

## The Madurai group

Upon my arrival to Madurai in December 2001, I met a group of dedicated human beings carrying out Swami's work of service. So humble in their approach and nature, these people are true examples of sevaks which we can learn from.

As mentioned in the pages of this website, Swami gives instructions over the phone to MVSO. The choice to believe this fact is yours. I was fortunate enough to be a recipient of these phone calls. With the creation of the website, a flurry of calls came as He advised us of the content of the web pages. It was quite funny during one night working on the logo for MVSO. A few errors kept on occurring on the computer and we were stuck on how to progress. Then, just as soon as we had asked for help, the phone call came and problem solved! Swami also made it very clear this MVSO was "His project" with a thunderous voice. I dare anyone to challenge this fact if they heard the tone of voice He spoke with.

A lot has been mentioned already about the various service activities that are conducted in Madurai. Taking part in such activities is something I cannot fully describe. The zeal with which each volunteer carries out their duty is remarkable. However, it is not a question of duty I feel. It is more a practise of moral responsibility which is the driving force behind this organisation.

The following quote from the Dalai Lama of Tibet is a more precise description of this fact:

"My message is the practice of compassion, love and kindness. These things are very useful in our daily life, and also for the whole of human society these practices can be very important." Basically, universal responsibility is the feeling for other people's suffering just as we feel our own. It is the realization that even our own enemy is motivated by the quest for happiness. We must recognize that all beings want the same thing we want. This is the way to achieve a true understanding, unfettered by artificial consideration."

The weekly puja and bhajans provide more dynamic facets to the range of activities that are carried out in Madurai. The cosmic plan at work here is quite stunning and beautiful to take part in. Any form of service rendered within an area, whether it be singing bhajans, performing rituals or spreading love, elevates the vibrations of entities surrounded within that vicinity. My understanding of Swami's 'secret' mission is that He is channelling the efforts of His 'workers' to not only physically and mentally help, but to be 'cleansing angels' for society at metaphysical levels. Quite a clever fellow this Sai Baba. And who's to say He isn't doing the same thing elsewhere?

On a humourous note, one night we all sat down for dinner and out of courtesy for our dietary needs, Mrs Omkumar had bought us some western food, the infamous fried rice. However, upon reaching the extremities of my tongue, the food became what I affectionately term 'chilli rice'. You can imagine my surprise when I had it. And I kept on eating it, much to everyone's shock and my foolishness. After I had finished, I casually started getting up when the call came from you know who. What He said bowled people over with laughter as well as the fact that everyone had to finish off the rice because we couldn't. He said, "Rishi, don't eat hot food, its bad for your stomach!"

The message of sacrifice is another lingering thought in my mind when I reflect on my visit. The two families I stayed with treated me with hospitality and kindness normally reserved for dignitaries it seems. An even greater act of sacrifice is the fact the Sri Sai Nivas now serves as the headquarters for MVSO where previously it was a home for the Omkumar family. Officials of spiritual organisations today claim to build temples and retreat houses for the benefit of their community. The question remains now - how many of them can claim their own house as a temple which can provide such a service. Sai Baba certainly made this clear when He acclaimed Sri Sai Nivas as His Abode. The proof is the incredible multitude of miracles that occur at His alter. Once again, if we gauge our perceptions of His 'secret' mission here, do you consider your home an Abode of God? Interesting isn't it once you look behind the curtains. Lets travel even further into this - are our own bodies such temples?

Throughout my one month stay in Madurai, the lessons I learnt about human behaviour were phenomenal. Yes the phone calls from Swami were an incredible experience. Yes the miracles that occurred were a joy to be a part of. All of this however does not even compare to the spiritual growth I attained by being a part of His mission. The foundations of family and responsibility were firmly displayed to me by Swami. This I cannot forget and will always revere. Lucky am I indeed that I was able to be a witness of His ideal in this physical world.

Love All Serve All is the call God commands  
Our duty for this initiative we make ourselves demand  
Healing the elderly, needy, and society's unfortunate  
We do with our hearts as we in turn become more fortunate

How can I describe the thrill of humanity?  
It is my character which learns true humility  
How can I explain the bliss of one's smile?  
It is my Divine nature which travels a million mile

True beings of light we meet on every plight  
Touching our souls and remembering our true goals

I do not crave reliance or a sense of belonging  
For I serve my needs through another's sense of longing

Silly are we to think that we are the doer  
The person in front of us is no one but Him, our Saviour  
My claim to this Truth is my faith in His Grace  
For this Grace leads me to never forget His face

Next time you walk past yourself in the street  
Always remember they are watching their own feet  
I share the same air as you and your friend  
Breathe this love and bring your mind to an end

This love sets my heart free  
This love removes my inhibitions with unwavering glee  
This love dares me to Live  
This love dares me to unconditionally give