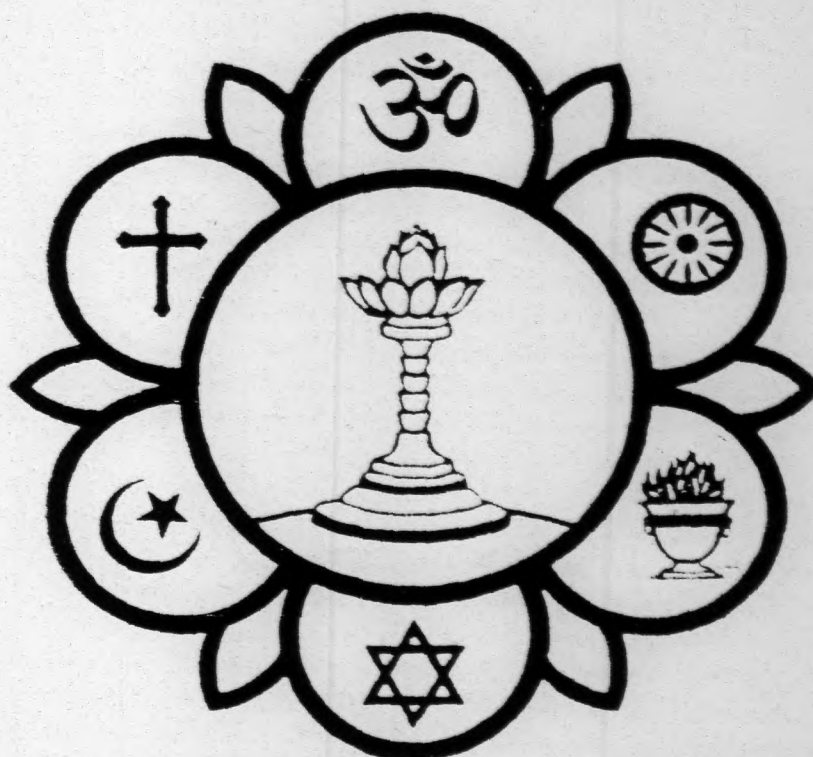


Sathya Sai Newsletter
1800 E. Garvey Avenue
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SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER



**GOLDEN JUBILEE
OF THE ADVENT OF THE
AVATAR**

**FALL 1990
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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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*T*he devotees of the United States of America offer their love and homage to Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday, which coincides with the Golden Jubilee of the Advent of the Avatar, and the Fifth World Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Organizations.

May this time be remembered as a great historical event for the spiritual advancement of all beings.

--Editor
Sathya Sai Newsletter

GURU PURNIMA: DIVINITY IS EVERYWHERE

The world is like a dream
full of likes and dislikes.

At dawn it looks real,
and at dusk it disappears.

Embodiments of Divine Love:

As long as you are dreaming, everything you hear and see appears to be true. In the same way, before realization, this world, which is a combination of likes and dislikes, appears as real. Once you get the vision of God, the entire world becomes a dream.

The physical body is a combination of the five great elements: earth, water, fire, air, and ether. These have regulated standards. The physical body establishes all types of relationships with the world. Another name for the physical body is *pancheekarana*. In the body, the *Atma* (the indwelling Divinity) would be in the waking state, and all the senses would be functioning fully. The body is the home for joy and sorrow. It has been divided into three levels: gross, subtle, and causal. The physical body is made up of food and thus totally inert. Only this gross physical body is visible to us. Considering this vis-

ible body to be eternal and permanent truth, man gives up the principle of *Atma*, which is truly eternal and permanent.

THE DREAM STATE

The subtle body consists of the five breaths, the mind, the intellect, and the ten senses. This may also be called a dream state. In this state the individuality is hidden, not visible. In the subtle body, the mind creates its own world. It is a world unto itself. In the dream state, the subtle body becomes the many things that it experiences. It is a form without form, a hearing without hearing. It creates taste without any actual taste being there. But the entire creation is restricted to a particular individual's experience only. In the dream state, even if there are ten people living and sleeping in the same room, each one's dream is different from the others', and each one's experience is unique and limited to himself. There is no relationship whatsoever between the dream state and the waking state.

One person may dream that his friend is giving him trouble. The next day when he meets his friend and asks him why he gave so much

trouble last night, his friend will reply, "Oh, mad man, I didn't even see you last night! So how could I give you trouble?" This means that he has created a friend in his dreams, and he has also created all the experiences for himself. In this way the experiences of a person, in the dream state, are restricted to himself and are not real. The experiences of joy or sorrow are in this same category, the dream state. Depending on our actions, it is this subtle body which takes birth. The mind creates the entire world in the dream state.

WAKING STATE

The mind is one entity, but it has been given different names on the basis of the functions it performs. It gets the name "mind" or "*manasa*" because of the thought process that takes place. It is called "intellect" or "*buddhi*" when it discriminates. As it contemplates, it is called "*chittha*." When it identifies itself with the physical body, it is called "ego" or "*ahamkara*." The four terms: mind, intellect, contemplation, and ego refer to the same mind. The waking state as well as the dream state is the creation of mind.

DEEP SLEEP STATE

The third state is called *sushupti* or "good, deep sleep." In this state there is no mind. Therefore, there is

no world either. As there is no world, joy and sorrow do not exist. The world exists only as long as there is the mind. As long as you are concerned with the world, there will be joy and sorrow. Therefore, it is the world which is responsible for joy and sorrow. It is the mind which is responsible for the world. In this context, it has been said that the mind is responsible for one's bondage or liberation.

THE FOURTH STATE

There is one more state, the transcendental or *Atmic* (Divine) state. Man forgets the *Atma* because he identifies himself with the waking, the dream, and the sound sleep states. But *Atma* is the basis of all experiences. Mind is one, but images are many. Gold is one, but jewels are many. Milk is one, but cows are many. The indwelling Divinity, *Atma*, is one, but bodies are many. Mankind forgets this *Atmic* principle, which is the basis of everything, and believes in the body, mind, senses, and intellect. Thus, mankind is subject to ignorance.

There are innumerable waves in the ocean. There is no similarity between any two waves. Waves appear to us to be different. But we are forgetting the truth that the water, in all the waves, is the same. We come across innumerable human beings

in different forms. All these forms are like waves in the ocean. Names and forms appear different, but the basis of the *Atma* is one and the same. But one must realize that the *Atma* is covered by five sheaths: *annamaya kosa* (the physical body), *pranamaya kosa* (the vital sheath), *manomaya kosa* (the mind, mental sheath), *vijnanamaya kosa* (the intellect), and *anandamaya kosa* (the bliss sheath or the causal body). The causal body is called bliss, but it is not true bliss. It is enjoying the bliss which is merely a reflection of the *Atma*. We cannot see the *Atma* clearly because it is covered by these five sheaths.

ATMA IS UNTOUCHED

Similarly, the moon is not self-luminous; it shines when the sun falls on it. Mind, like the moon, is not self-luminous. It is the *Atma* which has the quality of self-illumination. It is the light of the *Atma* that illumines all the other parts of the body and makes them conscious. It is the consciousness of the *Atma* that makes the world function. This consciousness is the basis for the moving and unmoving cosmos. Man subjects himself to endless grief and sorrow because he ignores this fundamental truth. The joy and sorrow experienced by the body, mind, and intellect do not touch the *Atma* at all.

WHAT IS ATMA ?

People carry on various activities because of the light which they get from the sun. Some people undertake meritorious activities and others undertake sinful activities. Some undertake helpful work, while others take up harmful work. But none of these actions touch the sun, which is merely a witness. In the same way, the results of the actions of the physical body, the mind, the senses, and the intellect can never touch the *Atma*. The *Atma* is only a witness. Man wrongly considers all these activities to be related to the *Atma*. This is due to incorrect identification with the senses, the mind, the intellect, and the body. It is the mind which is responsible for actions. Once you forget the mind, everything becomes clear.

For example, we have built a house. In this house there are different rooms for different purposes: a kitchen, a living room, a bedroom, a bathroom, a dining room, and so on. But where do you get these differences? We create these different rooms, for our convenience, by constructing walls to separate one section from the other. Remove the walls and there will be just one common hall.

Similarly, *Atma* is all-pervading. We have forgotten this fact about the oneness of *Atma* because we

have constructed the walls of the physical body, the mind, the senses, and the intellect. It is all because of man's narrow-mindedness. It is attachment which is responsible for all the grief and sorrow of mankind. Just as you can remove the husk from the rice by pounding it, likewise, you can remove the trappings of the five layers: the physical body, the vital forces, the mind, the intellect, and the bliss sheaths. Then you will be able to experience your true *Atmic* nature.

The body sheaths are like husks that cover the rice. When you remove the husks, what remains is the grain of rice. As long as there is a husk on the rice there will be the cycle of birth and death. Once you remove the husk, the rice cannot be grown--then there is no question of rebirth. Therefore, the body, senses, mind, and intellect are responsible for bondage. However, *Atma* is literally found in all these things. For example, when you touch an iron ball which is in the fire, your hands get burned. We can say that you got burned because of the iron ball. This is not a proper observation. It is not the iron ball which burned your hands. If that be so, where is the fire in the iron ball? Is the fire outside or inside the ball? The fire is both inside and outside the iron ball. So also, the Lord is inside and outside everything. Even though the fire has caused the burning sensation, we

accuse the iron ball of having caused the burned hands.

SEARCH FOR ATMA ?

The entire world can be compared to the iron ball. In the world, we are subjected to joy, sorrow, criticism, cruelty, censure, praise, and such other things. What is it that is being subjected to all this suffering? We think it is the body, senses, mind, and intellect that are being subjected to suffering. But that is not true. The truth is that the *Atma* exists inside and outside this world. The individuals who have not grasped the fact that the *Atma* is all-pervasive are lacking in understanding. Hence, it is the *Atma* which is responsible for everything.

So what strategy should we use to obtain a vision of the *Atma*? There is no need for seeking or searching. It is self-effulgent. It is not like acquiring something which you don't have. At all times, in all places, under all circumstances, *Atma* exists. If that is so, how can you search for something which already exists? Is it not some sort of madness to search for the source of the light when you have a searchlight in hand? *Atma* is effulgent at all times. There is no need for a special *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) to seek *Atma*. Until man recognizes his own true nature, he will continue to delude himself into

thinking that the *Atma* is in some other place. It is like the ashes of body consciousness which cover the knowledge of *Atma*. Once we realize the bliss of the true Self, then all delusions will disappear.

AHAM, THE "I"

All of creation emerged only after the word "I" came into existence. If "I" is not there, there is no creation. What is this "I"? Who is this "I"? That is the very Being (*Uniki*) as it expresses itself in everyone. It has been called *Atma*. Another name for the same entity is *Brahma* (God). Another name is Heart. Still another name is *Aham*. I, Being, Heart, *Brahma*, and *Aham* are all synonymous. When we speak of the Heart, we mistake it for the physical heart. That is not the real Heart. The true Heart has no boundaries. We are giving up the true Heart, which is all-pervasive, and thinking the physical heart to be the true Heart. We are living our lives on the basis of one word, "I." This "I" is *Aham*. *Aham* is *Brahma*, God.

Sometimes a man may describe himself by saying, "I am a family man." Before the term "family man," he uses the word "I." "I am a *sanyasin* (renunciate)." Before the term *sanyasin*, the man uses the word "I." In the statement, "I am a man," "I" comes first, followed by the word

"man." Similarly, "I am a woman" makes the same statement. If we remove the words "man," "woman," and "*sanyasin*" from the the above statements, what remains is the word "I." This illustrates that "I" is the basis for everything. When you say "I," it is *Atma*. We forget that this principle of *Atma* is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. This act of forgetting *Atma*, is responsible for subjecting mankind to problems, grief, and sorrow. What we have to love is not the man; instead, we should love the *Atma*, the God within. We make the mistake of loving the physical body. That is why there is no firmly established self-confidence.

RELATIONSHIPS ARE PASSING CLOUDS

You have a mother, father, and children; and, under all circumstances, you will love your mother, father, and children. You love them, in spite of all the trouble they create for you. One experiences extreme grief if the family is suffering. What is the reason? An individual experiences grief when he identifies with and attaches himself to his mother, father, children, or spouse. All these relationships are only passing clouds. One has doubt because he does not have firm faith and love for God. He does not consider God as his very own. You have firm love for the individual you consider to be your own

father. You have so much love for the physical body, which is impermanent, but you do not have love for the *Atma*, which is permanent.

What is the reason for this kind of mistake? It is because you consider truth as untruth and untruth as truth. It is *Atma* alone which is true and eternal. Mankind should have unshakeable faith in this truth; instead, man is developing attachments at the physical level and to bodily relationships. That is why your faith is not steady and permanent. It is only when you consider something as your own that you will have that firm faith and a permanent relationship with it. Without that firm faith, you can never be a *sthithaprajna*, an even-minded, balanced person who is unaffected by external circumstances. Therefore, you can not derive wisdom, truth, and real joy. You can never reach a state which is permanent. All other things are delusions. As long as you have delusions, *Brahma*, God, will be distant from you. The moment you give up delusion, you can attain the vision of *Brahma*.

We must believe in the existence of the Divine in everyone. Then there will be no room for differences in the world. There would be no room for misunderstandings or fights. There would be no room for likes or dislikes.

Mankind and human nature are deteriorating from day-to-day because man has developed attachments, likes and dislikes, and various other kinds of delusions. You should realize that the principle of "I" is the principle of *Atma*, the indwelling God. Once you are firmly established in the knowledge of *Atma*, you have reached the goal. This destroys all doubts. Today's world is full of problems. Likes and dislikes are responsible for all these problems. Selfishness is responsible for all likes and dislikes. Self-interest is responsible for selfishness. Delusion and attachment to the physical body is the main cause of all of these. It is the mind which is responsible for the delusion of the physical body. Once you offer and dedicate your mind to God, you have caught hold of a real *mantra* (repetitious chant). The primary or root *mantra* is the principle of "I, I, I." The Sanskrit equivalent of this term is, "*Aham, Aham, Aham.*" We have to sanctify our lives by this *mantra*. Whatever you see, whatever you hear, whatever you say, whatever you eat, whatever you do, you must do it with the feeling of *Atma*.

BIG "I," LITTLE "I"

There are two types of "I," one is associated with the mind and the other is associated with the *Atma*.

THE ADVENT OF GOD IN HUMAN FORM

This is the story of the Lord in human form,
on November 23, 1926, in Puttaparthi, He was born.
Sathya Narayana was the infant's given name,
and the pet of the village He soon became.

In 1940, on March the 8th, from a scorpion bite,
Sathya suffered silently, eventually losing His sight.
To doctors and holy men the child's parents did lure
their son to go, hoping to find a cure.

Nothing seemed to help Sathya get well,
until on May 23 He was ready to tell.
The villagers cried out in fear, "What to do with you?"
"Worship me," replied Sathya, "your whole life through."

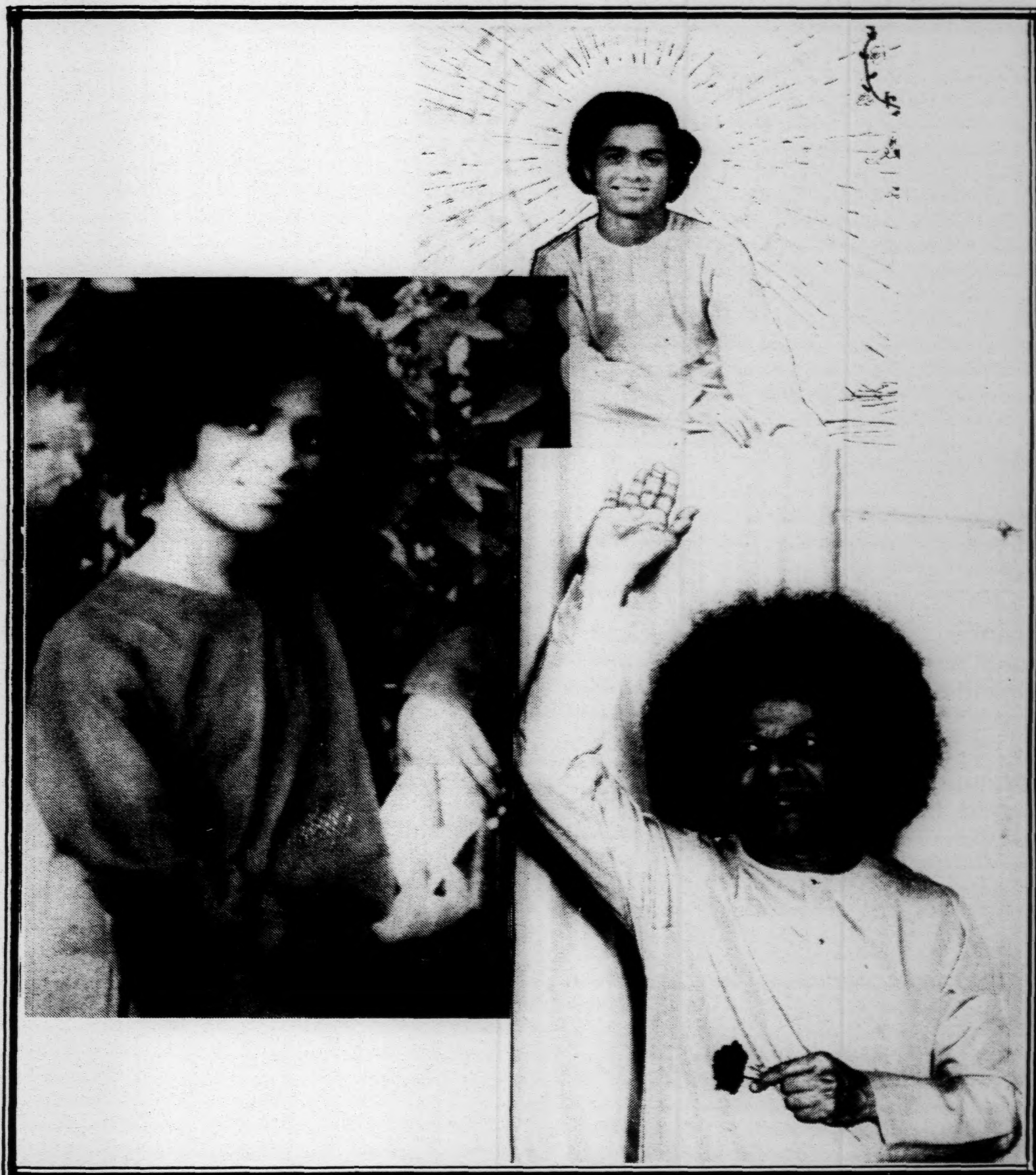
The child spoke, "Place in my hands those jasmine flowers."
Throwing them high in the air, they fell in a shower.
The blossoms spelled "Sai Baba," perfectly clear,
much to the astonishment of all those near.

Speaking sweetly, the child replied,
"I am now Sai Baba in whom all things reside."
"My devotees are calling, I cannot stay.
I must serve my children and show the way."

Sixty-five years ago, the story began,
the birth of the Lord, cloaked in the body of man.
His life is His message, you cannot deny,
We are blessed beyond words to know Sathya Sai.

Let us celebrate the day the Divine was born,
God, come in human form!

--Joy Ziegler
Gilbert, Arizona



DISCOVER THE SPIRITUAL CREDIT CARD

Just about the time that the holiday season rolls around, we are treated to a commercial message on television in which a certain company implores the viewers to discover their credit card. The message proclaims that it is the only card that actually pays you back, up to a whopping 1% of qualified purchases charged in one year! Delightfully generous of them, don't you think?

Now, let me tell you about another credit card which pays us back 100% of our expenditure every time we use it, and it does so not just once a year, but constantly. There are no finance charges, no minimum payments, and no spending limits! We can use it any time, anywhere, in any situation, and it is guaranteed to bring us happiness, peace of mind, and a reduction in debt. Best of all, our credit limit increases automatically every time we use it. The name of this unusual card is Spiritual Living!

Frivolity aside, we all realize that the best way to deal with the numerous situations in life is to rely on the voice of our conscience. The trick is to know how to hear this voice over the din of the mind. Many have shown

us ways to quiet the mind, but no one does it better than Sathya Sai Baba. His prescription is simple. "My life is my message," He tells us, "Live your life the same way."

Baba has said that the best way to change the world is to, first, change ourselves. If every man, woman and child were to take the responsibility to change their way of life, and to follow the moral, ethical, and spiritual teachings of their faith, they wouldn't have to worry about the next person. The world would already be a different place, a better place. It sounds so simple, but it is probably a difficult thing to do.

Why is it so difficult? In my view, the difficulty arises from our false identification with the body and with the illusory world. It arises from the vagaries of the mind and our meek surrender to its self-centered actions. This weakness brings us miseries, difficulties, and sorrows. But then, lacking the will to override the mind, and lacking the right perspective, we often blame others, and God, for our problems. We pile up debt in our spiritual bank account because of our avaricious, spendthrift nature that compels us to spend our spiri-

tual capital on what Baba calls "trinkets and trash."

How does one get out of this bankruptcy? Baba tells us that the most effective way is to learn how to control the mind. He also cautions us that we have to be patient, consistent, and disciplined in our efforts.

He gives a wonderful example of forbearance and dogged determination in the quest for the ultimate goal. He tells us to look at the river, how it starts its journey at the foot of a mountain. In the beginning, it is just a small trickle, which turns into a small stream jumping over rocks and boulders and around obstacles on its way to the ocean. Along the way, it collects other streams, gathering momentum and strength, and soon it is a river rushing through the valleys and plains, enriching those that it meets along the way but never stopping until it has merged into the ocean.

Our spiritual journey is like that of a river. In the beginning, we are alone with our own limited strength and desire. As we travel down the path with determination, we gather strength and wisdom to overcome small obstacles and distractions. Often we find that as we learn to control our minds with regard to small things, then we are faced with unexpected tests and more formidable challenges. These are meant

to keep us honest and humble, and to make us stronger for the bigger obstacles which are bound to come our way. Along this pilgrimage, we meet others who are going in the same direction. We are encouraged by the *satsang*, good company, of these fellow travelers. We enrich their lives as we are enriched by theirs. And, if we persevere, we are rewarded with success, happiness, and peace of mind.

Where does it all begin? It begins with the first "D" word--DUTY! We have to understand and accept that our first duty is to become truly human. At the same time, we have to realize that, even in our humanness, we enshrine a spark of the Divine in our core as does everything and everyone. Once this common characteristic of creation is understood and accepted, we learn how to treat others as we would ourselves--with love, compassion, and dignity.

We have all experienced the fact that some things are easier said than done. Then what do we have to do to accomplish them? For that, we come to the second "D" word--DISCIPLINE! We have to discipline our mind and make it realize that it is not our master. We have to become the master of our mind so that it cannot pull us hither and thither.

Baba gives a very simple recipe for this. He tells us that we should

give up the ownership of the results of our actions, whatever they may be. We should surrender the fruit of our actions to God. We should realize that the talents, skills, and responsibilities we possess are given to us by God, who gave them to us as trustees, not as owners. God is the owner, we are His instruments. If we concentrate on being the best instruments that we can be--well-tuned, well-honed, and in top condition--we can achieve a lot with our lives. The best part is that, if we surrender the fruit of our actions--good, bad or indifferent--to God, we become free. We don't have to carry the burden. God carries it for us.

We discover, as we undertake this journey, with the sense of duty and the tools of discipline, that we begin to grow as human beings. This leads us to the third "D" word--DEVOTION! Baba once asked a school boy, "What is devotion?" The boy replied, "Swami, for our age, devotion means obeying Your word, complete obedience to whatever You say, because we know that You have only our welfare in Your mind!"

Total, unwavering obedience to God--that is devotion, according to Baba. It should be obvious that the only way we can get to that state of enlightenment is by understanding our duty and acquiring the necessary physical and mental disciplines to control the wavering mind. Then

we begin to see that doing God's will is the only way to happiness.

Becoming a true devotee of the Lord is the essence of living. To understand why it is so precious an undertaking, let us contemplate on the following story told by Baba.

While the sage, Narada, was visiting Lord Krishna, the following conversation took place between them:

Krishna "O Narada, who is the greatest of all?"

Narada "You, my Lord!"

Krishna "No, no, no! Which of the five elements is the greatest?"

Narada "Oh, well, mother earth, my Lord."

Krishna "But three-fourths of the earth is covered with water."

Narada "Yes, my Lord. Then, water is the greatest."

Krishna "But the sage Agastya drank up all the oceans in one sip."

Narada "That is correct. Agastya is the greatest."

Krishna "But you see, Narada, Agastya is now a mere star in the vast sky."

Narada "Well, then the sky is the greatest, my Lord."

Krishna "How can that be? Lord Vishnu covered the whole sky with one foot in His role as the Avatar, Vamana."

Narada "Well, then Vamana's foot is the greatest."

Krishna "Shouldn't Vamana be greater than His foot?"

Narada "So, I was right the first time. I told You that You are the greatest."

Krishna "No, Narada. I am trapped inside the heart of a true devotee. I cannot get out. How can I be the greatest? The greatest is My devotee, who has the power to lure Me and imprison Me in his heart. That is where I am happiest."

So, devotion has the power to bring God into our hearts and to help us feel Him in our every breath. That is the reward for leading a truly spiritual life. Lest we think that to do so requires a great sacrifice, let us read the following story told by Baba:

A great sage once went to the court of a famous king. The king got up from his throne, and paid his respects to the sage, saying, "O Revered Sage, you are the greatest, for you have renounced everything."

The sage replied, "O Mighty King, what have I renounced? I have only given up the worthless, transient worldly things which are so insignificant. And, in return, I have received so much--realization of God, knowledge of scriptures, peace--all

such treasures. So I have not really renounced much. On the other hand, O King, you are to be admired because your sacrifice is truly great. You have sacrificed everlasting peace, the knowledge of scriptures, mastery over the senses, knowledge of God--so many precious things. And for what? For all these insignificant worldly pleasures. So, you, you have renounced much more than I have."

Thus, Sathya Sai Baba puts in perspective the benefits to be gained by leading a spiritual life. We all come into this world with a certain spiritual bank balance. We have to draw upon that credit and accumulate more spiritual wealth so that our future journey toward God is assured. The key to the success of this endeavor is to discover our spiritual heritage--our spiritual credit card--and use it.

As I said at the beginning, this is the only credit card which increases our balance when we use it well. We don't have to fill out any application forms, for we are pre-approved at birth! Then, it pays back not only the principal, but also the interest, which is compounded daily when we give our account to God. What more can we ask for?

--Deepak Bhat
Troy, Michigan

When attachment to the body declines, then attachment to the Atma shines.

--Sathya Sai Baba

From a Divine Discourse, January 2, 1987

THE UNIVERSE IS MY MANSION

Let me share the gift Baba bestowed on me at Dharmakshetra on our return to India. It was the holy *Guru Purnima*. Baba was at Kampala and Nairobi, blessing devotees. On that day disciples everywhere offer homage to their preceptor. He reached Bombay in time to bless devotees there, on that sacred day. In Bombay they had arranged a colorful reception for Baba. The visit to East Africa was, they believed, His first overseas journey. Over thirty thousand people gathered to greet Him. Speeches were delivered in praise of Baba's visit to a continent across the sea.

Baba prefaced His talk with a mild reproof. "Why make such a fuss about my going to Africa and returning to Bombay?" He asked. "I am in all places. All places are mine." *Prapanchame na illu*. I translated the Telugu sentence thus, "The world is my mansion," and waited for the wave of appreciation that I deserved for choosing the word mansion to denote the *illu*--a commonplace proletarian word meaning, at best, only a house. But what I received was a loud "No!" and that from Baba Himself.

He had closed the ear of the mike with a grasp and had turned squarely to me. He shook a finger at me, cautioning me against the blunder. He repeated "No" twice and, *Sai Ram*, took a few paces toward me. I feared that I had erred beyond redemption. What exactly did I say? Didn't I hear aright? I must have spurted out some sacrilegious English!

I was on the verge of tears. I shivered from head to foot. That finger! That frown! The "No, No, No!" I moved a few fast paces toward Him in order to accept whatever He was coming to give me.

We met on the dais. Baba had His finger raised, He shook it at me and said, "No! Not the World! The Universe is My Mansion!" Ah! I had the *darshan* of Him, whose *illu* is the Universe! I heard the word, the Lord Himself proclaiming His *Viswarupa* (Cosmic Form)! I fell at the feet for the bliss of *sparshan* (to touch a holy being)! He raised me by the shoulder with a mild "*lay*," "get up," and when I managed to stand, He said, pointing to my mike, "*po*," "go." He took a few paces and resumed, but not before I managed to pronounce, "The Universe is My Mansion." The world had presented me a gift more precious than any other it could offer.

Yes, I ought to have been more circumspect. I was too enamored of the term "mansion" to pay due attention to the other word *prapancha*. Baba had instructed me about that word long ago. It means the cosmos, or rather since *pancha* means five, it denotes earth, water, fire, air, space, and wherever any or all of these exist. My word, "world" was indeed far too diminutive for the majesty of His Reality.

--Prof. N. Kasturi
From his autobiography
Loving God

DEVOTION: LOVING GOD

Over the years one comes to know that people in general, and even friends in particular, have their individual life goals. Such goals are not cast in iron but are concepts subject to change. Observing this, one is led to ask if individuality is everything. If one then chooses to pose the question to Sri Sathya Sai Baba, a firm and clear answer is received. He tells us that beyond individual likes and dislikes there is a common goal for all. This goal is the return to the Source from which one came. The Source is Divinity, the Absolute from which all has issued. To those of us who know this answer and to whom it has the ring of truth, the question must arise--is there a way to return to that Source, that Divinity, a way of return that is sure and swift? Again, if we ask, Sathya Sai answers. He tells us that the mind may seek the way, although with great difficulty and slowly, yet sure and swift is the way of love, of devotion to God, of love for Him, He who is love itself.

The question that we ask of Sathya Sai is the same question asked of Krishna by Arjuna. Krishna gave the answersome 5000 years ago as does Baba today. He replied to

Arjuna, "For those who set their hearts on Me and worship Me with unfailing devotion and faith, the way of love leads sure and swift to Me." And, "They for whom I am the Goal Supreme, who do all work, renouncing self for Me, and meditate on Me with single-hearted devotion, these will I swiftly rescue from the cycle of birth and death to fullness of eternal life in Me. Still your mind in Me, still yourself in Me, and without doubt you shall be united with Me, Lord of Love, dwelling in your heart."

Divinity, clad in the dear-to-us Sai form, stands with each one of us, ready and willing to dwell in each heart as Love Itself, one's true Self, the indivisible Absolute. One need only set aside his unquestioning reliance on the first person singular and thus make the heart ready.

To open one's heart to the Divine, to willingly set aside "me-oriented" motives and emotions, and to totally dedicate every thought, feeling, and action to Him brings His grace into those thoughts, feelings, and actions. Thus, in such a mode of being, each one of us may immediately be His devotee, may live each moment in devotion to the Divine Sai.

Baba told me directly, one day at Brindavan, that to be born now was even more fortunate than to have been alive in the time of Krishna. How extraordinary! How could such grace be ours? Yet, it is so. Then let us not waste even one day of this great good fortune. Now, let each of us invite Sai to reside in our heart as Love. Be His devotee, let the mind be filled with thoughts of Him every moment in which the mind is not engaged in essential work. With work done, return to Him, who stands beside us lovingly regarding each as His own child, as not other than Himself. Why turn aside with idle wishes, random thoughts, and remembrances? Hold to Him, repeat His name, love Him, glow with happiness in His love, as does the devotee who is never separate from Him.

To live in devotion to the Divinity, to the Love that is Sai, is not impossible nor difficult. Each of us is already in love with Love. We are in love with Happiness, in love with Truth, Beauty, Wealth, and Auspiciousness. Sai, the Lord, is all these and much, much more. If we love these, then we are loving Him.

As a mirror reflects the rays of the sun and projects them outward, in like fashion, the Sai person is the focus which radiates all that is lovable, rich, and magnificent in the vast cosmos--both subtle and objective. See Him so, for He is the great-

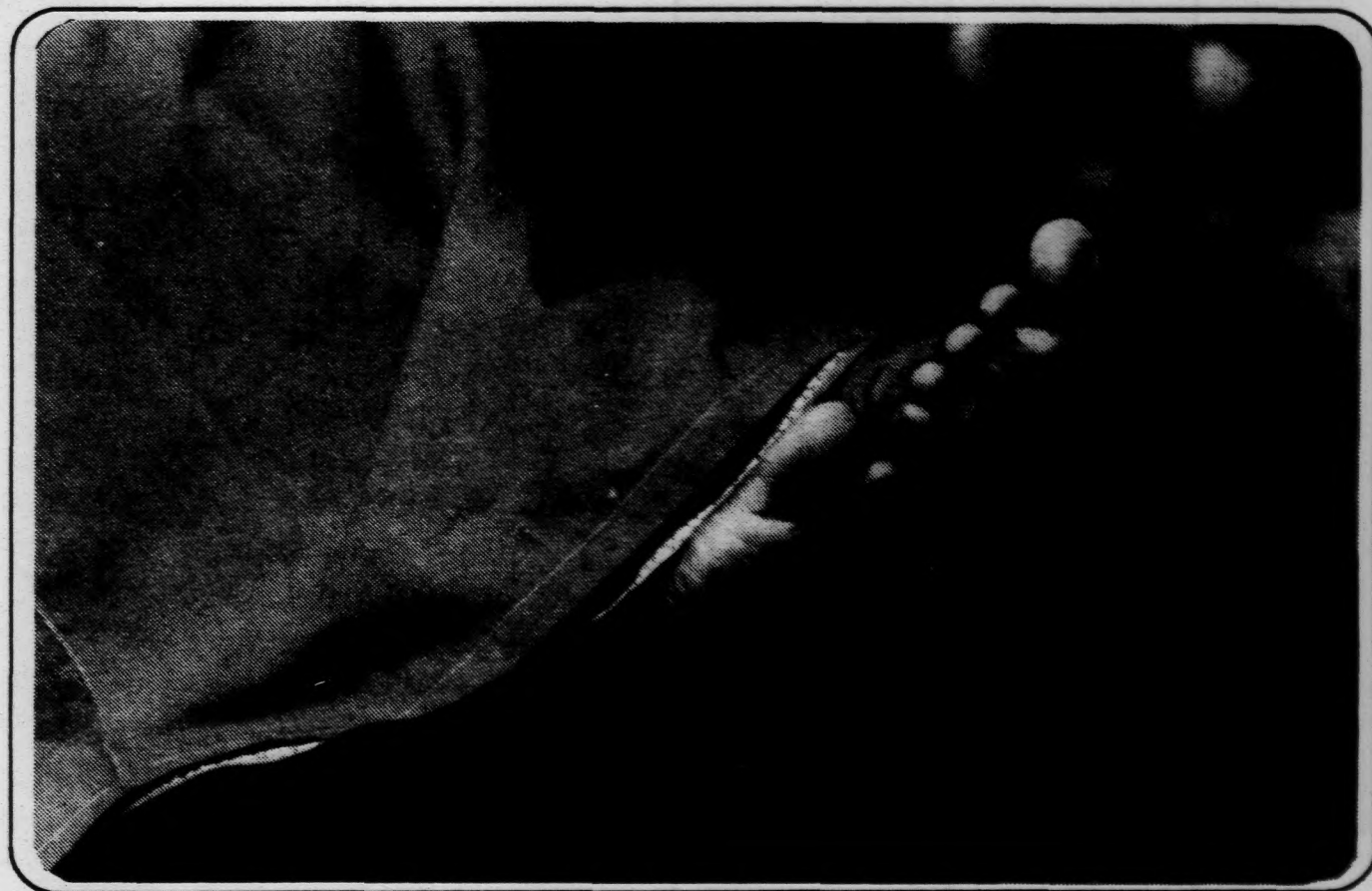
est of the great, yet also close and intimate to us. He sweetly tells us to feel close to Him, to regard Him not as the distant, Almighty Divinity, but as a close and affectionate friend who has the power to help. He is willing and able to help if we will just abandon the imagined separation. Know that He is the Beloved, and that we are infinitely dear to Him.

God is Love; it is our destiny to merge in divine Love. Let each of us know that Sai declares it is so. Now is the time, today is the day to discard separation from God and realize that devotion is the bond by which we come to know that He and ourselves are, in truth, One and One only.

No great explosion of consciousness is needed to open one's heart; no great tragedy is needed to break our isolation as a supposed separate and unique individual. Now, let concepts fall away, let hatreds and fears fall away, and then let heart and mind love--and love Him--our divine Friend, our Beloved, our Sai.

--J.S. Hislop, Ed. D.
Central Coordinator for
World Region I, USA

OFFER ALL ACTIONS AT THE LOTUS FEET



There is no disease worse than greed.

There is no enemy greater than anger.

There is no grief worse than poverty.

There is no joy greater than wisdom.

But man is making himself distant from such wisdom. Faith in God has disappeared. Good behavior, based on righteousness, has lost its place. Disbelief in God, atheism, has

grown enormously. Respect for the *guru*, the master, the preceptor, has disappeared. Devotion has also vanished, and the practice of timeless values, *sanathana dharma*, has declined. Strict discipline and important things like honoring and respecting others has descended to the lowest level. That is the state of things today.

Dear Students:

In this world, *Vedic* literature is the most ancient. It is a wealth of

wisdom. It is the *Vedas* which can bring prosperity to mankind. *Vedas* are the very basis on which mankind's culture and good thoughts are developed. All the qualities and all the *dharma*s (righteous actions) have emanated from the *Vedas*. *Veda* is infinite, unfathomable, mysterious, and full of bliss. The word *Veda* has originated from the root word *Vid*, which means knowledge of *Brahma* (God). Knowledge of *Brahma* is *Veda*. *Advaita*, nonduality, is knowledge of the *Vedas*. *Vedas* are also science. All these are synonymous with the knowledge of *Atma* (indwelling God).

Ordinary people cannot understand the sacredness of the *Vedas*. Whether understood or not, it is the greatness and the splendor of the *Vedas* which has pervaded all.

PROCESS OF ACTION

Man has a body in order to perform action. He has the duty to act. But his actions, *karma*, must be in tune with righteousness. We must realize that this body is given for the practice of *dharma*, righteous activities. When mankind's actions become perfect they become devotion. When devotion is saturated with divine love, and all actions are performed for the glory of the Lord, they become full wisdom. The essence of these actions, devotion, and wisdom are one and the same. This can be understood by the following anal-

ogy: Flowers become unripe fruit, then they become fully ripe fruit. The process starts with *karma*, or action, then develops into ripened fruit.

The epics, the *Puranas*, and other scriptures are written as an annex to the *Vedas* in such a manner that mankind can easily understand, practice, worship, and find wisdom in them. The end of the *Vedas* is the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads* are divided into three parts, and offered to mankind, making it easier to practice the teachings.

Yoga means an offering. Whatever action one undertakes, it should be treated as an offering to the Lord. Every deed has to be performed for the pleasure and glory of the Lord. *Yoga* is worship. Real worship is loving the Lord from the core of one's heart, with full love and purity of the three instruments: thought, word, and deed. Love for the sake of getting one's work accomplished, fulfilling one's desires, or for satisfying the delusions of the world cannot be called worship. Love for love's sake, that is *upasana yoga*. The third is *jnana yoga*. Everything is the form of God. It is God who dwells in every being. Real wisdom is experiencing only one *Atma* in all. Realizing this oneness is true *jnana*, wisdom. Real wisdom is to firmly believe that the same *Atma* is residing in every being as Divinity.

ONLY ONE

You may have a few doubts. Doubts may arise in different ways: different types of behavior, different names, different types of philosophy and beliefs. So how can there be unity in diversity? In the unfathomable depths of the sea there are waves which emerge. Each wave has its own form. One gets the impression that there is no similarity between one wave and another. But the water in each wave is the same. There is no difference between the ocean and the waves. Similarly, people may have different names, forms, beliefs, and actions, but they are all waves in the ocean of *sat-chit-ananda* or being, awareness, bliss.

There is only one God for all people. Depending on different beliefs and ideas, people enjoy God in different ways. There is one God, but He has different names. God is one, whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or Buddhist. Whatever name you utter, or whatever form you worship, the prayer goes to only one God. For example: There is only one sun. There is not an American, British, Chinese, or an Indian sun. But each country gets a vision of the sun at different points in time. Just because people, in different parts of the world, cannot see the sun at the same time--wouldn't it be ignorant to say that there are different suns?

FIVE DEFECTS

In ancient times the spiritual preceptors used to prescribe very rigid discipline for the teaching of the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* have been able to survive and flourish for such a long time because the ancient preceptors emphasized rigorous discipline and laid down strict conditions. The *Vedas* were not in the form of a written book, they were obtained only through hearing (*shruti*). The *Vedas* were handed down from *guru* to *sisya* or student, through generations of listening to the teachings. The preceptors used to chant the *Vedas* according to prescribed rules and intonations, and the disciples memorized them accordingly.

The preceptors of those days were totally selfless and pure-hearted. They were full of godly, divine feelings. They were full of pure love and were prepared to dedicate their lives for the welfare and progress of the students. The students of those days implicitly obeyed the commands of their masters and preceptors. Any students who violated the rules of discipline were not allowed to come near the master's premises.

There were five defects that the preceptors never tolerated. All five defects start with the letter "A." The first is indifference, *alakshyam*, the second is lack of humility, *avinayam*,

the third is egoism, *ahamkara*, the fourth is jealousy, *asuya*, and the fifth is lack of good manners, *as-abhyam*. A person who has these five defects has no right to be a student at all.

Many disciples gathered around the sage, Vyasa. Foremost among them was Vaisampayana. Vaisampayana sanctified his life by having faith, humility, and always obeying the commands of his master. Wholesome intelligence, adherence to truth, devotion, discipline, the discharging of one's duties--when these values are taught--that is true education. A student should learn these. Vaisampayana learned the *Vedas* from Vyasa, observing all the rules and regulations. Then he established his own *gurukulam* to teach the *Vedas*. *Gurukulam* does not mean that a special place is established for teaching and observing certain rules. The home of the preceptor was the *gurukulam*. The same food of which the *guru* partook was offered to the students. The students lived with the preceptor. The food and habits of the *guru* and the disciples were the same. Therefore there was unity and harmony among them in thought and behavior. As the food was the same, the head and thoughts were similar. The *gurukulam* and *gurus*, of yore, taught the principle of *Atma* (the indwelling God) while enforcing regulations in diet and habits.

Yagnavalkya entered the *gurukulam* of Vaisampayana. He was a great intellectual. He was able to master each day's lesson and answer whatever the teacher asked. The preceptor was very pleased with his ability and intelligence, and all the other students recognized his intellectual sharpness. All the praise made Yagnavalkya become a little egotistic. He felt that no other student could score better marks than he, that there was no one else who could answer the preceptor's questions as well as he. It was as though he always got the "A" grade. Once the ego developed, Yagnavalkya became indifferent. Along with indifference arose a lack of good manners and improper conduct. Vaisampayana closely observed all these developments in his student. The preceptors in those days were ready to give up their lives for the welfare of the students. The preceptors would punish the students severely if they saw that the students were straying away from the proper path, such as lacking humility, becoming egotistical, or lacking discipline.

Siksha means education. Mere book learning is not education. Obeying and implementing all the commands of the preceptor, accepting every punishment given by the *guru*--that is true education.

After observing Yagnavalkya straying away from the right path, Vais-

ampayana called him, and told him that he had forfeited the right to be in the *gurukulam*. He asked him to leave immediately, and also to give back all that he had learned there. The master had given the disciple the proper education and training with much love. With equal harshness and vigor he commanded him to leave and to give back what he had been taught. The punishment was very severe. Yagnavalkya recognized the command of his master, and he gave back or vomited the knowledge that he had acquired. This vomit was eaten by some birds. These birds then started repeating the *Vedas*. The *Taitireya Upanishad* got its name because of these *tithtiri* birds.

There are two traditions associated with the *Vedas*: the *Brahma* tradition and the *Aditya* tradition. What was vomited by Yagnavalkya refers to the *Brahma* tradition. This has been called the *Krishna Yajur Veda*. Yagnavalkya realized his mistake. He undertook great penance, worshiping the sun god by giving up food and drink. Repentance cleanses one's sins and purifies one's heart. By this kind of repentance he was purified. Realizing that Yagnavalkya had repented sufficiently, the sun god appeared in the form of Vaaji and told him never to repeat the same mistake. He asked Yagnavalkya to forget the past.

Why did the sun god appear in the form of Vaaji? The ancestors of Yagnavalkya used to do charity by giving food to people, hence, the family got the name Vaajasam. It is because of this that the sun god appeared as Vaaji and gave the teachings which are known as *Shukla Yajur Veda*.

Yajur Veda is divided into two sections. There are only four *Vedas*: *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *Athara Veda*. Although originally four *Vedas*, they became five when the *Yajur Veda* was divided into *Krishna Yajur Veda* and *Shukla Yajur Veda*. Yagnavalkya worshiped the sun god, and earned his grace. He wanted to know what was good and essential for ordinary human beings in this world. He discovered a treatise regarding the duties to be performed by mankind. He realized that the sun god had appeared to him because his ancestors gave food in charity. He discovered that:

There is no charity greater than feeding the hungry.

There is no god greater than one's parents.

There is no truth and integrity greater than penance.

There is no righteous act greater than compassion.

There is no profit greater than good company.

There is no enemy greater than anger.

There is no disease greater than indebtedness.

There is no death greater than a bad name.

And no wealth greater than a good name.

There is no jewel or ornament greater than chanting the name of the Lord.

Yagnavalkya declared these truths and undertook to teach them. He emphasized respect for parents and teachers, and giving food for charity.

ACCEPT & PRACTICE

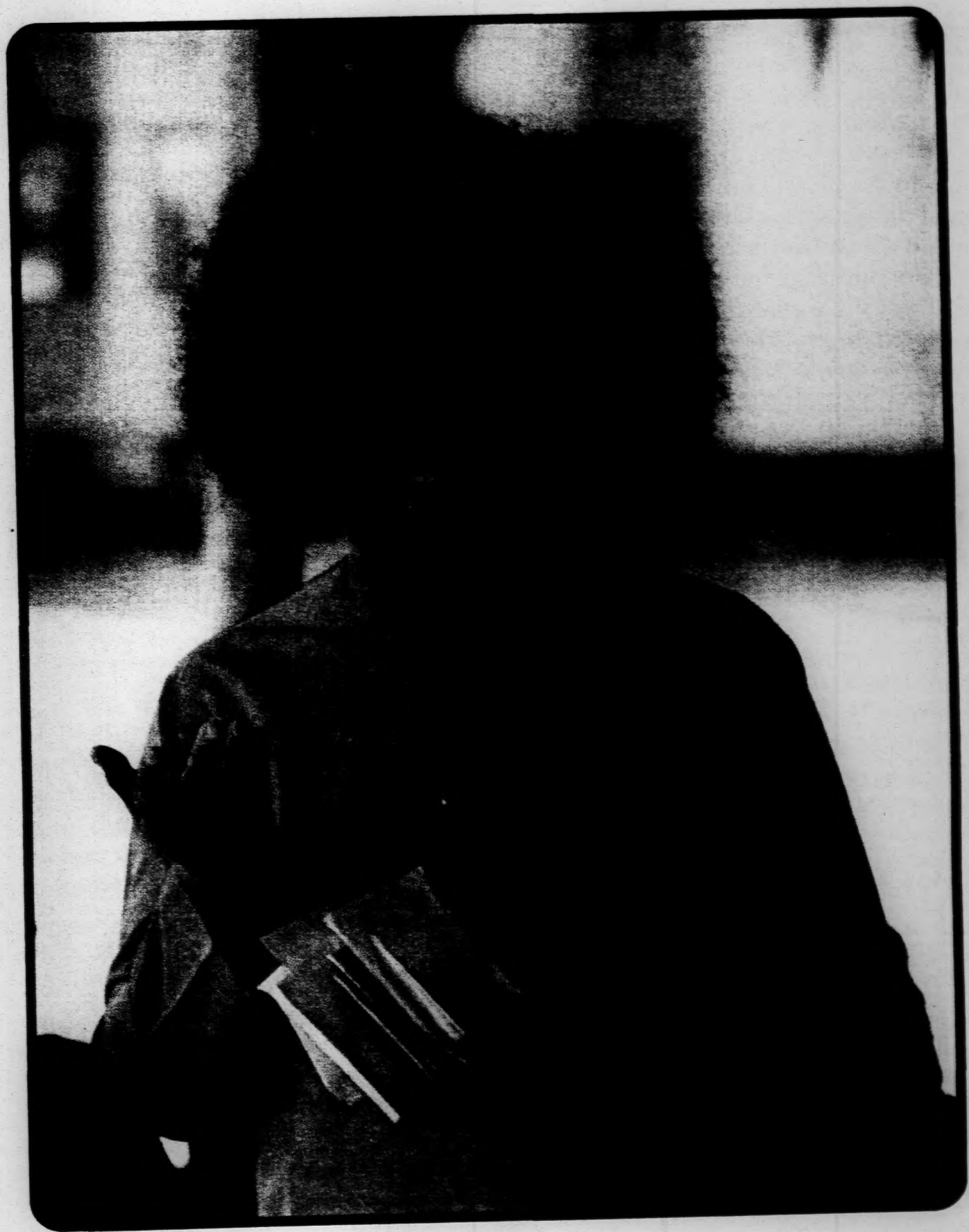
Dear Students: Learned people and elders who have experience, have taught you important concepts from the core of their hearts. Those great teachers who have taught you are not easily available now. But, at least, Swami is easily available. Such great people have come with love and interest to teach you valuable concepts. Those teachings have to be accepted with devotion and faith. But mere acceptance is not enough. You have to practice them. You must

practice at least a few of the concepts you have learned, and make yourselves into ideal beings. You should not be indifferent to the commands of your preceptors, elders, parents, and *gurus*. You should conduct yourself with humility. You will acquire an education when you are humble and obedient. Do not allow any arrogance or ego on the basis of your intelligence. You should not become jealous of people who are better than you in any respect. If you have any of these four defects, your behavior will not be proper in society.

The essence of the *Vedas* is the essence of the scriptures. You are going to be the well-wishers of Bharat (India). You are going to be the future leaders. You should offer your lives as ideals, enter the path of truth, and practice righteousness. If you practice righteousness, it will protect you.

You may consider that you would like to learn only worldly education. Along with the secular education you should combine spiritual education. Secular or worldly education is just for earning a living and having a comfortable life. But you will have to firmly believe in the *Atma* which is the fundamental basis of everything. Have firm faith in the *Atma*.

There are two types of *dharma* taught by the *Vedas*. *Nishidha dharma* involves things which will



have to be given up, and *vihitha dharma*, things which will have to be followed. Unfortunately, today we are practicing things which have to be given up and giving up things which have to be practiced. This is the greatest ignorance. One small example: You go to the market and buy a beautiful mango, paying five rupees. You say, "I have purchased this mango by paying my own money." Will you be able to eat the skin and the seed? No, you can only enjoy the flesh and the juice, and you will have to discard the rest. In the world, which can be compared to the fruit, you have to give up those things which have to be given up and accept those things which have to be accepted. I have told you these five things many times in the past. See no evil, see what is good. Hear no evil, hear what is good. Speak no evil, speak only good. Think no evil, think what is good. Do no evil, do what is good. This is the way of life.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Dear Students: You are extremely fortunate. Of the millions of people in the world, just a small number of you have this great opportunity. I would be happy if even a few of you can become ideal students, accept an authoritative position, or take up any job or business you want. You can even take up cultivation of the land. But while discharging your du-

ties have firm faith in the *Atma*. All the problems, injustices, difficulties, grief, and sorrow in the world are caused by lack of faith or lack of firm conviction in the *Atma*.

Today, man does not have faith in himself. For example, a person has a hundred rupee note and gives it to a friend, asking him or her to keep it because he is worried that he may spend it foolishly. If that person does not have faith in being able to keep the hundred rupees, how can he have faith in himself? Then, after handing over the money to his friend, he begins to doubt whether his friend will return the money. Therefore, above all, one must have self-confidence. Only when you have self-confidence can you get self-satisfaction. That kind of satisfaction cannot be obtained by any amount of wealth. If you do not have self-confidence, you cannot have self-satisfaction. A person who is dissatisfied will face innumerable problems and losses. If you want to be free from problems and sorrows, have satisfaction--which can only be derived from self-confidence. If you have self-satisfaction, you are prepared for self-sacrifice without anyone telling you. Once there is self-sacrifice, self-realization will dawn automatically. If you want to get self-realization, there is no need to go to any particular place or do any specific spiritual discipline. If you follow these principles the goal is attained automati-

cally. Therefore, every student should follow the path of good action. Good action confers purity of heart. Purity of heart alone will confer wisdom. All these things are available to you.

There is no need to search for these things outside. There is no need to read any books. If one searches within oneself, one can obtain all the answers. For example, there is a wall clock with three hands: the second hand, minute hand, and hour hand. If you carefully observe them, you can learn an important lesson. When the second hand moves through sixty seconds, the minute hand moves only to the next space. When the minute hand moves through sixty minutes, the hour hand moves only one space. Our body is like the wall clock. From dawn to dusk we continually undertake action. This is the second hand. When we perform innumerable good deeds, our purity of heart advances to the next space. If one can love God, worship, and meditate with a pure heart, the *Atma* advances to the next space. We can see the movement of the second and the minute hands. You can total up the number of good deeds you have done. You can count how much worship and how many prayers you have done. But the movement of the hour hand is not easily visible. The movement of the second and minute hands are meaningful because they cause the hour hand to move. If the hour hand does not move, what is the use

of all the movement of the second and minute hands? Whatever good deeds you do, whatever good thoughts you have, all are useless if you do not have self-confidence.

DEVOTION

Wherever you are, follow any of these types of devotion; that is good enough. God does not look at your wealth or your prosperity. He does not care to see what caste you belong to. He will be beside anyone who has pure love for Him. Do you think that God looks at one's lineage? To which caste did Valmiki belong? He was a hunter. Nanda belonged to a low-born family in a small village. God did not look at this. God showered wealth on Kuchela, but what wealth did he have to begin with? He didn't have even a few grains. God showered grace on Kuchela because of his love. What education did Gajaraja, the elephant king, have? What did Dhruva have? God does not look at one's age. Dhruva and Prahlada were only five years old when the Lord appeared to them. They were extremely fortunate to have such a great experience at such a tender age. God does not see whether one is a scholar, *sanyasin*, elderly person, child, or an ordinary person. You foolishly imagine otherwise.

Sabari was told that Lord Narayana had taken birth and had de-

scended in human form as Rama, in the kingdom of Dasaratha, and that He had entered the forest. Sabari always waited for Rama by Matanga Maharishi's *ashram*. She had heard that in order to obey His father's word, Rama was in exile, and He might come anytime to see her in the forest. She waited for Him all the time. This was constant *japa* (prayer) and *dhyana* (meditation). Sabari was short in stature. She had so much love and devotion for Rama that she thought the branches and bushes would obstruct her view of Him, so she cut them down. Rama was very tall. If she got exhausted while working, she would sit on a stone and visualize Rama. For Rama's sake, she would make the stones smooth by grinding and polishing them, should He pass that way. This is renunciation, this is penance, this is meditation, this is *japa*. She would collect berries and fruit that grew around the *ashram* to eat. While partaking of the fruit, Sabari would think of the Lord. She thought that if the Lord passed that way and was hungry, she wanted to offer the best fruit to Him. So she would taste each

fruit to ensure that only the best and sweetest were kept for the Lord. Thus every act of hers was meditation and penance.

Meditation does not mean closing the eyes and thinking of something, as if posing for a picture. That is not true meditation. Whatever work you do should be a meditation on God. When you partake of food, consider it as an offering to the Lord. You don't need to leave food for God. When you drink water, consider that as an offering to the Lord. Once we believe everything and every act is an offering to the Lord, we will never undertake any bad action or deed.

Dear Students: Whatever great lessons you have heard and seen, you may offer as a prayer to the Lord and undertake actions which justify your being God, thus bringing about the welfare of the world. With this hope, I bring this long discourse to a close by blessing you all.

--Sathya Sai Baba

Excerpted from the
Valedictory Discourse
Brindavan, June 3, 1990

What is devotion? It is not doing japa or sitting in meditation or doing bhajans. Essentially, it consists of two things: one, lack of interest in worldly things; two, love of God. Whatever you do out of love for God is devotion. You may engage yourselves in the ordinary duties of life. Only convert them into acts of worship by offering them to the Divine.

--Sathya Sai Baba

Sanathana Sarathi, January 1990

SAI SPEAKS OUT ABOUT THE BIRTHDAY/CONFERENCE

During the Sixty-Fifth Birthday Celebration, thousands of lakhs (100,000) of people will congregate. All should get ready to become protectors of the congregation through determination to serve, and by becoming soldiers to carry out any task. Younger generations should get inspired by your dedication and come forward to join and assist you.

During the Fifth World Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Organizations, opportunities will be given to new members who are not office bearers. The older members and officers of the Organization should exemplify the ideals to the new entrants. All can become true managers and leaders with determination to create favorable and comfortable opportunities for participation for all who congregate. Consider this task as your spiritual discipline (sadhana) and sacrifice (tapas).

You will come here [Prasanthi Nilayam] to do this. Remember that service is the highest form of spiritual discipline, and that it enables you to cross the ocean of life and death (samsara). In comparison to pilgrimage, penance, the study of scripture,

and meditation, nothing is more sacred than service [to mankind].

All of you are knowledgeable. Most of you are experts without the need of further advice from me.

You can overcome all the differences which are bound to happen when there is more than one head. Do not allow opportunities for such differences to occur. Do not search for defects in others. If you find defects, you should consider them to be a reflection of your own thinking. Instead, search for goodness in others and accept that goodness.

With great expectations that all of you will succeed in getting Swami's grace through your dedicated and successful service and will sanctify your lives by giving high ideals through your service, I am blessing all of you.

--Sathya Sai Baba

Excerpted from a discourse
given to office bearers
July 8, 1990

CHILDREN'S CORNER:

ON THE TRAIN WITH KRISHNA

One day little Krishna went on a train to see Sai Baba. Before he got there, he bowed toward Prasanthi Nilayam for the last mile.

When he reached Baba's feet, Baba said, "Krishna, I have an answer for you. You know the little things you do that get you into trouble? Well, tell your mother to make a chart and keep track of your good deeds, also noting when you get into trouble."

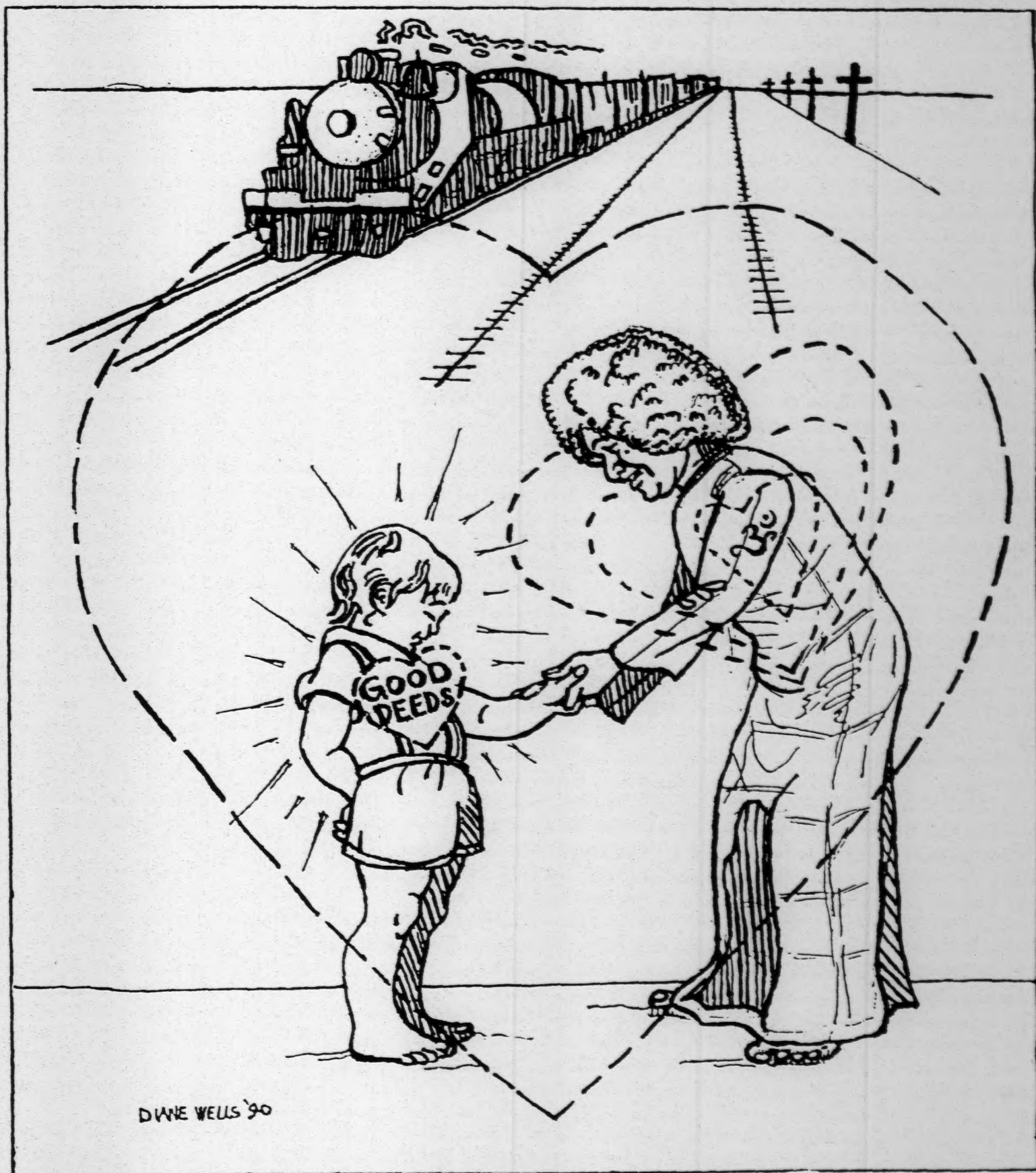
Baba then said, "Every week, if you don't get into trouble, you may have a small piece of butter for a reward." (This Krishna liked butter just like his namesake, Lord Krishna.)

Krishna went home and did what Baba said for him to do. Krishna went back to Baba when he was older. Baba said to him, "Krishna, you have learned a very good lesson." The lesson is that, if you put your attention on doing good deeds, you won't get into trouble, and you may get a reward. But, even if you don't get a reward, the good deed still lives in your heart, and, at the end, you will be happy.

--Hina Rapa Lipton

Age 10

Kailua, Hawaii



THE IDEAL FOR WOMEN: SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT FOR WOMEN

In the book, *Prasnothara Vahini*, Sathya Sai Baba answers questions posed to Him about women acquiring spiritual awareness or God wisdom, *Brahma Vidya*.

Q Baba, You speak of a strict spiritual regimen--should both men and women follow this?

Baba Of course! They are both flesh and blood, bone and marrow; they are both afflicted with illness. Each person who is afflicted with the cycle of birth and death and who suffers, is in need of the medicine. Whoever wants the treatment has to follow the regimen. Whoever neglects the regimen, whether man or woman, cannot get rid of the illness. They cannot afford to say that they are free from it. If someone has had initiation into the spiritual path of God-realization, but they are devoid of virtues like control of the senses (*sama*) and self-control (*dama*) they cannot save themselves, whether they are men or women.

Q But then, Swami, why do many scholars, learned in the *Sastras* (scriptures), declare that women have no right to acquire *Brahma Vidya*

(spiritual attainment)? What is the reason?

Baba There is no reason at all for declaring that women are not entitled to acquire spiritual knowledge.

Vishnumurthy taught Bhudevi the glory of the *Gita* (song of God, or God's word), Parameswara taught Parvathi the *Brahmatathwa* (formless Reality). Besides, Easwara initiated Parvathi into *yogasastra* (mental churning which brings success) and *mantrasastra* (chanting of holy sounds). The *Upanishad* mentions that Yagnavalkya taught Maitreyi this very same *Brahma Vidya*. These are well-known facts. Now you can judge for yourself, and draw your own conclusion whether women are entitled to spiritual training or not.

Q There are some who declare that women are not entitled to *Brahmacharya* (the path that leads to wisdom, celibacy) and *sanyasa* (renunciation). Is that correct? Do the *Vedas* prohibit that?

Baba The *Vedas* have two sections: *Karmakanda* and *Jnanakanda*. The *Karmakanda* is for beginners, for

the worldly, spiritually undeveloped, and the *Jnanakanda* is for the more advanced, the spiritually developed intelligence. There is no reference to men or women in connection with these. The beginners are worldly. How can they understand the immortal message that the *Jnanakanda* offers regarding the *Atma*, the indwelling God?

We also have mention of Gargi and Maitreyi, both women, who shone in the spiritual splendor of *Brahmacharya* and *sanyasa*. In the epic of the *Mahabharatha*, we have Subatha-yogini and other ideal women who are full of virtue.

Q Can women win *Brahmajnana* (realization of God), even while leading the householder's life?

Baba Why not? Madaalasa and others were able to get *Brahmajnana* while in the householder's stage of life. You must have heard of these women and how they attained the height of auspiciousness, *Brahmajnana* itself. Then again, do not the *Upanishads* declare that there were other women who were adepts in *Brahmajnana*?

Q Swami, are there any women who have attained *Brahmajnana* while in the householder's stage? And who attained it while in the *sanyasa* stage? Are there any who realized it while in the *vaanaprastha*

stage? Are there women who acquired spiritual wisdom in the *Brahmacharya* stage of life?

Baba Yes, there are women who have realized *Brahmajnana* while in any one of those stages. Choodaala attained it while a householder, Sulabhayogini won it while a renunciate, Maitreyi attained it while living a life of austerity, and Gargi acquired it on the path of wisdom or the *Brahmacharya* stage. There were other great women of Bharath (India) who have achieved this height. There are, even today, many who are of this great category. I simply mentioned four names because you came up with that question. So, do not in the least lose enthusiasm--there is no need for loss of heart.

Q When we have so many examples of women who have attained *Brahmajnana*, how is it that many argue against it? Why do they impose limitations on women?

Baba It is sheer absurdity to deny women the right to earn *Brahmajnana*. But in worldly matters, it is necessary that some limitations are respected by them. Limitations are imposed only for the sake of morals and the social well-being of the world. That is the reason for these limitations.

This does not mean any fundamental inferiority. Why even pun-

dits and men learned in the *Sastras* acquire their wisdom through the reverential homage they pay to the feminine deity, Saraswathi. The patron deities of wisdom, wealth, and knowledge--all three are feminine. They are Saraswathi, Lakshmi, and Parvathi.

Even in customary correspondence, when women are addressed, they are referred to as, "To.....who is equal to Lakshmi," etc. You always speak of Lakshmi and Narayana, Sita and Rama, Radha and Krishna, and so on. The feminine name comes first and then the masculine. From this you can gather how much reverence is paid to women.

Q Do You condemn this distinction between men and women as knowledge of a mixture of true and false (*Mithyajnana*), or do you value it as knowledge of the indwelling, all-pervasive God (*Atmajnana*)?

Baba My dear fellow! The *Atma* has no such distinction--it is eternally conscious, pure, and self-effulgent. So the distinction can only be a mixture of true and false or *Mithyajnana*, it can never be knowledge of the indwelling, all-pervasive God (*Atmajnana*). It is a distinction based on a condition, a limitation. The *Atma* is not masculine, feminine, or neuter. It is the human form that limits, deludes, and that wears the names.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, SWAMI

You responded to our pleas, and, on November 23, 1926, came into incarnation.

Now, in 1990, Your grateful children come together in world-wide celebration.

Our birthday gift to You, our transformation.

The gift You bring to us, Liberation.

--Joy Thomas
Cherry Valley, California

--Sathya Sai Baba

Adapted from *Prasnothara Vahini*

HE WHO SENT ME WILL COME AGAIN

And the story says there was a star in the sky, which fell with a new light, and this led a few Tibetans and others to the place where the Savior was born. This story is read and taken on trust by man, though stars do not fall or even slide down so suddenly. What the story signifies is this: There was a huge aura of splendor illumining the sky over the village when Christ was born. This meant that He who was to overcome the darkness of evil and ignorance had taken birth, that He would spread the light of love in the heart of man and the councils of humanity. Appearances of splendor or of other signs of the era that has dawned are natural when divine incarnations occur on earth.

The aura of light was a sign that the darkness would be destroyed. A master arrives in answer to man's prayer: Lead us from darkness unto light (Thamaso maa jyothir gamaya).

There is one point that I cannot but bring to your special notice. At the time when Jesus was merging in the Supreme Principle of Divinity, He communicated some news to His followers which has been interpreted in a variety of ways by commentators and those who relish the piling of writings on writings and meaning upon meaning, until it all swells up into a huge mess. The statement itself has been manipulated and tangled into a conundrum.

The statement is simple: "He who sent me among you will come again," and He pointed to a lamb. The lamb is merely a symbol, a sign, standing for its voice: "baa baa;" the announcement was of the advent of Baba. "His name will be Truth," Christ declared. Sathya means Truth. "He will wear a robe of red, a blood-red robe." [Here Baba pointed to the robe He was wearing.] "He will be short, with a crown [of hair]." The lamb is the sign and symbol of love. Christ did not declare that He would come again; He said, "He who sent me will come again." That baa baa is this Baba.

--Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume VIII
A discourse, December 25, 1972

IF HUMANITY BAKED A BIRTHDAY CAKE FOR GOD



If humanity baked a birthday cake for God, the Grand Canyon would serve as the mixing bowl and the Little Dipper as the stirring utensil; the blossoming desert with its tenacious heat, the oven; and the great purple range of the Rocky Mountains, the cooling rack. Fresh snow from the sacred Himalayas would slightly melt over the top of the cake as frosting, and the breath of holy angels would inscribe in their finest cursive, "Happy Birthday, Dear Lord." The brilliant tail of a comet

would hover over sixty-five giant redwood candles and light them simultaneously, sending sparks far into the unknown regions of the galaxies. The hands of time would reverently serve the Lord and, with the mysterious finger of fate, He would taste His birthday cake, and the world would smile. And even with the cake made this way, it would not touch upon His grandeur. His birthday is our birthday--we are all One.

--Joy Ziegler
Gilbert, Arizona

....continued from page 7

The feeling of *Atma* is the real "I." When the "I" is associated with the mind, it becomes *ahamkara* or ego. When the "I" is associated with the *Atma*, it becomes one with *ananda* or bliss. Then one sees everything as the same. Truth is one, but it is called by various names. If you can experience unity in this diversity, you have experienced *Atma*, God who dwells in all hearts.

CHANGE THE WORLD

Embodiments of Divine Love: Everything undergoes change. Changes are occurring from moment to moment. The mind is responsible for these changes. The root cause of the entire world is the formation of thought (*sankalpa* and *vikalpa*). The mind is always fickle, it is not steady at all. That is its very nature. Once you merge the mind with Divinity, the mind will not have a separate existence. Different people carry on different *sadhanas* (spiritual practices). All these *sadhanas* are a type of delusion. All these *sadhanas* are undertaken to satisfy the mind. All *sadhanas* performed today are done through the mind. All of them are associated with the mind, and are impermanent and transitory. There is no difference between *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) and *dhyana* (meditation), they are not two different things.

There is no difference between meditation, the meditator, and the object meditated upon. There is only one thing which exists.

When you want to undertake spiritual discipline, first establish the feeling of *Atma* in your heart, only then will the practice become fruitful. Without having firm faith in the *Atma*, whatever *sadhanas* are performed through the mind are fruitless and useless. Like clouds which are formed because of the rays of the sun falling on the water, these very clouds cover the very same sun. Similarly, those thoughts which have come from the *Atma*, are like the clouds covering the *Atma* itself. It is the mind which hides the *Atma*. Destroy the mind, what remains is the *Atma*. Then what is the mind? Mind is a conglomeration of delusions. Remove all delusions, and what remains is *Atma*.

Today spiritual aspirants call themselves *sadhakas* or devotees, but their desires and thoughts are growing day by day. How can one reach the state of *Atma*? It is not possible all at once, but gradually we should eliminate our self-interest and selfishness. It is selfishness which is responsible for the perversities in mankind.

We should make an effort to develop broad-mindedness in the world. In

order to bring about change in the world, various efforts must be made. How can one bring about change in the world without bringing about change in mankind? If you want to change the world, mankind must change first. You have to remove evil tendencies and develop good thoughts. When the individual is good, the society will be good. When the society is good, the nation will be good.

Embodiments of Divine Love: We have to sanctify our individuality by filling ourselves with good thoughts. One may study and attain an education, one may occupy a high position, one may earn a great deal of money or gain a reputation, but are any of these permanent? Without having a vision of your real Self, what is the use of knowing anything else? Man is traversing millions of miles into outer space, but he has not been able to penetrate even half an inch within himself. The journey we have to undertake is to turn the mind inward. As long as mind goes outside, what you see is the external world; as long as there is the external world, you will be full of joys and sorrows. There is no need for going toward the external world. In deep sleep you have no world. When there is no world, there is no mind. When there is no mind, there is no joy or sorrow. We have controlled our joys and sorrows by removing the mind when we are in the deep sleep state. If you

really want to enjoy bliss in life, control the mind. Direct your mind toward God. Make the mind move in that direction. That is real spiritual discipline. All other types of meditation and spiritual discipline are a waste of time.

In the very first instance, you have to transform your mind. Without improvement in the mind, any change in mankind is worthless. Without a change in quality, a change in clothes will not do much. Therefore, it is important for us to change our quality today. There is a great need for total transformation from bad to good qualities. We have to transform our thoughts into divine thoughts. This is the real message.

GURUS / PRECEPTORS

Guru Purnima refers to the full moon. There are sixteen aspects or phases of the moon, but on *Guru Purnima* the moon will be full. There are also sixteen aspects of the mind, which are a reflection of the moon. There are six enemies: desire, anger, greed, jealousy, pride, and attachment. Of these six bad qualities, each of them has aspects of two of the negative *gunas* or qualities, *ta-moguna* and *rajoguna*, all of which add up to eight. In addition to this, there are eight types of pride. They are: pride of physical strength, birth, scholarship, wealth, penance, beauty,

youth, and power or position. Mankind has these undesirable traits. Once we free ourselves from these sixteen qualities, then we become complete human beings, endowed with fullness and perfection. This state of being is called *purṇima*. Only the one who brings us to that state of fullness and perfection can be called a true preceptor, or *guru*.

When we speak of the *guru* or preceptor, we mean the one who has transcended these sixteen qualities. Unfortunately, today the preceptors have many of these qualities. The disciples seem to be much better than the preceptors. The disciples are undertaking sacrifices while the preceptors are acquiring wealth and possessions. That is why, in today's world, it is difficult to say who is a preceptor and who is a disciple.

People are somewhat naive today. Whenever anyone sees an elderly person or one who seems to be wise, they want to be initiated by that *guru* and to be given a *mantra* to chant. What is a *mantra*? If you know your own true nature, then that becomes a *mantra*. You have your real *mantra* within you. You are the very form of *mantra*, *yantra*, and *tantra*. Your inhaling and exhaling is the real *mantra*, *So-ham*, *So-ham*. [Baba demonstrated how *So-ham* should be chanted with each incoming and outgoing breath.] As you breathe, the *So-ham mantra* is

constantly going on. The *mantra* repeats, "I am That, That I am, I am That, That I am." Your physical body is the *yantra* or machine. What is the *tantra*? Your heart is the *tantra*. When you are the combination of *mantra*, *yantra*, and *tantra*--why are you approaching another person for initiation? What an ignorant and weak person you are! How can *mantras* from another person save you? It is impossible, impossible, impossible! No one else can save you.

Your *guru* is God. He alone has transcended all qualities. He is the One who does not have a form. He alone can remove the darkness of ignorance and confer the light of knowledge on you. It would be great ignorance to approach the wrong person, accept a *mantra*, and become further bound by this. How can a person, who is himself in bondage, free you from your delusions? If he is a beggar and starving, how can he free you? Therefore, do not go in search of *gurus*. Confirm and strengthen your feeling of *Atma*. Aspire to have the bliss of the *Atma*. Develop a feeling that you are the *Atma*. That is the real message. The moment you know who you really are, the mind disappears and becomes the true *guru*. For this *guru* there is no particular time, circumstance, or conditions. For a person who has worldly pursuits in mind, there are different times like morning, noon, and night. This bondage

of time is only for a human with a mind. Transcend the mind, then everything becomes the same. Only when we have confidence of the Self can we attain that state.

TRUE GURU IS THE SELF

Embodiments of Divine Love: We consider worship of *gurus* an important part of *Guru Purnima*. During *Guru Purnima*, there is a great deal of income for the so-called *gurus*. Being a true *guru* is a responsibility, and there is no monetary reward. They never aspire for money. Only a lowly type will look for income. The genuine *guru* recognizes that there is only one *guru*, God, who is the true Mother, Father, Brother, Friend, and Everything.

We have to observe some rules and regulations when undertaking *sadhana*, or spiritual discipline. For doing *sadhana*, you need not resort to *gurus*. Develop the true *guru* which is within you. What can a *guru* do for the person who has no such goal? It is a delusion to think that you can reach the goal with the help of a *guru*. You can reach the goal only through your own effort, self-confidence, and self-will.

For example, you have flowers, a needle, and thread. Can these become a garland by themselves? No.

Someone is needed to make the garland. There is a container, oil, and a wick. Can the lamp light by itself? No. There is a need for someone to light it. There are gold and diamonds. Can they become jewelry by themselves? No. There is a need for someone who can fashion them. Even though you may have lofty and divine thoughts, it is only God who can bring them together and confer bliss.

While you are discharging your duties, do *sadhana* by surrendering everything to God. God will give you all the necessary guidance. Not only does He teach you, but He will give you the real vision as well. When we talk of getting a vision of a person, the person does not suddenly appear from somewhere. When God is found everywhere, where does He have to go, where does He have to come from? God's hands, feet, eyes, and ears are everywhere.

In fact you are God. It is because of the association with the body, mind, senses, and intellect, that you are forgetting your real Self. Therefore, you are deluded. You think that the external world is real.

We are bound by our own body. We are bound by our own mind. Once we recognize the true nature of our own body and mind, we become what we really are--that is, EVERYTHING.

THINK OF THE LORD

Embodiments of Divine Love: There is one *mantra* you have to chant continuously. That is, *Aham Brahmasmi, Aham Brahmasmi Aham Brahmasmi, I am Brahma, I am God*. Once you do this, you will truly become *Brahma* itself. But, merely declaring to yourself that you are *Brahma* is not enough. You have to know that you are declaring the truth, and then conduct yourself in the light of this knowledge.

Truly speaking, One alone exists. We have to love that One with all our hearts. It is love that links everything together. Without love, we cannot achieve anything. If we want to attain love, we can reach it only through love. Make yourself distant from your own mind. Wherever you are, you must remember that the mind and the body are the instruments which are performing. In every action that we perform, we have to say to ourselves, "I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am not the external senses, I am not the intellect, nor am I the *anthahkarana* (inner senses)." We should consider all these as gifts from God. We have to put them to proper use. How can we sanctify them? Everything becomes sanctified when it is offered to God.

We need not wait for a whole year,

until *Guru Purnima* day. From moment to moment we need to transform our mind into fullness. We have to develop a broad, universal outlook, and remove all narrow feelings within ourselves. In everything that we do, we have to develop divine awareness. This is true spiritual discipline. Without divine awareness, you go on turning the *ja-pamala* (prayer beads) and sit for meditation, but this will get you nowhere.

What is *sakshatkara*? When you think of the Lord at all times and in all places--that is real *sakshatkara*. The true form of *sakshatkara* is always thinking of yourself as *Atma*. Realizing your true Self is self-realization. There are two ways to perceive the self: one relates to the body, and the other relates to the *Atma*. This physical body is impermanent, while the *Atma* alone is permanent. We are not the body. We get a body because of the attachments which we have and the actions which we do. This is *swabhaava*. *Swa* refers to the *Atma* and *bhaava* to nature. You may consider the *Atma* to be your real nature, unless you consider yourself to be a human body.

ANIMAL TRAITS

Committing mistakes, committing sins, harming others--these are the nature of animals, not of human

beings. It is sheer ignorance to say that you are a human being, therefore you make mistakes. Mankind should not commit mistakes, knowingly or unknowingly. If mistakes are made, one should repent and take care that those mistakes are not repeated.

Today we are correctly called animals and not human beings. An animal is that which has always externalized its vision. Man should internalize his vision. If one continues defending himself, one will never save himself from a fall. Being human, man has to sanctify his own mind, make it sacred. Develop the feeling of *Atma*. You have to firmly believe that whatever you do is done with the help of the *Atma* alone. Chant the name of the Lord wherever you go. After having made the tongue sacred, you should not use it to criticize others, to say harsh words, or to insult others.

Do you know who searches for faults in others? Dogs search for shoes, and wicked people search for faults in others. You are not a dog. You are a member of the human race. You should not resort to such behavior. Let others have their defects, and do not bother about them. We can become the very embodiment of Divinity if we develop sacred thoughts.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Embodiments of Divine Love: You have to serve all. It is not sufficient to worship one photograph or one particular idol, we have to worship the entire universe. We have to firmly believe that the *Atma* resides in everyone. This belief is not gained in an instant. We have to practice the feeling in order for it to be firmly established in us. How much practice have we done to learn things like walking, talking, and eating? Only by practice can you get the feeling of *Atma* and thereby obtain peace of mind. What a lot of effort is put into obtaining a B.A., B.S., or an M.A. degree! If you want to get a degree, a great deal of effort is required. We should be willing to make the same effort in order to feel that we are the embodiments of the *Atma*.

We should never use demeaning descriptions of ourselves like: I am a mean person; I am a weak person; I am a sinner, etc. All these are types of weaknesses. You should never doubt your capacity to undertake a particular task. If you have firm faith in yourself, you can do anything. That is why *Vedanta* tells us that a person with weak feelings can never realize *Atma*. If you go on telling yourself that you do not have a particular attribute or skill, then that will psychologically affect you in a negative way. Develop that kind of

courageous feeling that you can accomplish many things, and then you will be able to do them. You have to develop this kind of courage and confidence day after day.

We make efforts to acquire trivial pleasures. How long will the trivial pleasure last? We are not making any effort to develop confidence in the Self, the *Atma*. The real devotee is someone who makes an effort in that direction. He is really the fortunate one. He deserves to attain what we consider to be unattainable.

You may enjoy the world, but you should consider everything a gift from God. We should live our lives in such

a manner, believing that everything is for the glory of the Lord and for praising the Lord. You should offer your life only to the Lord. God has given us this life, so let us offer it only to Him.

CHARITY & SACRIFICE

People perform different types of charity. There once was a good and pious lady in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India. Within her means, she used to undertake charity. Whenever she came across a group of people, she would walk humbly, with her head down. All her friends used to admonish her, "Mother, you do so



Wisdom can dawn only when a devotee's thoughts, words, and deeds are dedicated to God. God loves those who love their fellow beings.

--Sathya Sai Baba
Excerpted from a letter by Baba

much charity; nobody does as much as you. You should walk with your head held high because you do so much for others." She used to reply, "Child, God gives to me with a thousand hands. I am giving to others with only one hand. It is with a sense of shame that one gives with only one hand. So many hands come forward for receiving, but not one hand comes forward when it is time to give." She further told her people that this was not a good state of affairs in society, and that we should develop a sacrificing nature.

It is said in the *Vedas* that through sacrifice, through *thyaga* alone, that man can attain immortality--not through wealth or progeny. One should use one's body for helping others. Use your body for the welfare of others, and the mind for thinking good thoughts. Use your money for building educational institutes, hospitals, and supporting the poor. That is living a true life. Because we have money, we become selfish. What is the use? We are not born for this. Therefore, perform righteous activities and undertake sacrifices.

Whatever we undertake, we should do it with a divine, sacred feeling. There is no *sadhana* greater than this. Do not undertake penance for the sake of your own selfishness. Doing penance for your own benefit is a sin. When you work for others, even your spiritual discipline helps them. We should live life with a feeling of Divinity. But, if we live with the feeling of, "just me and my family," and do not care what happens to the rest of society, then we are living nothing but a type of animal life. We should think, not only of ourselves and our families, but also of society. For without society, where is the family? And, without family, where are you? We are all dependent on society. We should always aspire for the well-being of all the people in the world. This is the type of big-hearted, universal vision that one must develop. We can experience Divinity only with that kind of broad, expansive feeling. When we think of the Lord and chant His name, we sanctify all of our actions.

--Sathya Sai Baba
Guru Purnima July 7, 1990

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One of the Sai Organization's Regional Travel Coordinators has discovered an important phone number: (202) 647-5225. This is the number of the Citizens' Emergency Center, a division of the U.S. State Department, which will, if an emergency exists, attempt to locate an American traveling overseas and get a message to him or her. They will also act as a liaison between American citizens abroad and their families in the United States.

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Sathya Sai Service Opportunities



VOL. 6, No. 1

Fall 1990

REACHING OUT TO CHILDREN IN NEED

An Afternoon Away from the Shelter

Service for the San Francisco Sai Center is literally child's play. One Sunday afternoon a month, members take children from a battered women's shelter out on excursions to the zoo, museums, the planetarium, the aquarium, and parks.

As they play with the children on the swings, take them through the monkey house, and ride along with them on the merry-go-rounds, they see transformations taking place—sad children becoming gleeful, aggressive children becoming gentle, withdrawn children becoming boisterous.

By the end of the day, they say, they're as happy—and exhausted—as the children themselves.

"It opens my heart every time," says one of the project's coordinators. "You know abstractly that God is in everyone, but you don't always see it—at least, I know I don't. But in these children, it's so easy to see God.

"We're gaining much more than we give," she says.

The project began in June 1989, when members of the Center read in the newspaper about a San Francisco home for battered women and their children called La Casa de las Madres (literally, House of the Mothers). The oldest such shelter in the city, it offers

temporary refuge to mothers (and their children), generally low-income, who are fleeing domestic violence.

Sai Center members called the shelter to offer to take the children and mothers on outings. It turned out that the best day for Sai volunteers, Sunday, was also the best day for the shelter, since that was when most staff members were off and the mothers and children had nothing to do.

Since then, about eight volunteers, including some from East Bay Sai Centers, have arrived at the shelter on Sundays at 12:30 to pick up the children, who usually number from 8 to 18 and range in age from 2 to 13. About a third of the children are accompanied by their mothers. "The philosophy is to give mothers who want a break a break and those who want an outing an outing," says an Oakland Sai Center member, a coordinator of the project.

The excursions, which end at about 5 P.M., always include a playground stop and a meal—"We're not talking gourmet food—they love McDonald's" says a volunteer. Center members cover the minimal expenses out of their own pockets.

For many of the children, it's a rare treat in a rocky life. "They've been ripped away from their father and the life they're used to. That trauma is magnified by living in a house with 40 other people, which is never easy," says a volunteer. "Many children go into their shells and revert to babies."

But the few hours with starfish, seesaws, and french fries puts the light back in their eyes. One volunteer remembers a little 3-year-old boy who changed dramatically in 3 weeks: "The first time, he was extraordinarily shy and withdrawn, but by the end of that

(continued on page 2)



"God is the source of all love; love God; love the world as the vesture of God—no more, no less. Through love, you can merge in the Ocean of Love. Love cures pettiness, hate, and grief. Love loosens bonds; it saves man from the torment of birth and death. Love binds all hearts in a silken symphony. Seen through the eyes of love, all beings are beautiful, all deeds are dedicated, all thoughts are innocent. The world is one vast kingdom."

—Sathya Sai Baba, *Sanathana Sarathi*, July 1985, back cover

trip, he was starting to come out of his shell. On the second trip, he was quite fearful of a slide on the playground. We helped him down it, and he became very talkative. He began blossoming. By the third trip, he was quite boisterous. He had much more confidence and was running around with the other boys."

Another volunteer, a police captain, remembers seeing a change in a little boy at the petting section of the aquarium. "He was real rough with the starfish, and I took him aside and spoke to him about twenty minutes, explaining that starfish are a living part of the animal kingdom and shouldn't be hurt. Afterwards he was much, much gentler. I later found out that the week before, the boy's father had pulled a gun on his mother and had slugged the boy on the head with it." That, he said, helped explain the boy's aggressive behavior.

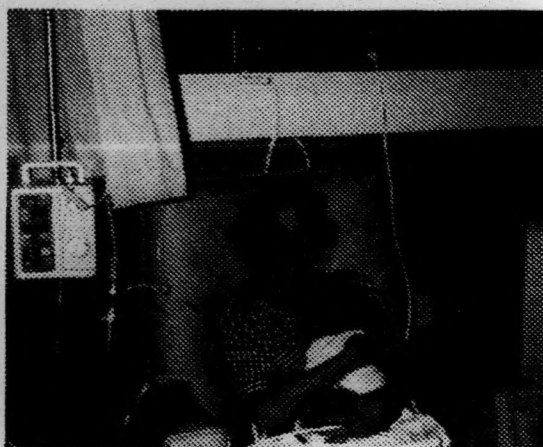
The expeditions are not always free of worries—volunteers report chasing anxiously after toddlers disappearing down the halls of darkened aquariums and dealing with children who come without diapers but turn out to be not so potty-trained. "I've called on Baba a lot for assistance in keeping the children together," says one volunteer, with a laugh.

But Center members say those problems matter little compared to the joy they receive from the children. "We come there optimistic and they pick it up and give it back to us," says a volunteer.

About half of the volunteers have no children, and the others have only grown ones. They say that the project fills a space in their life: "It gives me a chance to grandmother them," says one.

The Sai Center has been expanding its work with the shelter: At Christmas, volunteers brought some presents and Christmas dinner for the families that had moved to new homes, and at Easter, they bought Easter baskets for the children and corsages for the mothers.

"If we can help the children, that's to the good," says a volunteer. "But I've become much more aware of Baba's teaching that service is more for yourself—I feel that strongly with these children. There's a sense of joy and a sense of happiness, and I really look forward to doing it again." —Staff



"The Love of a Thousand Mothers"

In the Parkland Hospital in Dallas, TX, sick children wait for someone to come see them. A little girl takes faltering steps, trying to walk alone. A small boy plays with a construction toy, attempting to entertain himself. And babies lie in their cribs, crying to be held.

The children here, who range in age from 3 months to 8 years, are rarely visited by their families. Either because of drugs or language barriers or poverty, most of the parents find it too difficult to give these youngsters the love they so desperately need.

But whatever the reason for their neglect, today some of these tiny patients will be visited by people who care. A group of adults from the Dallas Sai Center is coming to give the children some personal attention, relieving the overworked nurses, who will then be free to devote their time to medical tasks.

The service project began in 1989, when one of the Center members had a desire to care for infants. Now every few weeks, volunteers from the Center regularly go to the hospital. Before the Sunday visit, the coordinator calls the head nurse, who directs the devotees to children who need special attention that week. Center members reach the hospital around lunchtime, and each spends the afternoon with one or two little patients.

When the devotees arrive, their first job is to see that the children eat lunch. Most of the volunteers find babies to love and are soon busy bottle-feeding them formula. The few who stay with the older children help them as they try to feed themselves.

After lunch, volunteers matched with infants play with them, hold them, and hug them. The effect of this attention is dramatic. Babies who, just 20 minutes ago, were crying incessantly start to smile and laugh and make gurgling sounds.

Some of the devotees sing songs like "I Am the Sun" and "God's Love Is Wonderful" to the babies. The little ones move their hands to the music and eventually fall asleep. Other Sai volunteers pet the infants and rock them until they too drift off.

"You would just love the babies," says a Center member. "They like being held. You can see it in their smiles and the way they snuggle up to you. They sense they're protected."

Devotees play with the older children in the hospital's two nurseries, which have dolls, blocks, and musical toys. The adults also read children's books found there to the youngsters and tell them stories.

In relating to the children, the Sai volunteers proceed very cautiously, watching the reactions of the youngsters and responding accordingly. Some of the children are afraid of strangers. "Their expression," a devotee reports, "clearly says, What are you going to do to me?"—as if they expect an adult to give them a needle. Other youngsters are really active. Their immediate reaction, she says, is let's play. And still others come up and hug the adults or check them out.

While the hospital supplies the children with toys, the Sai volunteers provide what they need most—love. To one volunteer, that means "having someone to hold you and care for you." To another, it is giving the children "undivided attention to the extent that they want it." And she adds, "We really understand that God is working through us."

Songs, prayer, preparation of mind, and love in the heart are all you need for this service. It is not hard to love the infant who wraps her tiny fingers tightly around yours and trustingly falls asleep in caring arms such as she has never known. You cannot change the circumstances that led to her neglect. You can only love. And love sometimes works wonders. —Staff

Someone to Look Up To

I opened the door to greet a young man who, at age 9, had been the first child assigned to me in my work as a volunteer "mentor." Until he was 11, Sal and I had had a special one-to-one relationship in which I served as his adult friend, guide, and example. Then he moved out of my area in New York City, and we lost contact.

Seven years later, Sal had gone to a great deal of trouble to touch base with me. Now face-to-face once more, we began to discuss mentoring. During this long meeting and during others in the days that followed, we summed up much of what mentoring means and what Swami teaches about service.

Saulito, as I called him, remembered everything we had done together, including the names of my office staff, my father's instructions to him on how to shake hands, the museums, the plays, the country visits, and the concerts. "How is your friend with the Afro and the orange robe?" he asked. "I don't

remember His name." But Sal did remember the many aspects of a positive new world for him. This was fresh evidence of Swami's reminder to give as well as you can, as lovingly as you can, and leave the results to Him.

Saulito told me that in the last 7 years, he greatly missed two things: "There was no one around to give me a push," he said, "and there was no one I could look up to." Since Sal was about to enter the Marine Corps, I told him that he had just resolved this problem because in the Marines he would be continually pushed and he would always have someone to look up to—if only a drill sergeant.

The greatest tragedy in this country today is the ever more serious devaluation of young lives, that is, the increase in children without hope, love, and guidance. If each of us mentored one child and improved one life, what a major change would take place in this country! What an opportunity to serve!

It has been said that there is only one way to teach anything to anyone—by

setting a good example. That is the heart of mentoring and the heart of Swami's teachings. "My life is My message," He says. The greatest service we can ever do is to understand His message and to continually improve our behavior to reflect His teachings.

Mentoring programs are increasing rapidly throughout the United States. School, business, and governmental groups as well as local chapters of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America can provide information about mentoring. I will be happy to talk to anyone who wants to know more about this opportunity, and I am hereby suggesting that mentoring be made a national Service project. Please consider this opportunity seriously.

Swami spends 75 percent of His time with children. Sai is love, and so He gives love. Sai is joy, and so He gives joy. Find the time to share the blessings of His love and joy with a child in need.

—Hal Honig

National Service Co-coordinator

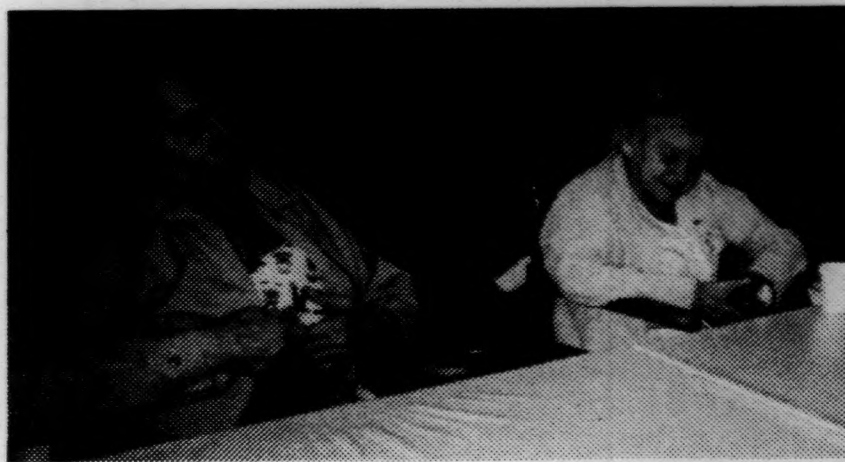
REACHING OUT TO THE ELDERLY

Service of the Heart

"Is this for me?" Jerome asks as he clutches the plush fabric heart close to his chest. He recognizes the heart shape even though his eyes have been closed in blindness for the past 40 years. His fingers find satisfaction in touching the soft heart while he sits in his chair at the Franklin Nursing Home in Flushing, NY.

The heart is a gift from the Flushing Sai Center. On this third Sunday in April, some of us from the Center are here for our monthly visit. As we talk with the residents of the home and give out stuffed hearts, it is sometimes difficult to decipher who is receiving more bliss, they or we.

Goldie, another resident, is always laughing. Whether we understand everything she says is not important. At the moment, she is smiling at us, holding her stuffed heart, squeezing it with her fingers, and evidently getting much tactile pleasure from this. I, in turn, am



most happy just watching her and listening to her infectious laugh.

One of our Center members created the pattern for the hearts. She suggested that the back be one piece and the front be a patchwork of different fabrics, with bright blues, reds, and pinks for a stimulating effect.

The hearts were simple to make. We used strips of bought fabric and remnants of old saris. After we cut and sewed the material, we stuffed the hearts to give them the soft feel.

Now, as I look around the home, I

see our spiritual practice of love at work. Most of the infirmed are sitting, not quite upright, in wheelchairs, holding tightly to their new gift. Some smile, others nod, and some clutch the soft heart and bring it to their face in a

way that takes my breath away. The world of love has come to them and through them to me.

What is it that Sai Baba says?

"Love is God; live in love. . . . He can be known and realized, reached and won, only through love. You can see the moon only with the help of moonlight. You can see God only through the rays of love."

—Beatrice Flaig
Woodside, NY

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SERVICE TO THE EARTH

"Man secures all the things needed for living from the Earth. Hence, the Earth must be regarded as a manifestation of God."—Sathya Sai Baba

A Center member reaches down to pick up a plastic six-pack holder from the bare soil. Bal Vikas children, under parental supervision, gather Styrofoam pellets near the edge of a lake. A devotee removes a disposable diaper from the ground.

These and other members of the Brookline (Boston), MA, Sai Center consider such seemingly insignificant acts a way of showing they care about the Earth. "Picking up trash is like ministering, nurturing, the Earth," says a Center member. "Healing the Earth—that's what it is."

Scientific evidence indicates that trash removal can have a dramatic impact on the environment. Eliminating one six-pack holder may save a bird from strangulation. Without human intervention, the holder could also litter the ground for years to come.

"We have to have a sense of responsibility for this Earth," says a devotee. "It's a small planet, and we're all in this together. Each of us has to take care of our environment because if we don't, all of us suffer."

To do their part, the Brookline Sai Center has started an environmental service program that includes a series of community cleanups. Since the program began in April, the devotees have completed two such projects in the Boston vicinity—Mystic Lakes Park and World's End Beach. Another cleanup is scheduled for the end of September.

"We take some of the areas that have been neglected and abused," says one of the project's coordinators, "and try to pick up the trash and make a difference." By *difference*, she means not only less-littered grounds but a change in the consciousness of those who use them. "If people see trash there," she says, "they're more likely to throw trash there."

The park cleanup took place on a Sunday morning in May with a group of 12 committed Center members. Armed with work gloves and lawn and leaf bags, the volunteers moved out in

different directions, silently repeating the name of the Lord as they picked up the trash. Some carried two bags so they could put recyclables in one and the remaining trash in the other. After 3 hours, the tired devotees went home, leaving behind in a designated spot about 20 bags of garbage, which the Middlesex County parks department had agreed to haul away.

"I feel pain when I see trash around," says a Sai volunteer. "The Earth is in pain. What the project has done for me is to make me open up to that pain." And this increased awareness, he says, has motivated him to want to do more to help the Earth.

The project has also reinforced the Center's efforts to encourage household environmental measures. "For all of us," says a coordinator of the project, "it made us more conscious of how much trash we produce. It made us want to make more of an effort to produce less trash in our own home."

In April, before the cleanups began, the Center had had a study circle that focused primarily on home conservation, recycling, and biodegradable products and included sharing of literature and ideas on these topics. In the fall, the Center plans to have another meeting to discuss their efforts.

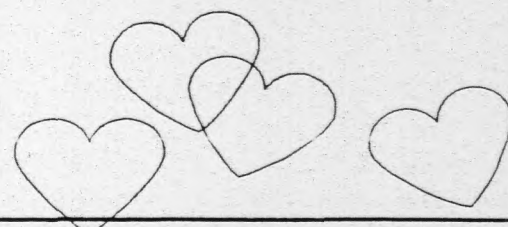
Since the initial study circle, one man from the Center no longer leaves the water on when he shaves or brushes his teeth. And a couple now put water-filled plastic containers in their toilet tank so they can save almost a gallon of water every time they flush.

"By reducing the use of resources, we are practicing nonviolence," says a Center member. "If we use fewer plastics, we're cutting down on our petroleum usage, and we're not sucking the blood out of the Earth. If we use recyclable paper, we are protecting the Earth."

Helping the Earth, he believes, produces an expansion in consciousness. "By extending love," he says, "we feel a sense of kinship. So by doing something nice for the Earth, we feel more connected to the Earth."

For information and literature on environmental service, send a stamped self-addressed envelope to Sirojini Cooppan, 101 Elmwood Road, Wellesley, MA 02181.

THE ELDERLY *continued*



I Love You Gerda

It is Wednesday, 12:15 P.M., and Gerda is lying in her bed. She has no choice, since she is 93 years old and paralyzed. She cannot walk and speaks with great difficulty.

When I awaken her, her blue eyes light up with happiness. My weekly visit is a joy to me and to Gerda, who receives no visitors except on rare occasions when a niece flies in from a distant state. I attempt small talk and struggle to understand her responses. The effort to understand is always worthwhile because I care what she thinks and she knows it.

Once, when I asked her what was the most important thing she had learned in her long life, she answered with one word: *patience*. She has been in pain with a bed sore for a long time but doesn't complain. Instead of feeling sorry for herself, she prays to God to take her every day and waits unafraid. She told me that Sai Baba has helped her with the pain.

Her lunch comes, and I serve it to her. Her gratitude touches my heart, but I explain that it is I who am grateful for the chance to help, for it is God serving God. Gerda loves me and I love Gerda.

Many are like Gerda—sick and lonely and waiting. God is waiting too. Four words demand action:

Love All, Serve All!

—A Florida Devotee

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