

Living In Sai

Practice Ceiling on Desires by not wasting
Food, Money, Time and Energy

Dear Sai Young Adults,

Sai Ram! With Bhagawan's grace and inspiration, we are pleased to share with you our next spiritual practice point "Ceiling on Desires."

Well before the global narrative included phrases like- Carbon footprint, Organic produce, Energy Star, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle; Bhagawan has been emphasizing on the importance of reducing our desires – prodding us to make judicious use of natural resources. Bhagawan led by personal example – students, administrators and devotees have many stories to share about how Bhagawan switch on and off lights when entering or leaving the room, recycle used envelopes to send messages to devotees or use it as scratch paper.

In November 1985 the 'Ceiling on Desires' program was officially launched as a part of the 60th birthday initiatives. The program focused on four important components- Food, Time, Energy and Money. The goal of the COD program was not to suppress desires as that would not lead to healthy living. Rather, the program would offer practical tools to sublimate our desires and understand how less is actually more!

This newsletter and study circle guide is more like a refresher course since we had reviewed the COD program in detail for the pre NYC initiatives. We hope you will enjoy sharing and discussing this special edition, and exchange ideas on practical application with your family and friends.

In this special edition from Go-Green House and Health & Wellness House-

-What is COD?

-COD challenge!

-How to reduce desires?

-Kick it up a notch, rethink the way you eat!

-Testimonials

Ceiling on Desires is a must for leading a peaceful and meaningful life.

-Baba



Introduction

What is the meaning of "Ceiling on Desires"? Man is deluded by his unlimited desires. He is living in a dream world. He is forgetting the Supreme Consciousness (Paratattwa). That is why it is important to keep our desires under control, to place a ceiling on them. Curtail your desires, as materialistic desires lead to a restless and disastrous life. Desires are a prison. Man can be freed only by limiting his wants. You should have desire only for life's bare necessities. -Baba

As Swami states in the quote above “we are living in a dream world”. Most of us don’t always recognize the immanence of the Divine in Nature. This may lead us to develop an impersonal relationship with the natural world.

From an early age we are taught - that Nature is composed of vast resources, which are necessary to meet our basic human needs. As we over use these natural resources to meet our “materialistic desires” we are putting a dire strain on nature and ourselves. By practicing the Ceiling on Desires program we can not only help restore the balance of the Earth and Nature but lead a more calm and healthy life.

You may wonder how practicing the Ceiling on Desires program can lead to a health life. Swami’s words on health have included words like “moderation” and “just enough” – concepts that also apply to ceiling on desires. As it relates to health and wellness, what does placing a “ceiling” mean? Our bodies are remarkable machines that are constantly balancing energy and resources. Therefore, a ceiling in this case refers to maintenance of this balance by regulating what we eat, how we exercise, and deal with daily pressures.

Immediately, all too familiar phrases like “low fat” and “run a lot” pop into our heads, but is this what we are really getting at? No! More often than not, it simply means making minor adjustments towards a healthier lifestyle. The goal is always balance! Another consideration is money. Choosing between organic and fresh foods, which can often be more expensive, versus cheaper and more processed foods is a balancing act. Moderation should be the guiding principle.



Challenge #1: Pack your own lunch for work or school

Pack lunch in reusable plastic containers and reusable bags; wash and reuse ceramic/plastic/metal cups, mugs, plates, and cutlery.

Tip: Not only will eating meals from home save you money than buying lunch outside but it will be a healthier meal than eating at a typical fast food restaurant. Not to mention you'll be reducing waste by using a reusable container.

Bonus Challenge: You can make it a family project. Rotate who prepares lunch each week with a roommate, sibling, spouse or parent.



Challenge #2: Reduce your shower time by a few minutes



Tip: An average showerhead uses about 2.5 gallons of water per minute. Even if you reduced your shower time by three minutes you would save 7.5 gallons a day and 105 gallons a week!

Challenge #3: Go paperless whenever possible

When you receive unwanted catalogs, newsletters, magazines or junk mail request to be removed from the mailing list before you recycle the item.



Tip: Not only will your mail box be lighter but by letting companies know you are not interested in their mail you're reducing the cost and energy it takes to get those materials to your door.

Bonus Challenge: Sign up for free e-statement services to reduce your incoming mail even further.

Take the "COD" Challenge!

Challenge #4: Turn off the computer



Skip the screen saver and set the automatic feature to sleep when you take a break from the computer. Shut it down completely when not in use, especially at night.

Challenge #5: Buy your fruits and vegetables from local farmer's markets

Not only will you be supporting local farmers but eating fresh food grown in your state. The prices are more affordable than large grocery stores that mostly import their food from around the country and world.



Challenge #6: Become a vegetarian

We all know that Swami encourages us to eat a vegetarian diet out of love; compassion and respect for the earth, our bodies and of course our fellow species.



Did you know: eating meat is essentially the third largest net contributor to global warming pollution in the world (behind using motor vehicles and burning household biofuels — mostly wood and animal dung), according to NASA.

How can you reduce desires? Sathya Sai Speaks...

Food is God. Do not waste food.

Firstly, consider the food we consume. Eat only what you need to eat. Do not be greedy. Do not take more than you can eat and waste the rest, because wasting food is a great sin. The surplus food can feed another stomach. Do not waste food, because food is God, life is God, and man is born from food. Food is the main source of man's life, body, mind and character.

Secondly, consider the ways in which money is spent. Do not misuse money. By doing so you will only become a slave to bad qualities, bad ideas, and bad habits. Use your money wisely for good deeds. Do not waste money, as misuse of money is evil. It will lead you along the wrong path.

Misuse of money is evil.

Time wasted is life wasted.

Thirdly, examine the usage of time. The most important, the most needed factor is time. One should not waste time. Time should be sanctified because everything in this creation is dependent on time. Do not degrade time by spending it participating in unnecessary conversations, or by getting involved in other's personal matters. The truth behind the saying "Don't waste time" is that no time should be wasted in evil thoughts and acts. Instead, make use of time in an efficient way.

Man's misadventures have created several problems for the entire mankind. He has polluted the five elements causing havoc on the earth. There is pollution everywhere -- in air, water, food and so on. His misdeeds coupled with his evil thoughts and feelings have degraded human life on the earth. If man acts in the righteous way, there will be no pollution at all.

Conserve energy. Think, see, speak, hear and do good.

Did you know?

1. Globally, we use 1 million new plastic bags/minute. This uses 2.2 billion gallons of oil each year. Every year, more than 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide. Less than 3% of those bags are recycled.
2. In the U.S an estimated 30 billion plastic water bottles are consumed every year of which 99% are incinerated or land filled. Americans throw away 2.5 million plastic bottles every hour!
3. In 2008 the US generated 400 million units of electronic waste, which contained about 42 million PCs and 130 million cellular phones. About 87% of this waste is incinerated or land filled which is releasing extremely hazardous material in to the atmosphere.

Simple and healthy meals!

**Rethink the way you eat-
Try one of these delicious,
nutritious, quick and cost
effective meals today.**

When we think about ceiling on desires regarding food, we may focus on finishing our food or not throwing excess food away and not overindulging.

It is equally important to make healthy choices as our body has a set requirement for nutrition and calorie intake.

Eating out at a restaurant may be convenient, but it is not the healthy or cost effective choice.

Restaurant food is almost always higher is calories, fat, sodium (salt), and sugar, nutrients that should not be eaten in excess.

Enjoying a night out every once in a while is not a problem but eating out regularly can hurt your body and your wallet. The next time you are thinking about running to a fast food joint for a meal, try one of these healthy, quick recipes at home.

■ **3-Minute Healthy Nachos**

Buy organic or blue corn chips and skip the refried beans to make these healthy, yummy nachos in just tres minutos.

1. Layer your chips with canned sliced olives, canned kidney beans, and canned sliced jalapenos (all rinsed before use)
2. Grate a little organic cheddar over everything. (Buy organic when you can afford it. It's better for the planet.)
3. Add any veggies you like (the more, the healthier).
4. Pop in the oven for around a minute, and garnish with salsa.



■ **Pita Tacos**

Whole wheat pitas, black beans, cheese of your choice, Veggies of your choice: lettuce, tomatoes, olives, onion, bell peppers, mushrooms, avocado

1. Stuff pita with ingredients and eat. It doesn't get easier than that!



■ **Broccoli, Lentil, and Tofu Stirfry**

300g (10oz) firm tofu, drained & crumbled
1 large head broccoli, cut into florettes
1 can cooked lentils, drained and rinsed
3-4 tablespoons hoisin sauce
lemon juice, to taste

1. Heat a few tablespoons oil in a large frying pan (skillet).
2. Add tofu and broccoli and cook, covered, stirring every few minutes until the broccoli is tender – about 6 minutes.
3. Add lentils and sauce and stir fry for a few minutes or until everything is hot.
4. Taste and season with salt and a little lemon juice.



■ **Cost comparison:**

Veggie burger on whole wheat bread with lettuce, tomato slices and cheese

At home: \$1.50

At restaurant: \$4.50 or more plus the extra blood sugar increase from white bread

Pita Tacos (see above)

At home: \$0.75

At restaurant: \$1.99 or more plus extra fat, salt, and less fiber

Testimonials from Young Adults-

Environmental Service: Tree Planting, SERVICE AS INSPIRATION (SAI)

For the last three years, Bridgewater Sai Center in New Jersey (Region - 2) has been undertaking some environmental services, such as tree planting, marsh cleanup, etc. Last year, our young adults with the support of fervent center memberships, organized a tree-planting event on April 24th to commemorate the Earth Day and Arbor Day as part of our continuing efforts to raise the level of environmental awareness in the community. With Swami's Grace, the saplings have since grown into healthy plants. Love and unity shown by the center members throughout the planning and execution were remarkable. By involving children in the service, adults were able to demonstrate to them, importance of taking care of the nature and the environment we live in.



Namasmarana: The perfect remedy! We also shared how our spiritual practices like chanting the Gayatri prayer every time we water plants; acts as a catalyst in helping the plants grow. Just like every organ part in a living body is interrelated in governing the physiological system, is closely associated with each other serving multiple functions in the larger body system called, ecosystem. Thus when humans alter one entity in the ecosystem with little or no consideration, a series of problems arises and affects Mother Nature.

Testimonial from Chicago YA who began practicing healthy eating habits and not wasting the nutrition of food: "I am convinced that adherence to healthy nutrition and exercise has helped me better understand and strengthen my mind and body. Over the past year I have been increasingly more cognizant of my food consumption and tried my best to consume 8 servings of fruits and vegetables daily. The impact has been great. I feel more energetic and active. Whenever I eat fried or fatty foods I immediately notice the change, as I feel lethargic and less alert. Both nutrition and exercise have helped my personal development physically and mentally, and I pray that I continue to be committed to this goal."

Testimonial from Prof. Anil Kumar: Swami Does Not Waste Anything- [Taken from the Sunday talks by Prof. Anil Kumar, October 2010]

Once Swami started reading letters in front of us. He opened an envelope and took out the letter. A boy had written two lines on a long white sheet of paper. There were only two lines on the top. The rest of it was blank. What did Baba say? He tore it there and gave that remaining white paper to a boy saying, "You use it. I don't want you to waste anything, not even white paper." Further Baba said, "**Don't waste food. Food is God. Don't waste time. Time waste is Life waste. Time is God. Don't waste energy. Don't waste water. Don't waste money. Waste of money is evil.**" He taught these wonderful lessons to the boys who were assembled that afternoon.

I recall one of Bhagavan's visits to the boys' hostel. He got out of the car and immediately He said, "Hey, come here! On the third floor, a fellow has not turned off the water tap there in the bathroom. Go and close the tap! After using it, you should turn the water off. You should not let the tap run and waste water." That's what Bhagavan said.

You must have also noticed that when He calls you for an interview, Bhagavan goes into the room first. As you all go in and sit down, He switches on the fan Himself and the moment you leave, He will turn it off. Why? "Don't waste energy. Don't waste electricity."

Bhagavan sets the finest example for all of us to learn from His own life. That is why Bhagavan has every authority to say, "My life is My message. My life is My message." As He does not waste anything, we should follow His example and not waste anything either.

LIVING IN SAI

Study Circle Guide

Spiritual Discipline 8: Practice Ceiling on Desires by not wasting: Money, Time, Food and Energy

Dear Young Adults,

Sai Ram! We hope you enjoyed reading our “Ceiling on Desires” edition of the newsletter. This “Ceiling on Desires” edition of the study circle contains a wonderful story, questions, real life scenarios and coverage of chapter XVI of the Sandeha Nivarini. We do hope you enjoy this edition as well. Sai Ram!

Start the study circle with 3 OMs. The facilitator now takes the participants through the following exercises.

- Close your eyes. Visualize Swami sitting in the middle of the circle. Now visualize a connection between your heart and Swami’s heart in whatever form that comes naturally to you. It could be in the form of a golden thread, a beam of light, etc.
- Ask Swami to send His unconditional love through that connection to you.
- Feel the strong powerful energy enter your heart from Him.
- Now visualize the same connection between Swami and everyone present in the room. Visualize everyone connected to Swami like spokes of a wheel connected to the center.
- Now slowly turn your attention to the Sai Center that you attend. Visualize the same connection between every member in the Sai Center and Swami.
- Thank Swami for His love and guidance in doing this activity.

ACTIVITY

Food for Thought

Swami says “We are prone to take the creation for granted...” Let’s reflect on this message while taking a short walk in nature. Let us be aware of God’s creation all around us and the need to protect and respect it.

Ice Breaker Questions:

1. After reading the newsletter how do you feel our actions (negative & positive) impact our nature?
2. What are some of the benefits of putting a ceiling on our desires?
3. What is the difference between needing something and wanting something?

[Some example of negative actions: clearing cutting trees, polluting water resources, impacting our wetlands, etc.; examples of positive actions: reducing/avoiding our consumption of environmentally non-friendly products, planting trees, cleaning our river and marshes, driving eco-friendly vehicles, etc.]



Story: The Life of John Muir

John Muir was perhaps this country's most famous and influential naturalist and conservationist. His actions and writings taught the importance of experiencing and protecting our natural heritage, and earned him the title, "The Father of our National Parks." His writings contributed greatly to the creation of Yosemite, Sequoia, Mount Rainier, Petrified Forest, and Grand Canyon National Parks.

John Muir was born on April 21, 1838 in Dunbar, Scotland. Throughout his life he was a farmer, an inventor, a sheepherder, a naturalist, an explorer, a writer, and a conservationist. His life was nothing short of inspirational. He was one of the first to realize that all species are interconnected and "hitched together." He developed a deep, spiritual connection with the land as he walked thousands of miles, from Alaska to Florida. He hated the blatant waste and foolishness of man and yearned for people to love and respect the wilderness. As his fame and following grew, President Theodore Roosevelt wrote to him in 1903 to ask Muir to take him to the mountains. During this pivotal time, Muir talked to him about the importance of wilderness to the human spirit and the nation as a whole. As a result, by the time Roosevelt left office in 1909 he had added 100,000 acres to the forest reserves, created six new National parks and 53 new wildlife refuges.

In 1860, Muir entered the University of Wisconsin. He made fine grades, but after three years he left the university to pursue his passion to explore the natural world. He traveled throughout the northern United States and Canada, odd-jobbing his way through the yet unspoiled land.

In 1867, while working at a carriage parts shop in Indianapolis, Muir suffered a blinding eye injury that

would change his life. When he regained his sight one month later, Muir resolved to turn his eyes to the fields and woods. There began his years of wanderlust. He walked a thousand miles from Indianapolis to the Gulf of Mexico. He sailed to Cuba, and later to Panama, where he crossed the Isthmus and sailed up the West Coast, landing in San Francisco in March 1868. From that moment on, though he would travel around the world, California became his home.

It was the beauty and grandeur of California's Sierra Nevada and Yosemite that truly claimed him and compelled him to start writing, publishing over 300 articles and 10 major books that recounted his travels, expounded his naturalist philosophy, and beckoned everyone to "Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees." (*Our National Parks*, 1901, page 56)

Through a series of articles appearing in *Century* magazine, Muir drew attention to the devastation of mountain meadows and forests by sheep and cattle. With the help of *Century's* associate editor, Robert Underwood Johnson, Muir worked to remedy this destruction. In 1890, due in large part to the efforts of Muir and Johnson, Congress created Yosemite National Park. In 1892, Muir and a number of his supporters founded the Sierra Club to, in Muir's words, "do something for wilderness and make the mountains glad."

In 1901, Muir published *Our National Parks*, the book that brought him to the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1903, Roosevelt visited Muir in Yosemite. There, beneath the trees, they laid the foundation of Roosevelt's innovative and notable conservation programs.

John Muir was a man whose life was



nothing short of inspirational, as demonstrated by this quote: "Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul."

Questions on John Muir Story

1. Do you think our lives are richer due to the efforts of John Muir?
2. In the quote, Baba says, "We are prone to take creation for granted." How did Muir's actions show that he did not take creation for granted?
3. How did Muir exemplify practicing placing a ceiling on our desires?
4. How can we place a ceiling on our desires to lessen our impact on nature?
5. What does this quote mean: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe." – John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, 1911, page 110 (3)

Real Life Scenarios

Hungry Shopper

You are going grocery shopping and as you start to shop, you realize you are famished and everything looks appealing, especially the sweet and savory foods you see. As you walk out of the stores you realize that while you only came to get milk, bread, fruit, and some frozen vegetables, your bags now also contain chips, soda, cookies, muffins, frozen pizza, and ice cream; things you didn't even need. Plus, you paid 3 times as much as you would have!



Is it really 50% off?

Your friends tell you about a really cool sale at the Ann Taylor store that ends today. You hurry after school and your heart skips a few beats when you walk into the store. The outfit you have been eyeing the entire summer is on sale (50% off). You pick out your size and go to the checkout counter. The sales person rings up the outfit and you do not see the discount. When you point out that the outfit is on sale, she very pleasantly replies that you are correct. But you would have to buy another outfit of equal or greater value, to get this outfit at 50% off. Or you can buy the outfit at regular price and she will give you a \$25 voucher off a regular priced item at the time of a future purchase.

Black Friday

You are at Best Buy on Black Friday! You have been doing your research on flat screens and came to the conclusion that the Toshiba 40 inch, 1080p, 3 HDMI ports and standard mount is the best in the market. And the Black Friday deal is really sweet. Even though you got to Best Buy very early in the morning, the Toshiba model that you wanted are all sold out in the store. You ask the frazzled Salesman if he can look up other stores to see if they still carry it. You find out that the Best buy which is 60 miles east of your house does have a few left, but no guarantees. And you have no idea how long it will take in this traffic. He then looks at it and says, that there is another brand (and you have never heard of this brand) with the exact same specs, \$150 less expensive than Toshiba, one year warranty and is available in the same store. When you ask him why the others are not buying it, he says, "it is all in the brand name, Sir."



Discussion:

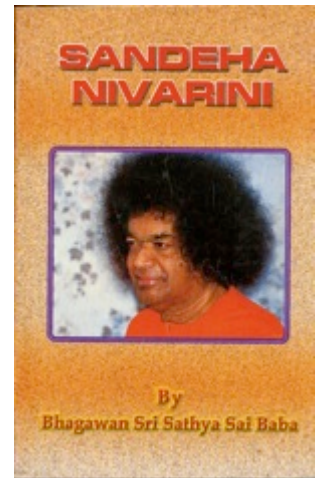
1. What could have been done differently to avoid this common grocery store problem?
2. What are ways you can avoid these pitfalls in the grocery store, even if you do find yourself craving foods you know are not the best for you?
3. What are some ways we can avoid wasting money on impulse purchases other than food such as clothes or gadgets?
4. Would you still buy the outfit at Ann Taylor? Why or why not?
5. Was it really a sale?

Sandeha Nivarini

This month we will be focusing on Chapter XVI of the Sandeha Nivarini

Questions:

1. Why do you think Swami says “the attainment of Dhyana is Ekagratha-concentration”?
2. What practices must we avoid when practicing Dhyana according to Swami?
3. What does Swami mean when he says: “Stick to the goal and the journey. Never give up the discipline of the Sadhana. Do not change the time of Dhyana. With one aim and unchanging attitude, strive to attain it. That will vouchsafe the Fruit. That will bless you with the Bliss”?
4. Swami says “Remember, you can consider only the Lord as the Universal Form and as the Universal Friend and Protector.” Why do you think he means by this statement?



Additional Reading:

1. “Ceiling on Desires - 1”, *Sathya Sai Speaks*, vol. 16
2. “Ceiling on Desires - 2”, *Sathya Sai Speaks*, vol. 17
3. “The Source and Center of Values”, *Sathya Sai Speaks*, vol. 33
4. “Discover Your Divine Essence”, *Sathya Sai Speaks*, vol. 19