

# AntharDhwani



**E-Newsletter from the Counselling Department, SSSIHMS, Whitefield, Bangalore, India  
Vol-III, January 2020**

## CONTENTS

1	Swami's message "Develop your Faith with Love for God"
2	Director's page for AntharDhwani
3	The foyer of the Temple of Healing
4	Continuing Education monthly meetings - 2019 highlights
6	Sathya Sai Heart Hospital, Ahmedabad adopts SAI Counselling
8	The Faith factor in medicine
10	The importance of counselling a patient's family.
13	Coping with Grief
15	The story of Shampa - a caregiver's saga of Faith
20	The story of patient Bristi and her mother
23	The Department of Counselling: Facts and Figures - 2019

## EDITORIAL

By Bhagawan's Grace, AntharDhwani has entered its second year of publication, and inspired by Bhagawan dedicates this New Year 2020 first volume towards creating greater awareness within the medical fraternity and the public at large of the holistic medical care being practiced at SSSIHMS, Whitefield. The Counselling Department has played a major complementary role in implementing this Sai Healthcare model.

In this issue Faith is the central theme starting with Bhagawan's Message, a clarion call for developing Faith through Love for God. In this endeavour we present an interesting and thought provoking vignette about Faith extracted from a paper published in the British Journal of Medicine in **1910** by Dr. William Osler, the legendary physician. The faith factor is also embedded in the several patient case studies presented here; the outstanding example being the story of caregiver Shampa.

The article on Coping with Grief highlights the importance of knowing the person behind the illness in a patient undergoing PTCA procedure to truly heal. Two other case studies presented in another article accentuate the importance of counselling patient's family to address emotional contagion. The story of facing uncertainty of patient Bristi touches one's heart.

We are happy to announce that the Sathya Sai Heart Hospital in Ahmedabad has adopted the SAI Counselling program; read the article contributed by two of their counsellors, Dr. Saifali Gupta and Mrs. Ami Patel, who underwent training in our department. Happy reading.

The Editorial Team



# Anthar Dhwani

## Develop Your Faith with Love for God

**Bhagavan's Discourse 20th July 1996, Sanathana Sarathi June 2012.**

*"Love and Faith are present in you. What you have to do is to turn them towards God. Then work will be transformed into worship. Whatever you do consider it as God's work.*

*You have to develop your faith with love for God. Love is not something that can be given to you as a gift. When you step on the path of Love, your love for God will automatically develop. The growth of your faith depends entirely on you and not anybody else.*

*Faith is not something that can be developed in you by others. Faith is there in you right from the time of your birth. When you realise this truth, faith will automatically develop. When you say, she is my mother, it is based on faith only. Without faith, you cannot call her as your mother. Likewise, when you have a firm conviction in the presence of God, your faith naturally develops.*

*First of all, have faith in yourself. If you do not have faith in yourself, you cannot have faith in God. Therefore, one who denies God, denies himself. One who has faith in himself will have faith in God. Have firm faith in God.*

*Faith in yourself, faith in God. This is the secret of greatness."*

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### **Our prayer to You Beloved Swami:**

**We the SAI Counsellors at SSSIHMS, Whitefield, in all humility and reverence, offer at Your Lotus Feet our most heartfelt gratitude for providing us this unique opportunity of serving You through this Seva of Love for all the patients who enter the portals of this Temple of Healing seeking relief from their illness and solace for their suffering, thereby sanctifying our own lives in our spiritual journey.**

**We pray to You for Your Blessings and Grace, and to give us the strength to be able to continue serving You in Your Divine Mission.**



Dr. Shekar Rao



**DIRECTOR'S PAGE FOR ANTHAR DHWANI**

It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to write down a few thoughts for the first Anthar Dhwani issue of 2020.

At the outset, I would like to express my highest admiration for the dedicated and devoted team of counsellors who have really enabled the spiritualization of the practice of medicine in the Divine precincts of our hospital. They have achieved this by manifesting unlimited love for the patients who seek our help and by doing their best to find out and address their deepest concerns and anxieties.

Truly they have practiced Swami's teaching that states "**Duty without love is deplorable, duty with love is desirable, love without duty is Divine.**"

They have earned the trust and confidence of patients from far and wide and by being there for them, have completed the process of treatment which is received with optimism and gratitude. When this frame of mind is achieved, medical treatment can have its best and most meaningful results.

This issue of Anthar Dhwani carries examples of such wonderful interactions and reading them becomes an enriching spiritual endeavor in itself. Further, the technique, skills and theory behind successful and meaningful counselling is also alluded to so that readers can understand and appreciate the knowledge and efforts that go behind the work of this Department of Counselling.

I pray to Bhagawan that reading the contents of this issue provides everyone with joy, satisfaction, inspiration and understanding of His Grace.





## The foyer of the “**TEMPLE OF HEALING**” SSSIHMS, Whitefield

**Functions of the temple** - Sathya Sai Baba, Dharma Vahini, Chapter X , The House of God.

“Temples are centres of discipline, where the aspirant is guided step by step to attain a vision of the truth. They are schools for the training of the spirit, academies for the promotion of scriptural studies, institutes of super-science, laboratories for the testing of the values of life.

*They are hospitals for the treatment and cure not only of the “birth-death disease”, which has persisted in the individual for ages, but even the much more patent “mental disorders” that trouble those who do not know the secret of acquiring peace.*

Temples are gymnasias where people are reconditioned and their hesitant faith, waning conviction, and upsurging egotism are all cured. Temples are mirrors that reflect aesthetic standards and achievements. The purpose of the temple is to awaken the Divinity in humanity (Madhavathwa in manavathwa), inducing people to believe that the physical frames in which they live are themselves houses of God. Temples exist for the progress and welfare of humanity.”



## CONTINUING EDUCATION MONTHLY MEETINGS - 2019 HIGHLIGHTS

The second Sunday of every month is devoted to a CE session for the counsellors wherein presentations on topical counselling subjects are made by the respective day-team of counsellors followed by interactive discussions. It also provides an opportunity for the entire team to meet once a month to exchange information, discuss case histories, seek clarifications and more importantly bond together. Experts and specialists are also invited depending on their availability to address the counsellors in their areas of domain expertise. In 2019 we had two such sessions as narrated below.

### Sunday 11th August meeting - Guest speakers:



**Dr. E.V. Joshy,**



**Dr. Gayathri Joshy**

*(Dr. E.V. Joshy, Honorary Consultant and Former Chief of Neurology, SSSIHMS, Whitefield | Dr. Gayathri Joshy, Professor and Head, Department of Respiratory Medicine, MS Ramaiah Medical College, Bangalore 560054)*

Dr. Joshy needs no introduction; he is very well known to all the counsellors, he has addressed the counsellors several times on neurological illnesses and regularly refers Neuro OPD patients for counselling. The main speaker of the day was Dr. Gayathri Joshy, a very highly qualified and renowned pulmonologist matching her husband, Dr. Joshy, in humility and maintaining a low profile - a true Sai devotee.

Counsellors in their training program learn about cardiac illnesses but are not familiar with the functioning of the respiratory system, which is intimately connected to the functioning of the heart. A pulmonologist like Dr. Gayathri was needed to fill this gap.

Doctor Gayatri made a very lucid presentation highlighting on COPD (Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.) Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is a common lung disease with impaired functioning of the lungs resulting in difficulty in breathing and breathlessness known medically as dyspnea. The main cause of COPD is tobacco smoking and in developing countries like India COPD often occurs in people exposed to polluted air, fumes from burning fuel for cooking and heating in poorly ventilated homes. Patients having COPD find it hard to breathe and they may find it difficult to do deep breathing during BRMC. They might either breathe in the reverse or manage to have shallow breathing. They may not be able to do the deep abdominal breathing as taught during BRMC. This was very enlightening to the counsellors; they would accordingly be alert to watch out for such cases during counselling.

The counsellors expressed their sincere thanks to Dr. Gayathri for this huge learning from her presentation.

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### Sunday 8th December meeting - Chief Guest.

**Dr. Shekar Rao, Director & Chairman Cardiac Sciences, SSSIHMS, Whitefield.**

The year 2019 ended with a very memorable Sunday meeting with the Director, Dr. Shekar Rao, gracing the occasion. The meeting began with bhajans by the Counselling team bhajan singers in Swami's room with prasadam to be served during lunch, being kept as naivedhya to the Lord. It concluded with arathi by the Director and the counsellors. This was followed by a group photo session in the foyer, a tradition of the Counselling department with every new Director. The group then convened in the Counselling department shrine room for the meeting to listen to the Director's address and what an inspiring treat it was.

Tracing the history of surgery Dr. Shekar Rao recalled how in the sixteenth century surgeons were considered as tradesmen as opposed to physicians being learned professionals. It was Ambrose Pare, a French surgeon often referred to as the father of surgery, who through his sincere efforts was responsible for surgeons being included in the category of learned professionals. He maintained and convinced the concerned bodies that one's decision making approach based on serving the best interest of the patient, was the touchstone for differentiating a learned profession from a trade!

Continuing Dr. Shekar Rao said that in this era where the above concept is being rechallenged we are truly in an oasis, where over and above our professional medical knowledge and skills, the driving force is to cater to the best interest of the patient. To that extent the complementary efforts of the counsellors is a valuable part of the process. The physical manifestation of the anatomical structural derangements, mitral stenosis, tetralogy of fallot, etc. are only a part of the entire perception of the condition. In reality what actually affects the patients and their kith and kin is an entire host of issues, which have an equal bearing on how the suffering or difficulty is perceived, and when addressed, is actually when the benefit of the surgical intervention comes to fruition bringing about the feeling of the wholeness of relief from the suffering.

To be sensitive to this aspect and to have a mechanism to address the issues in a systematic and meaningful way is what SAI Counselling does - something, he said, we are proud and happy to have as part of our armamentarium with which we can handle these problems. And in Swami's teachings there is one more step beyond this. As Ambrose Pare has said 'you are working and doing your best in the interest of somebody else - the patient. Swami goes even beyond by saying **"you sanctify your lives thereby"!**

According to Dr. Shekar Rao, "the use of modern technology, the ability to apply some advanced techniques and the attitude borne out of the totality of who we are, enables us to see the entire picture unfold. To experience the sense of Blessing and Grace derived from being a participant in this drama is the greatest reward - it makes life worthwhile. As Swami has said "if by your actions, thoughts and by whatever you do, you are able to feel a sense of satisfaction in your life, there cannot be a greater blessing".

Dr. Shekar Rao concluded his talk with the following quote by the legendary physician Dr. Tinsley Harrison

*"No greater opportunity or obligation can fall the lot of a human being than to be a physician. In the care of suffering he needs technical skill, scientific knowledge and human understanding. He who uses these with courage, humility, and wisdom will provide a unique service to his fellow man and will build an enduring edifice of character within himself. The physician should ask of his destiny no more than this and he should be content with no less."*

Following the above talk he spoke about Congenital Heart Diseases which led to an interactive discussion with counsellors clarifying their doubts and seeking his guidance on what more needs to be done to help patients and caregivers.



The meeting concluded with the director and counsellors offering arathi to Swami. Swami in His own inimitable way and munificence gave His stamp of approval to this august occasion by covering each and every food dish offered as naivedhya to Him with copious amounts of vibhuthi! A very memorable Sunday meeting indeed to finish the year 2019.



**Jai Sai Ram**.....

Contributor: The Editorial team.

## SRI SATHYA SAI HEART HOSPITAL, KASINDRA, AHMEDABAD ADOPTS THE SAI COUNSELLING PROGRAM OF SSSIHMS, WHITEFIELD

Sri Sathya Sai super specialty hospitals founded by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba are unique in their functioning and structure. Treatment and surgeries at the hospitals are performed completely free of charge, with state of the art equipment and facilities. The structures of the hospitals have a spiritual grandeur more like a temple, church or mosque and less like a hospital. Our beloved Bhagawan Baba, in his boundless compassion and love for humanity created these temples of healing for the needy patients. While all the above stated facts are well known, the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (SSSIHMS), Whitefield, Bangalore has a unique **Counselling Department** that has developed and implemented the SAI Counselling program which has become part of the routine hospital protocol for all patients admitted for treatment. SAI Counselling is **Spirituality Awareness Integration** in counselling, the focus being to foster the innate spiritual strength in the patients to help heal body, mind and spirit, and to reinforce their faith in the God of their choice.

The purpose of our visit to the Counselling department was to learn about the unique services the counselling department offered and to emulate closely the same at Sathya Sai Pediatric Cardiac Surgery hospital in Kasindra, Ahmedabad. After coming here, we realised that the very concept of SAI Counselling was unique; it bridged the gap between patients and the medical staff. It made hospital care a very personalized care and enabled the hospital to provide 'treatment with love'. It was truly a beautiful experience to undergo this training and we found the counselling department to be a truly divine concept. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say SAI Counselling has taken the counselling practice to new heights.

The day started with positive affirmations and prayers in the presence of the patients and we could experience a total shift in energy levels, a rise in the vibrations around us and could visually see the settling down of the anxieties in the patients. For the counsellors too, the beautiful start helped all to connect with the Lord, with each other and served as a reminder that we (counsellors) were a channel to the divine purpose.

For the patients, the first interaction was the history taking session. The first session with the patients in their mother tongue was again a divine blessing to the patients. It was truly impressive how counsellors could comfortably talk with patients and attendants in their mother tongue, which brought in a visibly increased comfort level for them. It involved taking the spiritual history, which was a very unique idea for the medical dictionary. The patient profile that has been developed, is totally comprehensive and covers minute details of social background, illness history, psychological and spiritual levels of the patient.

As the histories of patients are taken, each patient/caregiver obviously reacts to their illness and the treatment / surgery to be done with different grades of anxiety and a part of it has to do with their coping skills. Obviously, a big part of their coping skills is directly related to the strength the patients/caregivers derived from their spiritual connection. This was beautifully reinforced during the history taking session with Gita Ma (HOD, Counselling Department) and there was a visible energy shift in the patients and we could see how the patients and their caregivers opened up about their problems and anxieties after it.

The BRMC - The Body Relaxation and Mind Cleansing procedure was so beautifully woven into all the sessions and taught so unobtrusively that the patients/caregivers took to it immediately. This also is an amazing initiative being very relevant when the patients are young children. The reinforcement of the BRMC procedure before surgery and before discharge also ensured that the patient and caregiver had been well-cared for in the hospital and empowered, so that when the patient was discharged from the hospital to return home, they were confident of taking care of themselves in body, mind and spirit - the essence of Sai Healthcare.

**SAI Counselling is an awesome divine implementation of the most important teaching of Baba- LOVE AND COMPASSION.**

We returned to Ahmedabad with a comprehensive understanding of the SAI counselling program at SSSIHMS, Bangalore. We have implemented the program here successfully for the parents/caregivers since we deal only with pediatric cardiac surgeries. Our present setup for counselling in our hospital is as follows. The Managing Trustee of the hospital is Mr Manoj Bhimani. We are a total of four counsellors, including the two of us (Dr Shaifali Gupta and Mrs Ami Patel, who visited SSSIHMS, Whitefield) serving as volunteers at the hospital, while Mrs Hema Bindu and Mr. Subakant Naik are regular staff at the hospital. We are a multilingual group capable of communicating in Hindi, Gujarati, Oriya, Bengali, Telugu and Kannada languages. Since inauguration a total of 1164 operations have been performed till date. Mainly the patients have come from the states of Orissa, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Gujarat.



Currently at our SSS Heart Hospital BRMC is practiced with the pediatric patients' parents. The relaxation techniques help them immensely. We have an interesting and heartwarming patient story to share, which amply illustrates the efficacy of BRMC.



Sania Chirag Khan, an eight year old girl from Khargone District in Madhya Pradesh had a heart problem from childhood (CHD-Congenital Heart Defect). Her father, perhaps, not knowing the gravity of the situation, had not taken the initiative to get her checked up for possible corrective surgery. Sania studies in class 2, has a 5yr old brother and a 25 days old sister. They stay in a 'kachha' house with meager social presence. Her father unfortunately is an alcoholic and doesn't help the family in any way. Her mother works hard to feed her kids. Her grandfather stays with them. He works hard as a labourer to support the family by earning Rs.5000/- a month. Her grandfather took the initiative to get her treated; so took her to a medical camp in Indore where her heart condition was diagnosed and surgery recommended at the earliest. On hearing of Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital at Kasindra in Gujarat, performing free pediatric heart surgeries they brought her here. Grandfather's sister being a good Samaritan decided to dedicate her time to stay with the child until the operation was completed - she had lost two children in her family so she was keen on getting Sania treated at the earliest. She stayed here for about a month and took the child back after a successful operation.

Sania was admitted on 14th Nov 2019 for a BDG open heart surgery. Once the child was listed for surgery, we started interaction and counselling session with Sania and her grandmother. BRMC worked wonders on the granny! She was at an age when life slowed down, and many would prefer to remain in their native villages and towns, within their comfort zone, safe. On the contrary, Sania's grandmother with a strong familial bond of love for her grandchild took the entire responsibility of Sania at a completely new place, followed the protocol for patient caregivers and remained by Sania's bed side till she was fit to be discharged. Instilled with faith, inner strength, determination and an indomitable spirit the grandmother stayed at the hospital for almost a month to take care of the little girl.

In old age, one seeks comfort and needs to be taken care of. On the contrary, this grandmother was prepared to forego comfort and instead chose to take care of her granddaughter, ensuring the child gets to lead a normal life of children her age. Truly Sania was blessed to have such a grandmother.



▲ **BRMC Training session-  
SSSIHMS, Whitefield**



▲ **BRMC session-  
Ahmedabad Heart Hospital**



▲ **Counsellors and caregivers  
at Ahmedabad Heart Hospital**



**Jai Sai Ram.....**

Contributors: Dr. Shaifali Gupta and Mrs. Ami Patel, Counsellors at Sathya Sai Heart Hospital, Ahmedabad with introduction by Ms. Vidyullatha R, Director's Office, SSSIHMS, Whitefield.

## THE FAITH FACTOR IN MEDICINE - A VIGNETTE

*Faith in God, faith in oneself and faith in others is innate in humans as Swami has expressed so eloquently in His Message earlier in this issue of AntharDhwani. The following excerpts from an article published in the British Medical Journal, June 18, 1910 and written by the legendary physician Dr. William Osler is uncanny in its resonance with Swami's sayings.*

*In today's world of medical technology with an increasing trend towards AI and Robotics perhaps the time has come for honing basic human skills such as the faith factor.*

### **THE FAITH THAT HEALS. - Dr. William Osler, MD, FRS, FRCP (1849 - 1919)**

*Dr. Osler was one of the founding professors of Johns Hopkins University. The following paragraphs have been extracted from the above titled article in BMJ June 1910, and presented to stimulate interest in today's medical world of a forgotten vital aspect of medicine. Dr. Osler's language reflects the literary style of a bygone era - quaint and colourful.*

*"Nothing in life is more wonderful than faith - the one great moving force which we can neither weigh in the balance nor test in the crucible. Intangible as the ether, ineluctable as gravitation, the radium of the moral and mental spheres, mysterious, indefinable, known only by its effects, faith pours out an unfailing stream of energy while abating not jot nor tittle of its potency.*

*Three of its relations concern us here. The most active manifestations are in the countless affiliations which man in his evolution has worked out with the unseen, with the invisible powers, whether of light or of darkness, to which from time immemorial he has erected altars and shrines. To each one of the religions, past or present, faith has been the Jacob's ladder. Creeds pass; an inexhaustible supply of faith remains, with which man proceeds to rebuild temples, churches, chapels, and shrines.*

*And all this has been done by faith, and faith alone. Christendom lives on it, and countless thousands are happy in the possession of that most touching of all confessions, "Lord! I believe - help Thou my unbelief." But, with its Greek infection, the Western mind is a poor transmitter of faith, the apotheosis of which must be sought in the religions of the East.*

*Again, faith is the cement which binds man to man in every relation in life. I have had faith in the profession, the most unbounded confidence in it as one of the great factors in the progress of humanity; and one of the special satisfactions of my life has been that my brethren have in many practical ways shown faith in me. I take this illustration of the practical value of the faith that worketh confidence, but there is not a human relationship which could not be used for the same purpose.*

*And a third aspect is one of very great importance to the question in hand - a man must have faith in himself to be of any use in the world. There may be very little on which to base it - no matter, but faith in one's powers, in one's mission is essential to success. Confidence once won, the rest follows naturally; and with a strong faith in himself a man becomes a local centre for its radiation.*

*St. Francis, St. Theresa, Ignatius Loyola, Florence Nightingale, the originator of every cult or sect or profession, has possessed this infective faith. And in the ordinary everyday work of the doctor, confidence, assurance. (in the proper sense of the word) is an asset without which it is very difficult to succeed. How often does one hear the remark, "Oh! he does not inspire confidence," or the reverse!*

*Faith has always been an essential factor in the practice of medicine. Phenomenal, even what could be called miraculous, cures are not very uncommon. For more than ten years a girl lay paralysed in a New Jersey town. A devoted mother and loving sisters had worn out lives in her service. She had never been out of bed unless when lifted by one of her physicians. The new surroundings of a hospital, the positive assurance that she could get well with a few simple measures sufficed, and within a fortnight she walked round the hospital square. This is a type of modern miracle that makes one appreciate how readily well meaning people may be deceived as to the true nature of the cure effected at the shrine of a saint. Who could deny the miracle? And miracle it was, but not brought about by any supernatural means. Without any special skill in these cases or special methods, our results at the Johns Hopkins Hospital were most gratifying. Faith in St. Johns Hopkins, as we used to call him, an atmosphere of optimism, and cheerful nurses, worked just the same sort of cures as did Aesculapius at Epidaurus."*

***"Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation" D. Elton Trueblood***

## DR. WILLIAM OSLER - A PROFILE



▲  
(Photo courtesy McGill University)

Born in the small town of Bond Head, Ontario, Canada in 1849, the youngest child of a clergyman he went on to receive his medical degree from the prestigious McGill University in 1872. Endowed with a charismatic personality and a compelling interest in medicine he ventured forth to London, Berlin and Vienna for further studies. A believer in experiential learning and practical knowledge, upon his return joined McGill University as professor of medicine where he pioneered how clinical medicine could work more efficiently and with a greater human touch. In an era when medical education was confined to acquiring book knowledge, with his innovative thinking and spirit he ushered in a new era, and laid the foundation for clinical medicine being integrated with classroom study.

His outstanding pioneering work as a professor of medicine was attracting attention and in 1884 he was approached by the University of Pennsylvania to join there as a professor of medicine and five years later, Johns Hopkins University lured him into their fold recognizing the immense potential of his pioneering work in clinical experience for medical students. In 1892, he published his classic book "Principles and Practice of Medicine" which became the standard textbook for physicians the world over.

In 1905 Dr. Osler moved to England to accept the prestigious position as Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, and in 1911 was made a Baronet, Sir William Osler. He passed away in 1919, McGill University has in their archives a very evocative 'eulogy' - "Upon his death in 1919, the Times attributed his extraordinary influence partly to his "great power of inspiring others, of getting the best out of his pupils, and his high personal idealism." But the power of his ideas has outlasted his considerable personal influence. Indeed, many of the approaches to medical training he advocated - medical residency programs and a medical curriculum that includes bedside interaction with patients - are still cornerstones of medical education today".

A true teacher, a Guru, he has shared his thoughts, perhaps reminiscent of Sai philosophy, very lucidly through his quotations.

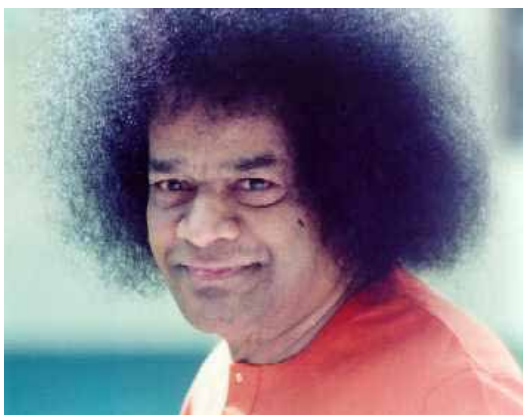
***"The practice of medicine is an art, not a trade; a calling, not a business; a calling in which your heart will be exercised equally with your head."***

***"Be calm and strong and patient. Meet failure and disappointment with courage. Rise superior to the trials of life, and never give in to hopelessness or despair. In danger, in adversity, cling to your principles and ideals."***

***"Acquire the art of detachment, the virtue of method, and the quality of thoroughness, but above all the grace of humility."***

**Jai Sai Ram.....**

Contributor: Umesh Rao, Senior Consultant, Department of Counselling, SSSIHMS, Whitefield.



***Faith is the basis for all creation. Where there is faith and love, everything else will be added unto such a person. Faith devoid of love has no use. Love and faith must be together like mutually attractive magnetic poles.***

***- Sathya Sai Baba, 26 December 2007***



## THE IMPORTANCE OF COUNSELLING A PATIENT'S FAMILY TO ADDRESS EMOTIONAL CONTAGION

The director Dr. Shekar Rao while addressing the counsellors in a meeting mentioned that “The physical manifestation of the anatomical structural derangements, mitral stenosis, tetralogy of fallot, etc. are only a part of the entire perception of the condition. In reality what actually affects the patients and their kith and kin is an entire host of issues, which have an equal bearing on how the suffering or difficulty is perceived, and when addressed, is actually when the benefit of the surgical intervention comes to fruition bringing about the feeling of the wholeness of relief from the suffering.” He captured the essence of Sai Healthcare and as being practised at SSSIHMS, Whitefield.

When patients come for counselling for the first time, they often wonder what counselling is all about since they have not seen this in other hospitals. They get enlightened when the counsellor tells them that while the patient alone is afflicted with the organic disease, the rest of the entire family/caregivers are afflicted with fear, anxiety and other negative emotions, they agree! They are relieved when told that counselling treats these diseases of the mind not only in the patient's mind but also in the minds of the family members.

There is a flip side to this, sometimes the accompanying family member/caregiver comes with his/her own additional mental baggage which has impacted the rest of the family owing to close familial bonding, so characteristic of Indian culture. This phenomenon called emotional contagion is said to occur at the subconscious level and applies equally to both negative and positive emotions as per current research in psychology. An aura of negativity from a close family member would certainly be undesirable at any time for a patient afflicted with an organic illness and especially so when the patient comes to the hospital for surgical intervention.

SAI Counselling has recognised this issue and the counsellors are trained to identify such cases during the very first counselling session with patient and family, when the patient profile is created. Counsellors observe the body language of patient and caregiver, especially during the BRMC session, and enable an environment conducive to establish an empathic relationship and mutual trust. A stressed caregiver invariably opens up and vents his/her feelings to the counsellor. Counselling is then done in depth for the accompanying caregiver also so that the patient and caregiver are relieved of their stress factors before the intervention/surgery. This ensures that not only is the patient cured but the family - patient and caregiver - are also healed in body-mind-spirit.

Two illustrative case episodes are narrated below by the respective counsellors.

### Case Study 1 - Hope To The Caregiver As A Silver Lining To Overcome Grief

This story highlights the trauma of patient Prashanth's father and how through empathy, unburdening, silence, active listening and BRMC, a transformation was brought about during the counselling session.

Eight-year-old patient Prashanth Kumar accompanied by his father, Randhir, who was in his mid-thirties, and uncle came to the counseling department on 3rd Sept 2019 for PR Counselling. A farmer family, their home was in Goriar village in Purnia district of Bihar. A relative who had previously been treated successfully for a cardiac illness at SSSIHMS, Whitefield, had told them about our hospital.

They were seated in the prayer hall to offer their obeisance to their God. The counsellor requested the patient and caregivers to accompany her for SAI counselling. The patient's father said he wished to remain in the prayer hall and his brother, the patient's uncle would attend the counselling session along with his son Prashanth, the patient.

At this point the counsellor observed that the father looked sad and wanted to continue praying by sitting in silence in the prayer hall. The counsellor showing empathy, said that he could pray for some more time, she would come and call him after sometime, as a very important relaxation technique would be taught. A few minutes into the session, the father joined them. He was aware of SAI counselling since he had come just the previous month as his youngest son underwent ASD closure here and now he is well and recovering. And now he has come for his older son, Prashanth's ASD closure treatment at Swami's Hospital.

Having made an empathic connect with the counsellor, the patient's father was inclined to talk and unburden his heart. His son's illness was diagnosed accidentally. It so happened that on a rainy day when Prashanth who is very naughty, went to the terrace and was cleaning the wall with a broom. The broom accidentally touched the high tension electric wire overhead, which impacted Prashanth so much that he went into a coma for 2 days. Prashanth had to be shifted to a bigger hospital in the city where he was treated and recovered from the coma completely.

During this treatment, he was diagnosed as having a hole in his heart, which needed corrective surgery. None of the doctors in his village had diagnosed this condition in Prashanth when he suffered from frequent bouts of fever, cold and cough. They merely prescribed medicines for symptomatic relief.



The counsellor said that it was indeed providential that Prashanth recovered from the electric shock and that illness was diagnosed in time. Counsellor reassured that even Prashanth would also get the best of the treatment at Swami's Hospital. At this point, the father revealed that his wife, Prashanth's mother had also been diagnosed with CHD and he would have to bring her later for treatment.

Counselor's reassurance, empathetic words, open ended questions helped the father to unburden his grief which was clearly visible. He said that, bad time for his family had started back in February when his mother passed away due to cancer and a series of illnesses that followed was the reason for his sadness and grief. Speaking in his native language, Hindi, he expressed his feelings very poignantly - "अब सब खुशियाँ ही मानो खत्म हो गयी हैं" (It was as if all our happiness has now been brought to an end).

The counsellor maintained silence with empathy, and active listening helped. The patient's father's self-confidence had to be brought back; apparently there had been a very close bond

between him and his mother. The counsellor empathised on his bereavement - loss of a mother and consequent grief, which can be very significant because of the strong mother-son bond, typically characteristic in the Indian cultural context, especially in rural areas. To get him out of this depressive state, the counsellor suggested he recall and reflect on his good days with his mother; asked open ended questions regarding his mother and the experiences they had with her in their growing years. He vented his pent up feelings and was immediately transported to the days when his mother had brought him up with so much of love and care.

The counsellor said that it was his mother's love and upbringing, that has brought out the best in him in spite of their challenges and that now he has to take up the responsibility as head of the family to inculcate the same virtues and values in his children which he had imbibed from his mother. He began to realise that he has to take care of himself and his family by unburdening his negative thoughts and be positive and optimistic of the future. Time spent praying in solitude in Swami's shrine area to his Shankar Bhagwan, his favourite deity, had strengthened his faith and the counsellor's empathy during counselling renewed his hope of a brighter future. There was a great shift in his perception. He fondly revealed how Prashanth was very fond of art and craft in school.

He felt that Swami had brought him and his family repeatedly only to bless him with His Grace. He was grateful to the hospital and the service rendered by the counsellors with motherly love, which he very beautifully expressed in Hindi by saying "आप जैसे माँ सभी को मलें" ("May everyone have mothers like you all"),

The patient, Prashanth, an eight-year-old child was only a mute witness. What was going on in a child's mind is difficult to fathom, but he certainly had a happy look and a smile on his face when he saw the relief and peace in his father's demeanour after the counselling session.

Prashanth was admitted on 10th Sept 2019, underwent a successful ASD closure procedure and discharged on 12th Sept 2019 - another patient and family cured and healed in Swami's Temple of Healing. Both siblings are doing well which has brought great peace and relief to the whole family and reinforced their trust and faith in God. The father is very grateful to Swami attributing everything to Sai's Grace.

Recently the patient's father Randhir expressed his happiness by sharing his family photo, shown herein, after returning home. The two young siblings, Prashant and Prabhat, who underwent the ASD Closure procedure within a space of one month at our hospital are seen in front along with their sister Pratibha and flanked by their parents. A happy and healed family, the parents expressed their gratitude to Swami and the entire hospital staff.

**Jai Sai Ram**.....

Contributor: Sharada Gopinath, Counsellor, Department of Counselling, SSSIHMS, Whitefield.

## Case Study 2 - Helping Patients/ Caregivers Develop Coping Skills While Facing Adversity Compounded By Familial Negativity

Miracles are virtually a daily happening in Swami's Temple of Healing at Whitefield. While other hospitals generally address the organic disease in a patient, here in Swami's hospital the focus is on the patient healing in body, mind and spirit. In the Indian context where close knit families are the norm, the patient's caregiver's well-being also needs to be addressed. The following case study is a good example.

On 19th August 2019 patient Vijay Kumar, accompanied by his father, was admitted to our hospital and diagnosed as having Pituitary Adenoma, a tumour in the pituitary gland requiring surgery. Their first counselling session was on 30th August 2019, a new experience for them. Stepping into an oasis of calm serenity in the loving presence of the counsellor they relaxed and quickly an empathic relationship was established between the counsellor and the father-son duo. The counsellor's active listening, silence and empathy made them want to unburden all their pent up feelings, which gushed out from both like a torrent.

The patient Vijay Kumar, seventeen years old lives alone with his parents in a village in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. His only sister is married and moved away. His father, Ashwatha Narayana, is a hard working farmer managing to eke out a meager living off his land. Ashwatha Narayana cherished high hopes for his only bright young son, wanting him to have a secure government job preferably in the police or military services. This was his dream, which he was looking forward to be fulfilled by his son. He had faith in their family deity, Hanuman.

Vijay Kumar a hale and healthy teenager, very good in his studies was doing his pre-university course; his dream was to be an engineer, contrary to his father's expectations. Being gregarious he had friends, loved music, watched TV and participated in wrestling as a sport and won prizes in his school. His life seemed to be moving along well without the slightest inkling of the challenges that would suddenly emerge to turn his and his family's world topsy turvy.

It started very innocuously with Vijay Kumar getting headaches rather persistently making him seek medical help from a local doctor who prescribed medication. Unfortunately, there was no respite, his condition worsened to the extent that his vision started blurring, neither he nor his parents could understand what had befallen them. To make matters worse, he failed in his pre-university examination. They came to SSSIHMS, Puttaparthi where Vijay Kumar was diagnosed as having a neurological illness and referred to SSSIHMS, Whitefield, where their immediate concern was to find a cure for Vijay Kumar's loss of vision. But the shattering of their individual dreams also weighed heavily on them; a son with an aptitude for engineering versus a father who valued security of a government job for his son - very stressful to both.

The patient was disturbed by the sudden turn of events in his life, he was feeling helpless, insecure and plagued with a nagging fear of what his future would be with impaired vision. The counsellor gently pointed out his positive attributes like his love for music, loving family support and the circle of friends he had cultivated - the peer group so important for a teenager. These would help hone his coping skills to face life's challenges, and their family deity Hanuman would always be with him. The counsellor's soothing words rekindled his hope.

The father was far more agitated at the turn of events in his life. While genuinely concerned about his son's condition he seemed to be overwhelmed by what would happen to them now. He kept repeating this concern while venting his feelings to the counsellor, particularly his disappointment with his son pursuing engineering. With open ended questions the counsellor gradually guided him to understand the multiple job opportunities available to his son despite his health condition. The cathartic effect of venting his feelings coupled by realising the possible solutions promoted acceptance of the situation. The counsellor's body language of genuine concern and caring, and his innate faith in Hanuman brought about the shift - he truly felt peace within. The BRMC session that followed helped them both relax, introspect and connect with Hanuman their family deity. After the counselling session father and son were very calm, the emotional bond between them strengthened with no inner conflicts, and the patient was ready for the surgery with renewed hope and confidence.

After a successful surgery the patient was discharged on 12th October 2019. The father met the counsellor, with relief written all over him he expressed his happiness at the successful outcome and promised to encourage his son to pursue engineering. Another case of the miracles of Sai Healthcare at the Temple of Healing, curing and healing for a poor ambitious farmer and his teenage son.

**Jai Sai Ram**.....

Contributor: Asha Latha Chadrashekar, Counsellor, Department of Counselling, SSSIHMS, Whitefield.



## COPING WITH GRIEF

In today's society where cardiac diseases are on rapid rise due to lifestyle, obesity, financial hardships etc., grief can also be a contributing factor. The death of a dear one be it due to an accident, natural disaster or illness can bring upon untold grief. Coping with grief in these situations is difficult and could possibly lead to depression related stress, triggering cardiac issues or aggravating existing cardiac problems.

*Any individual going through grief and also having heart-related symptoms, should consult a doctor immediately. According to the Johns Hopkins Medicine website: "Stress cardiomyopathy, also referred to as the "broken heart syndrome," is a condition in which intense emotional or physical stress can cause rapid and severe heart muscle weakness (cardiomyopathy). This condition can occur following a variety of emotional stressors such as grief (e.g. death of a loved one), fear, extreme anger, and surprise".*

Daily prayer/meditation, physical activity/brisk walks, adopting a values-based approach in life, together with a healthy lifestyle will help one cope when life throws a curveball.

Nageshwar Mahato, a 64 year old male was referred to the counselling department on 26th Oct 2019. He was accompanied by his son. The patient had been experiencing difficulty in breathing and walking for the past six years. Six months ago he developed severe chest pain and was referred to CMC Vellore. The patient's brother had visited SSSIHMS, Wfd in 2006 for a neuro problem and was cured in six months by medicines. This encouraged the patient to seek treatment at SSSIHMS, Wfd. The doctors at SSSIHMS suggested PCI (Percutaneous Coronary Intervention) for Nageshwar Mahato, which is a non-surgical procedure to open up blood vessels in the heart that have been narrowed by plaque build-up.

Nageshwar is from a village in Bhagalpur district, Bihar. He has nine children (five sons and four daughters) and 49 grand and great grandchildren. He is a farmer and so are all his sons. They are a large, happy and humble family with a simple lifestyle. He belongs to a religious community called Kabir Panth and is actively involved in the group's satsangs. He practices daily stuti (chanting) and exercises regularly.

He was accompanied by his second son and they seemed close to each other. The son was concerned about his father's health. The patient had lived with a cardiac illness for six years which got aggravated during the last six months. The patient's wife was not accompanying them which provided a cue for the counsellor's next question and on enquiry, the patient revealed that he had lost his wife six months ago.



The circumstances of the wife's death were rather unfortunate. A hale and hearty lady she was electrocuted while drying clothes on an electric wire. During that time the patient was in the neighbouring town with his son for his cardiac treatment. It was a very sombre moment when the son narrated the tragic circumstances of his mother's death.

The counsellor then introduced them to the BRMC technique in which they fully participated. In fact, Nageshwar got very emotional towards the end. Tears rolled down his eyes for a couple minutes and the counsellor quietly watched. She observed a visible change in his face and body language. A similar change was observed in the son as well.

After the BRMC session, Nageshwar Mahato seemed calm and collected. Finding the counsellor empathic towards him, he and his son felt like sharing their grief with her. Being a traditional patriarch he perhaps couldn't do this with any of his family members. He expressed his loneliness after his wife's passing away to the counsellor - a loneliness thrust upon him like a bolt from the blue sky, the sudden vanishing of a cherished companion and one who provided succour these past few years when he was suffering from cardiac illness. This unburdening to the counsellor truly had a cathartic effect on him. He realised he had to move on in his life.

However, he could now try to find happiness by spending quality time with his grandchildren. He strongly felt that he would be cured at SSSIHMS. The patient is a spiritually oriented person. During the BRMC, he was able to make a spiritual connection with the God of his choice. The time and space created during the session helped him get in touch with his feelings of loss and accept them. He could also draw strength to face the reality of his health condition. His simple statement that he will spend more time with his grandchildren indicated that he had himself found an alternate way to heal from the sudden loss of his loving life-partner. He was ready to heal himself physically also to lead a healthy life. In all, the counselling session and the patient's own spiritual strength enhanced his coping mechanism.

On 30th Oct 2019 patient was admitted for the PCI procedure. The counsellor who met him before the admission process, found both the patient and son relaxed and in a positive frame of mind, as can be seen in the picture. On 3rd Nov 2019 patient was discharged after a successful PTCA procedure. When the patient left the hospital he was not only cured but also healed.

According to **David Kessler**, an author, public speaker and expert on death-and-grieving, who has published many books, including two co-written with famed psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross:

*"The **five stages**, denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance are a part of the framework that makes up our learning to live with the one we lost. They are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling. But they are not stops on some linear timeline in **grief**. Not everyone goes through all of them or in a prescribed order. Our hope is that with these stages comes the knowledge of grief's terrain, making us better equipped to cope with life and loss. At times, people in grief will often report more stages. Just remember your grief is as unique as you are."*

The pain of loss can be overwhelming, but SAI Counselling has shown a way to cope with one's grief and learn to heal as can be concluded from Nageshwar's case. While the old adage 'Time heals everything', is true, certain spiritual and social routines quicken the healing process by helping one find a new purpose in life.

**Jai Sai Ram**.....

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## THE STORY OF SHAMPA - A CAREGIVER WITH AN INDOMITABLE SPIRIT AND STEADFAST FAITH



The year was 1989, Shibshankar Das and his young bride Kalpana migrated from Bikrampur near Dacca in Bangladesh, to West Bengal. They were enthralled and charmed by the beauty and serenity of the small town of Dhupguri and chose to settle down close to the river Bamini. Shibshankar started a small business, trading in vegetables and agricultural products for his livelihood and soon earned the respect of the local residents.

On 15th April 1992 the couple were blessed with a beautiful daughter and they named her Shampa meaning "lightning." Shampa grew up to be a caring, warm and friendly child. Her frail mother was being treated for osteoporosis and Shampa took care of her from a young age. Being a studious child Shampa enrolled in a local school, her dream was to get an MA degree paving the way for a secure Government job. Life was moving well for the family, Shibshankar's only concern being the frail health of his wife Kalpana. He was a hardworking and contented person with strong faith in the Divine, which was also shared by his family.



In 2015 when Shampa was studying in college for a master's degree a sudden tragedy struck the family. She was helping her mother at home when they heard a loud cry for help followed immediately by a deafening thud; rushing out they were stupefied to find Shibshankar sprawled motionless on the ground. He was pruning a tree and apparently had slipped and fallen from a considerable height. He was fifty years of age and in good health when their little world turned upside down in an instant. Showing rare presence of mind and courage young Shampa, barely twenty-three years old took charge of the situation immediately. She rushed to her father's side to find him conscious. She tried propping him up, but was dismayed to find that the fall had immobilized her father and he was traumatized. With the help of neighbours Shampa shifted him home and then to the local hospital. Her mother being of frail health couldn't help much and naturally, was in a state of shock and disbelief. In the local hospital he was treated and condition

stabilised but his disability, physical pain, immobility with loss of sensation in his lower limbs and incontinence was a cause of great fear and concern. Local doctors were unable to diagnose or treat Shibshankar's condition.

**STRENGTH VERSUS VULNERABILITY** - An existential crisis like the one experienced by the family can trigger either the best or the worst emotions and feelings. An overpowering sense of fear occluded Shibshankar's very being as he experienced unendurable pain that seared through his body diminishing his innate strength. Shampa on the contrary experienced the latent qualities of courage and self-confidence being unleashed from within her, as she relied upon her innate faith in God which was an integral part of her spiritual upbringing. Shampa surmised that given the condition of her parents and with no other familial support, she needed to empower herself and take charge of the challenging situation at home. Her first priority was to locate a good hospital outside Dhupguri which involved travel. She had to plan and be prudent with their meagre savings and family finance. Being immigrants they lacked family support in India. She was relieved and grateful when her father's friend Biswajith Datta and Protul Roy offered to help her and a relative Sanjan Das offered to accompany the family in their travels.

Shampa's carefree days were over. She found herself taking her father's place, shouldering varied responsibilities. With remarkable courage she faced fear with incredible poise, strength and faith. She had to sacrifice her studies, yet hoped to complete her master's degree subsequently. Her aim was to find the right hospital for her father. Shampas exemplary courage, hope and faith sustained her father and permeated her mother with confidence.

### **COURAGE:**

*"At the level of courage, an attainment of true power occurs; therefore it's also the level of empowerment. This is the zone of exploration, accomplishment, fortitude, and determination. At the lower levels, the world is seen as hopeless, sad, frightening, or frustrating; but at the level of courage, life is seen to be exciting, challenging, and stimulating."*

*Dr. David R. Hawkins, M.D., Ph.D. POWER vs FORCE.*



## THE WILL OF GOD- When God closes a door, He opens a window.

Shampa had heard of Bangalore being a good place for competent medical services, where serious illnesses requiring major surgery could be treated. Trusting God to guide them, the family boarded a train to Bangalore hoping to receive medical support from any one of the hospitals in Bangalore. This is where their destiny or God's Grace comes into play. A fellow traveller was on his way to SSSIHMS Whitefield Bangalore (for a post op cardiac check up). Seeing the plight of the family he spoke about his experience at the hospital founded by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. They had never heard of Baba or the SSSIHMS and were wonder struck to learn about the quality of medical care available at SSSIHMS **totally free of cost**. Overwhelmed by the coincidence of receiving this valuable piece of information at an opportune moment the pious family offered a prayer of gratitude to God and their Guru Rabindra Chandra Goswami. Shampa felt the grace of her Ishta Lord Krishna protecting her family and wondered about Sai Baba and His Divine Compassion towards the needy.

**SSSIHMS-SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER MEDICAL SCIENCES.** As they entered the portals of SSSIHMS Whitefield they were in awe of the beauty, magnificence and spiritual ambience of the hospital. The compassionate and courteous service offered at the hospital was like a balm to their weary mind and fatigued body. Shibshankar was relieved when he was formally registered as a patient at the hospital. As an outpatient at the hospital from 8-10-2015 to 28-10-2015 he went through several screening tests **all free of charge** to help diagnose his illness and certify him fit for surgery. According to the medical report at SSSIHMS, he had sustained a fracture of the spine from his fall. Vertebral body changes were found at D11, L1, L3. He needed a Corpectomy surgery which would involve the surgeon removing all or part of the vertebral body as a way to decompress the spinal cord and nerves to help alleviate the pressure on the spinal cord. Patient and caregiver were sent to the counselling department for their first counselling session, a routine procedure for all patients admitted to the hospital.

Patients come to this hospital, The Temple of Healing, and are healed, which Swami has often told the doctors, can happen only when the body, mind and spirit are addressed - the doctors take care of the body and the counsellors the latter two. It was perhaps divinely ordained that Shampa's family needed this healing!

SAI Counselling at SSSIHMS, Whitefield with Swami's Guidance and Grace has a very strong/efficient team capable of delivering the same quality of service to the patient as well as caregiver. Also, the team supports the patient if the stay in wards gets prolonged due to slow progress or any other medical condition. On a need basis, the service is extended to the patient even after discharge. This uniqueness unfolds itself and reveals its true worth in Shampa's family's case as will be obvious from the narrative below.



**SHIBSHANKAR'S EXPERIENCE AT THE COUNSELLING DEPARTMENT.** On 8-10-2015 Shibshankar and Shampa were ushered into the counselling department. He was on a stretcher extremely tense, not knowing what to expect. They found the empathetic approach of the first counsellor they met, very reassuring. Her soft voice and caring words helped calm their tired and agitated mind. The open ended questions addressed by the counsellor regarding patient's history was answered by Shampa who found herself spontaneously unburdening her concerns to the counsellor as she would to a mother.

The bond between them developed and was strengthened during the session. The physical, social, psychological and spiritual dimension of the patient was recorded in the counselling department's patient profile. After listening to both patient and caregiver the counsellor introduced the abdominal/ diaphragmatic breathing technique to them to help them cleanse their mind from worries. There was a perceivable shift towards relaxation in their body and in the still and quiet ambience of the shrine there was a transformation towards a calm and peaceful state of mind. The counsellor suggested to connect to their source of strength and God of choice and after prayers they left the department of counselling with renewed hope. The first stage of counselling transported the patient to a different experience. In his own words-



**"The first time I entered the shrine and prayed my mind was relaxed and my body felt light. I felt like I was reborn. I realized that the accident and trauma had a purpose. I had to visit and experience this temple of Baba, I had to witness and be blessed with Baba's presence. My entire life is blessed with this awareness (darshan) of Baba's greatness. I felt Baba Himself had personally showered His protection and blessings upon me".**

#### DAY OF ADMISSION COUNSELLING

As an outpatient at SSSIHMS Shibshankar had to undergo multiple screening tests from 8-10-2015 onwards. He was eventually referred for his second stage of counselling on 28-10-2015, the day of admission. Destiny and Divine Will introduced Shampa and Shibshankar to a second counsellor on the day of admission on 28-10-2015. The family felt reassured by the warmth, empathy and genuine concern as the counsellor approached them with compassion and understanding. The information documented previously on 8-10-2015 in the patient profile helped the second counsellor understand the patient and caregiver's trauma, lack of social and financial support and the desperation. Observing their tired, worried, tense and anxious countenance, a gentle compassionate smile and a caring touch of the counsellor unleashed pent up emotions in both patient and caregiver. In the quiet sanctity of the shrine they wept in silence - tears of relief flowing down their cheeks appeared to be a sign of cleansing and unburdening rather than an act of despair.



On the day of admission the quality of empathy and compassion expressed by the counsellor combined with the silent therapeutic effect of the abdominal diaphragmatic breathing induced the relaxation response in both Shibshankar and Shampa. It had a calming effect on their oscillating thoughts and emotions. Their innate spiritual nature was evoked and helped them connect to their Guru mantra and to their Lord.

There was a perceivable shift in their countenance. Respecting their need for silent contemplation the counsellor provided them the time and space to introspect and pray in silence. The following words of Baba instilled faith in them and inspired them to move forward. **"Curing is 50%medicine 50%Divine grace" Baba.** The second counselling session had a deep impact on them and they hoped they could stay in touch with the counsellor.



Soon after his admission the team of doctors and nurses cared for Shibshankar and he was posted for surgery the next day on 29-10-2015. He underwent Corpectomy surgery to set right the vertebral body changes at D11, L1, L3. His surgery at SSSIHMS was successful and his recuperation in ICU and the ward showed good progress.

Daily bedside counselling post operatively helped him remain in a positive frame of mind. On 5-11-2015 he was eager to share his experience of being blessed by a Divine Being whose compassionate and effulgent form erased his fear and filled him with peace, joy and happiness.

**CAREGIVER'S BURNOUT** - Surprisingly Shampa who had remained courageous all along unexpectedly showed signs of distress **after her father's surgery**. Sensing her fear and loneliness the counsellors embraced her with love and understanding helping her discard accumulated pain, fear and trauma which was stored in her subconscious mind and fatigued body. Her main apprehension was about leaving the safe and protective sanctuary of the temple of healing SSSIHMS and returning home to Dhupgiri where medical support was poor.

*"Soothing support in the midst of chaos is a critical element that trauma therapists must provide for their unsettled and troubled clients. This truly is the starting point for one's return to equilibrium. The therapist must, in other words, help to create an environment of relative safety, an atmosphere that conveys refuge, hope and possibility."*

- Dr.Peter A Levine



The following counsellors Sadhana Rao, Shumal Vidyadhar, Sarada Gopinath, Jaya Tadimeti and Ashalata Chandrashekar worked in harmony with Gita Umesh in the lead to help reinstate courage and faith in this young caregiver. Her mother was unable to support her due to her frail health and Shampa looked up to the counsellors for emotional support. Sensing the need for her to hold on to her belief and faith at this crucial period of her journey as a caregiver the counsellors organized a picture of her Ishta Sri Krishna which made a world of difference to her faith, courage and spiritual dimension.

On 6-11-2015 Shibshankar Das was discharged from the hospital. Shampa's face lit up with a smile when her wish to keep in touch with the counsellor was fulfilled and received the counsellor's contact number to stay connected. On 10-11-2015 Shibshankar had a review with the neuro surgeon and he was certified fit to travel home. The family stopped by to bid farewell to the counsellors and thanked them for the emotional and spiritual support they received from the counsellors.

*"Pure empathy and a warm therapeutic relationship are not enough, for traumatized people are often unable to read or fully receive compassion. They are too suppressed. So what is the therapist to do with human beings hurt and beaten down by past trauma? It is to listen to the unspoken voice of their own bodies and to enable them to feel their survival emotions. There is an intrinsic and wedded relationship between spirituality and trauma. For all our rootedness in a physical body, we humans are spiritual creatures."*

- Dr.Peter A Levine

Over the months, Shibshankar's health improved gradually. He regained strength and was on his feet again though in a limited way. Shampa completed her MA and was employed. Her mother's health improved and the family were grateful to SSSIHMS. A semblance of order was restored in their life. Tele counselling helped Shampa overcome numerous challenges in life.

Shampas faith and courage was put to the test yet again in 2019. She took refuge in prayers and her weekly sessions with the counsellor over the phone helped her immensely. Her father had developed urinary complaints and was bedridden. This was a testing time for the family. Her fervent prayer to Baba and Krishna was finally answered when the family travelled to Bangalore to the safe sanctuary of SSSIHMS Whitefield to consult the doctors. They were overjoyed to reunite with the team of SAI counsellors on 15-7-2019. They were relieved when Shibshankar had a complete and thorough medical investigation and felt reassured with the doctors discharge advice. With a deep sense of gratitude to Baba the family returned to Dhupguri.

The story of Shampa is the saga of a courageous girl with an indomitable spirit and unshakeable faith rooted in love of God and her family, who singly faced and overcame all odds to come out smiling. **She had the qualifications of being a true Sai devotee - love of God, her Lord Krishna, and an intense faith in Him. Added to these was her deeply rooted love for her parents, a familial bond that she had nurtured since childhood being conscious of her responsibility as the only child, especially with her mother's health being poor. Her self confidence hence was a natural outcome from being armed with Dharmabala (strength from righteousness) and Daivabala (strength from God) as Swami says.** Reflecting on this in a recent tele-conversation with one of the counsellors in her native language Bengali, she beautifully captured the happenings in the family over the past five years as evident from the following translation.



*"There is a saying that life is a challenge which I had read in a book in my childhood, but never ever imagined that this will come true and I myself will come face to face with such a challenge in my life.*

*In the year 2015 father's accident had occurred. My struggle began from that day. We faced many difficulties and went through a lot of pain. With Sai Baba's Kripa and everybody's blessings, my father's operation was successful. At this moment, I felt I was the happiest person. In our trying times the loving counsellors Gita Maa and Sadhana Maa filled me with confidence at every step. They were always in touch with me. With the unimaginable efforts and treatment of the Doctors my father recovered and I could take him home. When we were leaving, we received so much love, which cannot be expressed. I also received a most treasured gift, my loving Lord Krishna's precious photo.*

*It so happened that most unexpectedly one more challenge was awaiting us. After some time, in the year 2019, my father fell ill again. I was lost! I really didn't know what to do! Nowhere to go. Again, I took help from my loving counsellor Gitama. She was always in touch with me, by the Grace of God. The most helpful person, she always gave me confidence.*

*After father fell ill again, I was totally heart-broken. There were only tears in my eyes, but my counsellor Maa never allowed me to get depressed. She was always in touch with me over the phone. She made me understand, she instilled courage in me to have faith in Sai Baba. She encouraged me to face the current challenges with grit and confidence. After this, with the help of my counsellor Maa and other counsellor Maas who prayed for me I was able to bring my father again to Baba's Hospital. During this visit I received so much compassion, love and co-operation, which I will never forget in my life.*

*Prayer and the counsellor Maas' unconditional love these are my most precious possessions. My counsellor Maa treated me like a daughter and the way she showered her affection on me, I cannot forget ever! With the efforts and treatment of the doctors and by the grace of Sai Baba, my father is much better.*

*I wish to say, from Sai Baba's Temple of Healing I have never returned empty handed, His Kripa (Grace) was always there, is always there, and will be there on us always! Om Sai Ram!*

*- Shampa"*



*Expecting the worst, you look, and instead,  
Here's the joyful face you've been wanting to see.  
Your hands opens and closes and opens and closes.  
If it were always a fist or always stretched open, you would be paralyzed.  
Your deepest presence is in every small contracting and expanding.  
The two as beautifully balanced as bird wings.*

*-Rumi (1207-1273)*

**Jai Sai Ram.....**

Contributor: Gita Umesh, HOD, Department of Counselling, SSSIHMS, Whitefield.

## THE STORY OF PATIENT BRISTI AND HER MOTHER ISHANI - ENDURING AND ENJOYING LIFE THROUGH SAICARE

**‘LIFE IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION’ - Ralph Waldo Emerson**

The humane and caring milieu that permeates the atmosphere at SSSIHMS Whitefield, the ‘Temple of Healing’ - Bhagawan’s unique gift to humanity - has the potential to bring about an imperceptible yet lasting transformation in patients and caregivers.

A thirteen year old patient, Bristi and her parents Anup Ghosh and Ishani Ghosh perceived the peaceful atmosphere of the hospital and found it very relaxing. Born prematurely, and physically very weak from childhood Bristi had had a history of seizures, frequent falls due to loss of balance, tilting of neck and quadriparesis compounded by wrong diagnosis and treatment, until she came to SSSIHMS, Whitefield where her condition was diagnosed as AAD. Atlantoaxial dislocation. The parents were relieved when Bristi’s long term illness was finally diagnosed and underwent a cervical spine surgery by the doctors here at SSSIHMS, Whitefield.



▲ Bristi and mother Ishani

During the counselling session the mother Ishani was remorseful and penitent for having neglected and delayed medical treatment for her daughter. She reminisced about Bristi being prone to frequent illness but being strong in spirit. As an eight year old she experienced gradual weakness in all four limbs **but yet actively participated in dancing and other school activities with enthusiasm**. Her father Anup Ghosh had consulted doctors in Kolkata but was ignorant of the doctors wrong diagnosis and treatment provided for three long years. Her health was further neglected when she was 12 years of age, with the arrival of a new born sister. Mother Ishani spontaneously unburdened to the counsellor and felt relieved after the session.

This ‘Temple of Healing’ was like a dream come true to the family. Bristi was courageous and soon after her surgery Anup Ghosh had to return home to South 24 Parganas in West Bengal with Bristi’s two year old sister. Mother Ishani was Bristi’s constant companion at SSSIHMS. The neurosurgeon

Dr.Sarita, recognised the need for Bristi to be counselled and referred her for counselling to be done in the neuro ICU. Seamless coordination and cooperation from the nursing superintendent and the team of nurses helped facilitate the counselling sessions. Counselling patients in ICU needs special training. The ICU patient normally is unable to communicate in words, the exchange between patient and counsellor is mainly through body language, keen observation and the energy of love. **Understanding the person who is the patient** is the first step.

***“The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease.”***

***— Dr.William Osler, the legendary physician.***

Information and update shared by the caregiver and nursing sisters forms an integral part of these sessions. The nursing superintendent Sister Vasanti , Sister Hema and nursing sisters in ICU played an important role



▲ Birthday celebration with counsellors



▲ Counsellor Sukanya, Sr. Vasanti, Counsellor Gita, Sr. Hemalata, Counsellor Sarada

in connecting the counsellors with Bristi. This interrelationship between departments and team work has helped provide quality care to both patient and caregiver. Soon she was shifted from ICU to the Neuro-surgery ward.

On her birthday, with special permission from the doctors, Bristi was wheeled into Swami’s hallowed shrine area in the counselling department where she bonded with the team of counsellors.

Knowing of her love for music and dance, some of the Bengali knowing counsellors sang popular folk dance songs of her liking. It was truly a wonderful and heart warming sight to see the happiness in the child's eyes and her beautiful hand movements while still sitting in the wheelchair. She enjoyed listening to her favourite Sai Bhajans offered at the shrine and returned to the ward in a happy frame of mind - she, her mother and everyone else in the room bathed in Divine Love while communicating in the language of the heart, as Swami says.

**CARE GIVER'S BURN OUT-** The mental equilibrium of the caregiver is a major contributing factor in the healing process of the patient. A sudden downturn in Bristi's condition necessitated her being moved back to ICU, which naturally increased the anxiety level of her mother Ishani. To make matters worse while Bristi was still in the ICU Ishani received the tragic news of her father-in-law's sudden demise. This triggered a deep sense of despair in her and she longed to return home. She was in a dilemma. Torn between her love for Bristi and the need to support her at the hospital and the need to return home to support her family in West Bengal she approached the counsellor in a disconsolate and dejected state of mind. Her thoughts vacillated between home and hospital and she strongly felt she should return home. Bristi was not in a condition to be discharged from hospital. In her confused state of mind she argued that she would leave without Bristi and the doctors, nurses and supporting staff at SSSIHMS would nurture and take excellent care of Bristi. She hoped to leave her child in the safe custody of the hospital without a caregiver not concerned about breaking the protocol of the hospital.



**THE COUNSELLING SESSION THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE.** The counsellor patiently listened to her torrential outpouring and understood her acute stress. Ishani seemed to be on the verge of having a nervous breakdown. Life at the hospital seemed bleak, lacked meaning and she had lost a sense of purpose in her life. She had become a mere witness, unable to contribute or do anything. The mother's heart within her could feel her child Bristi's distaste for the hospital food and yearning for home cooked food, but she was helpless and suffered silently from suppressed frustration. Taking the cue from her narrative the empathic counsellor picked up the subtle unspoken words. Highlighting all her strengths and her deep love for Bristi the counsellor realized a therapy that might work for the dejected mother. Ishani had previously expressed a deep desire to be actively involved in cooking for her child. Her greatest disappointment was her inability and incapacity to fulfil Bristi's desire for home cooked meals. **But the Lord listens to every prayer and uses His instruments to empower the needy. He works in mysterious ways.**

**INTERDEPARTMENTAL CONNECTION AND SUPPORT FOR PATIENT AND CAREGIVER.** The counsellor reached out to the Head of the Dietary department Ms Sharavati to support the caregiver and help her fulfil her longing. In the true spirit of service with love and compassion Sharavati readily agreed to permit Ishani to cook for her child in the dietary kitchen. This decision to support and fulfil the mother's wish under the special conditions brought about an amazing transformation in Ishani. Her spiritual energy blossomed forth triggered by "the energy of love in action" and she regained her will to live for the sake of her child by cooking for her. The team at the dietary department lead by Shara supported the young mother.







Finally Ishani found her haven of joy in the midst of the caring dieticians at SSSIHMS despite her turbulent journey as a caregiver to her first born child. The opportunity to cook in the kitchen filled her with an overwhelming sense of joy. She offered her gratitude to Baba and with a radiant smile she set to work. She regained her poise and equilibrium. Her instinct as a mother made her believe her child's appetite and health might improve if she cooked her favourite dishes for her. The occupation of cooking for her loved one induced a fresh spurt of energy and purpose in Ishani. Bristi who used to peck

at her food was overjoyed to see her mother serving food which she could identify and relate to. Ishani and Bristi are in a happy frame of mind despite their long stay at the hospital.

Love is evident at all levels of life. Pure love is unconditional and knows only to give. Love that is unconditional in action transmutes one into becoming humane, compassionate and benevolent and transforms human love into Divine Love.



**"THE MOTHER IS A TANGIBLE PROOF OF DIVINITY" - BABA**

**Jai Sai Ram.....**

Contributors: Gita Umesh, HOD and Sukanya Chattopadhyay, Counsellor, Department of Counselling, SSSIHMS, Whiefield.

*We are weaned from our timidity  
In the flash of love's light  
We dare be brave  
And suddenly we see  
that love costs all we are  
and will ever be.  
Yet it is only love  
which sets us free.*

**- Maya Angelou**  
(in 'Touched by An Angel', 1995)

## THE DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELLING, SSSIHMS, WHITEFIELD FACTS AND FIGURES - 2019

The Counselling Department continued to function in 2019 with the same team of trained thirty-one voluntary counsellors, as in 2018, thereby maintaining the high standards of SAI Counselling. A total of 13086 counselling sessions were done in the calendar year 2019 as against 13290 in 2018. Though the number of counselling sessions has remained fairly constant, there are some noteworthy observations.

■ The Neuro counselling sessions have increased from 4309 to 4482 of which Neuro Surgery Discharge has seen a significant increase from 774 in 2018 to 1029 in 2019.

■ Tele Counselling sessions have continued in 2019 and number of sessions have increased by 45% (92 patients in 2019 compared to 41 in 2018).

■ Similarly, under the category of “Others” which includes Hospital staff, nursing students from the Nursing College and from schools/colleges in Puttaparthi, we have reached out to 145 patients this year.

### ● Counselling Sessions in 2019

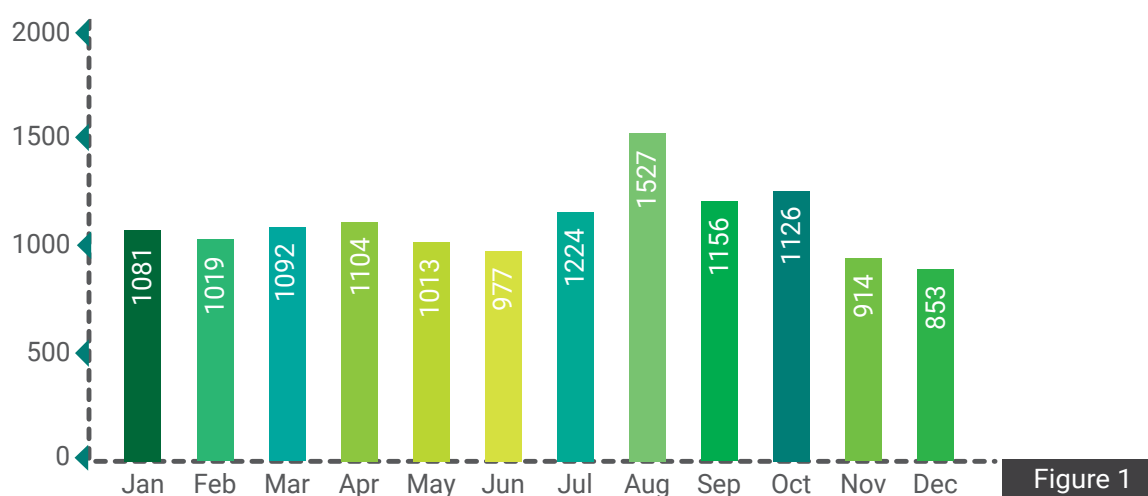


Figure 1

Figure 1 indicates the month wise sessions with the peak numbers in the month of August 2019. The average number of sessions per month is 1090.

### ● Total Counselling Sessions

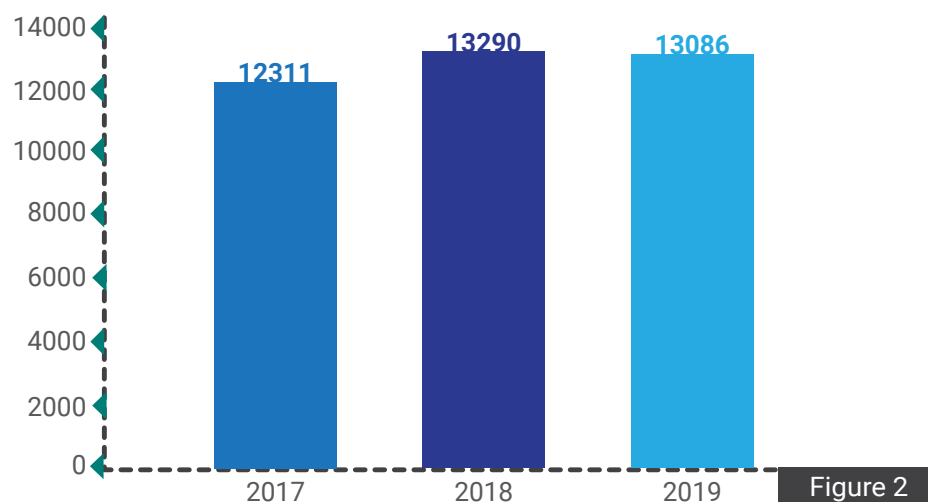
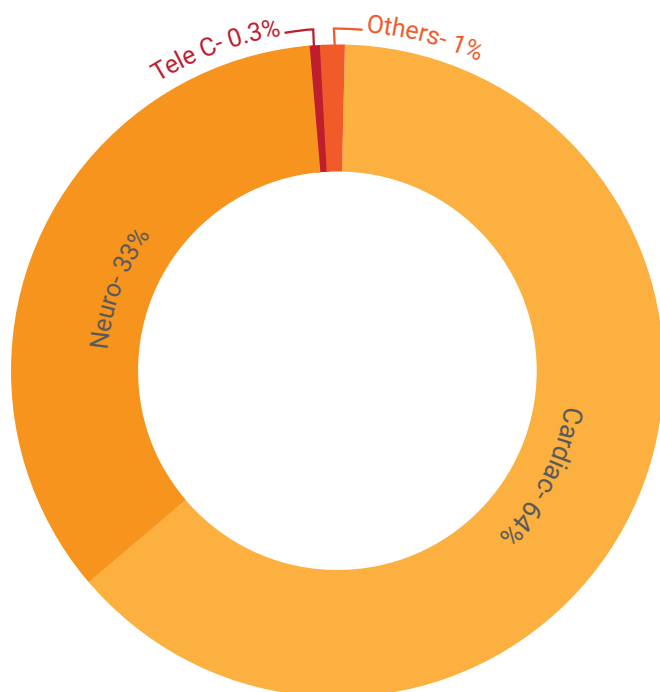


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows the 3 years' comparative data indicating a stability in the number of counseling sessions.

The following charts show the various categories of patients counseled in the year 2019

### Category wise breakup for 2019



Neuro Counselling Sessions : 4482

Pre-Anaesthesia check-up  
(PAC) : 1769

Admission  
(NS Adm) : 1485

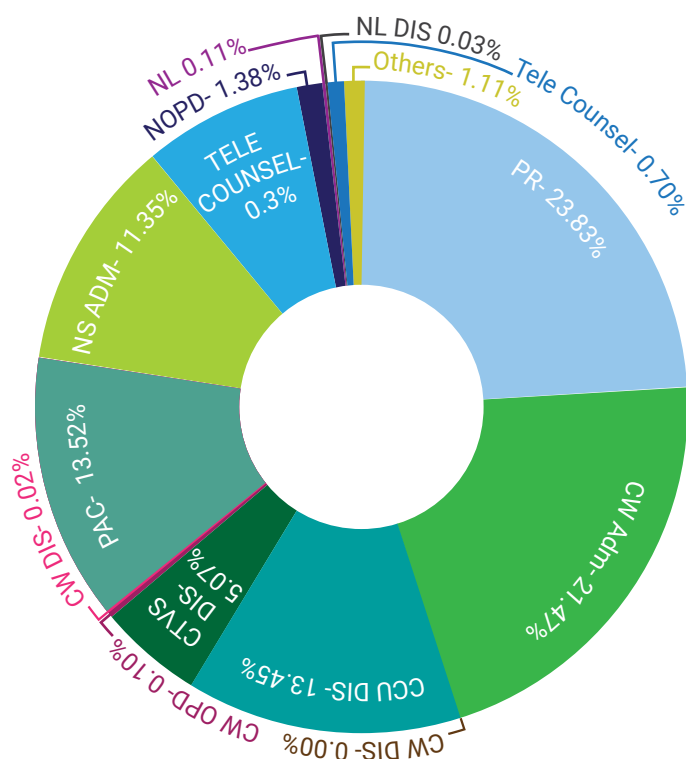
Discharge  
(NS Dis) : 1029

Neurology Out Patient Department  
(NOPD) : 181

Neurology  
(NL) : 14

Neurology Dis  
(NL Dis) : 4

### Category wise Patients counseled in 2019



Cardiac Counselling Sessions : 8367

Pre Admission Protocol  
(PR) : 3118

Cardiac Ward Admission  
(CW Adm) : 2809

Cardiac Ward Discharge  
(CW Dis) : 3

Critical Cardiac Unit Discharge  
(CCU Dis) : 1760

Cardiac Thoracic Vascular Surgery  
(CTVS Dis) : 664

Cardiac Out Patient Department  
(CWOPD) : 13

Tele-Counselling Sessions  
(Tele C) : 92

Other Counselling Sessions : 145

Jai Sai Ram

Contributors: Radhika Yadalam and Lalitha Anil, Counsellors, Department of Counselling, SSSIHMS, Whitefield.



## SAI SANKALPA AND GRACE



"COUNSELING THE SAI WAY"

Umesh Rao and Gita Umesh, SSSIHM, Wfd.

**2010 Mayo Spiritual Care Research Conference**

*Spirituality and Health Across the Life Span: Investigation and Application*

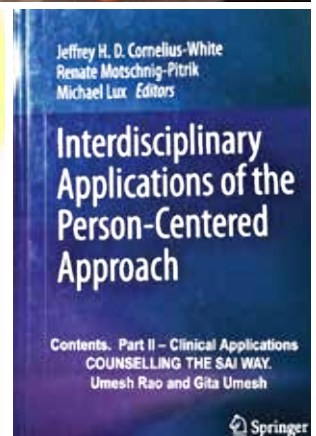
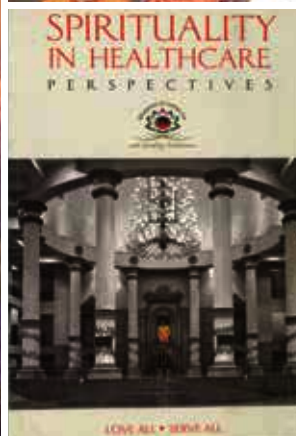
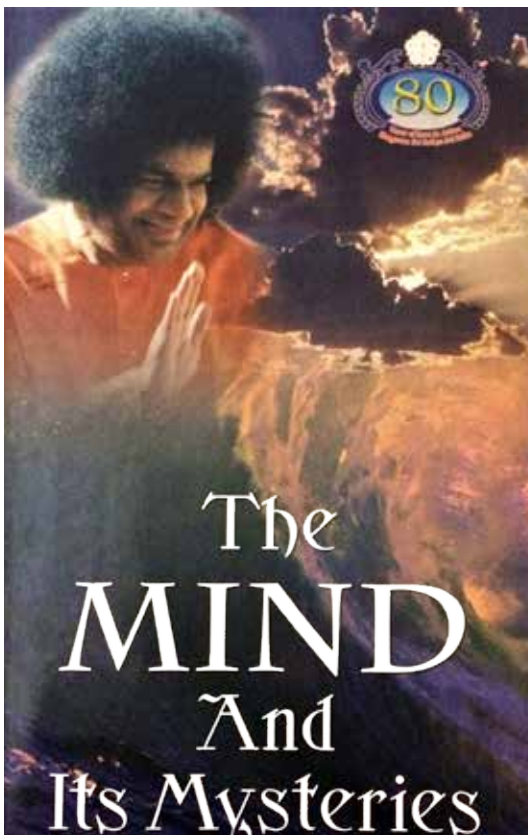


5 November 2010



**2010 MAYO SPIRITUAL CARE RESEARCH CONFERENCE-** Comments about the presentation from the session participants.

- Was very nice to have the depth of a different culture than we usually get and found their work very inspiring.
- Loved hearing about how spirituality is incorporated into patients' hospitalization.
- Extremely interesting. Truly, if the mind is at ease, the body can be.
- My favorite session. I also believe that the holistic approach to healing is far more effective than just the medical aspect. This seminar was especially helpful and enlightening.
- Good Material. It was interesting to learn about their SAI counseling.
- We can learn much from what they are doing at their hospital in India.
- Thank you! At last, the mind, body and spirit approach I believe in. I loved the comment they made, "Let's open our minds". PS I love Sai Baba!
- Very interesting philosophy, we need to do more health care like that!
- They were amazing, as is this facility and the teachings of Sai Baba.
- Great example of a refreshingly different model of spiritual care.



Layout design- Sailatha Bopanna Aiyappa

" There is only one religion, the religion of love.  
There is only one caste, the caste of humanity.  
There is only one language, the language of the heart.  
There is only one God, and He is omnipresent."  
- Sathya Sai Baba.

