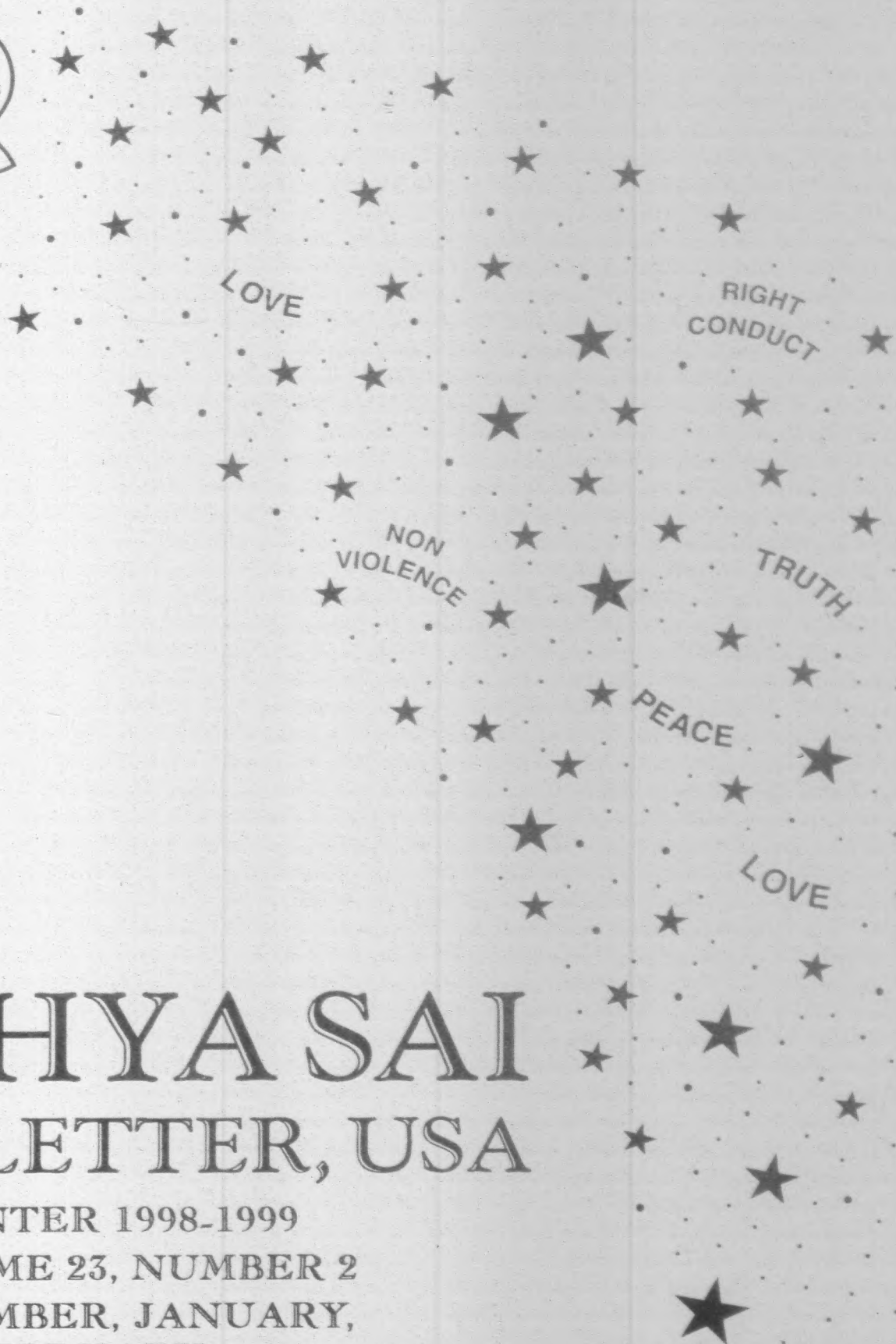
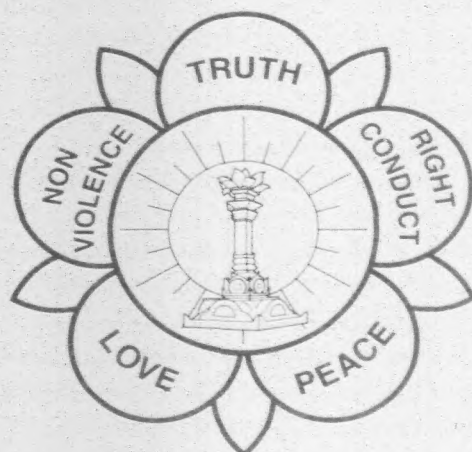




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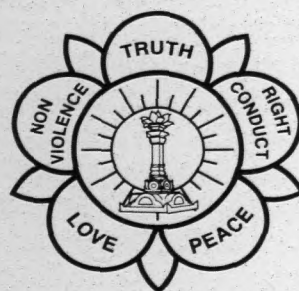
*This publication is dedicated with love and devotion to
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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Sathya Sai Service Opportunities Newsletter.....*An Enclosure*

Compiled and Edited by *Judith Wechsler*

***The Sarva Dharma symbol of the Sri Sathya Sai Organization depicts
the five qualities from which all human values emanate.***



The *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA* welcomes photographs, drawings and literary contributions. Sorry, but we are unable to return any items which are sent to us, so please keep a copy for your files. We reserve the right of discrimination in selecting and editing for publication. Kindly send any material to: **Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA, c/o Sathya Sai Book Center of America, 305 West First Street, Tustin, California 92780-3108, or Fax to: (909) 337-5270.**

—*Barbara Bozzani, Editor*

Sai's Birthday Message



On this auspicious day [November 23], realize that it is a day of rebirth for each one of you.

Every year, the message I give you is the same in essence, for Truth never changes. Birthdays present an opportunity for the spirit to grow and break out of a state of stagnation where time passes, and life is just existence without any meaning. That is not good. But now, once again, you have the opportunity to make that vital decision to change your whole way of life, and your attitude to all and everything. Let this be a day of celebration, celebration of your own awakening from the sleeping state.

The Lord is always there, watching every movement, every action; He is aware of every thought which passes through your mind. Just reflect upon the significance of that truth. Make a new start today.

—Sathya Sai Baba

From a Sathya Sai EHV pamphlet

It's All for Our Own Good

Baba's grace showers during the Christmas festivals. The Christmas program includes a play and two choirs. Department heads for the productions are chosen, e.g. a play director, chorus leader, props, lighting, costumes, make-up, art and design, plus the stage manager and other personnel. It's a huge crew of people. The department heads then choose their own staff. The idea is to involve as many devotees as possible, because it is a special privilege to be serving in these ways. I try to remember, at all times, that this small play is within His bigger play. We have a budget and meetings just like an off-Broadway production.

Once Swami's permission is given, the process of selecting a suitable children's play begins. These are original plays with Christmas and Baba themes, written by nonprofessionals. Usually, there are about 10 days from the start to the finished performance. Baba wants as many children as possible to participate. Last year, 1997, there were 171 children in the play. The children mime the parts; adults, hidden in a well just below the stage, speak or act out the actual voices.

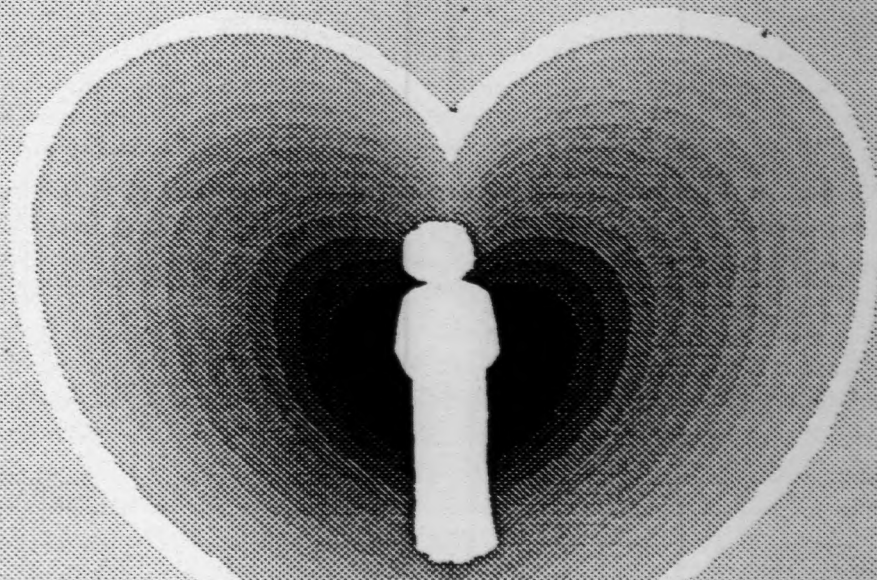
One of the program's unspoken but perhaps most important function is to provide a vehicle for everyone involved to feel, sense and experience firsthand the miracle of Baba's omnipresence. During the production, there will be hundreds of problems. The miracle is that somehow, no matter how great the obstacles, the problems magically get solved. This happens so frequently that

everyone begins to realize Baba is there with us each and every minute. However, the miracle of His omnipresent solutions only happen when we surrender, and let His will be done. If we insist on thinking that we are the doers, then the difficulty stays with us until we learn to surrender.

For instance, we needed 150 chairs for seating during the choir's performance, but only 100 could be found. We tried everywhere, from offices to canteens, without any success. So, we just accepted the 100, but when a truck arrived, there were 150 chairs. In the dress rehearsal, the lighting was so bad that the audience could not see the children's faces nor the gorgeous costumes that were miraculously manifested in three days. There was just not enough light. We didn't know what to do, but suddenly several men appeared placing sandbags around the base of new stage lights. When you see problems dissolve in front of your eyes, you know that you are experiencing Baba's divine hand.

We started the program on December 16. Then, on December 20, there was an announcement which stated, "Anyone who is staying outside the ashram **cannot** participate in the program." This meant anyone who was connected in any way with the program, and included all the technical people, carpenters, stage hands, artists, props, costumes, make-up, purchasing, and of course, the entire cast, both choirs and all of the children and adult narrators. This was a totally unexpected new rule.

The initial reaction was a chaotic



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move back inside. They had to quit the production, and replacements had to be found,

which consisted of several department heads, a child who was one of the main characters, some narrators, prop and lighting people, plus some very disappointed children and choir people. Swami gave us challenges like these to see if we had the wisdom to let Him solve this dilemma. At the height of the turmoil, the person in charge did not panic. Instead, he said, "Swami says, '*Everything that happens is for our own good.*'"

However, there were parents and children crying together. Fear and misery ruled the day. There were a few who said, "Trust Swami. There is a reason for this; if we surrender and wait, He

ing ground' is that we can remain untouched by all things that seem to be catastrophic."

in three days. There were the usual small problems—with props, a backdrop, or songs—but, somehow, Swami showed us how to solve them. Within four days, the entire cast came together. Everyone, almost as if under a magic spell, began to work harmoniously together as an example of Swami's "unity principle." Both the main chorus and the chorus for the play gave the audience a rare combination of Christmas carols and exquisite loving tributes to Baba. In the end, the audience thoroughly enjoyed a beautiful celebration of both Christmas and our devotion to our beloved Lord.

One of the best ways to experience Baba's omnipresence is to become involved in some activity. It doesn't make any difference what you do; you could be

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uproar of despair. People were rushing around desperately trying to move from an outside room back into the ashram. The announcement stated that they had one day to move back, and if any person from the outside tried to participate, the entire program would be canceled! One major difficulty was the "30 day visitation rule." After staying in the ashram, devotees must leave to make room for other visitors. So, people in the program who had been forced to move outside by the 30 day rule would not be allowed to move back inside. They had to quit the production, and replacements had to be found,

which consisted of several department heads, a child who was one of the main characters, some narrators, prop and lighting people, plus some very disappointed children and choir people. Swami gave us challenges like these to see if we had the wisdom to let Him solve this dilemma. At the height of the turmoil, the person in charge did not panic. Instead, he said, "Swami says, *'Everything that happens is for our own good.'*"

However, there were parents and children crying together. Fear and misery ruled the day. There were a few who said, "Trust Swami. There is a reason for this; if we surrender and wait, He

will help us." We were told Swami said, *My devotees are inside.* Does that mean inside the ashram or those fortunate enough to have learned to live inside their hearts?

The program moved forward. We had just four-and-one-half days left when rehearsals started. Most of the people

had never worked together before but, somehow, Swami's miracle began to take shape. The child actors learned their parts, the dancers moved beautifully, and the most imaginative costumes were designed, cut and sewn in three days. There were the usual small problems—with props, a backdrop, or songs—but, somehow, Swami showed us how to solve

them. Within four days, the entire cast came together. Everyone, almost as if under a magic spell, began to work harmoniously together as an example of Swami's "unity principle." Both the main chorus and the chorus for the play gave the audience a rare combination of Christmas carols and exquisite loving tributes to Baba. In the end, the audience thoroughly enjoyed a beautiful celebration of both Christmas and our devotion to our beloved Lord.

One of the best ways to experience Baba's omnipresence is to become involved in some activity. It doesn't make any difference what you do; you could be

"We need to be involved, and then do our job the best way we can, whatever the circumstances. At the same time, keep our sense of detachment and be a witness, as if it is all just a film or play. The wonderful thing in this 'inside testing ground' is that we can remain untouched by all things that seem to be catastrophic."

working in the kitchen or the bakery. Any type of service where you interact with other people, and where you can experience the trials of ego, is an opportunity for spiritual growth.

Baba is always telling us that we should try to be unattached and witness what happens. Reporting this experience makes me “witness” the events. It has become clear that the people who agonized over some of the production problems were the ones who thought what was happening was **real**. Those who surrendered recognized that this was all Baba’s play, His *leela*, and were untouched. They saw the drama for what it was, a play within a play.

We need to be involved, and then do our job the best way we can, whatever the circumstances. At the same time, keep our own sense of detachment and be a witness, as if it is all just a film or play. The wonderful thing in this “inside testing ground” is that we can actually remain aloof and untouched by all things that seem to be catastrophic. This is because things are only real if we allow them to be. Back home an earthquake, war, or plague on TV is so easy to ignore. The ashram has an enormous value in offering us a place to safely act out the dramas of life, where the only people who can get hurt are those who get trapped into thinking that what is

going on is real or meaningful. Perhaps the secret is to find a ladder and climb up and out of the morass to a better vantage point. There, we can get the perspective to witness what is happening—whether in the ashram or at home—as a wonderful drama designed to teach us equanimity in the face of what we used to think were catastrophes.

It now becomes clear, why it is necessary to adopt Swami’s rule that only those who are inside the ashram can participate in the Christmas program. It is because He creates a ring of protection that exists inside the ashram. He provides us with a safe playground where we can act out and, hopefully, empty out many false ideas. He forces us to see the truth by exposing us to suffering and pain. Once the veil of self-induced delusion is removed, we gain the insights we need to continue our spiritual growth at home, as well as in Prasanthi Nilayam.

In Baba’s Christmas discourse, He said, yet again, “*Whatever happens, say, ‘It is good for me. It is good for me.’*” He was once more emphasizing that He knows what experiences will help us to grow in the knowledge that we are all Divine. He bathes us in His omnipresence, and we are indeed blessed to be inside His ashram, protected by His grace.

—Jack O. Scher
Faber, Virginia

Men are like flint. Flint has latent heat, and when it strikes against another flint sparks emanate, and they become fed until a big fire is caused. The second flint is usually some calamity, loss or disappointment. These sharpen the mind and reveal truth. Success and prosperity deadens the intellect and makes intelligence blunt. Failure prompts inquiry resulting in the struggle to remove the causes thereof. So, welcome failure as it spurs activity.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Divine Thoughts for the New Year

There is no place in the world which is not pervaded by Divinity whether it is a city, a village, a forest or any other area. There is also no form in the world which is not Divine. Wherever one may be—whether on top of a mountain, in the depths of the ocean, or on level ground—God will come to the rescue of one who has no other source of help.

In Pursuit of Knowledge

People undertake many kinds of spiritual efforts (*sadhana*) in pursuit of knowledge of the Self. They may study all the scriptures, go on pilgrimages to holy places, seek the guidance of preceptors, or take up other types of *sadhana*, but they cannot attain Self-realization by these means, unless they turn their vision inward to understand their own higher Self. If they cannot understand their own reality, how can they expect to realize the latent Divinity within? In fact, only when they realize their own human qualities, will they be able to progress toward God-realization.

Buddha made a great effort in the attempt to acquire the wisdom of the inner Self (*Atma jnana*). He studied all the books available on the subject. He went on pilgrimages to holy places and had dips in holy rivers. He also met great saints and seers, but he could not find satisfaction. The reason for his failure to achieve his goal was that all these efforts were pertaining to the external, transient, and changing world which can be termed as negative. When done in the right manner, the proper path is to utilize the five senses. If you misuse the

five senses, gifted to you, and direct them toward wicked pursuits, how can you expect to realize God?

The First Step is Good Vision

What people should do is to understand the sacred purpose for which the senses are given to them, and put the senses to right use. That is why Buddha pronounced “good vision” (*samyak drish-ti*), as the first step in the right direction. This means that simply because you have the faculty of vision, you cannot go on seeing everything and everyone who meets the eye. You should develop sacred vision. You must see what is good and see no evil. That which is auspicious, Divine, and not detrimental to moral values may be taken as good. The vision which arises from the depth of the heart is sacred. What is seen by the physical eyes cannot be taken as pure and sacred. External vision is negative; that which comes from the heart is positive. The vision springing from the heart is positive and, when it is expressed through the negative aspect of the physical eyes, the resulting synthesis of positive and negative becomes sacred. You should develop this sacred vision through the eyes. This cannot be achieved when your feelings, thoughts, and actions tend to be negative or wicked.

Primary Need

Today, mankind is not fostering fear of sin, love of God and morality in society. That is why our country is in such a deplorable plight. In the modern world, fear of sin and love of God are absent;

there is no peace. The primary need today is to put the five senses, gifted to mankind, to good and proper use. If you cultivate good vision, you will breed good feelings (*samyak bhava*). This will, in turn, lead you to do good deeds. Performance of action is the main purpose of the human body. The thoughts arising from the heart should be expressed through words resulting in action through the limbs of the body. The purity of thought, word and deed is triple purity of the heart, tongue and body.

The saying that the "proper study of mankind is man" refers to this harmony in vision, thought and deed. This harmony reflects genuine humanness. Undertaking elaborate study of spiritual literature and making pilgrimages to holy shrines will be useless, unless you have proper vision. With this truth in view, Buddha prescribed *samyak drishti* or right vision as the basis for pursuing the wisdom of reality.

Words from the Heart

The person who spoke earlier referred to the axiom, "Help ever, hurt never." Everyone should follow this principle and try to extend help to the needy to the best of their ability and avoid giving trouble of any type, not by thought, word or action. If it is not possible to help, at least you should desist from harming anyone even in thought. The day when you develop *samyak drishti*, (good vision), you will be able to speak *samyak vaak* (good words), too. The words that emanate from the depths of the heart will always be good and true. The words coming from the throat or tongue are not good. Words should come from the heart, so that they will reflect

love and compassion which reign in the heart. Vision, speech, action and hearing should all be sacred and good (*samyak*). You should certainly conduct self-inquiry as to whether the vision or speech comes from the depth of the heart or not. This is the right spiritual inquiry which insures the purity of the heart.

About Buddha and Divinity

Buddha's cousin, Ananda, met with him after Buddha attained Nirvana (Enlightenment). Ananda shed tears because Buddha had given up worldly attachment and was getting ready to shed his mortal coil. He sought advice from Buddha entreating him to show the right path. Buddha told his cousin, "I am very close to liberation. You must also come to this state." People lament over the death of their kith and kin. This is sheer folly because one who laments over the death of another will also have to die later. Only God is beyond birth and death; He has no beginning and no end. God is the eternal witness who always shines in full glory. Birth and death are inescapable for all except the Divine. While this is so, why do you cry? You also must make an effort to understand the truth that the God who is eternal is in everyone. Turn your vision toward the Divine. He is everywhere.

God has hands and feet everywhere, He has eyes, faces, ears and mouths everywhere, and He is pervading every place in the universe. What does this mean? It implies that all the beings in the world are only His multiple manifestations. Every being is the embodiment of the Divine. That is why the *Upanishad* (scripture) declares that, "All this world is pervaded by Iswara, the Divine."

Everyone is an embodiment of God. You are deluded that you are only human, basing your assumption on the body. The body may be human, but the Divine is enshrined in the human frame. You are not one person but three, the one you think you are, the physical body; the one others think you are, the mental body; and the one you really are, the *Atma* (Indwelling Divinity).

Offer All Acts to the Lord

Human life is an amalgamation of three entities. So, how should we pray? The import of prayer is that these are a combination of three attributes—*sathwic* (calm, pure, good, pious), *rajasic* (angry, greedy, hateful, over active), and *tamasic* (dull, inactive, lethargic)—and the three entities of body, mind and *Atma* (the Divinity that all possess). Such a person should offer himself to the Lord. How is this done? By offering all acts to the Lord.

In order to develop such a sacred ideal, one should have good vision. If your view is not good, your actions will not be good. When there is pure water in the storage tank, you will be able to get pure water from the tap which is connected to the tank. If the water stored in the tank is dirty, then dirty water will come out through the tap. The human heart is the tank, and all the sense organs are the taps. Meditation, spiritual exercises, and other methods are all external. These are all negative pursuits and may give only temporary satisfaction. No positive results can be achieved if there is no sense control.

How do the *Vedas* (scriptures) describe the positive state? The *Vedas* declare, "The entity which is attributeless,

immortal, ancient, eternal, transcending time and space, is permanent and of blemishless purity." We should have such a permanent entity as our basis. If we rely on temporary things, our lives will become meaningless. *Atma* is permanent; body is transient. So, we should have *Atma* as our basis. This should be our fundamental principle. If you fill your heart with sacred feelings and thoughts, your speech, hearing, attitude and actions will all become sacred. But today, man does not bother about the purity of heart at all. He speaks as he likes, and subjects himself to suffering as a result thereof. Because he has the faculty of vision, he goes on seeing bad things. This gives rise to bad feelings, and wicked thoughts which lead to bad actions. The basic reason, therefore, is lack of *samyak drishti* or good vision. So, you must follow the dictum, "See no evil, see only good; speak no evil, speak only good; hear no evil, hear only good; think no evil, think only good; do no evil, do what is good." To insure this, one should control his senses. Whatever spiritual practices one may pursue, all will be wasted without control of the senses.

The *Atmic* Principle cannot be expressed by words, it cannot be comprehended by the mind or intellect. It is beyond all these. The *Atmic* Principle is in everyone as conscience; it is part of the all-pervasive consciousness, though limited to the adjuncts of the individual body. Consciousness is manifest everywhere. Only a drop of this is present in every being as conscience. Conscience is limited to the senses. When you sanctify the five senses, the conscience becomes sanctified, and it merges with the all-pervasive consciousness.

“Who Is He, Really?”

An old friend whom I had not see for many years came to visit and, seeing the photos of Swami, naturally became very curious about Him and my frequent trips to India. I gave her a general answer, creating an overview of His humanitarian work, educational reform and free medical services. On seeing Swami's diamond ring on my left hand, she asked if I was engaged. When I admitted that Sai Baba had manifested it, she looked at me straight in the eyes and asked, “Okay, who is He, really?”

What a dilemma! My friend knew of my spiritual quest from our association when we were both much younger. She could see that I had “found something.” The challenge I faced was how to answer her question without having her dismiss my statements as nonsense, or even worse, having her decide that I was a victim of a guru's cult.

During the early days of my association with Swami, I gave answer to that question with enthusiasm and joy, “He is Love embodied, God, the Christ energy returned!” Almost always a fast change in conversation occurred. As time went by, others wiser than me taught a softer reply. I learned to say, “A holy man in India, a great spiritual leader, a teacher of human values,” and let them find out more for themselves.

I didn't want to leave it there with this friend. I wanted to share what I knew with her. Casting about in my mind for a starting point, I suddenly thought of Jesus, walking in the Judean desert with a small band of disciples. A Jew, coming from an ancient lineage which

taught its followers to have strong ritualistic faith in a judgmental God. Taking a deep breath after mentally saying, “Swami, help!” I began speaking of Swami with this picture in my mind. I asked my friend—who is a church-going Christian—to imagine what it must have been like two thousand years ago. I asked, did she think if we were both living in Judea, we would have probably been Jewish? She agreed. I then said, “Okay. We have just heard of Jesus and His activities—a Jewish man, an itinerant preacher going about multiplying food, healing lepers, speaking about love and forgiveness of our enemies, and so forth—would we have gone to see Him to find out what was going on?”

Her reply made me laugh. “Well you would have! And you probably would have dragged me along saying something like, ‘Hey, I hear He walks on water!’” I thought, so far so good. I enlarged the scenario by reminding her that Jesus said at first, He was a messenger of God, then later, that God was His heavenly Father, and finally stated, “My Father and I are One.”

I asked, “Would you, as a good Jewish girl have accepted these statements Jesus made? Would you have recognized Him? Would you have believed Him to be who He said He was, One with God?” My friend sat quietly, deep in thought for some moments before replying. Glancing at me, immersed in her role of a young Jewish woman, she almost whispered, “This takes courage. I would have had to step outside my conditioning and think for myself on this, and my parents

would be horrified if they knew. Yet, there is something about this Jesus—He moves me.” Sitting up and giving herself a shake, she then said, “I can only

hope that I would have recognized Him.”

—Faye Bailey, England

From her book, *Another Journey to Love Experiences With Sathya Sai Baba*



One Light

*The light appeared at Nazareth's gates
And Mother Mary smiled at me,
In silence now the form has changed
The Light will always be.*

*She called my name in every age
I bear it now in this,
For centuries crumbled in the dust
Have led me to Her bliss.*

*That bliss, in turn, has led me on
Across the sands of time,
Propelled by love and pushed by tears
To seek the most sublime.*

*I found Him walking earthly sands,
Unearthly was His peace
Familiar with His selfless love
Compassion without cease.*

*I thought, "It's true that all are one,"
Her pure heart leads to Sai
The path is straight, Her guidance sure
That love will never die.*

*Holy Mary, Mother of God,
You kept your promises to me
Your goal was Sai's eternal peace
Your lesson, purity.*

—Mary McGrath
Mt. Shasta, California

“Love My Uncertainty”

Love my uncertainty is Baba's standing advice to His devotees. To nondevotees as well as new devotees not used to the strange ways of the Avatar, His uncertainty may be irksome and inconvenient. However, most of us are familiar with the “uncertain” aspect of Baba. Whether at Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan or anywhere else, nobody knows His program beforehand. All sorts of rumors are set afloat. Everyone seems to keep guessing, in a state of wondrous suspense, about what to expect. Even on festival days, there are invariably no advanced announcements of details about *darshan* (seeing a holy being), *puja* (spiritual rites), *bhajans* (devotional singing), discourses or other special events.

So, it is worthwhile for us to try to unravel the mystery and the message behind His unpredictability. At the outset, we should guard against hastily and wrongly construing Swami's uncertainty as an indication of His being whimsical, erratic, irregular, or unpunctual and the like. That would surely be an unpardonable blasphemy. In all cases—where He fixes a definite date and time for any meeting, function or ceremony—Swami is scrupulously punctual to the very minute of the auspicious time, despite His not having a wrist watch. What then are the reasons for His uncertainty in other cases? To be sure, His uncertainty is a deliberate design meant for us to learn some valuable lessons. So, let us first focus our attention on the central purpose, and then consider the peripheral benefits of His unpredictability.

Whose Uncertainty?

The central purpose will show up if we carefully analyze the three words in His exhortation: *Love my uncertainty*. Here, the words, *my uncertainty* are used by Swami as a figure of speech called the “transferred epithet.” It means that He has transferred our uncertainty to Himself, just the way He sometimes takes upon Himself the disease or suffering of others who are helpless and deserving of His help. Otherwise, how could there be any uncertainty in the Lord or for Lord Sai who has unequivocally proclaimed that His will (*sankalpa*) is invincible, immutable and irrefutable, and who is the inner and outer motivator of the whole universe with its cosmic rhythm operating with regularity at His Divine behest? There can, therefore, be no uncertainty whatsoever in or for Him who is the creator and sustainer of the universe. Uncertainty is only in and for man who often creates chaos in the cosmos created by God.

It becomes clear that it is not His uncertainty but it is our own uncertainty about Him that creates discomfort for us. When we use the word “our” what does it mean? As Baba puts it, we are three in one: body, mind and spirit (Self or *Atma*). We know that the true Self or *Atma* has no problem of uncertainty. Uncertainty relates only to the body and mind which together constitute the false self or ego which is nothing but the feeling of “I” and “mine.” If, when the ego is eliminated, the two words “my uncertainty” are eliminated automatically,

leaving only the first word, "Love," which is a synonym for Divinity.

Erase the Ego

Thus, the problem of uncertainty boils down to the problem of eliminating the ego. But our ego has become deep rooted and strongly entrenched due to its persistence, life after life. Hence, it cannot be jettisoned overnight. Persistent and prolonged effort is needed for this. Therefore, the central message of the Sai aphorism or sutra, "Love my uncertainty," is to love the effacement or erasure of the ego. But, the erasure of the ego, otherwise called the self or *jiva* (individual), can be effected only when it is subjected to erosion by the swift currents of uncertainties or vicissitudes of life in the form of the inescapable ups and downs inherent in life; just as a rugged stone becomes smoother and rounded due to the erosion in a running brook.

Therefore, the individual who has entered the University of Life as a student, is exposed to several learning experiences which, when properly learned, enable him to go beyond uncertainty and, instead, to go in and through uncertainty. This may sound paradoxical, just like Swami's statement that one has to go beyond name and form—but has to go through name and form, or reach the Real through the unreal—and know the Creator through His creation. The individual has to recognize that the only certainty in life is uncertainty. There is uncertainty about diseases, accidents, marriages, friendships, properties, jobs, positions, wealth, reputations, bereavements, natural calamities, so on and so forth. In fact, all aspects of life are riddled with uncertainties. That is why

Swami says, *You insure because you are unsure*. Baba is, therefore, training us to live with all the uncertainties of life without being unduly perturbed, by subjugating the ego and developing the needed equanimity buttressed by the implicit faith that God will reveal what we need to know, give us what we need or deserve, and show us what we need to see, all in His own way and time, based on His unerring divine judgment.

Live and Act in the Present

Now coming to the other benefits of Baba's uncertainty, we have to recognize that He is grooming us to overcome our common weakness of unduly brooding over the past and worrying about the future. Most of us rarely, if ever, live in the present. We are almost always in the past or in the future; in the past, regretting past mistakes, feeling guilty of past sins, gloating over past achievements, or resenting past injuries caused by others. Or, we often live in the future, dreading possible calamities and unpleasantness, anticipating future joys and dreaming of future events. This is why Baba points out, *The great cause of human suffering in the world is that the elders always live in the past, the youngsters always live in the future, but none lives in the present*. Since our feelings of uncertainty are centered around our futile concern about the past and the future, Swami admonishes us to live in the present, which according to Him is *omnipresent*.

The whole point is that activity, effort or experience is possible only in the present, but not in the past nor the future. Such being the case, is it not indiscreet on our part to waste our precious present by dissipating our energies

and becoming devitalized due to undue concern for the past and future? Bhagavan asks us to *Aspire now, adore now, act now, and achieve now*, without any attachment to the past or anticipation or anxiety about the future, thereby living from moment to moment and from movement to movement.

Always Be Ready

Back again to the comparison of the individual to the student. In quite a few educational institutions, they conduct what are called "pop quizzes," unannounced examinations or tests of short duration. The element of uncertainty in the timing of these tests keeps the students on their toes, and induces them to be alert and always prepared for tests. Similarly, Baba wants us always to be prepared, just like the pious tribal woman, Sabari of the Ramayana, who was always ready—day after day, month after month, and year after year—to receive and serve her Lord Rama whenever He might visit her humble hermitage in the forest. So, to encourage us to be ever ready is another reason why Swami wants us to "Love His uncertainty."

Don't Take Him for Granted

Swami's uncertainty also cautions us against taking Him for granted in any respect. For, if He were to adhere to a fixed pattern or schedule, it would be taken as a monotonous routine and a stale, pedestrian affair. This uncertainty makes the devotees think of Him more often than otherwise. The Sanskrit term *nava* holds good with Swami in two respects. *Nava* means "nine" which is called the divine number. *Nava* also means "ever-fresh." Everything about

Swami is ever-fresh, never stale because of this divine trait of His uncertainty. That is why we sing His praise as the "ever-fresh, tender One of blue cloud complexion."

Suspense and Thrill

Another message of Swami's uncertainty is that of the suspense and thrill implicit in it. For example, when our parents, spouse, children or friends want to present us with some gift for our birthdays or marriage days, etc., they usually do it with a pleasant surprise to us, the thrill of which we would otherwise miss. Swami also says, *Life is a game, play it*. A game is fraught with the thrill of uncertainties as to who will win and who will lose. Take, for instance, the game of cards. Would any seasoned player put up his trump card except in the nick of the moment? Moreover, Swami compares life to a drama. Can there be any drama worth the name without the element of suspense? In short, Swami caters to our sense of surprise, suspense, excitement and thrill by asking us to Love His uncertainty and by playing hide and seek with us.

Teasing and Teaching

How many thrilling dramas of suspense does Baba enact with His devotees day in and day out? Mind you, the teasing involved in such dramas is only for teaching us valuable lessons in a dramatic manner. These dramas are strategically designed both to entertain and enlighten us. They reveal to us what He means when He sings enchantingly about Himself: *O compassionate Sai Rama! You induce tears and wipe off tears!* These are but the tantalizing and

playful ways of His divine grace.

Considering His uncertainty as part of Baba, the playful divine child, the late professor Kasturi writes in his book, *Loving God*: "Playfulness is inherent in the relationship of God and man. Baba has written: *I created the world for my pleasure*. On another occasion, He declared: *I am directing this puppet show, and I am well-pleased with it*. Pricking bubbles, exploding ego balloons, demolishing aerial castles, playing hide and seek—these are favorite pastimes of His. *Love my uncertainty* is what the Divine Phenomenon advises us. And who can be more uncertain than a child? When distributing sweet *laddus*, inducing each devotee to catch the gift when He throws one in his direction. Once in a while, He throws an empty gesture and laughs at the disappointment He causes us. The next moment, He may give us two [*laddus*], with a pat on the back to soften the impact of disappointment."

The Overall Message

Life is a challenge, meet it, says Baba. He is asking us to meet the unavoidable challenge of uncertainties in life with serenity and self-confidence which will lead us to self-satisfaction and self-sacrifice (i.e., ego-sacrifice), culminating in Self-realization. This, indeed,

is the unique message of the Sai sutra: *Love my uncertainty*.

A Caveat

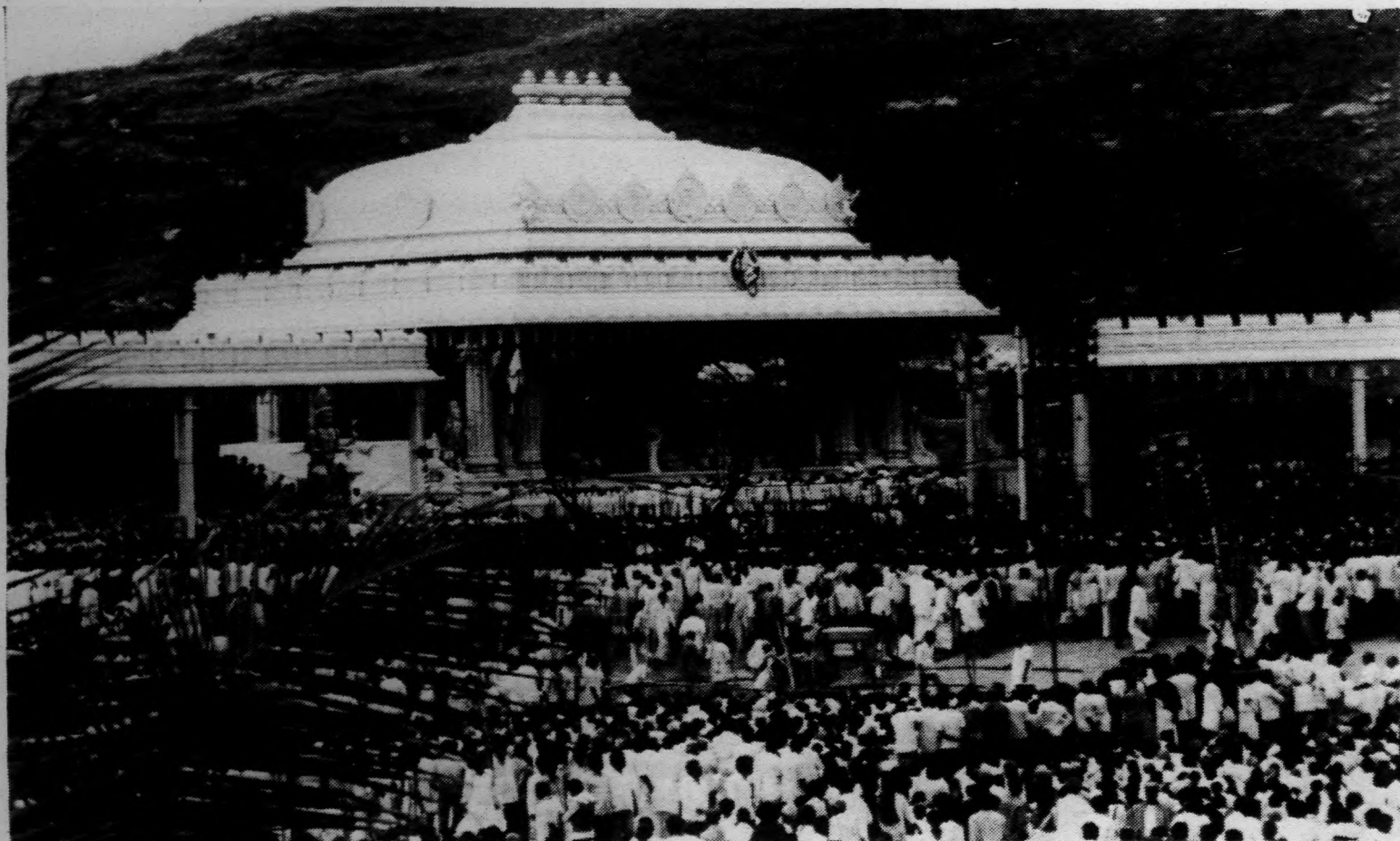
It is perhaps necessary to sound a word of caution against stretching the concept of uncertainty too far. It should not be construed as an alibi for inaction. It is good and even necessary to benefit ourselves from past experiences, whether they are successes or failures. But we should remember that we can derive the benefit of past experiences only by acting in the living present in the light of those experiences. We should always be prepared for an unexpected turn of events in the present. Likewise, it is desirable to plan for the future, but we should not forget that planning can be done only in the present. We should not be upset or dejected when our plans do not come through. Remembering the popular saying, "Man proposes and God disposes," we should make use of the God-given faculties to the best of our ability, but grieve not, and blame not God or anybody else when things go awry. We have to take everything as Swami's *prasad* (holy food), and sincerely say, "Lord! Thy will be done," with the firm faith that God does everything for our own good.

—Dr. A. Adivi Reddy
Gainesville, Florida

Life is a gift of God. It has come from Atma, but you are misusing human life; you are an aspect or spark of God. How careful you should be to earn the name, "Child of Immortality." Removal of immorality is immortality, which is culture and refinement. Hands in society, and head in the forest. Forest is for rest. You have all the comforts at home, but your mind is restless. Place your mind in trust for God and earn your interest; that is real rest. . . . The purpose of life is to reach the destination, God, and not to be born again and again.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Brindavan, March 24, 1996

Sai Talks about His "Birthday"



Baba on stage, in the circle at Hillview Stadium with a small portion of the crowd during His sixty-fifth birthday celebration.

Embodiments of Love, you are experiencing great joy in feeling that you are celebrating my birthday today [November 23]. For me, there is no birthday to be celebrated. It is for your happiness, for your sake and to fulfill your own wishes that I have agreed to take part in various programs arranged for today. If one has no birth, there is no death. If there is death, then one must have been born. Birth and death are action and reaction, I am beyond both.

The body has no permanence. It is like a bubble on the water; it rises from water, expands in water and merges in water. People are the bubbles; God is the water. Without water, the bubble cannot come into existence. All human bubbles are born in God, grow in God, and, ultimately, merge in Him. Why rejoice in the birth of a bubble or mourn its disappearance? As long as you have a body, engage yourself in sacred tasks, dedicate all your thoughts and actions to the Divine.

I must ask you to give me, as a birthday offering, only these things: Reduce your selfishness; abate your wrong desires; foster your spirit of sacrifice, and grow into noble human beings. If you dedicate yourself to these objectives, you will realize the purpose for which you attend this celebration and derive immeasurable bliss.

—Sathya Sai Baba, *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Volume XI, Chapter 11

Baba's Guru Pournima Discourse

Embodiments of Divine Love! People resort to several religious practices to liberate themselves from the cycle of births and deaths. They undertake disciplines—like penance, chanting the Lord's name (*japa*), the study of scriptures and going on pilgrimages—all for their own selfish interest—not for God's sake. None of these practices or other rituals will help them in this respect. It is only selfless service to fellow beings that will lead to liberation. Service or *seva* is the best form of penance, worship and *japa*. If money is lost, it can be earned again. If friends are lost, one could gain [new] friends. If the spouse is lost, one could marry again. But if the body is lost, one cannot get back the same body again. Therefore, the body is a sacred and precious gift of God. What is the purpose for which we should take care of this body? It is only for the sake of practicing righteousness (*dharma*), and serving others. Human life is very rare to obtain; it is highly sacred, being a repository of noble character. If we do not recognize the value of this human birth and make proper use of it, then, what is the reason for being born as human beings? People are born with the marvelous faculties of research, inquiry and reflection about Truth. It is because of these faculties that philosophy, science and fine arts are being created and fostered since time immemorial.

Search for Truth

However, it is regrettable that by and large, man is not properly using these God-given gifts in the right way. For in-

stance, some people look at the trunk and branches of a tree, ignoring the roots. Some others direct their attention to the roots only, neglecting the trunk and branches. Scientists belong to the former type, while philosophers come under the latter category. But what is needed for a correct, full understanding of Truth is a comprehensive or wholistic view of the entire tree, not a fractional approach.

Don't Give Up

There is a good illustration in Hindu mythology. Demi-gods (*devas*) and demons (*danavas*), once upon a time, began churning the ocean of milk. In the process, they came across poison. But without becoming frustrated, they remained undaunted and went ahead with the churning. As a result of their persistent efforts, they later obtained the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, the celestial white elephant, Airavata, nectar, *amritam*, and other precious things. Likewise, people today have to churn the ocean of milk within themselves, namely, their own hearts, to arrive at the Truth. In the initial stages, they may have to face some disappointments. But without any sense of dejection or despair, they should persistently pursue the path. Then only will they be crowned with success in gaining the precious wealth of virtues and values like righteousness, justice, truth, forbearance, compassion and love. Today, instead of making an effort to attain such qualities of enduring value, people are wasting their lives by striving to acquire worthless things.

It Is All Around Us

In the search for Truth, we may not come face to face with Divinity in the beginning. However, we will get the benefit of some sign or intimation of Truth and Divinity. How? In order to show the polestar to a person, we point out to him the branch of a tree and tell him that the polestar is over the branch. In fact, there is no relationship between the branch and the star. Likewise, all our words, actions, looks, etc., are part and parcel of the process of the search for Truth; they are all indications of the existence of God. When we look at the vast ocean and its waves, or the mighty mountain with its high peaks and thick greenery, we feel a sense of exhilaration and inspiration. Such natural scenes in God's creation remind us of the Creator, although we cannot directly see Him. We see a mighty tree coming out from a minute seed, or a fine fledgling hatching out of an egg, or one creature giving birth to an offspring, or a flower sending forth sweet fragrance. From milk, we get smooth, soft butter. All these are pointers to the underlying essence of Truth. These phenomena demonstrate to us the triune aspects of creation, sustenance and dissolution. We see the manifestations of Divine Truth everyday, all around us. Instead of grasping the Divinity underlying these phenomena, we go on questioning the existence of God, decrying Him or altogether denying Him.

Where Is God?

It is easy to criticize God, but very difficult to seek and succeed in discovering Him. Why? God exists as Truth in Truth, as untruth in untruth, as bad in bad, as good in good, as sacred in sacred

and as sin in the sinful. It is based on this that the *Bhagavad Gita* asserts that God is the very essence of everything in this universe. In other words, God exists in the world in the same way as sugar and sweetness in syrup, as butter in milk, as fragrance in the flower, as humanness in human beings. He is the very essence of everything. He cannot be seen physically; He can only be experienced.

The *Vedas* have declared that God creates, sustains and destroys the universe. Not only the *Vedas*, but also the *Upanishads*, *Koran*, *Granth Sahib* and other sacred texts testify to the truth of God being the sole Master or Controller of the three aspects of life. Nobody, whether he is a philosopher, scientist, doctor, engineer or, for that matter, anyone belonging to anyplace or anytime, can deny the triune phenomena of creation, maintenance and destruction. This is born out by the very word "God" in English. "G" stands for generation, "O" stands for organization and "D" for destruction. Thus by analyzing every word and syllable, we can understand Truth or Divinity that underlies everything. The world has no existence apart from the triple aspects of creation, organization and dissolution, all are under the complete control and will of the Lord.

Heart is the Source

What should we follow in order to understand such a divine principle? Man's heart is the source of all his thoughts. So, if the heart is pure and sweet, automatically all thoughts, words and deeds will become sacred and nectarine. Good or bad does not come from outside; both emanate from within one's heart only. That is why it is said:

*Pain and pleasure are both inter-
twined;*

None can ever separate the twain;

*Nor can we witness unmixed plea-
sure anywhere;*

*What is called pleasure is but the
fruition of pain.*

—Telugu poem

To Attain Peace

The truth of everything is the One appearing as the many. To discover and experience this principle of oneness is the supreme goal of human life. Among all creatures, to be born as a human is said to be a rare privilege. But what is that privilege? It is the realization that the same Self or *Atma* that resides in you, resides in everybody and is in everything in the universe. Not merely this, but man's body consists of the five sheaths or *kosas*: the physical or the food sheath, the vital or the life sheath, the mental sheath, the intellectual or the wisdom sheath and the sheath of bliss. Of all these five, the intellectual sheath does not exist in any living being other than man. So, how can man—endowed with such a rare faculty as wisdom—be considered as an ordinary or insignificant creature? By not making proper use of this rare gift of wisdom, man defeats the very purpose of his human estate or status. Forgetful of his true nature, man is restricting himself to the food sheath. As long as we confine ourselves to this physical food sheath, we cannot attain peace.

The sage Narada had mastered all sixty-four branches of knowledge. Yet, he was suffering from lack of peace. At

last he approached another sage, Sanatkumara, and prayed to him:

“Swami, remove my ignorance, and bless me with the knowledge that will confer peace on me.” Sanatkumara replied: “Oh Narada! There is no branch of knowledge unfamiliar to you; you have mastered all the scriptures. But what you have acquired is all bookish knowledge. Such transient, theoretical knowledge cannot give you peace. Spirituality begins where science ends. All knowledge pertaining to the body and other ephemeral things come under science. Of course, you have to take care of the body, but you should not consider it as the end or aim of life. It should be recognized as a tool or means for achieving all things, including Divinity. You say, ‘This is my body, my mind, my intellect,’ and so on. But who are you? No one pays attention to this vital question. When you say, ‘This is my handkerchief,’ you know you are different from the kerchief. Similarly, when you say, ‘My body,’ you are different from the body. So, you should know who you are. But instead of that, you are wasting time in trying to know everything about the transient scenario around you.”

Inherent in your body is Divinity. All other things are the negatives; you are the positive. You should forget the negative and experience the positive. Negatives yield only negative values. The main reason for restlessness in the world is due to paying attention to the negatives. All this is matter; you are the master. Master the mind to become a mastermind. That is true knowledge as contrasted with bookish knowledge. For several things to be achieved in life, love (*prema*) and sacrifice or renunciation

(*thyaga*) are the two prerequisites.

During the reign of Queen Victoria, her Prime Minister, William Gladstone—who was highly intelligent, well-educated and a shrewd politician—carried out his duties with love, sacrifice and faith in God. He dealt softly and sweetly with everyone; he never experienced lack of peace. His biographer wrote that he was a noble soul and spiritually evolved.

Where there is pure love, sacrifice and other virtues, there is God. So, man is verily an embodiment of God. In him lie all latent, divine qualities, but he should make them patent by putting them into practice in daily life. It is man who gives value to things like diamonds, gold and land. But people are more valuable than all the wealth of the world. People are repositories of all divine qualities, of which Love and compassion are most important. God is Love; Love is God. Therefore, always live in Love. In this expansive universe, our Love should also be expansive, not restrictive. Only then, do we deserve to be called human.

Indian Culture

All the problems, trials and tribulations in this world are mere passing clouds, but our values are more important and lasting. Hence, we have to cherish and nourish human values. We ruin ourselves by ignoring these values and healthy traditions. The ancient traditions and culture of Bharat (India) have withstood the onslaught of time for more than 5,000 years. Indian culture is like a gigantic tree that has sent its roots deep down into the permanent water table underground and, consequently, it does not wither or dry up. That permanent water table is Divinity. This is the reason why

why the Bharatiya culture has not declined or disappeared like many other cultures in the world. It is a changeless culture which is unique. But, disregarding this priceless possession, modern man is running after trivial and transient comforts derived from science and technology. Despite all the so-called comforts, people are lacking peace. And without peace, how can there be happiness?

Winston Churchill once said, "Mankind has achieved many things, and has conquered many things, except himself." Even as the boy, Prahlada, told his father, the demon king, Hiranyakasipu, "What is the use of conquering the whole world without conquering your own senses and mind?" First of all, conquer your mind. The mind cannot be controlled by any means other than spirituality.

Significance of Guru Pournima

What is the spiritual significance of *Guru Pournima*? Who is a guru? There is only one guru and He is God Himself; all others are teachers but not gurus. But calling themselves gurus, many people take advantage of *Guru Pournima* festival as an opportunity to collect money and materials from their so-called disciples or followers. As a matter of fact, the syllable "gu" means the one who transcends the *gunas* or qualities; and "ru" denotes the one who has no form or *rupa*. So, the real guru is God alone who is devoid of qualities and form. Also "gu" stands for the darkness of our ignorance, while "ru" indicates the remover of such ignorance. Since God alone can dispel ignorance, only He can be called the true guru. The other so-called gurus are themselves steeped in ignorance, and they tend to mislead their disciples on

the wrong path. There are many gurus in various fields of knowledge pertaining to the material world, but they have commercialized the profession of teaching. Nowadays, this mercenary attitude has made its inroads into the spiritual field. The moment

such business mentality makes its appearance in the domain of spirituality, it ceases to be genuine spirituality.

The Two: love and Love

You should also try to understand the differences between worldly love and spiritual Love. Worldly love is ever eager to receive; but spiritual Love or Divine Love is always ready to give and expect nothing in return. That is the true mark of Divinity. In contrast to this, we tend to resort to the outward path. On the other hand, we should take recourse to the inward path. Of course, we have a necessity to engage ourselves in some worldly activities, but what is important is to perform them in a spirit of dedication, as offerings to God. This alone benefits man (*manava*). Who is *manava*? A



Baba accepting letters from devotees and followers during *darshan*.

combination of these—good thoughts, good conduct and good character—is what constitutes *manavatwam* or humanness. We must never give up Truth. Our lives must be changed into rivers in which Love flows continuously.

The Perennial Flow & the Mind

Recently, someone told me that he is bathing daily in a perennial river in Bangalore. “Where is the perennial river in Bangalore?” I asked him. From his reply, I understood that he considered the drainage canal as a perennial river! It is only the drainage canal that never becomes dry in the city of Bangalore. It is because, nowadays, people are spending their time in association with such perennial flow of polluted effluents that they are suffering from ill health. The

pollution of the environment—including water, atmosphere and food—is responsible for several diseases. Not merely this, but the minds of most people are polluted and even deranged. There is a wrong impression that most diseases are due to contagion or infection. Actually, man has no diseases. Almost all diseases have their origin in hypochondria, i.e., mental depression and anxiety. Ninety percent of diseases are psychological.

A physician who was a heart specialist used to examine other people's hearts, and frequently examine his own heart. Because of his psychological obsession with the heart, he eventually died of a heart attack. Another doctor was engaged in the investigation of diseases pertaining to the digestive system. This gastroenterologist died of indigestion, because of his misgivings about his own digestive system. All this shows the influence of one's mind on one's health.

It is the mind which determines not only one's health, but also one's bondage and liberation. If the mind is pure, whatever you see, hear, speak or do will also be pure and sacred. The same key can lock or unlock, depending on whether you turn it to the right or to the left. Similarly, one's heart is the lock and one's mind is the key. If the mind is turned toward God, it results in detachment; if the mind is turned toward the world, it leads to attachment. We should not pollute our minds by turning them toward transitory, mundane matters. We should consider everything as Divine.

With Physical Eyes

The entire universe is filled with *Brahman* (the Supreme Absolute). When Vivekananda questioned Sri Ramakrish-

na whether the latter had seen God, he replied, "I see God just as I see you, and you see me." Then, Vivekananda asked, "I am unable to see God; can you show Him to me?" Ramakrishna admonished him, saying, "Fools go on seeking God, even though they are actually seeing Him everywhere. You are seeing with your physical eyes, therefore, everything appears as the material world to you. Look through the eyes of wisdom and feeling, then you will see only God all around you. But what is needed for this is sincere longing for God. People cry and weep for worldly things, but nobody weeps for the sake of seeing God. As such, how can they see God? It is impossible. Therefore, cry for God if you want to see Him."

If you can direct yourself, even for a moment, toward God, the intense yearning and striving which you devote to worldly things—like spouse, children, relatives, wealth, name and fame—God's grace will descend upon you, and the door of your heart will be opened by the key of Love. Without Love you cannot achieve anything; direct your Love toward God. Also love your mother, father and preceptor as Divine, but remember that they are to be regarded as only godly, but not as God Himself. Mother resides in the home and so does the father; the preceptor stays in a hermitage. Hence, they are to be considered as gods in their respective places. However, it is God alone who is the permanent resident of your heart. All the others are only external, ephemeral, physical bodies.

Know the Self While in the Body

You don't know when your frail physical body, composed of the five elements, will disintegrate and drop down dead.

The human life span is said to be 100 years, but you can never take that for granted. You are not certain when and where death will overtake you, whether in childhood, youth, adulthood or old age, whether in a village, forest or a watery grave. Among all these uncertainties, there is only one thing that is certain—that is death. So, a wise person is one who tries to know his true Self even while the body is alive.

*What is this body after all?
It is nothing but a filthy hovel,
A barrel full of fermenting and tormenting diseases,
A wooden log incapable of fording the sea of birth and death,
And a quiver holding a bundle of bristling arrows (of trials and tribulations).
Oh mind, never depend on this will-o'-the-wisp, called the body.
Take refuge at the lotus feet of the Lord.*

—Telugu poem

Again, of what use are various kinds of learning? They only result in vanity and pride of scholarship. Instead of such wasteful knowledge, turn your mind toward God. Nowadays, all types of spiritual activities—penance, worship, meditation, *japa* (chanting the Lord's name) and the like—are being undertaken only for selfish ends, but not for God's sake. Alternatively, if you are doing them for your sake only, then consider yourself as God. One who does these for the sake of God, will become God. Constantly repeat to yourself with firm conviction, "I am God, I am God." this is true meditation. This is the teaching of a real guru. To consider yourself a person is only a half-truth. To say that you are not an

animal is also a half-truth. It is a full truth to say, "I am a man, not an animal." And then, man should realize himself to be God. Therefore, replace the idea of your manhood by the idea of your Godhood. From dawn to dusk, our breath is constantly chanting, "*Soham*," 21,600 times during a 24-hour day. *Soham* means, "I am God." Your body is human, but the Indweller is Divine. Consider your body as the temple of God. Without God, there is no body. Develop the firm faith that the one God resides in all bodies. Then only will all bad thoughts and habits disappear from you.

From Human to Divine

There is one disease which is spreading widely and rapidly among mankind. What is this disease? It is egoism (*ahamkaaram*). This disease is common among people of all categories; the difference is only in degree, not in kind, or in quantity, nor in quality. This *ahamkaara* or ego should be totally destroyed along with its companion called *mama-kaaram* or attachment. The former says "I," while the latter says "mine." Both should be annihilated, since they are the main source of all evils in society. Once you get rid of these two, you become Divine. As mentioned earlier, it was because Prime Minister William Gladstone of England was free from these two, namely, ego and attachment, so that his biographer considered him to be Divine. We should follow cardinal human values in our dealings with others in our daily lives. You can always speak obligingly, although you cannot always oblige. This is the way to evolve and elevate yourselves from the human status, to the Divine level. *Manava* is man only in form

and appearance; but in reality, he is *Madhava* or God Himself. Man is the syrup; God is the sugar in the syrup, therefore, every person is Divine. In fact, the whole universe is pervaded by God and Love, but in order to see that God and Love, you should put on glasses of Love, not other colored glasses. However, the glasses that you wear should help your vision, not hinder or obstruct it. There is no virtue higher than Love which gives rise to all other secondary virtues like compassion, forbearance and tolerance.

Embodiments of Love! You are practicing different types of spiritual disciplines. God never wants your spiritual exercises; He wants only your Love.

A few hours earlier, our Central Trust member, K. R. Prasad came to me, and in the course of our conversation, he asked, "Swami, what is the difference between a devotee (*bhakta*) and a servant of God (*dasa*)?" I told him, "*Dasa* or servant is one who does service to God from the viewpoint of the physical body. A *bhakta* or devotee is one who always thinks of God, wherever he might be, regardless of physical proximity."

Shankaracharya had five disciples; one of them was very purehearted; the other four were interested in acquiring knowledge of the scriptures. One day, Shankara was teaching them grammar and logic as related to the sacred texts. The purehearted disciple was more interested in doing personal service to the guru. His attitude toward the guru was that of a *dasa* or servant. He was washing the guru's clothes on the far bank of the river. Later, while returning to the other bank where the preceptor was

teaching the disciples, suddenly there was a flood tide in the river. Undaunted by the surge of water, this disciple forded the river by chanting his guru's name with faith and reverence. He kept the bundle of his guru's clothes on his head, with firm determination to offer the bundle at his guru's feet before sunset, come what may. Wherever this disciple set either of his feet, there appeared a lotus to support him on the water.

After this wonderful miracle, his preceptor blessed him by giving him the name, Padmapada. *Padma* means lotus; and *pada* means feet. This name, therefore, was literally true of that disciple who was complimented by Shankara as an ideal disciple who considered the guru to be God. By his guru's grace, this disciple also became very proficient in the knowledge of the scriptures. But by hearing this story, don't be carried away by the impression that all the so-called gurus of today are to be served and worshiped as embodiments of God. On the other hand, consider God, Himself, who is the Master—of creation, organization and dissolution—to be your guru.

Now, who was Shankara? The one without any doubt (*shanka*) is Shankara. No one should entertain doubts about God. With total Faith and Love, you can achieve anything. Music, literature, dance and other fine arts can be acquired only by God's grace. Consider everything as God's gift. There will be no problems or suffering for anyone who has earned God's grace by dedication and surrender to Him. Always direct your thoughts, words and deeds toward God.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Guru Pournima, July 9, 1998

What's Up? Announcements

Don't Forget Your Photos!

Those who may be going to India for Baba's 73rd birthday or for any other reason, remember that two extra photos, passport size of each person in your party are required when checking into the ashram.

Should you forget the photographs, they can be done in the village, but that does take extra time away from ashram activities.

Airbus Schedule to and from Prasanthi Nilayam

Starting October 26, 1998, the airbus schedule is as follows:

Mon. and Fri. IC522	Airbus	Mon. and Fri. IC521
Mumbai (Bombay) depart 10:15 a.m.		Chennai (Madras) depart 13:30 p.m.
Puttaparthi arrive 11:35 a.m.		Puttaparthi arrive 14:10 p.m.
Puttaparthi depart 12:05 p.m.		Puttaparthi depart 14:40 p.m.
Chennai (Madras) arrive 12:45 p.m.		Mumbai (Bombay) arrive 16:00 p.m.

The Name

Swami has told devotees that their most important task is to protect the name of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. And how does one do that? One does that by being a good example of His teachings and rendering service to the needy.

Money

Please know that you will never be asked to donate money to the Sai Organization for any reason. Should you be asked to make a donation, you must realize that the person(s) asking are either ignorant of the rules and procedures of the organization, or they are trying to line their own pockets by misusing the name of Sai.

Catastrophes

From time to time, reports are circulated that Swami has predicted some great world catastrophe. These reports are false. Swami has said that He will never make predictions of that sort.

A Parade Is Planned

A parade of floats is offered during Swami's 73rd Birthday. Children between the ages of eight to 14, and who are in Prasanthi Nilayam by November 14, might be eligible to participate. Also, artists, painters, set and stage designers will be needed. This may also be an opportunity for Young Adults.

Any questions? Please call the coordinator for U.S. participants, Al Levy who resides in NY, ph: (914) 358-9487, or Juan Moore in CA, ph: (310) 325-0031.

The Theme for the Year, 1999, Is Nonviolence or Ahimsa

Sathya Sai Education in Human Values

National Conference, August 14-16, 1998

The conference began on Friday evening with a prayer and devotional singing led lovingly by Berniece Mead. This was followed by inspirational introductory talks from Dr. William Harvey for the National Sathya Sai Organization, and Robert Bozzani for the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Foundation. Bea Flaig then spoke of the purpose for the conference, and she gave a history of the program in the United States since 1983, and what we expect will be its future. Throughout these talks, importance was placed on the necessity for maintaining Sathya Sai's name for this educational program. The emphasis, as Swami has always stressed, is self-transformation; thus, it is incumbent upon each one of us to practice His teachings in our daily lives.

In the evening, we heard reports from Mary Keane, Kathy Feely and Creta Schiermann who had attended the Sathya Sai Education Conference of World Region B, for all Asia, held at Prasanthi Nilayam in July, 1998. The evening concluded with the viewing of one of Swami's discourses on education.

Saturday brought so much new information and inspiration. Dr. Michael Goldstein, President of the Sathya Sai Foundation, reminded us to always use Swami's name when referring to Education in Human Values, for it protects the sanctity of the program and preserves its Divinity. He also spoke of the importance of being an example of those teachings. Dr. Goldstein again mentioned that it is vital that we understand the deeper

meaning of Sathya Sai EHV—as Swami constantly tells us—it is 3 HV which stand for Head, Heart and Hands.

Cheryl Fraser—through the use of slides, songs and examples—showed us the keys to the phenomenal success that the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values program has had in the state of Hawaii. She pointed out that the purity of the system must be maintained by faith, example and intelligence.

Doris Hampton told of her success in using Sathya Sai EHV in the Montessori schools in Saint Louis and, following her, Dr. Malaika Horne spoke on a different approach in accessing the community for Swami's education program. Berniece Mead then described her recent meetings with the parents of various communities, all of whom wanted to bring a program of teaching values into the lives of children.

The conference members were also made aware by Robert and Barbara Bozzani of the cooperation given by the Sathya Sai Book Center of America, and the publications, *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*, and *Sai World for Children and Youth*. The Book Center and the two publications will work in support and harmony with the SSEHV program. Dr. Sastry Pappu shared with us personal Sai stories of which we never tire.

A great many hours were spent in subcommittee workshops on both Saturday and Sunday. The committees will forward their individual reports to members of their group, but it is important for everyone to note the following:

1. The Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Foundation, Inc. is now housed at the Sathya Sai Book Center of America, 305 West First St., Tustin, CA 92680, Phone (714) 669-0522, Fax (714) 669-9138. An education resource center is being set up in that building.

2. Materials, lesson plans, etc. will be sent to subcommittee chairpersons. They will review the work, and forward it to Bea Flaig of the Executive Committee. With consent of the other members of the Executive Committee and Dr. Goldstein for the Foundation Trustees, everything will then be sent to the Resource Center. This procedure will facilitate a reliable Education Center worthy of bearing the name of Sathya Sai Baba.

•The trustees of the Sathya Sai EHV Foundation are: Dr. Michael Goldstein, Robert Bozzani, Philip Budin, James Sinclair.

•Members of the Executive Committee of the Advisory Board are: Bea Flaig, Doris Hampton, Berniece Mead and Dr. Malaika Horne.

The Advisory Board Subcommittee Chairpersons are:

•Early Childhood and Elementary Schools—Kathy Feely

•Middle and High Schools—Creta Schiermann

•Post Secondary—Hymon Johnson

•Community—Megan Bennett

Members of the four subcommittees are also part of the Advisory Board.

3. Teacher training for Sathya Sai EHV will be in place soon. The best ways to reach regional needs will be carefully looked into.

4. Recognition will be given to the need for materials for parents as well as the availability of Swami's educational discourses.

5. Many of the immediate proposals of the Post Secondary Subcommittee are underway.

6. The manual for the community will continue to move ahead. A paper on accessing the community will also be formulated.

The Sunday program concluded with subcommittee reports, general discussion (which were ongoing throughout the conference), closing remarks by Dr. Goldstein and a closing prayer.

There is no doubt of the success of the conference, and we now await the next step for Sathya Sai Education in Human Values in the United States.

—Bea Flaig, Tucson, Arizona



Children are like fresh cloth; they can be given any color you like. Just dip them in that color, that is enough. Adults are like old clothes that will not imbibe color so easily or well. Hearts that are green and fresh will learn habits and disciplines quicker. For the learning of good habits and manners, age is no barrier, but training will enable children to learn more easily.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. II

How Grateful I Am

How grateful I am to Swami who made it possible for so many teachers and community service representatives to gather together for the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) Conference in St. Louis, Missouri [August 14-16, 1998]. Swami's presence was felt by us all, as we were encouraged to begin plans for implementing the Sathya Sai EHV program in public schools and communities.

That conference has made a profound impact on my work as a private teacher. In the past, I had always been very careful to silently demonstrate, as best I could, Swami's teachings in my work. As Swami gave me more work and increased the number of students I was to teach, I would occasionally say to myself, "I wish I could tell my students and their parents about Swami and His marvelous system of Education in Human Values." I began to integrate silent sitting, human values stories and quotations as part of my lessons. I left out the songs, not knowing how to implement them in a natural way for teenagers in public school. The nature of my work is such that I teach all subjects to children from first grade to twelfth grade. These students have one common deficit, lack of self-confidence. I have always been warned about proselytizing Swami's name in public, so I went to the opposite extreme and avoided any discussion about Sathya Sai Education Human Values, worrying

about the reaction I would get from my clients about a named spiritual leader and His approach to education. As good fortune would have it, the message at this conference was that now is the time to begin using Swami's name openly and use all facets of the SSEHV, too. With the fear of public reaction erased, I went home with a new confidence and promised to use the Sathya Sai EHV program completely, even the songs!

By Swami's grace, I had the opportunity to test SSEHV with two of my summer students, one a third grader, the other a seventh grader. The response from both the students and their parents was beautiful. When I described Sathya Sai Baba—as a universal master, spiritual teacher and the founder of SSEHV—they were delighted and grateful that there is now such a beautiful, positive, spiritual approach to learning. Both sets of parents had wonderful

"When I described Sathya Sai Baba . . . they were delighted and grateful that there is now such a beautiful, positive, spiritual approach to learning."

inquiries about the benefits of silent sitting and inspirational reading and music. I was very fortunate to have this experience

with two clients who knew me well from past work with their children. Swami says, *Be, then Do, then Tell*. How true this is! When we try as best we can to "be" what Swami asks us to be; to "do"

His work in the manner He asks us to do it; then the "telling" part is believable to those who are listening because, they have already witnessed the sincerity. The method must be as natural as breathing, so that its own rhythm will become a healing that promotes self-confidence, healthy living and good attitudes.

As a final comment, my students are creating their own human values stories, some of which are better than those I could ever write. As I am gaining confi-

dence in the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values program, my students and their parents are also gaining in self-confidence. So, by the abundant grace of our beloved Baba, we are touching upon a wonderful moment, the beginning of a healing in our public education system. How grateful I am to those who organized this conference and to Baba, who is our life's breath.

—Christine Kanakis
Poughkeepsie, New York



The teacher has the duty cast on him or her to watch every step of the pupil, and warn him when he takes a false step, develops a bad habit or entertains deleterious doubts. Like the farmer who has to be vigilant against the growth of weeds or the upsurge of pests, the teacher, too, must be ever alert to destroy the weeds of sloth and unsteadiness and the pests of vice.

The word "teacher" cannot denote these high roles; it can mean only those who transmit information, and train in skills. I direct that teachers, hereafter, be known by the vastly more important name, "guru," so that they may be conscious of the spiritual role which they have taken on, and its responsibilities and value. You are the lamps from which their tender hearts must receive light and love. By adherence to truth, righteousness, peace and love, you have to inspire these qualities in the children who come to you, and the homes from which they come.

There are many who shiver at the prospect, when they contemplate the future of their countries. You should never entertain such doubts and fears, for you are the builders of the future, and you know it will be glorious. The students whom you are guiding and inspiring will be the leaders of tomorrow. The virtues you implant in them, the counsel you are providing for them, the examples you place before them will remain carved in their memories and transform their outlook and behavior in the days to come. . . . The things learned during these early years stick to the memory and act subtly and silently on the growing mind to modify and purify their conduct in later years.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. IX, Chapter 1

"Help Ever, Hurt Never"

"We're a service van!," our upper school coordinator shouts. "Let's go," I say and leap out of our vehicle, which is stopped at a red light. Followed by six or seven of my fellow teachers, I trot through stopped traffic to a stalled truck in the left lane. Within seconds the light turns green, and we put our shoulders to the rear fender, roll the lame vehicle onto the parking lot of an Amco station on the adjacent corner. Climbing back into our school's van, we applaud ourselves, united by our spontaneous display of compassion.

We were on our way back from the Uptown Health Care Center, a nursing home where we had spent the afternoon talking with residents and making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the homeless. This was the first day of our faculty orientation, and I had asked to arrange this service project and an introduction to service in the context of our school. The stalled truck incident indicated to me that the brief lesson I'd offered had been taken to heart.

While this year began with a blaze of glory, last year, my first year of teaching, had not. A year ago, at about the same time, I had spent two hours sitting on the floor measuring and cutting out two-foot-tall purple paper letters which clearly stated, "Help Ever, Hurt Never." This was all I could think to do to decorate the cinder block walls of my empty classroom. I carefully affixed the letters to a huge piece of green paper and, with help, plastered the message above the chalkboard which spanned the front of the room.

Just back from the Sathya Sai World Youth Conference [held in July, 1997], where I had walked in orderly lines with my Sai sisters, where I had heard inspirational speeches by Sai devotees from around the world, and where I had tasted the cool breeze of the coming Golden Age. I had high hopes for my budding teaching career. My new job teaching seventh and eighth grade math and science at Denver's Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning espoused valuing both service and character education. It seemed an ideal opportunity to put Sai's high ideals into practice on U.S. soil.

My students arrived. They ignored my billboard. They ignored me, except for seizing every opportunity to hurl epithets and small, blunt objects in my direction. Billy and Trevor stared at me, eyes full of rage. They heckled one another relentlessly. They were the wildest bunch of kids I had ever met, and they knew it. The whole school knew that this was the "bad" class, the trouble makers, the kids no one wanted. They dared me to care about them. Confronted with their reality, my bliss bubble burst, and I did not know what to do.

I went home and cried. In all my life, I had never really failed, and now there was no clear path to victory. I did not know how to win. I drove back to work the next day, calling to Swami, insisting that He had to teach through me. Love had to win over their anger. Math lessons were met with Match Box toy cars zooming across the middle school students' desks. Class discussions, on any topic, invited absolute chaos. They were

out of control. How could it be possible that I had moved halfway across the country for this?

I stared at my own billboard, "Help Ever, Hurt Never." What did that mean? How could I help these kids who seized every opportunity to defy me? It seemed that they had been quite hurt already; they provoked people to hurt them; they were out to hurt others. How could I win them over? What would that help look like? As I pondered these questions, I realized that they were not going to let me help them until they trusted me, until they knew I cared, and trust seemed to be in low supply with this group. I gathered my courage and resolve; I started small by greeting them individually in the hallways, chatting before school, joking here and there (although few laughed). *Patience is all the strength man needs*, Swami says; I grew determined that I would win them over. Through their anger and defiance, they were begging for it.

While the culture in my classroom showed all evidence of instability, the steep mountainside at Eldorado Canyon was sliding down onto the road. In the canyon, a road crew had been at work building gabions, rock retaining walls wrapped with heavy chicken wire. I arranged for my class to help.

Every rock in every gabion had to be put there by hand. And that is what we were, twenty-seven pairs of hands. My crew formed a human chain up the steep slope. Every kid had a place to stand, and could not move his or her feet for fear of kicking loose rocks or sand onto the kids below. We handed up the rocks—one by one, one by one, for hours—to the tail crew on top, who placed them in

the gabions. Rocks, rocks, rocks! Each had to watch the person below to know when a rock was coming up, and then had to turn to the person above and check to see if he/she was ready for the hand-off. The consequences of a mishap was very real—a rock on someone's head! We spent the morning passing rocks, depending on each other, laughing together, glimpsing our unity.

But back in the classroom, it was more of the same.

I watched my students wage war against one another day after day, and I prayed to Swami night after night. I tried logic. I tried humor. I tried loving kindness. Working to get my point across—I read stories, showed videos, played games—with the intention of introducing to my students the possibility that they could treat one another and me compassionately rather than cruelly. After three long months which tested my patience, strength and faith, I felt anger welling up in me. I felt like I had tried everything, and I was still failing.

I remembered Swami's story of the snake: It seems that the snake was told by his guru not to bite, and he was left defenseless. The snake was subsequently trampled by all comers. Returning to his guru bruised and battered, he asked advice, and was told by the guru, "I told you not to bite, but you can still hiss!"

So, I decided to try a new tactic, one Swami uses when nothing else will get through. One rowdy day, while laughing inside, I yelled at the class at the top of my lungs, called them on every low shot they'd taken all year long, "hissed" at how they'd treated one another and me, and wondered why anyone of us wanted to walk into this classroom, day after day.

They sat in stunned silence and listened. They had never heard me raise my voice. I raged on, showing my frustration and my humanness, and my belief that they deserved better than what they were giving themselves. Finally, I paused and asked them how things needed to be different. They agreed that: We would respect each other; we would talk, one at a time; we would learn; they would leave their toys at home.

Then, things began to change. Slowly, one rock at a time, we rebuilt the culture in the classroom. A few months later—after a racially motivated murder in Denver—I invited my students to attend a peace rally downtown. Virtually all of them came. Before we left school, we spent some time preparing and making posters. Evan piped up. “Hey, we could take that ‘Help Ever, Hurt Never’ sign.” They had noticed it after all.

Spring brought great opportunities for service. In conjunction with our study of geology and erosion, I arranged for us to work at the South Platte Park on erosion control related projects. Alongside two resource rangers whose resources we became, twenty-four of us spent a month of Wednesdays building drainage systems, planting willow bushes and grass seeds, protecting trees from beaver damage and more. Outside, working with our hands, we were a cohesive and constructive crew.

After our service work, we always talked. First, we would review what we

did, then we’d discuss how we worked together, what we learned, and how we could apply the knowledge elsewhere—even in the classroom. These debriefings were always a great chance for me to hear the impact that the service was having on the kids. They would talk about teamwork and perseverance, about accomplishment and the feeling of doing something that really mattered. My own “wild crew,” after nine months, had been transformed into a cohesive collection of kids who understood the value of service.

And I, too, was transformed. That first year was a trying one, a year which challenged and strengthened the muscles of my faith.

Day after day, I ran home to Swami, insisting that these students were His, and that He had to work through me. Constantly, I fell back on those words, “Help Ever, Hurt

Never,” and grew to understand them in greater depth. Help does not always mean sweetness and gentleness; I think I helped my students most the day I drew the line with my compassionate hollering, a tactic which I previously considered hurtful. Help meant not letting the kids get away with misbehaving. Perhaps if I had been more confident and strict from the get go, I could have avoided having to raise my voice. Nonetheless, Love had won; Patience had won; Swami had won.

Liberated from the labor of proving myself, I began planning for this new

“Then, things began to change. Slowly, one rock at a time, we rebuilt the culture in the classroom.”

school year with renewed energy and strength. I decided that what my students need most is to develop compassion. To this end, my math/science classes are looking through the lens of the current famine in Sudan, at issues of nutrition, food and hunger in America and abroad. Meanwhile, my biweekly service class will be participating in many food-related projects in our community: serving food at the Rescue Mission, interviewing and writing stories about homeless people, repackaging food at the Food Bank, collecting canned goods for the needy and more.

Just a couple of days ago, I borrowed a colleague's van and took some students on one of several trips downtown, to help serve lunch to homeless people. I was impressed by the courage of my seventh graders who served spoonfuls of potato salad onto the plates of some unsavory

looking characters. On our way back to school, students shared their impressions of the people they had been serving. They talked about wanting to help the woman with the little baby, about the friendly man with the rubber bands in his beard, and the funny one who didn't seem to understand the words "potato salad." Students were enthusiastic about their experiences; Robin asked if we could come back every week. Vincent said, "Before, I thought they would be all scary, but they're just people."

We are all just people—angry middle schoolers, struggling teachers, hungry homeless folks. When we are reminded of this truth, the logic of the Lord's message is obvious, "Help Ever, Hurt Never." What other lesson is there to teach?

—Wendy Ward,
Denver, Colorado

Education must enable a person to discriminate between light and darkness. It must foster and promote the precious wealth of moral strength and spiritual victory, and purify the inner impulses of mankind Experience is essential for the confirmation and consolidation of what is learned from books. . . .

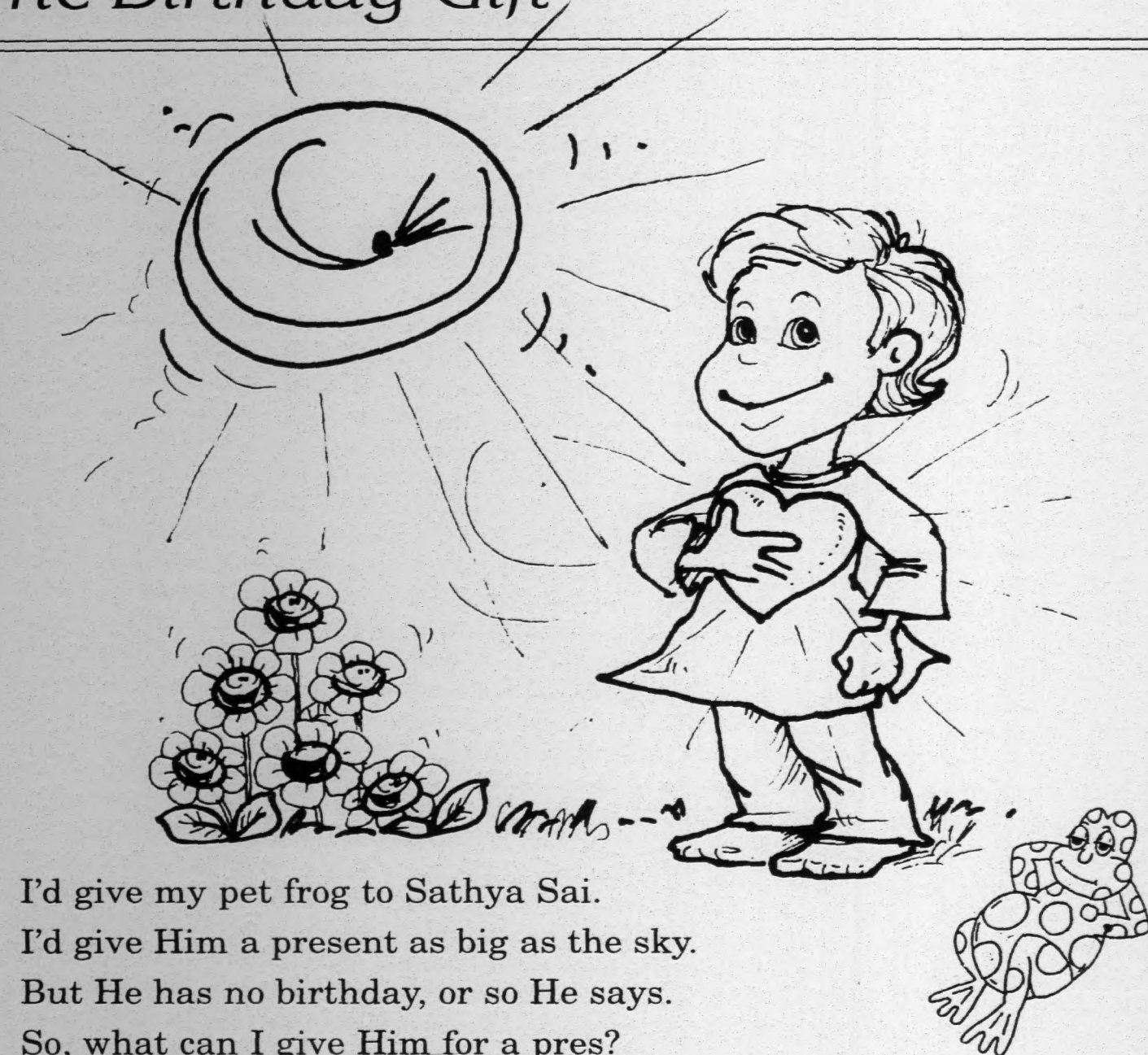
The ideal that is held before the students in our [Sathya Sai] Educational Institutions is different. Other institutions are engaged in a mechanical process of turning out young men and women who detest work that soils their hands or disturbs the folds of their clothing. The passion for profit is instilled in their hearts, and the urge to sympathize and serve is ignored.

Education must produce wisdom and moral character. It can be acquired only by hard living, and spending days of toil with no respite. But present day education makes those who undergo it mere bondslaves to their senses. They do not know how to avoid this bondage, so they revel in envy, greed and egoism.

What the country expects and demands from the educated person, however, is that they should set an example of honest labor by lighting the lamp of knowledge in every home.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. X, Chapter 60

Children's Corner, *The Birthday Gift*



I'd give my pet frog to Sathya Sai.
I'd give Him a present as big as the sky.
But He has no birthday, or so He says.
So, what can I give Him for a pres?
My mom said, "He only wants your love."
But birds are nice, how about a dove?
Now I know what to do!
Beloved Swami gave me a clue.
He and I will never part,
So, I'll just offer Him my heart.

—Anonymous

Buddha's Progression

This is the way in which Buddha performed his spiritual practice:

He first controlled the senses. He cultivated sacred thoughts which resulted in a thorough purification of his heart. When his heart became sacred and pure, he attained Nirvana (supreme enlightenment through the extinction of individual existence).

If you have the Fundamental Principle of *Atma* as your basis, even the temporary body, mind and intellect will become sacred.

God's Creation and Science

You need water for sustaining life. How do you get this water? The scientists have found that the combination of two-parts hydrogen and one-part oxygen (H_2O) will produce water. They proclaim that water can be generated by this chemical process. But they fail to understand who created hydrogen and oxygen. This is God's creation and is the fundamental basis for the scientists to launch their experiments. Nothing can be done by the skill of human beings without the fundamental creation of the Divine. Because of the permanent Divine Principle, human beings enjoy extensive power (*sakthi*).

Expanded Love

All the spiritual practices and rituals one undertakes—such as penance, meditation, sacrifice, and other rituals—are all good deeds, but they cannot lead one to liberation. Saint Namalwar, in his prayers, stated that he was doing his worship with a pure heart (*chittha suddhi*). You have to develop broad-mindedness; you should not be narrow-

minded. You should expand your love, not constrict it.

There is an example of this. Once a wayfarer was walking on a street; it started to rain, and it became a heavy downpour. He was looking for shelter and found a small veranda of a house. He knocked at the door but there was no answer. He managed to stretch his legs on the veranda. After a few minutes, another pedestrian who was looking for shelter, requested him to give room by folding his legs, so that both could squat. After some time, a third pedestrian came to the same place and requested accommodation. When the two pleaded that there was no room, he requested them to stand up, so he could also stand with them. In the place where two could sit, three could stand. This is the spirit of accommodation one should exhibit; this is an example of the attitude of helping others. When one was lying down, he accommodated another by folding up and sitting. When the third person also wanted help, they adjusted and were prepared to stand. This is the spirit one should have in order to follow the principle, "Help ever, hurt never." The body is given to you for doing righteous deeds; it should always be put to good use.

Nine Points

You should develop good vision and be one-pointed toward good things only. What is meditation? It is concentration on God. Many follow spiritual exercises. Great saints like [Sri] Aurobindo and Ramana Maharshi would sit on the open terrace and concentrate on the stars in the sky. They developed one-pointed vision. Even after closing their eyes, the

vision would still be in their minds.

You will be recapitulating later. Don't think of finding the mistakes in others and harping on them. Listen only to good things like the glory of the Divine. Follow any of the nine types of devotion:

- *Sravanam* is Listening to spiritual truths, divine discourses.
- *Kirthanam* is singing joyously the name and glory of God.
- *Vishnob Smaranam* is remembering the majesty of the Lord.
- *Paada Sevanam* is aspiring to worship at the feet of the Lord.
- *Thanam* is seeing the Lord in every being.
- *Archanam* is offering prayers to the image of the Lord, ritual worship.
- *Dasyam* is surrendering to the will of God.
- *Sakhyam* is confiding completely in Him.
- *Atma Nivedanam* is dedicating all thoughts, words and deeds, yielding fully to the will of the Lord, whom the seeker knows through his own purified intuition.

These are all to be followed, or you can follow any one. When you see some one suffering, help that person. You should not think or talk of others.

The New Year

On this Tamil New Year's Day, realize that many such new year's days have come and gone, but there is no transformation in your hearts. Every year try to improve and transform yourselves. By merely preparing special food and eating, you celebrate the new year. You can make special delicacies to eat any day, why wait for the new year? When there

is a sacred feeling arising in your heart, that is the onset of the new year. From dawn to dusk, man is spending time in worldly pursuits. The purpose of life is not eating, drinking, sleeping and dying. You are given five senses which must be put to proper use.

Develop Good Vision

What is good vision or *samyak dhrishti*? While you are walking on a road, do not look at everyone who passes or every poster on the walls. Thereby, you may even run the risk of involving yourself in an accident and endangering your life. You must only watch your step, that is good vision.

"Help ever, hurt never." That will also help you to avoid accidents and danger. Whatever work you do, do it as an offering to God. When you are feeding a beggar, do it as an offering to the Lord, as if you are feeding Him. That is yoga. Without sacrificing, you want to enjoy everything, but then you cannot have peace at all. The *Vedas* say that immortality is attainable only through sacrifice. Your position and status in life are only fleeting and temporary; they can all disappear in a moment. That which is changeless and permanent is *Atma* only.

Your eyes are so small in dimension, not even a half inch; but you are able to see vast areas of land and even the stars which are millions of miles away. Wherefrom do the eyes get such power? It is Divine Power.

You have a new flashlight with a new bulb and a new switch, but you cannot have light unless you put batteries within. Your body is the flashlight, the eye is the bulb, intellect is the switch. Only if you put in the battery cells of new

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thoughts, will you have the enlightening experience of good feelings. In this new year, you should breed new good thoughts. Think of God who is within you, above and below you; Divinity is around and within you. You cannot survive even a second without Divinity. Always say to yourself, "I am a human being, not an animal." When you say, "I am a human being," that is only a half

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vate *samyak anrishi* which
will lead to other good features. Nowadays, everyone is having bad vision, bad thoughts, and they are indulging in bad deeds. How can such people realize Divinity? This is not correct; you should control your vision to make that vision sacred.

Swami concluded with the devotional song, "*Bhajana bina sukha santhi nachin...*" (Without singing the name and glory of the Lord there is no peace or happiness...)

—Sathya Sai Baba
Tamil New Year's Day
Kodaikanal, April 14, 1998



Happy New Year to all! The theme for 1999 is *Ahimsa* or Nonviolence.

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The New Year

On this Tamil New Year's Day, realize that many such new year's days have come and gone, but there is no transformation in your hearts. Every year try to improve and transform yourselves. By merely preparing special food and eating, you celebrate the new year. You can make special delicacies to eat any day, why wait for the new year? When there

beggar, do it as an offering to the Lord, as if you are feeding Him. That is yoga. Without sacrificing, you want to enjoy everything, but then you cannot have peace at all. The *Vedas* say that immortality is attainable only through sacrifice. Your position and status in life are only fleeting and temporary; they can all disappear in a moment. That which is changeless and permanent is *Atma* only.

Your eyes are so small in dimension, not even a half inch; but you are able to see vast areas of land and even the stars which are millions of miles away. Wherefrom do the eyes get such power? It is Divine Power.

You have a new flashlight with a new bulb and a new switch, but you cannot have light unless you put batteries within. Your body is the flashlight, the eye is the bulb, intellect is the switch. Only if you put in the battery cells of new



thoughts, will you have the enlightening experience of good feelings. In this new year, you should breed new good thoughts. Think of God who is within you, above and below you; Divinity is around and within you. You cannot survive even a second without Divinity. Always say to yourself, "I am a human being, not an animal." When you say, "I am a human being," that is only a half

truth. With a human form, you have animal qualities, so always recall, "I am not an animal." The combination of the two will make you desist from indulging in animal nature. The unification of these two, make you realize your Divinity which is truth. Sacred thoughts are essential; they are the real rituals you should be doing. This world is *karma kshetra*, a field of activity. You have come to this world on a pilgrimage, so develop good vision, good speech, good feeling, good thoughts and good actions.

Everyone should cultivate *samyak dhrishti* which will lead to other good features. Nowadays, everyone is having bad vision, bad thoughts, and they are indulging in bad deeds. How can such people realize Divinity? This is not correct; you should control your vision to make that vision sacred.

Swami concluded with the devotional song, "*Bhajana bina sukha santhi nachin...*" (Without singing the name and glory of the Lord there is no peace or happiness...)

—Sathya Sai Baba

Tamil New Year's Day
Kodaikanal, April 14, 1998



Happy New Year to all! The theme for 1999 is *Ahimsa* or Nonviolence.

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An Older Volume

Vision of the Divine by **Eruch B. Fanibunda** A limited quantity of this book is now available. This volume has been popular with seekers since the first edition was printed in 1976.....BI-080 \$7.50

A New Book

My Holy Man is Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
by **Dr. Choudary Voleti**

Dr. Voleti has given us his autobiography, and a fascinating overview of the workings of the Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital, as well as, many facts about the ashram, India and his experiences with Swami. Besides the interesting text, the book contains many photographs in rich color.....BI-043 \$13.50

1999 Calendar

This calendar is prepared by members of the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values committees and is published by the Sathya Sai Book Center of America. It has a photo of Sathya Sai Baba. Each week has a saying from Swami about human values. The 8½ by 11 inch page for each month lists important dates and is large enough to add your own important dates.....BC-099 \$4.00

As Swami sat one day surrounded by some of His devotees, there was an abrupt interruption. A pundit felt a sudden urge to ask this question, "Swami, was your incarnation a divine entrance (pravesha) or an enceinte (prasava)?" Turning to Easwaramma, the Mother, seated in front, Baba said to her, "Tell what happened that day near the well after your mother-in-law had warned you. . . ."*

Easwaramma said, "My mother-in-law had dreamt of Sathyanarayana Deva (a deity), and she cautioned me not to be frightened if something happened to me through the will of God. That morning, when I was at the well drawing water, a big ball of blue light came rolling toward me; I fainted and fell. I felt it glide into me."

Swami turned with a smile saying, "There you have the answer; I was not begotten. It was pravesha, not prasava."

—Professor N. Kasturi

*Excerpted from
Easwaramma, the Chosen Mother*

**enceinte, from the French, meaning pregnant, with child*

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Sathya Sai

Service Opportunities



♦Vol. 14, No. 2 • Winter 1998-99

YOUNG ADULT SERVICE RETREAT

During the World Youth Conference, Swami emphasized that youth should spend more time in service to the needy, reminding us that "service to man is service to God." The first North Central/Mid-Central Regional Service Retreat was a response to these divine directives. After our Indiana Young Adult Group decided to host the retreat, we prayed that this event should not just inspire our own service, but give other young adults in attendance the opportunity to do service and bring back ideas for projects when they returned home. We made sure that every project we planned for the retreat could be duplicated by any other young adults. Swami says that the desire to serve is the only qualification you truly need to do selfless service. God will equip you with the knowledge

and means necessary if your wants are pure and unselfish.

We prayed incessantly that Swami would pave the road under our feet if we were to simply point the direction we wanted to go. Often this happened when brainstorming for ideas and planning the projects. But we learned and experienced often: "Man proposes and God disposes." These dispositions were, of course, necessary, however trying on our faith they became. At one point, it seemed that we had work for 60 people with only 25 people wanting to come. Then it appeared that those projects we had counted on had fallen through, while now more than 45 people wanted to attend. Swami, of course, is the only thing we can count on. So as our prayers increased, Swami, in His divinely

mysterious way, saw that everything happened without incident.

Our weekend service retreat was held on November 15-16 in Indianapolis, attracting more than 40 young adults from seven states. The young adults spent the bulk of the day on Saturday doing service. Activities were scheduled at local foster group homes for children, a treatment center for misguided and abused youth, and a home for handicapped adults. In downtown Indianapolis, the young adults distributed clothes, food, and hygiene products (shaving kits, soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste, combs, etc.).

In the evening we rejoiced in God's name with a high-charged session of devotional songs and concluded the day by sharing our

(Continued on page 2)



"You must be prepared to dedicate your life for service. You can become a leader only when you are filled with the spirit of service."

"Today you pray to a river: O river, overflow with water. Don't pray to the river. Address your prayers to the rain. When the rain responds, the rivers will get filled automatically. Likewise, when you serve society as the Divine, automatically your desires will be fulfilled."

"Like oil for a lamp, love is essential for life. Without oil, or love, darkness will prevail. Render loving service to all. Recognize that the Divine is within you, and you have all the potency for great deeds."

∞ **Sathya Sai Baba**

Sanathana Sarathi, Nov.-Dec. 1995

Young Adult Service Retreat

Continued from page 1

experiences of the service we'd done earlier and by presenting summaries of the service activities undertaken by the different young adult groups represented.

The next day followed with a study circle taking a few simple quotes from Swami on different types of selfless service (service to the family, the elderly, the distraught, the imprisoned, the hungry, etc.) and discussing these in smaller groups before presenting the results to the whole assembly. The blissful weekend ended with a session of devotional songs and a prayer that was on the cassette presented to Baba at the World Youth Conference.

Aside from the unique nature of this retreat, what made it so remarkable was the unified effort by all young adult groups in the two regions and the strong presence of newcomers to the Sai Organization. Newcomers took very active roles in the planning of the different service projects and have continued to show great enthusiasm for Swami and His work by planning and participating in the projects that have followed.

But it wasn't our devotional songs or our study circles that drew these young people to attend this auspicious occasion. Rather, it was the opportunity to do something good for another human being. This retreat was a means by which Swami, the Divine Fisherman, could plant His hook in the mouths of these newcomers. Being then pierced, Sai's latest catches could be reeled in by Him, and one by one be tossed in the boat ferrying across this turbulent sea to the Golden Age of Paradise.

~ **Indiana Young Adult Group**
Adapted from
Flowers at His Feet, Spring 1998

A HOME FOR THE HOMELESS

Around four years ago, I slept over a friend's house and went with her and her parents to a shelter in the morning. I told my parents about how much I enjoyed going there, and they began going as well. The old shelter was located in Christ Cathedral in the downtown Saint Louis area. We were among several volunteers who went there every Sunday from 6 a.m. to about 8:30 a.m. to serve the residents a wholesome breakfast.

We would play with the children and clean up after them when they had finished eating. On the roof was a playground, and we often went up there with the kids. But that shelter closed down a couple of years ago because of lack of fund-

ing. Our team then moved to the Christian Service Center on 19th Street.

A four- or five-story building, the new shelter has a smaller dining room and a much smaller kitchen, but it has six times as much room for the homeless. Every Sunday, 15-20 volunteers come to set up, cook, serve, and clean up. We now cook pancakes, waffles, biscuits, and plain and raisin toast—a complete brunch. And we still play with the children at breakfast. It feels as though we have become a family.

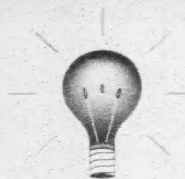
~ **Elena Akopyants**

Saint Louis, MO

Adapted from

Flowers at His Feet, Spring 1998

ENERGY



SAVERS

- Have your car's air and oil filters cleaned periodically. The car will use less gasoline.
- Don't keep your air conditioner on all day while you're at work. Instead, buy a timer that turns it on one-half hour before you come home. You'll save both energy and money.
- Leave the oven door closed while cooking food. Opening the oven makes the temperature inside go down about 25 degrees, forcing the oven to reheat.
- Use light-colored lampshades lined in white. More light will filter through them than through dark-colored shades.
- Hang clothes outdoors in the sun instead of using the dryer. Or hang them inside a heated apartment in winter. You may save drying time as well as energy.
- Allow leftovers to cool slightly before you store them in your refrigerator or freezer. Your appliances won't have to work as hard to cool the food.

Sathya Sai Service Opportunities is published under the auspices of the Sathya Sai Baba Central Council of the United States of America. All articles and photographs on group or individual service projects are welcome. Send contributions to the editor, Judith Wechsler, 131 Joralemon St., Apt. 66, Brooklyn, NY 11201. We reserve the right to use our discrimination in selecting and editing material for publication.

SERVICE TO THE ELDERLY

An edited version of a presentation given by Charles and Edith Gregory at the Northeast Region's Conference on Selfless Service on September 6, 1997. A portion of Charles' words are presented here as a second installment.

As Edith already mentioned [in Spring 1998 *Sathya Sai Service Opportunities*], we usually visited our resident friends at the nursing home separately to make the most of our time. For two years I did my best to discover what my people were interested in. I tried to understand something of their lives before they entered the home. Who were they really? And what were the needs I might help fulfill? This took quite a bit of patient listening and understanding and a willingness to forget myself and project into their inner lives. Gradually, my relationships with them developed a warm and rich texture. We seemed to communicate easily. I felt that they and I looked forward to our meeting and that something was being accomplished.

However, after the second year, I began to notice that something was wrong—something seemed to be missing. I realized that we were talking about the same things over and over again. I felt like a mechanical man. If I was to continue at the home, I thought, I had to begin operating on a different level. I had to tap new fountains of understanding within me.

Over the last few months at the nursing home, I had observed a newcomer, a lady who seemed more dead than alive. She was, to all intents and purposes, totally incompetent. She could not walk or speak a single word and seemed not to react to anything or anyone around her. I was informed that she had been in this condition for a very long time. When I first saw her, I told myself that she was one patient I must avoid at all costs. Whatever could I possibly do if I had to relate to her?

One day, as I was thinking about ending my visits to the home, I glimpsed this lady, Helen, as she lay

there uncomprehending. Suddenly, I found myself intrigued by the apparent hopelessness of her condition. Was Helen the one to liberate me from my increasing sense of futility? Were we meant to visit one another? Was Baba opening a door for us both? I pondered this situation for a few days and decided that I must walk through that door.

When I returned a few days later, I found Helen to be in her customary situation. I pulled up a chair beside her and just sat there. I felt that it was very important to approach her quietly. She seemed, of course, entirely unaware of my presence. This scenario went on in the same manner for weeks. In a way, I was grateful, because I no longer felt the need to perform. I only had to be there.

One day, as we sat quietly, it occurred to me that she might like some ice cream. I got a cup of vanilla, put a little bit on a spoon, and touched it to her lips. She loved it. It took quite a while, but eventually she ate the whole cup. Some days, when she seemed asleep, I would just brush her lips with the spoon and without opening her eyes she would lick her lips. She would finish the whole cup without opening her eyes even once. I could never tell whether she was asleep or not. The ice cream treat became a ritual.

After some time passed, I began to hold her hand and stroke her arm. There was never any response. Who knows, I thought, what silent bonding was taking place. As the weeks went by, an idea came to me. Why not sing a song to her, since nothing else seemed to affect her? I recalled a lovely melody from my youth, and I sang it to her softly. When I finished the little song, expecting nothing really, Helen turned her head and looked at me.

For a moment, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Was this a miracle, or what? As the weeks passed, she never failed to look directly into my eyes when we met. We continued to hold hands and make eye contact. Even the nurses were stunned by this reaction.

A few weeks later, I wondered what would happen if I sang her another song. I searched my memory for a song with words that might have some meaning for Helen. I recalled one, and I sang it to her. Then another miracle happened. Before I had finished singing the song, a little smile formed on her lips. I was not imagining this—it was a real smile. What was happening, I wondered? How could this be after years of unresponsiveness?

Weeks of hand holding and ice cream feeding rolled by. Every day that we spent together, the glances and smiles became constant. The day came when I decided I should try to talk to her again. But what to say? I thought. I leaned forward and, very softly, whispered to her, "Helen, I love you." At the moment, it seemed like the right thing to do. I didn't, of course, expect any reaction. I simply wanted those words to vibrate in her atmosphere. After I said them, she slowly turned her head and looked directly at me. A few minutes passed and then, very slowly and almost inaudibly, she said, "I know that."

From that day on she even began to recognize me as I approached her, and she would smile. The nurses on duty would sometimes follow me to watch Helen's reactions as I approached her. As the months went by, I continued singing to her and telling her that I loved her.

(Continued on page 4)

SAI SERVICE FOR ALL SAI CENTERS AROUND THE WORLD

A philosophic and practical overview of selfless service presented in Puttaparthi, India, in November 1990 by J. Jagadeesan, Central Coordinator, Region 8 (Far East 1), who has written several books on Baba. Here is part one of our four-part series.

The *Bhagavad Gita* [Hindu scripture], chapter 9, verse 22, contains the famous *yogakshema* [burden of welfare] assurance described by Bhagavan Baba as "the navel of the Gita body." The verse [spoken by Krishna, an incarnation of the Lord; as Baba reports it] is as follows:

Whoever among devotees dedicates all acts to me with no other thought—whoever meditates on Me, serves Me, worships Me, remembers Me—know that I am always with him, ever providing for him in this world and the next. I bear the burden of his *yogakshema* [happiness here and hereafter] (*Githa Vahini*, chapter 18).

The word *yogakshema* contains the assurance that "whatever you have in life, I will preserve for you; whatever you *need* in life, I will confer unto you!" Baba has clarified the meaning of "serves Me," for service to man is service to god.

A South Indian saint expressed the same thoughts very graphically when he declared:

What you offer to the altar of the temple does not reach the walking temple outside. But if you serve the walking temples, it reaches God.

The Christian Bible, in Matthew, chapter 25, verses 31–46, provides what could be the key to the kingdom of heaven. It talks of the coming of the "Son of Man," who blesses those who "when I was hungry,...gave me food; when I was thirsty,...gave me drink; when I was a stranger,...took me in; when naked,...clothed me; when I was sick,...visited me; when I was in prison,...came to me," and invites them to enter the kingdom of heaven. After those invited asked when they had served him thus, He replied, "In as much as you have done it unto the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto

Me." Thus, yet again, through the Christian tradition, the concept of service to man is service to god is clearly echoed.

Likewise in Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Taoism, etc., the common echoes of service resound. Let us see what Baba Himself has said about the *sadhana* (spiritual practice) of service.

What Is Selfless Service?

What exactly is selfless service? Baba has elaborated:

Is it the consequence of devotional love? Or is it the cause of devotional love? It is neither; it is the sign of devotional love; it is the expression of devotional love. It is based on the experience of the devotee that all beings are God's children—that all are altars where He is installed, all are homes where He resides. Selfless service is the very nature of a devotee. He cannot be engaged in it; it is his very breath.

Baba has also declared, "Selfless service is the highest spiritual practice. Recitation of God's name, meditation, proficiency in *mantras* [sacred verbal formulas], or mastery of Vedic texts [Hindu scriptures] cannot help you reach the goal as quickly or as safely as selfless service." He also said that "the spiritual practice of selfless service has to be *undertaken as a way of life* so that it can yield results."

God, it is declared, is love, and the manifestation of that love is the manifestation of the "God factor in man." Baba has linked love and selfless service thus:

Grow in love, expand that love, practice love, strengthen love, and finally become love and merge in the illimitable love that is God. All your life, you must be love, with

love, for love—that is to say, *love expressed through service to those who draw love from you, and by drawing, help to increase it and deepen it.*

(to be continued next issue)

Service to Elderly

Continued from page 3

I suppose that the last phase of this odyssey came one day a few months later. As I sat down to our usual love feast one afternoon, Helen suddenly reached out to embrace me. As she did so, almost inaudibly I heard her say, "My friend." Hearing these two words, I felt that all the months of lovingly being there were more than justified. These words merged into the moment to be remembered. I don't know how all this happened, but Swami knows. What else is there to say?

The time, as it must, eventually came when we parted like ships that pass in the night, blinking their heartfelt greetings and silent farewell. Perhaps, what was true in our secret hearts is true for us all. Most certainly, the heart has its reasons, which reason knows nothing of.

(to be continued next issue)

Hands that serve
are holier than
lips that pray.

— Baba

