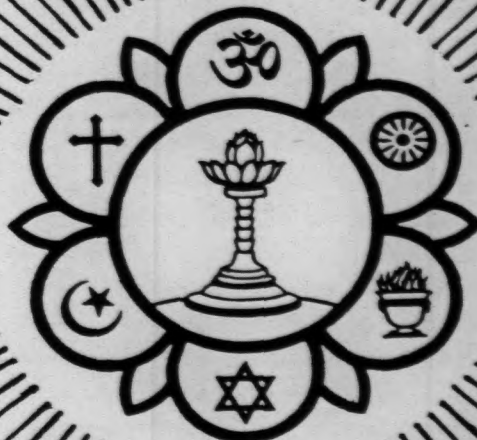




SATHYA SAI Newsletter

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SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER

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

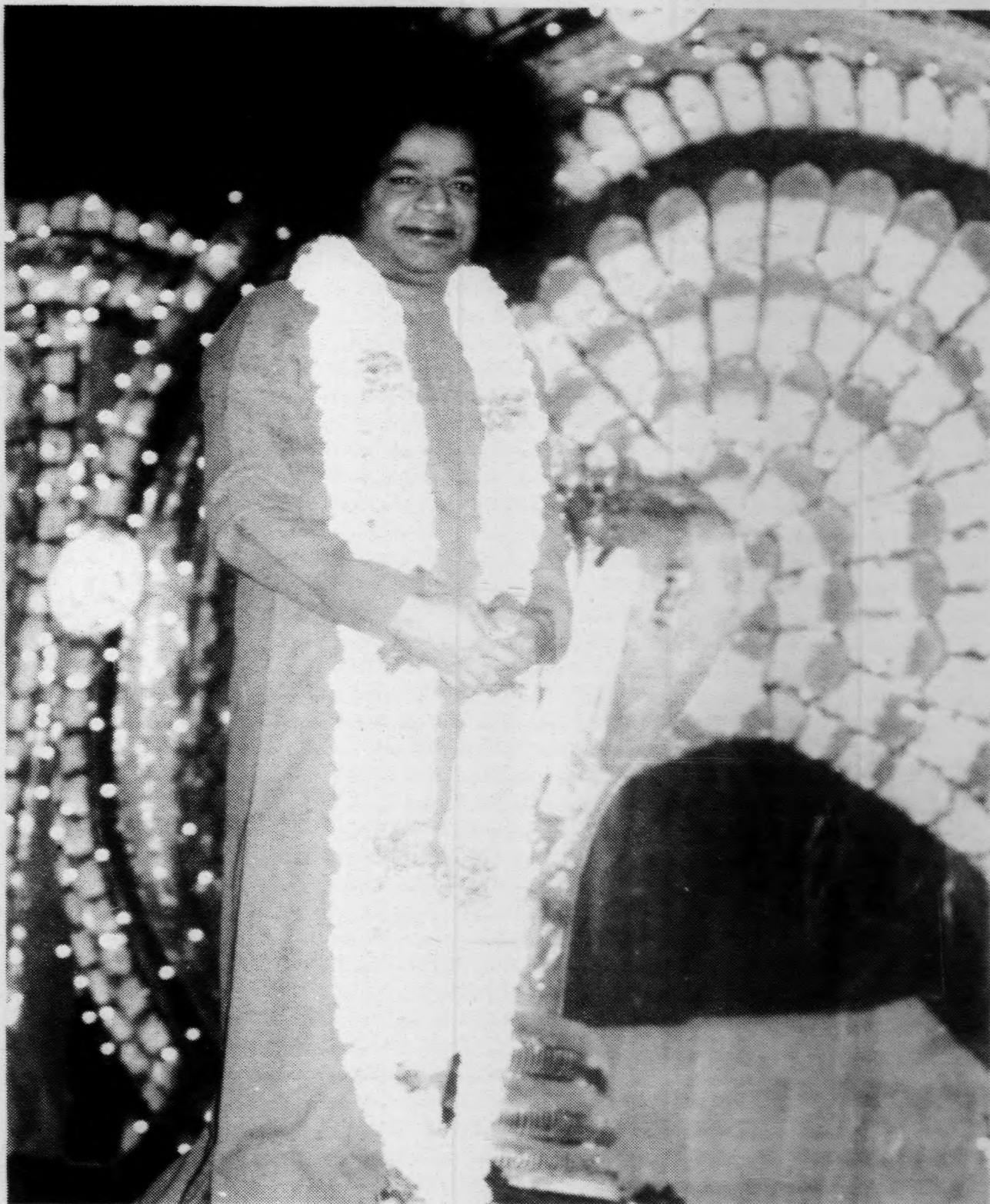
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**The Sarva Dharma symbol, the logo of the Sri Sathya Sai Organization,
represents the unity of all religions.**

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Devotion should manifest itself in every action. Everything done out of love for God and as an offering to God becomes devotion. The devotee is filled with love and shares that love with all others. Different forms of worship are only means to cultivate devotion. But the goal of all of them is to experience Oneness with the Divine.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Sanathana Sarathi, April 1988, p. 107

Practicing Devotion

The Revelation

You are engaged in discovering solutions to problems and arguments to overpower doubts, means to prevent new problems and to prevent more doubts from arising. Such exercises, which all conferences relish, cannot help successful navigation across the sea of spiritual endeavor. These are but frail contingencies, discussions, resolutions, regulations and speeches. The world is much too stormy and agitated to be kept quiet by these. This is the time for cool, calm contemplation, not quick, passionate speculations and hasty decisions.

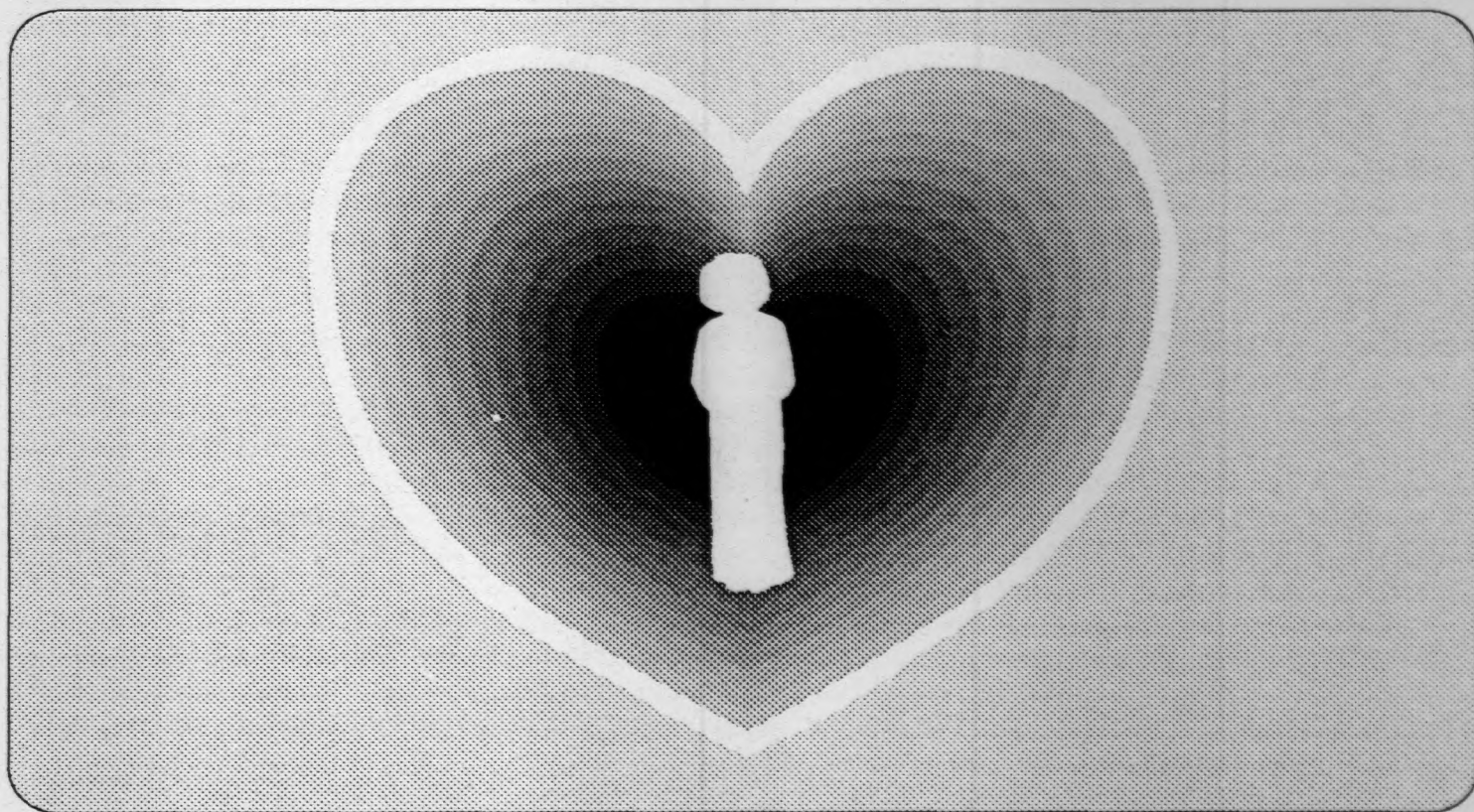
You need to contemplate once again on the eternal lessons laid down by the sages of India's past, lessons that have been neglected and cynically forgotten in recent years. The suggestions and solutions that have come out of the discussions are all good, as far as they go. But how can a person who cannot swim, teach others the art? How can one whose granary is empty, pour out in charity? Acquire the wealth of devotion, fortitude and peace before venturing to advise others how to acquire them. Bharath (India) has suffered slights and disregard as a result of a spate of teachers who have not cared to practice what they teach. I know you have the enthusiasm to carry my message among the people of this country and other countries. Let me remind you that the best and the only successful way in which you can do it is to translate the message into your own lives. Your thoughts, words and deeds must be saturated with the message. Then it will spread

effortlessly and efficiently, and the face of the world will be transformed.

The Presidents, Vice-Presidents and Secretaries of the Sathya Sai Organization from all over the world have come. You are Officers of the Sai Army. How can you lead soldiers into the fray when you are not aware of the intricacies of warfare, when you are, yourselves, inefficient instruments? You can attempt to lead others only after practicing the disciplines to perfection. This is true of all fields of human activity. *Ananda* (bliss) and *prasanthi* (the highest peace) have to be acquired first by you, and then they can be communicated to others.

Teachers in schools have to be examples of what they require the pupils to be. Men in authority who exhort others to follow the paths of love and cooperation must first have those virtues. People are not willing to be led; the leaders have no capacity to lead. Progress is the result of mutual trust between the leaders and the led. The unrest that is rampant now in all aspects of people's lives is due to the irresponsibility of parents, teachers, administrators and leaders, as well as those who hunger to benefit from them.

Namasmarana (repeating God's name) is one of the basic disciplines to which this Conference has paid great attention. The scriptures say that in this age of materialism it is the one hope for mankind. So you should not brush aside the name as a piece of glass or as a pebble.



gem from those simple folks so that he could sell it at a huge profit to some millionaire or maharaja. He discovered where the boy lived and went up and down that road hoping to see the child. When he saw him playing with the gem as if it were a cheap marble, his heart wrung in agony. The child threw it on the ground and it fell under a bush. He spoke to the boy, asking for the gem in exchange for a 100 rupees and, again, for 500 rupees. The boy ran into the house in tears, complaining about the stranger who would not leave him alone. The mother came out into the garden and told the merchant to go away.

The merchant grasped this chance. He told the mother that he was ready to give 1,000 rupees on the spot if the marble was placed in his hand. On hearing this, she forbade the child to play with it outside the house; he could play with it only within the rooms. The

gods for selecting the leader of the *Ganas* (troops of demi-gods who are the attendants of Siva). Participants had to go around the world quickly and come back to the feet of Lord Siva. The gods started off on their vehicles. The younger son of Siva enthusiastically entered the competition. He had an elephantine head, and his vehicle was a mouse. Therefore, his progress was severely handicapped. He had not proceeded far when Narada appeared before him and asked, "Whither are you bound?" The son was very much annoyed, and he fell into a rage. What had just happened was a bad omen, doubly unpropitious for those starting a journey. It is inauspicious if the first person you come across when you are on a journey is a single *Brahmin*. Though he was the foremost among the *Brahmins* (he was the son of Brahma Himself), Narada was a bad omen. Again it is a bad omen if someone asks, "Whither are you bound," when you are going

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There was once a boy who picked up a precious gem, bright and round, and used it for playing marbles on the road with his companions. A merchant dealing in precious stones chanced to pass along that road, and his discerning gaze fell upon the gem. He approached the boy, took him aside and offered to pay him 50 rupees in exchange for the "marble." If the boy had known the value of the rupees, he would have known the value of the gem. He went to his mother and told her that a stranger had tempted him with 50 rupees in return for the marble he played with. She was surprised that it was so costly and she said, "Do not go out of the compound, play in the garden with it." When the value was revealed, limits were set.

The merchant did not sleep that night. He was planning to secure the gem from those simple folks so that he could sell it at a huge profit to some millionaire or maharaja. He discovered where the boy lived and went up and down that road hoping to see the child. When he saw him playing with the gem as if it were a cheap marble, his heart wrung in agony. The child threw it on the ground and it fell under a bush. He spoke to the boy, asking for the gem in exchange for a 100 rupees and, again, for 500 rupees. The boy ran into the house in tears, complaining about the stranger who would not leave him alone. The mother came out into the garden and told the merchant to go away.

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merchant would not be sent off like that; he appeared the next day in front of the house. He held out 10,000 rupees as his offer for the marble. The mother refused to part with it; instead she put it in a safe, under lock and key. When the merchant came the next day with 50,000 rupees, she took the marble to a bank and deposited it in their safety vault.

You are also playing marbles with the name of God, unaware of its value. Once you realize its worth, you will keep it in your heart of hearts as the most precious treasure. Know that the name is the key to success in your search for consolation, confidence, courage, illumination and liberation.

Another illustration can be given from the ancient texts. On one occasion, a competition was arranged among the gods for selecting the leader of the *Ganas* (troops of demi-gods who are the attendants of Siva). Participants had to go around the world quickly and come back to the feet of Lord Siva. The gods started off on their vehicles. The younger son of Siva enthusiastically entered the competition. He had an elephantine head, and his vehicle was a mouse. Therefore, his progress was severely handicapped. He had not proceeded far when Narada appeared before him and asked, "Whither are you bound?" The son was very much annoyed, and he fell into a rage. What had just happened was a bad omen, doubly unpropitious for those starting a journey. It is inauspicious if the first person you come across when you are on a journey is a single *Brahmin*. Though he was the foremost among the *Brahmins* (he was the son of Brahma Himself), Narada was a bad omen. Again it is a bad omen if someone asks, "Whither are you bound," when you are going

somewhere. Narada had asked him that very question.

Nevertheless, Narada was able to assuage his anger. He drew forth from Siva's son the sadness of his predicament and his desire to win. Narada consoled him, exhorted him not to yield to despair, and advised him thus: "Rama's name is the seed from which the gigantic tree called the universe has emanated. So write the name on the ground, go around it once and hurry back to Siva, claiming the prize." He did so and returned to his father. When asked how he returned so soon, he related the story of Narada and his advice. Siva appreciated the validity of Narada's counsel. The prize was awarded to the son who was acclaimed as *Gana-Pathi*, (Master of the *Ganas*) and *Vinayaka* (Leader of All) The name undoubtedly brought with it the grace of God.

Meerabai, the Queen of Rajasthan, gave up status and riches, fortune and family, and dedicated herself to the adoration of the Lord. [She sang the Lord's name so beautifully that it touched the hearts of many.] Her husband [who did not understand her devotion to God] sent a chalice of poison which she was ordered to drink. She uttered the name of Krishna while she drank, and the poison was transformed into nectar by the grace the name evoked.

Kirtan is the word used for the recital or singing of the name and the glory of God. *San-kirtan* means reciting or singing well, or loudly with joy or in ecstasy. Her adoration of God was the supreme example of *nama sankirtan*.

Another method of *nama sankirtan* is to remind oneself of the various exploits and sports, the various acts of

grace and compassion, which the Lord has manifested in the world while you are reciting His name. This is called *leela* (sport) *nama sankirtan*. Chaithanya and Thyagaraja were two [saintly ancients] who realized the Lord through this path. Others recall the majesty, glory, might, mystery, magnificence, munificence and love with which God has clothed Himself, while they are reciting His name. This attitude is spoken of as *guna* (attributes, characteristics) *nama sankirtan*. Most of the saints honored in many lands showed their devotion in this way. . . .

Devotion To The One God

Mankind's duty is to sanctify the days and nights with unbroken *smarana* (recollection) of the name. Recall it with joy, with yearning. If you do so, God is bound to appear before you in the form and with the name you have allotted to Him as most beautiful and most appropriate. God is all names and all forms, the integration of all these in harmonious charm. God is designated in different faiths and adored by different communities, but all are limbs of the One God that really is. Just as the body is the harmonious blending of the senses and the limbs, God is the harmony of all the forms and names that mankind gives Him. Only those who are ignorant of the glory of God will insist on one name and one form for His adoration, and what is worse, condemn the use by others of different names and forms.

Since you are associated with the Sathya Sai Organization, I must warn you against such silly obduracy. Do not go about proclaiming that you are a sect, distinct and separate from those who adore God in other forms and names.

Thereby, you are limiting the very God whom you are extolling. Do not proclaim in your enthusiasm, "We want only Sai, we are not concerned with the rest." You must convince yourselves that all forms are Sai's; all names are Sai's. All are He.

You must have noticed that I do not speak about Sai in my discourses, nor do I sing of Sai during the *bhajan* with which I usually conclude my discourses. And you must have wondered why. Let me tell you the reason. I do not want the impression to gain ground that I desire this name and form to be publicized. I have not come to start a new cult; I do not want people to be misled on this point. I affirm that this Sai form is the form of all the various names that mankind uses for the adoration of the Divine. So I am teaching that no distinction should be made among the names Rama, Krishna, Iswara, Sai, for they are all my names.

When I know that I am the current that illumines all the various bulbs, I am indifferent to the bulbs which you consider so important. When you pay attention to the bulbs, factions arise, sects are born. This should not encourage discord or distinctions; all must adore the One which appears as many. The Divine illumines all the bulbs.

I do not have the slightest intention to utilize the *Seva Samithis* (Sathya Sai Baba Centers in the USA) for propagating or seeking homage for my name. No. I am content only when spiritual endeavors and disciplines to elevate and purify mankind are progressing everywhere. It is only through these that my Universal Reality will be revealed. So do not limit me to the boundaries of any one name and form. Your aim should be to

see the self-same God in all the forms that are worshipped, and to picture Him in all the names. You are to be conscious of His presence as the Inner Motivator of every living being, in every particle of matter. Do not fall into the error of considering some to be people worthy of reverence and some unworthy. Sai is in everyone; so all deserve your reverence and service. Propagate this truth; that is the function I assign to the *Seva Samithis* (Sai Centers).

You can observe me and my activities; note how I adhere to righteousness, moral order, truth and universal compassion. That is what I desire you to learn from me. Many of you plead for a "message" from me, to take to the *Samithi* of which you are members. Well, My Life is My Message. You will be adhering to my message if you live so that your lives are evidence of dispassionate, quiet courage, confidence and eagerness to serve those who are in distress. That is what my life should inspire you to do.

God is immanent in the world, so treat the world lovingly as you would treat your Master. Krishna served the Pandavas. He drove the chariot for Arjuna. Serve, no matter what the obstacles may be or whatever cynical ridicule you may attract. Such reactions are inevitable when one is engaged in doing good. Take my example, praise and slander have accompanied me throughout the ages. Opposition and obstacles only tend to highlight the good and strengthen resolve.

The torture that his father inflicted upon him to turn his mind away from God helped to bring out the unflinching devotion of Prahlada. The wickedness of Ravana served to reveal the might of

continued on page 27

Who Is A Devotee Of The Lord

Most people go to Prasanthi Nilayam with problems, either physical or mental. Most problems are of the mind and are of our own creation. It is to eliminate these problems that the following verses in the *Bhagavad Gita* were given, and so it is very relevant that we study them. They define a devotee in Krishna's words. The definitions of a true devotee are as follows:

"He who has no hatred towards any being, who is friendly, kind, compassionate, has no feeling that things belong to him, and he who bears both sorrow and joy with equanimity is dear to Me.

"The one who is ever content and self-controlled, is of firm conviction, and who has stabilized his mind and intellect in Me, such a one is dear to Me.

"He who is not harassed by the world and from whom the world does not shrink, and who is free from joy and anger, fear and agitation, he, too, is dear to Me.

"He who has no expectation, is pure, competent, unconcerned and untroubled, and who has given up all initiative in action, he, My devotee, is dear to Me.

"He who does not have sudden spurts of joy or sorrow, neither regrets nor desires, who has renounced the auspicious and inauspicious, is dear to Me.

"He who regards friend and foe, honor and dishonor alike, and who is alike in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, and who is unattached is dear. Praise and blame do not affect him. He is silent, content, has no fixed abode and is firm in mind. It is he who is dear to Me.

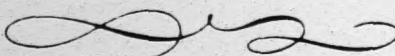
"But those who with faith, holding Me as their supreme aim, follow this immortal wisdom, those devotees are exceedingly dear to Me."

This verse states that we must do all the preceding if we are to come close to Him.

Sai wrote in 1947: *"I have my definition of the devotee I expect. Those devoted to me have to treat joy and grief, gain and loss with equal fortitude."* This is the definition of devotion. But for our purpose, these words of Sai were aptly paraphrased by a child at the primary school in Prasanthi Nilayam who said, "Swami, give us that attitude of mind, that faith by which we can accept whatever You say and follow it in thought, word and deed because we feel that You have our interest uppermost in Your heart. Give me, Swami, that attitude."

—Dr. M. V. M. Murthy

from *Who is a Devotee of the Lord*
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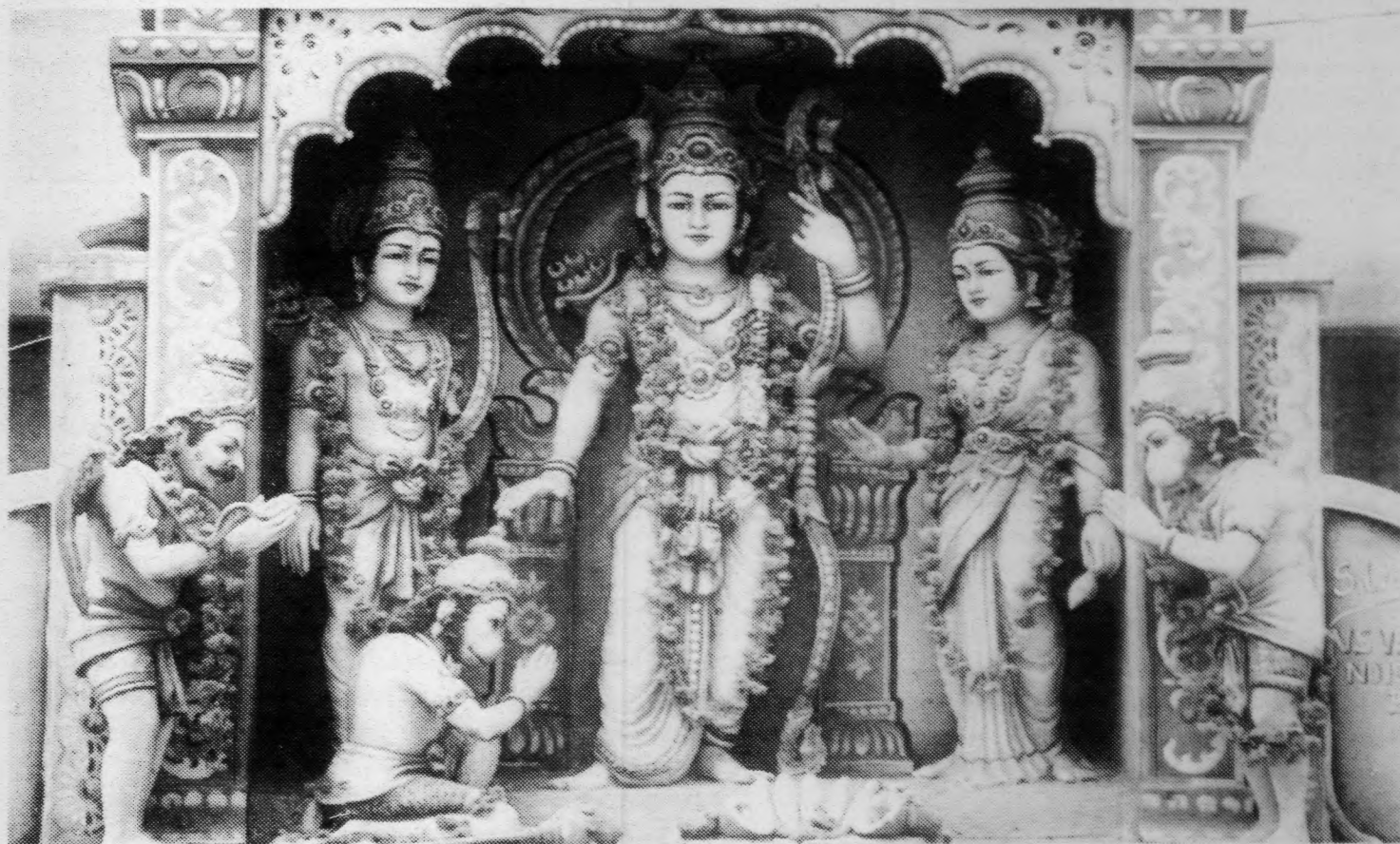


Love for the Divine is devotion. Devotion is not something objective and concrete. It is an inner experience which springs from the heart.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Sanathana Sarathi, February 1988, p.41

Active, Not Idle, Worship



Hindu Gods (under the arch) Hanuman, Lakshmana, Rama and Sita.

We in the West, have been warned of the dangers in "idol worship", and some people express alarm at any sign of it. It has been my experience that we are, by and large, unaware of the purpose of sacraments, statues, symbols and ritual within any religious context, including our own. Just as we readily accept the parables of Jesus as tools to describe what is essentially a Divine Secret, so, too, do other cultures readily accept such parables in stone, what we call "idols." The acceptance of such forms is not a reduction of the Divine into inert objects, just as ours is not a reduction of Jehovah into curious stories. Rather, each culture uses a familiar tool as a means of expressing what is essentially the unspeakable Mystery of God.

Many such idolized figures hold keys to wisdom: Mary holding the baby Jesus, the star and crescent moon, Hanuman bowing to Sita and Ram, or an empty cross—all offer clues to the Divine Presence when clarity blossoms. Just as Christ chose to speak plainly in parables, so, too, these speeches in stone, stone, these idols, speak loud and clear to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see.

It is not the outer form, the story or idol that is worshipped; it is the meaning which this device indicates that is adored.

Such gentle reminders of this awareness is water in the desert to those who seek active, not idle, worship.

—Bon Giovanni
Los Angeles Center

Two Levels

I recently began facilitating a Bereavement Support Group for Hospice. Because this group is in a community that is very religious, their churches have been a major support in their dealing with the loss of loved ones. However, it is often clear that their religion is also used as a way of avoiding feelings and honestly dealing with their grief.

Thinking about this, I realized that it is no different for us who are devotees of our beloved Baba. How often have I heard, "My father is dying, but by Swami's grace I have not been falling apart like my family." "My son doesn't want anything to do with me, but that's okay. I am detached; our children are really Swami's anyway." There is no question that Swami does help us endure the pain, and it would be awful not to have Him in our lives. But can't we be upset? What is wrong with crying? Can't tears be healing? I must admit that I, too, have fallen into this trap of repressing my feelings rather than truly detaching from them. But now I can take courage, tap into my devotion and bear the pain.

What Swami says about this has confused me. On the one hand, He tells us to, *"Let the wave of memory, the storm of desire, the fire of emotion pass through without affecting your equanimity. Be a witness to these."* *"You should not allow yourselves to be overwhelmed in any way by difficulties and sorrows, doubts or disappointments. . . ."* On the other hand, He tells us to *"Open your heart to pain as you do now to pleasure. Welcome it as a challenge."* *"We are told to, 'feel another's pain as your own. . . .'"* On the one hand, feel the pain; on the other, be a witness. Is this possible? Can we really reconcile the two sets of circumstances?

Yes, I think we can. Moreover, I think it is essential that we do. Yet this is not so easy, because we all have unfinished business. Isn't that why we're here? We are in a body; and, therefore, have emotions like grief and anger. It is important to recognize our own feelings, pains and faults. Certainly Baba is a Master at bringing out those parts of us that we don't see or aren't willing to face!

So when our mother dies, or our child rejects us, or we are very sick, what do we do with our feelings? **FEEL THEM!** What I believe Swami is saying is to let the fire of emotion pass through you. He doesn't say not to have the emotion. We just shouldn't get stuck in it. Have the feelings, and at the same time witness them. That could even enhance one's devotion.

We are not perfect; we are human. Part of being human and in a body is having feelings. We need to face them, feel them, and then watch them as they pass through us. I have decided that until, by Baba's grace, I obtain Self-realization, I will try to live on two levels: feeling my feelings and watching them as part of the play of life.

Baba says, *"Remember, until the reality of Supreme Consciousness is known, you are sure to be overpowered and confused by the uproar of the world. But once you enter deep into the realm of spiritual endeavor, everything becomes clear and the knowledge of the real nature of Consciousness awakens within you."*

—Judy Warner
Faber, Virginia

Representing God

I've heard it said that cancer is a karmic blessing for the soul, but as I looked down at the wasted body of what was once a beautiful woman, the initial shock ripped my heart. My mother and I lived a continent apart, so I hadn't seen her for a few months. But my twin brother, Gerry, standing grimly on the other side of the hospital bed, assured me that only a week before, our mother had looked amazingly healthy despite her long and fierce struggle with cells that, like a traitor within, would betray her life. And now, that life would be measured out in a matter of hours. So as the death watch began, I thanked my Lord, Sathya Sai Baba, for getting me to her bedside while she could still recognize me and talk a little between violent gasps for the oxygen flowing into her mask.

After she lapsed into her final coma, my brother and I sat beside her talking quietly, not of the memories that kept welling up. . . that would be too painful to express yet. . . but of her soul and its destiny. Despite the awful sorrow, there was a reason to rejoice. While enduring a life of personal torment and painful diseases, she had been given an astonishing abundance of God's grace.

Months ago, on the night that she fearfully awaited the results of her biopsy, I prayed at my *satsang* for Swami to comfort her. Two hours later, Sai Baba materialized Himself, in the flesh, in her hospital room. She said He took her by the shoulders, seated her on the bed, and stared deeply into her eyes. Since my brother and I are devotees, she knew

who He was, and that probably prevented her from dying of fright. But she was always devoted to Jesus, and was convinced that Sai Baba must be something evil. So when, after that, Swami came to her in occasional visions, she finally yelled at Him to get away from her. And so He did. But a few months later, when we convinced her that anyone who preaches love for God is not likely to be satanic, she opened her heart to Sai Baba and told Him that if He loves God, she would love Him, too. He immediately appeared again and gave her what she described as the most beautiful smile she had ever seen. Not many days after that, she went into ecstasy despite her pain, and found her house filled with a most exquisite fragrance, the origin of which mystified her. That fragrance graced her two more times after that, including once after Swami appeared to her during one of her hospital stays.

That Swami had given her such blessings didn't surprise me. She was the kind of loving mother who would struggle out of her sick bed, painfully hobble to the kitchen, and make a full-scale production out of my brother's supper. Gerry never could stop her. She was also the kind of person who would invite lonely drunks on barstools to feast with us on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Her generous heart was easily the greatest gift she lavished on those around her, and even the hospital staff cried when she died. So when we asked Sai Baba to be there at the end and take her soul, we knew He would. But they say that God moves in mysterious ways, and the Avatar of God certainly keeps that tradition.

The minutes and hours of her life slowly dribbled away, keeping time to rhythmic gasps that were growing in desperation. As we waited, watching death approach with agonizing slowness, I had an inspiration. Just as a new baby,



"... we truly believed He was there."

containing the reincarnated soul, struggles to emerge from a mother's body into the world, the soul must also be reborn into the spiritual realms by struggling to emerge from a body once again. So these weren't death throes; these were the pangs of birth. Soon thereafter, it struck me that I could "midwife" the birth of her shining spirit, so I dabbed some of Swami's *vibhuti* (holy ash) on the third eye chakra or her forehead. And since I heard that it's through the "crown" chakra at the top of the head that the soul leaves the body, I also placed a *vibhuti* packet there in hopes of helping to open that portal and ease her journey. Then, through a throat strangled by grief, I simply said, "Go to God, Mom, go to God." A moment later, her breathing stopped.

I had expected that, with the final moment, Sai Baba would indicate His presence with some sign...perhaps the fragrance again. In fact, I had even prayed for Him to grace us that way. Yet, nothing happened. Later, both my brother and I were mildly surprised and disappointed, yet we truly believed that He was there.

Memories of Mom, particularly her final hours, haunted me for days after, and if the time spent waiting at her bedside didn't evoke enough contemplations of life and death, the morose reflecting I pursued afterwards surely did. Yet from death, as from life, those seeking after some facet of the ultimate truth can catch a sparkling ray of light. And so this experience illuminated the teachings of Sai Baba. There were thoughts of

how much suffering humanity endures, and I wondered if every life must end either violently and quick, or lingering and painful. I felt my own vulnerability and how fragile and short are the lives of my loved ones. We all tread thin ice, never knowing when it will give way. As Swami says, the ones we love are never really ours to hold onto, and only God is our constant companion through the cycles of death and rebirth. And for the first time, liberation from that eternal wheel seemed a worthwhile goal, rather than just a concept.

And I still wondered why Swami hadn't demonstrated His presence when it would have comforted us. While my brother has always witnessed a stream of miracles, I had not experienced any such grace from Sai Baba since I left His

ashram, Prasanthi Nilayam, almost a year before. It seemed like He was ignoring me, not even answering my personal prayers. Was it the "long, dark night of the soul," as St. John of the Cross put it, or was I simply unworthy? After inventorying my faults like some grocer taking stock of his rotten produce, unworthiness seemed to be the likely reason. I also thought about my brother, who during the last two years of her life, brought our mother to live with him and cared for her. Like her champion, he battled against overwhelming odds to save her, trying almost every alternative therapy he could discover after conventional medicine gave up. I pitied his failure, though both we and our mother knew it would be up to God in the end. "Surrendering to the will of God," I told my mother during one of her despairing periods, "means that you have to act, and life is a gift too precious not to fight for. The outcome, though, is His will, to be accepted with equanimity, love, and trust." But then, she already knew that.

Then one day, while musing in the shower, I was given the meaning of that final drama at her death. Of course, Sai Baba didn't visibly take charge or grace us with a miracle. He remained behind the scenes and simply inspired me to

perform a small act of service that would help free her soul. Why? Was it because He knew that I had felt helplessly distant all those months while my brother, whom I envied for his service, fought on the front line? Perhaps, but I knew Swami would use one of life's two most profound moments to impart a greater spiritual lesson. Seeming to ignore me for all that time has been His method of weaning me from attachment to His outward human form and miracles, and to help me rely on the divine essence of Sai Baba, the God, within. "You too are God," He says. Divine authority and power lie latent within us all. By my "representing" God during the ceremony of death, Sai Baba reminded me that we represent God in all our acts. But the true death ceremony will be when we "die unto God" and recover our Divinity. Then we will know that we don't represent God in our acts; we represent God in action.

The epiphany in the shower ended when I asked Sai Baba, "Was the lesson I intuited from the death ceremony true?" At once a powerful electric tingling appeared at the top of my head and spread like a wild fire down my spine. *Sai Ram!*

—Thomas Wolke
Chantilly, Virginia



Death is not a deplorable event; it is the journey's end; the owner getting out of the car when time has run out and the goal is reached. It is the consummation, a happy conclusion, which it ought to be if only all are wise enough to treat it as such and be prepared for it.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, vol. 5, chap. 46

Doubt vs. Faith

Walking in the woods or the nearby cemetery encourages meditation; at least it does for me. This morning I chose the path through the cemetery. I lingered for awhile at the grave of a soldier who died during World War I.

I had been pondering a paragraph in a book, *The Hiding Places of God* by John Cornwell, I was reading late last night. In a flash, the pattern of the jigsaw puzzle of life fell into place, i.e. what does it all mean? Why are we here? And so on.

The paragraph was about a man named Tobias Wolff who went to Lourdes seeking a miraculous cure for his partial blindness. Although he was a skeptical agnostic, his sight was, in fact, restored. For one day, he had 20-20 vision; but for only one day. His analysis of why the cure was temporary is a masterpiece of psychological insight. In his words:

"At heart, I must not have wanted this cure to happen. I suspect that I considered myself unworthy of such a gift. And if I had kept it, what then? I would have had to give up those doubts by which I defined myself in the world's terms, as a free man. By giving up doubt, I would have lost that measure of pure self-interest to which I felt myself entitled by doubt. Doubt was my connection to the world, to the faithless self in whom I took refuge, when to embrace faith would have meant giving up my ego."

That sums up my whole spiritual life in one paragraph! I realized intellectually that faith precedes understanding, rather than vice-versa. But deep inside

was lingering doubt dating back 50 years. Then my philosophy of life was summed up as follows: "I will believe nothing until I can personally prove it to my own satisfaction."

True, I abandoned this rigid, preconception long ago. Still, doubt manifests itself powerfully, unconsciously, in an automatic tendency to appraise everything in judgmental, dualistic terms, i.e. "This is good, that is evil."

As Wolff intuitively knew, we doubt and judge (two sides of the same coin) to reinforce and reaffirm our attachment to our own egos. Whereas, we should never doubt, even if doubt is justified on the basis of worldly standards. In this event, we must abandon those worldly standards. We were given free will so that we could, by an act of will that is available to everyone, (1) replace doubt with faith, and (2) cease making any judgments at all or, if one is unavoidable, make sure it is motivated by unconditional love.

All this is, no doubt, more evident to and more easily put into practice by less ego-centered people than myself. After all, it is simply the message repeated endlessly by every Avatar including Christ and Sai Baba. Once we seek God in a spirit of pure faith and learn to see the Divine in everything and everyone; dualism, judgment and doubt are all eliminated. The end result, automatically and without any further conscious effort, is the unitive life in which the Divine and the individual soul become one.

—Rodger W. Bridwell
Medford, Oregon

A Birthday Gift

Dear Sai Brothers and Sisters,

Knowing that Sathya Sai Baba's birthday is November 23rd, we should ask ourselves, what can we give to our beloved Sai that would please Him? Since He continually gives us so much, how can we best honor Him? And by such an honor, how can we reflect Baba's message, life and love? How deep is our devotion to Him? Is it deep enough to put into practice, at least for one day, what He exemplifies 365 days a year? How can we please Him?

The answer is simple. In Baba's own words, *"Love all—Serve all."*

Swami is always giving, always feeding the starving souls that come to Him in endless streams. In fact, He tells us that His true birthday is when divine, selfless love is born in our hearts. Wouldn't it be wonderful if this year we welcome His birthday in our hearts on that holy day, November 23rd? We could do this by having a gigantic wave of loving Sai Service sweep across this land.

Instead of just gathering at our local Sathya Sai Baba Centers to sing and feed ourselves, let us unite in love and service for Sai's less fortunate beings on that special day. Let us feed Him through the homeless and the hungry. Let us love and adore Him in the hearts of sick and neglected children. Let His love pour forth to all, from us and through us.

Baba says, *"Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray."* He also proclaims, *"Unless you cleanse the mind with love, the full moon of spiritual*

wisdom cannot shine therein. The recital of the 'name,' the observance of vows and vigils, of fasts and festivals, may scintillate the inner sky of the mind like stars that stud the sky; but, until the lamp of love is lit, the darkness will not vanish."

Dear Sai Brothers and Sisters, let us not say, "Oh, there is no time, or we've already made plans, etc." Plans can be changed and activities combined. We can sing *bhajans* (devotional songs) while our hands are busy making sandwiches for the homeless. Just think how saturated with love and devotion such food will be. We can sing at a nursing home or at children's shelters instead of our Sai Centers. Or just visit with some lonely neighbors and shower them with love. I'm sure Swami will guide each of us to the right activity. If we are sincere, He will be with each of us.

In Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. IX, Swami says, *"Mutual respect can be built on the faith that all are children of God and all are Divine. Then on that basis, there can be cooperation and enthusiasm for work. Each will then do his best, knowing his duty and responsibility."*

As all of us who have been in Baba's orbit know, He uses the element of surprise without giving devotees any advance notice. I suppose that is part of our training to become more flexible and to do the Lord's work at His bidding, not ours. *"Love my uncertainty,"* He tells us. So let us welcome and accept this challenge in every Sai Center across the USA while giving new meaning to His birthday. Let everyone participate to make this the most memorable birthday

in Sai Service History. Swami spells it, "His Story."

Baba tells us, *"If the seeds of true wisdom that I sow do not come up as good saplings and give good harvest, I, too, am affected. On the other hand if they grow well and fructify into a harvest of ananda (bliss), how happy I would be. That is my food. This is the*

seva (service) you should do. There is nothing higher than this."

So Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us give Sai Baba a birthday gift that will touch His heart, so that He may say, "Very happy, very happy!"

—Sathya Sai Baba Centers
of Puget Sound
Washington State

Devotion and activity should go together. . . . Devotion directed to the Lord is called Divine Love and is the easiest of all paths for the realization of the goal. Love for God is Devotion.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba

For Baba On His Birthday

His smile shines as though
He is the sun.
His feet seem to be
as light as a feather.
He takes us
when He knows
our work is all done.

He floats like a cloud
in a cool summer breeze.
He was the dove that flew
from Noah's ark.
He is the one who gave us
our land.
He is the one who makes
life worthwhile.

He is our Mother, Father
and friend.
He is the Lord,
Sai Baba

—HinaRapa Lipton,
age 12 (when written)
Kailua, Hawaii



Devotion

On the occasion of the birthday of Sathya Sai Baba, a magnificent joy overtakes us. It is the same spirit that Christians exude during the Christmas season. There's a feeling of magical happiness, goodwill and love for all mankind.

Dear Swami, among Your devotees, there is a similar feeling. We are blessed immeasurably with the grace of knowing You. Our hearts fill beyond "worded" explanation on Your birthday.

People in the United States say that we should maintain the spirit of the Holiday Season year-round. They say, "Peace on earth and good will toward men," is only focused on during Christmas time.

So why are we not devoted to God in whatever form we perceive Him; why are we not devoted always and for all time? Many say that it is because we are trapped in the world, the web of *maya* (illusion) and desires. What then can we do?

We struggle to know the answers, so that we won't be afraid or give up our

search. Often, we only see the setbacks and forget that the path is laden with triumphs. Swami guides us with these words:

"Twenty hammer strokes might not succeed in breaking a stone, but the twenty-first stroke might break it. This does not mean that the twenty strokes were of no avail. Each stroke contributed to the final success. Likewise, the mind is engaged in a struggle with the world, both internal and external. Needless to say, success might not always be your lot, but man can attain everlasting bliss by immersing himself in good works and by saturating the mind with the love of God. Infuse every moment of life with that love." [Teachings of Sri Sathya Baba, p. 52, #24].

If we really can infuse every moment with God's love and express goodwill to all mankind, then the joy of Your birthday will be with us always. If we remain devoted to You, Baba, and practice all the perfect messages You've shared with us, then we will begin to understand the essence of devotion.

—A Western Devotee



Mere devotion is not enough. It must be regulated by reason and discrimination, or else, it will not flow along sane lines. Reason makes devotion a sharp instrument. Reason out the purpose of your sojourn on earth and the purpose of the intelligence with which you have been endowed. Then devotion will encourage you to fill your days with steady, controlled activity towards liberation.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Voice of the Avatar, Part II

A Unique Chance

Joy is a deceptive trap; grief is the real preceptor, teaching caution, circumspection, discrimination, detachment, awareness and vigilance. Death is not the merciless foe he is made out to be; he is the friend and companion, the teacher, the kindly kinsman who takes you into his fold and clothes you with the halo of remembrance. The heart of man has to be toughened, not hardened; it has to be soft, not slithery; this can be achieved only by the blows of loss, grief and distress. It is God's way of shaping us into the divine mold. But people are blind to God's mercy and revolt at the first blow of the sculptor's hammer. They abandon one divine form and transfer their loyalty to another form, which they believe to be more propitious.

You acquire a picture of Sai Baba, install it on your altar and start offering flowers. If a few days later, your cow yields less milk than usual, you decide that is due to the evil worked by the new God who has come into the home or by the anger of the old God who has been superseded, and you cast away the picture. Do not offer flowers or worship any form of God for the sake of these low gains. Do not lose the great chance of association with the Divine by identifying God with your trivial likes and dislikes, your tawdry aims and ambitions. Having come into this transient world, adore God in order to save yourself. How else can you escape disease and agitation?

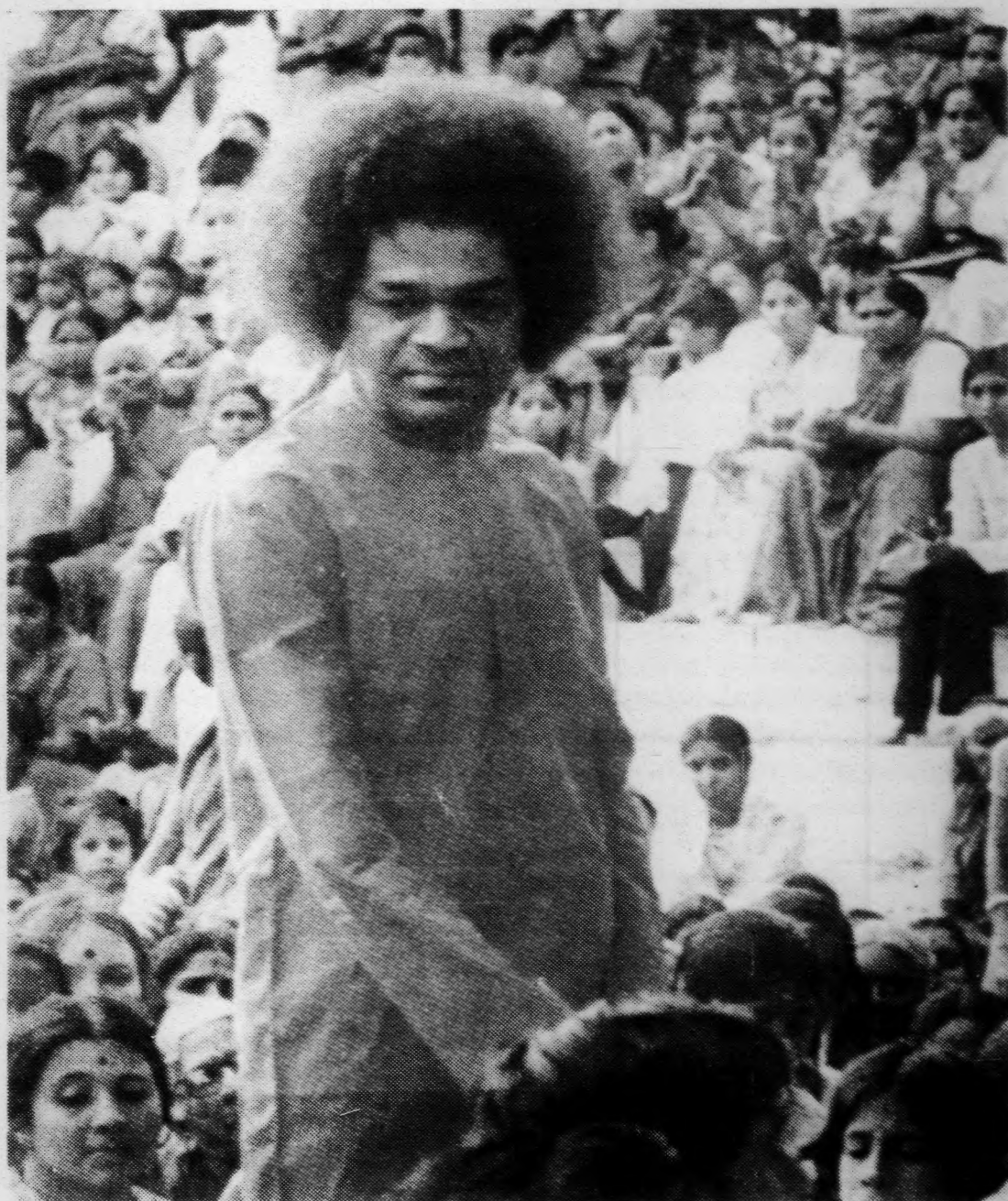
Of course, you can master disease and death, avoid agitation and anxiety by taking the prescribed remedies and

observing the prescribed regimen. Sing the glory of God when you are afflicted by grief or distress; for it is at such times that you need Him most. It is when one has a fever that medicine must be taken.

The Pandavas knew this secret to success. They called upon the Lord whenever circumstances conspired against them. Ordinary mortals start lamenting, "Oh, all my *puja* (spiritual procedure, prayer) has been in vain; all the worship I offered so sincerely and with such heartfelt yearning has been a waste." Others, too, laugh cynically at the misfortunes of the devotees and try to draw them away into the dreary desert of disbelief. Do not listen to that kind of evil. Be firmly rooted in faith. Feed the roots with repentance and prayers. Only those who are engaged in *puja* and worship in order to impress others will give them up when fortune takes a turn for the worse. The rest will accept whatever comes with the supreme indifference of a saint. Good fortune is only for those who understand and accept both sides of the coin as divine grace.

The true sign of a Sai *bhakta* (devotee) is this steadiness. You cannot swerve from this chosen path by cynicism or the call of luxurious pomp. You must put spiritual teachings into practice and know the immeasurable gain it gives.

You have the faith that this day is a great festival (Krishna's birthday), but have you the faith that induces you to follow the teachings of Krishna? Do not derive comfort by filling your stomach with savory and sweet food. Derive



Sathya Sai Baba giving *darshan*, circa 1970's

comfort by filling the brain [with God's teachings], by saturating the mind with faith, by shaping thoughts, feelings, emotions, impulses, attitudes and activities in accordance with those teachings.

The usual activity of a person who calls himself a *bhakta* or devotee of Rama, Krishna or Sai Baba is, as you must have noticed, planning to build a temple. A new temple rises up, and an

old one crumbles. Why should these people run about with appeals and donation lists, clamoring for contributions? Each one is induced by ego to build a temple, not for God, but for himself. "I shall build a house where my God, who now has no roof over His head, can stay." That is the vain and vulgar motive which is at the back of all this mania for constructing *mandirs* (temples). The people who are approached feel superior; the people who appeal for help display their want of faith in the God. They imagine that the *mandir* is for a new God, a God who competes with older names and forms of Di-

vinity for their patronage and support. Altogether, not a desirable activity for a *bhakta*, is it? Do not hope to come nearer to me by such means.

I have no sense of distinction between *bhaktas* who worship this form or another. All who crave for heat and light can come near. The heat of this Splendor will destroy the chill of sensual pleasure; the Light will scatter the darkness.

Cultivate love towards all; that is the way to gain nearness. I do not measure distance in terms of meters or miles. For me, the range of love decides the distance.

Another point, you desire that I should come to your homes. You pray to me to do so. You grieve when I do not come. You start reviling yourself that you are poorer than others, that you are less spiritually developed and so on. All this is irrelevant. I have no place in my heart for such distinctions and differences. You may believe this or disbelieve it, but I must reveal the real response of my heart. I have no enthusiasm to visit the homes of people, nor have I any disinclination to do so. I do not care for the brick and mortar structures in which you live. I care to visit and reside in your hearts. This Prasanthi Nilayam (name of Baba's ashram, meaning Abode of Peace) is not my residence. When your hearts are transformed into an abode of peace, then they are my residences. When you pray that I should visit your village, I think of the facilities it has—not for me; I need only standing space—but for the thousands who gather to have my *darshan* (to see a holy being). How can I tolerate the slightest inconvenience to them—the women, the children, the sick, the aged, the blind, the decrepit—who come for counsel, consolation, courage and cure?

Let me also tell you another point. Do not delay any more. Take hold of this unique chance while you can. Ask me about the *sadhana* (spiritual practice) you should adopt for your liberation and begin practicing from this day. Later, it may be difficult to approach me and ask, for people are coming to me in full,

unending streams. This is bound to grow into a world tree that shades and shelters all. I have come down in this form for that very purpose. This form knows no halting, no hesitation. My name is Sathya (Truth); My teaching is Truth; My path is Truth; I am Truth.

In each *yuga* (era), the Divine has incarnated as an Avatar (a Divine Incarnation) for some particular task. This incarnation is different in that it has to deal with the crisis which is world-wide and world-shaking. Intellectual audacity has grown so wild that people have become foolish enough to ask, "What and where is God?" Immorality has put on the garb of morality and is enticing people into the morass of sin. Truth is condemned as a trap; justice is jeered at; saints are tortured as social enemies. Hence, this Incarnation has come to uphold the true and suppress the false. I behave like you, moving, singing, laughing, journeying, but watch out for the blow I inflict suddenly to chastise and to warn. I shall scorch the wrongdoer for the wrongs and soothe the virtuous for the righteousness. Justice shall be meted out to all.

Of what benefit is this discourse of mine, if you do not receive it into your hearts and act according to it? I find that all the efforts, all these years, to awaken you to your duty to yourselves, are not fructifying in you. You are like the rocks on the seashore that unflinchingly face the beating of the waves. The rock does not move; the waves will not stop. This predicament should end. Awaken and avail yourselves of this unique chance.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Prasanthi Nilayam
August 8, 1968

The Script Is Written

The script is written,
its outcome cannot be changed.
Your role is assigned,
with freedom to explore at risk,
the diversions
that extend the trip.
Passing pleasures,
fleeting fancies,
trivial triumphs and temptations,
create confusion and chaos.
Difficulties become doubts,
doubts deepen to despair.

The way is convoluted,
the straight and narrow path is lost.
The journey is long and painful,
memory of home is forgotten and gone.
But the end is sure,
it cannot be changed.
Though lost in the maze of created fears,
the script is written.

Have courage—He is guide.
Ask, demand even, His attention.
He will not fail you.
You are destined to win.
He has called you,
you have responded.
Lord Sai is at your side.
Claim His Grace,
He will lead you home.
Find the right road.
Follow His signpost that reads:

"Do everything as worship."
Worship, worship—only that.
You become what you feel;
you are what you think;
what you turn your attention to,
you turn into.

The Avatar is here.
His miracles are His credentials.
His mystery, His holiness,
engender the feeling.
Focus, fix, fasten that feeling
firmly in your heart.
Yearn only for Him.
Seek only His company.
"Do everything as worship."

The right home is refound,
the home dimly remembered, reappears.
The gates are open.
His welcome clarifies
confusions of the trip.
The script is ended as it was written.
Now, consciously One with
His Luminous Love,
the journey in Time is completed.
It was a short adventure
that expanded
the eternal Bliss of our
being His Being.
The script is ended
as it was written.

—Hal Honig
New York, New York



The Lord is approachable by all. . . . Each has a place in His mansion. . . . Give your heart over to the Lord and move in society as a dedicated being.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Thought for the day at Prasanthi Nilayam
November 28, 1991

Who Do You Sing For?

There was a skilled musician. He traveled around the world singing and playing his instruments. He was very popular in every country that played his records. One of his favorite things to do was to appear on television. His name was "Mr. Stupendous."

The TV hosts would ask him, "Who do you sing for?" He always had the same answer, "I sing for **my** audience; they're **my** fans. They're the folks who buy my records, and **make me rich!**"

One day, Mr. Stupendous' record producer was walking down the street. He had been thinking about all the millions of dollars he had made from those songs. All of a sudden, he heard the most beautiful singing and instrumentation he had ever heard. Always interested in a new sound, the producer searched the streets until he found where the music was coming from. There, before him, was a homeless man with ragged clothes and a cluster of broken instruments.

The producer was excited. "Hey you," he called to the ragged man, "Where's the guy who was singing and playing?" He shook the shoulders of the poor man, but the homeless

man was not ruffled. His eyes twinkled and he smiled.

"I am your musician," he said with happiness. The producer couldn't believe it. He asked the man to play more. He did, and the producer cried at the beauty of the music.

"Where did you learn to play like that? What's your inspiration? Your music is the most incredible in the world! You're far more talented than Mr. Stupendous!"

The homeless man said, "Mr. Stupendous appears on TV and says that he performs for his fans. I think fame and fortune are his inspirations. My secret is that I sing to please God. My inspiration comes from God."

The producer asked him if he would like to make a record and become a millionaire? The homeless man laughed. "No," he said, "I do not sing for money. I sing only to please God."

The producer scratched his head. He tried to convince the man that he'd be even more popular than Mr. Stupendous, but the homeless man just laughed. Finally, the producer walked away. And as he moved on, he could hear the homeless man's sweet voice.



Every day on his way to work, the producer would come to the very same spot and pause to listen to the ragged man while he sang.

One day, the producer realized what his task should be. He asked the homeless man where he could go

to help the poor. The gentle man in ragged clothes placed his hand on the producer's shoulder and took him to a shelter for the poor. And now, the producer often serves there. The best part is, he has found inner peace by giving selfless service to others.

—Anonymous

Of Good Report...

Under the title, "Morality Becoming a Universal Destination," *The Los Angeles Times* recently reported the results of a Gallup Poll as follows:

"The attempts by some politicians this year to portray themselves and their party as representing family values, morality, and pious feelings about God certainly can be expected to strike a responsive chord with some voters. The political problem, however, is that no party or its followers has a monopoly on these feelings because most Americans of all political persuasions embrace these ideals. . . .

"A return to morality is fast becoming a nearly universal experience in this country. In 1982, three people in four [75 percent] identified moral standards as very important to their personal sense of being. Now, 87 percent say that morality is of top importance.

"In 1982, only 60 percent of those polled said that they were striving to be the best that they could be. Now 71 percent report this effort as very important to them.

"Seven people in ten now say that their relationship to God is important—a six percent increase over 1982.

"What has declined over the past ten years is the importance of financial well-being and self-centeredness. Only half of the public [50 percent] now say being well off is very important to them, compared to 57 percent who sought riches in 1982. Instead of accumulating wealth and being self-centered, people are now reaching out to help others. Seven persons in 10 [70 percent] now consider charity and volunteering service to others to be very important in their lives, compared to only 47 percent in 1982. [An increase of 23 percent.]"

—Compiled by Joy Thomas
Cherry Valley



Money comes and goes; morality comes and grows. [Sathya Sai Speaks, vol. X, 53]

Service to the individual is service to God. [Sathya Sai Speaks, vol. X, 19]

I assure you that very soon the dark clouds will be scattered, and you will witness a happy era all over the world. [Sathya Sai Speaks, vol. VII, 86]



—Sathya Sai Baba

They say, "He will come
again." I know of no real
coming or going.
I only know, He is here.

— James R. Todd, Jr.
Bartlett, Illinois

Arjuna Asks; Lord Krishna Responds....

"*Madhava* (Lord)! You said that it is the inherent quality of nature that distinguishes these two (God-directed nature and demonic nature). Which qualities make a demonic nature (*asuric*) and which a God-directed nature (*daivi*)? Please clarify."

Krishna replied, "Arjuna, I am ever willing to clarify. I only need listeners who are steady and intent. These 25 holy qualities are the traits of the divine endowment (*daivi sampath*). Hear this with unwavering attention:

- Fearlessness
- Purity of emotions
- Awareness of the unity of all creation
- Charity
- Control of the senses
- Sacrifice
- Study
- Asceticism
- Straightforwardness
- Nonviolence
- Integrity
- Equanimity, absence of anger or resentment
- Detachment
- Inner peace
- Refrain from scandal-mongering and talking ill of others
- Sympathy
- Absence of greed
- Sweetness and softness of speech
- Fear of unrighteous (*adharmic*) acts
- Absence of fluctuation in the mind

- Courage, patience and fortitude during disaster
- Steadiness
- Cleanliness
- Harmlessness
- Humility

Krishna continues. . . .

"Pride, pomp, vanity, anger, harshness and absence of discrimination are the components of the demonic endowment of mankind. People having these qualities are infused with the demonic character. Though to all outward appearances they may be humans, they do not deserve that name. Those who have the aforesaid qualities are known as human beings with divine parts. Those who have the demonic attributes are known as demonic humans.

"Some people esteem themselves as part Divine, but do they have all the attributes that should characterize them? Do they at least have sympathy (*daya*), morality (*dharma*), service to others (*paraopakara*), and equanimity (*santham*)? If they have these, at least in small measure, they can be regarded as Divine. Instead, if the full battery of demonic equipment is evident in them, how can their declaration be taken at its face value? It is sheer vanity to pretend so or to claim such. Vanity and pomp can never be classified as Divine; they are unquestionably demonic.

"Each one can easily analyze and decide to which class he belongs. The classification is not decided by physical

appearance, possessions, status or authority.

For example, consider Ravana. He had a human form; he was an emperor, and he was greater than Kubera, the Lord of Wealth. But can he be considered part Divine for those reasons? No! He is declared a demon on the basis of the qualities (*gunas*) he had.

"Three qualities form the fundamental basis of all demonic natures. They are desire (*kama*), anger (*krodha*), and greed (*lobha*). They destroy the self and foster the demon in mankind. They have to be overwhelmed and overcome by the divine qualities of detachment (*vairagyam*), equanimity (*satham*) and renunciation (*thyagam*). They are the warriors to rely on in this fight. Foster these warriors, and they will, in a trice, wipe out the forces of demonic influence. Any trace of the foes—desire, anger, and greed—left



Krishna instructing a kneeling Arjuna

unsuppressed anywhere is a potential danger, so they must be reduced to ashes. That leads to real success in the struggle for the goal."

—Sathya Sai Baba
Gita Vahini, pp 214-216

Hear O Israel...

Since I was raised in an atheistic family, I came to know about Sathya Sai Baba the hard way—through a long process of intellectual searching. But during my first visit to Puttaparthi in 1983, something happened that spoke directly to my heart. As a participant in the chorus, I had been practicing Christmas carols to be sung at the Christmas pageant, when one day, shortly before the performance, I overheard two ladies in conversation. One said, "We have been given permission to sing a traditional Hebrew prayer at the beginning of the Christmas pageant, and if you know any Jewish devotees who wish to participate, please let them know." I gasped at the coincidence of hearing this information, and immediately asked if I could be included. Even though my connection with my religious roots were tenuous, I still considered myself to be Jewish by birth and culture.

You cannot imagine the poignant feeling that swept over me while sitting on the stage of the Poornachandra Auditorium with about 10 other Jewish devotees, singing "*Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Elohenu, Adonai E'chod. Barouch Shem K'vod Malchuso L'olam V'oyed. Amen*" ("Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be His Name, whose glorious kingdom is forever, and ever. Amen"). We sang it like a *bhajan* with the chorus repeating the words, and as I looked directly into Swami's smiling face, I felt as though I were speaking directly to all of the children of Israel, my kith and kin, wherever they were. How ironic and beautiful, I thought, to have wandered in the desert

of my soul for so many years and to have come to India in order to finally feel such a strong connection with my own cultural traditions. My heart filled to overflowing with gratitude to Baba for granting me such an incredible experience.

It was not surprising, therefore, that shortly after a second visit to Baba in 1986, I found myself in a volunteer program, going to Israel to work in a hospital. From the start, my experiences were so extraordinary and illuminating that I stayed on; and, thus, I was in Tel Aviv when the Gulf War began and the SCUD missiles started falling. Even though my family and friends in the States urged me to leave, I felt that I could not. I wanted to be with the people in their trial by fire.

I cannot adequately describe the fear that possessed me when I heard the wailing of the air raid siren. My stomach was clutched by fear, and my fingers trembled, so that I could hardly put on my gas mask. Gone were the feelings of self-confidence. Gone were the feelings of Baba's protection that I had enjoyed for so many years. Gone also, was the treasured connection I felt with Him. Being totally engulfed in fear as I was, made it impossible for me to go into a deep enough meditation which would bring me to a state of serenity where I could feel His love as I had in the past. As the terror-filled days became weeks, I was struck as never before by the courage and bravery of all those who were victims of the Second World War and certainly those who had experienced the horrors of concentration camps. My

mind was unable to comprehend how they were able to withstand the unimaginable savagery of a war that dragged on for years. I was ready to fall apart after only six weeks!

Sitting in dejection one day towards the end of the Gulf War, I prayed fervently to Sathya Sai Baba, telling Him how disconnected I felt from Him and asking for some sign that He had heard me. Suddenly, I heard an almost musical "ting" and there, on an otherwise barren formica-topped footstool, standing perfectly upright, appeared the tiny earring that I had lost several days previously and that I had given up ever finding. My eyes filled with tears, my heart filled with hope and love. He was there. He had always been there, watching so closely that He was even aware I had lost the earring. It was I who had somehow become unplugged. Hasn't He said that He would never abandon those who called Him?

As soon as the war was over, a dear friend, Miriam, who had received

information and books about Swami, felt compelled to visit Him in India. Traveling over 12 hours by car after her arrival from Israel, without food or sleep, she finally reached Kodaikanal just in time for *darshan*. As Swami passed by, she called to Him, "Swami." He turned and came back to her. She held out her hand on which a medallion with a Star of David had been placed. "Israel, Swami," she said. (Miriam was raised in a religious family that can trace its matrilineal roots back to King David. She is a survivor of the Holocaust.) Swami placed His own hand over hers and said, "God Bless Israel."

During a private interview, He encouraged her to start a Center in Israel. It's tiny, but it's a start. Now we would like to extend love and friendship to other Sai Centers in the Arab world.

With His grace, let there be peace on earth, and please, God, let it begin with us.

—Barbara Hill
Tel Aviv, Israel



Devotion is the highest form of love. Service to God is known as bhakti. Devotion means constant contemplation of God. The term bhakti is derived from the root bhaj to worship. Devotion means loving contemplation of God, repetition of His name, worshipping Him and doing penance for Him. Service to the Lord is the highest expression of devotion. There is nothing which is not attainable through loving service to the Divine.

Devotion does not mean merely doing bhajans or performing puja. These forms of devotion at present are based on some kind of self-interest.

True devotion should be free from selfishness of any kind. For the external observer, all appear to be devotees filled with humility and piety. But internally, their hearts are otherwise.

True devotion should be an expression of love, both internally and externally.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Sanathana Sarathi, March 1988 p. 69

Rama's bow. Traducers like Sisupala, Danthavakra, Ravana, and Kamsa are inevitable accessories of every incarnation. This Sai, also, has that age-old accompaniment. Now, too, their brood is evident. On one side, adoration and homage are piling high into a peak; on the other side, abjuration and slander are also piling high. Standing between them, I bless them both with lifted hands, for I am not elated by one nor depressed by the other. The traducers will be rewarded with the crown they deserve; I will be crowned with my own glory. Of what avail is it if you simply worship my name and form without attempting to cultivate the *samathwa* (equal love for all) that I have, my *shanti* (unruffled equanimity), my *prema* (love), my *sahana* (patience and fortitude) and my *ananda* (ever blissful nature)?

You elaborate in your lectures the unique powers of Sai and the incidents that are described as miracles in books written about me. But I request you not to attach importance to these. Do not exaggerate their significance; the most significant and important power is, let me tell you, my LOVE. Though I may turn the sky into earth, or earth into sky; that is not the sign of Divine Might. It is the love and equanimity which is effective, universal and ever-present, that is the unique sign.

When you attempt to cultivate and propagate this love and this fortitude, trouble and travail will dog your steps. You must welcome them, for without them the best in you cannot be drawn out. If gold was as plentiful as dust, or diamonds as available as pebbles, no one would care for them. They are won after enormous exertion and expense; therefore, they are eagerly sought.

Since those who have devotion have gathered here, and people of all nations have come, I cannot but tell you one fact: World Conferences dedicated to religion or spiritual problems have been held before, also conferences of followers of particular faiths. But those were held only after the demise of the founders and divine inspirers. This is the very first time that a World Conference was held for devoted persons while the incarnation was present with the body assumed for the purpose and bearing the name that was chosen for it. I must tell you this fact, because 99 out of 100 persons among you do not know my True Reality. You came here drawn by diverse needs such as a taste for spiritual matters, eagerness to develop the institutions to which you are attached, admiration or affection, love or reverence, or a spurt of enthusiasm to join others and share with them your own exaltation.

In truth, you cannot understand the nature of my Reality either today or even after 1,000 years of steady austerity or ardent inquiry, even if all mankind joins in that effort. But in a short time, you will become cognizant of the bliss showered by the Divine Principle which has taken upon itself this sacred body and this sacred name. Your good fortune which will provide you with this chance, is greater than what was available for anchorites, monks, sages, saints and even personalities embodying facets of divine glory.

Since I move about with you, eat like you and talk with you, you are deluded into the belief that this is but an instance of common humanity. Be warned against this mistake. I am also deluding you by my singing with you, talking with you, and engaging myself in activities

with you. But any moment my Divinity may be revealed. You have to be ready, prepared for that moment. Since Divinity is enveloped by humanness, you must endeavor to overcome the *maya* (illusion) that hides it from your eyes.

This is a human form in which every Divine Entity, every Divine Principle, that is to say, all the names and forms ascribed by man to God are manifest. Do not allow doubt to distract you. If you install on the altar of your heart, steady faith in my Divinity, you can win a vision of my Reality. Instead, if you swing like the pendulum of a clock—one moment with devotion, another moment with disbelief—you can never succeed in comprehending the truth and win that bliss. You are very fortunate to have a chance to experience the bliss of seeing the form which is all forms of all Gods now, in this lifetime.

Let me draw your attention to another fact: On previous occasions, when God incarnated on earth, the bliss of recognizing Him in the incarnation was possible only after the physical embodiment had left the world, in spite of plenty of patent evidence of His grace. The loyalty and devotion they commanded from people arose through fear and awe at their super-human powers and skills, or at their imperial and penal authority. Ponder a moment on this Sathya Sai manifestation. In this age of rampant materialism, aggressive disbelief and irreverence, what is it that causes the adoration of millions from all over the world? You have been convinced that the basic reason for this is the fact that this is the Supra-Worldly Divinity in human form.

Again, how fortunate you are that you can witness all the countries of the world paying homage to Bharat (India). You can hear adoration to Sathya Sai's name reverberating throughout the world—even while this body is existing—not at some future date, but it is with you and before you. Soon you will witness the restoration of *Sanathana Dharma* (Eternal Wisdom) to its genuine and natural status. That is the *dharma* (righteousness) laid down in the *Vedas* for the good of all people of the world. The revival of *Vedic dharma* is the Sai *sankalpa* (the resolve of Sai) not only drawing people toward me, but also attracting them by the manifestation of my power and capability. This is not a phenomenon of delusion. This phenomenon will sustain truth, it will uproot untruth, and in that victory, make all of you exult in ecstasy. This is the Sai *sankalpa* (resolve, will).

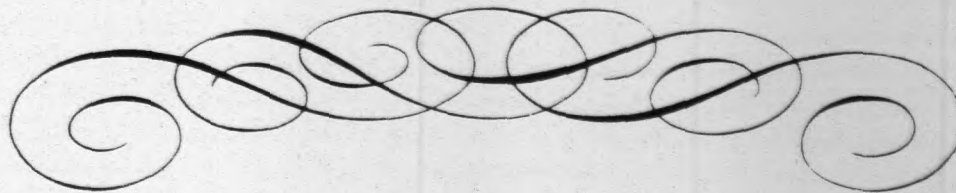
Some people, even those who have reached a certain stage of leadership and authority, have started exchanging the *Vedic* formulae and the principles of Bharathiya culture for lucre, in fact, selling them. Westerners, too, are inclined to purchase them. These truths and discoveries are not merchandise to be bought and sold. Therefore, I will travel to other countries soon, in order to appraise people of the real worth [of the *Vedic* formulae] and put a stop to this bargaining. It was only yesterday that passports for my visit to Africa were brought; they are praying that I may visit those countries soon. I am proceeding to Africa before the month of June [1968].

So utilize the chance of association with me as much as possible, and

endeavor as quickly and as best as you can to follow the directions that I have been giving. Obeying my instructions is enough; it will benefit you more than the most rigorous asceticism. Practice truth, righteousness, peace and love, which are dear to me. Resolve to keep those ideals before you in all your thoughts, words

and deeds. That can confer on you the mergence in the Supreme Substance of Divinity.

—Sathya Sai Baba
World Conference of the
Sri Sathya Sai Organization
May 17, 1968



4 SAI

Sai Baba finds dramatic ways to make us feel His love. Some time ago He sent me a message so loving and graphic it will be imprinted on the tapestry of my Sai memories forever.

Saturday is my "parent day." I travel down the Jersey shore, pick up my mother, and together we drive to get my father at a nursing home. Because Dad is 90 and suffering from Alzheimers it's never easy. You simply never know how he's going to act. Still we try to enhance the quality of his life by taking him out for dinner and a drive to the ocean.

On one particular Saturday; before leaving New York I meditated, asking Baba to smooth out any problems. In my prayer I said, "I'm doing this for you Baba, I offer it to You. Taking care of my parents is all for You."

Little did I suspect that Baba would return those very words to me. Directly after leaving the nursing facility with my parents I drove down a country road. Next to a rambling old house was a large weather-beaten "4 SALE" sign I had seen before. However this time the final "E" and the bottom of the "L" had totally faded. Facing me in big letters was. . . . "4 SAI."

I jammed my foot on the brake and tears poured from my eyes. Most passerbys would think that rain had erased the two final letters. But I knew otherwise . . . the "4," the "S," the "A" and the "I" part of the "L" were vibrant in color. I immediately knew who erased the bottom of the "L" and the "E." That sign was put there for me. Something so little yet something so comforting and loving. He was telling me once again that He is always listening. Thank You Baba.

—Lorenzo
Sathya Sai Center of Manhattan



Birthday Greetings from Devotees in the USA



Dear Sathya Sai Baba,

Thank you for all that you do. Thank You for the smallest trickle of water that gathers with other drops to quench our thirst. Thank You for the most magnificent wonders that only You can provide. But most of all, thank You for the gift of November 23rd, 1926, when You took the form of this Avatar who we are so privileged to know. We remember our true birthday, the day we discovered You in our hearts, and we celebrate Your birth in this form. You are the breath of our lives.

—Your Devotees

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them. Even some so-called "devotees" believe the statements. Never believe such things. They have also been spreading falsehoods, by word of mouth, from one person to another. You should never listen to unpleasant statements. Even if you hear them, you should not talk about or spread the rumors. It is only a sign of one's weakness to listen to and talk about such things.

This world will not come to harm or trouble. However, on this vast planet, now and then there will be some incidents.

—Sathya Sai Baba
reprinted from *Sathya Sai Newsletter*

A Feverish Situation

We've made a mistake in Baba's discourse in your last *Sathya Sai Newsletter* [Fall 1992, vol. 17, no. 1, p. 20]. Part of Sathya Sai Baba's discourse reads, "*The human body has to maintain warmth up to 98.6 degrees in order to be free from fever. . . .*"

The original translation stated that the human temperature is 98.2 degrees. We thought that the translator must have made a mistake. So in our infinite wisdom, we changed the temperature to what we thought was more accurate, 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit.

We have just learned of a recent report in the *American Medical Journal* that researchers in Baltimore, Maryland, through extensive studies, have established that the average human temperature is 98.2, with variations occurring at different times during the day.

—Editor



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—Your Devotees

Announcements

Chain Letters, Again!?

We know that recently many of you have received "chain letters" that make promises of good luck and make threats about continuing the "chain" or you will have bad luck. They attach the name of Sai Baba to these letters. Sathya Sai Baba has never endorsed this type of activity. We encourage you to disregard any such material that you may receive.

—Editor

Caution

I want to caution you about one thing. Sai will never do any harm to anyone. Some people, from this country and also from abroad, have distributed pamphlets saying that Swami has said that the world will have many disasters and misfortunes.

Never in the past or in the future, has Sai willed such thoughts and ideas. These are the rumors created by some people who do not have any other work to do. You should never believe such rumors. People are spreading false stories that this country (India) will be submerged in water, that 12 of Swami's students will rescue everyone from the disaster, and that the country will be saved.

Some wicked people have printed 90 false statements in pamphlets and are distributing them. Even some so-called "devotees" believe the statements. Never believe such things. They have also been spreading falsehoods, by word of mouth, from one person to another. You should never listen to unpleasant statements. Even if you hear them, you should not talk about or spread the rumors. It is only a sign of one's weakness to listen to and talk about such things.

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—Editor



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