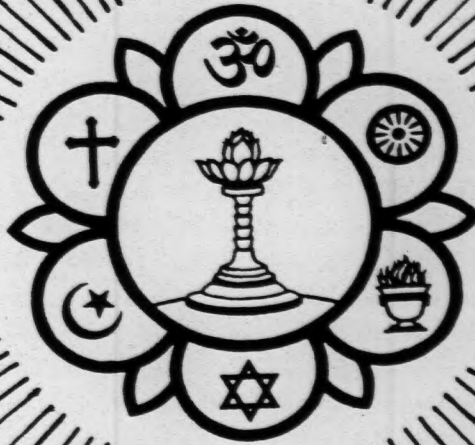


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SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER

This publication is dedicated with love and devotion to
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

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We have received favorable comments on the newly designed cover of the *Sathya Sai Newsletter*. Our thanks go to graphic artist Mr. Eufemio Felix of the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper.

The **Sathya Sai Newsletter** reserves the right of discrimination in selecting and editing material for publication.

The wealth you earn is not true wealth! True wealth is the grace of God. For getting God's grace, you have to make every effort. There is no greater effort or activity than service. Whatever bhajans (devotional songs), japa (repetition of the holy name), dhyana (meditation) you are undertaking, it is wasted if your heart is not pure.



Let us say you are about to prepare a meal. You have bought good quality, fresh food. You prepare and eat the delicious meal. But you get a feeling of uneasiness and nausea. All the ingredients were fresh and of good quality; why do you feel so sick? It is because the cooking vessels were not clean. You are doing bhajans, japa, and dhyana in a proper way. They can be compared to the various ingredients for making the meal. But if you do not have love in your heart (the cooking vessel), it will be a waste.

Through selfless service, you will be able to earn God's grace. Do not waste your time by mere words and speeches. Instead, undertake service activities. Only when a person serves will his speech have an impact on the hearts of others.

—Baba

From an October 21, 1986, discourse

ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER VISITS SAI BABA

(This news article was written by Dr. William Harvey, one of the Directors of the Sathya Sai Baba Council of America, and published in the newspaper The Mississippi Enterprise. —Ed.)

We received a report from one of our readers in Rome that is quite interesting. It seems that Italian papers have carried a story that so far has not appeared in the American press. It concerns the visit (early in November 1986) by Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi to Bangalore, India, where he was granted an audience with Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Sri Sathya Sai is the towering spiritual leader whose teachings and personal example are inspiring tremendous advances in public education, social service, and health care delivery, not only in India, but in all countries of the world, including the United States.

Prime Minister Craxi is quite a remarkable person in his own right. After a long succession of postwar Italian Prime Ministers, he has brought an uncharacteristic measure of political stability to that country. He has been in office for some three-and-one-half years, whereas the average length of time in office for his predecessors has been about six months. A socialist in terms of political orientation, he has gained the admiration and respect of leaders in the first, second, and third worlds.

According to our sources, Mr. Craxi decided to stop off in India after completing his recent state visit to China. It was a private trip and, perhaps for that reason, word of it did not get picked up by the wire services over here, although they had carried stories of his China visit. Sathya Sai Baba, at the time of Mr. Craxi's visit, happened to be near Bangalore at the site of one of the colleges he has established in India.

No doubt the visit was to some extent facilitated by Antonio Craxi, the Prime Minister's older brother, who is a follower of Sai Baba. The Craxi family is thought to be one of the most eminent in Italy and, therefore, quite well-known. Several years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Craxi became impressed with the teachings of Sai Baba and the good works and character transformations he so often inspires. Consequently, the couple has done much in the intervening period to introduce Sai Baba to the Italian people, including translating books by and about him, producing television documentaries, and holding workshops and symposia at their family home in Magenta.

In the fall of 1983, Antonio staged a historic conference in Rome that involved representatives from most of the world's religions. The theme of that conference was "Unity Is Divinity; Purity Is Enlightenment." The conference covered the following topics:

Science and Spirituality, Unity of Mankind, Sai Ideals in Daily Life, Essence of Religions, and Human Qualities and Divine Nature.

The Prime Minister, Bettino Craxi, did not attend the conference, but did receive some of the major speakers in the Italian version of the Oval Office. That group included England's Sir George Trevelyan, the United States' Roy Eugene Davis, former Sierra Leone Ambassador to Britain Victor Kanu, and Professor and University Vice-Chancellor V. K. Gokak, and noted journalist V. K. Narasimhan, both of India. Also present were Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Craxi and this reporter.

The Prime Minister's remarks to the group revealed a strong interest in world peace and a yearning to see some mechanism develop that might bring it about. It seemed clear, however, that he was nowhere near as convinced as his brother was that Sai Baba (or any other spiritual or religious figure) would somehow be instrumental in the successful attainment of this goal. He even bemoaned aloud the fact that throughout history some of the worst wars have been fought in the name of religion.

Prime Minister Craxi impressed me as a very intelligent, courageous, and pragmatic socialist politician. Nonetheless, he exhibited respect for his brother's position and viewpoint and displayed considerable enthusiasm for the conference's potential. He pledged the cooperation of his government and offered to provide any tactical assistance that might be appropriate. Moreover, it was highly significant that he is the head of state of a major member of the Western Alliance.

It is even more significant for a political figure of such stature to decide to go see Sathya Sai Baba. Not incidentally, Bettino Craxi paid his courtesy call to Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi after, rather than before, he went to see Sai Baba. And, as I said, the visiting head of state was granted an audience, or an "interview," as it is called. It is reported that Sai Baba materialized several objects for Mr. Craxi, including a *lingam* (a religious symbol of immense significance in Indian culture).

The next day, Mr. Craxi went to New Delhi for a brief courtesy visit with Rajiv Gandhi. Upon his emergence from that meeting, the reporters wanted most to know what had occurred in his meeting with Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Mr. Craxi is quoted as saying, "He told me things too precious to speak about, but I suggest you all go and see him for yourselves."

Prime Minister Gandhi is, of course, aware of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Both the President and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India, not to mention innumerable other government officials and military leaders, consider themselves followers of Sai teachings.

It is a truism that we cannot have good leaders unless we first become good followers. Hence, we ordinary citizens have as big a role to play in bringing about world peace as a Reagan, a Gorbachev, a Craxi, a Gandhi, or a Magabe. Faith, persistent action, and patience would seem to be the keys. And though that may be easier said than done, still there is "nothing to it, but to do it."

—**Bill Harvey**
from The Mississippi Enterprise

THE BREAD OF LIFE

I hunger for the bread of life
It helps so much to pray
The struggle with this earthly life
Grows tougher day by day.

You are the bread of life, Oh Lord
Please hear me up above
I know I never can afford
To be without Your love.

I've lived my life as well
As I know how
I've always needed You
I need You now.

Without Your love the thread of life
Is worn, and obsolete
Please feed my soul the bread of life
And make my life complete.

—George Frega
Jersey City, New Jersey

GOD DOES THE WORK; GOD BEARS THE FRUIT

It was Thanksgiving, 1971. My brother, two-and-a-half years younger than I, invited me to visit his apartment on the lower east side of Manhattan before we were to travel together to Long Island for a Thanksgiving meal with our parents. They would eat traditional turkey and we would insistently eat only the vegetables. Our parents thought we were being rebellious, but tolerated us and this new fad of ours. The previous spring, while in my freshman year of college, we had both learned a popular form of meditation. We enjoyed sitting silently, and now we had become ardent vegetarians, too, much to the displeasure of our father, who owned a wholesale fish dealership in the Fulton Fish Market.

I walked up the three flights of stairs of the dilapidated dwelling which was in such contrast to the upper-middle-class home in which my brother and I grew up. I knocked on the door at the head of the stairs and a tall young man answered. In spite of my grave doubts, he confirmed that this was my brother's place. I could smell a flowery essence wafting toward me from the interior two-and-a-half rooms and heard the strangest music. The music sounded so joyous that it filled me with a feeling of sheer delight. I danced into the apartment, moving in little circles, Jewish-style, hands held high above my head. Reaching my brother's bedroom, I greeted him: "Hi, Lou."

He was sitting on a mat on the floor, which I was startled to learn he called his bed, and burst into laughter at seeing me so happy—a strange occurrence—doing an even stranger dance into the middle of his room. "What are you doing?" he asked. "I'm so happy I can't help but dance. This music is wonderful," I enthusiastically replied. "Who is it?" "Oh, that's Sai Baba singing *bhajans*." "Who's he?" I asked. His reply threw me for a loop: "He's God. He lives in India."

Instantly all dancing ceased. You see, more than ten years earlier, I had terminated my relationship with God. Hebrew school had been a grueling experience, in which I alternated between being yelled at by the schoolteachers for not knowing the Jewish prayers and being struck with bicycle chains after class by older students who had had a little too much of the one-and-a-half hours of frustration twice a week. In my lifetime, I had not been able to find a single individual who, speaking about God, and oftentimes directing me in the understanding of God and the religion I had inherited, was able to represent that tradition without representing the tradition of anger, selfishness, and general pettiness as well. So how could God exist when there was so little love in my life? Besides, what about the Jews during World War II? So if God did exist, I didn't like him anyway; and, besides, how can a person be called God?

That's where I found myself while dancing into my brother's apartment on Thanksgiving. There was too much sorrow in my life to acknowledge God's existence, much less his love, which seemed not to be coming my way. Besides, the holocaust was a good rationalization for my atheism. And, if that wasn't enough, since I was Jewish, God was without form and was certainly not a man. With no thanksgiving and an arrogant laugh, a consequence of receiving top grades throughout my educational career, but hardly any moral training, I retorted, "God! What God? The one in your fantasies? Come on!" I could feel anger rising, the anger felt in childhood—born of sadness, loneliness, friendlessness, of not loving, not being loved, not understanding, and feeling not understood.

His response hit me right where my stubborn intellect was most vulnerable: "See for yourself. Read about him." That Hanukkah (or Christmas, if you like; my brother believed in Jesus, too), Lou gave me the book *Baba*, by Arnold Schulman. Within a few days, I reluctantly opened it and read. After ten pages, I put the book down, my mind numb. In fact, my mind seemed to have stopped—an impossible occurrence. After a few brief moments, it began again, but all I could think was, "Oh, my God! This is God!" In a state of sheer excitement, I picked up the phone and dialed my brother. "Lou, you're right. This is God. Sai Baba is God. What do I do now?" He calmly replied, "Relax. Sit down and meditate. When I see you next, we'll talk more about it. Keep reading."

That was the beginning and, I might add, only the beginning of the magnificent, munificent grace which Baba would let rain down upon me. In the following year while reading his books, the ones called *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Volumes I, II, III, etc., in the midst of a treasure of teachings, I came across what I thought was a most practical one for an overworked college student. "The fruit of action belongs to the actor; therefore, renounce the fruit. Act, but renounce the fruit of action; dedicate every action to God and renounce all desire for its fruit; call upon God to be the doer of action, and totally and fully, without recourse, renounce every vestige of attachment to the fruit of action." —Baba

For the past week I had been trying to write a final paper in my first and only political science course. We had studied the philosophy and leadership in the American civil rights movement. I had read Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Jr., Eldridge Cleaver, Malcolm X, and innumerable other black political figures. The professor had asked us to write one paper to pull it all together. This was it: the only grade in the course. I set about the nearly impossible task, and after a week succeeded in crumpling up more than 20 pages of first-page starts. I was in a panic. How was I to enjoy the Thanksgiving break which was now upon me if I had to write this paper?

I resolved to retreat to my brother's house, where the joy of God's love had touched my thirsty soul just one year previously. Thanksgiving eve I sat down, paper on desk,

pen in hand, and lit a candle before a picture of Sai Baba. I prayed. "Oh, God, hi! It's Al Levy calling. Can you please write this paper on black political thought for me? You are the doer of all deeds, the speaker of all words, the thinker of all thoughts. Please then write this paper and bear the fruits, too. I surrender it all to you. Thanks."

For the next sixteen hours or so, he wrote. Every time I seemed to reach an impasse, I called on Baba again for help, praying as I did before. The paper was typed the following week at college and handed in. Just before Christmas, I received it back. The professor had written: "This is a good paper. You have a nice flow of language . . . When you talked about Martin Luther King, I heard Martin Luther King talking; when Frederick Douglas was mentioned, it sounded like Douglas was speaking; and when Malcolm X was referred to, it was like him speaking. A job well done. 'A'." Of course, it was a job well done by Baba. He had brought the essence of these courageous leaders, who had already left the earthly plane, and placed their thoughts directly into this paper. Thank you, Baba!

Through the next thirteen years of my educational experience, I called on Sai Baba to do the work and bear the fruits. With his grace, I passed through the bachelor of arts in psychology and a master's of science in social work. Receiving professional training in psychoanalysis was a difficult one, but he took me through a psychoanalytic institute in Philadelphia and on to graduate university where I prayed to make it through the program. When I entered, the university was not yet accredited, but the dean assured us it would be, and then all degrees would be retroactively honored with full accreditation status. I decided to enroll. While engaged in doctoral study, I was offered an opportunity to pass through the program in one year, contingent upon writing an original doctoral thesis on a psychoanalytic topic. They said my previous graduate training qualified me for such an opportunity. Doctoral programs are notorious for being brutally arduous and terribly torturous, taking five to ten or more years to complete. Delighted by the opportunity to be free of the entire educational rigamarole, of which I had been a prisoner for more than 25 years, I took the university up on their one-year offer.

I prayed to Baba as always, "Please, dear Baba, write this doctoral thesis. Baba, you are the doer of all deeds, the speaker of all words, the thinker of all thoughts. Please, my Father-Mother God, write this paper and bear the fruits, too. Thank you." (I had matured a little in my relationship with God by now, so I left out the "Oh, God, hi! It's Al Levy calling" part. I just figured he knew me by now, I had been in trouble so often and called on him so much for help.)

But when the year was up, I had only completed the first half of the reading of references necessary to write the paper. Two years passed. The reading and note-taking was done, but, to my despair, no writing. I kept praying to Baba and hoping against the odds set up by my mind that he hadn't abandoned me. The third year

passed and some writing had been done, but it was rejected by the doctoral committee. They didn't seem to like my topic: "Psychoanalysis and Meditation." What was I to do? I prayed to do nothing and let Baba do it all.

Within the next six months, the doctoral committee accepted the topic "An Exploration into the Psychoanalytic Treatment of the Meditating Patient" without question. Some patients I was treating as a psychoanalytic student intern had learned meditation and were practicing the technique while undergoing treatment. I decided to study them to see if they did better in psychoanalysis than my nonmeditating patients. I continued to pray to Baba, but all along the question kept arising in my mind: "Baba, why, when they gave special permission to complete the degree in one year, is it taking so long?" And I complained to Baba, too: "Each three-month term costs fifteen hundred dollars, Baba. Can't we speed it up?"

In June, 1985, after four-and-a-half years, the paper was completed. The doctoral committee approved the thesis with minor revisions, and the next month I received a letter from the dean of the university congratulating me on the award of the long-awaited degree. The timing was right. During the previous two weeks, all the university students and previous graduates had received a letter from the dean stating that the graduate school, after twelve years, had received full accreditation by the Midwest Regional Committee of Colleges and Universities, as well as accreditation by the university and college accreditation board in America, effective March, 1985. This was the first "university-without-walls" program in the United States to receive full recognition. However, the dean and the faculty were very sorry to announce that all graduates who had received their degrees prior to March 1, 1985, would not be entitled to accreditation status, according to the regulations of the Midwest Regional Committee.

"Thank you, God!" I exclaimed. Baba had saved me from a most unforeseen tragedy. Had I completed the doctoral program any sooner than the four-and-a-half years it had taken, my degree would not have been fully accredited when received. Baba had done it again, and his timing was perfect.

- So I say to you, all who have to struggle through the cumbersome and sometimes obnoxious task of the educational experience, pray to the Lord to do all the work and bear the fruits thereof. For it is true: "Lord God almighty, Sai Baba my beloved, you are the doer of all deeds, the speaker of all words, the thinker of all thoughts. I surrender it all to you. Please, then, bear the fruits of all my thoughts, words, and deeds. Thank you." And add a little "I love you" at the end.

—Dr. Allen Levy
New York, New York



The greatest weakness is to think that you are the doer. You are not doing anything. If you have a pure heart, it is God who is the doer, and whatever has to be done will be done by him.

—Baba

From the divine discourse
during *Dasara*, October 6, 1986

REMEMBERING

Every year, the *Sathya Sai Newsletter* prints a list of important dates to remember in the year ahead. These include holy days of the various religions, as well as dates specific to Swami and his mission. May I suggest that three more be included?

Most of us are familiar with the wonderful stories of Baba's birth and childhood as told in Mr. Kasturi's biography of Baba (the volumes titled *Sathyam Shivam Sundaram*). Most dramatic, and most vitally important, to his devotees are the dates of March 8, May 23, and October 20, 1940.

On March 8 of that year, the thirteen-year-old Sathya was apparently bitten by a scorpion. He fell unconscious and his life appeared to be in danger. When he regained consciousness the next day, he showed no signs of illness, but he behaved very strangely. His family feared that he was mad. He maintained long silences or spoke, sang, and behaved in a bizarre fashion; he revealed knowledge of Sanskrit Scriptures and Hindu philosophy. He seemed to leave his body for long periods of time. The doctors and exorcists who tried to "cure" him were helpless. He had begun the process of revealing his true identity.

Later in that year, on the morning of May 23, he awoke in cheerful spirits and proceeded to materialize sweets and flowers for his family and the neighbors who came crowding into the house. "What are you," his father demanded in desperation, "a god or a ghost or a madman?" His reply is history. "I am Sai Baba." He repeated it many times throughout the day: "I am Sai Baba."

Even after this announcement, for some months he continued with his life as a student, as a son of his family. But on October 20, in the town where he was living with his brother in order to attend high school, Baba took that final step. He started for school as usual, but when he reached the school gate, he turned back to the house. Standing on the outer doorstep, he threw aside his books and called out, "I am no longer your Sathya. I am Sai." His sister-in-law was almost blinded by the halo of light around his head. "I am going. I don't belong to you—my devotees are calling me; I have my work. I cannot stay any longer."

He never returned to his brother's house. Instead, he moved to a neighbor's garden where people came from all directions bringing fruit and flowers. Sitting on a rock that day, he taught them the sacred song that begins: "*Manasa bhajare guru charanam, Dustara bhava sagara tharanam. . . .*"* October 20, 1940, the day that Swami started his mission, is certainly the most important day of our lives.

*"Meditate in your mind on the feet of the guru.

This can take you across the difficult sea of worldly existence."

Swami has told us that nothing he does or fails to do is without a purpose. Many events in his life have been recorded without specific dates, but he has made these three dates in 1940 known to us: March 8, which marked the beginning of the end of his "ordinary" life; May 23, when he announced his name to the world; and October 20, the day he began the mission which has brought all of us to him, and him to all of us. Perhaps he has given us these dates so that we can remember them along with his birthday, each year renewing the joy and wonder of his advent. The Centers might wish to celebrate these days in any number of ways. I am sure, however, that you will agree that they should certainly be added to the list of "Dates to Remember."

—Mimi Goldberg
Pound Ridge, New York



DATES TO REMEMBER IN 1987

February 26, Mahashivarathri is observed during the new moon, and symbolizes the renaissance and rededication of spiritual life.

March 8, Baba began the process of revealing his true identity on this day in 1940.

April 7, Sri Rama Navami, the day to honor the birth of the *Avatar* Rama.

May 6, Easwaramma Day to pay homage to the memory of the mother of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

May 23, Baba proclaimed, "I am Sai Baba."

July 11, Guru Poornima, a day set aside for the adoration of the *guru*, or spiritual preceptor.

August 16, Sri Krishna Jayanti gives recognition of the birth of the *Avatar* Krishna.

August 28, Ganesha Chaturthi honors Lord Ganesha, who is the remover of all obstacles and ignorance.

September 26, Dasara, the beginning of the festival dedicated to the divine Mother in her various aspects.

October 2, Vijaya Dasami or Dasara, last day of the *Dasara* festival, celebrating the triumph of good over evil.

October 20, Baba told his family, "I don't belong to you—my devotees are calling me; I have my work." His mission had begun.

October 21, Deepavali or Diwali, the Festival of Lights to commemorate the victory of righteousness over wicked forces.

November 14-15, Akhanda Bhajan, a continuous twenty-four hours of devotional singing dedicated to world peace and done in Centers around the world. It begins on Saturday at 6:00 p.m. and ends at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday.

November 23, the Sixty-Second Birthday of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

December 16-23, Hannukah, the Jewish holy days proclaiming victory over the oppressor.

December 25, Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

EDUCATION IN HUMAN VALUES —FOR ADULTS

I'm not sure when I first became interested in trying to teach a class in Education in Human Values (EHV) for adults. I was aware from my EHV background of the importance of parents playing a supportive role in a values (or any other) program for children. But an education in values has to be practiced and lived, perhaps to a greater extent than other forms of classroom learning. If a child sees that the only "values" honored at home are greed and self-indulgence, there is certainly no fertile soil for the practice of giving and self-control!

But what about adults learning about the values, whether or not they have children in an EHV class? These values (truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence) are the heart and base of Sathya Sai Baba's teachings, as well as the teachings of virtually all religions and philosophies. Can they be used as a "doorway" to a better understanding of spiritual teachings and, more importantly, as a practical way of putting those values into practice in daily life?

All of us are familiar with the typical pattern of learning spiritual lessons. One studies the teachings, the great teachers, and takes up the right spiritual practices. But what happens on a day-to-day basis, when we are faced with life's many annoying and frustrating situations and we react from habit, from the "mood" we happen to be in? What happens when, for all our good prayers, practices, and intentions, life seems to clobber us? How well, how often, and how quickly do we remember the teachings, the teachers, and the omnipresent Sai in our lives?

In the fifteen years I have known Sathya Sai Baba and tried to practice his teachings, I have learned many lessons and grown—often against my own resistance—to a greater understanding of how much I have to learn. I don't feel that I have accumulated anything over the years other than this: the ability to recognize every moment of life as a new chance to learn. Perhaps I could describe it as a willingness to learn and to admit how little I know.

Understand that I do not say this to put myself down or call myself a fool. What I am trying to describe is an *attitude of learning* that Swami has taught me. In the West, we are used to *building up* from one course, one degree, to another. We feel that the more we add on, the more we know, the wiser we are, and the happier we are. One good glance around us tells us this is not so. "Of what avail is a mass of nondescript knowledge?" Swami asks us. We have to learn what *kind* of learning, what *kind* of information, is truly useful to a human being.

My interest in EHV led me to wonder how one would teach these values of truth, right action, peace, love, and nonviolence to adults. I do not mean to adapt the EHV program to an "adult" level, but to translate the spirit of the program into something an adult could find useful and practical in the same way the program is useful to a child. Let me explain this further. A child has had a limited amount of contact with the world and a limited range of situations that confront his moral resources and judgment. Therefore, Swami has provided us with a program that gives an understanding of the values, and lessons and examples to show a child how to use the values in life situations. Values are presented as *the way* in which to face life, not just a new alternative to the many ways we can respond to these situations.

In presenting EHV to adults, it is also necessary to achieve a certain degree of understanding of the values themselves and the material that we use with children. But now we are dealing with people who have twenty, thirty, or even eighty years of life-hardening experiences and habits under their belts. For us, the illustration of a value with the story of a great person may help our intellectual understanding, but this does not seem to reach to the heart of the adult in the same way it does with a child. We learn, or I should say "unlearn," much too slowly. For adults, I felt that EHV needed a specific focus to really be effective.

With permission from Dr. Jack Hislop, I decided to try out a class in EHV for adults at the Santa Cruz, California, Study Group. We met biweekly for three months and are now starting on a second round with the first values. I am trying to refine and work out an approach that will be easy to share with other groups, and will also try a full-day version of the class in San Francisco, just to get a little more experience in how this type of class might go.

I would like to share some of what we have learned so far, so that you may begin thinking of trying this type of class once we have a more developed format. I would also welcome any suggestions you may have (c/o Sathya Sai Newsletter) that might help me in working on this program.

For each value, I found a certain aspect or quality that seemed to bring it close to the day-to-day experience of an adult. For example, I could talk myself blue in the face about the importance of truth and all its ramifications; but, for me, in order to learn how to practice it, I have to think of truth in terms of being honest with myself. If, in any given situation, I am really honest with myself about who I am, what I value, what my needs and weaknesses seem to be, what my real goals in life are, I can begin to act with a little more humility, a little more honesty, from the center of my heart; I can learn to be a bit less automatic and habitual in my reactions; I can learn to make the progression from (to paraphrase Swami) the one others think I am, to the one I think

I am, to the one I really am. Thus, by being a little more honest with myself, I experience this Sai teaching and give myself the chance to practice it more effectively.

In the class, I usually present the value first from the standpoint of the children's Education in Human Values program. Then I try to relate it, through quotations from Sai's teachings, to how we need to integrate it into our philosophical and intellectual understanding. Then, as a group, we look for the ways in which that value comes into play in our daily lives, in work, family, etc. We always begin the class with a few minutes of meditation on the value we are discussing and how we experience it in our hearts. Sometimes we do this again when we look for the practical ways it affects our lives. I find this keeps the focus and discussion very well-centered, without drifting into philosophizing, opinionizing, and sermonizing.

After going through the five values: truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence, and the relationships between them, I saw a pattern emerging that I am exploring now in our second round. Because I have spent so many years giving talks and presentations of Sai teachings, I found in the first classes that I was playing a more active teaching role than I had intended, and I am now trying to encourage class members to contribute more to the class. I am also finding it important to use the best possible quotations as a catalyst for discussion; in that way, there can be more direction but less teaching in the meetings. For this I must give credit to Duane Robinson for sharing with me his unpublished manuscript *Wisdom of Sathya Sai*, an anthology of excellently retranslated quotations, divided into the major areas of Sai teachings.

Once we have completed the second round of the class, and I also have the experience of presenting it in an in-depth one-day format, I hope to have a syllabus to present to the Sathya Sai Baba Council of America that might be useful to other Study Groups and Centers. I found that the class served as an excellent introduction to Sai teachings, that the informal aspect of the class enabled newcomers to feel comfortable, and that, for all of us in the class, it brought these values into much sharper focus in our daily lives and seemed to give clarity to our spiritual practices.

—Richard Bayer

*Vice President, Sathya Sai Baba Council of America
Santa Cruz, California*

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

Please tell me why Baba's chair sits on a tiger skin. I heard some time ago that it has to do with some Indian tradition, but I still do not understand. Is that the same Baba who once commanded an English hunter to return to the bush to rescue the motherless tiger babies after having shot the mother? It doesn't make sense to me. I have been so unhappy since I saw that picture in the *Newsletter* (Fall 1986, page 35). Why did he pose like that? Please explain.

—Hanna Hamilton, Ph.D.

Dear Dr. Hamilton:

We appreciate very much your expressing concern to us. There will undoubtedly be other readers who will welcome the explanation and the "Children's Corner" article which follows.

The tiger skin in the photograph is the same one referred to in the following story. The tiger had been killed by the English officer so that he might display it in his home as a trophy. However, after his heart was softened by his contact with the young Sathya Sai Baba, he returned to Puttaparthi and offered the skin to Baba as his pledge to never again take the life of an animal. It was for this reason that Baba accepted it—because it represents nonviolence and respect for all life (*ahimsa*) and is a reminder of this principle to all who see it.

There is an Indian tradition that great sages and holy beings sit on animal skins. However, the skins are only taken from animals which have died from natural causes and the practice is considered to be a blessing to both the animal and the human being so associated. It signifies that the individuals who sit on them have transcended their animal qualities.

If one believes that all creatures have a soul and that the soul evolves, it follows that the tiger in the picture must have received very special grace from the most holy being known as Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

—The Editor



CHILDREN'S CORNER The Tiger Skin

Many years ago, the English ruled India. Quite a few of these Englishmen enjoyed big-game hunting (*shikar*). In fact, *shikar* was a fashionable sport in those days, especially among kings, noblemen, and people from the armed forces. For those of us who love



all living creatures and believe that God is in all beings, it is a cruel sport to kill animals for fun or adventure.

Shortly before the time of this story, Sri Sathya Sai Baba had announced that he was the former Sai Baba of Shirdi. He was only fourteen years old then. His parents had sent him to the village of Uravakonda for his high school education. He had returned to Puttaparthi from Uravakonda and told all the people that he was Sai Baba. People in the neighboring villages and even in villages far away had heard of him and his miraculous powers. They were aware that he stood up for all that was just, true, good, peaceful, and beautiful. He loved all creatures. He was very much against harming any form of life, especially innocent animals.

The lovely little village of Puttaparthi stands on one bank of the Chitravathi River. It is a picturesque place with emerald green fields stretching for miles around, and beautiful purple hills in the distance. This is where Baba now has his *ashram*. On the opposite bank of the river is wilderness.

One day an English army officer and his Indian driver were on their way from the jungle to Anantapur. As their jeep came near the riverbank, it stopped. The Englishman had been out hunting all day and was anxious to get to Anantapur as soon as possible.

The driver, as well as the officer, did everything to get the jeep moving. Nothing helped. The jeep was stuck and so were they! Everything had seemed to be going well until then. What could be the matter? Something had to be done; they couldn't stay there

indefinitely! The driver realized they were just across the river from Puttaparthi. He had heard of the little “wonder boy” who lived in that village and suggested to the officer that he wanted to go and ask him for the boy’s help. The Englishman was certainly not happy that he was stranded, and agreed to let the driver go.

As the driver was approaching the village, he saw the boy walking toward him. He was surprised when the boy addressed him and said that he himself was on his way to the jeep.

They both walked across the dry riverbed and came to the jeep. Baba knew of the dead tiger inside, which the officer had shot barely two hours before.

Imagine the astonishment of the officer when Baba said to him, “I stopped the jeep at this place.” “Why? What was wrong?” wondered the officer. The little boy seemed to know everything. He said that the dead tiger was the mother of three little cubs which had been left behind in the forest. The poor little babies could not find their mother. They had frantically searched for her, but she was nowhere to be found.

He told the officer to go back to the forest at once, find the cubs, and donate them to a zoo where they could be well looked after. The officer was stunned when Baba said, “Do not shoot wild beasts again, for they have caused you no harm. Why do you seek them by surrounding them and laying traps to catch them? Shoot them with a superior instrument—your camera. That won’t maim or kill them.”

The Englishman was at once enlightened and touched by Baba’s wise and loving words. For the first time, he realized what an injustice he had done to the mother and to those innocent cubs. Shoot animals with a camera? Why hadn’t he thought of that before?

He followed Baba’s instructions and easily found the cubs. He presented the orphaned tigers to a zoo. When the tiger skin came back from the taxidermist, he brought it to Puttaparthi and placed it at Baba’s feet. At first the young Baba was reluctant to accept it, until the hunter promised to never again take the life of an animal.

That same tiger skin is a familiar sight to the thousands who visit Baba’s *ashram*, and is often shown in photographs of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It serves as a constant reminder that all life is valuable.

—Adapted for children by **Vidya Alekal**
from Sathyam Shivam Sundaram, Part IV, by N. Kasturi

SENECA'S VISIT TO PRASANTHI NILAYAM

Our nine-year-old son, Seneca, has been diagnosed as having cancer of the leg and the lung. Upon hearing this verdict, my husband, Tim, and I decided that the best thing we could possibly do for Seneca would be to take him to see Baba. We had not formulated any specific plans for how or when to do this, but one day I decided to get Seneca's passport application completed. That afternoon, the thought occurred to me to call our dear friends Rita and Bob Danielle to find out if perchance they might be planning to go to India anytime soon. When I posed the question to Rita, there was a long silence at the other end of the line. Then she replied, "Bob just made our reservations an hour ago."

With such indisputable evidence of divine guidance, we proceeded confidently, and all arrangements for Seneca and me to join the Danielles were made easily and smoothly. We left for India on August 13, 1986, and the flights from Los Angeles to Frankfurt, Frankfurt to Bombay, and Bombay to Bangalore were made as scheduled. From the Bangalore airport, we proceeded directly by car to Prasanthi Nilayam.

Upon arrival at the ashram, Seneca and I were given a room in one of the round buildings, and we were able to get to afternoon *darshan* (the blessing of seeing a holy being). Being somewhat weary from the long journey, Seneca and I were not at our best to see Baba for the first time. Baba made it clear immediately, however, that he was expecting us. He asked Bob Danielle how many were in his party, and when Bob started to tell him about Seneca, Swami replied, "I know. The boy has cancer. I will see you." This, of course, made us all very happy.

Seneca surrendered his heart to Baba at once. He told me how much more handsome he thought Swami was in person than in his pictures. Love simply poured in upon us—from Baba himself and through his loving devotees. We became acquainted with Richard and Michelle Kaplowitz, who exemplified Baba's teachings on loving all and serving all. Recognizing that Seneca might experience some difficulty adjusting to a change of diet, they offered to make an American-style lunch for us every day. Not only was the food wholesome, digestible, and delicious, but Seneca and Richard became good buddies. Richard was alert to see that Seneca's chair was placed where he might get a reasonably good view of Swami at each *darshan*. Seneca was frequently able to sit next to our good friend Ray Strock, which was a great blessing also.

On the third day of our visit, Baba called us in for an interview. He put Seneca at ease with a warm smile, asked his name and age, and then said, "What's your second name?" Seneca looked at me for help, not knowing what was meant. I silently mouthed "Cunningham." Seneca answered then, and Swami repeated the name "Cunningham." Turning to me, Baba asked, "You're from California?" After my

affirmative response, he patted Seneca's leg and asked, "Boy has cancer?" I replied, "Yes, and also in his chest." Swami said, "Yes, I know."

He called Seneca to him then, made a beautiful silver medallion and chain, and put it over Seneca's head. My son was smiling from ear to ear and his eyes were as big as saucers. Baba made candy and *vibuthi* for him, too, and gave some to everyone present. We were all simply ecstatic from this outpouring of Baba's love. He took Bob, Rita, Seneca, and me into the private interview room then, and directed his first comment to me. "You have been very worried about him." I agreed readily. He continued with great compassion, "Why do you worry? Don't worry. When you worry, you waste time. Time wasted is life wasted. Don't worry; think about God. Pray for the health of your son."

He then allowed us to touch his feet (*padnamaskar*), and said that he would see us again. When we were back in the group interview room, he said, "The way to know God is to love all."

A few days later, Seneca's leg became very swollen and red and his fever went up to 104°. As it was the leg which had been operated on, I became quite frightened and did some serious praying. The doctor came, looked at it, and said that it was an infection which growing children get. He recommended a medication which the Kaplowitzes just happened to have on hand. Bob was keeping Baba informed of Seneca's condition and Baba said that we were not to worry, that he would "take care." We are not now certain what caused the aggravated condition of the leg. At one point, a doctor stated that Seneca had been bitten by a snake or a scorpion, which would have caused him to go into a life-threatening coma had he not received special care. Whatever the cause, we know that after Seneca had been confined to bed for a number of days, he was again allowed to be up and his leg had improved greatly. Two California children, Ryan and Shawna, had been coming in to play games with Seneca, keeping him from becoming lonely or bored. Their grandparents, Bob and Ginny Rinehart, performed many loving services. When Seneca was again able to go to *darshan*, Bob Rinehart carried him to the rickshaw, and Ryan and Seneca rode to *darshan*, pretending they were in a stagecoach.

Seneca's leg improved daily; and, as soon as he could walk again, Baba called us in for an interview. He told us: "Life is like a bubble—so fragile. Life comes and goes. Don't worry." When we asked what we should do, he said again, "Don't worry; I will take care."

Later on that same day, Dr. Michael Goldstein arranged to have the Planetarium (Sathya Sai Space Theater) opened for a special showing of Halley's Comet. Prior to the showing, he announced that this was a presentation being given by Seneca Cunningham for his guests. Seneca was delighted, of course.

We were to leave the day after Krishna's birthday (August 28). Seneca's hope was to be able to see Baba's pet elephant, Gita, before we left. After all of the love which he had received, it was not too surprising that he just happened to be seated right next to where Gita stood for the birthday celebration. It was a fitting conclusion to a glorious trip. Baba's love had poured through everyone we met, as well as coming directly from himself. The trip was a blessed gift which we will always share.

—Alexis Cunningham
Laguna Beach, California



PRACTICE IS MORE PRECIOUS THAN TALK

It is necessary for us to know why terrible, atrocious actions are committed in the world. It is basically because we are not giving selfless service filled with love, and therefore all sorts of (wrong) desires have developed in people.

Embodiments of divine love! We should not waste even a fraction of a second of valuable time. Man has forgotten the significance of divine love to which he is entitled, because he is not thinking along proper lines. Man is wasting time, indulging in talk, claiming to do things which make no sense.

Service may be compared to a sharp sword. When such a powerful instrument is in the hands of people who know how to handle it properly, it can bring tremendous good, but if it is in the hands of someone who does not know how to use it, it can cause great harm. How should one make use of the sword? The same question applies to our actions. How should we make use of our power to act? Only people who have made an analysis [of their situation] should undertake action. People who undertake work without knowing the secret of work [action] spoil the sanctity of action. It is in this context that we have to make self-inquiry to find out if we have the requisites and qualifications to understand selfless service. The important qualifications are compassion, humility, and courage. Only those who have these qualities can be examples to the world. A person who is given to egoism, ostentatious behavior, and attachment can never undertake selfless service and expect to perform it well.

Man gives up his "human nature" because of egoism. Because of a showy nature and ostentatious behavior, he becomes artificial in his actions. Because of attachment, he develops animal qualities and animal feelings. He cannot develop confidence in himself with these characteristics. A person who has such doubts can never have faith in himself.

One who does not believe in himself cannot trust others. A person who has neither faith in himself nor belief in others cannot undertake selfless service in society. Therefore, in the first instance, egoism must be destroyed; only then can one develop humility. Only a person who has humility has the authority to undertake social work. Then they must put an end to showy or ostentatious behavior. They should remove attachment also. One has to recognize that the same Divinity exists in every human being; and then, with that unifying feeling, he can undertake selfless service in the community. Without becoming a servant, one can never become a good leader.

Today the world has come to such a chaotic condition because people, who do not know how to serve others, have become leaders. From time immemorial, there have been millions of people who have undertaken work, sacrificing everything to serve others. But gradually, the number of such people who are willing to sacrifice, is dwindling. People who know how to serve have become rare. In the name of "service to others," they are deceiving themselves. Only such actions can be called service which are performed while forgetting one's self entirely and recognizing the Divinity existing everywhere and in everyone.

There are people who are helpless with no one to look after them. Undertaking activities which would help them is very important, but we must remember to correct our own character and qualities. We have to recognize the importance of morality and truth. We should be prepared to sacrifice anything for the sake of the country. When I say country, it does not signify "mud," but people. We have to feel that service to humanity is service to God.

Patience and perseverance are important. Among all vows, telling the truth and having good character are the greatest. In fact, honor is greater than life itself. But today we have become absolutely imitative. We act as if we are artificial in our nature. We have become like an elephant which does not know its own extraordinary strength.

By big speeches and high-sounding words, we are trying to preach to others. However, this is not going to save us. We have to put an end to the kind of preaching which is not supported by any practice. By speeches which are memorized from texts, we are not going to transform the world. We have to enter into activities with total simplicity and selflessness, doing silent and unselfish work. We need to practice, and then we can undertake preaching to others. Practicing is far more precious than talking. Words may bring temporary satisfaction, but gradually that strength will leave the body. By proper practice, we can bring about transformation in the world.

Whatever Swami has said is in the best interest of all. We'll have to take this in that spirit. Forget the past mistakes and undertake service activities, keeping in view all that Swami has said. In the future, sanctify your lives.

—Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
From a November 21, 1986, discourse
Prasanthi Nilayam

EHV ORIENTATION PROGRAM IN INDIA

The Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Trust held an Orientation Program for overseas teachers at Prasanthi Nilayam on December 28, 29, and 30, 1986. About 250 participants from thirty countries attended the program, including twenty-five from the United States. The main objective of the program was to prepare the teachers to train other teachers in order to spread the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) program to schools throughout the world.

The Orientation Program speakers covered the components of the training program in depth, and described the progress of the SSEHV program in India, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Africa. Representing the United States, two members of the SSEHV Foundation of America spoke. Michael Dave gave a talk on the development of the program and discussed the teacher training workshops that are being conducted in American public schools. Ronne Marantz spoke on two aspects of these workshops: parent participation and teaching techniques.

For countries that have not yet developed a SSEHV program, provisions for national SSEHV faculties and literature were set forth. The areas of operation for implementing the program were delineated, as well as details of SSEHV administration and the supporting role of Sathya Sai Baba Centers.

The three-day training provided an excellent orientation to the various aspects of the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values program.

—Shelley Van Arsdale
Sherman Oaks, California

SAI EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN THE USA

- On **January 30, 1987**, the Sathya Sai EHV Foundation presented a Sathya Sai EHV teacher training workshop at William Jennings Bryan Elementary School, and was sponsored by the Dade County Department of Education, Miami, Florida.
- On **February 14**, the Sathya Sai EHV Foundation presented a Sathya Sai EHV teacher training workshop at the Oaklawn Hilton Hotel for the Montessori school teachers of Chicago, Illinois, and was sponsored by the Laren Montessori School.
- On **February 23**, the Sathya Sai EHV Foundation will present a Sathya Sai Bal Vikas teacher trainer workshop in San Francisco, California.
- On **April 11**, the Sathya Sai EHV Foundation will present a Sathya Sai Bal Vikas teacher trainer workshop in St. Louis, Missouri.

—Michael Goldstein, Chairman
of the Sathya Sai EHV Foundation

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

The Publications Committee of the Sathya Sai Baba Council of America has been given responsibility for evaluating all written, audio, and video material being considered for use in Centers or for the public. Our recommendations will be submitted to the Council for final decision. Since this committee will be so active, we want to keep you informed about our functions and to ask your active participation in our projects.

The Publications Committee was appointed by Dr. Hislop at the time of Sai Baba's Sixtieth Birthday celebrations. Members include Sam Sandweiss, Chairman; Richard Bayer, Secretary; and Robert Baskin, Bill Harvey, and Hal Honig. All communications should be directed to Richard Bayer, 154 Junco Drive, Santa Cruz, California 95060.

Sathya Sai Baba Centers have already received the *Center Roster* and the *Center Guidelines*. In the next month or so, they will be receiving a one-page, tastefully-done fact sheet which can be used to introduce our organization to newcomers at meetings or wherever we interface with the community, as in service activities and the Books-to-the-Library Project. Centers will also be receiving the *Center Manual*, which will amplify sections in the *Guidelines* and provide additional information about the operation of our organization. For additional copies, write to Birth Day Publishing Company, P.O. Box 7722, San Diego, California 92107. Other projects include:

Evaluating Manuscripts. All manuscripts should be sent to Bill Harvey, 2305 St. Louis Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63106.

Books-to-the-Library Project, coordinated by Robert Baskin. About thirty-six Centers have participated, and approximately 1,200 books have been placed in libraries. It is hoped that all Centers will become active in this project.

Publication of a Sai Brochure, Sam Sandweiss, Coordinator. The brochure is almost completed.

American Editions of Sai Literature. Mimi Goldberg is coordinating an effort to write small, free, handout booklets on different aspects of Baba's life and teachings. She is looking for talented writers, editors, and artists for these projects. If you are interested, please write her at Donbrook Road, R.R. 3, Box 121, Pound Ridge, New York 10576. Please send a brief description of your background and a sample of your writing or artwork.

Learning-English-Devotional-Songs Program. Production of good English devotional song tapes for devotees is being coordinated by Fred Greenberg and Dennis Gersten.

—Sam Sandweiss
Member of the Sathya Sai Baba Council of America

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20013 Pontevecchio, Magenta
Milano, Italy

B-6 Sathya Sai Sadan, Prasanthi Nilayam
Andhra Pradesh 515134, India

—per Sanathana Sarathi
December 1986



PRESENTATION OF SAI LITERATURE AT THE INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR IN GERMANY

From October 1-6, 1986, the 38th annual International Book Fair was held in Frankfurt, West Germany. The main theme of the fair was "India, Change in Continuity." This fair is an important event in the literary world, as the newest editions of books are presented to the public.

The Sai association of Germany, the *Sathya Sai Vereinigung*, which is responsible for the translation and publication of Sai literature into the German language, participated in the event, assisted by the Austrian *Sathya Sai Philosophische Vereinigung*. They presented thirty titles in German, as well as a selection of books in English. The *Sarva Dharma* symbol was displayed in the center of the pavilion with quotations from Sri Sathya Sai Baba on his life and his messages on service, faith, and education in human values. The books, as well as the display, attracted a great deal of interest from visitors and booksellers alike.

The *Sathya Sai Vereinigung* has established and manages book stores in Germany and publishes a quarterly entitled *Sai Briefe* (Sai Letter).

—Bernhard Gruber
West Germany

RETREATS OR CONFERENCES?

A veteran participant in Sai Retreats has concluded that the gatherings we call "retreats" are more akin to conferences, and that they should be so entitled henceforth. Devotees who long for solitude and time to retreat from the sensory world to quietness within themselves—think, and discuss: if it would be possible to have "true retreats." What do you think?

—**Jack Hislop**, President
Sathya Sai Baba Council of America

SOME RETREATS AND CONFERENCES FOR 1987

Date and Cost	Location	Information and Registration
April 10-12 Adults \$35 Children 6-16, \$15 Under 6 free	Triangle Y Ranch, Oracle, Arizona , near Tucson	Jonathan Roof 4960 E. Avenida del Cazador Tucson, Arizona 85718 (602) 299-2054
Memorial Day Weekend: May 22-25 Cost not established	Camp Colby, in the Angeles Forest, near Los Angeles, California	Surendra Patel 18212 Leaf Circle Huntington Beach, CA 92648 (714) 847-0043
Memorial Day Weekend: May 22-25 Cost not established	Camp Wyman Eureka, near St. Louis, Missouri	Raghavan "Chuck" Chakraverty 12404 Vernie Lane Maryland Heights, MO 63043 (314) 469-3804
For 5 nights: June 29-July 3 Adults \$125 Children reduced rates	Evergreen State College at Olympia, Washington , near Seattle	Gayle Alden Star Route, Box 4 Addy, WA 99101 (509) 935-6353

The sum and substance of good acts is to sanctify our own life. Therefore, can there be greater or more sacred charity than offering food? Can there be a more sacred God than parents? Can there be a greater truth than sacrifice? Can there be a greater inner feeling than compassion?

—Baba
From an October 7, 1986, discourse

WEEDS OF THE HEART

Service! I can't do that. I'm too busy. I work a full-time job, plus I have a backyard full of weeds to cut and clear. This is what I was thinking while reflecting on all of the bewildering talk about service projects at the Sathya Sai Baba Center and, at the same time, looking out over my backyard full of weeds and dreading another spring season of hard labor. I decided service projects were just out of the question for me, for what project could I possibly engage in with my limited time?

Oh, but Sai does not let go so easily. At that moment, while in the midst of this dilemma, a devotee friend called and mentioned growing a vegetable garden and donating the food. Wow! What an idea. A light went on inside and I realized the weeds in my backyard were not the problem. It was the weeds of *tamas*—laziness and ignorance in my own heart—that was preventing me from doing service.

So off to the phone I went, and I suggested to other devotees that we grow a vegetable garden and donate the food to the Marin County Food Bank, a nonprofit organization which collects food and distributes it to the needy within the county.

An entire day was devoted to putting in the garden. The work was toilsome, especially rototilling, for the soil was hard from not being worked for a long time (as was the soil of my heart). But with repeated passes, the ground loosened and was turned into an amiable composition. Soil amendments were added, the seeds planted, and Baba's garden was blessed with the *Gayatri Mantra*. The labor was exhausting and lasted all day. The evening ended with a delicious vegetarian dinner and devotional songs.

But the work did not end there, for the garden needed watering daily. And lo and behold, over a period of time, another phenomenon occurred—weeds grew! As with my heart, the constant watering while repeating Baba's name was a must for the seeds of loving service to sprout. A constant vigilance had to be kept over the weeds of my heart, for, if they were not pulled out quickly by the roots, they would grow fast and multiply, destroying the newly sprouted seeds. Every time I pulled out a weed from the garden, I felt I was also ridding myself of negativity—a clean garden, a clean heart. What a wonderful service project this was turning out to be. It was as if the garden was a mirror of myself.

Eventually, with the help of the Sai devotees, watering, weeding, and harvesting the garden produced more than 500 pounds of fresh vegetables which were greatly

appreciated by the Marin County Food Bank. One of the managers asked: "Who is this Sai Baba? I never heard of him before. He seems to do good work!"

From this project, I have learned service is a twenty-four-hour-a-day activity, not a four-hour-per-week project. Service is an attitude of giving, a process of keeping thoughts clean and pure so that one can give freely and spontaneously from the heart in daily life. There are no excuses for not doing service, such as "I don't have time" or "I don't know what to do." As long as we keep the heart cleared of the weeds of ignorance and watered with the love of Baba's name, the opportunities for service will present themselves to us. Service may be no further away than your own backyard.

—D. J. Olds
Novato, California



Love expresses itself as service. Love grows through service. Love is born in the womb of service. And God is love.

—Baba

NINE WAYS TO HELP THE HOMELESS

The homeless problem in the United States is reaching vast proportions. According to official estimates, from 250,000 to two million people in this country are today without a permanent place to live. These—society's throwaways—are becoming one of the major issues of this decade.

As Sai devotees, we have a responsibility to do whatever we can to alleviate this suffering. Indeed, much is being done. Many Centers have excellent ongoing feeding and clothing projects directed toward the homeless. And a number of members work as volunteers in community programs. However, the urgency of the situation makes a review of possible service in this area appropriate. Here is a list of suggestions that may be helpful to those interested, both inside and outside the Sai organization:

- **Pray daily**, asking the Lord for his help.
- **Develop a list of organizations** that offer assistance in your community. This can include government agencies, private volunteer organizations (the Red Cross, Salvation Army, Society of St. Vincent De Paul, etc.), and church groups. Also list soup kitchens, shelters, and hospices for the homeless.
- **Distribute food and clothing** directly as a Center or indirectly through established church and school groups. Warm coats, hats, scarves, socks, sweaters, gloves, shoes—all are badly needed. If you give these out independently, do not go alone, but always in a group.
- **Collect toilet articles and household items** (such as blankets, sleeping bags, pillows, and sheets) and distribute them directly or through established organizations.
- **Learn about the homeless**—who they are and why they are rejected by society. Understand their plight, their struggle for survival, their need to preserve a shred of human dignity. See them—all of them—as the Lord's children; see all as our brothers and sisters.
- **Speak to organizations and write to newspapers**, using what you know to make others aware of this desperate need.
- **Contact your city, state, and federal representatives** and stress the urgency of appropriate research and legislation.
- **Act by volunteering** as an individual or by joining together to help and encourage friends to do the same. Volunteers are desperately needed at many soup kitchens and private shelters.
- **Trust that your love in action will bring the Lord's grace.**

"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." (James 1:22)

—Hal Honig
Service Opportunities Newsletter

DIVINE MESSAGE DURING THE *DASARA* FESTIVAL PRASANTHI NILAYAM, OCTOBER 9, 1986

One who has been conquered by the inner enemies will not be able to conquer the external enemies. How can he do it? It is not possible! Only the one who understands the Transcendental Principle has sanctified his life. This is a fact which is conveyed to you.

The transformation of man is the transformation of the world; only when man changes can the world change. Only when the individual changes can society change. It is essential to have the physical and mental transformations in order to get the spiritual one. From times immemorial, many sages, scholars, saints, and great ones have been teaching philosophy. Teachings have been done only by word of mouth and have not been demonstrated by practice. Teachings which are supported by practice are the need of the day.

The *Gita* Is Timeless for All Cultures

Today, each religion has one text as its basis. Christians believe in the *Bible*. Muslims believe in the *Koran*. Sikhs base their beliefs on the *Granth Saheb*. *Bharatiyas* (Indians) have the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* and a number of other Scriptures as the basis of their beliefs but, of these, the *Bhagavad Gita* is the most important. We have to examine carefully the *Bhagavad Gita*, understand its teachings, and practice them in the proper way. We will be able to understand and experience the essence of any spiritual text only when we faithfully practice the teachings. Today, people only chant and read books and perform rituals instead of trying to understand the inner significance of the contents and put them to work in their lives.

You have to recognize the fact that spiritual texts are teaching the Transcendental Principle and are not meant for reading in a week. It is narrow to think that the *Bhagavad Gita* is applicable only to Indians. It transcends time, country, caste, community, and everything on earth. This is a text which is based upon *Advaitic* (nondualistic) philosophy, full of spirituality and truth. Its divine essence includes all of the divine principles. The entire divinity is codified into a song. *Bhagavad Gita* is the essence of the *Upanishads*. The one who drinks this essence will become a courageous, brave, and heroic person, not a coward who runs away.

Because the essence of the *Bhagavad Gita* has not really been understood, only externals are being preached. The speakers are full of delusion. The *Bhagavad Gita*,

on the other hand, should remove delusion; caste, community, and religion are delusions, and the *Gita* transcends them all. Delusions are based upon qualities (*gunas*), and God transcends all qualities. God resides in the form of *Atman* in everyone. When you say, "I, I, I," this "I" refers to God alone.

We should not consider the *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of God) in the form of this text as being the only Song of God; in fact, any description of the Lord may be described as a song of God. All the texts of the various religions give descriptions of the Lord. In a way, all of these can be taken as *Bhagavad Gitas*.

Only if we understand the underlying unity in these texts can we understand the greatness of divinity. We should not waste our life in narrow-mindedness, basing our beliefs on differences of caste, community, and religion. It is an act of ignorance to think that the *Bhagavad Gita* is sectarian. The *Bhagavad Gita* is basically associated with spirituality, *thathwa jnana*. What is the meaning of *thathwa*? *Thwam* refers to the individual state. When you associate the *thwam*, the individual soul, with the *Eswara thathwa*, or *thath*, then only will you get *thathwam*. *Bhagavad Gita* essentially relates to the unity of God with the individual soul. It is the merging of nature with its creator. It is the joining of the *Atman* with the *Atman* Principle.

We are studying the *Bhagavad Gita* with a narrow sense, although it is a sacred text. The essence of the *Gita* has to be experienced by practice. It should not be restricted to preaching and teaching. The true significance of this sacred book has to be understood clearly. When you open the *Bhagavad Gita*, at first you are under the impression that Krishna, Dhritarashtra, and Arjuna are conversing. If you read the text with the feeling that Krishna and Arjuna are essentially physical entities, you will not get the benefit. You must understand that Krishna refers to the Godhead and Arjuna to the principle of the individual soul, or *jivi*. Arjuna was in a state of delusion. When he entered the battlefield, he saw his teachers, relatives, and friends and declared to Krishna: "I am feeling rather confused; please, let us go back home!" When he saw his relatives and friends, he felt deluded. This delusion is associated with the feeling of "my-ness" which comes with attachment. Krishna told Arjuna: "As long as you have delusion, you can never reach *Brahman* (Ultimate Reality)." He removed Arjuna's delusion and destroyed his fears. He established and proved the principle of *Brahman* to Arjuna. Only then could the timid Arjuna become a great hero, a brave and courageous person.

The Essence of the *Gita* Is To Know Yourself

Individual souls today are also full of delusion, fear, and attachment; and, like Arjuna, they are giving up their duties. They are losing the human principle in themselves. With

ceaseless work, full of worries, unlimited desires, and excitement, how can a person who is thus trying to reach the Ultimate succeed? When you want to understand this permanent entity, you must first free yourself from delusion. It is therefore essential to practice. Delusion may be described as infatuation. Infatuation occurs on account of the *gunas*, or qualities, all of which are artificial. We feel frightened by things in the world, which are merely the objects in a dream. These objects are created by our own vision. The entire world is something like the reflection of an object in a mirror. We have been able to see the reflection, but this has nothing to do with the mirror. These things are seen with the eye, but they have nothing to do with the eye at all. The eye always remains as the witness. It can see everything in creation, but it cannot see itself.

The *Bhagavad Gita* removes this kind of blindness and confers divine sight and grants divine experience. These days, the number of those preaching and teaching the *Bhagavad Gita* has grown tremendously. The *jnana yagna*, a ritual which involves reading for a whole week, is being practiced. The result is that man is being brought to a greater sense of ruin and destruction through wrong explanations and interpretations. Memorizing and chanting the *slokas* mechanically like a phonograph record can never confer good benefits. We have to make an effort to practice correctly and, thus, experience the real glory and joy. We have to make an effort to understand the real meaning contained in the *Gita*. Krishna himself has said that Arjuna is a mere instrument: "Oh, Arjuna, I am using you as an instrument, for this *Gita* is meant for the entire world and not for you alone! I exist in all beings in the form of *Atman*. Yourself and myself are not different one from the other. Because of your attachment and hatred, you're not able to know your own nature. Just because the sun is covered by clouds and cannot be seen, you cannot deny the existence of the sun! Just because you cannot recognize the truth, arguing that truth does not exist is not proper. Oh, Arjuna, if one recognizes oneself, one becomes *Brahma* (God) himself." The essence of the *Bhagavad Gita* is to know oneself. That kind of difference, which makes you think that Arjuna is an individual soul and Krishna alone is God, makes you full of fear. You have to understand the principle which unifies the individual soul with the supreme Soul.

This is the law of *dharma* (right action, duty). *Bhagavad Gita* is *dharma sastra* (righteous moral code). The reason is that Krishna has declared that he incarnates to establish *dharma*. "Whenever *dharma* declines, then I am born." What do you understand by *dharma*? It is our very life breath. Sugar is characterized by sweetness; flowers, by fragrance; in the same way, for man, the characteristic is *dharma*. This kind of *dharma* must be associated with truth and morality. To understand the real meaning of *dharma*, you have to practice it. Can you preach *dharma* when you are aspiring for money? You cannot buy *dharma* with money; you have to buy it with your heart. All the preachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* have been subverted into a type of business today. Neither individuals, nor listeners, nor preachers can benefit when the teaching is contaminated by greed.

We have to make an effort to analyze and understand the delusion (*maya*) under which we have been spending our entire life. All attachments and bondage are *maya*; family life is *maya*; death is *maya*. Why enter into *maya* again for this transient life? Understanding the *Bhagavad Gita* will destroy *maya* and take you to the principle of Divinity. The essence of *Vedanta* is to enable man to live as a man and reach *Madhava* (the divine Entity).^s

From time immemorial, there are *crores* (tens of millions) of people who have read the *Bhagavad Gita*, but to what extent have they understood the meaning? When we are not living in accordance with its teachings, how can we understand and enjoy its real meaning? Not only are we missing joy, but we are also suffering.

Thorough Inquiry Promotes Practice

Neither reading nor chanting the *Gita* will enable you to practice it. Only after a thorough inquiry will you be able to undertake the practice. Only when you elaborate on it and ponder it will your inquiry become meaningful. This kind of inquiry can give you joy. The joy that you are able to get out of performing rituals related to the *Gita* is only something like a reflection in a mirror; it is not the real joy! When you have a bird in your hand, why search for one in the bush?

When the *Bhagavad Gita* is teaching that *Eswara* (another name for God) is the resident of the heart, why should you search for him elsewhere? The real essence and the correct way of enjoying the *Bhagavad Gita* is to consider your *Atman* as Krishna, your heart as *Brindavan* (a holy place), and your thoughts as the *gopikas*, Krishna's devotees (those who have subdued their senses). Then, when matters arise which pertain to your personal interest, you will not lose faith.

When we teach others with a lot of firmness and conviction, but do not practice what we teach, there will be confusion. This kind of confusion affects a person who considers himself to be different from God. This is like Arjuna who prayed to Krishna to go on a mission to ensure that war would be avoided. "The war is not good. So many innocent people lose their lives. There will be problems." Arjuna, thus taking into account all the consequences a war would bring about, prayed to Krishna: "Krishna! Please save us from this war!"

Because of this prayer from Arjuna, Krishna went on a mission to the Kauravas. In order to avoid the war, Krishna tried his best to negotiate with the Kauravas. The wicked ones, Duryodhana, Dushasana, and others never agreed to Krishna's proposals. When



Krishna came back and told Arjuna that he did not succeed in his mission, Arjuna changed his views. He thought that God was withholding his grace. The feelings of individuals go on changing, depending upon what is convenient for them. If Krishna had succeeded in his mission, Arjuna would have been extremely happy. Arjuna suspected that the Kauravas would not agree to the proposals. When Krishna returned from his mission, Arjuna spoke to him thus: "Oh, *Gopala*, why undertake this again? Let us not continue this mission. Those narrow-minded people will never agree to our proposals. Let us waste no more time, but begin to make preparations for war."

Was it not Arjuna who had indulged in delaying tactics? As he did not succeed in his idea of avoidance, he began exhorting Krishna for the war. This is the state-of-affairs of every individual human being. For their own selfish ends, they make every effort. If they succeed, they think it is due to their own efforts. But if they are unsuccessful, they think: God has not graced me! When one is victorious, does one say that it is on account of the grace of Sai? Because of such narrowmindedness, man cannot understand the real meaning of spirituality. If everything is God's blessing, then we must broaden our love to accept and include everything. This is described as "expansion love." If we limit our love to only our own, then it can be described as "contraction love."

Today in the world, we may have a little broadmindedness; but when it comes to the matter of God, we become narrower in our way of thinking. Those people who are preaching, expounding, and teaching the *Bhagavad Gita* are expounding things to suit the audience. All their efforts are to earn the appreciation of people and bring them closer. The result of this is that they entangle man further in delusion. The listeners think that these ideas are coming from very knowledgeable people, so they accept what is said as truth. It is not the teaching and preaching you have to do, but the practicing. Take the path of *practicing*, as well as preaching.

If we don't practice what we preach, we lose the faith and trust of others. It is essential to preach only after practicing. *Lakhs* (hundreds of thousands) of copies of the *Bhagavad Gita* are printed today, and many are chanting the *Bhagavad Gita*, but there is no mental transformation at all.

For mental transformation, there must be a change of behavior. Man means essentially "mind," mind means thoughts, and thoughts refer to our daily behavior and practice. The sum and substance of this is that man is only as good as his behavior. We have to make our own behavior good.

Each Has His Own *Dharma*

If we change our conduct and behavior into good, our mind will be able to follow. Once there is mental transformation, spiritual transformation can also take place.

We have to bring about transformation in our thinking. But Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita* did not do this. He said: "Swami, I shall implicitly carry out your command." It is after listening to such a prayer that Krishna gave encouragement to Arjuna. He made a hero of him and made him victorious and glorious. The real yoga is discharging our duties. The one who forsakes his duty can only get dis-ease. You have to establish God in your heart and develop the faith that everything happens by his *sankalpa* (divine will). His will is the real charioteer. *Partha* does not refer exclusively to Arjuna; all of us are the children of Mother Earth. For every individual, God is the *sarathi* (charioteer). You have, therefore, to pray: "Become the charioteer of my life, please!" Then and only then can you become an instrument in his hands.

You must completely surrender your own individual feelings, thoughts, and ideas. It was in this way that Arjuna obeyed Krishna's commands. Only then Krishna declared: "As you have just accepted me unconditionally, now you are my true devotee, Arjuna!"

The proof is implicit obedience in carrying out God's commands. But today, man does not value his own word. Embodiments of love! For the word, the price and the expenditure may be less, but it is invaluable. How can a person who does not value his own word understand man's value? The words of the Lord are totally selfless. Whatever he does, thinks, or says is only for your good. You should firmly believe this truth. Then only can you earn the privilege of having God as your charioteer. He does not need anything from the world; he does everything for the sake of the world, and he can get anything by his mere will.

We have to firmly believe Krishna when he declares that there is nothing he has to do and no duty he has to perform in all the three worlds. Everything he does is for our own sake.

We are reading the *Bhagavad Gita* and memorizing seven hundred *slokas*, but we don't understand what they really mean. If you want to understand it completely, you have to take two things. Some people say that it teaches us *bhakti* (devotion), some that it teaches *dharma* (right action, duty), others *karma* (activity), and so on. All these commentators, in the light of their own understanding and intelligence, are losing the real meaning of what Krishna has said. While developing different meanings and interpretations, the real meaning is lost and wrong meanings and interpretations are emerging. In the first stanza, the first word is *dharma* and the last word of the last stanza is *mama*; if you join both, it becomes *mama dharma* (my duty). We have to recognize what our *dharma* is by reading the *Bhagavad Gita*. All people may not have the same *dharma*. There are different *dharma*s given to *brahmacharis* (students of *Brahman*), *grihasthas* (householders), *vanaprasthas* (those who stay in seclusion), and

sanyasins (those who renounce everything). Similarly, one may be a student, an agriculturist, a businessman, or a woman or a man. For each, there is different *dharma*. Even between women, one may be a married woman, one may not be married. It is wrong to think that *dharma* is uniform for all. One has to recognize not only what state he or she is in, but what stage of evolution, as well. It is very difficult to understand one's present condition, the direction of movement, and the limits or boundaries in this process. The easiest thing is to offer and dedicate every act to God. Say: "God, by your own grace I can do this, so I offer it to you." The heart must be transformed, not just the words coming from the mouth. Chanting the *Bhagavad Gita* is of no avail if you do not practice it.

If you keep delicious food on a plate and merely repeat a thousand times, "What delicious food, what delicious food, what delicious food," will your stomach get full? We need not go on describing these delicious things; let us eat them! If you eat them, your stomach will become full. This is like practicing. You get joy only when you practice, not by mere chanting. Practice is the final proof of the *Bhagavad Gita*, and it must be taught only in this way.

—**Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

For Further Reading...

...about the *Bhagavad Gita* by Sri Sathya Sai Baba, we suggest:

Geetha Vahini

(translated by Professor N. Kasturi)
which describes the philosophy
of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

252 pages — \$3.60

To obtain this volume, contact the Book Center of America.
The address is on page 38.

CEILING ON DESIRES PROGRAM

Now that the booklet of *Suggestions for Study Groups and Individual Use of the Ceiling on Desires Program* has finally been released, each Center will have received a copy. For those who would like to obtain their own copy, please send \$1.00 to cover postage and handling to the SAI Foundation, 7911 Willoughby Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90046, or to the Sathya Sai Book Center of America, P.O. Box 278, Tustin, California 92681-0278.

The booklet is an experiment to determine how best to put into daily practice Baba's directions limiting desires by cutting out waste (of money, food, time, and energy) in our personal lives. It is not an easy program. Baba calls it a spiritual discipline which can lead to freedom from attachment to material security symbols, which prevents us from finding our security solely in Baba.

In order to make the booklet as helpful and practical as possible, it will be greatly appreciated if devotees will try it out and see how it works, both in study groups and in their individual lives. When you have tested it, please send your comments, criticisms, and suggestions, such as: Does it lend itself easily to use in a study circle, family, or on an individual basis? What would you like to see changed or added? What have you found to be helpful which might also help other devotees? In this way, it is hoped that a really practical guide will emerge to help all of us put the program into action as Baba urges. You can write your suggestions to Phyllis Krystal, P.O. Box 865, Pacific Palisades, California 90272. Appropriate comments will be included in future printings of the booklet.



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From an October 21, 1986, divine discourse

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