



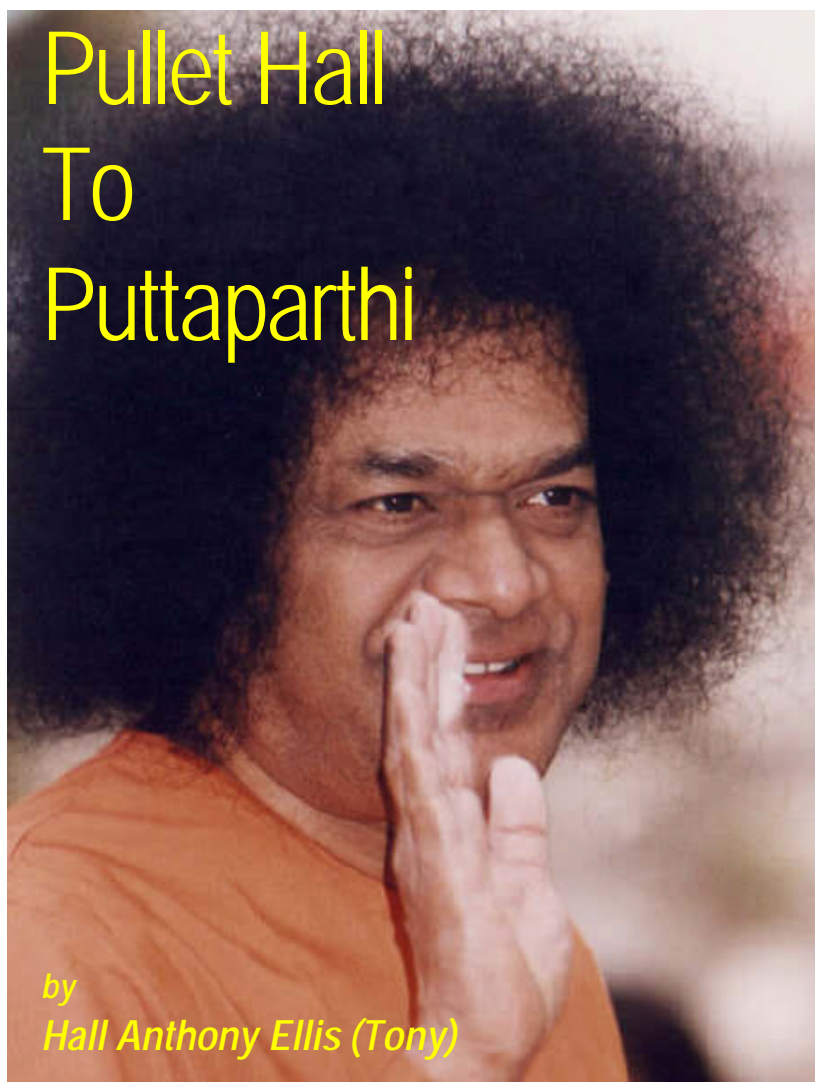
Sai Jamaica



Celebrating 80 Years of
Divine Love!



Pullet Hall To Puttaparthi



by
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About the Author



Hall Anthony Ellis (popularly known as Tony), is an ardent devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He was a film-maker at JBC Television (Jamaica) and is one of the leading playwrights of the country.

Several of his plays (including the famous play “1888”) have been staged in the UK, Canada, USA and of course in Jamaica.

It was indeed during one of his visits to London to stage his play in 1988, Tony had a series of experiences which culminated in his devotion to Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Pullet Hall to Puttaparthi

1

The
Arrival

I was thin as a rake, light as a flea in 1999 at the time of Sivaratri when I ventured on my second visit to India only to see Sri Satya Sai Baba. 1996 was my first visit to Whitefield near the city of Bangalore where one of Sri Satya Sai Baba ashrams is located. The first trip was just as awesome as the second visit which I will, with Swami's blessing, try to narrate.



Entrance to Sai Kuluwant Hall in Prashanthi Nilayam

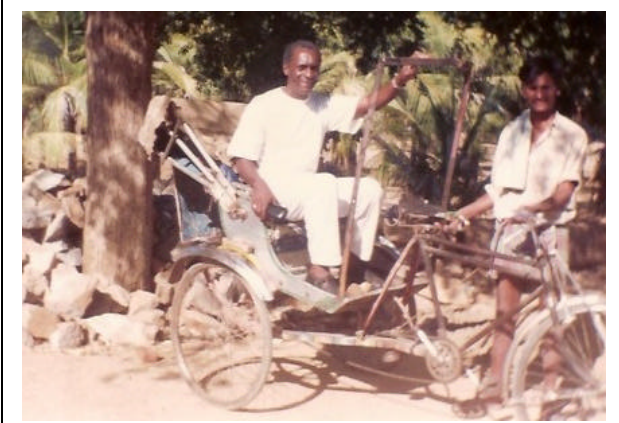
Puttaparthi is the village where Sri Satya Sai Baba was born or made His entrance as avatar of the kali age. I should also mention that on my first visit, I

was able to go on a day trip to Puttaparthi which then was a deserted village as Swami was in Whitefield. Sivaratri is the nocturnal festival of Siva. It also happens that 1999 was the re-start of Swami producing the lingam after a pause of many years before a crowd of thousands attending Sivaratri.

Four of us arrived in Puttaparthi from Bangalore airport by taxi. I was extremely tired. It was about 10:00 a.m. Indian time. Nevertheless, I remained cheerful as I knew within myself I'll be seeing this divine personage again. If a slight wind had turned up in the village, I would certainly, like a dried leaf, be blown away - there were so many devoted people milling about the ashram compound trying to get registered, and the formalities had long queues for over 50 yards long.

I had to join a few of these queues before I received the final go ahead to enter the apartment. The apartment was owned by a lady in a town outside of London, England, whom I've never

met. She, hearing I was coming all the way from Jamaica, offered me the accommodation because of the overbooked residencies, with the understanding I would share with another party from London who was pressed for finding a place for his short stay. He left right after Sivaratri ended.



**The author on a cycle rickshaw near
Chitravati River in Puttaparthi**

After having settled in the apartment, I went for a quick lunch which revived me a little. I met my incoming roommate and showed him around. He was a young student from London who had heard of Sai Baba from a Mrs. Fowler who herself, had heard about Swami from me on one of my visits to London for the performance of one of my plays. She and her husband came to see the play and would not leave the theatre until they met me.

They invited me to their home to talk with me about my unusual way of presenting

life in Jamaica for the theatre. I soon introduced them to the writings of Sri Satya Sai Baba. Today, the Fowlers have regular Bhajan and Sai discourses at their home. In the evening after supper, I was so exhausted I purchased a book by Swami Vivekananda and then retired to my room. I evaluated the day's proceedings. My room-mate was so excited as he was going off to Bhajan and would see Sai Baba for the first time. He did ask me before leaving "what is He like?".

I responded, "He's tiny but certainly you'll be knocked out of your senses when you behold him".

2

The Darshan

Next morning, I went early to darshan, the majestic figure as always, floated in the Mandir. I sat quietly with my eyes fixed as his feet slowly glided over the long, red carpet. Always after I have seen Sai Baba, I think it's time I should go home to Jamaica to spread the news of this king of kings. After darshan, I had breakfast, went out doors to sit by one of the many gardens. By then, the news spread that the royal family of Belgium had left a few days ago - devotees pointing at the new residence for VIPs where the royal couple had stayed. Things happened so quickly in Puttaparthi, there's a criss cross of culture, religious, greetings, smiles from folks you have never met.



The mesmerizing moment of Sai Darshan!

An Indian man about 25-30 years of age came over to me as if we knew each other for years. He began to tell me about his father who had deserted the family in Uganda. As a youngster, he went to England with his mother and two sisters. While this unavoidable chit chat was going on, he pointed to his mother, one of his sisters and surprisingly, to his father. They were seated not far away from us. Financially, he had done very well in Birmingham, England. The father, now old, in his seventies, turned up at their home. He could hardly control the pent up anger he had for his father. So as not to break his mother's heart, he took the father in. They had just arrived from Shirdi. Later I understood that the family was seeking a bride for him.

He must have thought I was an African. Realizing I'm a Jamaican, he urged me to give him a solution to his father's disposition. I said, "The truth is, you must be careful, hatred can get the better of you, his only son. You must show him unending love." He seemed surprised; then he invited me to come and meet the family. All I could see in all of them was sweetness so warm and healthy.

I left them and began to explore the ashram. I had planned on going to Sai Baba's birth place but the crowd at the Ganesha gate forbids me to try going any further. After some perseverance, I finally got through the gates. Someone shouted to me "where are you going?". It was the Indian from Birmingham - he seemed elated. He thanked me for my advice then I told him that I was going to Sai Baba's birth place. He decided to join me.

When we got there, the crowd was as thick as the Great Wall of China. You could not find a way through it. We ended up going to Sai Baba's father's and mother's graves. By this time, it was about eleven. How time flies at this place or there seem to be no time at all. As we were heading back to the Ganesha gate, he said, let's have a cup of tea. We had, by then, reached the Sai towers hotel/bookshop. We went inside, he ordered. The tea shop was filled with westerners. A lot of vibrant chatting and laughter gladdened the atmosphere. We all wore scarves bearing the name of the country from which you came. In my case, I had to wear the U.K. scarf, being the only Jamaican.

Only in India, the following could have happened: A lady from England made a dramatic entrance like an actress entering a Hollywood movie scene. She kept looking at the occupants as she walked to and from, scrutinising the faces at the tables. Then she saw me and the man from Birmingham - she then gesticulated to us, saying the U.K. devotees will meet with Sai Baba for interviews at 2 0' clock. The entire tea shop was thrown in a humdrum when I screamed at the top of my voice with tears in my eyes 'I cannot see Him! It's not possible, I'll die!' I was quickly guided out of the tea house by the English lady, telling me to get a hold of myself. "You cannot miss such an opportunity; can you imagine the thousands who would like this to happen to them?" "I'm not worthy", I retorted.

By this, she and the Indian from Birmingham had already guided me through the Ganesha gate.



**The Author with Swami's Chair,
specially designed by him**

3

The Interview

After lunch, I got dressed all in white. I thought to myself when leaving Pullet Hall a few days ago, one of my aunts (my mother's sister) waving as I was going to the car, she shouted from her veranda "Please say thank you to Sai Baba for all of us!" (Since my mother died on the same night that I was born and I lost my father within a month thereafter, I was brought up by this Aunt. Practically, she was my mother). I turned to her and said "I can only see him as a dot in the distance; I'll never get close to send your regards." "Well anyway", she *insisted*, "still thank him for us!" The crowd in the Mandir was so vast.

We were told a flag will be raised to signal us when to start walking towards the interview room. It was so moving when the flag went up and I started from my little corner. Several times I nearly fell as hands from amidst the crown began to stroke my feet, seems they were aware that myself and others were going to the interview room. There were ten of us – five women and five men (including the old man and his family). Sai Baba was already there! Oh what a lovely soul to soothe my troubled mind. We immediately were put at ease "Come, come sit! Oh, we need a few chairs – you young man (one of the devotees) go to my office and bring a chair."



Most of us sat on the floor, about three or four, including the old man, were given chairs to sit on. I never surmised he was so small – looking closely at him you swore you have met him before. He behaved just like a mother, welcoming her children who had travelled away from home, returning exhausted. Sai Baba seemed more glad to see us than we him. He then created Vibhuti (holy ash) for the women, and then returned to his seat. There was only one person between him and me. I was seated on the floor. I had all the chance to see this noble avatar at close range. "Any questions, any questions?" There was silence; we were all numb.

Then he turned to the young man, my roommate, seated next to me. Sai Baba looked at him hard, he then waved his hand and the most beautiful, green diamond stone ring appeared (I must be honest, I was not awed by his materialization as I have long believed if he wishes to create another world he could do with ease.

He said to the young man, "do you want this (the ring) or me?" The young man was stunned, he could not answer. Sai Baba with one breath blew out the ring. Many gasped. He then turned to the ladies - one lady he asked her "what does the cross symbolize?" She said she did not know. With a wave of his hand, this glorious gold cross on a golden chain appeared in his hand. He explained to her and to us how one must cross out the ego. He placed the cross around her neck and the other lady received the mother of Christ on a golden chain. A third lady got a two-stone diamond ring. "No question? No question?" he repeated. My Indian friend from Birmingham, to my utter surprise, began to complain to Sai Baba about his father. Sai Baba with a sharp and cutting rebuttal said "Stop it! You must love him!" The old man broke down in tears - this scene reminded me of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. The old man was almost flat out on the floor weeping. Sai Baba did not move from his chair but somehow he said gently "Come, come!" The old man literally crawled over to him. Sai Baba bent down and embraced him, then he materialized a very abstract golden ring, very Indian in design, and placed it on the old man's finger.

I have yet to see a scene as moving as that was. He comforted the old man and guided him back to his seat. After seeing that, I thought it was now time to leave for Jamaica. The old man's daughter asked for the healing of a family member. Sai Baba said ": I know, I will help." He did ask one lady where was her husband, she responded, he was travelling, then he raised his hand in the air and said "marriage is like a wife with a knife". We all burst out laughing. After a pause, a lady from England said, what about that little man from Jamaica? (Referring to me). He quickly settled her curiosity "that's not your affair." He said.

Then all hell broke loose.

4

The Inner View

He turned to me and said 'How is your aunt?' I screamed out, broke down, as I could not deal with this blessed invasion of knowing all. He shouted at me "Stop it." Then his voice became gentle, he said "come - come with me. We moved into his little office. Of course, I was half dead by this. He drew the curtain that divided us from the others.

He went straight to his desk where there were books, papers and a pen. His back was now turned to me. Three chairs lined the wall. I crept and sank myself in the chair at the far end, far from him. I still had the strength to watch him playing with the pen, opening it, closing it. I said to myself but that's how I behave, I'm addicted to pens. I can't find my pen, I go into frenzy. I only write with pens, the ink coming from the pen for me is like a spirit. He glanced at me; saw that I was way down the end in the last chain. Sai Baba said "Come up here and sit in this one", which was the chair closest to him. I cried out "Lord, have mercy on me" as I crept to the chair and sat down.



Then I said to myself, "What is he doing if he's going to give me something why doesn't he do it so I can go." He turned, said to me "Up! - get up" I was trembling, then came the truth "why do you worry so much, I'm here to take care of you, you are not to worry about a job, I'll look after you. Then came a blankness, I never knew I had lost consciousness until some months after I came home to Jamaica. He came closer, looked through me, seemed I'd recovered. "You do love Jesus", he asked. I boldly said "yes" then I looked at him and continued "I'm a devotee of yours". I was astounded by my own bravery.

Swami said "Then why do you worry so much? Believe me", He said in a Jamaican accent, to me in a whisper "we are not to talk so loud, they might hear what we saying. I smiled; happiness got a hold of me as we left the room, I ahead of him. By this, none of us knew it was nearly one hour and twenty minutes we were with Swami. I was the last person to be interviewed. After entering the main interview room, Swami beckoned to us "It's time to go". We all got up, somewhat reluctantly; we headed towards a door, a very large door I can't remember us coming through that door. Then I nearly forgot that I had two letters from Jamaican devotees. On leaving, I stopped and showed Him the letters. He indicated a small basket which had other letters. I placed the letters in the basket and then joined the others.



As we all got to this large double door His voice thundered "You", referring to me "open the door". I quickly passed the others, went up to the door, again I became very nervous as I did not see the lock or bolt to turn so the doors would open.

The others stood watching and made no attempt to help me to find the bolts. Sai Baba again with a gentler shout said "I said open the door!" Still looking for the bolts, I said "Lord have mercy!" I pulled it, the door was now freed to be pushed open. I presume Swami could go ahead of us, a third time he said "Open the door". I mustered all the strength I could and pushed the doors apart. It seems during our interview, hundreds if not close to a thousand more devotees had entered the Mandir. It was like an ocean with waves as eyes sat staring at us and Swami.

We froze, then slowly we waded ourselves through the animated great souls who seemed to have come to greet us.

5

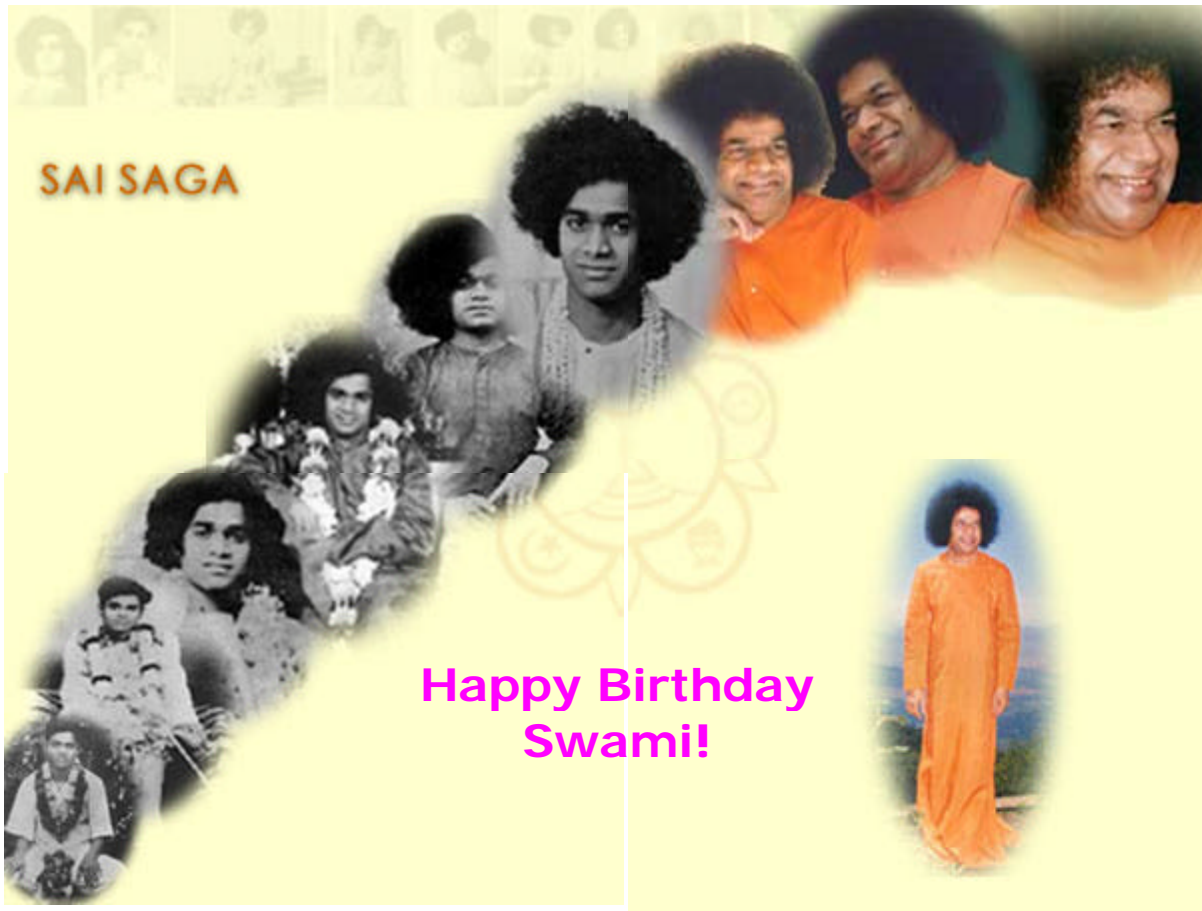
The Post Script

Foot notes

1. The old man died one year later in March. His family took his ashes back to Puttaparthi and placed it in the Chitavati River. The ring was returned to Sai Baba.
2. A Robe of Sai Baba was taken to Jamaica in the 1970's. A Mr. Mahendra Raizada from India, through government to government programme was assigned to Jamaica from India. His post was with the Ministry of Social Security and Sports. Raizada was a devotee of Sri Satya Sai Baba before leaving India. Sai Baba gave him one of his robes – Sai Baba said to him *“take this to Jamaica and all who (see it or touch it) will be blessed”*. In 2002, Mr. George Ingram, along with Hari and a few friends came to Pullet Hall with the robe.
3. My aunt died this year (on 31 Oct 2005), at the age of 100.
4. I returned to India a third time in 2002 to visit Whitefield. This trip was just as powerful as the other two. On the plane down from London to Bombay, on this last trip, I kept saying “Swami” how I would love to write a book and call it “From Pullet Hall to Puttaparthi.” (Pullet Hall is a tiny village where I hail from in Jamaica.)
5. One morning at darshan I was in the middle of a huge crowd. He spotted me in spite of the crowd, smiled, and then beckoned me to bring forward the letter I had. It was a photograph of all of us who went to Pullet Hall, with the robe. On the morning of darshan when I would leave for London, He again stopped before me, glanced at me as if to say, *“Go ahead and write.”* And, here is an excerpt from the book.
6. The manuscript for the complete book is ready and we seek His blessings to publish the book soon.



Jai Sairam.



Celebrating 80 Years of Divine Love!

*Presented at the Lotus Feet of
Our Beloved Bhagawan
Sri Sathya Sai Baba
On His 80th Birthday
On November 23, 2005*

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