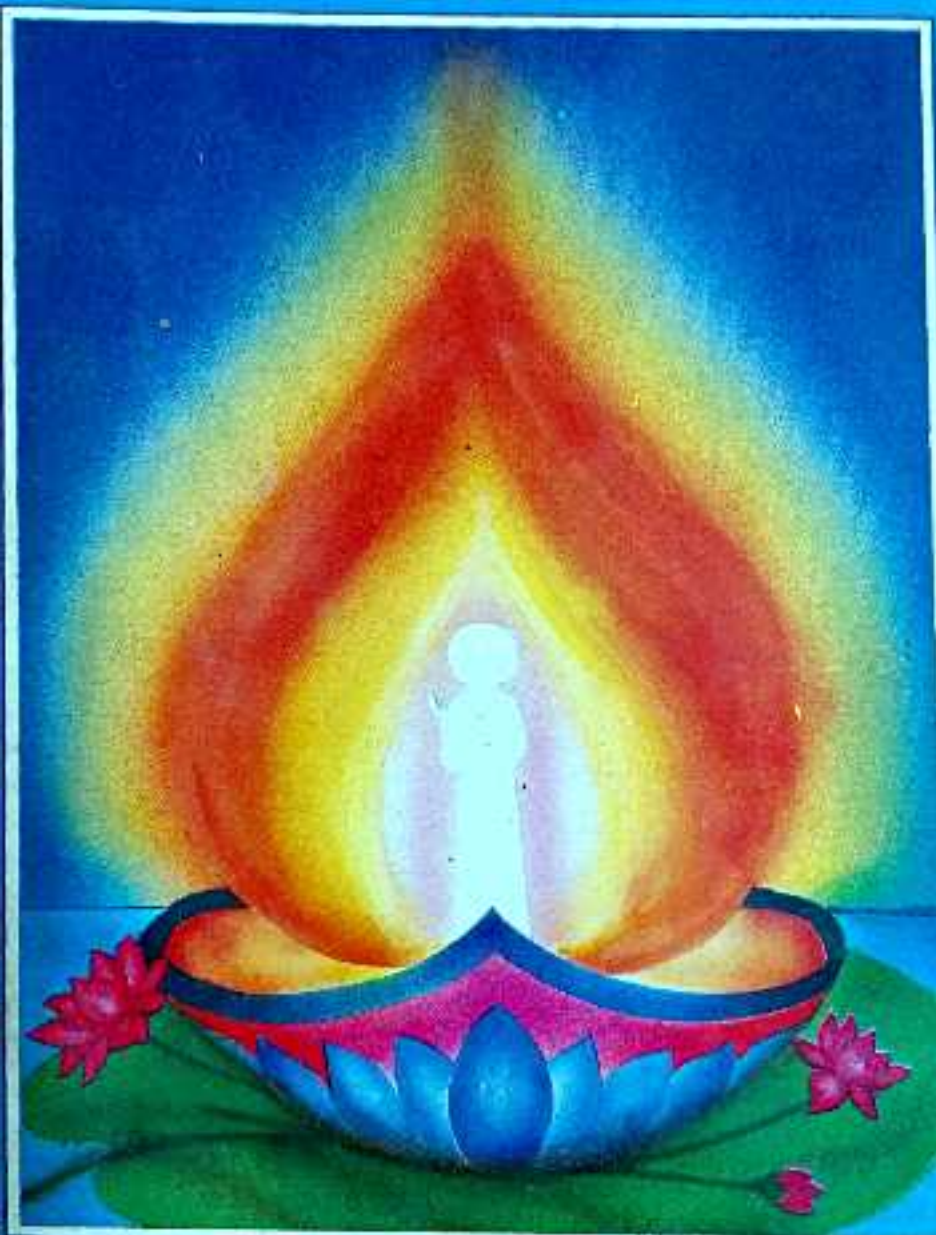


SATHYAM SIVAM SUNDARAM
PART I





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IN HUMAN FORM

This is the story of the Lord, come in human form. He incarnated at a quiet little village, Puttaparthi by name, thirty five years ago.

Puttaparthi is a hamlet that has carved out a niche for itself in the hearts of the people of the area, by legends that sanctify the memory and a history that inspires the young. The name is derived from 'Putta', which means an ant-hill in which a snake has taken up its abode and 'Parthi', which is a modified form of Vardhini or multiplier. A thrilling legend endeavours to explain the origin of this place-name to the curious inquirer.

Long, long ago, the village was known as Gollapalli or Home of Cowherds, a designation reminiscent of the leelas of Sri Krishna and redolent with music of His Flute. It was the abode of prosperous gopalas and the cattle of this place were sleek and strong and beautiful to behold. The cows yielded copious milk, thick and sweet beyond compare; every home was rich in butter and ghee! One day, a cowherd noticed that his favourite cow had no milk in its udder when she returned from the grazing grounds on the hills and when he later secretly watched her movements, he was astonished at her behaviour. For, she slid out of the shed, leaving her tiny calf to nose about with her sisters and proceeded in a bee-line to an ant-hill on the out-skirts of the village. He followed her to this rendezvous, only to witness an even more astounding spectacle! A cobra issued from the mound, raised itself on its tail and applying its lips gently to her teats drank the milk, in glee! Enraged at the loss to which he was subjected by this wily trick, the villager lifted a stone over his head and taking good aim, heaved it right on top of the cobra. Writhing in pain, the serpent threw an angry curse on all the gopalas of the village and, its last words foretold that the place will soon be full of ant-hills, which will multiply endlessly. And, so it happened, soon! The cattle declined in numbers and health; they could not



PRASANTHI NILAYAM

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