

## LEADING A SPIRITUAL LIFE:

# Self-Sacrifice

October 2012

### Getting Inputs from YAs around the nation

*We surveyed the YAs across the nation on their insights on this very important topic. Please see the responses throughout the newsletter.*

### What does sacrifice mean to you?

*Sacrifice means giving up your desires for the overall benefit of others. There is no specific size for a sacrifice. Making a sacrifice is making a rational decision, based on what you believe in and what you think is the right thing to do at that very moment.*

*Sacrifice means giving up something (time, materialistic comforts, first row seat at darshan, etc) for someone else without expectation of any reward or glory.*

### What does self-sacrifice mean to you?

*Self-sacrifice blends in with the topic of ceiling on desires. When you make self-sacrifices for the betterment of others, you are placing a ceiling on desires. Self-sacrifice is when you personally give up your time and energy for something else.*

*Giving less importance to one's own desires over something which is believed to be a better cause*

*To give up whatever gain maybe accrued for the self in order to benefit another's.*

*"My life is for the sake of humanity at large. The happiness of people is the happiness of Swami."*

**-Baba (Oct 20, 2001)**

It was a crisp autumn morning in Uravakonda and a packed assembly of high school students. After Sathya had finished leading the morning prayers, He threw the books away and declared, 'I do not belong to you. I am leaving; I have work to do. Those devoted to Me are calling Me. I am no longer your Sathya. I am Sai Baba.'

The entire township was electrified by young Sathya's announcement. At a tender age of 14, Sathya relinquished worldly attachments and personal happiness to serve and uplift humanity. More than 7 decades later, Swami's life and teachings continue to inspire and transform millions, irrespective of nationality or religion. The educational institutions, hospitals, water projects and service activities undertaken by devotees across the globe is a testimony to Swami's life which has been a silent saga of pure love and sacrifice.

Swami is the epitome of Self-sacrifice. However, when we observe nature and society closely, we will find other great examples of sacrifice. It seems that sacrifice is coded into the DNA of the Universe and is essential for creation, survival and evolution. As in the Lion King, Mufasa explained to baby Simba, 'everything we see, exists in a delicate balance and we are all connected in this great circle of life.' So, how do we manifest, sustain and expand this spirit of sacrifice that is a part of our DNA? In the previous editions, we learnt about Self-confidence and Self-satisfaction as the foundation and the walls for building a spiritual life. How does it lead to Self-sacrifice?

Join us and others on this exciting journey with Swami as our GPS. In this newsletter and study circle, we will read inspiring stories and insights from Swami. We will also learn how the world's religions uphold sacrifice and discuss real life scenarios to understand, practice and ultimately experience the joy of our oneness through Self-sacrifice.

Happy reading!  
Jai Sai Ram!



## Reviewing Self-Confidence and Self-Satisfaction (Newsletters 1 and 2)

Take a moment to think back to the previous newsletters and study circle documents on the topics of self-confidence and self-satisfaction. Reflect on what you have learned on these topics and how you have practiced it.

### Reflection Questions:

- 1) a) Have you seen your self-confidence grow in the last few months? Please give some examples.  
b) How can you develop your self-confidence even further?
- 2) Think back to a situation where you had fear to embark on something. Based on what you have learned and practiced so far, will self-confidence help you face it or react to it differently?
- 3) a) Have you consciously practiced self-satisfaction?  
b) Have you been able to recognize your acts of self-satisfaction? In other words, have you been able to realize that you are happy/satisfied with things that you might not have been before?  
c) Has this feeling of self-satisfaction been constant or momentary? How can we strive to make this a permanent feeling?
- 4) How can self-confidence and self-satisfaction lead us to self-sacrifice.

**Activity:** 1) Express in terms of a cartoon, an image, a poem, words, lines, or any other form of 'art', how you visualize self-confidence. Here is an example-

*"I want you to be leaders to protect the world. Leaders like lions, self-reliant, courageous, majestic and just."*



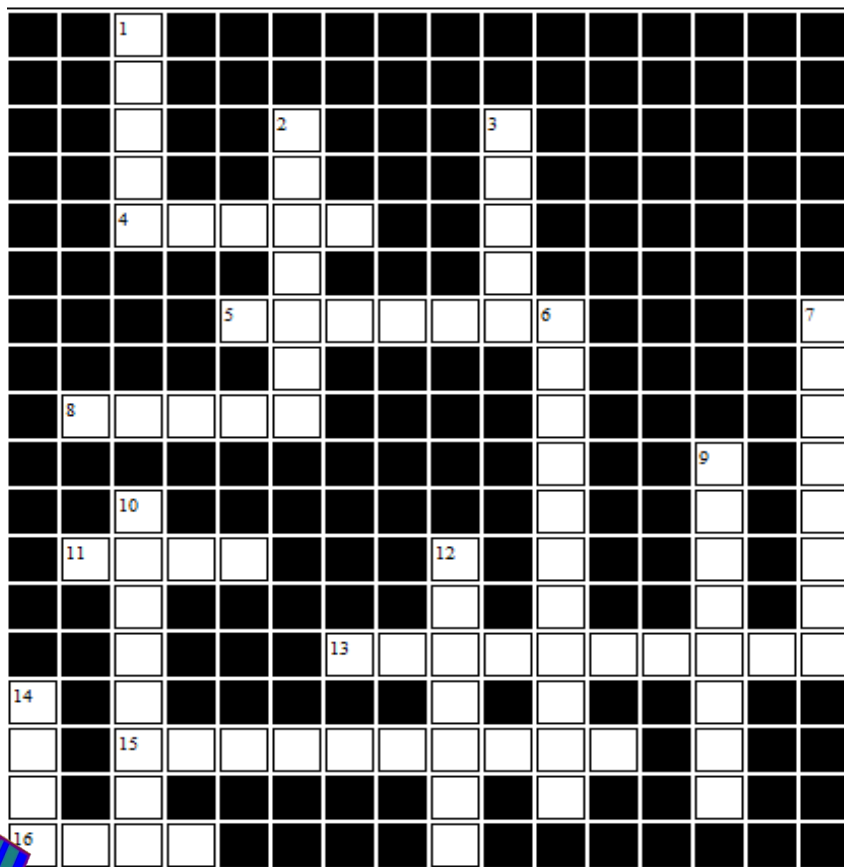
Low Confidence



Self-Confidence



## Self Confidence & Self Satisfaction: A Review



Across

4. Practical tip on building self-confidence: Listen to the \_\_\_\_\_ guidance.
5. Self-satisfaction can be practiced by: Praticce ceiling on \_\_\_\_\_.
8. When we rejoice in newer and newer opportunities to serve the Lord, life will become verily \_\_\_\_\_. (Hint: Prema Vahini)
11. By ignoring the faults of others as negligible, we can cultivate \_\_\_\_\_. (Hint: Prema Vahini)
13. Self-satisfaction can be practiced by: Follow the inner voice with \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Self-Satisfaction can be explained using several attributes, one of which is \_\_\_\_\_.
16. Swami says, "Self Confidence is the foundation, Self Satisfaction is the wall, Self Sacrifice is the roof. and Self Realization is \_\_\_\_\_."

Down

1. Self confidence means doing anything with confidence that \_\_\_\_\_ is the the doer. (Hint: YA responses on self confidence)
2. One can eliminate the feeling of mine and thine by feeling \_\_\_\_\_. (Hint: Prema Vahini)
3. Developing self-confidence leads to internal \_\_\_\_\_ and happiness.
6. Seeing all beings with as much as faith and love as one has in oneself is called \_\_\_\_\_. (Hint: Prema Vahini)
7. Practical tip on building self-confidence: Follow the \_\_\_\_\_ received.
9. Developing self-confidence promotes love and faith for \_\_\_\_\_ within.
10. Self-satisfaction can be practiced by: Loving \_\_\_\_\_ unconditionally.
12. An example of a person/role model who achieved great success through self-confidence is \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Practical tip on building self-confidence: Accept the results as His \_\_\_\_\_.

1) Repeat this activity for self-satisfaction. Please submit your drawings to [saiyausa.net/](http://saiyausa.net/)!

## Are acts of sacrifice/ self-sacrifice important?

*Sacrifice and self-sacrifice are important as these values allow one to experience the bliss of true love. The one who sacrifices is a true devotee says our Lord.*

*Yes! It helps one think beyond oneself.*

*Yes they are important, because when sacrificing your utmost desires, you feel that closer attachment to god. You are also doing a service to another person, when making a sacrifice. In the end, the path to divinity is making sacrifices during your life.*



## Do You Know?

**What was this American sprinter's act of self-sacrifice in the Summer 2008 Olympics in Beijing?**

## Understanding the topic: What is Self-Sacrifice?

*Let us read through a conversation between 3 young adults to see their perspective on self-sacrifice.*



**Sai:** I have been learning about "self-sacrifice" recently, and this topic is still a little abstract to me.

**John:** Well, maybe we can think about some examples to understand it a little better. During finals, I can't play computer games. So I sacrifice my fun for my duty.

**Krishna:** I couldn't watch last night's game because I had to meet a work deadline. There went my weekend.

**Sai:** I had to stop and sacrifice my tennis lessons back in high-school. I couldn't manage my advanced courses and all the extra research I was doing. But guys, I think we're missing the point. We seem to be talking about doing our duty. Is it really a sacrifice to re-prioritize our activities so that we focus on the prime responsibility of the moment?

**Krishna:** Hmmm, you may be right there. But I must admit - I definitely felt like I was losing or giving up something. And I can't say it was necessarily for a reward. Maybe doing well in an exam feels good. But I'm not sure about working on a weekend to support your company. I don't think I gained anything.

**John:** Well, to add to that, I'm giving up soda. I'm surely sacrificing tasty for healthy.

**Sai:** Hey but do we always have to gain something better while sacrificing something else? Desire seems to get stitched in right there when we start expecting things in return.

**John:** And that seems contrary to the very import of sacrifice.

**Krishna:** Come to think of it, we are confusing doing the right thing without any expectation with sacrifice. And that brings us back to square one.

**Sai:** Maybe we can understand it better if we think of role models. When I think of sacrifice, my parents come to mind first. Parents sacrifice so much of their time, energy and comforts to make sure that their kids are cared for.

**John:** Yeah, and they do it selflessly. They don't expect us to return the favor.

**Krishna:** Or a role model like Mother Theresa or Martin Luther King Jr. Mother Theresa sacrificed all material joys in order to serve her fellowmen.

**John:** And Martin Luther King Jr. sacrificed his life to

empower African-Americans for eternity.

**Sai:** The undercurrent of these examples is selflessness and lack of expectation. I think it goes even beyond that. One must truly have love above and beyond oneself to truly sacrifice.

**Krishna:** That is true. This Memorial Day, I was just reflecting on all those national heroes who sacrificed their lives for the security of all citizens. Their love for their own selves was overpowered by their love for the greater good of all. It is symbolic of placing our small concerns and wishes below what really matters. After all, we are all one.

**Sai:** Yes, the spirit of oneness or the underlying unity of all must be appreciated to truly sacrifice.

**John:** We can also think of self-sacrifice as giving up our negative qualities like anger or ego. Swami has been urging us to overcome them. In the process, we will be sacrificing our lower impulses.

**Krishna:** That's a great point! So, I see a few important points in our discussion. Self-sacrifice is something we perform with love, without any expectations, and with the spirit of oneness and unity with all.

**John:** And that spirit of love, unity and selflessness are but attributes of God and divinity!

**Sai:** So, we can all start by consciously sacrificing our lower impulses. Next, in all our thoughts, words and acts, we can practice remembering our inner divinity in place of identifying ourselves with doership or ego. Eventually, we can pray to be hollow instruments for Swami to play his music through. That will be the pinnacle of self-sacrifice!



## What various religions say on Self-sacrifice

### Islam

The Qur'an reveals a very important truth, **"You will not attain true goodness until you give of what you love."** (Surah Al 'Imran: 92) Self-sacrifice, one of the basic moral qualities that allows people to attain real goodness, can enable individuals to give up, happily and without a second thought, all that they own, love, and value. When necessary, they will endure every difficulty and exert all of their energy for the sake of their values and loved ones. When faced with choosing between their own advantage and that of their loved ones, they will forego their own benefit and make the greatest physical and emotional sacrifice that they can for their loved ones.

### Zoroastrianism

To Thee as a sacrifice Zarathustra offers the very life and being of his self; He dedicates the first fruits of his loving thoughts to Ahura Mazda; He offers the best of his words and deeds and willing obedience to the Divine Law. (Avesta, Yasna 33.14)

### Confucianism

The Master said, "The determined scholar and the man of virtue will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their virtue. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their virtue complete." (Analects 15.8)

### Hinduism

Man, in truth, is himself a sacrifice. (Chandogya Upanishad 3.16.1)

"Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaike Amritatvamanusu" Immortality can be attained only through sacrifice; neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer it. (MahaNarayana Upanishad)

### Christianity

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

### Judaism

"Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the L-rd, and He will have compassion on him; and to our G-d, for He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:7)

### Buddhism

In accepting the true Dharma, may I abandon body, life, and property, and uphold the true Dharma. (Lion's Roar of Queen Srimala 3)

## Is there a difference between sacrifice and self-sacrifice? If yes, what is it?

*I don't believe there is a difference in self-sacrifice and sacrifice...*

*I think self-sacrifice is more focused on giving up something you desire in order to give something to someone (or something) else. Self-sacrifice feels more specific with regards to there being a recipient to the act of sacrifice.*

*Sacrifice could be giving up anything .. Self-sacrifice would involve giving up things one likes or involve giving up on one's time.*

## What makes performing acts of self sacrifice difficult or easy?

*You are making a sacrifice, because you would rather do something else at that point in time. It's difficult, because our minds think of what "we" want to do first, naturally. Putting yourself in another person's shoes, helps make this decision easier.*

*Difficult - When in a difficult situation, allowing others happiness to come before yours  
Easy - When you see positive results of your self-sacrifice. This also helps the next time you are put in a situation where you need to decide whether to sacrifice or not.*

*Being able to perform acts of self sacrifice become easy as one evolves in their spiritual journey.*

## Cultivating Self Sacrifice

*"Life itself is a Yajna (Sacrificial rite). To make human life an oblation (offering) in the sacred fire of duties and actions is itself a Yajna. To get rid of one's bad qualities is Yajna. Every individual who seeks to lead an ideal life, to achieve bliss and attain self-realization has to cultivate the spirit of sacrifice. Yajna is the means to lead one from sorrow to happiness, adversity to prosperity, darkness to light. Human life can be worthwhile only when it is based on sacrifice or the quality of renunciation. Thereby not only can it become meaningful but Divinity can also be experienced."*

- Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume 16

### Why should we cultivate self-sacrifice?

To sacrifice is to let go. Love is our very nature and sacrifice is an expression of that love. Through a spirit of sacrifice in everything that we think and do, we make ourselves more and more aligned with our Divine source and in the process feel light and joyful.

*Do not accumulate impediments; renounce little by little and get into the attitude of sacrifice. Try to be of help to others to the extent of your capabilities. - SSS vol. 6*

As we climb higher and higher up the mountain of self - realization, sacrificing our ego makes the climb easier and faster.



### How should we cultivate self-sacrifice?

It is very important to take up this endeavor of practicing self-sacrifice slowly and with deliberation so that we do not get overwhelmed. Every spiritual aspirant has certain tendencies and influences from the environment they are in. If we start letting go of too much too fast, consciously or unconsciously there might be a feeling of expectation of being rewarded for acts of sacrifice. These feelings of expectation must always be kept in check because self-sacrifice is a reward in itself. These acts of self-sacrifice should be done silently with focus on Swami or the Divine within.

While consciously engaging in thoughts or acts with a spirit of self-sacrifice, it is a good idea to ask the following questions - Does it make me feel happy and peaceful? Do I feel the need to be rewarded for this act of self-sacrifice? If we feel unhappy or restless with subtle tendencies of expectation and reward, it is a good idea to take a step back and re-evaluate the reasons underlying these emotions.

As always, it is helpful to internally ask for Swami's help and guidance in this process. Every act done in the spirit of silent self-sacrifice leads to blossoming of the Divinity within each one of us.

As we progress consciously along this path, there will come a time where every act, every thought of ours will be filled with the spirit of self-sacrifice without our consciously being aware of it.

### Practical Tips for Cultivating Self-Sacrifice

1. Go out in nature and dwell on how nature is self-sacrifice in action. [examples from picture]
2. During the day remind yourself that you are an instrument of Divine will. That way you will have sacrificed the ownership and rewards of your action.
3. Keep a journal and systematically work on one undesirable habit a week. You can also use Phyllis Krystal's method of cutting the ties with undesirable traits like anger, jealousy, envy and greed.
4. Every week make a conscious effort of devoting some time in service activities and at the same time closely monitoring how you feel after engaging in service activities.
5. Practice Ceiling on desires with respect to food, time, money and energy.
6. Every week, try to make the habit of doing something (a favor, running an errand) for somebody else.

# STORY CORNER

## *The Praying Hands*

Back in the fifteenth century, in a tiny village near Nuremberg, lived a family with eighteen children. Eighteen! The father, a goldsmith by profession, worked almost eighteen hours a day to merely keep food on the table.

Despite their seemingly hopeless condition, two of the children dreamed of pursuing their passion for art. However, they knew having their father finance the education at the Academy in Nuremberg would be nearly impossible. After many long discussions late at night, the two boys finally worked out a pact. They would flip a coin. The loser would go work in the mines and earn money to support his brother at the academy. Then, four years later, the brother at the academy would sell his artwork and provide for the other brother's education, possibly working in the mines if necessary.

One Sunday morning after church they tossed a coin. The younger brother, Albrecht Durer, won the toss and went off to Nuremberg. Albert Durer, the elder, went into the dangerous mines. Albrecht's work at the academy was an immediate sensation. Albrecht returned home to a festive dinner punctuated with music and laughter. Shortly after, Albrecht rose from the head of the table to drink a toast to his brother for the years of sacrifice that made his dream possible. His closing words were, "And now, Albert, blessed brother of mine, now it is your turn. Now you can go to Nuremberg to pursue your dream, and I will take care of you." All

heads turned in eager expectation to the far end of the table where Albert sat, tears streaming down his pale face, shaking his lowered head from side to side while he sobbed and repeated, over and over, "No ...no ...no ...no."

Finally, Albert rose and wiped the tears from his cheeks. He glanced down the long table at his family, and then, holding his hands close to his right cheek, he said softly, "No, brother. I cannot go to Nuremberg. It is too late for me. Look ... look what four years in the mines have done to my hands! The bones in every finger have been smashed at least once, and lately I have been suffering from pain so badly in my right hand that I cannot even hold a glass to return your toast, much less make delicate lines on parchment or canvas with a pen or a brush. No, brother ... for me it is too late."

One day, to pay homage to Albert for his sacrifice, Albrecht Durer painstakingly drew his brother's abused hands with palms together and thin fingers stretched skyward. He called his powerful drawing simply "Hands," but the entire world almost immediately opened their hearts to his great masterpiece and renamed his tribute of love "The Praying Hands."



Source: Radio Sai

## *Quality over Quantity*

During the Super Specialty Hospital build, Swami was so intricately involved with the project that he would lose time with His students. This was difficult for the students, as much of Baba's time was now dedicated talking to people involved with the project. However, the boys understood the reason behind the change and now communicated with the Swami through letters.

One afternoon, Swami went back into His room after collecting letters from students and the public. A while later, the door opened and Swami came out holding a letter in His hand saying, "Who wrote this letter? Which boy wrote it?". The boy who had given the letter recognized it to be his. Filled with fear, he slowly got up. Swami asked, "You wrote this letter?" Fearing the worst, the boy just nodded. "Come here" said Swami.

Legs shaking and body trembling, the boy tip-toed to Swami. Swami then said to the people on the veranda, "You know what this boy has written and done? He says, 'Swami, I am very anxious to do something for the Hospital Project. If I were a rich man, I could have written a cheque. If I were a contractor, I could have contributed building materials. If I were an engineer, I could have helped with the construction. If I were a doctor, I could have opted to serve here. I cannot do any of these things because I am still a student here. Yet I want to do something. So Bhagavan, out of Love for You, I decided to save money, money that I would otherwise have spent on soft drinks, snacks and various personal conveniences. For example, I now wash my clothes instead of giving it to the Dhobi [washerman]. This way, I have been able to save a hundred rupees. Please allow me to offer this with Love at Your Lotus Feet. If this money could get even a little brick for the Hospital, I would consider myself Blessed!'" After saying all this, Swami held open the envelope and held up a hundred rupee currency note for all to see. Bhagavan then slowly said, "For Me, this hundred rupee note is more valuable than the biggest of cheques". Source: Radio Sai



## Individual Reading of Prema Vahini: Chapters 16-23

<http://vahini.org/downloads/premavahini.html>

### **The Story Behind Prema Vahini:**

*It was February 1958, Bhagawan at the age of 32 years, started a monthly magazine, aptly named as 'Sanathana Sarathi' to spread His message of love and divinity. The very first article in the inaugural issue was written by Bhagawan, 'Prema Vahini', or the 'Stream of Divine Love'. For 25 months till February 1960, Swami assiduously penned for mankind the challenges and characteristics, norms and nuances of Divine love. As Prof.Kasturi, eloquently expressed, "while reading the book you are in touch with the very source of Prema; while translating its message into action, you are visibly led by the Grace of the Lord Himself; while enjoying the thrill of Sadhana (spiritual discipline) prescribed here, you are responding to the majesty of the very Ocean of Mercy."*

**After reading Chapter 16-23 of Prema Vahini, test yourself by answering these questions**

### **Have you ever experienced or performed acts of self-sacrifice?**

*Yes every other Sunday morning.. I would love to Sleep in ..☺ but I know there are many people on the streets awaiting their morning breakfast.. so though not very easy .. I head out for Sandwich Service!*

*Every time a woman gives birth, she risks losing her own life. I have been the beneficiary of self-sacrifices of my mother who lovingly gave up her time, hobbies, preferences, etc. for my benefit and growth.*

### **Additional Inspiring Resources**

#### ◆ **Radiosai on Self-Sacrifice:**

[http://media.radiosai.org/journals/vol\\_09/01MAR11/03-musings\\_sacrifice.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/journals/vol_09/01MAR11/03-musings_sacrifice.htm)

#### ◆ **Swami's discourse on Self-Sacrifice and Ceiling on Desires:**

<http://www.saidarshan.org/baba/docs/d990314>

## **Test Your Knowledge!**

**1) According to Swami, Life is a collection of what?**

- (a) Knowledge
- (b) Samskaras (worldly existence, flux)
- (c) Mundane Events
- (d) Good Deeds

**2) What does Swami say is inevitable when it comes to life?**

- (a) Money
- (b) Fame
- (c) Death
- (d) Karma

**3) What is the key to everlasting bliss?**

- (a) Getting immersed in good works
- (b) Saturating the mind with the love of God
- (c) Infusing every moment of life with love
- (d) All of the above

**4) What is the object of all sadhana?**

- (a) Wealth
- (b) Perfect Health
- (c) Destruction of the mind
- (d) Moksha (Liberation)

**5) What religion does Swami say is the mother of all religions?**

- (a) Christianity
- (b) Islam
- (c) Buddhism
- (d) Sanathana Dharma

**6) What are the two eyes of Bharatha Desa (India)?**

- (a) Buddhi and Siddhi (Intellect and Fulfillment)
- (b) Vedas and Sastras
- (c) Wealth and Health
- (d) Truth and Peace

**7) What does the term Sarvaantharyaami mean?**

- (a) One who is the Eternal Witness
- (b) One who is Omnipresent
- (c) One who is full of Ananda (Bliss)
- (d) The great One

**8) When the individual name and form imposed by the Bhakta (devotee) are transformed into the Attributeless and the Formless, it is referred to as \_\_\_\_?**

- (a) Bhakti (Devotion)
- (b) Meditation
- (c) Yoga
- (d) Brahman

**9) Desires are a product of \_\_\_\_?**

- (a) "I" and "Mine" feelings
- (b) Wants and Needs
- (c) Having lots of money
- (d) Greed

**10) Yama (God of death) is associated with the \_\_\_\_, whereas Siva is associated with the \_\_\_\_?**

- (a) Death, Life
- (b) Evil, Good
- (c) Body, Jivi (Soul)
- (d) Materialistic, Spiritual