

**Sai Pearls of Wisdom,
Part 44-D**

**ACTOR, SINGER, DANCER BABA
May 19th, 2023**

**Om Sri Sai Ram
Prasanthi Sandesh**

Om Sri Sai Ram.

Prasanthi Sandesh, Sai Pearls of Wisdom.

We know what an expert composer singer and musician Bhagavan is! We also know that He was an excellent dancer known to everybody in His younger days. He had vast experience in the field of drama too. We have witnessed how Swami attends every program – be that music, dance or drama. He comes forward with many suggestions.

There were many times when He designed the costumes they were supposed to have while enacting a play. He led a team of students to Delhi, (at) Vijnana Bhavan, where the students staged a drama by name ‘*Shankaracharya*’ which was applauded (by) everybody. Therefore, Swami’s interest in these fine arts – music, dance and drama, are very well known to Sai world of devotees.

In fact, these were the qualities He displayed while He was very young, right from His school days. He was exposed to the dramatic arts even as a child. He was revealing great creative talents with a known penchant for the dramatic arts. Street operas were His first love and very early in His life, He had played feminine roles in several plays with mythological or scriptural themes. There was thus a generic flow of the dramatic mode in Him.

This apart, His latent Divinity was a great aid to His interest in epic and mythological plays. These plays were moving and full-blooded symbols of the deep spirituality of India. In his book, *Sri Sathya Sai Baba – A Story of God as Man*, Dr M.N. Rao writes, “Being slim and young, He was perfect to take up feminine roles in mythological dramas. He was known to have enacted the roles of Mohini in a drama, Devaki in another drama, played the role of Tara in the third one.

Sarees belonging to Venkamma Garu, His sister, heretofore, (were used for) Sathya’s costumes. Krishnama Raju, Sathya’s cousin would say to all friends, “Sathya and my

brother Subba Raju had together acted in several plays like '*Kanakadhaara*' and '*Lava Kusha*!'"

So, Swami's interests in these dramas are very well known to everybody. Yes! Venkamma, His sister, would remember that Raju, while balancing a bottle on His head, would bend down and with His tongue pick up a coin placed on a match box. See that! What a kind of excellence it was!

Sathya's classmate at Bukkapatnam told that dancer Ratna Bhai came with a theatre troupe to Bukkapatnam and presented a program in which she danced with a pot full of water on her head, and His classmate adds, "In the class, He used to dance very well during free hours."

There was a dance program in the Bukkapatnam school by a famous dancer, Shankara Chinna Obulesu – OBULESU, compelled Sathya to dance. Some boys put a long glass bottle on His head, and after some time they put oil and a wick into the bottle and lit it. He danced with that for a long time. Everybody appreciated the performance.

At Bukkapatnam, the play '*Krishna Leela*' was also enacted. In the play '*Bhoo Kailasam*' – '*BHOO KAILASAM*,' performed in the school, Sathya played the role of Krishna. Brahmanapalli, a nearby village here, Sathya sang and danced in the play '*Kanakadhaara*' - '*KANAKADHAARA*'. So there were many instances like this I can mention.

And I can also tell you this (which) Sri Kasturi mentions in his book. Thammiraju (teacher) once asked him to stage a play. Sathya then wrote, produced and enacted the play entitled, *Cheppinatu Shestaaraa*, *Cheppinatu* – *CHEPPINATU SHESTAARAA* – "Do you do what you say?" That is the meaning.

The play reflected Sathya's disillusionment with the ways of the world. It exposed the hypocrisy of teachers and parents who set a bad example to their children. It was a scathing criticism of the promise on values made by the in-sections of the family and the school, both of which He was to abandon later on. It was a hilarious skit that had great impact on the entire village.

One gentleman by name Narasimha Das of Uravakonda speaks of Sathya having written another play, '*Parijathapaharanam*' – '*PARIJATHAPAHARANAM*', which was staged in their house. Sathya had asked Das' father, Anjaneyulu, to arrange a stage for the performance. Anjaneyulu, who had 8 attendants, arranged the stage in no time. This was a private performance. Sathya wore Das' mother's saree.

Das' father dressed Him up and his sister, Subbarathnamma, played the role of Devendra; Sathya – the role of Satyabhama. He asked Das to act as Sri Krishna. As Satyabhama, Sathya was to kick Sri Krishna on the head. Das would cherish the experience with reverence!

So, even in the later years, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba would take keen interest in dance and drama. He would become the inspiring music director and stage director of music concerts and plays staged at Prasanthi Nilayam by visiting devotees and by the students of the University.

In another incident, the English teacher by name, Subbannachar – SUBBANNACHAR, tried to punish Sathya, probably for having given the impression that He had not taken notes in the class. Subbannacharya asked Him to spread His palm. As the teacher raised the cane to strike Sathya, he saw an image of Sai Baba of Shirdi in Sathya's palm. What a wonderful miracle it is!

In the later years, He openly said in public, on record, that He is the reincarnation of Shirdi Bhagavan. This was displayed; this was demonstrated and proved while He was very young, as stated now.

Most astounding at Bukkapatnam was His astounding dancing talent. A popular professional dramatic troupe visited the area during that time and the centre of attraction was a young dancing girl. Years hence, she would still be remembered, but there would be differences of opinion regarding her name. She was an adept in a particular dance in which, with a bottle balanced on her head, she would pick up a handkerchief from the floor with her teeth as a finale.

Sathya proved that He could not only do the same dance number but also improve upon it. Instead of picking up a handkerchief from the floor with His teeth, He picked up a needle with His eyelids, all the while balancing a bottle on His head.

Another occurred at the school on the Annual function - it would be admirably confirmed the Sathya's versatile talents. A famous actress and dancer, Rishyendra Mani – RISHYENDRA MANI by name, was invited to perform the fund-raising function. All arrangements were made. Tickets were sold. People were gathering and a large crowd was expected. At the last moment, the dancer sent a word that due to ill health, she was unable to come to perform. That Rishyendra Mani would not appear could not create trouble which you will know later! But to start with, it was expected that her absence would create trouble from the disappointed crowds.

Sathya offered to save the situation, suggesting that He would be happy to dance in Rishyendra Mani's place. The desperate school administration, with no other alternative, immediately agreed. The spectacular thing about the actress' dance was that she could balance a plate with a lighted lamp on the top of a bottle on her head perfectly, while keeping lighted lamps on the plate!

When Sathya performed that dance, the audience roared in applause. According to a standard biographical accounts, the District Collector – a British Officer, readily walked up to the stage to present the dancer with a medal, anxious to put it around her neck. As no Indian lady would ever allow a strange man to touch her person, the actress insisted that the medal would be given in her hand. The poor Collector walked away disappointed, not recognizing that lady's hands were those of a small boy.

Ramasubbamma, the District Education Board President, presented the prizes for the 2nd day function. She spoke in appreciation of the actress who had performed the previous day and acknowledged that the school funding program had been substantially increased with the young dancer's help.

Wanting to honour her, she announced that she would present to the actress a silk saree. The actress' name was announced with a request that she appear on the stage. The audience waited expectantly to see her image. In the midst of the excited crowd, Sathya walking towards the stage was stopped by the police who had no idea of the role He had enacted.

The headmaster rescued Him, took Him to the stage and proudly announced that it was He who had saved the day by performing in the guise of the actress.

Ramasubbamma complimented Sathya for His performance and also developed great affection and regard for Him.

Well, this is a thing to show that in the Indian tradition, a woman would not expect anybody to put a chain or a saree given to her straightaway by a man. So He refused to receive from him because He played the role of a dancer then. He upheld the Indian tradition.

We will come to know more in the next episode.

Sai Ram!