

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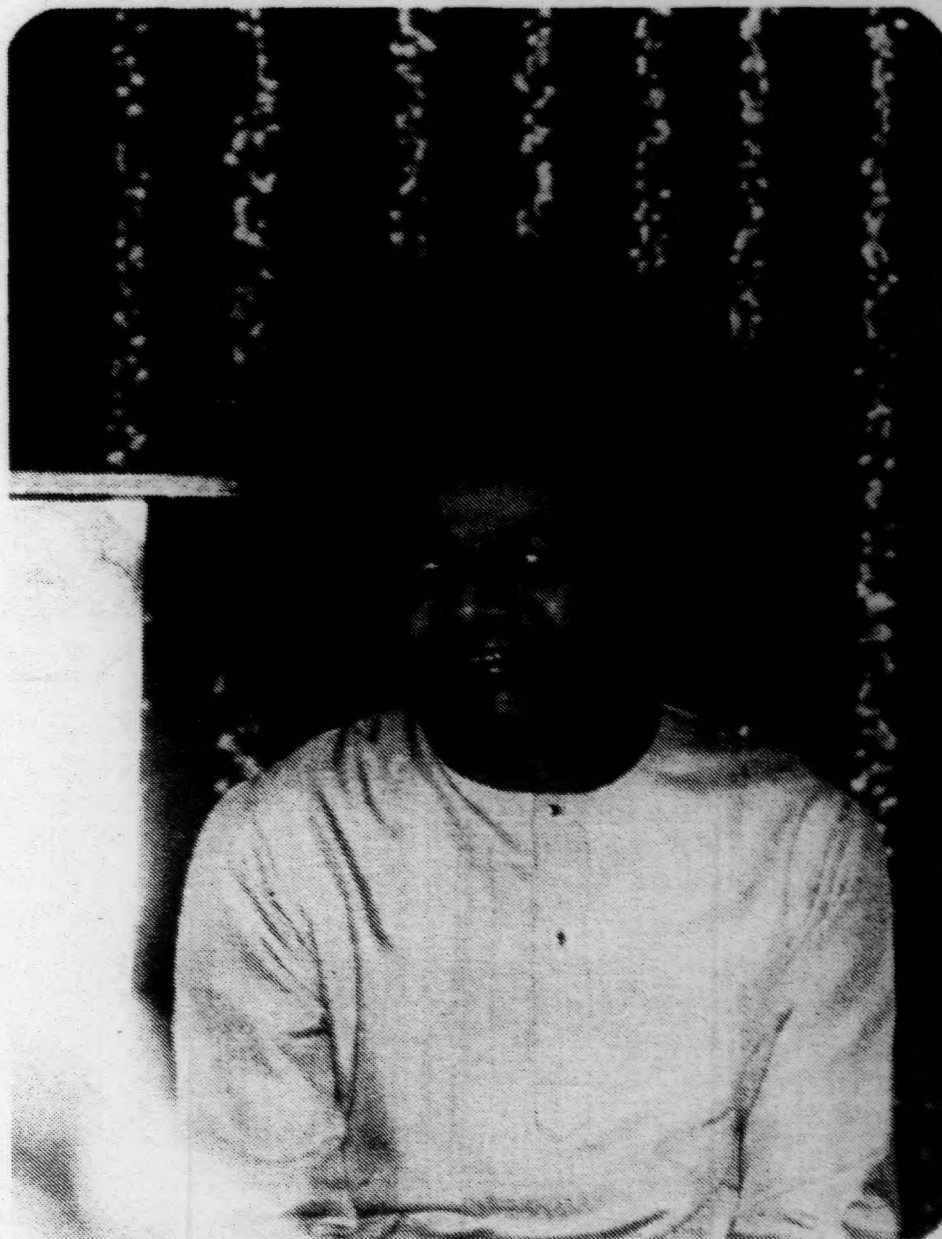
This publication is dedicated with love and devotion to
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Quotation, <i>by Sri Sathya Sai Baba</i>	1
The Fire This Time, <i>by Kaye Dunham</i>	2
True Grit, <i>by Jay Jarrett</i>	10
Prayer at Evening Darshan, <i>by Arthur E. Tishman</i>	11
Health and Healing, <i>by John Evans, M.D.</i>	12
The Politics of Love, <i>by Dennis J. Gersten, M.D.</i>	18
More Supermarket Seva, <i>by L.S.</i>	18
Limits That Liberate, <i>by Sri Sathya Sai Baba</i>	19
The Ideal for Women, Part II, <i>by Sri Sathya Sai Baba</i>	23
Children's Corner: Gumby's Choice, <i>by Art Clokey</i>	24
The Language of the Heart, <i>by Cathy Shanley</i>	25
English Devotional Songs, <i>by Jack Hislop</i>	25
Dates for the Second Half of 1987	26
Sai Retreats for the Second Half of 1987	26
Communication Enhanced, <i>by Richard Bayer</i>	27
Business and the School System, <i>by Hal Honig</i>	28
A Loveless Life Is a Deserted Home, <i>by Sri Sathya Sai Baba</i>	32
Sai Books, Tapes, and Other Items	
Sathya Sai Book Center of America	39
SAI Foundation	40
Birth Day Publishing Company	40
Subscription Information	Inside Back Cover
Sai Education in America—	
A Progress Report, <i>by Michael G. Goldstein, M.D.</i>	Insert

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Who can hinder the inscrutable operation of the will of God? Can the divine mystery be penetrated and unraveled? Fools who cannot grasp the truth, who cannot recognize divinity and measure the power of God, who have no faith in God, live in the delusion that their petty plans will save them and that they can triumph through their own efforts! The fact is that not even the smallest success can be won without God's grace. Though this is true, we should not sit with folded hands, believing that a thing will accomplish itself if and when God wills it. Human effort is essential, and man himself must try. He must use the strength and skill he is endowed with and resolve to proceed with the work, laying the responsibility for success on God. For without the grace of God, every effort will be rendered fruitless.



—Baba

Bhagavatha Vahini, p. 334

THE FIRE THIS TIME

I will drag them, place them on the table, and operate.

—Baba

On Thursday, October 2, 1986, around 6:30 p.m., I was severely injured by a truck carburetor flash fire which burned my chest, hands, and face. In this account of the incident and subsequent events, I will try to report the many dimensions of learning experience which occurred.

Firstly, in my view, it is not coincidental that this took place on a Thursday, the day which Sri Sathya Sai Baba, my spiritual guide and the One whom I accept as the present high manifestation of the Lord, has designated as His day.

Baba tells us over and over again that it is critical to one's well-being to follow certain practices such as meditation and positive self-affirmation, recognizing that one is God and that God dwells within each of us; to exercise self-control, kindness, and noninjury to all other beings; to revere parents as God; to speak gently to people and avoid criticism; to eat moderate and well-balanced vegetarian meals; to perform selfless service; and—most importantly—to constantly repeat the Lord's name (remembering the Lord in whatever your chosen form of Him may be).

Baba says if we don't work at these things and the mind takes over, we can be dragged down into negativity, self-pity, self-degradation, angry acts, jealous thoughts, unkind speech, and dark desires—all of which will bring about self-destruction.

Indeed! My fire experience is a dramatic example of this truth, but I was spared by the Lord's grace. I also see that my life had been the story of a hypocrite because, although I did much service in the community and worshipped God well in our meetings—conveying the image of a true devotee—my heart was dry and choked with anger. This anger presented itself at home around my wife and daughter or in abrupt communications with my employees at our small business or with colleagues. Anger also surfaced too often when I spoke to my mother.

Moreover, because I have not really learned to surrender all to the Lord—the joys, sorrows, anxieties, and aggravations—I was greatly overburdened with self-doubt and a gnawing sense of inadequacy in handling my business and family responsibilities—the very things the Lord pleads with us to give Him to carry. I wasn't yielding to the great faith in the Lord that I knew I had, and I was becoming more and more alienated. The only saving graces for me were the service projects and the fellowship meetings with devotional singing.

Once Baba had warned me in a dream (through His omnipresence) about an impending vehicular accident which he would avert for us, and the incident came to pass. However, this time I had no such prior warning. On the fateful evening, I was helping move a stalled truck by priming the carburetor. Michael, the driver (and my friend), was inside starting the engine on my command. I recall feeling angry at him earlier because he didn't know how to deal with the truck himself. "I'll show him," I thought.

As we were coordinating this procedure, suddenly, like an angry spirit, flames shot up from the carburetor and caught my hand and shirt sleeve. I fell backward off the truck bumper. I saw and felt the flames spreading. I was witnessing myself burning, still not quite believing it was happening. The fire would not brush off like dirt or shake off like water. For a moment I didn't move; and as time seemed to stop, I sat on the cement driveway realizing that, in this moment of truth, I could let this fire destroy me—me who always boasted that the world is just delusion anyway—me who smugly proclaims, "I am not this body." The "I" remembered feeling: "What a betrayal to your wife and family and the others who care for you." As quickly as I had that thought, I found myself rolling on the ground, attempting to smother the flames, calling out "Baba, Baba, Baba. . . ." Michael came running with a garment and finished putting out the flames. (For those who read this and don't know, Baba has always said to call Him in times of danger and He will save us. He also says He rescues beings even when they don't call His name or know of Him.)

I lay motionless, watching the scene from deep inside my body, seeing people looking down at me, hearing voices. I kept repeating "Om Sai Ram." I felt nothing. My wife Lorraine, who had been on the loading dock, was now standing over me. How horrible this must have been for her. The paramedics came (Lorraine had called them). They moved me into the vehicle. Michael whispered in my ear, "I hope I'm as much on the case as you were," meaning that if he were ever in need, he hoped he'd remember to call the Lord's name the way I did. As the ambulance pulled away, I, in robot-voice fashion, began whispering intermittent reports to the medics as to where I felt pain: "Arm. . . intense pain." They were dousing me with saline solution.

How many times have I watched these efficient angels of mercy at work, heard the sirens, and seen the red and white vans slip through the city streets, and now I was in one. I was admitted to one of the best burn centers in the country and was met by a distinguished burn surgeon who was to be my doctor—the Lord's grace, for sure! It was on the burn ward that my lessons began in earnest.

The Hospital Lessons

I. Caring

The burn center is a highly specialized ward and an incredibly nurturing environment. The registered nurses, the burn technicians, and the support staff give each

patient caring attention. They work hard and are trained to deal with burn patients who suffer several levels of trauma, *i.e.*, emotional and mental, as well as physical. For the two and a half weeks I was hospitalized, I experienced their compassionate ministrations and their genuineness in relating to me.

Before this incident, I had begun confessing to Baba that I was not a truly loving person; my heart was not really open. See what He was showing me?

Lorraine came to comfort me every day, driving a great distance after putting in long work hours (she was running our business and tending our daughter). I was very aware of her burden, and I was a constant witness to her unselfish attention to me with never a negative word. I searched her eyes and found no trace of resentment, no hint of reluctance toward her difficult task. Ah, Baba, so this is what You mean, and she has not even declared herself to be a devotee!

So many people took the time to come and visit or send cards. I was amazed and overwhelmed that friends and family cared enough to make the effort to be supportive (we had several devotional song sessions in my room). My friend Michael came every day to bring good cheer in the form of greetings from well-wishers or special food treats. Even patients on the ward with their own difficulties stopped by to be encouraging. I couldn't believe that I was the recipient of so much grace. To top it off, I was basically feeling no great pain, just minor discomfort. It was difficult for me to adjust to hospital life, not having been a patient since tonsillitis as a youngster.

I knew that Baba was taking care of the situation, but—as operation day approached—I was looking for specific signs or direct communications from Him. All who know about Baba know that He can and does communicate with people through usual and unusual channels. I wished that He would “appear” in the operating room as He has done on several occasions for devotees. Maybe I should warn the doctors, “Excuse me . . . there's this man with an Afro hairdo and a long orange robe”

On the eve of the operation, what *did* occur was a visit from a couple who are truly two of God's loving children and deep devotees. I was delighted to see them. They had recently returned from visiting Baba, who had showered them with grace by giving them a sacred object called a *lingam*. He had told them that during the course of their daily family worship, they should pour pure water over the *lingam* while reciting the name of the Lord (this is an ancient ritual). He further said to give the water to sick persons to aid in their healing. My friends had brought me some of that water. I clearly saw this as a sign of Baba's attention. The second incident occurred after visiting hours when I was resting comfortably in my room and probably inwardly preparing for the early-morning event. A lab technician whom I had not seen before came in to take more blood samples. She was quite efficient and a very pleasant, radiant person. As she finished up and was gently straightening out my bedding, she happened to

look up at one of the several Baba pictures that surrounded me. "Oh, Sai Baba!" she exclaimed. I was joyously surprised. "How do you know Baba?" I asked. She replied that her ex-roommate is a Baba devotee, and then added that she was puzzled that her roommate had an Eastern *guru*, meaning that this was removed from the typical Western religious traditions. I told her that Baba has devotees all over the world. "Where are you from?" I queried. "The Philippines," was her reply as she left. Her recognition of Baba was a sign. I was grinning from ear to ear.

II. On Procrastination, Heeding the Elders, and Taking the Lord's Counsel

Almost a year before this burn incident, my mother had sent me a book which she had found to be an insightful guide along the path of self-understanding and spiritual growth. The title is *The Road Less Traveled*, by M. Scott Peck, M.D. I, in characteristic fashion, especially because my mother sent it, didn't read the book. Lorraine, however—who is an avid reader—did, and was favorably impressed. Here was the scenario: I was lying captive in a hospital bed, having fallen victim to my own stress overload, and in walked the psychiatric social worker making her rounds. She is a very empathetic, informed, articulate young lady. During the course of our conversation, she recommended that I read a fantastic book to help me gain insight. The title? *The Road Less Traveled*! Further, I mentioned the book to a burn technician who said that it has top priority on her books-to-read list. "OK, Baba, I get your message."

I asked my wife to bring the book in. Those of us who know of Baba know that He is the Master at playful comment, ironies, and bringing events full circle to resolution (always with a lesson for the recipients) in His grand and continual orchestration of human events. Here is an excellent example, because, you see, the first time I heard any of the contents of this book was after the operation when it was read to me (since my hands were in casts and I was flat on my back) by my mother, who had come down from San Francisco to help out. I recommend the book. It talks about patterns of non-productive and destructive behavior that one may have learned early in life which can be recognized and interrupted. It speaks of self-discipline, love, and the ultimate goals of living. To a great degree, it is the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba in Western language.

III. On Eating Habits

Mine are notoriously poor. I constantly display a keen disinterest in the whole subject. "Food is for fuel" is my credo; however, I don't eat much, nor do I eat a balanced diet with any established regularity. I do stay away from animal products, most categories of "junk food," white sugar, highly refined ingredients, and milk. My cooking skills are at the basic survival level, and I aspire to eventually eat only raw "living foods" (if I have to eat). I have a definite aversion to spending time considering daily menus, and I am the antithesis of a gourmand.

What happened in the hospital was that I was advised that I needed increased caloric intake to promote healing, and that meant that I had to ferret out what hospital fare was available for a vegetarian. My choice was to face choosing my meals from a menu card every day or end up getting stuck with such wonderful commissary delicacies as broccoli souffle or Brussels sprouts in cheddar sauce (even fuel has its limits!).

I had to force myself to perform this duty which, after all, *is* my primary responsibility for myself. I usually avoid it by hardly eating. Of course, early in my injured state, I didn't want to think about food anyway. At home, too much of the time I was letting Lorraine deal with it. As a matter of fact, when I finally got into the swing of making my own choices at the hospital, it was not without having to wrestle the job away from Lorraine, who has been doing it for me for years! My poor eating habits, I'm sure, contributed to my stressed-out condition, and I had to pay for them somewhat in terms of my body dealing with the heavy trauma of this injury. Baba says we have a sacred duty to protect this body, this vessel, this temple.

IV. Untitled

I will not elaborate on this lesson, although it was the most important, by far. It had to do with coming to terms with certain angry feelings I had toward my mother. Since she was tending me every day, I knew that I'd have to—indeed, *wanted* to—deal with them. Baba was giving me this opportunity to clean up my act on this score. Thank God we worked it out, but not without some confrontation. She is a wise, caring, generous, loving, and patient lady, who came to help care for her son as much as he would let her. She called afterward from San Francisco to say that she felt good about what we dealt with and that the stay had been a wonderful one. Baba and the Scriptures both are emphatic on this issue. As manifested souls, one of our prime debts and duties is to honor our parents as God.

V. Faith

After the first grafting operation, which took an intense five hours and was rated as highly successful, my chest was bandaged and both hands were in heavy casts. It seemed to me that if my arms were to slip off the bed, I would end up going through the floor to the rooms below. Essentially, I had to lie on my back all of the time, not being able to move much or shift my arms without help or to take care of my own needs. It was a great lesson in patience. There were some moments of deep discouragement experiencing such helplessness. I had to call the nurse for everything, operating the call button by blowing into a tube placed in front of my mouth. When would this nightmare be over? The doctor was coming back in seven days to remove the casts. Couldn't it be earlier? No, he would be out of town until Monday. I wanted to demand his presence or that of his assistant. By Saturday, a certain desperate madness was setting in,

born of impatience and frustration. It must be what prisoners feel. I don't think I showed it outwardly, but inside I was writhing like a cobra trapped in the jaws of a mongoose.

Sunday came, and with it, the Lord's grace. My nurse announced that the doctor would be coming in to take off the casts. I was ecstatic! Surely, this news could only be compared with the moment one attains the victory of liberation from the gross world! And, as if to confirm Baba's gift to me, while I was waiting for the doctor, a morning visitor breezed into the room. It was the lady of the couple who had brought me the blessed water. She had made a special trip to bring me a dish of sweet rice which had also received the Lord's blessings through worship ritual. I told her the good news, and her joyous reply was that this day was the end of *Dasara* (a significant religious festival in India), the day which marks the moment of victory for the participants. I felt her presence was, indeed, auspicious.

When the doctor arrived, he carefully cut away the casts, removed the chest bandages, and surveyed his work. The critical concern in this type of surgery is whether or not the grafts take hold. The chest looked fine, and the areas on the lower arms, hands, and fingers where there had been grafts were excellent, he reported. But, alas, as he inspected the ungrafted areas of my fingers (particularly on the right hand, which sustained the deepest burn), he said very calmly and with admirable directness, "Mr. Dunham, I have made an error in judgment. You will need grafting on these fingers. We must operate again, as soon as scheduling permits." "Won't the skin grow back?" I asked hopefully. His reply was, "Yes, but if you want fingers that are functional, you should have this done. Otherwise, they will heal in a disfigured, gnarled fashion." He also said that some fingers on *both* hands might need this further work.

Well, I didn't want to go through the whole routine again, especially the postoperative ordeal of helplessness, etc. Baba's devotees who are reading this account all know what my inner thoughts were at this point: "This sounds like a job for the Lord. He can fix this deal right up. Boy, will this doctor and everybody else be surprised, not to mention the lifetime legendary status I could achieve, when Baba intercedes."

"Are you sure you have to operate? I'd like a chance to see if they will start healing," I asked courageously. I even went a step further and asked if he thought positive thinking (that's as close as I felt I could get to a spiritual vocabulary with him) would induce healing. He agreed to take another look at them before he operated, but he didn't feel there would be much point if I wanted useful fingers. "It's up to you," was his parting shot. I want to add here that the doctor seemed to be a genuinely concerned man and was giving me his best opinion of the situation. The internist, a gentle man who attended me, was more encouraging. He felt that perhaps in a week there might be indications of self-healing. He empathized with my desire to avoid another surgery. But when I expressed my feeling to one of the veteran burn technicians, she replied, "In a week, forget it," dismissing my uninformed fantasy. All during the ensuing week,

I had help from visiting devotees and encouragement from one nurse who used positive imaging to try to affect skin regeneration on my unseen hand (now wrapped in bandages). As operation day drew near, I began to realize how much I didn't want to go through it again, especially having to spend more time on my back with monster casts on my hands. Then I remembered, "Yes, Baba as the indwelling Lord already knows my prayer, but I must also contact Him through 'external' channels. I'll send a telegram." The moment I realized this, I felt that doing it would confirm my faith in God. Late that night, I composed a cable. I experienced deep joy while doing it, and I knew that it was an important act for me no matter what the outcome. I called Western Union and dictated the letter, holding back the warm tears which, for those who love the Lord, are a spontaneous expression of the deep, unbreakable bond between ourselves and Baba.

On the Sunday before the scheduled operation, I called the good doctor. Would he come and take the bandages off and look? He felt there was no need. He apologized that perhaps he had not clearly stated his most considered professional opinion and assured me that he was a very moral man and would not do any unnecessary surgery.

On Monday, the operation went as planned and was a success. It was not as long as the first, nor was the sleep as deep. I was in at 7:00 a.m. and back in my room and awake in time for lunch at noon. I even had a hearty appetite. Only one hand was in a cast. The following day, the doctor discharged me to continue recovery at home. My departure was a great event, with fond goodbyes to staff and patients. The relief is indescribable. It is as if one finds oneself at the end of a tunnel which one has accepted as being endless. Then there is the adjustment of coming back into the world from a highly protective environment, getting used to massive amounts of daylight, space, and street sounds, and learning how to put the body in motion with its temporary restrictions. I felt as if I had on a suit that didn't fit properly and was tight in too many places.

A day later, I had a sudden revelation that caused streams of grateful tears. I exclaimed through my sobbing, "Baba did answer my prayer, and I didn't even see. He knew that my greatest fear was to be helpless on my back again, and look how I am already home with only one hand in a cast and I can move freely around. Oh, thank you, dear Lord."

The greatest gain for this soul, as I see it, is the truth expressed by a visiting devotee at the hospital. "Kaye, now you'll be able to truly empathize with those who suffer injury and illness."

—Kaye Dunham
Los Angeles, California



*Whatever work or task you may undertake,
if you have your attention on God, then God
will take care of you.*

—Baba

TRUE GRIT

What we used to call sandpaper (and now more accurately call abrasive paper, since it's no longer made with sand) comes in many grits. A coarse grit, say a #60, serves to remove unwanted material quickly with relatively little time and effort. The experienced craftsman, however, uses it judiciously and knows that it is only the first step in creating the perfect surface he hopes to achieve.

Once he has sanded the material to the approximate shape or size, our craftsman now shifts to a medium grit, possibly a #100 or #120. Such a grit still removes quite a bit of material with only moderate effort. At the same time, it leaves a much smoother surface than did its predecessor. Depending upon the intended use for the material he's working with, our craftsman may consider the surface satisfactory and go on to the next step in his project. Some less-skilled workers will stop at this point, too, even though closer examination will reveal the need for further labor with a finer grit. This is where differences in the skill levels and dedication of the various craftsmen are most evident.

To the dedicated woodworker who is creating a piece of fine furniture or detailed carving, no amount of effort is too much, because he knows the beauty of a properly prepared and finished surface. If the design and execution of the project is good, it warrants meticulous attention to detail. When his piece has been treated with fine and extra-fine grits, the surface pores sealed, the grain enriched with the proper stain, then protected with a fine varnish or rubbed with several coats of a quality wax, our craftsman runs his sensitive fingers lovingly across the surface, smiles, and declares it's good.

We who have been drawn to Sri Sathya Sai Baba know what it is like to be subjected to the most meticulous preparation and finishing. There has never been a craftsman like Baba. He has the rare ability to recognize the potential hidden under the roughest exterior and the patience to apply all of the various grits and finishes to bring out the beauty in all of us.

In the process, a good bit of heat is experienced as Baba applies the finer grits with ever firmer pressure. It's also true that the harder the wood, the more pressure He must apply. More pressure brings more heat. Here the analogy breaks down, for we have one ability that a piece of oak or maple does not. Knowing that Baba will not cease His sanding until we have the shape and surface He wants, we can become soft and pliable in His hands, thereby expediting the process.

To do so does not benefit Baba; He has the tools, unlimited time, and patience for any task. Instead, it's to *our* advantage to yield and, thus, reduce the discomfort resulting from the heat buildup!

—Jay Jarrett
Stone Mountain, Georgia



Prayer At Evening Darshan

Your crimson robe floats across the evening sands.
Grant us each Your grace, sweet Sai, a blaze of bliss-filled Love.
The very sun sinks down beneath Your hand.
Your will commands the moon to rise above.

O Lord of Lords, light Your lamp within our breasts;
Make strong our tender faith and keep our hearts from harm;
Grant us equal mind in times of joy, or harshest tests,
Before the breeze of praise, within the fierce eye of the storm.

As we spin and stumble through Your cosmic play,
Our senses are but maya's clever dance.
We offer a Ceiling on Desires; Your truth's the only way.
We're longing for Your blessings, Sai, a word, a touch, a loving glance.

Draw us near You, Lord, so we may learn to reach
For what alone can free us—which lives within our hearts;
Your life is Your message, God, You came again to teach.
Divinity is our birthright, and we all must play our parts.

—Arthur E. Tishman
Burlington, Vermont

HEALTH AND HEALING



Most followers of Sathya Sai Baba become aware early in their spiritual quest that healing is one form of grace bestowed by Baba. This knowledge is gained both from reading about His divine activities (*leelas*) and observing His interactions with the crowd at Prasanthi Nilayam. As a physician, I also noted that many members of Sathya Sai Baba groups in America feel a strong reluctance, verging almost on repulsion, toward seeking any form of treatment from an orthodox medical practitioner. This does not mean, however, that they avoid all practitioners of the healing arts, since most feel comfortable in consulting any type of alternative practitioner, from chiropractors to faith healers. Since Baba is the perfect physician, it seemed advisable to learn what He has said about illness and healing. I have recently been encouraged to record my findings for others who may wonder about this.

Swami teaches us in various ways. Early in my quest, I was seated for afternoon *darshan* between a surgeon from Tamil Nadu and an elderly, retired Sikh colonel. The latter produced an article from his bag that he had written and silently handed me a copy. The title was, "How to Maintain Health 'Til We Breathe Our Last." The text stated that this was "mostly" in conformity with Baba's teachings, but it really preached turn-of-the-century Naturopathy, condemning doctors and all medicines. Amidst the verbiage were several pearls of quotes from Baba: *"The elementary rules of personal cleanliness are neglected in the name of novelty and neo-spiritualism."* *"Sometimes people cite the example of the Rishis, who did not tend their bodies. Rishis had full control over their sense organs and were always on the higher plane of nearness to Reality. Imitating them, without first possessing the same strength, control, and inner conviction that one is not the body, can only be hypocrisy and exhibitionism."*

What does Baba actually say about physicians and hospitals? Dr. John Hislop (President of the Sathya Sai Baba Council of America) once asked Him, "How should one be healed?" And the answer was, *"By ordinary medical means and by prayer."* The spiritually oriented physician will always be aware of the need for the second half of this advice. As the medieval surgeon, Pare, said, "I dressed his wounds; God healed him." Swami went on to say, *"Some people have faith in doctors, some have faith in Swami. Both can proceed together—the doctor can be consulted and vibhuti (holy ash) can also be used. But regardless of the degree of faith, it is best to pray to Swami for His grace. Vibhuti may or may not be used, but there should be prayer. Swami's preference would be that ordinary means of help be given their due place."*

On Hospital Day in 1983, He said, *"There are people who might be afflicted with minor ailments and diseases. For instance, you have a cold, a cough, and immediately*

you put your hands up in prayer: 'Oh, Sai Baba, cure me of this cold; cure me of this cough!' It's all these seemingly insignificant and totally irrelevant things you keep asking to have cured. You could get relief by going to a doctor! You're asking for these small and trivial things for which you really don't have to trouble God. You could as well go and see somebody who can come to your assistance!'"

Swami has told doctors that they should be motivated by the spirit of service and sacrifice. Serving humanity is the way in which doctors can realize themselves. As Swami has said, *"If you have thoughts of the Lord in you, let your hands do the rest. Now, because you have the medium of the hands, Swami is also giving you the strength and the capacity. If you didn't have hands, how would God give you that? Here is a case of the negative and the positive coming together."*

In discussing hospitals, He said, *"Many ask why, in this ananda-nilaya (abode of bliss), does there exist an arogya-nilaya (abode of health—a hospital)? It is a silly question, for it implies that everything here should be done through some miracle, or in some strange, inexplicable manner! It also implies that no one who has come here should fall ill or die. I have no desire that you should live, or fear that you may die. It is you who decide your condition. The hospital is for those who believe in the doctor and in drugs. It is faith that matters, that cures."*

Some may wonder why Swami gives such prominence to bodily health, rather than being concerned only with the health of the spirit. He stresses, however, that for attaining the *Purusharthas*, the four aims of human life—*dharma* (right action), *artha* (prosperity), *kama* (fulfillment of desires), and *moksha* (liberation from bondage)—the basic requirement is health of body and mind. Health is essential for happiness, and happiness is essential for health. Disease means feeling uneasy, disturbed. The upsetting of one's temper, balance, or equilibrium affects the physical as well as mental condition. There are two reasons for such upsets: faulty food and faulty activities.

Baba teaches that *"it is wiser to prevent disease than to run after remedies after it has happened or grown beyond control. Man does not attend to precautionary measures; he allows things to worsen, and then the disease is aggravated by fear, uncertainty, and anxiety."* Although He notes that every experience of the senses has an effect on one's health, until such time as we are beyond sense impressions, Baba gives us sensible rules for maintaining health of the body and mind. To those of us in the United States who hear constantly of the influence of diet on disease, it should come as no surprise that most of His admonitions concern food.

The first rule is to decrease the total quantity of food intake. Baba quotes an old Indian axiom: *"One meal a day makes a yogi (a contented, God-centered man), two*

meals a day makes a *bhogi* (one revelling in sensual pleasure), and three meals a day makes a *rogi* (a man ridden by illness)." We should only take food when we are really hungry, and then only the minimum amount to appease hunger, not to the point of feeling gorged. We should rise from the table as lightly as we sat down. Swami says we should sustain the body, not try to increase its size.

Some bodies do not seem to thrive on one meal a day. If you function better with smaller, regularly spaced meals, keep them small except for the one main meal. Baba says, "*The older generation in this land used to take some quantity of rice soaked in curds for their first meal in the morning, or some ragi (millet) gruel.*" For this country, that would translate into the few cold cereals not processed and sweetened, or rice or millet served hot. The main meal should not be taken just before going to bed. This would be the time for a light meal of milk or yogurt, fruit, and nuts.

He also notes that even machinery is given a rest. It cannot run continuously. What, then, of this delicately organized human body? To rest the stomach and intestines, He recommends a fast one day in the week. Not only would this be good for the body, it would also help correct the shortage of food in Third-World countries. During the fast, He recommends only water, not fruit juice or other liquids. Even on nonfast days, He says we should drink water or other liquids, not during meals, but some time before or after. If there is any question about the water quality, it should be boiled and cooled.

The food we take should be natural and uncooked as much as possible—"as God created it, containing the essence of life." The food should be *satwic* (balanced, that which promotes elevated thoughts, mildness, and humility). Such food is not too salty, too sweet, too hot, too spiced, too sour, or too odorous. The food should have been grown naturally without artificial fertilizers. It should also contain sufficient protein and all the necessary vitamins. Overcooking will remove both. We should, as far as possible, avoid refined sugar. Even natural sugars in excess are related to diabetes and heart problems; but the refining process uses bone meal as a bleach, and Baba said in the Hospital Day address referred to earlier that this is one of the main causes of cancer. Baba also emphasizes that when He says that our food should be pure and *satwic*, He refers not only to that which enters the mouth, but also that which enters the body through the eyes, ears, and nose.

Other suggestions for the prevention of disease are to "*keep the exterior of the body clean and full of the charm of goodness.*" We can absorb vibrations from other bodies; therefore, we need to stay in the company of spiritual people as much of the time as possible. Baths will protect our bodies from deleterious emanations from others, not only water and sun baths, but even air, mud, or ash baths, which are rarely used

in this country except at elegant spas. Baba says we should not only be in the sun, but also *"let the sun's rays penetrate into the home, let them warm and illumine clothes and food; that will suffuse them with health."*

The final recommendations are deep breathing of pure air, sufficient rest, and exercise. *"Health,"* He says, *"is the inevitable result of a tough, hard life."* After establishing a proper pattern for our life, we should not *"spend much thought on the body; some people always worry about health and are never satisfied with the care they bestow on the body."* Instead, keep the mind centered on God. Pray regularly twice a day, thanking God who watches over you and wards off harm and injury. *"Feel that you are a hundred percent dependent upon God."*

No matter how well we carry out Swami's instructions on prevention of disease, for some of us the time will come when the body will develop a problem which is not self-limiting and is not correctable by medical science. We must then decide if it is time for a "total-body transplant" or if we should seek healing from Baba Himself. He does counsel, *"All have to die sooner or later. No one will be anxious to have the same dress on for years and years. Death is but the casting off of old clothes. When even Avatars leave the body after their task is fulfilled, how can man be saved from inevitable dissolution?"* But assume we decide the time is not yet. Many wend their way to Prasanthi Nilayam, and have done so since Baba began His mission. As Professor N. Kasturi records, in the early days of the ashram, someone asked his mother how long she had lived there. She replied: "Four years," to which came the retort: "What? Here four years, and not healed yet?"

The surgeon at the ashram hospital was formerly at a large medical center in a big city. Someone predicted that he would be going to the biggest hospital in India, and he said, "That's where I am now." But that person was right; he now works in Swami's enormous "intensive care unit." Some think Baba heals only for a special reason, setting aside *karma* and emphasizing that nature must take its course. But when Dr. John Hislop asked, "Does Swami heal only when the *karma* is appropriate?" He answered, *"No. If Swami is pleased with the person, He heals that person at once. Karma can have no effect on that. If the person has a pure heart and is living Swami's teachings, Swami's grace is automatic."*

How does the divine Physician heal when He wills it? On certain occasions, He may heal through a "faith healer." Mr. Howard Murphet reports the case of the veterinary doctor with bone cancer who went to Vergillio Gutierrez, a faith healer in the Philippines. When he later had Swami's *darshan*, Baba said, *"You are already healed,"* and added, *"Give My greetings to the 'Fake-healer' when you see him again."* Vergillio

has been to see Sai Baba, and Swami's name for him is a pun on the term "faith healer," accepted by Vergillio in the playful, mischievous spirit of love in which it was given. Others, however, Swami really considers "fake healers." To Dr. Hislop's question, "Does Baba heal through the person of a faith healer?" He answered, *"The power flowing from the healer is NOT Swami's power; it is evil power. The healer himself is in need of healing. Divine power is in every place; it arises from within. If a healing occurs, it is because (the patient) had a feeling or thought of God."*

Swami has been observed to heal by touch, as Jesus sometimes did. It is recorded in the Gospel of John that Jesus told the lame man whom He healed at the pool of Bethesda to "Go, and sin no more"; and on numerous occasions He said to those He had healed, "Your faith has made you whole." Swami says, *"It is man's mind that really does the healing; the necessary faith has to be created within his mind for this purpose."* As Mr. Murphet points out, "This faith never comes through reason or logic." When asked by Samuel Sandweiss, M.D., how He heals, Swami replied, *"By My own Sankalpa (Divine Will). The healing phenomenon has a dual aspect. I can cure, save, even resurrect people, provided they are in a spiritually receptive condition. It is like the positive and negative currents of electricity. My capacity to heal can be compared to the positive current; your devotion to Me, the negative. Once the two come together, the devotion provides what is called the miracle of healing."*

Sometimes He uses a material prop in this play, such as *vibhuti*. The physician, Dr. Pavan, reported that for a beloved devotee Baba once manifested some capsules and said, *"From the Sai Pharmacy."* On rare occasions, He has utilized surgical techniques as in Professor Kasturi's story of Baba extracting worm-like matter from a psychotic woman's brain. Whatever means He uses, what He is doing is *"to invest the patient with the confidence, will, and power to cure himself. It is My abounding LOVE, reciprocated by the intensity of the devotee's faith in Me, that produces the desired result."*

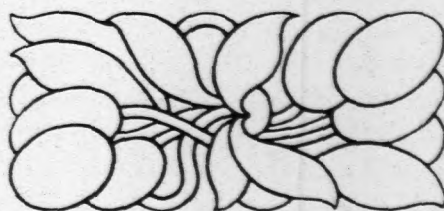
For those who are not healed and are sent away weeping for the imminent loss of their body, Mr. Murphet has summed it up very well: "A Godman has the power to forgive sins, to rub out the *karmic* sentences, and thus to cure incurable diseases. But if it is not to a person's highest spiritual interests to remove the *karma* of suffering, the Godman will not do so. Suffering may be necessary to chisel out deeply engraved *karmic* tendencies. In such cases the compassionate Lord will cushion the suffering head with His love and tenderness. If possible, He will bring some light of understanding so that the patient knows **why** he must suffer and learns to treat it as a *sadhana* (spiritual discipline). Thus the soul is cured before the body." [Sai Baba: *Invitation to Glory*, p. 26]

To summarize what Sri Sathya Sai Baba says concerning health and healing:

- Do not be too concerned about the body.
- Along with your spiritual discipline, subject the body to physical discipline. Don't coddle it.
- Keep it close to nature.
- If your mind creates a disease, use simple means first for relief, including, but not limited to, the services of medical doctors. (He also created physicians.)
- If you use medical practitioners, there is no reason this cannot be combined with *vibhuti* and with prayer for Swami's grace.
- Don't waste petitionary prayer to Baba on trivia. Daily prayer to Baba, expressing your love, devotion, and surrender, is part of disease prevention.
- If you think your mind has brought a fatal illness into manifestation unnecessarily, ask Him. He will help you understand.

Mortal physicians can take their cue from Him: He will heal sometimes, help often, and comfort and love always.

—John Evans, M.D.
Glendale, Arizona



***B**e careful about your physical health. Satisfy the demands of nature; the car must be given the petrol it needs. Otherwise, your head might reel and your eyes get blurred through sheer exhaustion; how can thoughts of the Lord be stabilized in a weak frame? Do not forget the purpose of this body when you are tending it. A road-roller is fed with oil and coal and other types of fuel. But why is it kept in good trim? In order to mend the road, is it not? Similarly, remember that you have come embodied so that you might realize the end of this cycle of birth and death. For that sake, use the body as an instrument, that is all.*

—Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. I, p. 36

THE POLITICS OF LOVE

Do you feel that you are not having enough impact in the world—that your role is too small? Do you feel that you must be a president, a governor, or a senator to effect change? I believe that the world is “saved” at Safeway and Vons supermarkets.

Consider these numbers. Suppose that the average supermarket checker sees three hundred people a day. If you are impatient or angry, you will bring him or her down. That spreads a little bit to the other three hundred customers. Maybe you are the one who just dampens her spirits for the day. If you are cheerful, you pick her up. That good feeling will spread, in some small way, to three hundred people.

Now, suppose those three hundred customers interact with twenty people a day. You have now directly or indirectly influenced six thousand people. You probably interact with about twenty other people a day, and they interact with twenty people a day—add another four hundred people you are influencing. If you were presenting this information to a group of twenty-five—and suppose they all had the same experience when they went shopping—collectively, you have influenced 160,000 people. Wow!

Baba says to be happy and cheerful. If you cannot do that, the next best thing is to contain your anger and your impatience. The next time you go shopping, think about how important you are. The world is one giant web of interconnectedness. The world depends on each of us to spread light—and it spreads so fast.

Just imagine if all of us reading this went to Safeway today. A thousand Sai devotees in Safeway! That calculates to 6,400,000 interactions. Let's make them good ones.

—**Dennis J. Gersten, M.D.**
San Diego, California



MORE SUPERMARKET SEVA

I was in the supermarket one day, standing in line to buy some groceries. In front of me was a mother with a baby who was crying very loudly. The mother was trying to write a check and hold onto the baby. I asked if I might hold the baby for her. After she looked me over thoroughly, she handed the screaming child to me. The baby saw my Baba medallion and grabbed it. It was as if Baba had waved His hand and said, “Peace!” The baby remained quiet and calm until I handed it back to its mother. Then it started crying again.

—**L.S.**
Loma Linda, California

LIMITS THAT LIBERATE

Life is a journey from the position "I" to the position "We," from the singular to the plural, from the imprisoned one to the liberated One who is seen in the many. The vision of the One, immanent in the obvious many, is the fulfillment of all the years of one's life. This is the teaching contained in the ancient texts and Scriptures, but this has been forgotten since the minds of the people of this land were won over by Western civilization. When this happened, the goal of life became the amassing of money and not the awareness of the Self.

What has to be gained is not money, but virtue. The means of sustenance are sought after and collected by birds and beasts; there is nothing especially human in this pursuit. When intelligence is used for the acquisition of food and physical comforts, man is lost in animal pursuits. Human life is much more meaningful than that of birds and beasts. Man has in him a spark of the Divine. His body is the temple of God. So he must live in such a manner that the innate Divinity expresses itself through love, through service to others, and through the recognition of the constant presence of God in him and all around him. When man dedicates his skills to the search for food, he estranges himself from the light that shines within him—the *Atma* (indwelling Divinity).

Man consumes as food many living beings: plants, eggs, fish, cattle, sheep, etc. They are later born as human beings because of this act of consumption. But since they have not had the education which can reveal the God within, they vegetate or stay brutish, not having an appropriate ticket or passport for rising higher than the human status into which they have been precipitated. Like most men, they roll along from womb to tomb, bondslaves to the senses and to the ills that the bondage inevitably brings in its train. Do not be content with slavery; yearn to reach the sun of splendor, the source of perfect wisdom.

Man does not discriminate and discover the special excellence of his own faith, as compared with the faiths of others, or the difference between his beliefs and religion and the beliefs and religion that others hold dear. He does not evaluate his viewpoint in the light of the viewpoints and attitudes of others. He does not weigh his acts and judge them as worthwhile or a waste. The seers and sages of India have laid emphasis on this discipline and prescribed measures to achieve these ends. But Indians have no knowledge of this discipline or of its value.

As a consequence, the sons and daughters of India are pitifully silent when cynics and purblind critics discredit their ancient culture and point the finger of scorn at what they interpret as its absurdities and inconsistencies. Do not join such people in their campaign of vilification. On the other hand, attempt to assimilate the culture and yearn to experience the bliss it promises. It is indeed a great shame that people calling

themselves Indians are not informed or experienced enough to silence the opponents and traducers of Indian culture.

The fault lies in the system of education that does not give them even a glimpse into the glory. The country is now sunk in fear, and the cure lies in your understanding the remedies prescribed in the ancient texts, practicing them, and propagating them. You are now being led away by people who do not know the true characteristics of that culture; and the ideas you have about the Epics and the *Puranas*, the *Sastras*, and the *Vedas* are warped by the prejudices that these people have implanted in you. For example, the story of the Virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus Christ is acclaimed as evidence of Divine Will, but you who accept this interpretation are not able to affirm that the birth of Karna to Virgin Kunthidevi is equal evidence of the same Divine Will. You are apologetic and ashamed when the fact of Karna's birth as a result of Divine Will is twisted and turned by the so-called scholars of today.

People who are completely ignorant have no doubts or misgivings; neither do those who are fully wise. It is the half-baked variety of scholar and student who falls into the traps laid by the prejudiced and perverted. We hope that your contact with ripe minds, intelligent scholars, and experience-filled hearts will strengthen your resolve and encourage you to foster and support the principles underlying Indian culture.

Education should not aim at merely making students become acquainted with a pile of books. It should insist on their assimilating the essence of the teachings which such books elaborate. Now, students direct all their efforts toward acquiring more and more knowledge of just one specialized branch of learning, so they are woefully deficient in general knowledge and are unable to adjust their behavior in order to survive the vagaries of fortune.

In regard to the relationship between science and religion, science has to develop more and more, for science makes life more comfortable. It has given man many items which make living easier, more entertaining, and more standardized. But the trouble is, while science and technology have advanced by leaps and bounds, man has not learned the art of using them in the right manner. He has allowed science and technology full license to cater to his sensual desires and, thereby, demean his stature and status.

You must avoid this mistake. While your intelligence, alertness, and awareness are all functioning well, you must learn how to keep your impulses under control and master the senses which tend to drag you into wrong and vicious paths. When the desire for pleasure overcomes your reason and innate goodness, you are left only with the shape and form of a human being; you have no right to be called a human being. Human-ness and God-ness coexist as inseparables; they are the negative and positive poles that have to be together to produce the warmth of love and the light of wisdom. Once



you have established yourself in the Higher Self, you will not get lost; you can then wander freely in the realms of the unreal. If you have not experienced the self as a spark of the Supreme Self, your wanderings will be as fruitless as the trekking that animals do by instinct. So try to transform the humanness with which you are endowed into the Divinity which is its real core.

The Universe is the body of God; every particle in it is filled with God—His Glory, His Might, and His Inscrutability. Believe that God is the inner Truth in every thing and every being. He is Truth; He is Wisdom; He is Eternal. Be humble before the evidences of His power and majesty.

We have the example of Hiranyakasipu, the father of Prahlada. He was unequalled in power and authority over the entire Cosmos. He was the repository of enormous knowledge. He had won many skills through his asceticism and other efforts. He was so proud of his achievements that he denied God, declaring that he had no need for Him. But a day came when even he had to call out for God. So, too, you may deny or dismiss God out of ignorance or perversity, but a day will come when you will have to pray for His compassion.

You are, in reality, God. It is the God in you that guides and guards you. When you deny God, it is tantamount to arguing, "I am born of a barren woman," or asserting very vociferously, "I am incurably dumb!" It is as absurd as denying yourself. This great truth is well explained in the Scriptures of this land, and everyone should know this heritage.

The seers of this land have marked out the limits and lines to be respected by aspiring men. The *Vedas* give these injunctions: "Revere your mother as God; revere your father as God; revere your teacher as God; speak truth; act righteously." These five instructions are as the five vital airs that sustain the body of man. Believe them as such; have unshakable faith that they have been laid down for your material and spiritual progress. Practice these precepts sincerely and without slackening. That will ensure success in your pilgrimage from humanness to Divinity.

If you revere your parents today, your children will revere you in the coming days, for the present shapes the face of the future as it, in its turn, was shaped by the past. That is why I always insist, "Be good, see good, do good; this is the way to God."

Each one of you must be equipped with the knowledge of these five disciplines and imbued with the fervor to practice them in your daily lives. Concentrate your attention on this task; do not mind inconveniences, changes in diet, or restrictions on play and entertainment. Bear with handicaps and rules patiently and gladly.

Life is all the sweeter for restrictions and limits. You will encounter many obstacles in life, but do not be disheartened by them. Pleasure and pain alternate in life; in fact, pleasure is but the interval between two pains, and that is what makes it welcome and worthwhile. Always have the future in view, and put up with pain now so that you can meet it boldly when it befalls you later in life. *Thyaga* (detachment) is the real *yoga* (spiritual discipline that purifies); renounce attachment and become master of yourself. Indulgence is the cause of disease.

Treat all as brothers and sisters. Always remember the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. People speak glibly while on platforms facing vast gatherings, addressing their audience as "brothers and sisters"! But are they prepared to divide their property with those brothers and sisters? Of course, you need not go as far as that, but you must recognize the One Divine Principle. When you are inspired by that belief, surely your eyes and ears will refuse to note differences and distortions. Your hands will refuse to engage themselves in unworthy activities; your tongue will not tarnish itself by low talk; your mind will not entertain shallow thoughts and ideas. Resolve that you will attain and maintain purity in thought, word, and deed. That is the central message of Indian culture.

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. IX, pp. 65-70

THE IDEAL FOR WOMEN

Part II

The woman is the prop of the home and of religion. She plants and fosters religious faith or dries it and uproots it. Women have a natural aptitude for faith and spiritual endeavor. Women with devotion, faith, and meekness can lead men on the Godward path and in the practice of holy virtues. They will get up early, before dawn, clean the home, and, after finishing bath, etc., sit for a while engaged in *japam* (repeating the Lord's name) and *dhyanam* (meditation).

They will have, in their homes, one small room set apart for worship of the Lord. There they will place images of the Lord, as well as pictures of holy sages and of *gurus* and guides. They will consider the room specially sacred and fill the atmosphere with their prayers both morning and evening, as well as on holy days and festivals. A woman who is steadfastly doing these things will be able to transmute even her atheist husband, persuading him to join the prayers or engage in some good activity or some scheme of social service marked by the attitude of dedication to the Lord. Indeed, it is the woman who maintains the home; that is her mission. She is truly the representative of *Shakti* (Mother Nature).

On the other hand, if the wife tries to pull the husband away from the Godward path, from the spiritual to the level of the sensual, or if the husband treats the wife who is disposed to seek joy from her spiritual endeavor as a person following the wrong track and tries to drag her away from it, the home of such a couple is unworthy of that name. It is hell—not a home; it is an inferno where ghosts and evil spirits revel.

Really, woman should strive to achieve the knowledge of the soul and live every moment in the consciousness of being only the *Atma* (indwelling Divinity); she must always evince a desire to become one with the Divine Consciousness. The home where the woman is such and where the husband and wife are leading their lives in the shade of great ideals; where they sing the glory of the name of the Lord together and spend themselves in good deeds; where there reigns truth, peace, and love; where regular reading is done of holy books; where the senses are under control; and where there is equal treatment for all creation, prompted by the knowledge of the basic unity of all creation—such a home is certainly heaven on earth.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Dharma Vahini, pp. 26-27

CHILDREN'S CORNER

GUMBY AT FISHERMAN'S VILLAGE



Gumby's Choice

One day, Gumby was taking Pokey for a ride on the pier. Prickle wanted Gumby to come for a boat ride and leave Pokey behind. But Gumby refused, because he didn't want to desert his best pal Pokey.

Has anything like this ever happened to you?

If you'd like to color the picture, Gumby is green, Pokey is orange-red with a black mane and tail, Prickle is yellow, and Goo (flying) is blue with yellow hair.

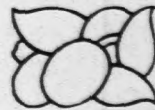
—Art Clokey
Topanga, California

THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

"Why do you like English *bhajans*?" "They touch my heart," was my only reply. Later that evening, I asked myself why English devotional songs had become so dear to me. I couldn't explain my sentiments; then suddenly, the answer came to me. When I sing, I want to praise Baba from my heart. I want to express my love for Him in words I fully understand. I want the message of the song to penetrate my consciousness. Since English is the language I naturally speak, love and devotion flow more freely and deeply when I sing to Baba in English. With English words, I feel there is a heart-to-heart connection between Baba and myself. No translation is necessary. The link is direct.

A unique feature of this Sai Avatar is that He has made His presence known to people throughout the world. As Baba has stated many times, He is not confined to any one religion, culture, or language. Indeed, Baba has encouraged His worldwide devotees to worship in their own language and according to their own customs. Devotees everywhere can experience the special joy of praising Baba in their native language. How wonderful to live in the time of the omnipresent Baba, who transcends all cultural and geographic boundaries, who accepts all sincere expressions of devotion. Our Lord Baba is accessible to all, for *"There is only one language—the language of the heart."*

—Cathy Shanley
Salt Lake City, Utah



ENGLISH DEVOTIONAL SONGS

The eight Regional Song Committees have covered themselves with glory in composing and distributing the first English devotional songs tapes. Now, the Publications Committee's Dr. Dennis Gersten is hard at work bringing the efforts of the eight Committees into the first official learning tape of English devotional songs. He will be communicating with every American Sathya Sai Baba Center. On this last trip to India, I mentioned to Baba that some long-time devotees were finding it difficult to accept English devotional songs. He replied, *"But the Telegu words are not understood."* He then said that both Telegu and English songs should be sung at each meeting, but that the balance in numbers should be on the side of the English songs.

—Jack Hislop
Council of America Bulletin, March 1987

DATES FOR THE SECOND HALF OF 1987

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, Navaratri, the beginning of the Dasara 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, commemorating 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.

SAI RETREATS FOR THE

Date and Region	Cost	Theme
Labor Day weekend: September 4-7 • • • Southwest Region	Full session: \$60.00 One day with meals: \$17.00	"Land of Enchantment" —Silent Retreat
September 11-13 • • • Northwest Region	Adults: \$61.00 Children: 6-11: \$54.35 Children 2-5: \$27.80 Under 1 year: Free	"Back to basics, intense devotion to our Lord, Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Enlightenment through His Love."
September 11-13 • • • Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regions	Adults: \$47.00 Children 6-11: \$20.00 Children 3-5: \$9.00 Under 3 years: Free	"We are born to serve God and realize our true Selves." —Baba <i>Prema Vahini</i> , p. 61

COMMUNICATION ENHANCED

On May 16th and 17th, the Officers and Regional Directors of the Sathya Sai Baba Council of America met in the beautiful Ojai Valley in Southern California. The purpose of the meeting was to enhance communication within the Sai Organization, to resolve any difficulties that may have arisen in the past, to update a variety of projects and programs, and to plan for the rest of the year. In addition, the Publications Committee met for the first time to organize and prioritize their projects and review them with the rest of the group.

The Council of America has been meeting regularly since 1976, and everyone agreed that this was the most successful and productive meeting ever. The eight Regional Directors found it invaluable to share experiences and advice with each other, and it was decided to meet again in February 1988 to continue this process.

—**Richard Bayer**
Vice President

Sathya Sai Baba Council of America

SECOND HALF OF 1987

Location	Information and Reservations
Jemez Bodhi Mandala, Jemez Springs, located between Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico	Barbara Verde P.O. Box 2903 Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504 (505) 983-7029
Camp La Honda, in the Santa Cruz Mountains, between San Francisco and Santa Cruz, California	Tim Dolan 596 Highland Avenue Penngrove, California 94951 (707) 795-7861
Lincolnfarm Camp, Roscoe, New York , near New York City	Hugh and Judy Brecher 396 Paul Court West Hempstead, New York 11552 (516) 483-7385

BUSINESS AND THE SCHOOL SYSTEM:

A New Partnership To Challenge The Devaluation of Young Lives

This past December, about eighteen students from a New York City junior high school walked into the offices of my apparel manufacturing company in Manhattan. The students, who were all in danger of dropping out of school, were there to learn about jobs in the garment industry and to speak to the workers. This event was based on a new approach which brings together the corporate and educational communities in dealing with the problem of school dropouts.

According to the New York City Board of Education's latest estimate, 33 percent of the city's 256,000 high school students will drop out of school. Teenage mothers, drug users, and students who simply lose interest in school become part of this burgeoning population of young people who are completely untrained to cope with life. Robert F. Wagner, Jr., president of the Board of Education, has said the dropout crisis is the number one problem facing our schools today. Because of this problem, crime and poverty have increased, taxing our court, penal, and welfare systems beyond their capacities. But the greatest tragedy is the loss of meaningful lives.

Last year, I began to explore means of dealing with this problem. As a result of a series of personal experiences over the previous five years, I had come to believe that new ways had to be found for nonprofessionals to help children who were in danger of becoming dropouts. As a businessman who has been involved in volunteer work, I was convinced that the business community in this country could make a major contribution in reversing this national crisis. My efforts to put these ideas into action began last September in a series of meetings with fellow Sai devotee Bea Flaig, Queens District Thirty Coordinator of the Attendance Improvement Dropout Prevention Program (AIDP), which runs special classes for "at-risk" students in selected schools throughout the city.

As agreed in our meetings, I made the first of two visits to Junior High School #10 at the end of October. The students and I sat together on the floor to mentally remove this activity from the regular school setting. We talked a little about what they wanted out of life. Then I spoke to them about how to be successful—starting from the bottom and working to the top, setting small goals and building self-confidence, and observing rules and regulations in life. I used stories and personal experiences, mostly from the lives of my employees, to illustrate these points.

In November and December, I had several office meetings with my New York staff of forty and developed a four-hour program for the students, who arrived for their tour

on December 4. Although most of them had never seen a company office and felt a little awkward at first, we were quickly able to put them at ease because they had met and spoken with me before. I gave a brief introduction, talking about the overall operation of the company. After snacking on donuts and apple juice, the students listened to our director of merchandising describe the life history of a garment from conception to completion. The tour also included a trip to Macy's Action Down Under Shop, where the students looked at styles of clothing. They returned to the company to find pizzas and sodas waiting for them.

After lunch, staff members involved in the various phases of design, purchasing, production, and selling talked to them. Our trimmings buyer, who had originally come here from the Caribbean Islands, told them about his job and how he had worked his way up to it. He started out sweeping floors and running errands; but every time he was sent on an errand, he ran very fast so he could get back to learn more about the business. Eventually, he knew enough to become a buyer. "Don't be lazy," he told the children, and they seemed to listen very hard to what he said. Our office manager talked about clerical work and computers. She related how she had come to this country nine years ago with only three hundred dollars and very little knowledge of English, but she went to school to learn English and studied bookkeeping and computers. A question-and-answer session ended the day's activities.

Later in December, the company ran two more tours for students from Intermediate School #126 in Queens and from John F. Kennedy Alternative High School at Phoenix House in Yorktown, New York. After every visit, the response from the students was overwhelmingly favorable. Commenting on the people at the company, one student wrote, "They took time out of their busy schedule to explain how each one of their jobs works to make garments. They seemed as happy to explain some of their work to us as we were to learn about it." Another was delighted to discover that "important, successful people are not frozen, but they are real and concerned about us." One boy seemed to gain an important insight into the value of cooperation. "There are," he said, "so many things each individual must do to make a company work. It's like a well-trained football team or a well-oiled engine." Many of the children seemed genuinely impressed with the stories of people who started at the bottom and who, as a result of their own efforts, now hold important and responsible positions. As one student put it, "You should always try at what you are doing and you will go up."

Mrs. Flaig was also enthusiastic about the value of this program. "These visits," she said, "offer the children an opportunity to experience what they talk about in class—that you can 'make it' with determination and hard work, that working can be more than just earning money. They discover that there are generous, caring people in our city who are willing to share their time, their energy, and, most of all, their love."



From the company's point of view, we were given so much more than we gave out. The program was organized so that it didn't interfere with the normal business operation, and the only cost was that of the simple lunch we chose to supply. But as a result of our involvement, our organization has grown in effectiveness. By working together toward a noble end, we were able to achieve greater harmony as a group, which increased our efficiency, and employee morale soared in the aftermath of our efforts. Staff members wanted to write to the students, to see them again, and to know how they could help. "A few times in my life," one of our employees commented the day after the tour, "I have been to a great play or a great concert and was moved and uplifted, but never so deeply as I was yesterday."

The program was so successful that the company decided to expand it to include other schools, particularly high schools. The older students there could take better advantage of other services we plan to offer—tutoring, training when applicable, and, most importantly, an ongoing supportive friendship with individuals on our staff. To date, we have brought three more schools into the program, bringing the total to six schools.

At the same time, we are continuing to work with the classes that have already been to our office. A tour of Service Prints, Inc., a silk-screen company, is being planned at this time, and officials at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital have agreed to meet with me to plan their participation in the program. I am also in the process of starting to meet with representatives from other businesses, banks, and the manufacturers' association. In this way, our program will not only be continued, but even more importantly will serve as a model for other businesses. For this to happen, however, there must be companies and institutions willing to take an interest in the dropout problem and to pioneer similar programs in their own settings. To blame society or the school system for this terrible devaluation of human life is like blaming the pillow for the headache we suffer. This is our community, our responsibility, our problem. We are not powerless. The contrary is true. The spirit of volunteerism exists within all of us. The idea of selfless service as a practical way of life for all businesses—large, medium, and small—is an achievable goal that is being modeled now in New York City. We have the means and the ability to attack the dropout problem, to reverse this devaluation by providing what is needed—the direct involvement of an army of positive role models who can teach most effectively by setting a good example of personal attention and caring.

"It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."

—**Hal Honig**, President
Jack L. Honig, Inc.
New York, New York

Note: For further information on developing this kind of program at your company, call Hal Honig at (212) 279-1100.

A LOVELESS LIFE IS A DESERTED HOME

Discourse, November 20, 1985

*Involving yourselves
in noble and godly activities;
Making sacrifices in your lives
without ulterior scheming;
Cultivating love, deepening love,
developing love, and sustaining love;
Doing good deeds,
engaging in generous gift-giving;
Thinking continuously of God—
and of God only—
This is the way to live
your daily lives, O Humanity!*

My dear living embodiments of the Divine *Atma*! The ultimate goal of life is realizing that this body is given to us to "Know thyself," and everything else pales into insignificance. It is realizing one's Self, the *Atma*, which is the basis for immortality. Your life is the bridge which links the world here to the world beyond. If you wish to converse with the *Atma*, then the *Pranava* (universal sound, *Om*) is the language you have to use.

It is the primary duty of every being to think about the Self beyond. This is also the path of *jnana* (wisdom) within. There are two types of *jnana*. One is a worldly wisdom—a material knowledge. The other is Divine Wisdom, pertaining to *Brahman* (the Universal Absolute). That which cannot be perceived by the eyes and ears, but moves the body and deludes the mind, is worldly knowledge. Thinking that this is the true way of life, every individual strives to gain a sense of perfection in these worldly things. This is the realm of *ksharamu*, the perishable—that which undergoes a change moment to moment.

Now, that which makes the mind lose itself—that which takes you along the path of God and shows you the way to reach God—is *Brahmajnana* (transcendent wisdom) and *Aksharamu* (the imperishable), which has no end. This *Parabrahma* (Supreme Being) which does not change is the imperishable origin of all that surrounds you and undergoes constant change. The principle of the changeless reality (*Brahmatattva*) is to give rise to this creation, to sustain it, and finally to let it merge back into itself. To reach this Godliness is the main duty of man.

The *Aksharamu Paratattva*, or changeless supreme reality, is the nature of the *Atma*. The *Atma* is truth—that which is real, changeless. The things of the world come and go; they are unreal, ephemeral. The *Atma*, which is infinite and changeless, is envehicled in the constantly changing body. But the human being is prone to feel that the body is the real thing, ignoring the *Atma* inside. To get beyond the body and the distractions which it offers, one has to transcend it by going deep within, seeking the *Atma* residing inside. This is what is known as *Atmavidya*, knowledge of the *Atma*.

The knowledge involved in mastering the Scriptures and the lawbooks, and the knowledge involved in professional disciplines such as the sciences, visual arts, music, dance, and so forth, is all worldly knowledge. These forms of knowledge exist so that you can make a living. But to gain the knowledge which makes it possible for you to make a living is not enough. There is a knowledge which makes living worthwhile. You should go to the very basis of things and come to grips with that realization. Therefore, we must begin to look upon the primary basis of existence and the final goal of our endeavors as the two wings which will enable us to proceed.

Nature Reveals God

The *Upanishads* teach that the world is a beautiful temple. It is impossible to locate anything on earth which does not at every moment bring home to you the truth that *Paratattva* (the Divine Reality) permeates everything. From the minutest of miniature things to the vastest of stupendously immense things, it is *Paratattva* (Godliness) which you see, feel, and perceive.

Meru, the great mountain, proclaims to you the majesty of God. The ocean tells you about the depth and dignity of God. The green trees and plants bring joy, the flowers offer you fragrant blossoms, and fruit gives thirst-quenching nectar. All these proclaim God's compassion, mercy, and love. The sun and the moon reflect the wisdom of God.

In this way, nature all around you speaks to you diversely of God. But ignorant of the meaning of nature's statements, and carried away by ignorance, the human being keeps running after the ephemeral pleasures of the world which are all unreal and bound to be transient. They never last. A synonym of the word "ignorance" is *maya*. *Maya* does not mean a particular messenger, power, or matter—*maya* is a reflection of God.

Green plant life grows from the soil on earth. What at one point is a sapling grows later into a tree which has blossoms and then ultimately yields fruit. If we delve more

deeply into this process, we discover that the tree and its flowers and fruits are transmutations of the soil. Similarly, a spider weaves a web of continuous matter, originating in itself. Then it allows itself to be caught in its own web. Where does the matter which makes up the web originate? Within the spider itself. Who created the web? The spider itself. Who has bound the spider? The spider who did the weaving.

Similarly, Divinity which emerged from God builds a web for itself and gets entangled and suffers. That which is born of a burning fire builds up a sheath around the very fire which is its origin. Where has the ash originated? It has come from the fire itself. Being born of the fire, it ends up covering the fire. Likewise, moss which surfaces on the water of a pond covers the face of the water. In a similar manner, the world we envision has its origin within. These haven't come from outside. They have their origin in each of their sources, as we have seen.

In the same manner, in this world we tend to make a distinction between good and bad. Realize the truth that this is only a way of looking at things. It has nothing to do with the nature of the things seen. Take, for example, fire. Say you are looking at flames. You can see the sparks flying from the fire. But these sparks are not anything distinct from the fire itself. All that you associate with the fire could also be found within these sparks of fire. In the same way, the *jiva*, or soul, born of God, is endowed with qualities of God.

However, we don't enquire into these great truths; we see the diversity without realizing the underlying unity of existence. *Maya* is not something which, in and of itself, binds a person. *Maya* takes various forms, depending on the three *gunas*—namely, *satwa*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. That which is *satwa*, is *maya*; whereas, *rajoguna* constitutes *avidya*, or ignorance. *Tamoguna* is inertia, the immobile. These are the distinctions between *satwa maya*, *rajas avidya*, and the quality of *tamas*—the three attributes which make up nature. Though different in name, they are parts of the same thing.

Atma which is reflected in *satwa maya* is *Ishwara* (God). *Atma* which is reflected in *rajas avidya* is *jiva* (soul). *Atma* which is reflected in *tamoguna* is nature which surrounds us. Here, the basic underlying principle of the *Atma* is one and the same, but the things based on it are different. Now, in the world around you, you have the *gunas* coming to the foreground. All that is in the world of nature is made up of the *gunas* with their distinctions. The creation of nature is an occasion in which all three *gunas* are together. But you have to be able to see the one in these three—that is the primary task. There are three ways to realize this oneness which is *Paratattva*. The first is *bhava* (faith); the second, *sadhana* (worship); and the third, *upasana* (consistency).

God-Centered Existence

What is *bhava*? We should really designate it *Brahmabhava*, or God-centered existence. For everything around us, there is one common basis. Without this basis, we cannot have the entity which is supported. The fundamental basis, or support, of all things is *Brahman*. This must become the seeker's unwavering view. To have an implicit faith, with no trace of doubt in the basic existence of God, and to lead one's life according to this orientation, is called *bhava*. Without faith in something at the outset, we cannot succeed in any venture. This faith is essential. Therefore, *bhava* is necessary for our spiritual venture. It is because of *bhava* that the innate Divinity in man can be brought to the surface through the medium of *sadhana* (spiritual discipline).

Intense Yearning

What does *sadhana* mean? It means that one must be filled with a sense of urgency or intensity. A person yearns only for that in which he has a firm belief. Seekers must look upon the *Atma* as being everywhere—all around us. Let that be your worship. Yearning is your *sadhana*. Intense yearning is essential. Without this deep longing, you cannot realize your *Atma*. Without faith in the first place, you wouldn't believe in that which is beyond you. In truth, faith is your life breath. Be firm in this conviction.

It is rather difficult for ordinary mortals engaged in their daily tasks to grasp the truth that the world in which they live is a fleeting one. It is a great good fortune to be able to see that which is permanent in this world. In addition to your own efforts, you also need the grace of God in order to realize the eternal amidst the transitory. Furthermore, you need the results of your past good deeds. All this is not easily available to everyone.

The Value of Human Life

If you compare other forms of mundane life with the human being's level of existence, which is quite lofty, you will know that there is a vast difference. What does life mean? To live like an animal or a beast, spending all of one's time catering to the stomach, looking for creature comforts, and indulging in sleep is not the reason for living. You must realize that, among all the various forms of life, that of a human being is the highest, noblest, and most difficult to attain. Simply because the human being experiences the sensations of hunger for food, the need for sleep, and so on, we should not feel that the mere ability to own a shelter, have sufficient clothing, and satisfy other such needs will fulfill the aim of life. These things merely serve to satisfy the clamor of the senses.

We must transcend the senses and attend to the needs of the mind, the intellect, and the *Atma*. We should lead the kind of life which will satisfy the *Atma*. We are not the body, the mind, the intellect, or the senses; rather, we are the *Atma* itself. Body, mind, intellect, and senses are merely things which are supported. The basis of the support is something other than these things. Thinking along these lines, seeking the spiritual experiences known to the ancients, and getting to know your contemporaries who have had such experiences will be of help to you in proceeding further on your pilgrimage.

Strive to Experience Interior Energy

How does one experience the *Atma*? By experiencing *Atmic* bliss itself. This does not mean to taste the inherent bliss of the eternal Self through another form or medium, but to know and experience it directly. Things which are supported have forms, but the *Atma*, upon which all other things are based, has no form. For example, think of a light bulb. You are able to derive light from a light bulb. The light bulb has form, but the light is formless. In the same manner, this body, which is a sheath made up of the five elements, has a form. And the organs which make up this body appear to be quite important, in themselves. For example, it is true that the eyes are able to see things. But the question is: Does the eye in and of itself have the power to see? The eye is just an instrument, bringing to the foreground something deep within you which enables you to see things.

The eyes which see, the ears which hear, the mind which experiences, and the tongue which speaks are all linked to the *Atma* within. That is what enables them to perform their functions. There is a current of interior energy (*antarshakti*) which enables these organs to function according to their capacities. Now, in a corpse, the eyes are present, the ears are present, and the brain is present. You will find that the limbs are there, too. But are they able to perform their tasks? The answer is no. The current of interior energy, which previously had been permeating all of their activities, is gone, and so they are rendered useless.

I am speaking. The microphone is here and the speakers are there. A current runs between them. Without this current, you would not hear me. So the tremendous and subtle energy (*shakti*), which is behind the functions of the body and is of the most dramatic importance, is very much like the electrical current between the microphone and the speakers. It is only when we strive to comprehend and experience this *shakti*, this current of interior energy, that it can be said that we are really living our lives. Only then will we be living up to the fact that man's life is the most difficult to attain and the most precious to possess. You truly have a lot to be proud of when you have the good fortune to be a human being. But your actions too often belie the nobility of your

existence. We should strive to avoid hypocrisy, become free of the tyranny of the three *gunas*, and place our attention upon that which is pure and sacred.

True Identity Is Divine Love

There are two things which overshadow the human being: attachment and hate. We should see to it that they never lodge inside us. They are the forces which bring us to disaster. When persons are carried away by attachment or hatred, they are as if insane. They lose sight of their own noble existence. Hence, the first *sadhana* you must embark on is to see to it that no vices such as hatred and attachment enter into you and that you remain free from their pernicious influence. The first step in such *sadhana* is *satsang*, companionship with other good people. When we are in the company of the good and the noble, we have a chance of picking up noble qualities and thoughts. When we are in the company of the evil, we tend to absorb their bad qualities. Therefore, to whatever extent possible, concern yourself with your own spiritual strength so that it may grow and, in time, assume good proportions. Always try to avoid the company of evil persons and seek the company of the good.

Whatever we see, whatever we hear, and whatever we say should be sacred. People tend to be caught up in trivial pursuits within the material world. If we succeed in our ventures, we become big-headed—full of ego. Then, again, when we fail in our undertakings, we become greedy. Practice rising above such negative involvements. In both cases—success and failure—it is our attitude which brings us down. It is best to practice restraint; hold back your desires.

Instead of becoming entangled in transitory relationships, we should seek our own spiritual Self, our own nature. Our nature is not this body. Our inherent nature is *ananda*, or bliss. All of our efforts should be directed toward experiencing this bliss. The happiness of the world comes and goes. It is like the passing clouds. We seek the enjoyment of fleeting pleasures of the world in order to combat despondency and despair. Then we lose sight of our own true existence.

O my dear ones whose very identity is Divine Love, nurture this feeling of love. Love is God—truly God. A life devoid of love is a deserted home. We should lead a life full of love, having confidence that love is God. We have to fill ourselves with love. We should journey on this path of love, filling ourselves up with love, allowing love to saturate all of our thinking and activities and, in so doing, realize God. I bless you in the hope that you may succeed in your endeavors.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba



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