yet matter of fact. Something that had immense authority, deliberately concealed. Like a quiet order from an emperor. I stood rooted to the pavement and turned my head towards the alley, waiting for the next order. "You are still not walking back." "I am not K and I will not try to choke you," the voice said. I shivered. I clenched my teeth, whosoever he was was spying on me. I wanted to run away, but my feet had grown heavy, it seemed as if some invisible rope kept me tied down to the ground.

"Don't be mistaken, it is not that I do not like to come out, but trust me it is safer here," the voice said. I retraced my steps and reached the mouth of the alley the wind blew right into my face. "Come in, come in, it is me Raogata," he said.

"Rao? Where have you been? Is it really you, I can't see your face." Rao switched on his torch and for a brief moment lit up his face from below. His face had hardly changed. In the yellow light of the torch and the corresponding shadows, his face looked menacing. "Why this blind alley man and why the sudden disappearance and then this sudden appearance, what is all this about and why the hell is the municipality looking out for you, what is going on Rao," I asked.

"As expected, too many questions?" he said. "And don't call me Rao, call me by the name you had given me, I like it more, 'Corto'."

"Yeah Corto, but these questions are screaming out for answers. So??"

"Things seem to be happening in your life pretty suddenly these days, may be that is why you seem to be concerned," Corto replied.

"That does not answer any of my questions, how exactly do you know what is happening in my life," then I remembered that he had mentioned about K being in my house, "and how did you know K had visited me recently. Are you spying upon me? And for what purpose?"

"I take care of my friends."

Rao's conversations were always as mysterious as the man himself. I had not known him for long, just a few years, he worked in the same office. He was tall well-built with sharp features a pointed nose and chiseled jaw, with cold eyes and lips, which seldom smiled. He was a man of few words and an incisive intellect. He was always on target with whatever he said and evidently some got stung by those words. He was, therefore, respected and hated in equal measure by the people around him.

When I spoke to him for the first time, I told him casually, without knowing much about his reserved nature, that he looked like the legendary comic book hero, Corto Maltese, he had smiled. He loved the name pretty much and we became good friends. Though of the same age, he was

senior to me in the organization and took upon himself to mentor me to the ways of working in it. Things were going on smoothly till the eclipse happened. A few months after the chaos died down, Corto called me one day while I was in the office and told me he would resign as he could not “digest the unsavoury changes”. Classic Rao, aka Corto.

Municipality had swept in the changes, our work changed dramatically from documentation to truth checking, some accepted these changes with some curiosity, some others whole heartedly, I did not belong either to these classes and I am sure nor did Corto.

Things moved on and I hardly heard from him. Almost a year later grapewine in the office told me that the municipality was looking out for him. What he had done was never told and never discussed. My bosses asked me if I knew what he was up to or where to find him. I told them about the day when he had called me and informed of his intended resignation. I did not tell them about his jibe. I felt that would put him in some unseen danger.

This meeting with him in the blind alley on the road to the café was our first after he had left the organization.

“Could you please explain, how you help your friends by turning up in blind alleys?” I asked.

I could feel Corto smile, though I could see nothing except his feet with his trademark leather boots jutting out of the shadow, as he stood leaning against the wall with his legs crossed.

“Let me apologise first for causing you guys some inconvenience”, he said. I waited for him to explain. He was quick to grasp that it has made no sense to me.

“Did the globs go out a few months ago, when you were at work?” he added.

“Of course they did.”

The full purport of the sentence exploded in my mind.

“You mean...you mean...YOU did it?” I stammered.

Corto cleared his throat.

“Have you not heard of the Underground”, he asked casually.

The word underground froze my blood. I felt cold and numb. I felt not blood but cold sweat rushing through my veins at the onslaught of a pounding heart.

“I don’t like that word particularly myself, I would rather prefer to call myself the Sun Worshipper, but then in war the name given by the enemy is what is remembered,” he said.

The papers told that authorities had found letters S.W. spray painted on the main light glob of the inner city, when they went to fix it after all of them had failed suddenly at mid-day a few months ago. This gave raise to many conspiracy theories about a gang of people who were out to subvert the municipality and all their ideas of existence. They were collectively given the name of the Underground by the people.

Some other said that S.W. stood for ‘Shadow Warriors’, some others ‘Sun Watchers’, and even ‘Scum of the World’.

Municipality rubbished all this as hearsay. And put the blame on a short circuit for the failure of ‘the suns’. Further they came up with a story that S.W. were the initials of the son of the maintenance in-charge of ‘the suns’, Mr. Weather . So S.W. stood for Son of Weather.

The municipality document, said that the kid had innocently spray painted the letters S.W. on ‘the sun’ and had been severely reprimanded for his act.

The matter ended there.

To be continued.....

No Rear View Mirror

by KVRK Bhargav

Bhargav is a student of Swami who after completing his B.Tech in Textile Engineering graduated with an MBA from the Sri Sathya Sai University in 2001. Ever since, he has had the great fortune of waiting for Swami's direct guidance. He has been blessed with many interactions with Swami. Currently, he helps out at the University Administrative Block.

Let us ask a fundamental question. Why do we use mirrors? It makes us feel good, makes us feel confident about our looks or otherwise or sometimes props up our vanity. It sometimes verges onto narcissism, a word coined after the poor Narcissus who fell in love with his own reflection and ruined his life. Let me be little more specific. Why the mirrors are used on a two wheeler? The answer will be quite different. But if I say that I found a town where mirrors are not so much in use atleast on the roads on two wheelers, does that mean the denizens of this town are free from the ills of vanity or I can say they don't care much about their looks or they have excellent road sense that a rear view mirror is superfluous.

As I was riding my scooter through the dusty pot hole filled roads of Dharmavaram, a small town around 40 kms from Puttaparthi, I found it quiet difficult to negotiate through these cluttered chaotic roads. To get some space for my scooter to manouvre, I was adding to the already existing chaos with the harsh sound of the croaking of a frog of my Honda Eterno. As one motorcyclist came just in front of me, the artificial frog croaked full throated but there was no clearance from the fellow in front of me. I tried to search for his face in his rear view mirror to gesticulate him to move out. I found none. When I turned around, to my surprise, I was the only narcissist or a vain fellow or I can say the one who scrupulously follows some basic road rules, in that posse of motorcyclists.

I remember when I went for my first driving license test, first because I failed a couple of times once in prelims and

the second time in practicals not because I was not competent enough but because I had a soft corner for Anna Hazare and had made an iron resolve not to contribute my part to this ill of the society. One question asked in the written test was about the importance of rear view mirrors. I answered it correctly- It helps to keep an eye on the rear side beyond the peripheral vision of the driver during parking, lane changing or taking a turn.

I grew curious to find out why I was the odd man out in this group of motor cyclists. Dharmavaram is a busy town always bustling with activity due to its roaring silk saree business. One can hear the sound of people working on their looms in many of its labyrinthine by lanes. It also has a rail head which is an important junction to reach the spiritual town of Puttaparthi. The railroad bisects the town into two. During peak hours of traffic the level crossings across these tracks are very busy. I reached one such level crossing and waited patiently for the train to come. Many motorists were scurrying away with their two wheelers, bending their vehicles and passing underneath the iron bar of the level crossing. With the deftness of an accomplished gymnast the riders took the two wheelers near the level crossing, bent it low cleared the hurdle and sped away riding the vehicles.

Either side of the level crossing, there were boards which had broken backs, twisted arms, disfigured faces as they had angered the two wheelers with their message and bore the brunt of their fury. Still they were holding fort and trying to scream a message to apparently blind eyes,

'Danger: Don't cross the tracks when the gates are closed.'

Golden Moments

by SowmyaRoopa

SowmyaRoopa is a student of Swami who after completing her graduation from the Sri Sathya Sai University taught in the Sri Sathya Sai Primary School for several years. She has had the great fortune of receiving Swami's direct guidance many times as a primary school teacher and a student of the Anantapur campus. She is also very creative and is responsible for the creative boards with Swami's sayings on it, placed in many of Swami's institutions. In this series she shares some of her experiences in interacting with divinity.

It was on 18 January 1988 at Parthi, during the morning darshan that Bhagwan gave me a moment of unimaginable joy. Each time I remember it, it fills the moment with renewed joy.

The Annual sports meet was over. We, the students doing the B.Ed course had stayed back for a few more days. The first two batches of B.Ed students had studied at the Brindavan Campus. Later, since 1988 June, course is being conducted at Anantapur. We were requesting Bhagwan to come to Brindavan. As Bhagwan came near us, I kneeled and said, "Swami..." I wanted to request and ask Bhagwan when he would come to Brindavan. He had already walked on. When I began the sentence, saying "Swami...". He turned, looked at me and tapping His chest lightly, He asked, "Han Sri Vaishnavi Aaa?" Meaning "Yes, (did you say) Sri Vaisnavi?" He was asking me and confirming that He was indeed Sri Vaishnavi Mata. Our Omniscient Lord had validated an experience which I had not told anyone. The incident was as follows.

It was the spring of 1983, A pleasant April morning. My parents and me were walking up the Trikuta Mountains to reach the shrine of Sri Vaishnavi Mata. As my parents walked slowly on the winding roads, I quickly climb the steep steps, enjoying chanting, "Jai Mata Di" with each step. I imagined the Divine Mother, wearing a grand red and gold sari, beautiful ornaments, carrying many weapons in Her hands, riding on a majestic lion. I surmised that, since it was a Divine Lion, it could walk on the low surrounding clouds. Devotees returning from the temple were smiling and I was eager to wade in the chilling waters of the Baan Ganga flowing inside the cave which is the abode of Mother Sri Vaishnavi.

I remembered one first trip when I was a five year old girl and the story of the The origin of Mata Rani. The fifteen year old girl smiled at the memory of her five year old self telling mother, "Mama, I want to wear shining rings on all my ten fingers like "Vaishno Mata."

A spring breeze gently caressed the tender leaves. A particular flight of steep doesn't reach the road for a long time, hence people would climbing them, I climbed alone, sat a while on a stone bench and then resumed the climb. I stopped to take a breath. On the next step, stood the most beautiful girl in the Universe. She was about 8 years old and her height was approx three and half feet, she wore a simple cotton long skirt and blouse which had two shades of brown and crème. Diagonal one cm squares were printed on it. The charming child wore her hair in a single plait. She looked neat and clean. It was strange that such a little girl was not accompanied by any elder. She asked – 'Tera pas kuch khanae ko hai'(Do you have any eatable with you !) I said nah (no). She looked with despair into my eyes and said, "Mujhe maloom Hai tere pas hai." (I know you have). I said "Han Hai Par Jutha Hai" (I have but). I started partaking it, hence it is unclear she said "Kuch Nahi Hota Mujhe De Do Na, Mujhe Bahut bhool lagi Hai" (Never mind, please give it to me, I am very hungry) Then I gave her the bun I had half-eaten. We looked at each other. Just to make conversation I asked the usual question, "Tera Naam Kya Hai. (What is your name?) She looked deep into my eyes. After considering the question, a slight hesitation whether to tell me or not she said, "Vaishnavi". I immediately thought, " Han Aaise He Bol Rahi Hai." (She is fibbing).

The moment the thought came, there was a hurt look in her eyes. I regret not believing Mata and thereby hurting her. It is also a life lesson. We tend to disbelieve truth which appears too strange to be true. Let's take time to seek the truth in our daily lives- for, **where there is love there is truth and there alone is God.**