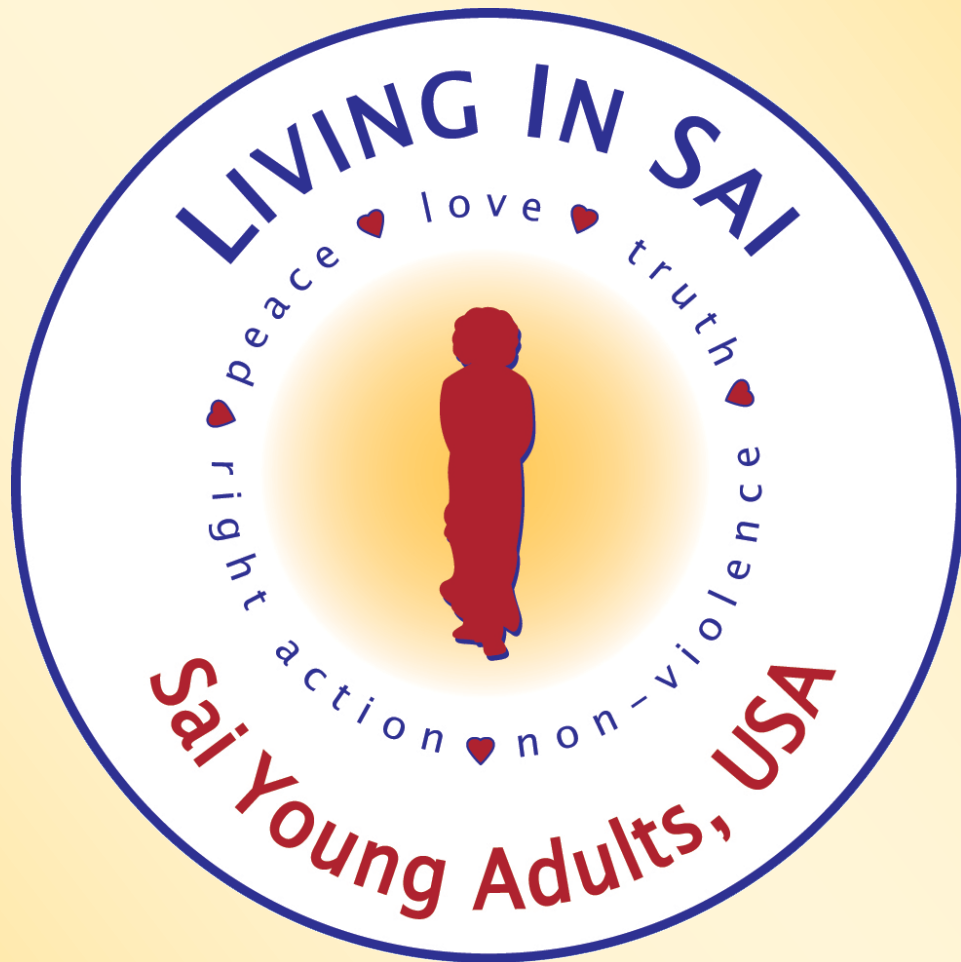
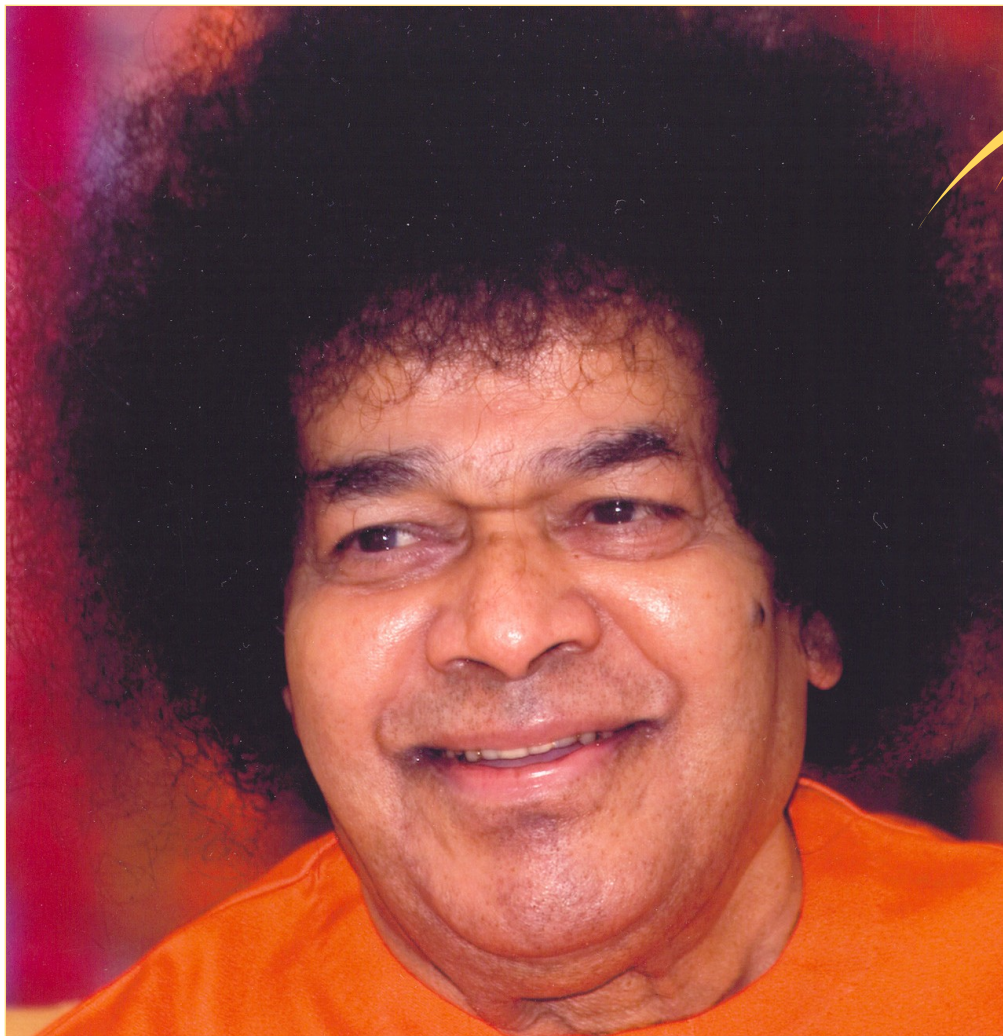


Spiritual Discipline Program



March, 2011



How Blessed are we to know Him today and how fortunate we are to have Him guide us!

In 2007 Swami graciously allowed His youth to take part in the Third World Youth Conference (WYC) in His presence. Youth across the world flocked to Puttaparthi to spend three beautiful days with our Bhagawan. He showered His unconditional love on His children. We took part in a spiritual discipline program, blessed by Swami, to enhance our self-transformation and connect us with our inner Self.

Four years later we continue our inward journey with the same nine spiritual disciplines that Swami blessed. Now is the time to follow the path that has been chosen by Him, with faith, love, discipline and confidence.

With Swami's guidance, our theme for 2011 is 'Living In Sai'. Starting in March, we will re-visit one discipline a month, through the end of the year. Each month we will publish a newsletter highlighting the discipline with experiences, practical tips, service and study circle ideas.

We hope you will take these newsletter nuggets and engage yourselves at the individual, local group, and regional levels, to learn from, and discuss with your Sai sisters and brothers.

May we continue our journey to realize our higher self, immersing ourselves in His Love; truly Living in Sai!

IN THIS ISSUE

Introduction to the Spiritual
Discipline Program 2011
Importance, Benefits of Chanting
Practical Tips, Testimonials
and more!

THE NINE DISCIPLINES

1. Practice *Namasmarana* - Chanting of The Lord's Name
2. Read Swami's Discourses/Books Daily and Conduct bi-monthly Youth Study Circles [Recommended text for study circle-Sandeha Nivarini]
3. Engage in Selfless Service as a Group
4. Sense control and Practice of Dietary Discipline
5. Learn to Speak Softly and Lovingly
6. Regular attendance and active participation in Sai Centers
7. Improve Communication and Interact Respectfully with Family
8. Practice Ceiling on Desires by not Wasting Food, Money, Energy and Time
9. Practice Daily Meditation and Prayer

Namasmarana /Chanting the Name of God

Devotee: "If we want to be with You always, what should we do?"

*Swami: "Namasmarana, Namasmarana! It can be achieved only by chanting God's Name.
Wherever Bhakthi dwells, God resides there".*

- Sathya Sai Anandadayi -

As we continue on this inward pilgrimage towards realizing our God Self, Young Adults are encouraged to participate in a monthly study circle on the spiritual discipline of the month. We pray to Swami to open up our hearts as we continue to understand and practice the inner significance of each of the disciplines.

*Please refer to the supplementary document for detailed information
on tools for conducting the study circle.*

As part of the Spiritual Discipline program YAs are encouraged to take up the study of *Sandeha Nivarini*. Literally meaning 'clearance of spiritual doubts', the book is a collection of spiritual dialogues with our Beloved Lord. The reading may be done as individual study or conference call based study circles once or twice a month in the local and regional groups. The focus chapters for the month of March are: **Dialogues I and II**

Sandeha Nivarini is available online at:
<http://www.sssbpt.info/english/vsandeha.htm>

WHAT IS NAMASMARANA?

Swami says, "If there is anything sweeter than all things sweet to the senses, more auspicious than holy objects, it is the Name of the Lord, because it is one with and inseparable from the Lord Himself who is Sat-Chit-Ananda Swaroopa. The Lord and His Name are one. In fact, the total sweetness of the Name may not be found in the Form. As soon as the name 'Mango' is mentioned, one is reminded of its juicy pulp, its incomparable sweetness and flavor. Instead, if an actual mango is placed in our hands, the doubt first arises in our mind whether it is sweet or sour; then again, one becomes aware of its skin, fiber, particular quality etc. When the name alone is mentioned, these things do not bother us. Only its sweetness comes to mind. Similarly, in the case of the Divine Form, there is the chance of awe mixed with respect and even fear eclipsing our love which sweetens the remembrance of God."

- Prasanthi Vahini



Importance and Benefits of Namasmarana/ Chanting the Name of God

Story: The Power of Chanting God's Name

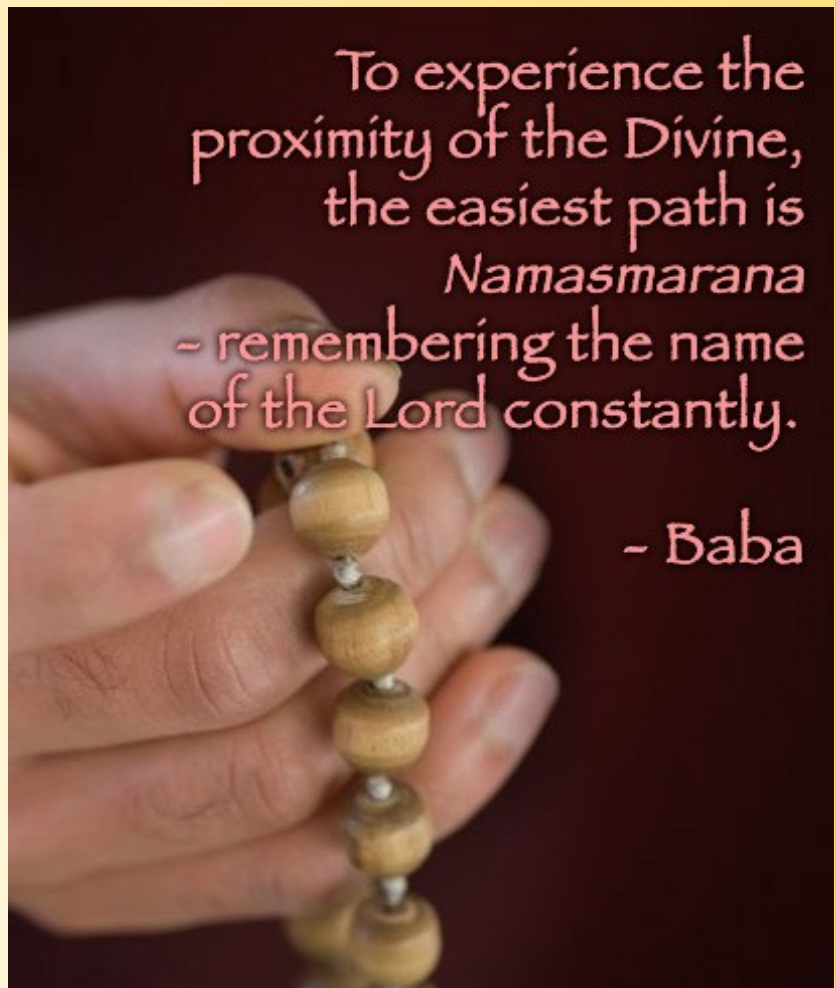
Complete story and discussion questions found in the supplementary document

One example of the power of chanting God's name is the story of Hanuman. Hanuman was given the task of crossing the mighty ocean in search of Mother Sita. With the power of Lord Rama's name, he crossed the mighty ocean in one leap and reached Lanka. Similarly, chanting the name of the Lord is sufficient enough to help us cross this ocean of life.



However there is more to the power of God's name than just crossing the ocean. It is said that after accepting Lord Rama's sandals, his brother Bharatha lived in a hermitage. He passed his life constantly repeating Rama's name. No one could tell the difference between Lord Rama and Bharatha. He was in every sense just like Lord Rama. Due to the constant chanting of the Divine Name, he began to resemble the Lord. This is indeed the power of chanting His name.

Constantly chanting God's name does not just help us cross the ocean of life, but also helps us realize the Ultimate Truth that we are not different from God.



To experience the proximity of the Divine, the easiest path is Namasmarana - remembering the name of the Lord constantly.

- Baba

Beads of Love - Namasmarana as a means to Selfless Service

Young Adult Testimonial

Beads of Love, is a service-sadhana initiative to channelize the positive energy within us and share Swami's Love with those in need. YAs were given beads, and they chanted 108 Gayatris with each bead, any day of the week as per their convenience. The goal is to use these 'charged' beads to make bracelets for cancer patients, and pass on the positive energy and Love to soothe their pain. We recently extended this to our center members, and the response so far has been very positive across the different age groups, and we hope to expand this energy and Love within ourselves and to the whole of creation.



Suggested Tips to Practice Chanting the Lord's Name

♦ Service and Chanting His Name — Turn "your work" into "His work"

Take His name before, during, and after all work. Your work may be related to your studies, office, or personal life.

Before starting any work, offer it to Swami. This prayer is one way to request Swami to use you as His instrument:

*"O Lord, take my love, and let it flow in fullness of devotion to Thee;
O Lord, take my hands, and let them work incessantly for Thee;
O Lord, take my soul, and let it be merged in One with Thee;
O Lord, take my mind and thoughts, and let them be in tune with Thee;
O Lord, take my everything, and let me be an instrument to work for Thee."*

Chant His name, when possible, during your work. Not only does it make your mind calm and pure but your work becomes His work. Even the smallest prayer can have so much power.

When the work is complete, thank Him for the opportunity you received to serve. Show your gratitude by remembering He was the doer all along.

- ♦ Offer all your tasks at His lotus feet by silently repeating "Om Sri Sai Ram"
- ♦ While driving/walking to work, silently chant the Gayatri Mantra while focusing on the heart. Invoke Swami's presence within, and ask for His guidance in your daily activities
- ♦ Sing/Listen to devotional songs while doing household work like cooking or cleaning
- ♦ Join in weekly 108 Gayatri Chanting offering via conference call

Every Thursday, 9:30 PM EST

Dial-in: 712-432-3900: Passcode - 438292#

- ♦ Reflect upon the process of remembering and chanting His name throughout the day.

How did you feel? If you had trouble remembering His name, what were the obstacles that prevented you in doing so? How would you plan to overcome these obstacles next time?

**"Charge every second of time with the Divine Current
that emanates from the Name..."**

**Practice at all times and under all circumstances,
with love and devotion, the remembrance of
the Name of the Lord"**

- Baba (Prasanthi Vahini)



Prayer Blankets - Sending Positive Energy Across Borders

Young Adult Testimonial

*"Fill this blanket with Your unconditional love oh Lord!
warming, comforting, enfolding and embracing.
May this provide a sacred source of security and well-being...
sustaining and embracing in good times
as well as difficult ones.
We make each knot with love and a prayer in our hearts...
May the children of Haiti be cradled in hope,
kept in joy, graced with peace,
and wrapped in love!"*

With this prayer on our minds, and Gayatris on our lips, YAs, adults and SSE children worked to put together fleece blankets for children in Haiti. The group had one goal in mind - to package and deliver Swami's healing love where it was needed most.

Blankets were sent to an orphanage in Haiti and our hearts were filled with joy when pictures of the children with their blankets were sent to us.



The smiles on their lips and hope in their eyes was Swami's gift to us!

This project brought service and chanting together in a beautiful way - Infusing positive vibrations into the blankets and the environment we created them in.

In other news...

* By Swami's Grace, the Sai-EP (Emergency Preparedness) project started in the summer of 2010. The vision for Sai-EP project is to "Prepare, Train and Network all Sai families to handle emergencies". All Young Adults are encouraged to actively participate.

Contact sairelief@gmail.com if you are interested in this project.

Has the practice of
Chanting the Lord's
Name transformed your
life in any way?

Do you incorporate
Chanting the Lord's
Name in your YA
service projects?

Share your experiences
in practicing this
spiritual discipline!

Please send your
testimonials to:

info@saiyausa.net

NEXT ISSUE

Stay tuned for the April
Newsletter to learn
more about our second
spiritual discipline -

Read Swami's Discourses/
Books Daily and Conduct
bi-monthly Youth
Study Circles



Showering His Sweet Nectarine Love...

USA Youth Pilgrimage 2011 Update

With great joy and gratitude to Him, we share with you an important update about the USA Sai Youth Pilgrimage 2011, and a wonderful blessing from our Beloved Swami.



During his recent trip to Puttaparthi, Dr. Narendra Reddy offered to Swami on our behalf, a Pilgrimage proposal card for His blessings and guidance. The proposal card contained details about our national Spiritual Discipline Program, a list of suggested programs and activities during our Pilgrimage to Parthi, and mention of the possible dates for our trip.



Picture of the card presented to Swami

Swami looked through the whole card, and when asked whether the USA youth should come during the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd week in August, Swami looked at the dates, then looked up and said, "Tell them to come for My Birthday!"

Through His direct guidance and blessings, our Beloved Swami has surprised us all with this opportunity to share His auspicious birthday with Him! May we take Swami's invitation as our motivation to further intensify our spiritual discipline and continue our inner journey towards self-transformation.

As His plans unfold, we will share with you more details about the exact dates for the Pilgrimage, and when to register. Surely, these plans will include being present in Puttaparthi for His Birthday on Wednesday,

November 23rd 2011, followed by the long Thanksgiving weekend.



Now, let us rejoice, let us pray,
and let us get ready to see our
Sai, to love our Sai,
to Live in Sai!

Spiritual Discipline Program

Study Circle Tips & Sandeha Nivarini Discussion Questions



Discipline #1

Namasmarana - Constantly Remembering and Chanting the Lord's Name

March, 2011

The objective of the study circle is to get a better understanding of:

1. What is *Namasmarana* - Constantly Remembering or Chanting God's Name?
2. Importance and Benefits of Constantly Chanting God's Name in our lives
3. How we can enhance the quality of our practice of this Spiritual Discipline

Study Circle Activity:

Start the study circle by chanting 3 Oms. Feel Swami's Love and Light in your hearts and visualize the Light fill the entire room engulfing everyone present in the room. Continue on with chanting 3 Gayatris as a group.

When finished, discuss the following questions:

1. What is the literal meaning and inner significance of the Gayatri Mantra?
2. Were you able to ponder over the meaning while chanting?
3. Analyze the thoughts you had while chanting the Gayatri Mantra. How often was your focus on Swami or the actual chant

As we contemplate on the above questions, it becomes necessary to understand what the real purpose of *Namasmarana* is and how can practicing this discipline help us in crossing the ocean of worldly life and in being who we really are. Let us start by considering the word "*Namasmarana*".

What is *Namasmarana*?

- ♦ "*Nama*" means the Name of the Lord. Any name that evokes a feeling of sacredness, beauty, and love can be thought to be the Name of the Lord.
- ♦ Examples: Om Sri Sai Ram, Gayathri Mantra, Hail Mary, Glory Be To The Father, Om Namah Shivaya, So Hum, Allah-Ho-Akbar, Om Mani Padme Hum, Shema Yisrael etc.
- ♦ "*Smarana*" means constant remembrance.
- ♦ Therefore, *Namasmarana* is the constant remembrance of the name of Lord.

Swami says, "If there is anything sweeter than all things sweet to the senses, more auspicious than holy objects, it is the Name of the Lord, because it is one with and inseparable from the Lord Himself who is Sat-Chit-Ananda Swaroopa. The Lord and His Name are one. In fact, the total sweetness of the Name may not be found in the Form. As soon as the name 'Mango' is mentioned one is reminded of its juicy pulp, its incomparable sweetness and flavor. Instead, if an actual mango is placed in our hands, the doubt first arises in our mind whether it is sweet or sour; then again, one becomes aware of its skin, fiber, particular quality etc. When the name alone is mentioned, these things do not bother us. Only its sweetness comes to mind. Similarly, in the case of the Divine Form, there is the chance of awe mixed with respect and even fear eclipsing our love which sweetens the remembrance of God." - Prasanthi Vahini

Namasmarana /Chanting the Name of God

Discussion Points:

1. Dwell on what is meant by “constant remembrance” of the Lord. What does it consist of?
2. Is *Namasmarana* limited only to chanting mantras and singing devotional songs?
3. Based on your discussion, how much of your daily life is spent in remembering the Lord, either in the form of chanting, singing or listening to devotional songs, or just in mere thought of Him.

Importance and Benefits of Namasmarana:

Swami Says, “The Name is the thunderbolt which will pulverize mountains of sin. It is the unfailing cure for the dreaded disease of Moha or delusion. It will lead you to release from the bondage of birth and death and will give you everlasting Bliss. I, therefore, advise you to resolve upon the quest of your Reality through the Sadhana of Namasmarana.”

- Prashanti Vahini P. 73

“It is only the sweetness in the Divine Name that makes our life worthwhile: it also helps us to attain the Goal of life. It is only by always having the Name on the tongue and in the mind that we conquer the influence of Maya or the delusion of the world.

- Namasmarana - A Universal Sadhana

A garland of extracts from Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s Discourses

Story: The Power of Constantly Chanting the Name of God



One prominent example of the power of constantly chanting God's name is the story of Hanuman - taken from the Hindu Scriptures.

Hanuman was entrusted the task of crossing the mighty ocean in search of Mother Sita. Hanuman was not sure about his strength and ability to cross the ocean - *the ocean of life*.

It was then that he was reminded of the power of Lord Rama's Name. Constantly repeating Rama's Name helped him assume a mighty form. And in a single leap, he was able to cross the ocean and reach Lanka, where Mother Sita was held captive.

This story shows us that just the name of the Lord is sufficient enough to help us cross this ocean of life.

However there is more to the power of the Name than just crossing the ocean.

When Hanuman returned back to Lord Rama after having met Mother Sita, the Lord hugged him and said that Hanuman was like a brother to Him on par with his own brother Bharatha. Bharatha was indirectly involved in the exile of the Lord to the forest along with Mother Sita and Lakshmana.

Why then did the Lord compare Hanuman who was considered His greatest devotee, to Bharatha?

After accepting Lord Rama's *Padukas* (sandals), Bharatha lived in a hermitage at the outskirts of *Ayodhya* (Lord Rama's Kingdom). There was not a moment when he did not chant His Name. When Lord Rama returned after fourteen years, the people of *Ayodhya*, the sages, hermits and everyone else could not tell the difference between Lord Rama and Bharatha.

Bharatha was in every sense just like Lord Rama. Due to constantly chanting the Divine Name, he began to resemble the Lord!

This is indeed the power of constantly chanting God's Name. Constant *Namasmarana* does not just help us cross the ocean of life, but also realize the Ultimate Truth that we are not different from God.

In Swami's words,

when we sing the glory of God, the Divine vibrations spread all around and the people who hear this, even from a distance, feel very happy. Divine music can confer solace even to children and animals. By hearing the Divine name, even the heart of a stone-hearted person will melt.

- Taken from Sai Young Adult Newsletter Archive, Winter 2004 -



Discussion and Practice

Discussion Points:

1. Have you experienced a situation where you have felt that chanting or remembering Swami's name has helped you overcome adversity or helped you accomplish a difficult task? If so, do you think *Namasmarana* changed the circumstances or changed something within you?
2. Reflect on what kind of changes we may see in our own selves by constant chanting or remembering God's name. How can we start to resemble Swami, not physically, but in being and in action by constantly practicing this discipline?
3. How can we practice remembering the Divine Name in environments like your workplace or school, when it may not be possible to chant the name of God or sing devotional songs out loud?
4. Recall any experiences at your workplace or school where you felt Swami's presence by remembering His name.

Now that we understand what *Namasmarana* is and the benefits that can come from practicing this spiritual discipline, let us move on to how we can best practice this sacred discipline.

How Can We Practice Constantly Remembering God's Name?

Swami mentions nearly endless ways one can practice this discipline:

- ♦ Vedic chanting, chanting the Gayatri Mantra, *Japa* (meditation), devotional singing, repeating 'Sohum' or 'I am God', listening to Swami's discourses, reading Sai books - these are all examples of *Namasmarana* because each of these examples allows our minds to turn inward on Swami.
- ♦ No matter what the means of practicing constant remembrance, it is the intent behind the discipline that Swami emphasizes.

As we practice remembering and chanting the Lord's name, how can we ensure that the practice does not become mechanical and that the true purpose of the discipline is not lost?

"The Name is a vocal image. When the Name is pronounced by the tongue and the Image is adored by the mind, these should not degenerate into mechanical routine.

The meaning of the Name and the content of the Form must, at the same time, inspire and illumine the devotee's Consciousness.

So, escape the routine: involve yourselves in the attitude of worship, deeply and sincerely. That alone will bring to you the requisite Strength and Courage, Peace and Joy from Him Who is within you." Namasmarana - A Universal Sadhana
A garland of extracts from Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Discourses

Closing Discussions

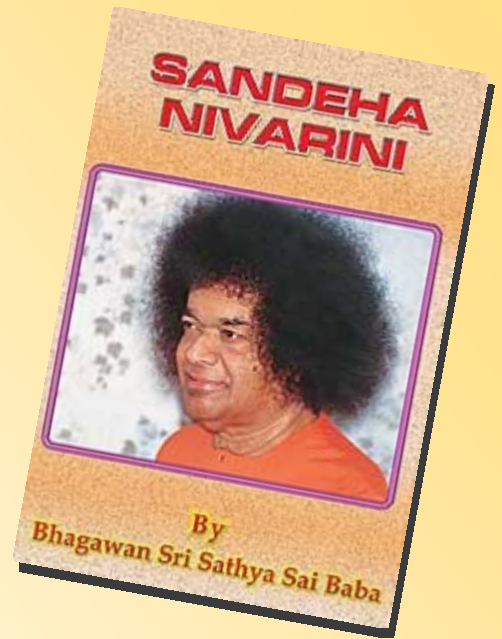
1. Recollect the discussion you had after the gayatri chanting at the beginning of the study circle. Based on what has been discussed, has your perception about the true purpose of chanting the Lord's name changed? If so, in what ways?
2. What is the connection between practicing *Namasmarana* with love and devotion and reflecting on the meaning and the significance of the mantra?
3. Reflect upon the process of remembering and chanting God's name throughout the day. How did you feel? If you had trouble remembering His name, what were the obstacles that prevented you in doing so? How can you try and overcome these obstacles in the future?



Sandeha Nivarini Discussion

As part of the Spiritual Discipline program YAs are encouraged to take up the study of *Sandeha Nivarini*. Literally meaning, “clearance of spiritual doubts”, the book is a collection of spiritual dialogues with our Beloved Lord. The reading may be done as individual study or conference call based study circles once or twice a month in the local and regional groups. The focus chapters for the month of March are: Dialogues I and II

Sandeha Nivarini is available online at:
<http://www.sssbpt.info/english/vsandeha.htm>



Preview of the focus chapters: Dialog II, page 10

Bhaktha: *Namaskaram (salutations), Swami.*

Swami: *Happy to see you. You seem very tired; and in this summer, travel is even more exhausting. Take rest for a little while. We can converse thereafter.*

Bhaktha: *When there is no peace of mind where can rest be got?*

Swami: *Well my boy, rest is for the sake of peace of mind. Once you have that peace, where is the need for rest? There is need for a bandage until the wound heals; after that, what is its use?*

Bhaktha: *Swami, just now my mind is restless. I cannot decide upon anything. I do not know what the reason is. What shall I do?*

Swami: *Well, no effect can take place without a cause. You do certainly know the cause of your present condition....Well, nothing else need be done: At such times of mental pain, do Namasmarana for a while sitting in a lonely place; or sing Bhajan songs loudly in a raised voice; or if that is not possible, spread the bed and sleep for some time. Thereafter you can think about all this.*

Discussion Points:

1. What is the meaning of Swami's words: "Once you have that peace, where is the need for rest"? Is a balance necessary between "God is the doer, take the name of God and one will have boundless energy" and "the physical body needs rest"? Why or why not?
2. What are some possible reasons why constant chanting/remembrance of God's name eases "mental pain"? Is the effect immediate? What has been your experience?
3. What are some practical ways of remembering to chant God's name as recommended by Swami? What has worked for you?
4. Discuss any pivotal points in life where an impossible situation became possible with repetition of God's name. Share any unique thoughts you've had during these times.
5. From this month's reading, what is your "take- home" message?

