

AntharDhwani

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EDITORIAL

In this Guru Purnima issue of AntharDhwani VIII we bring you Swami's Divine Message extracted from His first documented Guru Purnima Message delivered at Prasanthi Nilayam in 1956. ***"Let the Will of the Lord prevail; one's duty is but to connect oneself with the current of His Grace. Pray to the Lord Himself to show you the way and He will surely come to your rescue"***. That this is true in other religions also is highlighted in this issue on page 3.

In India, research has established the fact that more than 97% of the population irrespective of socio-economic status, religion, caste or creed believe and have faith in the God of their choice. In such an environment it certainly behooves that all tertiary care hospitals in India integrate spiritual care into the patient treatment process in the hospital. SSSIHMS, Whitefield has been the trend setter for India in this regard and over the past two decades has clearly shown the benefits of Sai Counselling as a complementary therapy in spiritual care for patients.

In this issue we bring to you patient stories that illustrate how a patient's well-being and quality of life is enhanced when doctors, nurses and counsellors work together as a team. It becomes apparent that fostering the patient's innate faith in God and prayer play a key role.

Jai Sai Ram

The Editorial Team

(Contact person: Umesh Rao <counsellingblr@sssihms.org.in>)

And whatever you ask in Prayer, you will receive, if you have Faith. | Matthew 21:22



Body Relaxation | Mind Cleansing | Prayer and surrender with total faith to God of your choice



Anthar Dhwani

God As Guide

In this world, which is impermanent and ever transforming, the Immanent Power of the Lord is the only permanent and fixed entity. In order to realise the eternal and the true, one has the power to attach oneself to that Source and Sustenance. There is no escape from this path. It is the destiny of one and all, irrespective of age or scholarship, clime or caste, sex or status. While proceeding along the road, you can watch your shadow falling on mud or dirt, hollow or mound, thorn or sand, wet or dry patches of land. You are unaffected by the fate of your shadow, are you not? Nor is the shadow made dirty thereby. It does not worry in the least where it falls or what it wades through. We know that the shadow and its experiences are not eternal or true. Similarly, you must get convinced that “you” are but the shadow of the Absolute; you are essentially not this “you” but the Absolute itself. That is the remedy for sorrow, travail, and pain.

The first step in spiritual discipline

The first step in spiritual practice is adherence to **dharma** (righteousness) in every individual and social act. The **dharma** that is followed in relation to the objective world will automatically lead on to **dharma** in the spiritual field also; only you must stick to it through thick and thin. Steadfastness is needed in the path of **dharma**; that alone is the sign of true surrender: “Let the Will of the Lord prevail; one’s duty is but to connect oneself with the current of His Grace.”

Keep the faith in the Lord undiminished

The greatest obstacle on the path of surrender is egoism and mineness or possessiveness. It is something that has been inherent in your personality since ages, sending its tentacles deeper and deeper with the experience of every succeeding life. It can be removed only by the twin detergents of discrimination and renunciation. Devotion is the water to wash away this dirt of ages and the soap of repetition of God’s name, meditation, and communion (**yoga**) will help to remove it quicker and more effectively. Do not waver or doubt when you are once convinced. Seek to understand and satisfy yourself. After that, do not be misled. When the sun is over your head there will be no shadow; similarly when faith is steady in your head it should not cast any shadow of doubt. Keep the faith in the Lord undiminished; you can then safely move about in the world. No harm can come to you!

Pray to the Lord to show you the way

In order to bring conviction to you in all this, it is best you approach a guru (spiritual preceptor) who knows the truth by experience and whose daily activities, words, and thoughts reflect this realisation. The guru is called so because the letter (syllable) **GU** signifies **gunatheetha** - one who has transcended the three **gunas** (qualities), the **thamasic**, the **rajasic**, and even the **sathwic** (ignorant, passionate, and virtuous) - and the letter (syllable) **RU** signifies one who is **rupa varjitha** (one who has grasped the formless aspect of God-head). Of course, one could come to that stage only through the sublimation of the lower into the higher qualities and the steady and conscious ignoring of the part played by mere name and form. The guru destroys the illusion and sheds light; his presence is cool and comforting. That is why this day, a full-moon day, is allotted for paying due honour to the guru. If you do not get such a guru, pray to the Lord Himself to show you the way and He will surely come to your rescue.

Extracts from the Divine Discourse at Prasanthi Nilayam, Guru Purnima, 01-08-1956.

Om Sri Sai Ram

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE - Dr D C Sundaresh



AntharDhwani is the true inner voice of Our Lord & master Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The group of devotees "Sai Counsellors" represented in this publication are truly a gift by Swami to the patients of the SSSIHMS WHITEFIELD. They have touched NUMBER OF HEARTS & minds of patients by the various methods - talking sweetly, meditation, prayer etc giving them the inner strength to go through the stresses of the treatment that they have come here for. The patient stories speak for themselves. This is one of a kind of service offered at SSSIHMS Whitefield and not available in any hospital across the world. I pray to Bhagwan to give this group of people the Health & Strength to continue their task till eternity.

Jai Sai Ram



"Where there is faith, there is love; where there is love,
there is peace; where there is peace,
there is truth; where there is truth,
there is God; where there is God, there is bliss."

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba





God is Guru and Guide

"When I was in the previous body at Shirdi, there was a woman named Radhabai who yearned to get a Mantra from me on Vyasa Purnima day. I asked her to go to some Guru and get initiated; she said, 'I know of no other.' I asked her the meaning of the sloka 'Guru Brahma Guru Vishnu Guru Dhevo Maheshwarah, Guru Sakshat Param Brahma Tasmai Shri Guruve Namah'. Why not take the Guru's name, then? Why demand another name from the Guru? If the Guru is God, obeying His orders, walking in the path He has shown, these are as effective as the japam (repetition) of the name." Once you have secured a Guru, leave everything to him, even the desire to achieve liberation. He knows you more than you yourself ever can. He will direct you as much as is good for you. Your duty is only to obey and to smother the tendency to drift away from Him. You may ask, how are we to earn our food, if we attach ourselves to a Guru like this? Be convinced that the Lord will not let you starve; He will give you not merely money but even Amirtha, the nectar of immortality".

Extracted from Swami's Guru Purnima Discourse, Prasanthi Nilayam 24-07-1964

"For this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide for ever and for ever. Trust in the Lord with all your heart." - The Bible: Psalm 48:14 and Proverbs 3:5-6.

"Allah is the Guardian of the believers - He brings them out of darkness and into light". "When guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray 'in this life' nor suffer 'in the next'". (Quran 20:123 and 2:257)

CASE STUDY 1: GRIT AND RESILIENCE - THE BEDROCK FOR MOVING AHEAD

15 year old patient Sonam Kumari hails from Purnia District in Bihar. She was referred for Sai Counselling from the Paediatric OPD at SSSIHMS, Whitefield, by the Senior Consultant Dr. Kamakshi with symptoms of retrosternal pain on exertion which began 3 to 4 years ago, along with breathlessness and intermittent vomiting. She came with her father, who is a medical rep in a pharmaceutical company. They chose to come to SSSIHMS WFD because he had undergone bypass surgery at SSSIHMS WFD in the year 2016, and had recovered well.

She is an only child, very much cherished by her parents and appears to be a compulsive achiever. At 15 she is already in 12th grade as she cleared her 7th and 8th in a single year. She is studying History, Political science and Economics. She has many friends for whom she is always there in a crisis. She loves photography, painting, dancing and Mehendi art. She is proud of having taken care of her sick mother when she was in 7th grade. She is devout and prays to Lord Shiva and Matha Saraswathi. Observes a Monday fast for her Deity.

Soon after meeting Sonam and her father I felt she would feel more free to talk to me on her own. So I asked for her father's permission to have a one-to-one interaction with her to which he readily agreed. There was a lot of pent up rage in the young girl as the counselling session began. As she narrated her story it became evident she needed to talk about the major events in her life to make sense of it. Though the chronology of events wasn't very clear it was as follows.

Her first stressful event was an appendectomy in the 6th grade as a result of intense stomach ache. Then 10 years ago she lost her paternal grandfather, whom she loved deeply. She actually lost consciousness during his death ceremonies. She kept getting an unbearable smell after his death and was sent away to her maternal grandparents for a while. She still dreams of him whenever she is under stress, of which she has had plenty.

In the 7th grade her Maths teacher touched her inappropriately and she boldly called him out on his behaviour. His response was to slap her. She immediately told her parents who complained to the Principal who fobbed her off with a box of sweets saying it was a trivial matter which didn't need to go further. She stood her ground but her protests were in vain, and the incident so traumatised her she had to change her school. Consequently she felt very lonely as she missed her friends from the old school. Even though her parents and some of the teachers were very supportive she began to experience breathlessness in her new surroundings.



Then there was another incident of her girl-cousin, who was very close to her, spreading rumours that Sonam had been in hospital for an abortion when she had gone in for her appendectomy. The timeline of the rumour was a bit confusing for the counsellor as the father mentioned later that they suspected black magic had been done to their daughter around that time and had taken her to an exorcist. However, it was evident that Sonam had been through a lot in her young life which is why it is to her credit she continues to be an achiever.

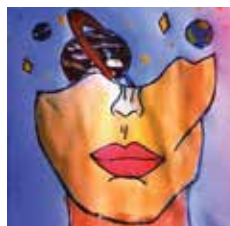
Through Empathy, Active Listening and open-ended questions Sonam was persuaded to try and leave behind the negative emotional baggage she has been carrying and also to let go of the anger she often feels. It was interesting to see the rage in her subside as she narrated her life story, as though she had unburdened herself of a lot of the baggage.

While taking her through the BRMC therapy I noticed she was doing reverse breathing due to her high stress levels. Eventually she got it right though gaining awareness of her breath. BRMC conducted with visualisation along with Music (Shiv Dhun naam Jap) helped her to feel relieved and relaxed. This technique was immensely beneficial to her. After the BRMC session Sonam said “बोहोत हलका लग रहा है मैम”, meaning “I am feeling very light ma'm”. I also advised morning walks and steam inhalation.



I suggested practicing BRMC coupled with prayer regularly would help her in de-stressing. Tips for anger management were given. Suggested she practice forgiveness for herself and others.

As she had mentioned in passing the added stress of her father insisting on her sitting for the UPSC exams I brought it up with her father when he joined us later. I suggested Sonam needed to make a few decisions of her own about her future. Emphasised how able and talented she was gauging from some of her works she had shared with me, and how she needed to feel in charge in order to feel less stressed. The father seemed to be inclined to agree.



Swami's Hospital Doctor's diagnosis that medically everything was fine and normal was a great relief to Sonam and her father. Additionally the patient found that she could overcome all the negativity and feel "very light" and at peace within herself through Sai Counselling. She felt empowered to be able to handle her problems without suffering any mental or physical distress. The loving father gained a better, much needed, understanding of his daughter and her dreams and her potential.

They expressed their gratitude to Swami, the Doctors and the Sai Counselling Department for the support and care extended to them. Sonam returned home in good health, and seems to have overcome her bodily illness accompanied by a very much improved sense of well-being.

Jai Sai Ram.....

Contributor - Sai Counsellor Sharada Gopinath, Department of Counselling SSSIHMS, Whitefield.



*"For the mansion of life,
Self-confidence is the foundation,
Self-satisfaction the wall,
Self-sacrifice the roof,
Self-Realisation is the life." - Sathya Sai Baba.*

CASE STUDY 2 : FAITH IN GOD AND THE MUNIFICENCE OF GOD'S GRACE



Prosenjit Paul, a 29 year-old young man, hails from Dum Dum city on the outskirts of Kolkata in the north 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. Prosenjit is unmarried, a graduate and belongs to a close knit family comprising his parents and a younger brother. A typically traditional middle class Indian family their family deity is Sri Ganesh in whom they have innate faith as being their Protector and Guardian.

They own and manage a book store in Kolkata, which Prosenjit was looking after. He used to play cricket but the past few years he has not been able to play but enjoys watching cricket and football matches. He loves listening to music and has a good number of friends. He has always been a very energetic person - enjoying walking and jogging.

Towards the end of 2020 tragedy struck this family. Prosenjit who enjoyed good health hitherto started having double vision, difficulty to read and so he could not attend to the work in the book store. He went to a local ophthalmologist. The treatment done did not provide any relief. Then severe headache started. The doctor recommended an MRI which showed he had a tumour in his brain. He went to a famous hospital in Kolkata. There doctors told him that his condition was serious, he may or may not get well! This naturally filled both the patient and the family with lots of fear, stress and anxiety. A complex brain surgery and treatment would be very expensive in Kolkata and beyond their means.

By God's Grace one of their relatives told them about Sai Baba's hospital in Whitefield and they promptly set out for Whitefield, Bangalore not wanting to lose any further time after getting the advice from the doctors at the hospital in Kolkata. Prosenjit was accompanied by his father, Nirapada Paul, who would be his caregiver. They reached SSSIHMS in Whitefield filled with trepidation but with total faith in their family deity Sri Ganesh. After the preliminary tests at the Out-Patient Department, Prosenjit was admitted for medical treatment on 28-07-2021. They did not know whether Prosenjit would get well or not.

In this frame of mind, the Sai Counsellor contacted them and could immediately gauge their fear and anxiety. Speaking in their mother tongue with empathy and love, her sensitive listening helped them unburden all that had happened to Prosenjit, apparently a hale and hearty young man still in his twenties. The Sai Counsellor could feel the cathartic effect the unburdening brought about in both father and son.

They were ready for the BRMC therapy to be administered, which the Sai Counsellor did and both gradually relaxed in body, mind and spirit praying and connecting with their God Sri Ganesh and with Sai Baba, being overawed at His Temple of Healing. They were now ready for the medical treatment to follow.

The patient's illness was thoroughly investigated by the doctors, the Final Diagnosis being Left Frontal Anaplastic Astrocytoma (Grade 3), a malignant brain tumour which warranted immediate surgery and further follow up treatment. Surgery was successfully done on 29-07-2021. The patient was discharged on 06-08-2021 from the hospital in a stable condition with Discharge Instructions pertaining to medication and particularly about the importance of radiation therapy and chemotherapy to be done in a local hospital to prevent further spread of the cancer. Both Prosenjit and father showed sincere gratitude toward Swami and were very happy to get so much love and care from the hospital staff.

However on the way back home on 09.08.21 Prosenjit had recurrent Seizures in the train. With the help of co-passengers father and Prosenjit got down from the train at a station not too far away from Whitefield. By Swami's Grace the father located an ambulance which brought them back to SSSIHMS, Whitefield the same night and Prosenjit was admitted to the Emergency Ward. Needless to say, the father, Nirapada Paul was very much worried and filled with fear and anxiety. He reached out to the Sai Counsellor for solace and was in constant touch with her.

The patient was readmitted on 10-08-2021 with symptoms of disorientation, fever, and bed sores which were infected. Treatment was done and Prosenjit was discharged from the hospital on 16-08-2021. Both the patient and his father expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Sai Baba and to the Sai Counsellor for continuously providing support with lots of empathy and love.



Prosenjit and his father returned to their hometown safely. They have meticulously followed our doctors' instructions. Patient Prosenjit completed his Radiation therapy followed by the Chemotherapy. He has gone back to his job of looking after the bookshop.

In February 2022 Prosenjit completed his 6 months check up at SSSIHMS. Doctors are happy and satisfied with his response to the surgery and the follow-up local treatment. His quality of life as well as the well-being of the family have improved tremendously after this unique treatment at SSSIHMS, Whitefield, the Temple of Healing.

Jai Sai Ram.....

Contributor - Sai Counsellor Sukanya Chattopadhyay, Department of Counselling SSSIHMS, Whitefield.



CASE STUDY 3 : EFFICACY OF PRAYERS

Reflecting upon the last words of 51 year old Lata, at the end of her life at a hospice in Bangalore made me wonder at the profound message she left behind for her family and the medical team who attended upon her. “Can someone please **lift me up**” was the call. The response from the caregivers has left a deep impression of the quality of care she received instantly at the physical dimension, emotional dimension of lifting her mind and helping her release and relax her mind and above all lifting her spirits through prayers which brought about a sea change and transformation in her spiritual dimension helping her transit into a peaceful state. The term “lift me up” initiated a new understanding in me on that fateful day at the serene hospice in the year 2006 - The words sounded like a fervent prayer to her God of Choice, pleading to help her shed her mortal coil.

Her family tried to soothe and comfort her, and the medical team rushed in to support her - trying to address her mind and body. But I, realizing the end was near, continued chanting Lata’s favourite prayer. As Lata listened to the soothing chant of the familiar prayer, which always had been a source of solace since childhood, everyone present perceived a remarkable transformation in Lata. In the past these very prayers had provided her with strength, courage and faith to face many challenges to move on in life. She crossed over the final bridge peacefully with the support of prayer. A calm, gentle and peaceful expression replaced the transitional expression of uncertainty as she anchored herself in faith. Her last words ‘Lift me up’ softly merged into silence, her body relaxed as she closed her eyes listening to the chant of prayers. Gradually her breath turned feeble and everyone present were amazed at the glow on her face and the spirit of peace that radiated from her.



This gifted artist was deeply spiritual since childhood. She chose to remain single and was both a son and daughter to her parents till their end. She loved teaching art and trained students both young and old. Her passion to teach art continued till her end and it is not surprising that her final batch of students were the young nurses at the hospice who attended upon her. During her short stay at the hospice she had built a good rapport with the nurses through the medium of art which was therapeutic in nature. They rushed to her side and joined the family in silent prayers. The experience of the efficacy of prayers in providing the profound sense of peace and spiritual wellbeing in the patient at the time of death left a deep impression in my mind and has been a source of great learning.

Jai Sai Ram.....

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

CASE STUDY 4 : A MOTHER'S STORY OF INDOMITABLE COURAGE

Seven year old patient Rejiya Sultana's mother Robina is a true inspiration to many. Her courage and determination as a single parent stemmed from her immense love for her child and her faith in Allah.

She hails from an upper middle class family in West Bengal and was married at a very young age. Her husband and his family were very disappointed in her when she delivered a baby girl and she had to bear their anger and ill treatment silently. One night, unable to bear the taunts and abusive attitude of her in-laws and the indifference of her husband she fled to the sanctuary of her parents home, carrying her baby to safety.

Reflecting upon her courage and determination to flee she realized it was her motherly instinct to protect her young baby and her prayers to Allah for guidance which provided her the strength of body, mind and spirit. Prayers from the Holy Koran and the loving care she received from her parents and brother helped her heal.

When Rejiya turned six she developed mild symptoms of lower limb weakness, but the child remained active and cheerful. Gradually there was a significant change in her activities and she complained of tightness in her lower limbs. Robina had to face new challenges yet again, with courage. Her search along with her family for medical support for Rejiya seemed endless and futile. Finally her prayers brought her to SSSIHMS Whitefield Bangalore. Despite restrictions on travel due to Covid 19, she summoned up strength and will power to journey alone with her child from Burdwan to Bangalore and had Rejiya admitted at the hospital on 15-1-2021. She was diagnosed as a case of communicating hydrocephalus and a small intramedullary lesion at D7 D8.



Hydrocephalus is caused by an imbalance between how much cerebrospinal fluid is produced and how much is absorbed into the bloodstream. Cerebrospinal fluid plays an important role in brain function. Too much cerebrospinal fluid in the ventricles occurs for one of the following reasons: Obstruction, Poor absorption, Overproduction.

Rejiya underwent a successful surgery performed on 25-1-21 by the team of neurosurgeons at SSSIHMS. Post operatively she developed right lower limb weakness which improved in due course. On 29-1-2021 she underwent laminectomy and a routine biopsy to ensure the lesion was benign. By God's Grace the histopathology report, which was the final test, came out negative. She went home in a happy frame of mind.

The mothers journey and experience of accepting her seven year old daughter's sudden illness, finding the right team of doctors and travelling to an unknown state in search of a cure for her precious daughter would certainly have been most traumatic *had it not been for her faith and prayers and the loving care her child received at SSSIHMS*. Finding the Sai Counsellor from the Counselling department very empathetic, she quickly established a rapport and was able to unburden her problems - a cathartic release of pent up emotions. She left me in wonder and awe at the strength bestowed upon a mother during the most trying period of her life. She relied upon her faith, her prayers and her belief which empowered her to take care of her child, the most precious part of her life.



A year later she surprised me with a visit to the counselling department after her annual check up at Neuro OPD. Rejiya had grown into a confident young active child and it was time for Robina to finally rest on her laurels since her child was cleared by the doctors and was normal.

Time seemed to stand still as we watched mother and child joyfully walking together their arms around each other. They were grateful for all the love and care they received at SSSIHMS.

Jai Sai Ram.....
Contributor - Gita Umesh, HOD, Department of Counselling
SSSIHMS, Whitefield.

CASE STUDY 5 : MOTHER ASNARA BIBI - AN EPITOME OF PATIENCE

Sixteen year old Tasik Alam from Kishanganj, Bihar was diagnosed with AAD (Atlantoaxial Dislocation) and admitted at SSSIHMS to the neuro-surgery ward. He belonged to a large happy family having two older siblings and two younger siblings. Asnara Begum, an epitome of patience managed her home on the meagre income of her husband who worked as a farm labourer. Tasik's symptoms of frequent falls and gait disturbance began in 2021 and progressed gradually which was a source of great worry and anxiety to the family. The family heard about the good medical support and treatment provided at SSSIHMS and Asnara Begum decided to travel to Bangalore from Bihar on a long journey with Tasik in search of a cure for her son. Bidding goodbye to her children, including her one and a half year old baby boy was not easy for the mother.

On 19-2-22 Tasik was admitted and the long journey for a cure had just begun. Soft spoken Asnara Begum's love for Tasik and her faith filled her heart with hope and patience.



Tasik's stay in the hospital was not only difficult, but tedious. Leaving behind his home, his family, the place of his comfort, he arrived into the foreign world of a hospital. However, many aspects guided him through this difficult path in his life. One being his faith, and another being the patience of his determined mother.

After weeks of stay in the hospital, Tasik began to grow impatient with this new world he had entered. He longed for his family, and his home, at one point, telling his mother he wanted to pack up and go home. But in his struggle, we see someone who was determined to help him. His mother, Asnara Begum. It was her patience. Her will to wait, until her son was cured completely of his illness. Doctors had explained to her that Tasik's treatment would take quite some time. She understood, and guided by her faith, she prayed, turning to Allah during this time. For her, her spirituality aided her in its guidance. Often, she would read the Quran to Tasik, helping him find his inner strength in his times of need through prayer. She knew this journey would not be simple, but she found ways to help her and her son in this difficult time in their lives.

Asnara was constantly told by Tasik how much he missed their home. One thing in particular he missed was home-cooked food. So, Tasik was given with the doctor's permission some of his favourite foods, such as rasgulla, and kheer, igniting his sense of taste. In these moments, he was able to get a taste of his home. Smelling flowers like jasmine, and rose, were a way to remind him of his home's garden. Here, his sense of smell was activated. Listening to his mother read the Quran was a way in which his sense of hearing was activated. Numerous video calls helped to keep him in a cheerful mood. His sense of sight. All these senses activated in his body, were a way to remind him that there was hope, and light there for him.

Doctors, nurses, and the counselling team were all there to support Tasik. Whether it be helping him medically, or emotionally, he got to experience how powerful love is, and how powerful prayer is. His patient and loving mother helped him through their faith, which benefited both of them. The love which he was shown through those around him in the hospital proved to be a safe and compassionate atmosphere for him. Asnara continues to stay by his side, as he has begun his journey to recovery, and Tasik visits the counselling ward at times, receiving warm greetings from counsellors. He will continue this process of healing, all with his patient mother right beside him. Swami's Temple of Healing truly takes care of patients and families till they are completely healed.

Jai Sai Ram.....

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

CASE STUDY 6 - POWER OF PRAYER

It is a matter of great interest to observe how an individual overcomes vulnerability and learns to cope with existential crises in life. So often the practice of connecting to one's spiritual dimension and relying upon one's innate strength, faith and courage helps one overcome stressful situations. Prayer is a tool often associated with **"asking or seeking help"**. Alfred Lord Tennyson elucidates the power of prayer in his poem *Idylls of the King* as follows- **"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."**

But, what happens if an individual is unable to connect to the world within or seek help from the universe when trapped in a maze of negative emotions? The following case is of a young woman suffering from functional *neurological disorder*, who learnt to face challenges by taking refuge in prayers. The counselling session uplifted her spirit and helped her regain her courage, confidence and strength to face her challenges with faith and hope.

A young 24 year old woman from West Bengal was referred for Sai counselling by the neurologist at SSSIHMS, Whitefield. She was on a wheelchair, holding a walking stick in one hand and a referral note from the doctor in the other hand. Wide eyed with fear and anxiety written on her face she had suffered from an illness which several doctors in her hometown failed to diagnose. Finally there seemed to be a ray of hope at SSSIHMS neurology department where her condition was diagnosed as *conversion disorder* / functional *neurological disorder*. Diagnosis usually involves assessment of existing symptoms and ruling out any neurological or other medical condition that could cause the symptoms. Only a skilled doctor with experience can help these patients since conventional diagnostic tools or methods are of little support in detecting this illness.

Cause of this illness is unknown and can be triggered by physical or emotional stress or trauma, neglect in childhood, physical or sexual abuse, pain, insomnia, fatigue, depression, panic disorder or even due to chronic adjustment and acceptance issues in life.

Patients are evaluated through various tests to rule out history of any neurological disease or disorder such as migraine, epilepsy or movement disorder. Symptoms can vary from person to person.

Treatment for this illness depends on the patient's specific signs and symptoms. A multispecialty team approach is generally practiced by the neurologist. This patient therefore was referred for Sai Counselling.

Counselling helped build a good rapport with the patient. Open ended questions helped the patient explore her feelings and reflect upon past traumatic events in her young life. She spontaneously unburdened her feelings during the session and it appeared as though a heavy burden was lifted away from her.

Twenty four year old Pooja was born in West Bengal in a middle class family. She and her younger sister were blessed with very loving parents with a liberal outlook. Pooja was a good student and excelled in her studies, sports, music and dancing. She completed her 12th grade in flying colours and she had plans of pursuing a career as a beautician.

She was popular in her social circles and received many marriage proposals at a very young age. Her parents, keeping the future welfare of their daughter in mind, consented to get her married to the only son of a wealthy couple. They failed to realize that it would cost Pooja her freedom and well being.

Soon after her marriage Pooja was expected to adapt to a very conservative and different lifestyle at her in-laws home. Her husband was a mere puppet in the hands of his parents and her in-laws were disrespectful and rude. Her attempt to maintain harmony in her new home was futile. From being an extroverted confident young girl she found herself living in fear and anxiety. Her relationship with her in-laws worsened when she was blessed with a daughter instead of a son.

Pooja felt trapped and could not cope or overcome the existential crisis on her own. Her husband failed to support her and her in-laws refused to send her to her parents home as punishment for failing to pay the dowry they expected.



Her in-laws and husband were alarmed when she developed symptoms similar to choreoathetosis. Involuntary bodily movements, unpredictable muscle contractions, muscle tightness, fidgeting followed by slow writhing and jerking movements of the body. Her parents were informed by her husband to take her and the child away.

Over time her condition worsened, she felt abandoned by her husband. Her child was the main source of joy in her life and she wished to seek medical help, remain healthy by finding a cure for her illness mainly for the sake of her child who was rejected by her husband and family.

She moved to her parents home and the search for a cure began. Her illness remained a mystery to the doctors. Finally a good Samaritan guided the family to SSSIHMS Whitefield. In desperation they journeyed to Whitefield from West Bengal.

Pooja was filled with hope when she entered the hospital. His holiness Dalai Lamas words aptly describes the spirit of service experienced by Pooja when she interacted with the multi speciality team members who served her at the hospital.

“May we become at all times, both now and forever, a protector for those without protection, a guide for those who have lost their way, a ship for those with oceans to cross, a bridge for those who have rivers to cross, a sanctuary for those in danger, a lamp for those in need of light, a place of refuge for those in need of shelter, and a servant to all those in need.”

~ The Dalai Lama ~



She was evaluated and treated as an out- patient in the Neurology department. At the counselling department she discovered the value of cleansing the mind and relying upon her inner strength. The Counselling sessions helped her regain her lost courage and self confidence. She learnt the importance of Prayers. As an outcome of Divine Grace and the treatment received at SSSIHMS, a young patient, stressed and anxious, visited the hospital with the support of a wheelchair and left the hospital walking with confidence and a smile on her face. She was clear in her mind of her goal for the future. She shared pictures of her child with the message that her daughter was the light of her life and with the support of her parents and sisters she was pursuing her dream. She had made prayer a part of her life and reached out to a greater power for help and protection for her child and her family that loved and supported her.

Would Pooja have suffered this illness if she had connected to her spiritual dimension while experiencing emotional trauma and stress during her stay with her in-laws? This is a question that has remained at the back of my mind regarding this case.

Jai Sai Ram.....

Contributor - Gita Umesh, HOD, 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

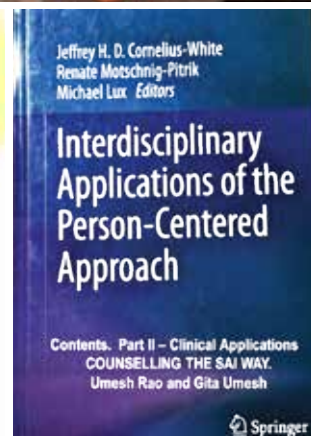
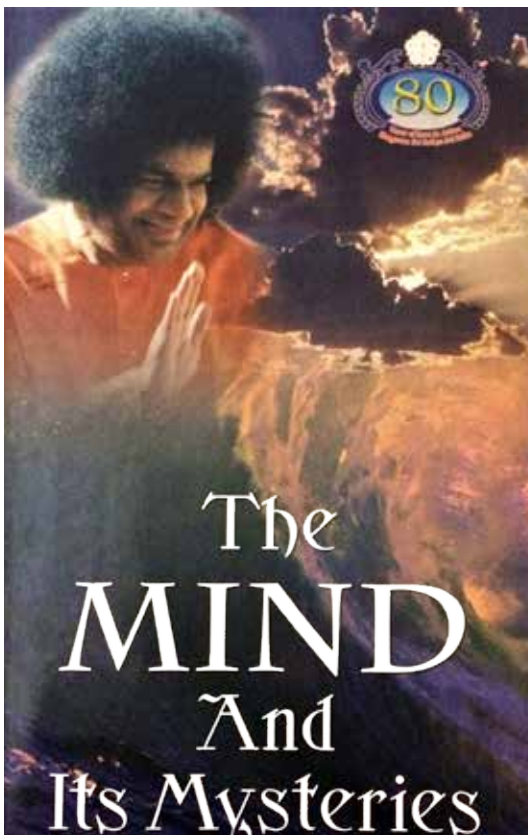


5 November 2010



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.

