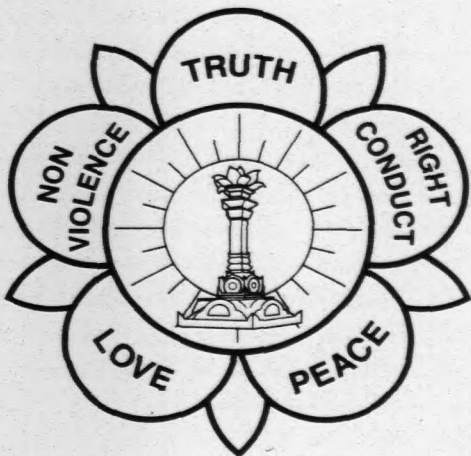




SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER, USA

SUMMER 1999
VOLUME 23, NUMBER 4
JUNE, JULY, AUGUST

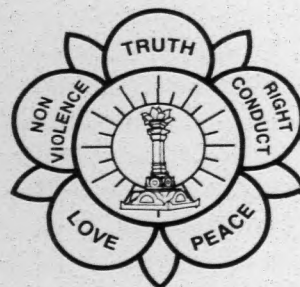
June, July, August

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

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

Sai's Message	Sathya Sai Baba	1
To See Him	Michael Hollander	2
Revelations of Divinity	Sathya Sai Baba	3
Journey of the Heart	Gayla Reiter	11
Another of Baba's <i>Leelas</i>	Phyllis Krystal	16
Baba Said: from the <i>Shivarathri</i> Discourse	Sathya Sai Baba	18
Making Sense	Jack O. Scher	20
Sai Visits Delhi and Bombay	Mr. Venkataraman	22
Announcements	Newsletter Staff	25
Children's Corner: Equal-mindedness	Some One	27
Education in Human Values	Bea Flaig	28
Bhagavan's Assurance to Devotees	Sathya Sai Baba	30
Sathya Sai Book Center of America	Book Center Volunteers	36
Sathya Sai Service Opportunities Newsletter..... <i>Included in this Issue.....</i>		
<i>Edited by Judith Wechsler</i>		

***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 Message

Running after desire for sensory objects produces only discontent. That type of desire has no end. Once you become a slave to the senses, they will not leave their hold on you until death. It is an unquenchable thirst. But I call you to me and even grant worldly boons, so that you may turn Godward. No Avatar has done these before: going among the masses, counseling them, guiding them, consoling them, uplifting them and directing them along the path of truth, righteousness, peace and love. . . .

If you give up and surrender to the Lord, He will guard and guide you. The Lord has come for just this very task. He is declar-

If I came as a man, like others, who would listen?

ing that He will do so, and that is the very task that has brought Him here. . .

If I had come only as a man, like any other, who would listen to me? So I came in this human form, but with more than human power and wisdom. . . .

You are moved this way and that by your desires. I have no desires except the one to make you desireless.

—Sathya Sai Baba

A Recapitulation of Baba's Divine Teachings, pages 7-8

Compiled by Grace J. McMartin

To See Him

Seeing that He is God

is really the easy part

Why? you may ask

Well—just look—what goes on around Him

watch the behavior and attitude of students and teachers

watch the response He gets out of tens of thousands of devotees

watch how all unfolds around Him

watch how the buildings spring up

and the University system blossoms

watch how the Hospital works

and what the doctors have to say

not to mention the staff and patients

watch how He walks

how He talks

the ever constant flow of miracles

watch the sheer magnitude of His Worldwide Organization

how throughout the globe His Message has spread

and all is based on LOVE

watch how He Sees it all

Knows it all

and with it all has never had a moment

that interfered with His Perfect Bliss

watch how His Sankalpa takes effect*

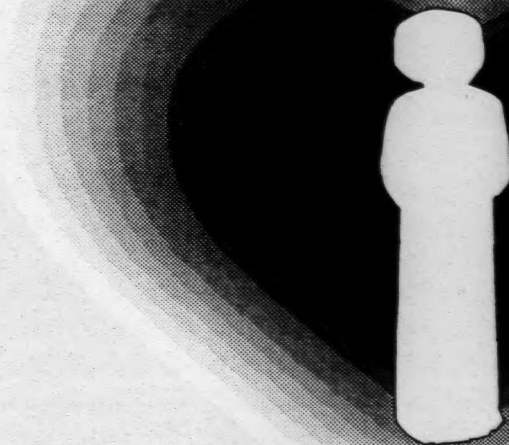
watch how His Words are always true

watch how He moves a heart to Love

and you will know

—Michael Hollander, Montvale, New Jersey

**Sankalpa is God's will, intention, resolve, a plan of action.*



*Audio Cassette Tapes
of the Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*

person. The word “is” proves their existence. This explains the principle of divinity in full. The power, divine play, and effulgence of God are limitless.

Five Elements and Free Will

The five elements are responsible for the protection and sustenance of the world. **Earth**, the first element, is the basis for mountains and hills, rivers and oceans, villages and cities, jungles and forests. You can very well imagine the immense power of the earth, which supports all these. The earth is endowed with infinite power. Scientists have discovered that the earth rotates. True. Logically speaking, the rivers, oceans, mountains, villages, and cities should also rotate when the earth, the basis, rotates. In reality, is it not so that only the earth rotates? Also, the railway track is the basis for train to move. If the tracks start mov-

evolution of life.

The third element, **fire** (*agni*), is also all-pervasive. It is present in the form of digestive fire in the human body. It is that which maintains the temperature of the human body at 98.4 degrees Fahrenheit. There is fire even in the ocean. There is fire even in trees. When two branches rub against each other, fire is generated. Fire is immanent even in a stone. Fire emerges when two stones are struck against each other. Investigations will reveal that there is no place without fire.

Similarly, the fourth and fifth elements, **air or wind** (*vaya*) and the **space or ether** (*aakaasha*), are also all-pervasive. Space is the basis for all. It is the origin of sound. In fact, all the other elements originated from space. Therefore, we can conclude that the divine power that is omnipresent and omnipotent is present in all five elements. When the five elements are so

Cassette Tapes of the Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Please check one: ☐ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Address Change

I wish to receive the ***Cassette Tapes*** of the *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*, at a cost of \$12.00 per year (postage included). Please find enclosed \$ _____ for my subscription which will include four (4) Audio Cassette Tapes annually.

Send check or money order to: ***Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA, Cassette Tapes***
%Sathya Sai Book Cntr. of America, 305 West First St., Tustin, CA 92780-3108

Name _____

Street _____ Apt.# _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

(Sorry, offer good only in the USA)

how He talks

the ever constant flow of miracles

watch the sheer magnitude of His Worldwide Organization

how throughout the globe His Message has spread

and all is based on LOVE

watch how He Sees it all

Knows it all

and with it all has never had a moment

that interfered with His Perfect Bliss

watch how His Sankalpa takes effect*

watch how His Words are always true

watch how He moves a heart to Love

and you will know

—**Michael Hollander**, Montvale, New Jersey

**Sankalpa* is God's will, intention, resolve, a plan of action.

Revelations of Divinity

*If all your ambitions do not materialize,
do not waver or get depressed.
He is a realized one who is cheerful
in the face of all adversities.*

Embodiments of Love

Telugu Poem

The whole universe is based on one fragment of the Divine. Just as the sun's rays do not exist in the absence of the sun, so, also, the world cannot exist without divinity, the primordial basis. Here, on this table you find a flower, a cup, a micro- phone and a handkerchief. The word "is" is used to connote the existence of all these items. Here, the emphasis is on the word "is." There is a picture, there is a pot, and there is a person. The word "is" proves their existence. This explains the principle of divinity in full. The power, divine play, and effulgence of God are limitless.

Five Elements and Free Will

The five elements are responsible for the protection and sustenance of the world. **Earth**, the first element, is the basis for mountains and hills, rivers and oceans, villages and cities, jungles and forests. You can very well imagine the immense power of the earth, which supports all these. The earth is endowed with infinite power. Scientists have discovered that the earth rotates. True. Logically speaking, the rivers, oceans, mountains, villages, and cities should also rotate when the earth, the basis, rotates. In reality, is it not so that only the earth rotates? Also, the railway track is the basis for train to move. If the tracks start mov-

ing, what would be the plight of the passengers? From this, it can be inferred that the track is the basis (*aadhaara*) and the train, the thing based on it (*aadheya*). This table is the basis (*aadhaara*) for the mike to rest upon (*aadheya*). Make an effort to understand the relationship between the support, *aadhaara*, and the supported, *aadheya*. The earth, which is the repository of all powers: electrical, magnetic, etc., forms the basis, sustains and protects all the objects on it. There is no power which is not present in the earth. The earth is able to support all the beings on it because of its infinite powers.

Seen or unseen, **water**, the second element, is present all over the earth. It is the water that sustains the life principle of humanity. It supports life on earth and is responsible for the evolution of life.

The third element, **fire** (*agni*), is also all-pervasive. It is present in the form of digestive fire in the human body. It is that which maintains the temperature of the human body at 98.4 degrees Fahrenheit. There is fire even in the ocean. There is fire even in trees. When two branches rub against each other, fire is generated. Fire is immanent even in a stone. Fire emerges when two stones are struck against each other. Investigations will reveal that there is no place without fire.

Similarly, the fourth and fifth elements, **air or wind** (*vaya*) and the **space or ether** (*aakaasha*), are also all-pervasive. Space is the basis for all. It is the origin of sound. In fact, all the other elements originated from space. Therefore, we can conclude that the divine power that is omnipresent and omnipotent is present in all five elements. When the five elements are so

powerful, how much greater is the power of God? Though the five elements which are essentially divine are present in man, he is in quest of divine power, which he feels is present elsewhere. These powers are insignificant for God is aware of everything, past, present and future. So make an attempt to understand the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent nature of God. The whole world is also a conglomeration of the five elements. The world cannot exist in the absence of even one of the elements. Whether you see them or not, the five elements are present everywhere. Here is a small example:

Though air is invisible and intangible, it is all-pervasive. Similarly, divinity is invisible and intangible, yet, it is omnipresent. Without realizing the divinity within him, man becomes egoistic and feels that all his accomplishments are due to his education, intelligence, and physical Prowess. But in reality, it is the divinity that protects and safeguards man at every step from womb to tomb. No one has the power to protect himself. It is only the divine power and divine will that enables man to protect himself. Only divinity has free will, none else.

Welfare of the World

Whatever God says or does is for the welfare of humanity. God is selfless. There is no trace of selfishness in God. What is the benefit accruing to the sun by rising and setting? None at all. Sunrise and sunset are for the benefit of mankind. It enables man to discharge his duties during the day and rest during the night. Similarly, every act of God is for the benefit of mankind, not for Himself.

As [Mr.] Narsimhamurthi pointed out, [Prof.] Kasturi once urged me not to neglect this body in the process of saving a devotee. I replied

that this body has come for the sake of devotees and shall be utilized for doing anything and everything for their welfare. Body attachment is human, and total detachment is divine. Attachment to the body is responsible for all suffering and misery. Since God does not have any body attachment, He does not attach any importance to the suffering of His body. Once He assumes a body, many things are bound to happen to that body. Whatever happens is for the welfare of the whole world.

What Does Baba Want?

Students, both boys and girls, are very good. Students participate in various activities, be it academics or sports, only with a desire to please and satisfy Swami. I am very well aware of this fact. No doubt, students strive to please Swami and make Him happy. But, they don't ask what actually pleases, satisfies, and makes Him happy. Will Swami be pleased if you display your valor by jumping through a ring of fire or, for that matter, from a lorry moving at a high speed? Will it satisfy Swami, if you display your courage by doing daredevil stunts on motorbikes like jumping over 10 or 20 people lying on the ground? I am pleased when you are safe and sound, and the audience is pleased and happy with your performance. He is the blessed one who conducts himself in a manner that hurts neither himself nor others. You should be safe and secure and, at the same time, desist from activities that cause apprehension in others. **This is what I am pleased with**, simple demonstrations, not exhibitionism. Even a small action done with a heart full of love pleases me.

I am very well aware of the fact that the year *Pramaadi* is fast approaching. January is the first month of the New Year. If you expe-

rience happiness in the beginning, you will be happy throughout. Start early, drive slowly and arrive safely.

Sports Day

While returning from Bangalore in December [1998], I instructed the Warden [of the men's college in Brindavan] not to bring the boys to the sports meet. They attributed various reasons to this word of mine. There may be many reasons, but what I am interested in is the action. After arriving here, I told the Vice Chancellor [of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning] that I do not object to boys participating in various sports and games such as: badminton, tennis, volleyball, etc. At the same time, I cautioned him to ensure that no harm is caused to either the participants or the audience during the course of the program scheduled for sports day, January 11, 1999. Students are tender-hearted, full of noble feelings and love for Swami. They planned various programs with a view to please me. I was very well aware of the impending danger. But students were not receptive to my words. I felt there was no point in advising them in such a situation. Only when they face the consequences of disobeying my command, do they realize the value of my words.

Until this moment, no one was aware of what exactly happened on the morning of January 11th. They said that the sports meet was a grand success. I am also happy when you are successful. Students performed extremely well. Each contributed to the success of this event based on their capacities and capabilities.

That morning, as I entered the stadium, I spotted two lorries. Immediately, I could visualize danger lurking in the corner. I saw the lorries with huge scaffoldings placed over them.

The boys planned to perform a few acrobatic feats on them. I knew that one of the rods was not fitted properly and was about to give way. If that were to happen, the boy would suffer a major head injury and a spinal break. I willed that the boy should be saved, and I decided to take the injury upon myself.

Prior to this, one boy had suffered a spinal break and had been admitted to the Manipal Hospital in Bangalore. I willed that such an untoward incident should not recur. Once the spinal column breaks, it is impossible to set it right. Immediately, I arranged for an ambulance to shift that boy to the hospital in Bangalore and gave 10,000 rupees to defray the immediate expenditure. I also insured that our doctor would accompany him. His parents shed tears of gratitude when they came to know of the love showered by Swami on their son. The doctor said that the boy would not be able to sit or lie down, since his spinal column was badly damaged. I told him, "Don't entertain any misgivings. Do as I say." Miraculously, by the time the boy reached the hospital, he could sit. He entered the hospital and sat on the bed. He regained sensation in all his limbs, which were numb until then. There was no danger whatsoever. He was protected because of my infinite mercy and boundless grace. All students should be safe and secure. I have repeatedly declared that students are my property. I consider students' welfare as my welfare, and their happiness as my happiness. I never think of my own happiness or comfort. My only concern is that the students should not be disappointed or put to any inconvenience.

A day prior to this sports day, I had instructed four boys to surround the chariot and keep a vigil. They are also full of love and devotion for Swami, but I noticed that none of

them were present at that spot. Nobody is to be blamed. No one does this deliberately. Swami is the very life-breath of the students.

While I was riding in the chariot, I asked for it to be stopped. A senior devotee was driving the chariot with all sincerity, love and devotion. He stopped the vehicle in accordance with my command. Just when I was about to speak to the Vice Chancellor [who was riding with Swami], the driver accidentally put his foot on the clutch instead of the brake. That resulted in a jerk, and I fell down on the chariot. As a result, I suffered injuries on my head and hand, and my spinal column was badly damaged. I took upon myself the injuries that the boys would have had to face. Many men and women were seated in the gallery, but I took care that none would notice my injuries. I pretended as though nothing had happened. The Vice Chancellor was worried, thinking that Swami was unable to get up. I knew that any further delay would cause anxiety in the minds of devotees. So I immediately got up, forgetting the pain and started blessing the devotees, waving my hands. The pain was so intense, and the cut on my hand so deep as though it was pierced with a knife. But the sleeve of the robe covering my hand was intact. This incident gives you a glimpse of the infinite power of divinity.

I found myself in an awkward situation; I had to walk up to the dais without the injuries being noticed. So, I willed that no one should notice my injuries, lest they become anxious. I walked up to the dais and took my seat. But in the meanwhile, the *dhoti* (a type of loincloth worn by some Indian men) below my robe was drenched in blood. Concerned that the devotees might see this, I discreetly walked into the bathroom. The available towels were insufficient to wipe the

oozing blood. I didn't want to leave the bloodstained towels in the bathroom, lest someone notice them. Though there was excruciating pain, I washed the towels myself with soap, squeezed them, and put them up for drying. Under no circumstances, do I reveal my suffering, pain or fatigue. Some boys were curious to know why I went to the bathroom repeatedly. I replied, "Why are you concerned? It is my business." Usually, I go to the bathroom only twice a day, morning and evening. Since I was bleeding profusely, I had to go to the bathroom five or six times in that short duration. In the meantime, two students came and prayed that the flag would be hoisted. When I got down from the chair, the sensation was such that it seemed as though I was subjected to electric shock. Reflecting on the incident now, I feel like laughing to myself. I couldn't stand firmly on the ground. I thought I should not be deluded by attachment to the body, and I walked forward smiling, to hoist the flag. Then, I lighted the lamp. I found myself in an embarrassing situation; I couldn't sit in any posture comfortably. When I exhort all devotees to give up body attachment, I should set an example in this regard. Saying this to myself, I conducted myself accordingly.

The primary school children performed extremely well, and they desired to have their photograph taken with me. Acceding to their prayer, I walked up to them and stood for the photographs, since I didn't want to disappoint them. Subsequently, I had to walk up to the playing field five more times to take photographs with the remaining students. In this manner, I detached myself from the body. My body was numb. There was no sensation whatsoever. My head was reeling. I resolved to make them happy no matter what happened to the body. I decided

to keep this to myself. Concerned that the bloodstains might be visible while returning to the dais from the playground, I ascended the steps leading directly to my seat. It is impossible for a human being to conceal a major injury from the public gaze for a long time amidst such a huge gathering. I was seated on the chair for five long hours. I am relating all this, so that students and devotees may comprehend the nature of divinity. Anyone in my predicament would not have been in a position to sit in the chair, even for a second. It would have been impossible, even to take a step forward. It was as though the electric shock was piercing my body. It is the electric current that gives a shock. But when I am the current, where is the question of my being subjected to a shock?

With that feeling, I sat through the whole proceedings and returned to the mandir. The Central Trust members followed me. The senior devotee [who drove the lorrie] apologized for what had happened. Then, I told him, "Why do you worry about the past? Past is past; I am happy, don't worry about me."

All of them had their lunch. After lunch, the wounds started bleeding again. The students were waiting outside for photographs. Again, I went into the bathroom to wipe the blood. Noting this, Indulal Shah cried out, "Swami, what is this?" I told him lovingly, "Indulal Shah, whatever had to happen to the body has happened." Saying so, I showed them my injuries. All of them cried out in agony. They saw the blood all over. I told them that I would not reveal anything to them in the future, if they expressed their sorrow like that. No one knew about it until I reached the mandir. Likewise, I take upon myself the untold suffering of students and devotees at various points of time in order to protect them. No one is responsible for this mishap. You may find fault

with one individual or another, but no one is responsible for this. What had to happen, happened. That's all.

"You are bound to experience the pain and pleasure that you are destined to have, even if you hide yourself in a dense forest. When the time comes, your body is bound to perish, in spite of the utmost precautions."

Telugu Proverb

All Are Vulnerable

Even mighty emperors and kings who had taken all precautionary measures had to give up their bodies at the appointed hour. Whatever is bound to happen will happen. One should not resist this unduly.

The year, *Pramaadi*, is fast approaching. There will be dangers in all fields: politics, education, etc. This is an indication of the forthcoming dangers. No one needs to worry about my welfare. I can do anything and everything. Here is a small example:

During the Mahabharatha war, Krishna was Arjuna's charioteer. Krishna diverted all the arrows aimed at Arjuna toward Himself, protecting Arjuna in the process. As a result, every arrow wounded Krishna, and He bled profusely. Since Krishna was the charioteer, He had to receive instructions from Arjuna regarding the direction in which the chariot should move. In those days, there were no indicators for left and right as we have today. Therefore, Arjuna had to press the region beside the right eye of Krishna with his iron boot to indicate that the chariot should move to the right. Similarly, he had to press the region beside the left eye to indicate to Krishna to turn the chariot to the left. As a result, Krishna's face was also bleeding. The whole body of Krishna was drenched in blood. No one

observed this, since it was wartime, and all were busy discharging their duties and, also, due to the fact that Krishna was seated at a height much lower than that of Arjuna. Therefore, only Arjuna could be seen, and not Krishna. Krishna protected Arjuna, as promised by Him earlier.

When Arjuna and Duryodhana approached Krishna for help before the war, Duryodhana opted for Krishna's seven-lakh (seven hundred thousand) strong army, whereas Arjuna preferred Krishna to the army. Then, Krishna assured him, "Arjuna, you don't need to fear. The army is comparable to the compartment of a train, whereas, I am the engine. Compartments can move only when the engine pulls them. So, Arjuna, don't worry, the engine is with you." Arjuna responded, "Krishna, it is enough if you are with me." Therefore, all the dangers that were to befall Arjuna were taken by Krishna. Many such incidents of God protecting His devotees have taken place in all the ages.

So whatever happened on sports day was entirely due to my will. Neither the students nor the driver are responsible for this. Everyday, the students used to ask why I was walking so slowly. I told them, "I don't have enough space to run; if only space is here, I am even ready to run." I was conversing with them with a smile. I am narrating this episode only to affirm the fact that I go to any extent to protect the devotees who obey my commands.

When I returned to the mandir, I called those four boys [who were to guard the chariot.] They noticed my injuries and were crestfallen. I chided them for not obeying my command. I asked them, "Why weren't you present at that time as I commanded? If only you had obeyed, this incident would not have occurred." Then, I told them not to feel sorry about it.

So, all those dangers that are to happen during the course of this year, have happened. Follow the divine command, be safe and secure and earn a good name for the institution, and make your parents happy.

Tomorrow marks the commencement of holy *Uttarayana* [when the sun starts its northward journey,] and the sky is clear. It is for this auspicious moment that Bhishma waited for 56 long days, lying on a bed of arrows, to give up his mortal coil. Tomorrow, the sun begins its northward journey, which is most auspicious. In olden days, people used to sing songs describing the arrival of *Sankranti* (time of harvest).

*The sun appeared cool and serene;
The days started getting shorter;
The chill wind blew fiercely;
The fields were filled with golden harvest.
The farmers rejoiced in singing at night,
With the moon shining bright.
The buds of flowers blossomed,
Like garlands of pearls.
On the banks of rivers,
Farmers were bringing home
The newly harvested grain,
Hailing the advent of
The joyous festival of Sankranti.*

Telugu Poem

For the Volunteers

Whatever I will has to happen, and none can come in my way. I would like to mention one more point: Last year, on November 19th, all the ladies gathered to celebrate "Ladies' Day."

They said, "Swami, we're wearing the saris gifted by you and experiencing the bliss of your divine presence. What can we do in return to express our gratitude to you? Please give us a chance to serve you." I replied, You don't need to do anything. Be always happy, that is enough.

But some of them pleaded for a chance to provide food for the volunteers (*seva dal*), who are now coming in large numbers from various parts of the country to render services in Prasanthi Nilayam. I assured them that I had already willed it, and that it would materialize in a short time. I had willed that the volunteers should be provided good food, entirely free of cost, for 365 days a year. I had already made arrangements for this. I had gotten the sheds put up. All the necessary items like gas cylinders, utensils, plates, spoons, rice, dhals, etc., had already been procured. No one was aware of this. Sathya Sai is a silent worker. From tomorrow onward, food will be served for the *seva dals*, free of cost, forever.

The Railway Station

Then, I summoned the members of the Central Trust, and I asked them what work they were doing. I said, "What is the use of occupying high positions if you don't discharge your duties sincerely?" Every year, people from all walks of life and from different strata of society are coming to serve as volunteers. I may give them food, free of cost, but who will bear their travel expenses? The railway fare is increasing day by day. In olden days, 20 rupees were enough to reach Madras from here, but these days even 200 rupees are insufficient. I commanded them to approach the railway authorities for travel concessions for the volunteers. I talk sweetly, but at the same time, I am stern when it comes to

a question of discharging one's duty. I told them, "Either you do this work or resign." The Central Trust members have negotiated with the railway authorities, and they secured the travel concessions sanctioned for the volunteers. Man plunges into action only when strictly told. The railway authorities were very happy. They thanked me, saying, "Swami, it is our good fortune that we have an opportunity to serve your devotees."

Not only this, in order to ensure that the volunteers and devotees reach Prasanthi Nilayam without inconvenience, the Central Government has sanctioned 50 crore [500 million] rupees for the construction of a railway station near the petrol bunk. We will have trains connecting Penukonda, Dharmavaram and Prasanthi Nilayam. The other day, the officials of the railway department had a meeting in Delhi and arrived at that decision. Everybody should be able to reach Prasanthi Nilayam comfortably for Swami's 75th birthday. One will soon be able to board a train in Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Hyderabad and many other places, to come here.

Don't Lose this Chance

Once upon a time, this Puttaparthi was a small hamlet, with a population of barely 100 people. In such a small village as this, who would expect: a **primary school**, a **university**, an **airport**, a **super speciality hospital**, and a **railway station** to be built in such a short period of time? All these things are happening during the lifetime of the Avatar, which is unprecedented in the history of mankind. During the time of no other Avatar were such stupendous tasks achieved in such a short period of time. Many more wonderful things are going to happen. Today, you are able to see me from close quarters. But after some time, you may have to see me from a

from a distance of a few miles.

So make the best use of the divine proximity of Sai.

Once you lose this precious chance to serve the Lotus Feet, you will never regain it.

Sai confers devotion, power and, ultimately, liberation on you.

Never be misguided by the works of others.

Keep this in mind and redeem yourself.

Secure and lead an ideal spiritual life.

Telugu Poem

In Conclusion

Today we find restlessness and anxiety. I have taken upon myself this suffering only for your sake. In response to your prayers, I have decided to cure myself now, for your sake. Don't give room for any anxiety. Now Swami is 100% perfect, perfect, perfect.

Follow Swami's commands, earn a good name, secure good marks, and set an ideal for the world. **That is what I want.**

In addition, for the volunteers, we are making efforts to provide adequate accommodations by constructing 100 more sheds. To provide accommodations for the foreigners, a suitable piece of land, 150 acres has been acquired on the hillock. For the 75th birthday, who knows where one will be placed? But if you have Swa-

mi's grace, you belong to Swami wherever you may be. Swami is always with you. Never entertain the feeling that Swami will be away from you. Have firm faith in Swami.

In the future, you can conduct your programs without hindrance. In the coming year, you can organize the sports meet in ways more grand than this. I won't put brakes on your activities. But in certain aspects, you must follow my commands. It is for your good not mine. Be safe, worry is prevalent everywhere. Spirituality is the only solution to all these ills of society.

Due to a lack of spirituality, man is subject to depression and disease. Diseases are the products of the mind, not the body. Lack of peace of mind results in depression, which in turn leads to disease. Develop physical strength, have faith in God, experience bliss, and share it with your fellow beings. Whatever may happen, never give up spirituality. It is only devotion to God that protects you, nothing else. Distance yourself from animal qualities, develop human qualities and be one with the divine. How can you understand divinity when you are not able to understand the importance of human values? First, practice human values; then, divinity manifests itself. Take to the path of spirituality, go around the four corners of the country propagating spiritual ideals, and strive for the welfare of the world at large.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Prasanthi Nilayam, January 14, 1999

Journey of the Heart

A few years ago, I went through what I now refer to as my “meat cleaver” cycle of heart tenderizing. It seemed as if razor sharp blows fell so rapidly, one after another, that there was hardly enough time to catch my breath. This period was marked by major illness with prolonged fevers of 106°, death of both parents, traumatic deaths of close friends, and sudden loss of my first husband. This was followed, a few years later, by another marriage and much hope. The all too transitory bliss was soon shattered by the death of our five-month-old baby. There was also, ever-present job stress with onerous overtime hours, betrayal by coworkers in a cause we’d long fought for, eventual abandonment by my second husband in the face of unrelenting problems, unexpressed grief, and a severe auto accident resulting in complex medical problems.

Still reeling from the staccato-like, unrelenting blows, I groped my way toward some stability. I was swimming daily, connecting to the earth through my garden, attending psychotherapy, group work and countless workshops. I was meditating, doing spiritual activity, including service work and reading. I got involved with Sufi dancing and prayer. All these helped me to reconnect with my inner self.

Gradually, the sharp pangs became more dull, less intense. Periodically, I’d experience a very unusual occurrence—a strong fragrance of roses would completely pervade my surroundings. This did not occur on any regular schedule and was totally unpredictable. But it seemed to occur most frequently when significant events were happening, or it would underscore some significant realization I’d just made. Usually, I was the only one present, although it occurred on one occasion during an intensive conference. The conference leaders had randomly matched me with a roommate who seemed like a long lost sister. She’d even been initiated by Swami Muktananda some 15 years earlier, as had I. The fragrance of sweet roses drenched our room three times over the course of that week, and she also smelled the wonderful fragrance on two of those occasions.

After these experiences had been occurring for nearly a year, I began to sense a name, and I felt that this was associated with a specific person. It sounded like “Maa Maa” or “Baa Baa.” Events seemed to lead me much as the proverbial carrot dangling enticingly in front of the donkey—the goal seemingly within my grasp, only a heartbeat away. Synchronistic episodes connected the

pieces. At that time, I learned of an Indian Avatar called, Sathya Sai Baba, who was reported to have remarkable powers. He emphasized that all religions are one, performed many miraculous feats, although He did not underscore them, calling them merely, "calling cards," (to get one's attention for more significant work). He had reportedly cured individuals of every imaginable illness; documentation reported His raising an individual from the dead. He appeared simultaneously in diverse parts of the world, and so on.

I knew nothing of this Sai Baba, and I had never been inclined to follow one leader or sect. I felt more like a Sufi than anything, believing there are many philosophies and paths one may follow. I was attracted to the teachers and philosophies in which there seemed to be "heart."

Nonetheless, the sweet scents continued. During one of my daily swims, a significant vision occurred over the course of about 50 or 60 laps. First, a spectacular lotus formed and opened revealing a vibrant egg-shaped object (I later learned it was a Shiva lingam). Next, an upright triangle formed, surrounding the Shiva lingam, with its apex pointing up toward the heavens. The vision was followed during the next 20 or so laps by another triangle with its apex pointing downward, toward earth, and intersecting the first triangle. It formed the ancient six-pointed cross

with its message, "As above, so below." Thus signifying, man's spirit descending to earth and the physical form, followed by his search for reunion with the spirit. Finally, a brilliant halo radiated from this symbol and gradually it solidified into a huge afro surrounding a compassionately beaming face, which could be seen over the entire picture.

Three weeks later, I was off to India still in hot pursuit of that enticing carrot. There was an interminable flight with countless connections, delays and a four-hour taxi ride over primitive dirt roads, finally culminating in my arrival at Prashanti Nilayam, Sathya Sai Baba's ashram in south India. Each day, a message from Baba was chalked on a blackboard under a large tree in the center of the ash-ram. The message that greeted me upon my arrival, seemed intended specifically for me:

Joy is a deceptive trap; grief is the real preceptor teaching caution, circumspection, discrimination, detachment, awareness and vigilance. Death is not the merciless foe he is made out to be; he is the friend and companion, the teacher, the kindly kinsman who takes you into his fold, and clothes you with the halo of remembrance. The heart of man has to be toughened, not hardened; it has to be made soft, not slithery; this can be achieved only by the blows of loss, grief and distress. It is God's way of shaping us into the divine mold.

I soon fell into the rhythm of the ashram: arising early for morning walking meditation, attending *dars-han*, participating in *bhajans*, as well as group discussions and study. I was amazed by the ongoing synchronicities and a growing sense of peace. Each day's events, though varied for the diverse group assembled, seemed to be meaningfully addressed by Baba's daily chalkboard messages. The gentle peace gathered momentum, glowing faintly at first, occasionally flickering, but with steady puffs of cosmic energy ever encouraging its expansion. It was soon to burst into full flame on Christmas Eve.

Although it was winter in south India, the outside temperature was still quite warm for me. As we gathered for *darshan*, hundreds of thousands of devotees flooded to the ashram from every corner of the world. I'd sat in meditation posture for what seemed an eternity. Jammed closely, were anxiously seeking devotees on all sides. Though hot, cramped and uncomfortable, I was nonetheless among the fortunate, as many had been turned away

for lack of space. At long last, Sai Baba emerged from the mandir (temple) and, rather than making His customary circuit among His devotees, He sat in front of the Western choir for a special performance of Christmas carols. He was only a few feet from where I was sitting. I noticed that as He listened to the carols, He seemed to use His handkerchief to wipe tears from His eyes. Distracted from my meditation, I mused, His devotees consider him God; I wonder if God cries?

"I saw Sai Baba standing with those piercing, all-seeing eyes looking deeply into my eyes. Once contact was made, He moved one hand slowly to His eye and made a graceful gesture, as if wiping away a tear."

As I sat joining the caroling, I fell into a deep reverie. Suddenly, I left my physical body and seemed to merge with every atom in the uni-

verse. Wondrous, all-encompassing, completely unconditional love flooded and engulfed my senses in great waves of bliss. I lost track of time, location, body awareness. I was consumed by immense feelings of gratitude and overwhelming love. Tears were streaming down my face, though I was scarcely aware of them. Eternities and lifetimes may have elapsed, everything seemed perfect and was unfolding according to a

great cosmic order. Suddenly, I felt a couple of strong nudges in my side, and bolted back to my physical body, gradually opening my eyes to an orange blur directly in front of me. I saw Sai Baba standing with those piercing, all-seeing eyes looking deeply into my eyes. Once contact was made, He moved one hand slowly to His eye and made a graceful gesture as if wiping away a tear. That simple gesture conveyed both an answer to my silent question and, also, acknowledged the intense devotional experience I had.

The following afternoon, we gathered at the Poornachandra Auditorium for Baba's Christmas address. I'd helped my friend who was in a wheelchair to a seat; so I found a place far back in the large auditorium. While waiting for Baba to appear, I began talking with a German woman who told me she was a psychiatrist and was involved in many innovative therapies: rebirthing, regression, bodywork, psychodrama, etc. She asked how I had come to see Baba, and when I related the series of events—scents, synchronicities, vi-

"I wondered at the awesome beauty of our connection with one another and with the divine."

sion and all—she was astounded, as she'd had many parallel experiences. She kept talking of the amazing grace that, out of the hundreds of thousands present, we'd been seated next to one another. She had just returned from a month-long period of study in Tibet. While there she'd learned that there

were not only colors and sounds associated with each chakra,* but fragrances as well. She only remembered two of the odors, narcissus (the scent she'd been smelling) was associated with the third chakra, and rose was connected with the fourth or heart chakra.

As I listened to Sai Baba's words on that special Christmas day—the importance of love and service, attention to substance in one's spiritual observances, not mere form, development of communities based upon pure love and desire for peace—I wondered at the awesome beauty of our connection with one another and with the divine. As I walked from the Poornachandra to the mandir, I saw a beautifully carved rose on the side of the wall of the mandir. Alongside

*Chakra or chakras are thought to be invisible discs that are aligned with the spinal column. With spiritual progress, the divine energy rises up through the eight spinning discs bringing with it divine wisdom. Sathya Sai Baba cautions that this process should never be forced. If it happens at all, it should happen slowly, in a natural way.

it was inscribed: *Make your life like a rose that speaks forever silently in the language of fragrance.*

A few days after my return from India, the video, "Jesus Lived in India," by the late Richard Bock, arrived. During one segment, a close-up of the chakras from an ancient Tibetan text was shown. The diagram's drawing of the heart chakra was a remarkable duplicate of the evolving vision I'd had while swimming weeks earlier. Inspired by this meaningful coincidence, the old adage, "When the student is ready, the teacher appears," came to mind. It took on a very personal significance as I basked

in the flow of this wonderful series of gifts.

Though my heart had certainly been tenderized and made ready by repeated blows, the blows seemed to have served a purpose in preparing for this awesome opening and healing. And now the real work begins in earnest—continual surrendering of control and ego, heartfelt service, ongoing observance of the patterns, so as to ever release and purify—hopefully in the end, making my life like that fragrant rose which gracefully affects others by its sweet presence.

—Gayla Reiter
Benicia, California



After long searches here and there, in temples and churches, on earth and above, at last you come back, completing the circle from where you started. You come back to your own soul and find that the One whom you have been seeking all over the world, and for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, the One whom you thought was the mystery of mysteries, is shrouded in the clouds of your own Self, the reality of your life, body and soul. That is your true nature. Assert it, manifest it. It is Truth and Truth alone that is one's real friend. Abide by Truth and tread the path of righteousness, then not a hair of your body will ever be injured.

Meditation is nothing other than rising above desires. Renunciation is the power of battling against evil forces and holding the mind in check.

—Sathya Sai Baba

From a letter written to a devotee, published in
Vision of the Divine by E. B. Fanibunda

Another of Baba's Leelas

In 1998, I had traveled to the ashram an unprecedented three times! The most recent visit to attend Baba's birthday in November. So, I had absolutely no plans to go again until the Youth Conference, which had originally been set for *Guru Poornima* in July of 1999. Therefore, it was with great astonishment that I awakened one morning, at the beginning of the year, with Baba's voice resounding in my head, as if I had been in His actual presence at the ashram in Prasanthi Nilayam. These were the words that so surprised me, "Come for Chinese New Year and bring your daughter." As I awakened more fully, I remonstrated with Him, and explained that I had already been several times quite recently. However, I simply could not shake free from His command. It literally haunted me. I did not mention it to anyone, not even my daughter, Sheila, because it seemed so impractical that I felt certain, it must be from my imagination or ego.

Shortly after this dream, Sheila informed me that she and her husband, who had suffered a stroke, were thinking of going to see Baba. My immediate reaction was that this took care of my dream. However, after some discussion, Martin, Sheila's husband, changed his mind and decided that he really did not want to go at that time.

Several days later, Sheila had a very vivid dream in which she was at the ashram standing with a small group of devotees awaiting Baba's arrival. When

He appeared, He walked right up to her, and recognizing her, asked, "But where is your mother?" She told Him that I was somewhere in the ashram, at which He said that she should fetch me, as He would be back after He had watched a video on ecology.

This dream, coming so soon after mine, seemed to indicate that Baba really did want us to go to the ashram together for Chinese New Year, so we decided to arrive just before that date.

The next thing we learned was that *Shivarathri* would fall on February 14, Valentine's Day. That was the day, last year, when we were granted an interview. It, therefore, seemed to be very appropriate to go. So, we changed our plans to arrive in time for the *Shivarathi* festival too, but early enough to avoid most of the crowds while traveling. We thought all was nicely arranged until we were informed that Baba had canceled the celebration of Chinese New Year at the ashram, much to the disappointment of the Hong Kong Center members who were to have been the organizers for the event. Of course, that set us to wondering what we were supposed to do next. We were certainly having a living experience of Baba's famous saying, *Love my uncertainty*. We both felt that we should make this journey and maybe, somewhere along the way, we would understand why Baba told me, in the dream, to go for Chinese New Year. As soon as we made that decision every-

thing worked out smoothly. We arrived at Prasanthi Nilayam two days before *Shivarathri*, so we were able to settle into the routine before the main crowds arrived.

On the actual day, we were all raptly listening to Baba's discourse when He suddenly coughed and then started to choke. At which time, an immense gasp came from the assembled audience, all of whom anticipated that, perhaps, He was about to manifest the yearly appearance of a Shiva lingam for all of us to observe. As soon as Baba began to retch, everyone stood up with tremendous excitement, which obscured the view for all of those in the back.

I was thankful to be given a tiny crack between the many heads in front of me, through which, I was able to watch. He worked so hard to release the lingam that had been forming inside of Him for the past year, as it has been doing for many years.

I recalled the last time He had produced a lingam at a public gathering, when my husband and I were present on that most auspicious occasion. At that time, I watched while Baba struggled to bring it out into full view. I had compared it to giving birth to a baby, and my heart went out to Him; He worked so hard to give birth to it. This time, with one last spasm, it shot out of His mouth and into the air, its passage forming an arc before it fell into His outstretched hands. In one of the photographs showing Him holding it, He can be seen looking down at it as lovingly as a new mother would

gaze at her newborn child. He then held it up for all to see, and told us that it was solid gold. At this statement, both Sheila and I were puzzled, as we had each distinctly seen a powerful surge of dazzling white light when it was in mid-air, and He held it up, so we had presumed that it was white. But later, when we saw the photographs, we could see that it was indeed golden.

As Baba resumed His discourse, it suddenly dropped onto the ground and started to roll away until one of the students retrieved it, and handed the lingam back to Baba. At one point, He threw it onto the ground with force to show that, like God, it is indestructible.

Sheila and I marveled at the way we had been lured to the ashram presumably to celebrate Chinese New Year. However, we ended up with this most impressive experience, which none of those present, least of all the two of us, could possibly have foreseen. How full of surprises Baba always is; how He loves to surprise us with those things we least expect. What a wonderfully fitting way to end this millennium, with the golden lingam to lead us all into the next period and hopefully, to the Golden Age which Baba so often promised will be forthcoming. But, He also reminds us that we each have to be willing to do our part by practicing His teachings everyday, for only when they become universally used can the world change.

-Phyllis Krystal
Los Angeles, California

Baba Said:



He then held the lingam up for all of us to see, and told us it was solid gold.

Embodiments of Love!

Understand the true meaning and inner significance of *Shivarathri*. [Showing the *Hiranyagarbha* lingam to the devotees, Baba continued:] This is present in everybody's spiritual heart (*hridaya*) and is on the right side of the body. The principle of *Hiranyagarbha* is spread all over the body. It assumes a form when I will it. Whoever has seen this lingam at the time of its emergence will not have rebirth. One should see its form as it emerges in order to sanctify one's life. Such sacred manifestations have to be shown to you every now and then. Only then can you understand the divinity in

humanity. This lingam will not break, even if it is dropped from a height with force. This is immortality. It is changeless. You cannot see such a manifestation anywhere else in the world. It is possible only with divinity.

For the past 20 years, devotees did not have the privilege of witnessing this *Lingodbhavam* (producing the lingam). The reason was that hundreds of thousands of devotees used to gather in the Poornachandra Auditorium to witness this grand spectacle. As the Poornachandra cannot accommodate large gatherings, there used to be stampedes. As a result, devotees were put to a lot of in-

convenience. In order to avoid this, *Lingodbhavam* was discontinued. Not only this, but three types of lingams emerged. They are *Bhur*, *Bhuvaha* and *Suvaha*. *Bhur* refers to manifestation (body); *Bhuvaha* refers to vibration (*prana*); *Suvaha* refers to radiation (*Atma*). I often say, you are not one, but three. The one you think you are, the physical body; the one others think you are, the mental body; the one you really are, the *Atma*, divinity.

On every *Shivarathri*, all three lingams would emerge. Even now, the other lingams have started to emerge, but I have prevented them because there are many things to be told to you. In the future, you will witness many more manifestations of divinity. Understand that this bliss can be only in the proximity of the divine and nowhere else.

Do not be deluded just because I am talking, laughing, walking, and eating like you. Do not be deluded by the body attachments. All my actions are selfless, selfless, selfless. There is no trace of selfishness in me. Have firm faith in this truth. If you have total faith, wherever you are, all your desires will be fulfilled without your asking. Only those who don't have total faith suffer. Develop self-

confidence. That is the first spiritual practice you have to undertake.

Truly, you are all most fortunate. Today is Monday, very endearing to God. This body was also born on Monday. In every Shiva temple, special prayers are offered on Mondays.

Hanuman is worshiped on Tuesdays. When Ravana was killed on the battlefield, Hanuman rushed to Sita to convey the good news. Sita was overjoyed and blessed Hanuman profusely saying, "Hanuman, I do not know what day it is, but since you have conveyed this much awaited, auspicious news, this day shall be called *Mangalavaaram* [it was Tuesday,] and may you be worshiped on this day." In the *Treta Yuga*, the names of the days, such as Monday, Tuesday, etc., were not in existence; they are of recent origin. Therefore, in the culture of Bharat, each term has an inner significance. But Bharatiyas are not making any effort to understand them, and they are going along the wrong path. Culture is important, not caste, so uphold culture.

Embodiments of Love! Understand the truth that Love is *Atma*, and *Atma* is Love.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Excerpts from *Shivarathri* Discourse, 1999

Having had the unique good fortune of witnessing the emergence of the time-space-embodiment in the lingam form, I assure that you are released from the bondage of birth and death. . . . When you are asked what happened at Prasanthi Nilayam, tell them that your life's mission has been fulfilled, that you were able to witness the Lingobhava, actually see the lingam which emerged during the auspicious hour.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. IX, chapter 7

Making Sense

Sathya Sai Baba says, *Love my uncertainty*. This is easier said than done. We are a nation of believers in the strength and reliability of rational thinking. We get so carried away by the frequent success of our ventures into predictable areas, that we fear going out on our own into the unknown. We voluntarily restrict our experience, so that we remain safe and sound.

We learn to worship orderliness and reliability. If something does not work, each and every time, its value diminishes because we cherish predictability. We are taught to avoid taking chances, and to look for and find the sure thing. We are nuts about neatness and having everything fit. This means that we can't afford to take chances and perhaps grow and discover new directions.

We invest enormous authority in the idea that everything has to be reasonable in order to be right. By definition, something that makes sense requires that it be understood. Therefore, we are likely to either discard or dismiss those things that we do not understand as having little or no value. Making sense is one of our culture's primary ruling concepts. We tend to measure the validity of anything with the guideline: if it doesn't make sense, or it doesn't work; it's worthless. However, we know for example, that it is not necessary to understand how or why we have fallen in love to know and experience its joy.

How many times does science and medicine fail to make major discoveries, because they are wedded to their self-declared idols of consistency, repeatability and constancy? Remember that Gandhi said, "Consistency is the refuge of fools!" Some doctors, choking on these restraints, loosen up and accept opportunities to use

a medication that only works 50% of the time. And how glad we are, especially if we are one of the people who gets well.

Recently, I was telling my son how Swami took on the pain and injury that was scheduled for one of the college boys, in the recent Sports Day meet [January, 1999] at Puttaparthi. My son ridiculed the idea by saying, "If He is God, why doesn't He just prevent the injury from happening? Why is it necessary to go through this charade?" I tried to explain that this was the way Baba chose to handle the situation, but my son said it just does not make sense.

Those words, "make sense," echoed in my brain, crying for an explanation. It touched upon all the rules we are taught as a child. This was the backbone we relied upon to get us out of trouble. How could I then undermine this basic tenet of society? It felt like blasphemy when I said, "Things do not always have to make sense to be valid; things do not always have to be understood to be true." But my son would have none of it. He wrote off my comments as weak excuses, and implied, I was not in touch with reality. I pleaded that part of our problem was due to our limited thinking, that we needed to open our minds and make room for the things that we didn't understand, that we had to allow and accept the idea that two opposing beliefs or concepts could be valid and true at the same time. My son said that he knew and had heard all about paradoxes. He felt that my definition of a paradox was a cop out, an excuse for not having a reasonable answer.

Our society wants everything to be explainable. Thinking we understand, allows us to feel comfortable, makes us feel we can control the situation. Rational thinking is celebrated as

the key to our freedom and understanding. It is supposed to guarantee solutions to all problems. That's why so many of us have been brought into the system. We fear not understanding and not knowing; it makes us feel insecure and, therefore, creates situations we cannot handle. We have forgotten the paradox that too much knowledge can be dangerous.

The whole concept of God is something that many of us accept without understanding. Miracles, by their very nature, are extraordinary events that we accept in spite of the fact that we cannot explain them. For instance, how can we define or reproduce bliss? Love means more to us than any other single experience, yet it takes on so many different colorations, means so many different things, and it can never be clearly defined. I asked my son if he could think of anything he knew of that did not make sense. He mentioned the idea in homeopathy, whereby diluting a substance, it actually becomes more potent. I said, "That's great." But he countered by saying that he did not believe it.

I have learned to treasure the paradox as a way to decipher things that previously were beyond my understanding. Surrender used to mean weakness, giving up. Now, it means allowing, accepting, freedom, and even strength. Baba tells us, *There is unity in diversity*. This paradox titillates the mind. We often see everything as being different. We enshrine individuality, and yet we have learned to recognize the unifying principles like, *All men are brothers*, or, *All are one*. There is only one God, and He is Jesus, Rama, Jehovah, Krishna, Buddha, Mohammad.

Somewhat frustrated, I found myself telling my son, "You know we love one another very much, we are not antagonistic, we just have totally different ideas about some of the underly-

ing principles of life. But if you asked me, what is the most important thing I could tell you, it would be that things do not have to make sense to be real, helpful, important and of value. The most precious things have an exact opposite characteristic, and this glorious paradox is imbedded in our lives. We have to learn not only to accept, but to love these paradoxes."

At this point, I should have had the good sense to end the discussion. But, I found myself telling him, "Swami manifested a lingam during *Shivarathri*." (see pages 16-19) I explained the importance of this day, and that Baba had not made a lingam in public for almost 20 years. I told him how Swami said that only those who saw the lingam emerge from His mouth would be liberated from having to be reborn. My son wondered why I would even be interested in this kind of liberation, because he knows how much I love life. I confessed that it was just my greed to have what the Lord was offering. I trusted that what He was offering was good. My son could simply not understand how I could accept and want something that I could not even understand. If only I had the presents of mind to point out, that here was a perfect example of the paradoxes that we had been discussing. Instead, I tried to explain that this is part of the marvelous mystery that we can love, and accept ideas we do not understand or even know how to properly value. Intuitively, we know certain things are precious.

It's true, we know some things that we do not want like: pain, fear, sadness and agony. We have some road maps to avoid these hazards. My plea is that we need to make room and allow ourselves to play with all kinds of ideas. Let the music begin, and the cacophony of discordant sounds blend into a rhapsody of enlightenment.

—Jack O. Scher, Faber, Virginia

Sai Visits Delhi and Bombay

For years, devotees have been pressing Bhagavan to visit their towns and cities. At last, the prayers seem to be yielding results, with the Lord paying brief visits to Delhi [after 17 years absence] and Bombay [after four years.]

Shortly before Baba's plane landed in the capital city, March 11, 1999, a message was received saying that the air traffic controllers of Delhi would be eagerly awaiting Him on the tarmac. As the plane came to a stop and the door opened, the traffic controllers lost all control and rushed towards the door. Swami stood there smiling and waving, but He could not get out! After distributing copious amounts of *vibuthi* (holy ash), Swami managed to extricate Himself, get past airport officials, and walk toward the crowd of VIPs waiting to accord a formal welcome.

In Delhi, Swami stayed at the residence of the state president, brother Kulwant Rai. As the motorcade made its way, children lining the route waved flags and cheered loudly. Posters, banners and floral arches en route gave ample evidence of the eagerness with which the capital city was awaiting the return of Bhagavan. At the Rai home, there was a ceremonial welcome with *Vedic* chanting, a band playing, and children giving a dance performance.

Elaborate and meticulous arrangements had been made for Swami's visit. More than 10,000 *seva dal* volunteers had arrived days before His appearance; they took care of everything from traffic management to crowd control. The police were hardly in evidence. The newspaper accounts recorded amazement at how private volunteers alone could manage such a herculean task. That speaks volumes of how love for Swami can evoke cooperation from both the general public and devotees alike.

Darshan (to see a holy being) formed only part of Swami's daily routine. He had to repeatedly criss-cross the vast city to visit the homes of various devotees. Besides this, there were many formal functions, at each of which a discourse was expected. At the Rai residence, where Swami stayed, there was hardly any rest since numbers of devotees, most of them VIPs, were waiting for an interview at all hours! It was amazing to see all these usually unapproachable and security-protected dignitaries waiting for Bhagavan like patients in the anteroom of a consulting physician.

The first major public event during the Delhi visit was the inauguration of the "Sri Sathya Sai International Center," the construction of which has been possible through the

munificence of Mr. Kulwant Rai (who also gave the Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam). Located in a central spot in the city, the International Center is barely a stone's throw away from a Shirdi temple. After ceremonies were completed, the speech-making began. The chief guest was the Prime Minister who made a short but effective speech that set the tone for Bhagavan's discourse. After referring to his long association with Swami, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India, said that the country was now passing through troubled times, and that everyone, including himself, very much needed Swami's advice. He, therefore, hoped that Swami would come often to Delhi, at least once a year.

Swami's discourse was down-to-earth and revolved largely around the country's problems. Mincing no words, Bhagavan squarely blamed the politicians for the present mess. He said that India was well-endowed with everything that one could ask for. It has a glorious past; it was the land of saints, sages, seers and Avatars. There was truth in the air, righteousness in the dust, and love in the waters of the country. And yet, today everything is in a shambles. The people have sacrificed much for winning freedom. But what has been achieved in the 50 years after independence? Crime, arson, murder, hijacking and terrorism have gone up beyond all limits. People live in fear. All this

because people in power have become selfish and excessively greedy.

Swami's delivery was powerful and poignant. The politicians in the audience were obviously most uncomfortable. The public was, overjoyed because here, at last, was someone who could severely scold the politicians publicly, to their faces.

Swami did not merely criticize, but He spelled out in detail what must be done to set matters right. Unity was the prime need of the hour, and everyone, including political parties, must learn to put the country ahead of party politics and inter-party [and intra-party] rivalry. Selfishness must be totally eschewed. All this is possible if people returned to their roots, which is Indian culture.

Baba also visited the Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar, a school in Delhi for girls, run very much on the pattern of the primary school at Prasanthi Nilayam. The love with which the children greeted Bhagavan, the program they presented, and Swami's loving response were all strongly reminiscent of Puttaparthi.

Shortly before enplaning for Bombay, Swami addressed a mammoth gathering in the vast Nehru Stadium, the scene of many historic sporting events.

On the afternoon of March 14th, Baba left Delhi for Bombay. It was clear that the devotees were filled with sadness; four days had just flown

by. There were crowds all along the road to the airport; and this time, the flowered arches read, "Thanks for the visit. Please come back soon."

Baba reached Bombay at 2:40 p.m. Again, there were crowds all along the road from the airport. Swami went straight to the Dharmakshetra with an impressive motorcycle escort provided by the *seva dal* volunteers. A huge crowd was eagerly awaiting His arrival. The place was packed; many could not get in, even including celebrities. People also watched from their high-rise apartment balconies. The program that was presented was something like a public reception. But the speakers who preceded Him sought refuge rather than offering felicitations. They uniformly lamented the decline of moral values, and the sharp rise in crime and corruption.

Then, it was Swami's turn, and His discourse was one of the most spirited delivered in recent years. Bhagavan severely admonished the rich people of Bombay, and declared that they alone were responsible for all the evils they were complaining about. They were all busy piling up wealth and living in luxury in skyscrapers, while those who contributed to their wealth lived in abject poverty in numerous slums scattered around the city. If they wanted things to change, then they must immediately transform their life style. They must become compassionate and take

up social activities benefiting the poor. They must start schools, dispensaries and hospitals.

Little did the audience expect this! They came for sympathy, but they got reprimanded instead. Swami told them, in no uncertain terms, that righteousness alone would protect them, and their most important duty, as commanded by righteousness, was sacrifice!

Another memorable discourse was given to the *Bal Vikas* students, mostly slum children, active workers in the Sai Organization, and teachers, mostly women working with the children, some parents, again mostly slum dwellers. Unlike the elite crowds of Delhi and Bombay who came to Bhagavan largely driven by fear and insecurity, these people had nothing to fear. They were following Swami's teachings and doing Swami's work. Thus, they were already enjoying the protection of the Lord. Swami extolled the women to such an extent that many began to wonder if it was Ladies' Day.

Swami returned to Bangalore on March 17th. He came out for evening *darshan* promptly; He went about taking letters and sat for *bhajans*. He looked fresh and rested, not like someone who had just gotten back from a hectic tour.

That is our loving Lord, more concerned about devotees than Himself.

Excerpted from a report by
—Mr. Venkataraman

Announcements

Sathya Sai Says . . .

Bhagavan Baba has told several people lately, **"Pray for good, righteous world leaders, and I will send them."** Let's remember to do our part and pray for this worthy cause. The world needs good leaders!

Two More Retreats/Conferences in July

• **July 2-4 hosted by the Bronkeys at Enchanted Acres, Grants Pass, Oregon.** This is a fine opportunity for those who like to camp out and enjoy the lovely hillsides of Enchanted Acres. Accommodations can also be made, in advance, for nearby motels. This function does not come under the ordinance or authorization of the Sathya Sai Organization. For more information call the **Bronkeys at: (541) 479-9066** or fax: **(541) 479-2997**

• **July 23-25, hosted by Northeast Region #1, at Wisdom House** in the beautiful hills of **Litchfield, Connecticut.** This will be a **Meditation Retreat.** The goal is to encourage devotees to follow the first step of the "Nine Point Code of Conduct," daily meditation and prayer. This is not a silent retreat, but rather a program of inspirational talks, practical workshops, meditation and pray. For more information call: **Chuck or Patty DiFazio (860) 613-0373, or the e-mail address, saidfaz9@aol.com**

Newsletters and Bulletins

To all the good people who send out those informative circulars and bulletins to announce the activities and schedules for your Sai Centers and service projects. Please be aware that **when you print a quotation from a published book or document, you may be breaking a copyright law.** It is best if you get written permission before printing any published quotation; **these laws are strict and enforceable.** But the good news is, **Sathya Sai Baba does not put copyrights on any of His published works,** so you can quote from any of the following: *Sathya Sai Speaks, Vahinis, or Summer Showers.* Those are always the best sources of wisdom on any subject; remember, Baba's words are scripture!

Year of Nonviolence, 1999

The **Sathya Sai Newsletter needs articles on nonviolence.** If you have any good ideas on the subject, please share them with us. As most of you know, nonviolence is one of the five basic human values. We know that the ideas are out there just waiting to be published.

To Remind Ourselves

Let us review the years that have been designated for the five human values: 1996 was the year of Truth; 1997 was the year of Righteousness; 1998 was the year of Peace; this is 1999, the year of Nonviolence. In the new millennium, the year 2000, we celebrate the year of Love.

Youth Conference

This year there will be another **Sathya Sai Youth Conference, tentatively scheduled for November, and might coincide with Baba's Birthday**. We are not certain of the dates for this event. Young adults, ages 16 to 30, please check with your Sathya Sai Baba Centers.

The last Youth Conference was a grand success with young adults from 160 countries participating.

The Sathya Sai Young Adults National Committee will be meeting in New York to help coordinate plans for the Youth Conference. The three coordinators—Bill Harvey, Hal Honig and Phyllis Krystal—will join with two representatives and two advisors from each of the ten regions to finalize plans.

An Empty Chair

Joy Thomas, has been an Associate Editor of the *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*, for more than 15 years. Joy left her body in April,* and she will be missed more than words can say. She was always a strict grammarian, and had acquired the title, "Queen of Commas." Joy has also written many books in which she chronicled her experiences with our own beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

When next, the *Newsletter* editors come together, her chair will be empty. This poem is dedicated to our friend and associate, Joy Thomas.

—Sathya Sai Newsletter Staff

*The night draws nigh
And beckons me to dream
Of light and joyfulness
Beyond the darkening sky*

*I sense below life's restless stream
The presence of creative will
Which in the midst of ceaseless work
Remains so sublimely still*

*We realize that many of our Sai sisters and brothers have passed on, and they are all equally dear to us. Unfortunately, we cannot write about each of them; instead, they are honored in our hearts. We have made an exception because of Joy's close affiliation with the SSN staff.

Children's Corner: *Equal-mindedness*



We don't live alone on planet earth
The world is so big, it has quite a girth
All people on earth are our sisters and brothers
When you think about it, there are no others

So give them all some special kindness
Sai Baba says that is "equal-mindedness"
And when you pray, ask God above
To send them all lots of love

Illustration Courtesy of
Bal Vikas Magazine for Children,
aged 1 to 99, Italy

Sathya Sai

Education in Human Values

Many Devotees are asking what is happening in the United States with regard to Sathya Sai Education in Human Values. So here is a direct answer: A LOT! The program is ALIVE and WELL! May Sai Baba's blessings remain with us as we remember His words, *Quality, not Quantity*.

We have been working since the mid-1980's, bringing this program to various schools throughout the nation. Individual instructors, who have had the EHV training, have been using the five values and five teaching techniques in their classrooms, and successfully so. There has been a problem of acceptance, on a broad plane, of using the name Sathya Sai along with Education in Human Values, but we have been true to our belief in Swami and His directives and have not wavered from His program.

In 1996, we established four subcommittees to carry out the goals of Sathya Sai EHV:

1. Early Childhood-Elementary School
2. Middle-High School
3. Post-Secondary Level
4. Community

There has been ongoing work in each category. In August, 1998, in St. Louis, Missouri,

a Sathya Sai Education in Human Values National Conference was held. General information was shared by

many individual instructors who have put into practice Baba's education program. The subcommittees also met in individual sessions. The conference was hailed as a success by the enthusiastic devotees who attended. Just recently, during the weekend of March 12-14 in Tucson, Arizona, a basic Sathya

Sai EHV training was conducted for West Coast subcommittee members who had not been previously trained. Again, the various subcommittees met in their own groups to share experiences and activities. The training was highly successful with everyone extremely motivated to play their part in doing Baba's educational work.

We plan to have East Coast and Central U.S. training sessions in the near future. The Post-Secondary subcommittee will be having its own meeting in August 1999 to finalize its plans. The members of this subcommittee are, for the most part, professionals: doctors, professors, lawyers, psychologists and social workers.

In the interim, each subcommittee member is busy completing many tasks:

- A new Sathya Sai community EHV manual
- Additions to the present K through 6 curriculum

"We strive to move forward . . . to have all devotees aware of the program Baba has so graciously given to the world . . ."

- A parent participation paper
- A Post-Secondary paper
- A continuance of Middle-High School activities, approaches, and other tasks

The Executive and Advisory Boards to the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Foundation are meeting regularly. We strive to move forward with a uniform strategy for training in the United States, plans for the future of EHV, plus an effort to have all devotees aware of the program Baba has so graciously given to the world for the character education of all.

We welcome your comments and participation. Please feel free to contact Bea Flaig at: (520) 577-7196 or the e-mail address: sai.baby.flraig@juno.com

Those Who Serve

Executive Committee members: Bea Flaig, Doris Hampton, Malaika Horne, Ronne Marantz, and Berniece Mead.

Subcommittee Chairpersons are: 1.Kathy Feely, 2.Creta Schiermann, 3.Hymon Johnson, 4.Megan Sweeney

—Bea Flaig
Tucson, Arizona

Teachers are the sculptors who shape the children into things of beauty and significance, utility and inspiration. They study the pupil's nature and aptitudes, decide on their roles in society, their paths, and stages in their progress. . . .

But it must be pointed out, the sculptor [or teacher] is not the only factor to be reckoned with in this process. The mother and father of the child also have important roles in the process of education. The positive and the negative must both meet in order to produce the electric current. Even God needs the yearning and endeavor of devotees to fulfill His will, and save devotees from perdition. . . . The teacher and the student have to be brought to each other, and encouraged by the parents to teach and learn, to share lovingly their knowledge and experience, so education might proceed, and the child benefit from the heritage given by his or her forefathers. The teacher must win the reverence of the pupil by showering love. So too, the pupil must win the love of the instructor by showering upon the teacher reverence and affection. It is a mutual transaction, a sharing of the emotions of the heart. . . .

How can a proper, congenial atmosphere for studying and teaching be built on a foundation of doubt and hatred? Nowadays, the atmosphere is polluted by the teacher's fear and suspicion, and the student's hostility and audacity. There is no love to ease the relationship between the teacher and the taught.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Prasanthi Nilayam, March 1974

Bhagavan's Assurance to Devotees

If man loses money, he can get it back; if he loses a friend, he can get another; if he loses his wife, even then he can remarry and have another wife; if he loses his share of land, he can get another. But he cannot get back the body once it is lost.

Embodiments of Divine Love

For all spiritual pursuits, and for all types of endeavors in life, the body is the main instrument. Of all the living beings in this world, human life is the rarest and most sacred. It is a great fortune to assume this vesture of a human body. In the human body there is the mind, which is mysterious. Everyone is aware of the presence of the mind in the human body. But no one knows the vagaries of the mind. Though it does not have feet to move, it can run faster than air and light. It has no death, no fixed life span and always remains youthful. One may be born again and again, but the same mind follows. Once you understand the nature of the mind, you will be able to understand your true Self.

Unify, Purify, Sanctify

The whole world is a mansion, and all of humanity is one family. There is no multiplicity. We live under the same sky, tread the same earth, breathe the same air and drink the same water. So it is foolishness to develop diversity in this underlying principle of unity.

What is the spiritual practice (*sadhana*) you should undertake? You should purify your body, mind and speech. How to purify the body? It is not enough if it is cleaned with soap and water, which amounts to only external cleanliness. It has to be cleaned with good thoughts, good words, good deeds which are very essential on the inward path. Whatever work you do, do it with sacred feelings. Divert the body from all

unsacred activities, use it only for good purposes. In what way can you purify the mind? You can purify the mind through sense control. Use the senses for sacred purposes:

- See no evil, see what is good
- Hear no evil, hear what is good
- Speak no evil, say what is good
- Think no evil, think what is good
- Do no evil, do what is good
- This is the way to God.

In order to purify the senses, you should make use of them in sacred ways. Purity of the senses comes from purifying the mind. Mind is the master of the senses. If the mind is to be pure, the senses will be pure.

How can you purify your speech? You can purify your speech by speaking the truth, following righteousness and cultivating love and peace.

The moment the human body is born, "I" (*Aham*) follows it. *Atma* (the indwelling divinity) is the origin of *Aham*, so *Aham* is the son of *Atma*. From *Aham* the mind is born, so mind is the grandson of *Atma*. And from the mind speech originates, so speech is the great-grandson of indwelling divinity or *Atma*. In short—*Atma*, *Aham*, mind and speech—all belong to the same family. So, you should have the conviction that the I principle in you is the dear son of God, mind is the grandson of God, and speech is the great-grandson. Once you

understand that your *Aham*, mind and speech belong to the divine family, and you act accordingly, your life will be sanctified.

More About Human Life

Human life has become artificial. There is no trace of love in one's thoughts nor in one's relationships with others.

Man finds it very difficult to have control over the senses. Due to the effect of modern education and high intelligence, man has become a slave to his senses. Unable to control his mind, man is leading his life with fear and delusion. From where does this fear arise? Where there are mistakes, there is fear. What is the mistake made by man? He has forgotten that the "I" principle in him is the son of God. He has forgotten that his mind is the grandson of God, and he has forgotten that his speech is the great-grandson of God. Since he has forgotten his relationship with God, man is stricken with fear and gripped in anxiety.

Due to advancements in the fields of science and technology, human values are lost and minds have become polluted. On one hand, science has progressed; but on the other hand, the sanctity of the senses has regressed. Man is happy seeing the advancements of science and technology, but he does not realize how far he has moved away from divinity.

Human life has become artificial. There is no trace of love in one's thoughts, nor in one's relationship with others. Even the relationship between mother and son has become artificial. Nowadays, when one finds a son talking to his mother, one finds only an artificial exchange of words, but not true love.

Students are leading an artificial life without

sense control. Even animals have sense control to some extent, but not modern students. This is due to the progress in modern education. I do not say that education should not progress; I, myself, have established a university [Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.] I only say that, along with education, students should imbibe good character. Can you call mere bookish knowledge education? Can you call all those who can read and write educated? Can you call all those who have degrees added to their names educated? If education were to be only for living, do you not find birds and beasts living? Education is for living a good life and not for earning a living. You should study to know the purpose of life. You should not be content with bookish knowledge, superficial knowledge; you should have practical knowledge, for practical knowledge, inquire within.

Don't Blame God

You should understand my ideal; once I say that you are mine, I will never forsake you. You may forget me, but I will never forget you. You may develop hatred toward me, but I do not have any hatred toward you. In this world, I have no enemies, and I have no dislike toward anybody. I always uphold my promises. I always go forward to protect, never do I retreat. But some may question that even after Swami accepts them as His, why do they have problems? Why should they suffer? This is not my mistake. I always keep my promises. People suffer because they forget their promises and lose their sacredness. I never go back on my word; I never make anyone suffer. Until the last moment, I will be with you, in you, below you, above you and around you. Many do not make an effort to understand this truth. People do not inquire into the reason for their suffering. The change in their hearts is the

main cause. Their wavering minds, and their ingratitude are responsible for this. The previous speaker said, "God is nearer than your mother." Though I shower much more love than their own mothers, some people do not show their gratitude. I do not look forward to your gratitude. But when I do my duty, you also have to discharge your duty from your level.

Some people blame God for their suffering, ignoring their own defects. They argue saying, "God does not keep His word." God will never go back on His promises, but man does not understand this truth. Being drowned in physical and worldly feelings, he blames God for his suffering. God will never make anyone suffer at any point of time. Each has to face the consequence of his action. Every action has a reaction. It may take place immediately, or in a few hours, or in a few days, or in a few months, or in a few years, or in a few births. For example, when your finger is cut with a blade, it starts bleeding immediately. When you fall from a staircase, you will suffer a fracture. In both the cases, the reactions are instant. The food that you eat takes a minimum of two hours to get digested. For a seed to grow into a tree and yield fruit, it may take a few years. Good or bad, you cannot escape the consequences of your actions.

Then, you may question, why should one pray to God? One should pray to God not for the alleviation of suffering, but for peace of mind. Once you have peace of mind, all your problems will vanish; you can even escape the consequences of your actions if you have God's grace. After the expiration date, the medicine loses its potency. Similarly, once you acquire God's grace, the consequence of your actions will have no effect on you. In order to make the negative consequences of your actions go away, prayer is

essential. You have to pray wholeheartedly.

Your heart is the seat of God. So think of God as installed in you. You cannot expect happiness in the outside world. Bliss is not in the material world, it is within you. When you search within, you will find bliss.

Embodiments of Love! Never blame God for your difficulties. Come what may, pray to Him. That is your duty. As long as you have the feeling that you are separate from God, you have to pray. Once you realize that you are one with Him, you need not pray.

Don't Limit Him

Your breathing process teaches you a lesson. When you inhale you make the sound "so," and when you exhale you make the sound "hum." This process goes on for 21,600 times a day. "So" refers to divinity, and "hum" refers to ego, which means you have to take God into you and drive out ego (*ahamkara*). This is an important principle of life. We breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. Divinity is like the oxygen, which supports your life, and ego is like carbon dioxide, which is dangerous for your health. Ego is a very bad quality; it has to be driven out.

In your daily life, knowingly or unknowingly, you are committing mistakes. You are only keeping the physical body clean, but are not making any effort to know how to purify your mind and speech. You are treating bad as good, and good as bad. You should make an effort to know what is good and what is bad. All service rendered for the welfare of society is good. You are a member of society; so your welfare depends on its welfare. The country will prosper if society is good. Individual prayer, family prayer and community prayer, all three are very essential.

The *Vedas* have declared: "Let the whole world be happy." Since ancient times, Bharat has propagated spiritual discipline to other countries insuring peace and security for all of humanity. You should have such broad feelings; your love should be as big as an ocean. When Jesus was being crucified, people around Him were weeping. At that moment an ethereal voice declared, "All are one my dear son! Be alike to everyone." The same thing is taught by the culture of Bharat wishing the welfare of all humanity. Unfortunately, with the passage of time, selfishness and self-interest have become rampant.

According to Bharatiya culture, *Uttharaayana* is considered to be very sacred. The great warrior Bhishma lying on a bed of arrows waited for 56 days for the advent of *Uttharaayana* to give up his mortal coil. During *Uttharaayana*, the sun travels toward the north. What does this signify? In the north, we have *Himaachala* (Himalaya mountains), which is said to be the dwelling place of God. When God is all-pervasive, how can we limit Him to *Himaachala*. What is the significance of this statement? The word *Himaachala* is made up of two words, *Hima* and *Achala*. *Hima* means that which is white as snow. *Achala* is that which is firm and unshakable. Where is the place to which this description applies? It is the pure heart where God is installed. It is said, "God is the indweller of all beings." So, in order to see God, you do not need to go anywhere; turn your vision inward. We cannot call an unsteady and impure heart *Himaachala*. Only the heart which is pure, sacred, unpolluted and unwavering can be called *Himaachala*.

There is no trace of spiritual thinking among modern students. When the parents and teach-

ers themselves have not realized the importance of spirituality, how can we blame the students?

Parents and Students

First, the parents must teach their wards to pray to God everyday. But modern parents themselves do not pray to God. As soon as they come from the office, they go to clubs and spend their time playing cards and drinking. Naturally, children follow their footsteps. In some houses, parents quarrel in front of their children, which is an unhealthy practice. If there is any difference of opinion among parents, they should resolve it in the absence of their children. Children cannot concentrate on their studies if they are disturbed by family problems. So parents should never discuss problems in front of their children. There are a few parents who set a bad example to their children by not speaking the truth. For example, if some unwanted person calls on the phone, they instruct their children to tell him that they are not available. Thus, encouraging children to tell lies.

Some of the children are like pure gold as long as they are here. Once they go on vacation, their minds get polluted. But, some students remain the same. Some return before their vacation's end in order to spend time with Swami. It is the innate culture acquired as a result of deeds done in past lives that shape their behavior.

You must try to know what divinity is. In this age of science, some say that there is no God. But there is God in all periods of time. There is no matter; whatever is seen by the naked eye is bound to disappear. Only God is permanent.

Anything for My Devotees

Time is most precious in human life. Misuse of time is evil. Time is God, so don't waste time. I feel very sad when I find you wasting time. I

always say, "My life is My message." I never waste even a moment. You think that after dining, Swami goes and sleeps. But actually, I do not know what sleep is. I never sleep. As you know, I collect letters from you; I see some of the letters immediately. I spend time in a most sacred way. I do not require anything; I do not need anything in all the three worlds; I do not need anything for myself. Still, I am engaged in activity from dawn to dusk in order to set an example. From top to toe, there is no trace of selfishness in me. Believe it or not, I always spend my time for others. I always give, but never receive. I ask for only one thing and that is pure love. I am ready to give my life for those who offer their pure love. You cannot understand my work; only men of sacrifice can understand this. I am always engaged in activity; I do something or other. Even while resting, I am working. I have to take rest for the sake of others; otherwise, they do not rest. To give them rest, I take rest. What is my rest? Doing devotees' work is my rest.

The previous speaker, Narsimhamurthy, spoke about this incident. One day, all of a sudden, I left this body. Gangadhar Shetty and Narsimhamurthy were surprised at this. Only these two men were present, it was not possible for others to be there. I told them, "There is a widow who always thinks of Swami. She has two children. After the death of her husband, she took a small job to maintain her family. She sustained a heart attack. The loss of her husband, and her inability to run the family made her depressed. As the money was not sufficient, she took a part-time job. But every moment, she used to chant the name, *Sairam, Sairam*, wholeheartedly. In such a situation, she suffered a heart attack. In fact, she was to die. So I took the heart attack upon myself. For seven long days, I did

not come down [for *darshan*]. I took upon myself all her sufferings and pain and made her healthy. After three days, she sent a telegram, "Swami, you came and protected me and my children." She did not know that I had taken her disease on myself. After a week, she came here with her children.

I am ready to do anything for the sake of those who have total faith and pure love. But it is very difficult to find such devotees. However, there are a few of them.

Noble People

If there are no noble people, how is it that you can find daylight in this world? There are many sacred people in this country as well as in this world. Do not limit spirituality to Bharat; it is present all over the world. Truly speaking, spirituality is more evident in foreign countries, than in Bharat. Indians do not know the *Brahmasutras*, *Upanishads* or *Bhagavad Gita*. But the foreigners have learned the *Bhagavad Gita* by heart. In Italy, there is a devotee who has learned the *Brahmasutras* by heart. She can chant *Rudram*. There, she constructed a building by name of, "Mother Sai," placed on 25 acres of land. Having full faith that one day Swami will certainly visit that place, she also built a spacious hall like the Poornachandra Auditorium, so that public meetings can be held there. She also has constructed some rooms to accommodate students who follow Swami. Do you know how clearly our primary school children from foreign countries chant *Vedas*! This is the result of being in good company. If the company is good, the children's futures will also be good. Tell me your company, and I shall tell you what you are. As is your company, so you become. Wherever you go, join good company. Let your heart and

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

% Sathya Sai Book Center of America

305 West First Street

Tustin, California 92780-3108. USA

Your Subscription Includes:

Sathya Sai Service Opportunities

A Service Newsletter sent twice (2 issues) a year

The ***Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*** is published quarterly at a cost of:

	<u>Two Years</u>	<u>One Year</u>
United States	\$10.00	\$ 5.00
Canada, Mexico and Puerto Rico.	16.00	8.00
All Other Countries*.	24.00	12.00

*For countries other than the United States, the subscription cost is computed for airmail. Foreign subscribers, please send a check or international money order in U.S. Currency Only.

mind be purified. Always speak the truth in a palatable and acceptable way. This is the spiritual path which you have to adopt. People may wonder why one should do meditation and devotional songs. Those are good actions. They are all good actions meant to sanctify the time, but God is not interested in them. What is it that you should do to make God happy? You should involve your body in good deeds. Fill the mind with good thoughts, speak sweetly and softly. Only these actions please God. Bharatiyas refer to this as, "Unity of thought, word and deed." With sacred feelings, students should undertake sacred actions and lead an ideal life. This is what I teach the students in particular.

Those students who are educated here should transform thousands of students outside. It is not enough if you merely preach; first

practice what you preach. Only then, your studies in this institute will find fulfillment. We do not receive even a paisa (penny) from you. Education is offered free. How can you express your gratitude to this institute? Share with others all that you have learned here. That is true gratitude. Do your jobs, take care of your parents, fill your hearts with divinity. When there is pure water in the tank, you get the same water out of the tap. Your heart is like a tank. All the senses are like taps. So, fill your hearts with love, and experience love. I expect and bless the students to take to this path of love and lead an ideal life. Thus, I bring my discourse to a close.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Prasanthi Nilayam
September 29, 1998

Subscription form: *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*

Please check one: ☐ New ☐ Renewal ☐ Address Change

Send ____ subscription(s) for ____ year(s). I have enclosed a check or money order in the amount of \$_____ payable to: *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*, % Sathya Sai Book Center of America, 305 West First St., Tustin, California 92780-3108. USA

Your subscription includes: *Service Opportunities Newsletter*, twice (2) a year.

☐ If you wish to have the current issue check here, and please add \$2.00 extra. If that issue is not available, we will return your \$2.00. Otherwise, all subscriptions start with the **NEXT** quarterly edition.

Name _____

Street _____ Apt.# _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Over for Subscription Cost

To give them rest, I take rest. What is my rest?
Doing devotees' work is my rest.

The previous speaker, Narsimhamurthy, spoke about this incident. One day, all of a sudden, I left this body. Gangadhar Shetty and Narsimhamurthy were surprised at this. Only these two men were present, it was not possible for others to be there. I told them, "There is a widow who always thinks of Swami. She has two children. After the death of her husband, she took a small job to maintain her family. She sustained a heart attack. The loss of her husband, and her inability to run the family made her depressed. As the money was not sufficient, she took a part-time job. But every moment, she used to chant the name, *Sairam, Sairam*, wholeheartedly. In such a situation, she suffered a heart attack. In fact, she was to die. So I took the heart attack upon myself. For seven long days, I did

sutras, Upanishads or *Bhagavad Gita*. But the foreigners have learned the *Bhagavad Gita* by heart. In Italy, there is a devotee who has learned the *Brahmasutras* by heart. She can chant *Rudram*. There, she constructed a building by name of, "Mother Sai," placed on 25 acres of land. Having full faith that one day Swami will certainly visit that place, she also built a spacious hall like the Poornachandra Auditorium, so that public meetings can be held there. She also has constructed some rooms to accommodate students who follow Swami. Do you know how clearly our primary school children from foreign countries chant *Vedas*! This is the result of being in good company. If the company is good, the children's futures will also be good. Tell me your company, and I shall tell you what you are. As is your company, so you become. Wherever you go, join good company. Let your heart and



Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba accepting letters from the assembled devotees.

mind be purified. Always speak the truth in a palatable and acceptable way. This is the spiritual path which you have to adopt. People may wonder why one should do meditation and devotional songs. Those are good actions. They are all good actions meant to sanctify the time, but God is not interested in them. What is it that you should do to make God happy? You should involve your body in good deeds. Fill the mind with good thoughts, speak sweetly and softly. Only these actions please God. Bharatiyas refer to this as, "Unity of thought, word and deed." With sacred feelings, students should undertake sacred actions and lead an ideal life. This is what I teach the students in particular.

Those students who are educated here should transform thousands of students outside. It is not enough if you merely preach; first

practice what you preach. Only then, your studies in this institute will find fulfillment. We do not receive even a paisa (penny) from you. Education is offered free. How can you express your gratitude to this institute? Share with others all that you have learned here. That is true gratitude. Do your jobs, take care of your parents, fill your hearts with divinity. When there is pure water in the tank, you get the same water out of the tap. Your heart is like a tank. All the senses are like taps. So, fill your hearts with love, and experience love. I expect and bless the students to take to this path of love and lead an ideal life. Thus, I bring my discourse to a close.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Prasanthi Nilayam
September 29, 1998

Sathya Sai Book Center of America

305 West First Street, Tustin, California 92780-3108

Phone: (714) 669-0522 Fax: (714) 669-9138

Book Center hours: Monday-Friday 10:00 to 4:00, Saturday 10:30 to 3:00

New to the Book Center

Light of Love Compiled by Prof. N. Kasturi. This is an account of the trip and the divine discourses given by Bhagavan Baba from June 30th to July 14th, 1968, during His travels to East Africa. Swami gave solace, guidance, warnings, and answered questions posed by the people in the African countries during His visit. BI-041.....\$2.50

Dasara Discourses '98 Compiled and published by the Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam. These divine discourses are reproduced from September 25th to October 1st, 1998 covering the talks given by Baba during the holy time of *Dasara*, a celebration of the victory of good over evil. BA-400.....\$3.00

Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1996 Compiled and published by the Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam. These are Baba's discourses on the spiritual classic, *Ramayana*, the story of the Avatar, Rama. BA-110.....\$3.00

Words of Jesus and Sathya Sai Baba Compiled by H. K. Takyi, M.D. and Krishin J. Khubchandani. This volume gives corresponding quotations of both Jesus and Baba; it clearly outlines the parallels between the two teachings and indicates that all great masters, throughout the ages, have shared the same messages. This book is offered in hardcover. BI-081.....\$4.00

Compact Disc

Prema, you and I are one This is a CD of 14 popular, Indian devotional songs produced and sung by devotees from Southern California. The CD was designed for listening and learning, whether one is new to *bhajans* or an accomplished singer. SCE-54.....\$7.50

The Sai Workers at the Book Center have been very busy putting together a new price list of all items which are currently being offered. Please call or send for your free copy. *Sai Ram.*

Five Decades of Divine Discourses by Sathya Sai Baba

<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. I.....</i> (the years 1953 to 1960, Revised Edition).....	\$4.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. II.....</i> (the years 1960 to 1962).....	4.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. III.....</i> (the years 1963 to 1964).....	2.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. IV....</i> (the years 1963 to 1965).....	3.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. V.....</i> (the years 1964 to 1967).....	3.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VI....</i> (the years 1967 to 1968).....	3.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VII... </i> (the years 1966 to 1977).....	4.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VIII..</i> (the years 1970 to 1973).....	3.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. IX....</i> (the years 1974 to 1975).....	3.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. X.....</i> (the years 1975 to 1980).....	3.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XI... </i> (the years 1971 to 1972, Revised Edition).....	4.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XII..</i> (the years 1973 to 1974, Revised Edition).....	5.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XIII..</i> (the years 1975 to 1977 Revised Edition).....	4.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XIV..</i> (the years 1978 to 1980 Revised Edition).....	5.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XV... </i> (the years 1981 to 1982, New Edition).....	5.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XVI..</i> (the year 1983, New Edition).....	3.00
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XVII. </i> (the year 1984, New Edition).....	3.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XVIII</i> (the year 1985, New Edition).....	3.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XIX. </i> (the year 1986, New Edition).....	3.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XX....</i> (the year 1987, New Edition).....	3.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XXI... </i> (the year 1988, New Edition).....	3.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XXII.</i> (the year 1989, New Edition).....	3.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XXIII</i> (the year 1990, New Edition).....	3.50
<i>Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XXIV</i> (the year 1991, New Edition).....	4.50

Divine Discourses Given to College Students by Sathya Sai Baba

<i>Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1972</i> (Revised Edition).....	\$4.00
<i>Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1973</i>	3.00
<i>Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1974</i>	3.00
<i>Summer Roses on the Blue Mountains, 1976</i> (Revised Edition).....	3.50
<i>Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1977</i> (Revised Edition).....	4.50
<i>Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1978</i> (Revised Edition).....	4.50
<i>Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1979</i> (Revised Edition).....	3.50
<i>Summer Course, Indian Culture and Spirituality, 1990</i>	3.00
<i>Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1993</i>	3.50

This Series, Written by Sathya Sai Baba, Contains the Wisdom of the Ages

<i>Bhagavatha Vahini</i> (on the life of Sri Krishna).....	\$5.00
<i>Dharma Vahini</i> (on morality, Revised Edition).....	3.00
<i>Dhyana Vahini</i> (on meditation, Revised Edition).....	2.00
<i>Gita Vahini</i> (on the classic <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>).....	3.00
<i>Jnana Vahini</i> (on wisdom).....	1.50
<i>Prasanthi Vahini</i> (on divine peace).....	2.00
<i>Prema Vahini</i> (on divine love).....	2.00

SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER, USA

P. O. Box 660908
Arcadia, California 91066-0908

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL

Nonprofit Org.

U.S. Postage

Paid

Arcadia, CA

Permit No. 71

© *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*—Summer 1999, June, July, August
Printed under the auspices of the Sathya Sai Book Center of America. **All rights reserved.**
Reproduction in whole or in part—without written permission—is prohibited.

Sathya Sai Service Opportunities



Vol. 15, No. 1 ♦ Summer 1999

WRAPPING GIFTS FOR GOD

The red, green, and gold foil, and the patterned multi-color papers, some with pictures of Santa on them, lent a holiday atmosphere to New Jersey's Atlantic City Middle School gymnasium, where on Saturday, October 24, 1998, over 115 Mid-Atlantic Sai devotees were determined to give gifts of caring and compassion to the region's less fortunate. Surrounded by literally mountains of presents, the Sai volunteers carefully wrapped the gloves, thermal underwear, socks, blankets, and other items destined to uplift the forlorn and forgotten all across the region. As they wrapped, a choir sang "Jai Baba, Jai Baba, Sai Baba Jai" and other devotional songs, adding to the spiritual feeling already present at this one-day "Service: Love in Action" retreat. Toward the end of the four-hour "wrap-in," someone showed up with

a couple gallons of ice cream, and many were reminded of the old days at the ashram when Swami would hand out sweets to volunteers doing service. And now in Atlantic City, devotees felt as if Swami was there, too.

"Swami's presence was felt in the love that was generated by the devotees who were wrapping and sorting these gifts," the Mid-Atlantic Regional President says. And the project's Area Coordinator for Delaware, Maryland, Washington, DC, and Virginia agrees. "There was so much love in whatever they did," she says, "you could actually feel the energy."

Beginning the previous June, members of the region's 28 Sai Centers, urged on by their love for Swami, had bought these gifts as a way of putting into practice His Ceiling on Desires program, which en-

courages devotees to save money on non-essential items and use it to aid the less fortunate. "If instead of going out for a movie or dinner with a family of four," says the Regional Service Coordinator, "you take the money and buy warm socks or gloves for a person living on the street, that gift will make a big difference in his life."

On retreat day, the 4,000 plus sparkling new gift items flowed into Atlantic City from all over the six-state region. Besides the cold weather warmers, there were toiletries (toothpaste, soap, shampoo, etc.) to be grouped with washcloths, jars of honey, and other small purchases.

On-site at the retreat, the day's program was designed to amplify participants' spiritual experience and to include all age levels—adults.

(Continued on page 2)



"Take Hanuman [Hindu deity] as your example in service. He served Rama [Hindu deity], the Prince of Righteousness, regardless of obstacles of all types. Though he was strong, learned, and virtuous, he had no trace of pride. When asked who he was by the rakshasas (demons) in Lanka [the enemy's city], into which he had entered so daringly, he described himself, in all humility, as the 'servant of Rama.' This is a fine example of the kind of uprooting the ego that service must bring about in us. No one can serve another while his ego is rampant. The attitudes of mutual help and selfless service develop the 'humanness' of man and help in the unfoldment of the divinity latent in him.... Through the practice of service, Hanuman attained identity with Rama, as the river attains identity with the sea."

❧ Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XV

Wrapping Gifts for God

Continued from page 1

young adults, and children. In addition to the wrapping, it featured opening and closing devotional song sessions and inspirational talks, including one by a former student of Swami's.

The Sathya Sai Education (SSE) students, aged 6-15, enjoyed a morning of greeting-card-making in a separate room. Using art supplies brought by their parents and SSE teachers, the students expressed the feelings in their hearts as they produced the stamped and handwritten, illustrated cards adorned with sayings from Swami and their own well wishes. One read, "Whatever happens in life, God is always with you," and another had a crayoned picture of birds on a tree, with the message, "Birds in the trees wish you a happy holiday." The cards were later placed in holiday bags, along with the toiletries and other small items.

Throughout the day, cooperation was key. "We knew we could wrap gifts in the Centers," says the Regional Service Coordinator, "but we liked the idea of the whole region coming together for Center unity."

During the wrapping and bagging, the Centers in each area harmoniously decided when (around Thanksgiving or Christmas) and where the gifts would be distributed, with more endowed Centers giving gifts to others that had less. Each Center agreed to bring its share to already-existing Sai service projects. Through this procedure, gifts found their way to a wide range of recipients, from the elderly at a church senior center in New York City to the poor at a soup kitchen in Atlantic City to sick youngsters at a children's hospital in the southern part of the region.

Many devotees, inspired by the day, spread the news to other Sai people back home, who then went out and added to the gifts already

collected and wrapped. "Many Centers doubled what they had because of that," says the Regional Service Coordinator. In the New York Metropolitan Area alone, according to the Area Coordinator, 400 gifts were added after the retreat, making the total number distributed about 1,200. This cumulative effect was, in fact, part of the retreat plan, which encouraged Centers to continue the gift activity till Christmastime.

But even more important than the number of gifts was sheer joy of handing them out to the recipients. On November 21, when volunteers from the South Bethesda, MD, Center were distributing warm clothing and blankets to the homeless in Washington, DC's, Dupont Circle Park, one recipient told them he had just been praying to God for something to keep him warm and then they showed up with the answer to his prayer. Similar stories were reported in other parts of the region.

Because of devotees' overwhelmingly positive response to this project, most of the Centers have decided to repeat it each year during holiday season. "We planted a seed," says the Regional Service Coordinator, "and hopefully, with Swami's grace, this seed will grow."

For more information on this project, call Michael Hollander at (201) 476-0463.

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

SERVICE IN SAI SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

What is service? It is nothing but seeing God, treating God, helping God, in everyone and speaking kind words. Such selfless acts arise out of compassion and consideration. It is so natural for children to be compassionate, while adults struggle to follow the teachings of Swami. Before children lose their innocence, we must train them to think good, see good, speak good, and act accordingly.

We see rich, poor, young, old, strong, disabled, healthy, and sick. How long does it take a rich man to become poor? an able man to become handicapped? Where do we see the difference? Is it not in our perception? The day we can forget these imperfections and change our perception, that day we can truly serve our fellow men. If we can make our children understand this concept in Sai Spiritual Education classes and in our homes, that will bring service into their lives.

We must also bring the practice of service into our classrooms. Give the children a pair of gloves and a trash bag to clean the environment; talk to them about hunger and have them make sandwiches for distribution to the homeless through a Center project. Have a child dress up as an old person, so he or she can realize that change happens at the physical level, but not at the atmic.

While we are busy teaching Sai Spiritual Education classes, we must emphasize such ideas and activities. These measures will bring a change in the children's attitudes toward others, and they will come to an understanding that service to others is nothing but helping their own selves, since we are all truly only one.

✿ Sowgandhi Sridharan
California

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 their words are presented here as a third and final installment.

We had been visiting our friends at the nursing home for about a year when Swami unexpectedly introduced us to a different service project. When we had this experience, we realized that He might have designed our nursing home activity as a mere preparation for it.

After the death of Charles's aunt, who lived with us in New York City, we kept in touch with two friends of hers, very old sisters who had no family or close friends left. For several years, Evelyn, aged 89, had been caring for herself and her 92-year-old mentally incompetent sister, Kitty, in a small, fifth-floor walkup in Brooklyn, New York.

One day, when we called them from New Hampshire, where we were then living, we learned from a neighbor that they had both been hospitalized. Apparently, the younger sister had collapsed and become unconscious in the apartment. After we got off the phone, we prayed to Swami for guidance, and He directed us inwardly to drive to New York to visit them in the hospital and see what had to be done to help them.

When we arrived at the hospital, we discovered that Evelyn was being consumed by double pneumonia. She was not expected to survive. Their doctors told us that, owing to their condition, they would not be able to return to their apartment. Arrangements were already being made by the hospital to place them in a local nursing home. In spite of her severe illness, Evelyn was horrified at the very idea of a nursing home in New York and refused to go. The doctors insisted that there was no alternative, but then wondered out loud if we would be willing to take responsibility for the two women.

Upon getting inner guidance from Swami, we agreed to assume responsibility for the sisters' lives and welfare. Evelyn gratefully accepted our offer for both of them, and it was decided to move them from the hospital to New Hampshire. But since we had to be near the hospital while we were attending the sisters in New York, she suggested we stay in their apartment.

Upon entering the apartment, we encountered a devastating picture of how they had been living for years. The walls were black, the windows were broken and stuffed with paper, and plaster was falling from the ceiling. All around were empty tissue boxes and plastic containers, brown bags, bread wrappers, and boxes filled with used envelopes and old advertisements.

The linens were foul smelling, and many of them contained dried feces. Rodents had made the place their happy abode. And we had to sleep and eat there!

In clearing and cleaning, we discovered thousands of dollars in social security checks, pension checks, and cash. We realized that the sisters had lost control of their lives long ago.

Their doctors said that for us to do what had to be done for them, we needed a durable power of attorney. This document enabled us to handle every aspect of their lives—health matters, finances, legal problems, etc.

Soon we began to comprehend the complexity of what we had volunteered for. The onslaught of tasks that had to be handled in less than a minimum amount of time was overwhelming. Meanwhile, the hospital was pressing us to get the sisters out by a certain date, or they

would be sent to a local nursing home.

Many tasks usually slowed by red tape required the speedy cooperation of governmental authorities. Some days we ran into steel walls hourly. Then together we would pray to Swami. If this was all His will, would He please show us the way, for we did not know what to do anymore. Then sometimes almost instantly, but never later than the next morning, the steel walls opened up just enough to enable us to take another step forward until the job was done.

We had come to New York on December 5 for what we thought would be a day's visit. We stayed through the Christmas holidays, spending every day at the hospital. Since the nursing staff was very short-handed, we had to be with and feed the sisters until it became obvious that Evelyn would survive.

Then, in barely ten days, we managed to rent a furnished apartment for Evelyn and hire nursing care around the clock for her, as she was still quite ill. With Swami's help, we found a room for Kitty in the nursing home where we volunteered, even though they had a long waiting list. Finally, just in time to beat the deadline set by the hospital, we had the sisters transferred to New Hampshire in separate ambulances. How Swami overcame all the obstacles, only He knows.

For all practical purposes, we adopted these two ladies, and they became our family. After settling them in New Hampshire, we had to drive to New York every weekend for three months to clean out and vacate their apartment and straighten out their entangled financial affairs.

(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), World Sai Organization, who has written several books on Baba. Here is part two of our four-part series.

Why Sai Centers?

Sai Baba Centers have been set up all over the world, not to give devotees positions of Chairman, Secretary, President, etc., but as *vehicles to help devotees channel their love and devotion through service to the needy.*

For the mere singing of devotional songs, practicing meditation, or performing some rituals, the formality of a Sai Center—with all its rules, regulations, and guidelines—is unnecessary. However, once Center members wish to go beyond the periphery of their own group and extend a helping hand to society, such formalization is needed so that devotion can be properly coordinated into meaningful programs of action to serve mankind.

In the Hindu tradition, there is the sacrificial fire, *yagna*, where offerings are made to Agni [god of fire]—the divine energy. In the practice of selfless service, the energy within one (within every individual) becomes the sacrificial fire, and the selfless service one performs for the poor, sick, and needy are the offerings put into this fire. And like the temple *yagna*, which glows in splendor when mantras are chanted and various oblations (ghee, sticks, etc.) are offered, the divine fire (i.e., divine love) in one will grow and glow in splendor when prayers and devotional songs that instill humility and a sense of self-sacrifice, and selfless service that expands one's consciousness, are performed together regularly.

Many Sai devotees and Sai Centers undertake some form of service activity. Some do this on a regular basis, akin to the regular prayers they offer the Lord, but others un-

dertake service only during special occasions like Baba's birthday, Christmas, etc. Here it is pertinent to remind all devotees that Baba has said, "*Seva sadhana* [the spiritual practice of selfless service] has to be undertaken *as a way of life* so that it can yield results."

Leadership by Example

Many Center leaders take the attitude that since devotees are not coming forward to do selfless service, no such service can be done by anybody in the Center. Here again, it is pertinent to ask such leaders, "What about yourself?" Selfless service is an individual spiritual exercise made more effective *for those we serve* by group participation, but nevertheless, it continues to be an individual exercise manifesting collectively as community spiritual practice.

Center officers (Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Service Coordinator, etc.) betray the divine responsibility they undertook when they voluntarily put on the mantle of leadership if they desist from selfless service just because other devotees do not volunteer. Leaders should set the example by action; they should plunge into service, either by themselves,

in pairs, or in whatever way they can. They should exemplify dedication and steadfastness in their practice of selfless service. They should begin to display the joy they experience from such service. And they should show the light of their divine love glowing brighter and brighter, fueled by the practice of selfless service.

If such leaders exist in Sai Centers, then the other devotees, inspired by their example, will follow. There is the case of one Sai Center where the leader of the group, undaunted by the fact that other devotees were only interested at that time in attending *bhajans* [devotional singing sessions], not in volunteering for selfless service, undertook hospital visits alone for more than 1½ years. Today that Center, fired by his example and the example of those who followed, is one of the more dynamic Sai Centers and is often quoted as an example and an inspiration to many who visit the Center from abroad. Thus the earlier exhortation for leaders to lead by example is not a theoretical proposition but relates to what is achievable from the crucible of experience.

Service to the Elderly

Continued from page 3

Kitty was happy in the nursing home, where she received the professional care she had been in need of for years. With a radiant smile, she often remarked, "You must have looked all over the world to find this nice place for me. I never had it so good." Evelyn was able to spend every afternoon with Kitty until she died contentedly at the age of ninety-six.

Now Evelyn, soon to be ninety-five herself, lives in the same nursing home. She finds the social contacts very stimulating and entertains her resident friends with delightful demonstrations of her dancing abilities at every musical occasion.

It is a well-known fact today that many older people lose control of their lives long before the world takes notice. A loving hand at the right time could make life so much easier and safer for them.