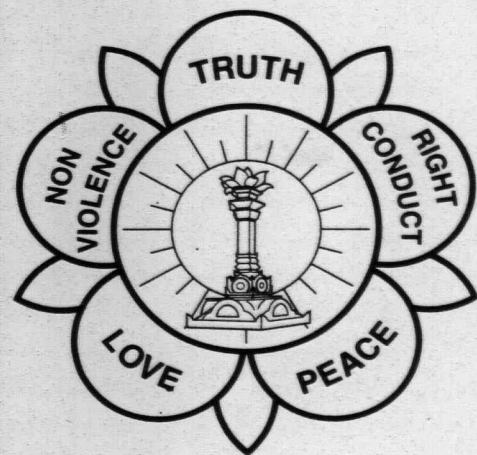




SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER, USA

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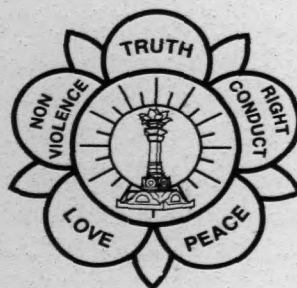
March, April, May

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
The Unbearable Charm of Sai Baba	Chris Germer	3
Discipline and Love Go Together	Sathya Sai Baba	6
Baba's Vernal Equinox	Marilyn Osoff	8
Baba, the Early Years	Sathya Sai Baba	9
Baba's Water Project—Here, at Home	Jorja Kelley	12
Qualities of a Devotee	Sathya Sai Baba	14
Sai Conferences and Retreats for 2000	Regional Presidents	18
Mid-Atlantic Retreat, My Kurukshetra	Carl Hirsch	21
Serve with Love	Sathya Sai Baba	23
Children's Corner: Anthony and His Violins	Sathya Sai Baba	27
Announcements	Newsletter Staff & Dr. Goldstein	28
Dates to Remember in 2000	Central Office, Prasanthi Nilayam	31
Sathya Sai Book Center of America	Book Center Volunteers	36

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



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—Barbara Bozzani, Editor

Sai's Message



scription is not universal. It is restricted to some people using a particular calendar. It does not apply to the entire cosmos. The cosmos is, in fact, divinity itself. An individual, restricted in time and space, is not on the same scale as the cosmos. From the point of view of divinity, 2000 is a mere speck. Several million years have gone by in the past. Hence, to say that this marks the beginning of the year 2000 is devoid of any significance. Two thousand years have passed since the era of Jesus Christ. What about the hundreds of thousands of years that preceded the advent of Christ? Even the names of the months such as, January, February, and so on, are related to various Greek kings and personalities of the past. Although periods of time have been named after humans, the very nature of humanness has been ignored. People are the very embodiments of divinity.

... From the physical and worldly point of view, you are looking upon this time as the commencement of the year 2000. Such a de-

Disputes over dates are meaningless. Every second is the birth of a new year. Seconds add up to minutes, minutes to hours, and so on to years. Every

second of your life is new. Thus, there is no particular sanctity about the beginning or ending of a year.

At this time, there are people who attribute special significance and speculate on some extraordinary or awesome events to take place. The time or the date is not the cause for your happiness or misery. Your own actions (karma) in the past are the causes of both your happiness and misery. "As you sow, so shall you reap." Don't waste your mental energies on speculations of this or that happening.

When you are a newborn babe, there are no ornaments around your neck; there are no chains of gold. But there is, for certain, an [invisible] heavily laden chain around your neck. All your actions, good and bad, counted one by one, have been strung together by Brahma (the Universal Absolute), and that is the ornament around your neck. When your actions are proper and pure, you will have good consequences.

On the whole, the coming year will be a good one for all of you. . . . The consequences of the past years will be unfolding in this year. In this period, for people of this country as well as the rest of the world, the effects are going to be generally beneficial. The first three months, January through the end of March, may be a little uneven. Why? Time is a phenomenon relating to the activities of the sun. In the year 2000, there are likely to be small changes. These changes are going to take place within a matter of three months. Such physical changes [may in-

clude] other consequences of a nonmaterial nature, resulting in some good and some bad effects for people. After these changes [April 2000 onward], there will definitely be a more stable period. Because of this statement, don't react as if everything can be left to the flow of time. In any event, you should make every effort on your part.

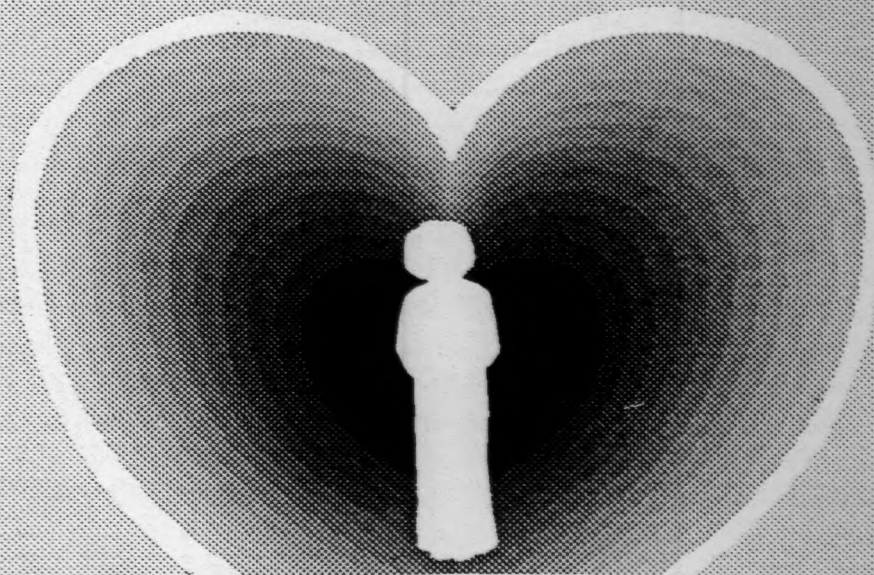
Many people are worrying and speculating as to how the year 2000 will unfold. There will be no formidable difficulties. All things come and go. . . . Meet all contingencies with love; transform everything into love; suffuse your lives with love. Then there shall be peace and stability in the world. . . . Swami is visible proof that the only wealth Swami [has] is love.

Who sent you invitations to this large gathering? Your love toward Swami, and Swami's love toward all of you has attracted you here. Hence, convince yourselves that everything can be achieved with love. Cultivate love in yourself. The evil traits of hatred, jealousy and pride should be cast aside. These are not human traits, they are appropriate for animals only. . . .

What is the ideal that you have to show? You must help all to your utmost capacity. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. Adopting service and love as your ideals, you must commence your new life from this moment. This is my blessing and benediction to you.

—Sathya Sai Baba
January 1, 2000

Excerpted from New Year's Day Discourse



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

dramatically depicted using his long, slender fingers—said, “We are in His clutches.”

It does not seem to matter how many interviews we have had. When Prof. Kasturi told Swami he wanted only to be close to Him, Swami replied, *What? Carry me around on your shoulders!* The brave devotees who commit themselves to go to Puttaparthi only to see Swami are usually reduced to children begging for closer physical contact, or an interview by the third day. Such is the Avatar’s extraordinary power of attraction.

Charm means the power to attract or delight. This is Swami’s weapon. Krishna and Rama had it, too. In this incarnation, by this power, Swami is uplifting the whole planet.

Swami’s charm is deep and abiding. It is not the charismatic charm that quickly disappears and disappoints. What are Swami’s charming qualities? A preliminary list might include these:

We taste only sacredness.”

Sai Baba’s inexplicable attractiveness is at once holy and healing. One exposure to Swami’s sacred charm can be life-transforming. For example, my father was transformed from an agnostic to an ardent spiritual seeker after only five private minutes with Sai Baba. Recently, a dear friend had his first private interview with Sai Baba, four days after his fiftieth birthday, on 9-9-99. Those precious minutes with the Avatar continue to dissolve this dignified man into tears with every retelling. His mind could not fathom the meaning of what Swami was saying, but his soul truly knew and loved unconditionally. What a rare opportunity in a lifetime for any human being, which the mind joyfully recollects for years to come.

But Swami’s charm has a rub to it. Once we are in His clutches—once we have lost interest

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—Sathya Sai Baba

January 1, 2000

Excerpted from New Year's Day Discourse

The Unbearable Charm of Sai Baba

What is it about Sai Baba? Why would a young lad, in a village, inaccessible even by a passable road, grow up to be adored in every corner of the world? Why would we travel to that hamlet, year after year, for a mere glimpse? And why do that, even as our hearts are breaking?

“Swami’s charm is deep and abiding. It is not the charismatic charm that quickly disappears and disappoints.”

For some of us, the first reading of a book about Swami grips us with a passion that will never quit. Others are gradually softened by His love, or perhaps by the disarming devotion of a Sai friend or loved one. As Prof. Kasturi—dramatically depicted using his long, slender fingers—said, “We are in His clutches.”

It does not seem to matter how many interviews we have had. When Prof. Kasturi told Swami he wanted only to be close to Him, Swami replied, *What? Carry me around on your shoulders!* The brave devotees who commit themselves to go to Puttaparthi only to see Swami are usually reduced to children begging for closer physical contact, or an interview by the third day. Such is the Avatar’s extraordinary power of attraction.

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Swami’s charm is deep and abiding. It is not the charismatic charm that quickly disappears and disappoints. What are Swami’s charming qualities? A preliminary list might include these:

He has universal, selfless love; He sees the divine in everyone; He is full of virtue; He is always happy; and He knows us better than we know ourselves. Who would not be delighted by just one of these attributes? When I asked my wife, Claire, what she found most charming about Sai Baba, she handed me a poem by Rumi:

“Something opens our wings.

Something makes boredom and hurt disappear.

Something fills the cup in front of us.

We taste only sacredness.”

Sai Baba’s inexplicable attractiveness is at once holy and healing. One exposure to Swami’s sacred charm can be life-transforming. For example, my father was transformed from an agnostic to an ardent spiritual seeker after only five private minutes with Sai Baba. Recently, a dear friend had his first private interview with Sai Baba, four days after his fiftieth birthday, on 9-9-99. Those precious minutes with the Avatar continue to dissolve this dignified man into tears with every retelling. His mind could not fathom the meaning of what Swami was saying, but his soul truly knew and loved unconditionally. What a rare opportunity in a lifetime for any human being, which the mind joyfully recollects for years to come.

But Swami’s charm has a rub to it. Once we are in His clutches—once we have lost interest

in pursuing our usual worldly desires, as our closest friends become other spiritual seekers (*sadhakas*), once we have directed our lives to His service—the pain begins. This is an agony which nothing in the world can permanently assuage, not even by more contact with Sai. Ironically, the physical contact with Swami may drive the fever higher. What to do?

Ramakrishna Paramahansa* begged Mother Kali for yearning, for it was the yearning that pulled him home. In the orbit of the Sai Avatar, there is no need to beg. Swami's gravitational pull is so enormous that we are unwittingly drawn in and, eventually, faced with a knotty dilemma, the agony of separation.

Our yearning may initially take many curious forms: We may buy more airplane tickets to see Him; we may become fixed upon some physical manifestation of His love, such as a ring; we may feel jealous when someone else gets attention from Sai; or we may stop reading about His divine play (*leelas*) because the pain becomes too intense. In my case, all of the above are true. I even sought comfort with another, more accessible teacher for a few years. All these strategies are vain attempts to avoid the pain of a heart breaking. They are derivative forms of yearning for Sai.

Such strategies may also be seen as transitional states from the physical to the mental relationship with Swami, as we attempt to internalize Him. Photo-mania is another example. Most of us have been through that stage or know someone with Swami-photo wallpaper. I remember when inexpensive cameras first included automatic rewind, and I snapped photos

in the darshan line in rapid sequence as Swami approached. When He came close, He looked down and said, *Not like that*.

We can never internalize Swami enough. This is because Swami is always in our hearts anyway. At some point, we must stop pulling Him in, let go, and awaken to His steady presence in our hearts. This takes great courage or despair to accomplish.

The turning point, for me, occurred one evening as I was reading about the life of Krishna. The *gopis* (the milkmaids who adored Lord Krishna) were pining for Krishna after He left Brindavan for Mathura. In His mercy, Krishna sent Uddhava to Brindavan to teach the *gopis* how to find Him in their hearts. (Krishna probably couldn't go personally, for it would have bound the *gopis* further to His beloved form and intensified their pain.) A light went on inside my head. Stubbornly nursing my broken heart, I had been unwilling to take the next step. I was finally ready to close my eyes.

Swami has said that SAI means, *See Always Inside*. The terrible yearning for Sai, which develops as we enter into His loving embrace, is perhaps His true gift to us. I had misunderstood the pain of separation as a problem in my relationship with Swami—inadequate attention at the physical level—rather than as His priceless gift to His devotee. The yearning is the engine which drives us along the path of spiritual activity (*sadhana*). *Sadhana* is the inward path, and there is no relief from the agony of separation, unless we turn inward.

I am learning, 22 years after first meeting Swami, to work with the deep hunger for Sai in

*Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) Hindu reformer and mystic. Sathya Sai Baba has referred to him as a "great soul."

my heart. In the morning, first thing, I read *Sanathana Sarathi* or the *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*. These newsletters have the right combination of wisdom and information about Swami's *leelas* to focus the mind after sleep and grip the heart. As the desire to be close to Swami intensifies, I shut my eyes and dwell on Him—Swami's name and form. This is perhaps meditation, but sometimes it is prayer. Mostly, it is a reliable experience that the greater the pain in the heart, before closing my eyes, the more the concentration and inner joy.

And Swami likes to talk to us. He will listen, but I think He likes it even better if we listen to Him. After the mind is still in meditation, I gently ask, as if in Puttaparthi, "Swami, what should I remember today?" If we practice opening our hearts and ears to Him without preconceived ideas about what should come through, something nourishing and true will usually be made known to us. Also, heeding the inner, loving voice makes the relationship with Swami stronger and more continuous through the day. It is perhaps safe to say that Swami's physical charm is how

He takes us into a deeper experience of our own divinity.

I am writing this article in the hope that the reader will not suffer from stubbornness about insisting on physical blessings from Swami for as long as I have. Attraction, Yearning, Inwardness: That is perhaps His program for each of us, and for much of humanity as well. (Perhaps we should think of Swami's method as savory CHAI tea: CHarm-Agony-Inwardness!) Undoubtedly, as the whole world increasingly clamors for Swami's physical attention, our aching hearts will need some solace. That comfort is within.

We should not fret. This process is surely in Swami's hands. We can "Let go and let God." We still have up to 22 years to enjoy His physical career on earth as Sri Sathya Sai Baba. With lives dedicated to His service, let us fully embrace His mission globally, locally and deep in our aching hearts. Then He will carry us, light as angels, to the goal.

—Chris Germer
Cambridge, Massachusetts

The tender heart is more valuable than all material possessions. When moral and spiritual excellence is gained, the divinity in one becomes patent. . . .

God has incarnated in human form, in order to inspire people to follow higher ideals, not only in India but in all other countries. People may have different languages and lifestyles, but God is One and He is present everywhere. All religions speak of Him as love and as attainable through love. Forms of worshiping God differ, for they are shaped by time and place, but love is the basic content of all forms. The language of love is understood and spoken by all hearts. There is only one race really, and that is the race of mankind. We now consider petty distinctions of nationality, race, religion and language as vital, and we hold back love which must flow to everyone from every heart.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XI, Ch. 3

Discipline and Love Go Together

“If money is lost, one need not be worried about it, for one can earn it again. If a friend is lost, one can have another. If one’s spouse is lost, one can marry again. If one’s land is lost, one can purchase another. All these can be regained; but if one’s body is lost, one cannot get it back.” (Sanskrit Sloka)

In the Latin language, the human body is associated with the terms of sacredness and purity. The *Upanishads* (Hindu scriptures) proclaim that human life is highly respectable. People are put to grief because they misuse their bodies not knowing their value and sacredness. You can understand the significance of the human body in your daily life only when you inquire into the mystery of God’s creation. The human body inhales life-supporting oxygen and exhales poisonous carbon dioxide. It partakes of delicious fruit (*phala*) and excretes foul fecal matter (*mala*). Likewise, people should accept that which is sacred and give up all that is unsacred. Due to the impact of the *Kali* Age, people are accepting bad and giving up good. Unable to realize their innate divinity, people are taking to paths which are contradictory to the principles of truth and righteousness.

All flowers that blossom may not be transformed into fruits. All fruits may not become ripe. Once a fruit is ripe, it falls to the ground immediately. Similar is the case with human life, but people fail to understand the temporal nature of the human body. People feel proud of their education and achievements and get deluded by material comforts, which confer only mean and momentary pleasures. People put their most valuable bodies to misuse in pursuit of worldly pleasures. Time is the most important factor in

human life. Days, months and years are, respectively, like the second hand, minute hand and hour hand of a clock. All three hands are constantly on the move. No one knows when the appointed hour arrives.

Magnetic Power

The whole world is permeated with magnetic energy. Green pastures attract cows. Flowers attract honeybees. A mother attracts her child. You are unable to understand the magnitude of this power of attraction, and you are taking it for granted. There is power of attraction between human beings, birds, animals and even insects. The world cannot exist without magnetic power.

For a long time, scientists were under the mistaken notion that magnetic power was the same as atomic power. Only of late have they recognized the difference between the two. This magnetic power is present in the human body from top to toe. There are innumerable unseen powers present in man. They are known as transcendental powers (*atheeta shakti*). Scientists know that energy which is infinite and unfathomable can neither be created nor destroyed. Since time immemorial, man has been investigating the nature of this energy. They have come to the conclusion that the whole world is based on psychotronic power, which is also termed as bioplasmic power. This is present in every cell and every vein of the human body. The human mind cannot comprehend the nature of this power. It is also called *ajnatha shakti*, a power which is not known. All these powers are not visible to the naked eye. It was this power that enabled Mother Sita to lift the mighty Shiva *Dhanush* (bow of Shiva) with her little finger. It

was then that King Janaka decided to give his daughter [Sita] in marriage to one who was equally powerful [Lord Rama]. Sage Vishwamitra, who had understood the intimate relationship that exists between divinity and transcendental power, took Lord Rama to Mithila and solemnized the marriage.

Very often, scientists refer to the two terms, matter and energy but, truly, only energy exists. Whatever appears as matter also becomes energy in due course of time. No one can describe the glory and grandeur of this transcendental power. This energy is beyond the comprehension of the mind and beyond description by words. This transcends the powers of body, mind and intellect. Who has created this power? Under whose control does this power lie? In whose hands does this power exist? Who can manifest these powers and prove their existence? Manifestation of these powers can bring about a divine transformation in the hearts of people. Swami wants such changes to take place from now on. It is impossible to say when, where and how this power will manifest itself. Merely listening to the glory of this power may not evoke interest in you. You will understand only when you experience it. This is the super-human divine power. Very soon you are going to witness it.

The Bangalore Students

You may have read an item in the newspaper this morning that Swami is not speaking because the students are causing trouble. It is sheer nonsense. It was specifically mentioned, very incorrectly, that Bangalore [college] students are responsible for Swami desisting from speaking. By publishing such a wrong news item, the image of the Bangalore students has been tarnished. No

student has ever troubled Swami in any way. In fact they have been pining for Swami incessantly. The relation between me and the students is heart to heart prompted by selfless love. Even such wrong information flashed in the Internet, so much so, that [Dr. Michael] Goldstein from America, being greatly agitated, contacted Prasanthi Nilayam to find out the truth. He was very much relieved to know the truth. Do not believe in such false propaganda. I do not trouble anyone, and none can trouble me. All our students are good. Such good students should not be put to disrepute. Unknowingly, they may commit a few mistakes, but no one has ever troubled Swami. No one should come in between the noble heart of Swami and the sacred minds of the students.

The Internet and Gossip

Some of the elders sitting on the veranda are indulging in gossip; it is finding its way into the Internet. Anyone found talking on the veranda should be sent out immediately, whosoever it may be. All those who give misleading information about what Swami tells them in the interview room should also be thrown out. I will never call such people for an interview again. Only those who observe silence are good people. Silence fosters purity. Therefore, observe silence at all times. It is a waste of time if you carry tales about others. Why have you come here? Gossip causes harm, so refrain from indulging in it.

Ignorance is on the rise with the progress of science. Truly speaking, science has not matured. Man has become senseless. All the trials and tribulations faced in this world are due to so-called development in science and technology. It is not technology, it is "tricknology." Do not become a slave to such technology. You

should uphold truth and righteousness, cultivate love and experience divinity.

Students, do not harbor any undesirable thoughts. Do not get perturbed by such mis-informational campaigns. Swami is always with you. He has been showering His love and grace on you. You, too, have immense love for Swami. Attain Swami through love. You cannot attain Swami through any other path but love.

Internet, a Kind of Pollution?

Swami has nothing to do with the Internet. Not only now, but even in the future you should not indulge in such wrong activities. This disease has its roots in cities and is spreading like wildfire into villages, polluting the village environment. Villages are the epitome of peace and love. Do not spoil the village atmosphere by imitating the city culture. Bliss will prevail in the world only when you develop peace and love. Do not give

scope for ill feelings and worthless talk. You can even reprimand the elders who indulge in mean talk. Tell them to behave in a manner that befits their status as elders in society. They should prove themselves as elders in conduct and not by age. Self-respect leads to self-satisfaction, which will in turn lead to self-realization. It is a shame that people who come here for self-realization indulge in something contrary.

Relationship with God

Our relationship is heart to heart and love to love, nothing else. Swami is love personified. Swami gives importance to love and nothing else. Do not give any value to mean and meaningless talk. Past is past. From now onwards, receive the divine love and divine energy emanating from me and experience the bliss derived therefrom.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Excerpted from a Discourse, October 15, 1999

Baba's Vernal Equinox

*The green bud emerges
from the branch that was once
hidden from sight,
by drifts of powdery snow.
Melting away the old season,
Springing forth the new.
Blossoming, becoming the flower
the rich, colorful growing
beauty Swami graces us with.
This is Baba's vernal equinox.*

—Marilyn Osoff
Sierra Madre, California

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

The Early Years

When this body was seven years old, dreadful and contagious diseases like cholera and plague were rampant in this tiny hamlet of Puttaparthi. Fear-stricken, parents would not allow their children to go out of the house. But the children, out of their love for me, would come to me without telling their parents. All those children were of the age group of six to eight. One day, nearly 12 boys gathered around me and said in an anxious tone, "Raju, we came to know that cholera and plague are rampant in our village. It seems they are dangerous and fatal. What will be our fate?" I told them, *The body has to perish one day or the other, whatever may be the precautions you take. So do not be afraid of death. Contemplate on God and take care that the diseases do not afflict you.* The boys asked me which form of God they should contemplate. They were all very innocent.

In those days, this was a very small village with a population of 106. They had no idea as to which form of God they should worship. I told them to light a lamp, place it in the bazaar at 6:00 in the evening and sing devotional songs (bhajans). They did not know which ones to sing. Then, I composed a few bhajans for them. I told them, *We need not search for God outside. He is within us. Let us go around the village chanting the name of Ranga, donning ochre robes and anklets, playing the cymbals in our hands and getting rid of the evil qualities of anger and desire.*

In those days, after 5:00 in the evening no one dared to go beyond the temple, as they considered it to be far away from the village, and

they believed that the area beyond the temple limits was haunted. I infused confidence in them saying, *There are no ghosts or devils.* I advised them to drive away the diseases of cholera and plague by chanting the name of God. We wore anklets and walked up to the Chitravathi River playing the cymbals and singing devotional songs. It was the divine name which eradicated the diseases of cholera and plague for good within a short span of three days. The parents brought their children to me and expressed their gratitude for having saved them from the epidemic. They said, "Raju, we are indebted to you for having instilled courage and confidence in our children. We don't want them to attend school, instead they will come to you; kindly impart the education necessary for their wellbeing." Everyday, at 6:00 in the evening, after having their dinner, they would assemble at my residence.

They used to address me as "tuition master." Their parents wanted to offer three paise per month as payment to the guru (*dakshina*), which I flatly refused. The children used to come to me every evening for learning numeric tables and alphabets. Taking this as a pretext, I also used to impart value-oriented education. I used to advise them to keep away from bad company and not indulge in criticism and slander, and to cultivate good habits and good qualities; respect their parents and obey parents' commands. Because of that, there was marked improvement in their behavior and outlook.

On moonlit nights, we would go to the Chitravathi River at 6:00 in the evening and return at 11:00 in the night. A few elders would also

accompany us. They passed the time by playing games like *kabaddi*, but the children were not interested in joining them. In spite of my repeated entreaties, they would not participate in any of these pastimes. They were more interested in singing bhajans and being around me. They would request that I lead bhajans. Thus, we used to spend our time singing near the Chitravathi. The children would plead with me to compose new songs and tunes. They extolled my composing capabilities. I used to ask them to express their desires, if any, but not to praise me.

One day, a pharmacist by the name of Kotte Subbanna came to Puttaparthi from Kamalapuram. He had heard a great deal about my composing capabilities and had come to request that I write a song that would serve as an advertisement for his new medicine. He went to Karnam Subbamma and inquired about me. She told him, "I know Raju very well. He is the only good boy in the village. He is of good character, behavior and conduct. Not merely that, but he imparts good teachings to all others."

One day, Karnam Subbamma invited Kotte Subbanna for lunch. During the lunch, he expressed doubts regarding my composing skills. He said it was difficult for him to believe that a tiny tot like me could write good poetry that would sell his new medicine in the marketplace. Consequently, I sent him away saying that it is better that he go to some person whose skills he had faith in.

I had immense love for the children. Keshanna, Ranganna, Subbanna and Ramanna were among the children whom I used to take to the riverbed every evening. Words are inadequate to describe their innocence, purity and love for me. A seven year old boy used to re-

quest that I lie down for a while, keeping my head on his lap saying that, I looked very tired and needed some rest. Seeing this, other children also wanted to have the privilege of keeping my head on their laps. Then they thought of a plan, so that all would get an equal chance. It was decided that each boy would take turns to keep my head on his lap for a count of one to 50. They missed no opportunity to serve me, and I would satisfy all of them.

One day, Kotte Subbanna came to me again and said, "Raju, all these children are ready to obey your command. They all sing well and have sweet voices. Please write a few songs to advertise my new medicine, and ask these children to go around the village singing them. I am prepared to pay remuneration for this." I told him, *I do not like this business of give and take. These children also do not approve of it. Anyway, tell me exactly what your medicine is. I will compose a song accordingly.* He explained that the name of the medicine was Bala Bhaskara, and that it could cure many types of ailments. I composed a beautiful song in Telugu on the efficacy of the medicine, "Oh children, come here, a new medicine, Bala Bhaskara, has arrived in the market. It is a wonderful remedy for various ailments like stomachache, indigestion, malnutrition and swelling of legs and hands. It is available in the shop of Kotte Subbanna. It is a very good tonic prepared by Pandit Sri Gopalacharya." Kotte Subbanna was pleased with the poem and had it written on big sheets of paper for advertisement. As his luck would have it, I was taken to Kamalapuram for studying fifth and sixth grades. Kotte Subbanna made maximum use of my stay in Kamalapuram for the advertisement of his medicines.

Right from the early days, I have been a source of inspiration for the young children. I would exhort them to desist from hurting others, and to discharge their duties sincerely. During the month of *Magha*, I used to take the children to the temple of Anjaneya (Hanuman, the monkey god) at 4:00 in the morning. Some of the children were so young that they would not get up at that early hour. So I would carry them to the nearby pond, give them a bath, and take them to the temple. I would sit at the temple, while the children would circumambulate the temple (do *pradakshina*). One day, they insisted that I too should join them in walking around the temple. I finally yielded to their pressure and started circumambulating the temple. Believe it or not, Hanuman himself came and stopped me, saying, "Oh Lord! It is I who should circumambulate you. You should not do this." But the children mistook Hanuman for an ordinary monkey. I told them that Hanuman himself came, and he would not allow me to walk around the temple. After this incident, there was a great transformation in the hearts of the children. They went around the village telling people what they witnessed at the temple. This news, also, reached Karnam Subbamma.

The next day, she invited me to her house saying, "Raju, today I have prepared *dosas* (a delicious pancake often filled with vegetables or potatoes), you should come and partake of them." In those days food items like *idli* and *dosas* were considered to be rich people's food. I told Subbamma that it is not my nature to eat alone and not include the other children. Then Subbamma prepared *dosas* for all the children.

The villagers had a lot of reverence for me. It is because of Sathya Sai Baba that the people of Puttaparthi started thinking of God for the

first time in their lives; and it gradually spread to the other villages too. I exhorted the villagers to refrain from partaking of nonvegetarian food, consuming liquor and smoking. I used to stress the need for pure, calming (*sathwic*) food.

During the festival of Ekadasi, it was a practice to hold bullock cart races on the riverbed of the Chitravathi. They used to whip the bullocks to make them run faster. I would tell the children to insist that their fathers stop whipping the bullocks. Not only now, but even in those days, I taught the principle of nonviolence.

Cockfights were quite common in villages in those days. They used to tie small knives to the legs of roosters, and make them fight with each other until one of them died. In the process, the other cock would get badly injured. I told them that one should have competition in doing good deeds, not in such cruel acts.

One day, the father of this body, Pedda Venkappa Raju, chided me for interfering in the affairs of the village. He said that the elders knew better, and I should not cross my limits. I told him that I could not tolerate it when the animals are killed or ill-treated. As he could not convince me, he directed the mother of this body to advise me. At the time of serving food, she would tell me, "Sathya, you should not do things that would displease your father. If you do not listen to him, you will earn a bad name in the village." I argued with her saying that, I was doing only good and was not bothered about what others said. I emphasized that one who always does good will never be put to disrepute. Kondama Raju, the grandfather of this physical body, also supported my argument. He called the villagers and told them, what I was doing was good for the village.

Please turn to page 32

Baba's Water Project—Here, at Home

In 1995, I was able to attend Baba's 70th birthday, witness the culmination of His Water Project, and hear His discourse when the water tap was turned on. Running water flowed for the first time in 700 villages in India. I was silently asking Baba, "How can our Sathya Sai Baba Center help?" The answer was soon provided.

After arriving home in the U.S., I began reading water conservation pamphlets from the local water treatment plant and environmental agencies. Did you know that a shower can use up 50 gallons of water? Washing your hands or brushing your teeth can use two gallons if you leave the faucet running. Watering your lawn can use five to 10 gallons per minute. I learned that the amount of water on earth does not increase. (In fact, Baba says it is drying up because of man's bad thinking.) The brochure said, "Wasting water wastes energy. It takes a lot of energy to treat water, pump it and transport it." All this increased my awareness of my responsibility in implementing the yoga of action.

Shortly afterward, I was given a sample of lingam* water from the Shiva lingam Baba manifested for a devotee; and I was given a sheet of paper explaining its use.

Lingam is God. Baba says, Its power is without limit through time and space. Tell your family to drink the lingam water each day. When the devotee asked Baba about putting fresh tap water over the lingam, Baba repeated, *Without limit through time and space.* Which means, if you keep adding water to it, you will have an endless supply of sacred, healing water.

"The lingam," the instructions continued, "and the water poured over it is the road to liberation. The water is purified at the physical and cellular levels, cleansing and healing. It purifies the mind, creating inner peace and harmony, creating equanimity, and it cleanses the soul of karmic overlay. Thus soul, mind and body align." It went on to say, "You can use it for muscular aches and pains, and in hot or cold wet packs. Add it to your bath, wash vegetables in it, cook with it, add it to your drinking water, put it in fish bowls, water your plants and garden with it. You can now help heal the planet by adding a cupful of the lingam water to every water-catchment you come across, such as: streams, ponds, rivers, lakes, water tanks, seas and oceans. It will contribute to raising the vibration of the planet."

Little did I know that this would become "Baba's Water Project" for our Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) group for summer of 1999. Our SSEHV group, or "The Baba Gang," as the boys call themselves, consists of two brothers, Joshua, 10, and Matthew, nine, their mother Lillian, president, and myself, education coordinator. Our Sai center is in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, along the Emerald Coast on the Gulf of Mexico.

It all began in May, when a raw sewage spill occurred in Destin, just up the coast from us. The city's 40 year old lead pipes ruptured. Because of the spill, the bacteria count in the gulf rose from 100 parts per unit of water to 125,000 parts per unit. All beaches and inlet waterways were contaminated and unsafe; it was a catastrophe

*lingam, an egg shaped, solid object used in the worship of God in the form of Shiva

that could not be reversed for a long time. Or could it?

"The Baba Gang" decided to take gallons of lingam water to all the area parks and beaches to purify the polluted water. We chose strategic sites on the largest inlet, Choctawhatchee Bay, and also the intercoastal waterways, as well as the gulf. It took five or six stops each time we met to cover all the waterways.

In the car, we began with three Oms, the Gayatri Mantra, and a Ganesha bhajan to insure a safe trip. When we arrived at the beaches, we'd say the Oms and chant the Gayatri as the boys took turns pouring the water. Before long, Lillian became aware that something unusual was occurring.

"Did you see what happened when we said the second Om?" she cried. "The water began to lap it up! There was only stillness in the water, not a ripple, when we began. But by the second Om, the water began splashing to take in the lingam water!"

During the Sai Gayatri, from out of the depths of the water came a jet ski, several boats and a barge. All the wakes made by these items created waves which broke on the shore. The water seemed to be actively participating by bumping the molecules against each other, spreading the lingam water at a cellular level. The boys said excitedly, "Maybe Baba stirred the water!" When we finished saying the third shanti (peace), the waters calmed completely. At the next stop, Matt cried, "Look at the hermit crabs!" I'm going to give them some of Baba's water." The crabs crawled upon the little rocky ledges to greet us, and receive their blessing. It seemed that nature obviously responded. In a much shorter time than expected, the beaches were reopened to the public.

Then, in June and July, we had a major raw sewage spill here in Fort Walton. Again, the beaches were off-limits, so we repeated our efforts to purify the water. Then shortly after that there were other spills, until it began to look as if there were deliberate attempts to pollute the coastline. However, the pipes in all the sewage systems were 40 years old and deteriorating. We repeated the Baba Water Project.

In August, heavy rains caused problems; once again, all the beaches on the gulf, the sound and the bay were contaminated. Signs were posted, "No Swimming, Boating or Fishing." This time it was from flooding and chemical runoff (caused by fertilizers and crop-dusting) that the inland rivers carried back to the gulf. We repeated the Baba Water Project.

Later, in October, some areas were stricken with the red tide. Thousands of dead fish were washed up on the shores. It's fairly normal for that time of year to have a small amount of red tide. It has to do with the microscopic, one-celled organisms or algae that flourish, causing some fish and people, on the beaches, to have respiratory problems. That year it killed many species, even the large, deep-water fish. The warm gulf waters and Hurricane Floyd may have contributed to the problem. Perhaps this is a natural occurrence, perhaps man's karma. But how much more can mother earth take? We repeated Baba's Water Project.

Then Joshua said, "We need to go to this one beach, I'll show you. It's up here on the left." He was correct; more work needed to be done there. Baba was guiding us to the places where damage had been done, where the need was the greatest. One site on the gulf looked beautiful, but within ten minutes all of us were coughing and couldn't

Please turn to page 35

Qualities of a Devotee

Embodiments of Love

These are the qualities of a true devotee as taught by Lord Krishna in the *Dwapara Yuga* (a period of time several thousand years ago).

The first quality is desirelessness (*anapekshah*). A devotee should not have any desires. How is it possible for people—endowed with a body, senses, a mind and intellect—to be in a state of desirelessness? People are bound to have some desire or other. On the one hand, there are desires pertaining to the senses that confer momentary joy. On the other hand, there is a desire that transcends the senses. Today, people are filled with various desires. Then, what is the way to lead a desire-free life? Lord Krishna has shown the way. He said, “There is nothing wrong in having desires, but all of them must be pleasing to God. Let all your actions be pleasing to God.”

You should put into practice the eternal principles based on truth, and dedicate all your activities to God. Lead your life without the feeling of “mine” and “thine” and offer everything to God. Only then can you attain the state of desirelessness. Today, people have both worldly desires as well as desires that lead to the inward path, but the number of desires that lead to the inward path pale in comparison to the number of worldly desires in them.

The second quality is cleanliness (*suchi*). Is it outward cleanliness (*bahir suchi*) or inner cleanliness (*anthar suchi*)? One has to develop both. Physical cleanliness alone is not sufficient; inner cleanliness is essential. Bharatiyas (Indians) are aware of this. For example, if *sambar* (a spicy soup) is prepared in an

uncoated cooper or brass vessel, it causes poisoning. Likewise, if the vessel of your heart is not coated with love, all that you do becomes unsacred. Sanctify your heart by filling it with divine love. Never entertain any unsacred or wicked feelings.

The third quality of a true devotee is determination (*daksha*). You should have determination in order to attain divine grace. Once you have taken refuge in God, never lose faith, come what may. Do not get disheartened by trials and tribulations that come your way. Be equal-minded in times of both pain and pleasure. That is true determination.

The fourth quality is total detachment (*udaseenatha*). You should lead a life of total detachment without entertaining the feelings of “I” or “mine.”

The fifth quality of a true devotee is living in the present without brooding over the past and worrying about the future (*gathavyatha*). The past is past, forget the past. Do not worry about the future, for the future is uncertain. So live in the present. It is not the ordinary present. It is omnipresent. The past can be compared to a tree, similarly the future. The present is the seed. This seed is a result of the past and the basis for the future. Therefore, one should live in the present with firm determination; only then, will success be assured. It is a waste of time to brood over the past, since it can neither be retrieved nor any remedial action be initiated. There is no point in worrying about the future since it is not in your control. Live in the present and discharge your duties with determination.

The sixth quality is giving up all desires and ego (*sarvaarambha parithyaagee*). One should give up all desires and ego. Ego leads to attachment, hatred, jealousy, aggrandizement and other vices. It is ego, which is responsible for the downfall of mankind. A person with ego cannot accomplish even a small task. An egoistic person is not respected even by those near and dear to him. Ego is the worst of all the enemies. Develop humility in order to be rid of ego. No amount of spiritual practices will help a person with ego in attaining tranquillity and bliss.

One who possesses these above-mentioned qualities is a true devotee. Only such a person is near and dear to the Lord. You should cultivate these qualities to be a deserving recipient of God's love.

An Inward Reflection

All your outward actions and behavior should be a true reflection of your inward thoughts and feelings. When you say salutations to the Lord (*namaskaaram*), say it wholeheartedly. Do not give room for bitter feelings (*kaaram*) in your heart. Ego (*ahamkaaram*) is full of bitter feelings. Ego leads to aggrandizement, pomp and show. Some people give wide publicity to their each and every small act, be it worship or a spiritual practice. God wants only practice, not publicity. Strive to put into practice whatever you preach and propagate. According to the *Upanishads*, the word *maanava* means one with self-respect. Live up to that name.

A person is truly a human being who speaks the truth in a palatable way. The culture of Bharat (India) says, speak the truth and follow righteousness. It also says, speak the truth, speak in a pleasing manner, do not speak the truth which is unpalatable. People attain sanctity and ful-

fillment in life only when they put these teachings into practice. As you think, so you become. If you entertain bestial thoughts you become a beast. On the other hand, divine thoughts will transform you into a divine personality. On this basis, the *Upanishads* have declared, "The one who constantly contemplates on Brahman (God) becomes Brahman (God)."

In this Era, the Kali Age

Due to the effects of the Kali Age, there is no trace of true love in people. The human heart is polluted. People—in particular, so-called friends—pretend to love, but in reality do not have true love in their hearts. God is the only true friend. He is always with you, in you, around you, above you, below you, protecting, guiding and guarding you. But alas! You are distancing yourself from your true friend and putting faith in so-called friends, who may turn into foes at any point in time. This is delusion. What is the difference between *bhrama* and *Brahma*? Viewing multiplicity in unity is delusion (*bhrama*), and viewing unity in multiplicity is divinity (*Brahma*). One should visualize unity in multiplicity. The *Vedas* (scriptures) say, "Let us grow together, move together; let us grow in intelligence. Living together, let us live in harmony without any conflict." The *Vedas* are the basis for all righteousness. You are misusing your time and energy, disregarding the *Vedas'* eternal teachings.

Embodiments of Love! You may acquire worldly comforts and conveniences and earn worldly name and fame. But that is not everything. All these are passing clouds. Do not get carried away by them. Follow the teachings of the *Vedas* and attain divinity. Practice is important, not publicity. Practice at least one of

the innumerable teachings of the *Vedas* and share the bliss derived therefrom with one and all. This is your bounden duty. Human life is highly valuable. People should lead ideal, noble and sacred lives. There is no righteousness greater than truth. Build the mansion of your life on the foundation of truth. The safety of the mansion depends on the strength of the foundation. Never utter a lie under any circumstances. It is an unpardonable sin to indulge in untruth. This body is gifted by God. Do not fritter away this golden opportunity by misusing it. The body is the temple and the indweller is God. What is the difference between people and God? *Vyashti* (individual) is a person, and *Samashti* (collective form) is God. People should progress from the state of *vyashti* to *Samashti*. Only then can they attain divinity. God pervades the entire universe. God is present in all beings. There is only one God, but the pundits call Him by different names. In order to understand these *Vedic* dicta, one needs to cultivate noble qualities.

Live Life Like . . .

Having been born as a human, it is a disgrace to lead the life of an animal. Food, sleep, fear and procreation are common to humans and animals. But only humans are endowed with wisdom. Bereft of wisdom, humans are equal to animals. Animals, too, eat, sleep and enjoy sensual pleasures. If you do the same, how can you be called a human being? You are also an animal! The only difference lies in the number of legs, i.e., you are a two-legged animal, and the other is a four-legged animal. Having been born as a human being, you should strive to become god-like. Do not degenerate to the level of an animal.

Divinity stands for the principle of oneness. You are being deluded by differences in names

and forms, and are wasting your time not making any effort to understand the principle of unity.

Time is God. Time wasted is life wasted. Time once lost cannot be recovered. So never waste even a moment. Cultivate divine thoughts, undertake noble deeds and lead a sacred life. Have the welfare of the society, not your self-interest, uppermost in your mind. You may have self-interest, but it should be within limits. There is no one in this world who has given up self-interest altogether. But one should not waste one's life wholly in pursuit of selfishness and self-interest.

Education

Embodiments of Love! Today, there are many students, educationists, intellectuals and scholars in this country; but how many of them are working for the progress of the nation? Only a few! Aurobindo Ghosh was working as a teacher in Calcutta. Once, he told his students, "Children, you are all very lucky to have been born in this sacred land. Youth is very precious. Make proper use of this golden age. You are born and brought up in the society. You acquire all your knowledge and skills from the society. So make use of your education to serve and support the society. Your education is a mere waste if the society is not benefited by it."

"Foolish persons boast of high education and intelligence, yet do not know their true selves. What is the use of all the education they have acquired, if they cannot give up their evil qualities? All the worldly education will only lead them to vain argumentation, not total wisdom. It cannot help them to escape from the clutches of death. So people should acquire that knowledge which will make them immortal." (Telugu poem)

What a shame it is if education is used solely to earn money without serving society. Today, people adopt corrupt practices and devise crooked ways to earn money. Just as the earth revolves around the sun, humans revolve around money. Is this the purpose of human life? No! Money is not important. Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows. So cultivate morality. Educate yourself to serve society and set an ideal for the rest of the world. You receive your education from society. You should in turn dedicate it for the welfare of society.

What Can We Offer God

What is it that you have to offer God? Our ancients used to pray thus: "Oh Lord, I offer you the heart which you have gifted me. What else can I offer at your lotus feet? Please accept my prayerful salutations." (Telegu poem)

The heart that God has given you must be given back to Him as it is pure and sacred. This is the offering that God expects. God accepts whatever you offer to Him, provided you do it with pure love.

In the time of Krishna, Rukmini could weigh Krishna with a small tulasi leaf as her heart was filled with love, she said, "Oh Lord, if it is to be true that you are pleased with any offering made with pure love—a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water—may this tulasi leaf balance your weight." So saying, Rukmini placed a tulasi leaf on the scale, which balanced Krishna's weight. All these should be offered to God—body, heart, mind and tears of joy—these are the offerings that God wants from you. You do not need to spend money or strain yourself in order to make these offerings. It is rather strange that you find it difficult to make such simple offerings. You are

reading many sacred texts, learning many holy *slokas* by heart, but what is the use? You are not able to get rid of your misery. The only way to overcome misery (*shoka*) is by offering yourself to God.

Sage Valmiki, after having composed the epic *Ramayana*, convened a congregation of saints and sages and wanted to know if there was anyone who would propagate the story of Rama to the people. The saints and sages expressed their inability to do so, as they lacked the physical strength because of their advanced ages. Then Lava and Kusa [the sons of Rama], who were sitting at a distance and watching the proceedings, came forward and expressed their willingness to undertake the task of spreading Rama's story far and wide. They took *thambura* (a musical instrument) in one hand, wore garlands of holy beads (*rudrasha* beads) around their necks, smeared holy ash on their foreheads and went to each and every street singing the glory of Lord Rama. They sang, "Oh people, listen to the sacred story of Lord Rama. Let your life be His story."

Criticizing

Modern youth feel shy spreading the message of the Lord. Not merely do they feel shy to participate in bhajans and to even smear holy ash (*vibhuti*) on their foreheads, but some of them wear *vibhuti* only at home, and wipe it off as soon as they step out on the street. They do not feel ashamed to do things which they are not supposed to do. Why should anyone feel ashamed to participate in sacred activities and chant the divine name? Some people feel ashamed to spread the divine glory, but do not hesitate to talk ill of others and ridicule them.

Please turn to page 20

Sai Conferences and Retreats for 2000

Date and Region	Location	Information
May 26-28 Memorial Day weekend Southwest Region 9	Camp Chapel Rock Prescott, Arizona	Dr. Bala Krishnan 8738 E. Whispering Wind Dr. Scottsdale, Arizona 85255 (480) 502-2727
May 26-29 Memorial Day weekend Pacific Region South Region 8	Pine Springs Ranch Mountain Center, California (off Hwy. 74, near Idyllwild)	Harshad Patel 1118 E. Colorado St. Glendale, California 91205 (818) 952-9600 fax: (818) 952-9060
May 26-29 Memorial Day weekend Mid-Atlantic Region 2	Camp Green Lane Green Lane, Pennsylvania (near Philadelphia)	Raj Sanmugalingam 6517 Winnipeg Rd. Bethesda, Maryland 20817 (301) 530-0192 raj.sanmugalingam@wcom.com
May 26-29 Memorial Day weekend Mid-Central Region 4 and North Central Region 5	Camp Wyman Eureka, Missouri (near St. Louis)	Kathy Feely 7490 Amherst Ave. St. Louis, Missouri 63130 (314) 862-1254, fax (314) 721-7574 kathy_feely@clayton.k12.mo.us
May 26-29 Memorial Day weekend Northeast Region 1	Russell Sage College Troy, New York (near Albany)	Vijay C. Amin 108 Flaxwood Ln. Minoa, New York 13116 (315) 656-7356
June 30-July 2 Independence Day weekend Pacific Region South Region 8	La Casa de Maria 800 El Bosque Rd. Montecito, California (near Santa Barbara)	Linda Fazzari 720 Via Vista Verde Santa Maria, California 93455 (805) 937-8841
June 30-July 2 Independence Day weekend Southeast Region 3	Location not Established	Wayner P. Crowder 1220 M. L. King Drive S. W. Atlanta, Georgia 30314 (404) 753-5157
July 14-16 Southwest Region 9	Sunshine Mountain Inn Colorado (near Estes Park)	Sulle Hamlon 3164 West 36th Ave. Denver, Colorado 80211 (303) 561-0384 fax: (303) 561-0385
September 1-4 Labor Day weekend North Central Region 5	Camp Hastings Illinois (near Chicago)	Shirley Pike 161 Chatham Rd., N.E. Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402 (319) 373-2434 voice mail (319) 399-6555, ext. 6667 e-mail: saivama@home.com
September 1-4 Labor Day weekend Southwest Region 9	Bodhi Mandala Jemez Springs, New Mexico (near Albuquerque)	Elaine Houseman 18 Rockridge Rd. Cerrillos, New Mexico 87010 (505) 471-4441
September 2-4 Labor Day weekend Pacific Region South Region 8	Camp Stevens Julian, California (near San Diego)	Diana Wenman 2770 Second Ave., Apt. 304 San Diego, California 92103 (619) 544-0457
September 2-4 Labor Day weekend Northern California and Nevada Region 7	Walker Creek Ranch Petaluma, California (By car, approximately 45 minutes north of San Francisco)	Suzy Mendenhall (831) 476-3999 suzymendenhall@hotmail.com or Ranga Jayaraman (408) 996-9525 RJayaraman@attglobal.net
September 2-4 Labor Day weekend South Central Region 10	Camp Allen Navasota, Texas (northwest of Houston)	Padmanand Warriar work (972) 480-2508 home (972) 712-6467 work e-mail: pwarrior@ti.com home pwarrior@earthlink.net
October 27-29 Pacific Region North Region 6	Oregon State Park Silver Falls Conference Center, Oregon (near Salem)	Lana Steele 1402 22nd St. , N.E., Apt. 531 Auburn, Washington 98002 (253) 735-9041

They do not understand why the tongue is gifted to them. It is gifted to chant the divine name. Criticizing others is the worst of sins. Never criticize anybody, for everyone is essentially divine. You all know that in present day politics each one accuses and abuses the other. It is nothing but the result of accrued sins from past lives.

Embodiments of Love! Never indulge in slander. Sanctify your lives by undertaking sacred activities. This is the true purpose of human life. The human body is gifted to serve others. The story of Rama is suffused with great ideals and noble values. Yesterday, the idols of Sita, Rama, Lakshmana and Hanuman were installed. Everyone should follow their ideals. Even Ravana* acknowledged the nobility of Rama before he breathed his last. He gave a message to the people in his last moments, "Oh people, I lost my sons, brothers, my entire clan, and kingdom as I could not control my desires. Do not become slaves to the senses like me. Follow the ideal of Rama and sanctify your lives."

Once the mother of Lord Rama, Kausalya; the mother of Hanuman, and the mother of Agasthya, met each other. Kausalya questioned them as to who they were. Hanuman's mother introduced herself saying, "I am the mother of the one who jumped across the ocean and went to Lanka in search of Mother Sita." Agasthya's mother said, "I am the mother of the one who drank the entire ocean in one gulp." On hearing this, Kausalya laughed and said to them, "Your sons could accomplish such stupendous feats only because they chanted the name of my son, Rama." Exactly at that moment Rama entered the scene and told Kausalya, "Mother, Hanuman

and Agasthya could accomplish those feats due to their sincerity and devotion. Hanuman is one of peace, virtue and strength. Agasthya is no less." So if you chant the divine name, you can achieve anything.

The epic, *Ramayana*, is replete with inner significance. All the ideals propagated by the *Ramayana* should be properly understood and put into practice by one and all. Only then, human life will find fulfillment. The name and form of Rama are highly sacred. Rama is one who pleases everyone; all should emulate Him. Rama is the synonym for God within each person, or *Atma*, hence the term *Atmarama*. In essence, all are the embodiments of the Rama principle.

God is all-pervasive. It is a great mistake to forget the all-pervasive God and get immersed in mundane, ephemeral pleasures. You may not get this chance again, so work for the redemption of your life by chanting the divine name. Offer yourself to God. That is the goal of your life.

Embodiments of Love! You all have come from different places for worshiping the *padukas* (the sandals of the Lord) and deriving the bliss therefrom. Indeed, that is good. It is not sufficient if you merely worship the *padukas*. Concentrate on them. Without concentration what is the point in worshiping? Here is a glass of water. Your thirst is quenched only when you drink water. Likewise, you will be blissful only when you install the *padukas* in your heart. Share the bliss with one and all.

God is the embodiment of love. So you can be a recipient of His grace only when you develop love for God.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Excerpted from a Discourse, October 1, 1999

*Ravana tried to destroy Lord Rama. Ravana even kidnapped Sita, Rama's wife.

*My Kurukshetra**

At the Mid-Atlantic Sathya Sai Retreat, Memorial Day, 1999, I shared responsibility for the group three boys with one other man. Group three youngsters range in age from 12 to 16. Our group was, for the most part, 13 and 14 years old, seventh and eighth graders. As a retired teacher, I remembered how this age group was extremely energetic, rather wild, full of humor, prone to mocking each other and quite difficult to control.

The theme for the retreat was, "The Golden Age of Sai." The leaders of group three decided to have the adolescents create and perform a skit during Sunday's cultural program, a radio broadcast of the future, in the year 2050, in Baba's golden age of Prema Sai (Swami's next incarnation). To complete this task, the group had at the most six working hours.

At the first meeting of the group three boys and girls, I found myself facing 30 to 35 early adolescents, the age I liked least to work with. Even getting them to quiet down took some doing for four adult leaders. During discussions they could not contain their own energy, and they would shout out comments without waiting for others, not listen, and carry on constant side conversations.

I ached with anxiety. What had I got myself into? There I was, in a context where all devotees present were to dwell on thoughts of Swami; and I was entangled with middle school children. And I felt very uncomfortable.

When that happens, I always think that something is wrong. I thought, "I have no faith in Swami," and "What's wrong with me that I feel no peace?"

When we met with the boys alone for the task of developing ideas and writing a script, we, the leaders, ended the session with feelings of frustration and doubts about getting the task completed. I knew somewhere inside that it always gets done when Swami is the focus of activity. At the same time that I knew this to be so, I was anxious and sometimes angry with the kids. Not only was I feeling these emotions, but I was also angry at myself for being angry. At the beginning of the next work session, I realized that their creative ideas were getting nowhere. They kept wandering off mentally and physically. I felt that I was not doing very well as a teacher in the sense that I wanted the youngsters to come up with their own ideas; I did not want to interfere or control them. How much input should I have? My chest hurt and my head hurt, too.

Then they began to follow a direction that was humorous. Their ideas were genuinely funny concerning advertisements for "instant karma pills," and other products promising an easy road to enlightenment. There was life in their ideas, quality not quantity. I encouraged them to develop those ideas, and found myself both guiding and responding to their thoughts. Yes, we were getting somewhere. I thought, "I can do

**Kurukshetra* The field of combat in the *Mahabharata* where the Pandavas fought the wicked Kauravas. Also a field of action where the mind struggles between good and evil, hope and despair.

this,” not so much in an ego sense, but in the sense that Swami had put me in this position, and I could do my best even though I felt some anxiety. The awareness that I could dedicate a task to Swami and still feel anxiety at the same time was paradoxical. I try to avoid anxiety whenever possible. Anxiety makes me avoid many actions or refuse to participate in many situations. I was learning to simply live through the anxiety and even accept it, and not let it stop me from action.

As I write these words, I experience the *Mahabharatha* scene being acted out within me. I feel the grace to be aware of the opportunity to engage in such action.

As the retreat moved on, I was with the boys most of the time. I saw them in a different context, where we were able to know each other more personally. I saw them as Baba’s students, adolescents who had been in Sai education classes for years, children who would become those same amazing, pure and powerful young adults. Even though I could see them that way, they were still not easy to control. And, you guessed it, my chest still hurt!

The boys rehearsed up to the last minute. Picture this: Twelve young boys in a small gazebo, pushing and shoving each other, making rude comments, throwing things, and not responding to requests for silence. The show was moments away. Their rehearsals had been far from good; six hundred people were in the audience. I really had chest pain and a big headache. But at the same time, I knew that the performance would turn out just fine. The kids were not even nervous!

Backstage, they actually settled down; they were even businesslike. While backstage, I paid

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba often tells us, *Whatever happens to you, say, “It is good for me, it is good for me.”*

homage to a picture of Swami. At that time, I had a working relationship with Baba, while inside I had a kind of “evenness” that felt clear and clean. The inner message was, “Just do the work.”

The children performed beautifully. Several of them proved to be good actors. The humorous parts received genuine laughs; the audience really appreciated the performance.

On Monday, during the last few hours of the retreat, I was cleaning the room where we had worked. One of the boys wandered by, saw me working, and immediately offered to help. His gesture indicated to me that, “Yes, this was a sacred event.”

Those young people really are wonderful. As the retreat was ending, my head was reeling. I realized that I felt quite the same as I had on a recent trip to Puttaparthi, where I knew I was being “worked on,” and that something was happening to me even though I did not know what it was. During the time spent at the retreat, I could see that the lesson was coming clear to not allow my own fear and anxiety to prevent me from engaging in action; just do the best I can and leave the rest to Swami.

Thank you Swami for allowing me to experience the lessons that Krishna imparted to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*, before the *Kurukshetra* battle. That is where I am most of the time. That this experience happened at a retreat does not limit its reality to the time or place. The situation would have been the same had it taken place in a public school or elsewhere. The clarity of the lesson was His grace!

—**Carl Hirsch**
Mullico Hills, New Jersey

Serve With Love

One who practices and propagates ideals such as goodness, morality and truth is a youth in the strict sense of the term. In fact, only such people are your best friends and my best friends, too.

(Telugu poem)

Embodiments of Love! Goodness means good behavior, good conduct, good discipline and good character. Truth, righteousness, peace, love and nonviolence are the five life principles of humanity. Human life is a journey from “I” to “we.” This journey is subtle, and the goal is very near, but people take many births to reach the destination. Why should people take such a long time, undergoing hardships, to attain the goal which is so near? Modern youth are making every effort to know all that is happening in the world, but they are not making any effort to understand the fundamental truth of human life. No benefit accrues from acquiring such information, which does not lead one to the goal of life. There are thousands of intellectuals, scholars and eminent educationists in the world today. But all the worldly knowledge and skills will be a waste if one does not know oneself. The primary duty of people is to understand who they really are.

Do not Become Living Corpses

Human beings have achieved everything in life, but have lost human values, which amounts to losing the five life principles. As a result, people have become living corpses. Faith in God is very essential for everyone. You may question who is God, and where is God. Truth is God. Truth is one and the same for everyone, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, language, nationality and ideology. There is no greater righteousness than adhering

to truth. This fundamental truth is God. Likewise, love is God. So live in love. True love is related to the heart, not to the body—heart to heart, not body to body. Body is like a water bubble, mind is like a mad monkey. So do not follow the body, do not follow the mind. Follow the conscience. Only then, can you experience truth.

Don't Just Eat, Drink and Sleep

Your life is a long journey and your desires are the luggage. Less luggage, more comfort, makes travel a pleasure. So reduce your desires. Human birth is gifted to serve others, not just to eat, drink, sleep and make merry. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. A person's foremost duty is to serve others and make them happy. Your life will be redeemed only when you involve yourself in serving society. The highest spiritual discipline is to transform love into service. That is true devotion.

The boy from Kerala, who spoke earlier, mentioned various diseases that affect the body. There are many instances in history wherein even mighty kings had to leave their mortal coil in spite of having access to the best medical facilities and the best doctors. Doctors by themselves cannot cure diseases. Divine grace is essential. There is no point in safeguarding your body if you do not uphold morality. For this, one should lead a life of truth and love. The love of modern youth is artificial. They may greet each other saying “Hello,” but it is all hollow within. Their lives have become artificial like a drama.

Spiritual Practices

People can rise to the level of the divine only through the path of service. When humans are

not able to understand humanness, how can they understand divinity? First, know thyself. Human life is noble as it is essentially divine. In fact, people and God are not two different entities; they are one and the same. Truth is one, but scholars refer to it by many names. Your life will be redeemed once you understand this truth. The divine power latent in humans is not found in any other being. Humans, unable to understand their own divine nature, are undertaking various spiritual practices such as penance, meditation and yoga.

All the spiritual practices bereft of love are a mere waste of time. Love in speech is truth, love in action is righteousness. So in the first instance, develop love. Lust, greed, hatred, jealousy, anger and pride are animal qualities. These qualities are the result of the impurities in the food we take. These are of man's own making. These evil qualities are responsible for people forgetting their divine nature.

People should make proper use of their intellect, position and wealth. Wealth, here, does not mean worldly treasures. It refers to the power of the senses. This power should be utilized for the service of society. Neither by penance, nor by undertaking pilgrimages, nor by going through sacred texts can one cross the ocean of life. It is only through service that they can redeem themselves. The words *seva* (selfless service) and *prema* (divine love) may be very small, consisting of only a few syllables, but they confer infinite power.

First, inquire and understand who you really are. Know yourself, and you will know all. Since many of you are newcomers, it is worth mentioning this. When you say, "This is my handkerchief," it means the kerchief is different from you. Similarly, when you say, "This is my

body, my mind and my intellect," it means you are different from all these. Then the question naturally arises, "Who am I?" Inquire into this. Body, mind, and intellect are mere instruments. Identifying yourself with these instruments is absurd. You are the master; master the mind and be a mastermind. You should never be a slave to your body, mind and senses. In fact, they should be under your control; you should not be controlled by them.

Your Message, Swami's Message

One of the speakers quoted Swami, "My life is my message." She also referred to the statement, "Your life is my message." You should clearly understand the meaning of these statements. Proclaiming that your life is Swami's message on the one hand and, at the same time, indulging in wicked activities and unrighteous deeds is treacherous. That constitutes your message, not my message. You can declare that your life is Swami's message only when you take to the path of truth and righteousness, install peace and love in your heart, and uphold non-violence.

All that you see outside is a reflection of the inner being. Good and bad do not exist outside, they are mere reflections of what is within you. No one has the right to judge others. Give up the bad in you, and you will find goodness all around. As is the color of the glasses you put on, so is the color of the world. The defect lies in your vision, not in creation.

The heart is the dwelling place of God, so only noble feelings should emerge out of it. If there are any evil qualities in you, it ceases to be a human heart. It is verily the heart of an animal. If you conduct yourself in a disorderly manner, you are a dog, not a human being. Act in a manner

that befits your human birth. When you are angry, remind yourself, "I am not a dog, I am human." When your mind wavers, tell yourself repeatedly, "I am not a monkey; I am human." Never be in haste; haste makes waste. Waste makes worry. So do not be in a hurry. Take time and think calmly. All these evil qualities can be eliminated by developing good thoughts and feelings. This is the remedy for all ailments.

Understanding, then Adjustment

Only young men and women are capable of eradicating restlessness in society. Excessive desires are the main cause for the suffering of people. Keep a check on your desires. As a student, discharge your duties diligently, study well and obtain good marks. Respect your parents and serve them. Keep in mind the wellbeing of society and the nation at large. Earn a good name in society. Do not feel proud of your education. Your education is a mere waste if it is not utilized for the benefit of society. The education you have received from society must be dedicated to society by way of service. The goal of education does not lie in merely acquiring de-grees, securing good jobs and amassing wealth. Service is the hallmark of educated people. No doubt, money is essential, but it should be within certain limits. Excessive money makes many wrongs. Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows.

First and foremost, make efforts to understand your true nature. The difference between God and humans is very subtle. As long as you do not understand the truth, you remain a human being. Once you recognize truth, you are God. Service is the best way to understand your innate divinity. Service should be for self-satisfaction, not for name and fame. Before serving others,

serve yourself by making your mind broad and pure. Get rid of the narrow feelings of "I" and "mine," and extend your love to one and all. Love is the binding force that brings together the entire world as one family. My wish is that you develop love and live like brothers and sisters. This body has been engaged in service right from birth, likewise, you should spend your life in serving others. This is my message. I practice whatever I preach. I love all and serve all, and exhort you to do the same. But as your feelings are narrow, you are not able to understand my love. That is your mistake, not mine. Today, conflicts are on the rise as there is no proper understanding and adjustment among people. Adjustment will be possible only when there is proper understanding.

Use the Body for Service

Right from the time of birth, only love exists with you. Enjoy the bliss of love and share it with others. Absence of love is the root cause for all the unrest in the world. Develop love and uphold truth. Truth does not mean describing what you have seen, heard or done. Truth is that which is changeless in all periods of time.

Just as you change your dress, you have to change your body one day or another. That is why it is said, "Death is the dress of life." That which is responsible for birth is responsible for death, too. This body is like a passing cloud. So long as there is life in the body, use it for the service of others. Engage yourself in service until the last breath. Service to humanity is service to God. Have control over your senses, without which all your service will be futile.

Keep Good Company

All of you have gathered here without being extended any invitation. It is your love for

Bhagavan, and Bhagavan's love for you that has brought you here. If there is love in your heart, you will never be put to any hardship whatsoever. Your love should be extended to one and all; it should not be limited to your family and friends. Tell me your company, and I shall tell you what you are. As is your company, so you become. How can one be good if one is always in the company of bad people?

You are all virtuous and noble. Make every effort to enhance this goodness. Make the best use of your stay here. Run away from bad company and bad feelings. Cultivate noble qualities. Develop the broad feeling that all are your brothers and sisters.

Lord Krishna said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, all are sparks of my divinity. Just as the sun is reflected in various vessels containing water, so too, you find the reflection of God in everybody. All that you find in this world are reflection, reaction and resound. Do not get carried away by them. Aspire to attain reality. In order to experience reality, give up body attachment.

Divinity is latent in everyone, but you are not making any effort to realize it as you are deeply engrossed in worldly matters. You are the embodiment of pure, unsullied, true and eternal *Atma* (indwelling divinity). Experience this reality. All that is related to the world is only a reflection, not reality. Discharge your duties keeping this truth in view. Help ever, hurt never. This is the essence of all the *Vedas* and sacred texts such as the *Bible*, *Bhagavad Gita* and the

Koran. All these holy texts speak of the same fundamental truth. It is a mistake to entertain differences based on religion. There is only one religion, the religion of love. There is only one caste, the caste of humanity. There is only one language, the language of the heart. Travel from "I" to "we" through the path of service. In due course, I will tell you how to go about it.

A Golden Opportunity

There are millions of people in this world, but only you, the fortunate few, have the golden opportunity of coming here. Make the best use of this opportunity, and share this joy with everybody. Serve the whole world. Understand the truth that you are born to serve society. Do not lead a selfish life amassing wealth. Do not be satisfied by filling your own belly; understand that there are millions outside who are hungry and suffering. Your life will be sanctified only when you help the poor, the sick and the downtrodden. That is true spirituality. That should be your way of life. In order to acquire a worldly degree, you need to study various subjects. But in spirituality there is only one subject and that is love. So develop love and undertake service activities. Being young, you may have a few doubts. I will clarify all of them. Do not give scope for hatred, jealousy and ostentatiousness. Be a humble devotee and render humble service. That is the true human quality.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Sri Sathya Sai International
Youth Conference, November 18, 1999

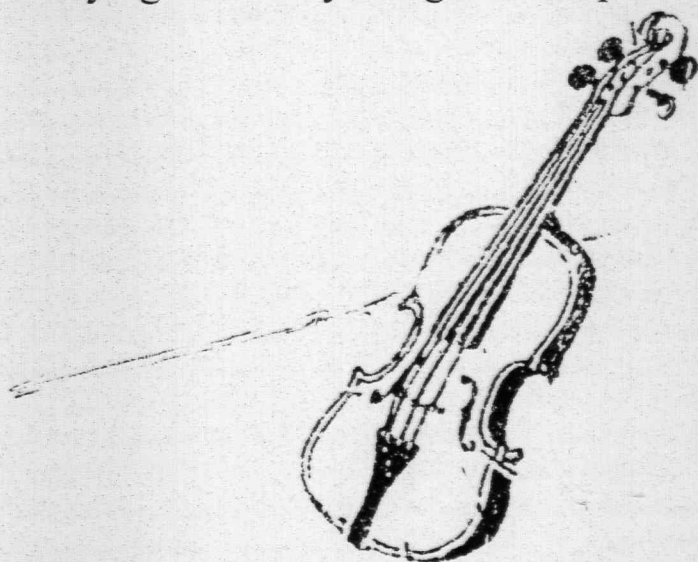
There is no need to give up your vocations. Keep functioning in society. But always remember that you are divine. God Himself intervenes when His devotees are in distress in the performance of their functions in society.

—Sathya Sai Baba, November 23, 1999

Anthony and His Violins

Once upon a time, in Italy, there lived a person by the name of Anthony or Antonio. He used to earn his livelihood by making violins. But being a perfectionist, he used to take a full year to make one violin. His friends chided him saying, "Oh mad man, how do you expect to eke out your livelihood if you spend a whole year to make just one violin?" Antonio replied, "God is the embodiment of perfection. Whatever He does is absolutely perfect. He will be pleased only when we do our duty in the most perfect manner. All my work would be an utter waste, if God is not satisfied."

Antonio's violins were very famous and highly valuable. The reason is that he used to make them with sacred feelings and total devotion. He never felt that he was wasting his time. He always had the feeling that he was sanctifying his time by doing his work perfectly



and, thus, pleasing God. You should follow the ideal of Antonio Stradivari.* It is quality that God values. God loves quality, not quantity.

—Sathya Sai Baba

From *Dasara* Discourse, October 19, 1999

*Even though Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737) has been gone for more than 260 years, his Stradivarius violins are still famous and prized by musicians throughout the world.

Announcements

Watch for this in October 2000

On October 19, 1999, Swami announced that He had already laid the foundation stone for the Sri Sathya Sai University of Music as part of His educational system. Not only music, lyrics, and dance, but even traditional folk arts—musical presentations of the epics, the *Puranas*, and village dramas—will be taught. Apart from that, all types of music from around the world will blossom there. This school of music will be inaugurated October 2000. Sathya Sai Baba said, *Whatever we undertake will be completed in a few months. You need not wait for years for its completion. . . . It will be syntheses of ancient and modern art forms. . . . This building complex is going to be in the shape of several musical instruments such as the mrudangam, the tambura, a conch in the middle, a sitar, etc. The mere sight of the buildings, will convey to the onlooker that it is a center of musical excellence.*

International Center in New Delhi

On March 12, 1999, Sri Sathya Sai Baba gave His blessing in person for the magnificent complex to emerge as a hive of spiritual and social activity. The Avatar, as a synthesizer of all faiths of the world, will be the prime focus of the center's activities.

At the inauguration held in the presence of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and attended by the Indian Prime Minister, and other leaders from all walks of life, Bhagavan Baba clearly set the goals and agenda for the newborn International Center. There are five areas on which the advisory committee is focusing its attention: social welfare, study circle, information center, health and hygiene, and the promotion of art, culture, music and sports.

The address of the Sathya Sai International Center is: Sai Marg, Lodhi Road, New Delhi 110 003. Telephone: 011-91-11-436-7375 or 436-7376, e-mail: info@saiinternationalcentre.com

For Professional Musicians

In the last issue of the *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*, we published the telephone and fax number to contact Maestro Giuseppe Savazzi who is the conductor of the Sathya Sai Universal Symphony Orchestra. Unfortunately, some of you had trouble reaching that number in Italy. From the U. S., we have since learned that for international telephone and fax numbers must be preceded by 011. So try: 011-39-011-812-5971 to reach the Maestro. We tried it, and it worked.

Vietnamese Translators Needed

By Swami's blessings, Vietnam is busy working on setting up the first Sathya Sai Center in Saigon. The Vietnamese who know about Sathya Sai Baba are in desperate need of books and periodicals, in their own language to learn more about Swami's teachings. Unfortunately, Sai literature in their own language is not currently available.

A small group of Vietnamese devotees in Northern California have started a team to translate books and literature written about and by Sathya Sai Baba. Their ardent wish is to offer the first book in Vietnamese to Swami on His 75th birthday, November 23, 2000. They are now asking for help from all brothers and sisters of Vietnamese origin [or those who know the language very well].

If you are interested and can help, and want to know more about this project, please contact Thu or Phu Nguyen at e-mail: ttnguen4@equilon.com or ph: (925) 313-3295 (business hours) or (925) 946-9298 (evenings).

Warning from the Secretary of the SSS Central Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam

This is to inform all devotees of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization of Prasanthi Nilayam, along with State Trusts and Seva Organizations throughout the world: Have nothing, whatsoever, to do with the organization run by General K.A. Taylor, under the name of Sri Sathya Sai Super Spirituality Hospital situated at Shyampur bypass (near the Police Post) Hariwar Road, Gumaniwala, Rishikesh, U.P. 249 204 India.

General K.A. Taylor has not been authorized to use the name "Sri Sathya Sai," nor use the emblem of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization.

Please **be cautious of anyone requesting money** in the name of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Did You Notice?

In the newspapers that publish Dear Abby's column (on Saturday, January 1, 2000), Abby quoted Sri Sathya Sai Baba! The quotation was: *If there is righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.*

Was there ever any doubt that our Swami would be known throughout the world?

Air Schedules to and from Puttaparthi

As far as is known, **Sundays and Wednesdays**, Indian Airlines, Airbus A-320 will continue to operate as follows:

Mumbai (Bombay) to Puttaparthi, flight number IC-669

Depart Mumbai 12:55 arrive Puttarthi 14:15

Puttaparthi to Mumbai flight number IC-670

Depart Putaparthi 14:50 arrive Mumbai 16:10

At this time, there are no flights scheduled to or from Chennai (Madras). The above flights can be cancelled or changed without notice. Always check with your travel agent or at the airport in Mumbai (Bombay). Also, when Swami leaves Prasanthi Nilayam, at Puttaparthi, the above flights are cancelled.

—**Sathya Sai Newsletter Staff**

Announcements from the Central Coordinator, USA

The USA Sathya Sai Baba Organization

Swami's grace has provided the USA with almost 200 Sathya Sai Baba Centers across the country. The administration of the Sai Centers is accomplished by 10 regional coordinating committees consisting of the presidents of the Sai Centers in their respective regions and other devotees with special accomplishments. . . . There is a national Sathya Sai Book Center in Tustin, California (714) 669-0522, which houses a national Sathya Sai Information Center (714) 669-0522, and now serves as the home for the national Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Foundation (SSEHV) (714) 368-9045.

The 75th Birthday

Swami's 75th birthday will be celebrated on November 23, 2000. More than 60 years ago Swami informed the world of His divinity and His mission. Divinity has been walking and talking with us in this world for many years. Now is the time! Let us open our hearts. . . .

7th World Conference of the International Sathya Sai Baba Organization

The 7th World Conference of the International Sri Sathya Sai Organization will take place in Prasanthi Nilayam, in the divine presence of Bhagavan Baba, on November 19-20, 2000. The tentative theme of the conference is: "Information to Transformation."

Delegates will be comprised of one person selected by each Sai Center, and the presidents of the coordinating committees, and all members of the central council.

[Before the 7th World Conference in India] there will be Regional Conferences held in every region of each country during the first half of the year 2000. The agenda will be the same for all regions in each country. . . . [These Regional Conferences may take place in lieu of the annual Sai Conferences and Retreats.]

The Sathya Sai EHV Foundation

The Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) Foundation was established in the USA almost 15 years ago. The trustees were appointed by Swami. From the inception of the program, Swami made it clear that it is essential for the program bear His name. He explained that this was to protect the spiritual authenticity and ensure the quality of the program. All materials published by the SSEHV Foundation are copyrighted. We have given them freely. Training to the public and private schools has been given freely by experienced teachers. Our only requirements for this program are that it bear Swami's name, that those who will use it be qualified and properly trained, and that we have the ability to oversee and ensure that the program is correctly implemented. In this manner, the children derive the greatest benefit from this powerful educational tool.

2000 Vesak Buddha Poornima Celebration

On May 29-30, 1999, the *Vesak Buddha Poornima* was conducted in the Divine Presence of Sai Baba. Swami has graciously consented for this celebration to be held again in mid-May, 2000. The focus of the program will be on Buddha's and Swami's teachings, and their relevance to modern society. All Buddhist devotees and office bearers from all countries are welcome.

—Michael Goldstein, M.D.

Excerpted from a report sent to all Sai Centers

Dates to Remember in 2000

Mark Your Calendar

Saturday, March 4, *Mahashivaratri* is the observance of the new moon, symbolizing a renaissance and rededication to spiritual life.

Wednesday, April 5, *Yugadi*, Telugu New Year's Day.

Wednesday, April 12, *Rama Navami* is the day to honor the birth of the Avatar, Sri Rama.

Saturday, May 6, *Easwaramma Day* is recognized as the time to pay homage to the memory of the Mother of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Sunday, July 16, *Guru Poornima* is a time to pay love and respect to one's spiritual guide or preceptor.

Sunday, July 23, *Global Handicapped Day* is a time for helping the physically impaired, and to remember that they need our help throughout the year.

Tuesday, August 22, *Krishna Jayanti* honors the birth of the Avatar, Lord Krishna.

Saturday, September 2, *Ganesh Chaturthi* is the time to pay respect to Ganesh who is the remover of obstacles and ignorance. Ganesh also sets up obstacles for our protection.

Sunday, September 10, *Vamana Jayanthi, Onam* is a holy day celebrate the triumph of good over evil.

Sunday, September 17, *Blood Donation Day* is a day to remember that all who are able should donate blood as often as they can. Check with your doctor first.

Saturday, October 7, *Dasara* or *Vijaya Dasami* is a celebration of good over evil.

Thursday, October 26, *Deepavali* is the festival of lights commemorating the victory of righteousness over wickedness.

Saturday & Sunday, November 11 & 12, *Akanda Bhajans* is a 24-hour singing of devotional songs around the world. The singing begins at 6:00 p.m. on Sat. and ends on 6:00 p.m. on Sun.

Sunday, November 19, *Ladies Day* is a day devoted to honor women throughout the world and the contributions they have made to society.

Thursday, November 23, the birthday of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Monday, December 25, *Christmas Day*, is a time to honor the birth of Jesus Christ.

—Central Office, Prasanthi Nilayam

I have come to light the lamp of love in your hearts, to see that it shines day by day with added luster. . . . I have not come on any mission of publicity for any sect, or creed or cause.

—Sathya Sai Baba, *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. V

He too advised them to refrain from violence and gambling. He cautioned them that lack of unity would lead to unrest in the village.

Because of these kinds of teachings, some people developed hatred toward me. I had to go to Bukkapatnam by 7:00 a.m. to attend school. Teachers were very affectionate toward me. Every teacher would ask as he entered the classroom, "Has Raju come?" Do you realize what I was like in those days? Ours was a poor family. Like some children of these days, I did not have dozens of sets of clothes. I just had one shirt and one pair of shorts. As soon as I returned from school, I would take off my clothes, wear a towel around my waist, wash the clothes and put them up to dry. In this way, I would make-do with one pair of clothes for a whole year.

When questions were put to me at school, I would always answer well. Most other students were not good at answering questions. My fellow classmates were quite grown up; in fact, some of them were almost 25 years of age, and most of them were wearing *dhotis* (a garment worn by Indian men). I was the youngest in the class. One day when I answered a question well, Mahboob Khan, the teacher, asked me to slap the dull students. I had to climb on to the desk to reach their cheeks. I used to touch them gently on their cheeks. The teacher then chided me, "Have I asked you to apply turmeric on their faces? I will show you how!" Saying this, he gave a few hard slaps. As I returned to Puttaparthi, some of the students would throw me down on the sands of the river and drag me along by my legs. They would tear off my shirt and throw me into the slush. All through this torture, I would remain calm. Peace is my nature; love is my very nature. Peace is the form of Swami; bliss is my resolve.

After reaching the Hanuman temple, I would

wash my clothes and put them on again. Students may well imagine my state then. If there was a tear in my shirt, there was not even a safety pin available to hold the cloth together. Nor had I any money to buy one. I had no desire to request [help from] anyone. I do not ask for anything from anyone. This resolve I have been up-holding from that day to this day. I went to Sathyabhama temple and took out a thorn from a cactus and used it as a pin to mend the torn shirt. If one remains steadfast in his true resolve, anything can be achieved.

Once, Subbamma told me, "Raju, you are becoming weak. Eat well and grow strong." My friends would bring food prepared in their homes for me. But I used to tell them, *See, in your houses, meat or fish is cooked and eaten. Please don't bring things from such houses.*

In this way I discouraged nonvegetarianism in Puttaparthi. In the same manner, I prevented cruelty to animals in the form of cockfights, cart races and also prevented the gambling habit.

Once, some people who were hostile to me set fire to the room I was sleeping in. There were some ten children of the ages 6 through 9 years old sleeping outside on the veranda. The miscreants had locked my room from the outside and set fire to the roof. The children were shouting loudly, "Raju! Raju!" I peeped out through the small window smilingly and said, *Don't be afraid. Righteousness, when destroyed, destroys. Righteousness when protected, protects. We protect truth, and truth protects us. Have firm faith in this precept.* The children closed their eyes and chanted "Raju! Raju!" as if it were a mantra. As the roof was made of hay, there was a big conflagration. Suddenly there was a cloudburst, and the fire was totally put out. The downpour was just over that

small hut and nowhere else. The joy of the children was indescribable. "Raju, Raju, what a great miracle!" They were shouting, "We cannot live without you." I called them in and gave them some guavas and bananas. They asked me, how I had gotten those fruits. I told them, *Why do you bother [to ask]? Eat what is given. Whether it is a mansion or a wayside shelter, what does it matter? It is enough if you get sleep, and if your stomach is full.*

Subbamma came to know of the episode the next day. She was a great soul; Swami was her very life. She started a detailed search to find the culprits. They were caught. She ordered that they should be banished from the village. The entire property of the village belonged to her. She was very wealthy. All lands belonged to her, so she ordered them to get off of her lands. Then, I caught hold of her hands. I told her, *Please don't harm them because of me. Knowingly or unknowingly they have committed a mistake. Please forgive them. Please don't drive them away.* When she told them this, all those children came to Swami and carried him over their shoulders. Subbamma, Ramanna and all of them were very proud people. They carried me on their shoulders saying, "You must have been some great person in your earlier birth. Otherwise, you cannot have such nobleness in you. Because of you, gradually this village is going to attain great fame." Karnam Subbamma said, "Don't mistake Him for a small boy. His power is like a lightning strike, how can you understand His true nature?" From that day, she did not allow me to go out of her house. I stayed in her house and went to school from there. She was a great lady. She was 60 years old then. She was always looking for me asking, "Is Raju there? Is Raju there?" She would sleep only after seeing that I was safe. She was

trying to protect me from the wicked people in the village.

One day, a Brahmin lady came. She requested Subbamma to send Raju to her for eating snacks in her house. Subbamma was not very happy at the proposition. She was suspicious and thought that there was some evil intention behind the invitation. She refused and told me, "Raju, don't go anywhere without my consent." I said, *Subbamma! Why do you want to thwart her desire?* She replied, "There is some wicked purpose behind her invitation." But I persisted and said, *I must fulfill her request.* I went there. She had made some *vadas*. They were poisoned. I ate them. Within five minutes my entire bloodstream had turned blue. Subbamma came to know of this and came running, looking for me. When she found me, I told her, *Don't worry. What they wanted, they have done. I can look after myself.* Then, I asked Subbamma to give me a tumbler of water with her own hands. As soon as I drank that water, the blueness vanished. Subbamma's anger had reached its limits. She said, "Such women will ruin the reputation of Puttaparthi. There is no room for such people in this village. Only righteous and good-natured people should live here."

Subbamma called the mothers of Swami's companions and told them, "These children are not yours. They are all His; they should be with Raju all the time. They should spend every moment of their lives with Raju." Until recently, [some of those companions] were [still] alive. You all may know Bukkapatnam Sathyanarayana. He was one of them, and [he] is still with us here. He was my classmate in sixth grade. All those children had come to Swami. It is hard to describe their unsullied affection, devotion and attachment to Swami. The present time, the *Kali*

Yuga, has poisoned the minds of children.

In those days, when Swami stretched out to go to sleep, there was competition between them to take my head on their laps. They would say, "Raju, since you slept on my lap, there is no pain or distress in my body, and there is some kind of joy filling me." I wonder if the children of today would have the same sentiments.

Children's minds are now filled with unrighteous feelings. As is the state of mind, so is the state of the person. Children of those days were very pure and innocent. Swami resolved then to spread these qualities to the villagers for their own good. Mere bhajan or chanting "Rama, Govinda" is not great.

Cultivate good habits. One should develop exemplary qualities and earn a good name. Swami is happy when students acquire the reputation for good character. The children's behavior should be good right from the start. That is why I say, *Start early, drive slowly and reach safely*. If you develop sacred habits from an early age, you grow into an exemplary human being. Even today, those who were with me, are shining examples in the villages. When Swami is

returning from Bangalore, all along the way when they see me, they offer their salutations, saying, "Swami, Swami," with great joy. Those who have followed me by car know how these people bring pots of water and wash the roads. They say, "Swami, you have brought water to us. We have to offer it back to you." If I just ask them, *How are you?* they are filled with bliss.

It is for this purpose of transformation that I have not accumulated any money, not a paisa. I have no property worth even a paisa. My entire wealth is my students. I ask for nothing; I only give and give. There is no limit to Swami's giving. The devotees must be made happy by being given something. Swami's sole concern is the wellbeing of His devotees. No one needs to worry about my welfare. My wellbeing is in my hands. Therefore, if one leads his life without departing from truth and righteousness, life will be fruitful and meaningful.

There are many more important but unknown things to be told to the students. I shall tell you more tomorrow.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Excerpted from a Discourse, October 17, 1999

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

Mutual respect can be built on the faith that all are children of God and all are divine. Then on that basis, there can be cooperation and enthusiasm for work. Each will then do his or her best, knowing their duty and responsibility.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Voice of the Avatar, Part II

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—**Sathya Sai Baba**

Voice of the Avatar, Part II

Continued from page 13

stop until we left the area. Air pollution is one of the results of the red tide.

At our next stop, two boys were swimming in contaminated water. We walked out on the dock where they were diving, and poured Baba's lingam water. The current pushed a circle of bubbles directly over the boys, so they became active participants by jumping in and stirring it up; probably baptizing themselves in the process. We concluded Baba's Water Project, enlightened and uplifted.

Wherever we live, there are potential hazards that can contaminate our earth and water. Baba's lingam water was given to us to use everyday, not to display in a tiny bottle as a sample. It is a gift of life. By transforming our water supply, we can help transform ourselves.

—**Jorja Kelley**, Fort Walton Beach, Florida

(Our readers may recall that Mrs. Kelley started the "Love for Lunch" program, taking warm lunches to shut-ins who do not receive food on weekends. *SSNewsletter*, Spring 1999)



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God will never desert you, nor deny you, nor turn away from you. God is your nearest, dearest, most loving, most eager companion, comrade and kinsman.

—Sathya Sai Baba, *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. I

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