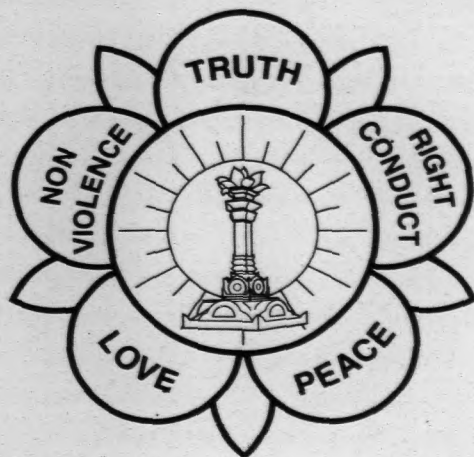




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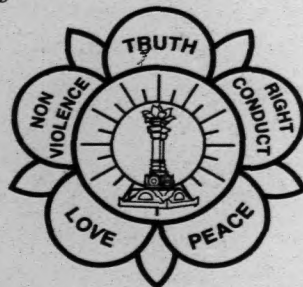
August, September, October

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

*This publication is dedicated with Love and Devotion to
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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



The *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*, welcomes photographs, drawings and literary contributions. Sorry, we are unable to return any of the above items, so please keep a copy for your files. We reserve the right of discrimination in selecting and editing any material for publication. Kindly send any of the above items to: **Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA**, in care of **Sathya Sai Book Center of America**, 305 West First Street, Tustin, California 92780-3108, Phone: 714-669-0522 Fax: 714-669-9138

—Barbara Bozzani, Editor

Sai's Message

Though it is hard to restrain the mind, it can be diverted. When the mind, steeped in the secular world, is diverted toward divinity, it gains in moral strength. The mind saturated in worldly matters makes you a prisoner of the world, whereas, a mind steeped in God secures liberation for you.

Your heart is the lock, and your mind is the key. When you turn the key to the left, it locks. But if you turn the key to the right, it unlocks. It is the turning of the key that makes the difference. So the mind is the cause for your liberation as well as your bondage. What then is liberation (moksha)? It is not an air-conditioned mansion, but it is a state devoid of delusion (moha). Majesty and morality lie in diverting the mind from the world to God. It is this which really contributes to your progress and prosperity.



Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, circa 1988, Kodaikanal.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1996, p 8

Along the Chithravathi River

The sun was setting on my last day in India.

Hawks and eagles were flying home

After their day on the rice paddies laid out neatly along the river valley.

An eagle circled above me against the crimson sky and graciously swooped down

To tell me of the gift on the Chithravathi River.

My work here is done, and I am to go home.

As I step away to say goodbye, I know I'll truly never leave.

There were such gracious smiles and laughter from my hosts and patients alike,

A most gentle force pressing us onward . . . to higher levels,

Many experiences permanently etched upon my memory.

Gratitude and tears from a thousand blessings have shifted the core of my being.

Such is the impact of this place.

There is a gift along the Chithravathi River.

It cannot be bought, nor sold nor measured.

I saw the look of death, as the infant fought for life—and lost,

The soul slipped out forever, I touched the pulseless arm and witnessed the ashen faces of
Lost parents.

I saw a look of hope on a man with a repaired heart—pointing to the prominent scar,

Smiling, “I have a new life!” as he went home.

The celebration of a patient's first steps after weeks of pain and doubt.

There were tears, at times they were my own. . .

Do not ever think the work you do is unimportant.

The same spirit that gives us strength and skill gives us purpose.

There is a gift along the Chithravathi River on the outskirts of the village of Puttaparthi,

An imposing dome along the sunlit horizon,

A mission and vision beyond my understanding,

A love and caring beyond my experience.

I will never be the same.

—Sarah ten Bensel
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Bhagavan Asks, Can You Escape the Consequences of Your Actions?

Embodiments of Divine Love!

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

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

Our Spiritual Practice

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

In what way can you purify the mind? You can purify the mind through sense control. Use

the senses for sacred purposes.

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

In order to purify the senses, you should make use of them in a sacred way. Purity of the senses is purity of the mind. Mind is the master of the senses. If the mind is pure, the senses will be pure.

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

When the Body Is Born

The moment a human body is born, *Aham* (a total, composite personality or "I") follows it. Atma (Soul) is the origin of *Aham*, so *Aham* is the son of Atma. From *Aham* the mind is born, so the mind is the grandson of Atma. And from the mind speech originates, so speech is the great-grandson of Atma. In short, Atma, *Aham*, mind and speech belong to the same family. You should have the conviction that the "I" principle in you, is the dear son of God; the mind is the grandson of God; speech is the great-grandson. Once you understand that your *Aham*, mind and speech belong to the divine family and you act accordingly, your life will be sanctified.

What About Human Life?

Human life has become artificial. There is no trace of love in thoughts or in relationships with others. Man finds it very difficult to have control

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

What About Science?

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

What About Education?

Human life has become artificial. There is no trace of love in thoughts or in relationships with others. Even the relationships between mothers and sons has become artificial. Nowadays, when one finds a son talking to his mother, one finds only an artificial exchange of words, not true love. Students are leading an artificial life without sense control. Even animals have sense control to some extent but not modern students. This is due to the progress in today's education. I do not say that education should not progress; I, myself, have established a university. I only say that along with education, students should imbibe good character. Can you call mere bookish knowledge education? Can you call all those who can read and write educated? Can you call all those who have degrees

added to their names educated? If education were only for a living, do you not find birds and beasts living? Education is for life; it is not for earning a living. You should study to know the purpose of life. You should not be content with bookish knowledge nor superficial knowledge. You must have practical knowledge. To have practical knowledge, inquire within.

He Is Ours, We Are His

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

The previous speaker has said, "God is nearer than your mother." Though I shower more love than their own mothers, some people do not show their gratitude. I do not look forward to your gratitude. However, when I do my duty, you also have to discharge your duty from your level.

Some people blame God for their suffering, ignoring their own defects.

Don't Blame God

People argue, saying that God does not keep his word. But God will never go back on his promises. Mankind does not understand this truth. Being drowned in physical and worldly feelings, people blame God. He will never make anyone suffer. Each person has to face the consequences of his own actions. Every action has a reaction. The reaction may take place immediately, or in a few hours, or in a few days, or in a few months, or in a few years or in a few births. For example, when your finger is cut with a blade, it starts bleeding immediately. When you fall from a staircase, you will suffer a fracture. In both cases, the reactions are instantaneous. The food you eat takes a minimum of two hours to digest. For a seed to grow into a tree and yield fruit, it may take a few years. Good or bad, you cannot escape the consequences of your actions. Then, you may question, why should one pray to God? One should pray to God not for the alleviation of suffering but for peace of mind. Once you have peace of mind, all your problems will vanish. You can even escape the consequences of your own actions if you have God's grace. After the date has expired, the medicine loses its potency. Similarly, once you acquire God's grace, the consequences of your actions will have no effect on you. In order to make the consequences go away, prayer is essential. But you must pray wholeheartedly.

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

Breathing and Essential Prayer

Your breathing process teaches you a lesson. When you inhale you make the sound, "so," and

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

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

Love as Big as an Ocean

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

According to Bharatiya culture, *Uttaraayama*

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

Parental Duties

There are no traces of spiritual thinking among modern students. When the parents and teachers have not realized the importance of spirituality, how can we blame the students? First, the parents must teach their children to pray to God everyday. But modern parents do not pray to God. As soon as they come from the office, they go to their clubs and spend time playing cards and drinking. Naturally, children follow in their footsteps. In some houses, parents quarrel in front of their children, which is an unhealthy practice. If there is any difference of opinion between parents, they should resolve it in the absence of

their children. Children cannot concentrate on their studies if they are disturbed by family problems. Parents should never discuss such things in front of their children. There are some parents who set a bad example by speaking untruths. For example, if some unwanted person makes a phone call, they instruct their children to tell him that they are not available. Thus, they encourage their children to tell lies.

Some children are like pure gold as long as they are here [in Swami's school]. Once they leave for a vacation, their minds get polluted. However, some students remain the same. Some of them return before their vacation ends in order to spend time with Swami. It is their innate nature which was acquired as a result of deeds done in past lives that has shaped their behavior.

Students! Embodiments of Love! You should try to know what divinity is. In this age of science, some say that there is no God. But there is God in all periods of time. There is no other matter. Whatever is seen by the naked eye is bound to disappear. Only God is permanent.

Working for Us Is His Rest

Time is most precious in human life. Misuse of time is evil. Time is God, so don't waste time. I feel sorry when I find you wasting time. I always say, *My life is my message*. I never waste even a moment. You think that after dining, Swami goes to sleep. Actually, I do not know what sleep is. I never sleep.

As you know, I collect letters from you; I see some of the letters immediately. I spend time in a most sacred way. I do not require anything. I do not need anything in all the three worlds.

**Uttaraayana* is the half year when nature is vibrant; there is not a cloud in the sky. This period is considered holier than the remaining months of the year.

Love of the Avatar

I am one of those people to whom Sai Baba has never spoken, who has never received an interview. I lack the authority to speak about Sai Baba to anyone, and I am unqualified to inform anyone about the ins and outs of Avatarhood. I am able to mumble the *Gayatri Mantra* and *Brahmaarpanam* well enough to bring only indulgent smiles to the faces of my Hindu friends. I am not rich, nor am I poor. Little belongs to me that might distinguish me in any way. That I feel compelled to write this article shows I have some amount of ego of which I hope to be cured eventually by the grace of God. The six enemies* have been my friends. However, they and I have been parting company since Sai Baba came into my life.

This is what I want to share with you. I was raised in the Christian household of a Protestant minister, the oldest of six children. I loved Christ deeply. His love healed me at an important time in my life and enabled me to live. But this is not the story I want to tell. Even in the context of this love given so freely, I made unfortunate choices and gradually felt distanced from the One who healed me. Not only did I no

longer feel Christ's love as I once did; I no longer seemed to find love anywhere in my life, particularly in myself. I was stuck and filled with despair. I had only the memory of that healing experience, the knowledge that it had been real, and the understanding that I had betrayed it with unfortunate choices.

Baba's entrance into my life was subtle and gentle, so quiet that the telling of it would take too many words. When finally I became aware of his presence in this world, my experience of him was no different than my early experience of the Christ. My despair and depression lifted. Christ led me to Baba. Baba gave me back the experience of love that first came to me through

"This is not my imagination. It is real. I will never go back, God willing. Never. I will only move forward in this love, so long as this love gives me the power . . ."

Christ. This is not my imagination. It is real. I will never go back, God willing. Never. I will only move forward in this love, so long as this love gives me the power to do so.

But sophisticated scholars these last decades have declared that the miracle stories

of Jesus Christ's actions and birth are myths created by the community of believers who survived him. It has been fashionable to remake

*The six enemies the author refers to are those which Sathya Sai Baba often mentions: lust, anger, greed, attachment, envy and malice.

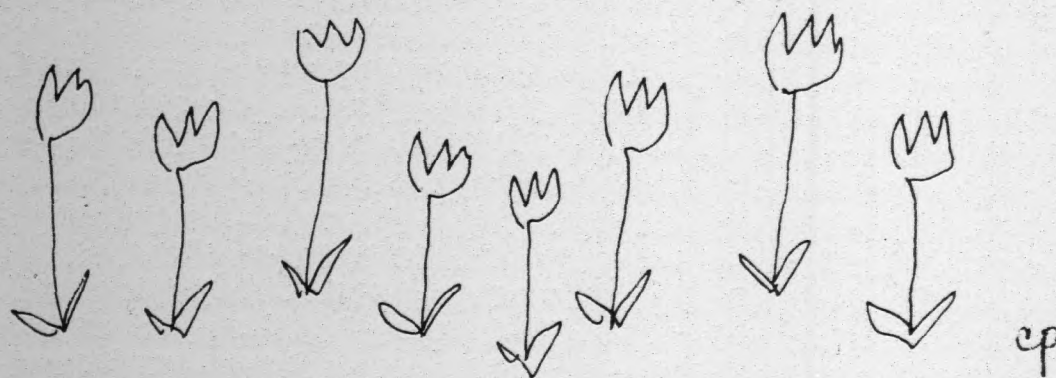
him in every conceivable way according to our own image, sometimes equipped with at least one of the six enemies. Baba's powers and miracles give the lie to this sophistication and fashion. The miracles happened then, just as they are happening now.

However, even if the birth and the miracles are in fact, myths, Christ's greatest quality remains: his love. The same is true for Baba. Therefore, I do not wish to quibble about the veracity of miracles and supernatural events, even though I can tell you honestly, they have and are taking place. Christ's love changed the course of history then. Baba's love is changing the course of history now. Nothing will stop it: no rumor, no lie, no vicious and salacious tale, no act of unkindness. Just as the crucifixion could

not kill that love two thousand years ago, so also no evil whatsoever, will destroy the blessing that is offered to this world at this time through the form of Sai Baba.

The evil that has nipped at the heels of every Avatar in this world is a gift to all devotees, just as their love is a gift. As great as the evil is, whether in the form of lies and tales, or crucifixions and doubts, so great is the possibility of your faith. Make your faith greater than the evil. Make it so. Ask for this power from God and God will grant it. Without evil, faith lacks the opportunity to manifest and prove itself strong and deep. Open your heart to the love. Let it fill your life. Ask for nothing more.

—**Deborah Ellens, Ph.D.**
Claremont, California



When you enter upon spiritual practice (sadhana), you have to give up all tendencies of hatred, lust, anger, greed, envy and malice. You should concentrate on expanding love toward all, at all times. You might encounter opposition from all sides, but consider these as tests of endurance, of sincerity and steadfastness. Your own parents, brothers, sisters, spouse, children, kith and kin, friends, favorites, countrymen and others, might try to turn you aside with ridicule or threats. You might even develop dislike for God for putting obstacles in the way. Atheistic ideas might sprout in you trying to crush your faith. You must overcome these with courage and confidence.

—**Sathya Sai Baba**
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. IX, Chap. 22

All Beings Are Eternal Sparks

Love Is God—Live In Love

It is the power of love that is responsible for the earth to rotate without a pivot. It is the power of love that makes the stars stream across the sky without falling on the ground. It is the power of love that restrains the ocean within its limits. It is the power of love that makes the wind blow incessantly in all the worlds. That power of love is infinite, most wonderful and one without a second. It permeates the entire cosmos. All of creation is saturated with love.

Telegu Poem

God Transcends all Attributes

God is love; love is the form of God. Lord Krishna declared in the *Bhagavad Gita*: “All beings are the eternal sparks of my divinity.” Just as God, the embodiment of love, showers his love on the entire world; people also should share their love with one and all. The principle of love is beyond definition or description. As people are not able to recognize the sacredness of love, they are directing it on worldly and ephemeral objects. God transcends all attributes. The same can be said of love too. But people associate attributes with love and waste their lives. They use the sacred word, love, to describe the relationships that exist between mother and child, wife and husband, brothers, sisters, friends and relatives. Prior to birth, who was the mother and who was the child? Similarly, prior to marriage, who was the husband and who was the wife? The love that exists between mother and child, wife and husband, brothers, sisters, friends and relatives, is related to the physical body and it is negative in nature. This is only a physical relationship and cannot be called love in the true

sense. The act of giving and receiving does not arise in love. Modern devotees pray, “Oh God, if you fulfill my desires, I will offer you ten coconuts.” They offer their mean hair and pray for mighty favors. Can this be called devotion? No, not at all! A true devotee is one who only gives and does not expect anything in return. Surrender is the true sign of devotion.

Human life is a combination of physical and spiritual aspects, one is related to the head and the other to the heart. But people follow the head and have only the physical world in view, thereby forgetting the spiritual aspect. As long as people only follow the head, neither they nor society, nor the country at large can attain peace and security. Peace and security will reign supreme in this world only when people give up body attachment and follow the principle of love that originates in their hearts.

What Is Our Code of Conduct?

The dualities of righteousness and unrighteousness, truth and falsehood, merit and sin, heat and cold, etc., coexist in this creation. People want unrighteousness (*adharma*) to be eradicated completely from this world. They want only righteousness (*dharma*) to exist, but it is not possible. In this world, righteousness cannot exist without unrighteousness and vice versa. The world is a combination of righteousness and unrighteousness. Neither can exist if one of them is absent. People should use their power of discrimination and lead righteous lives.

Humanity's righteousness is different from the code of conduct of animals. But people are unable to differentiate between the two. Humanity's *dharma* is to adhere to the principles of

truth, nonviolence and compassion. People can never attain peace and security as long as they do not give up bestial qualities. Food, sleep, fear and procreation are common for people and animals. Then, what is human *dharma*? To think that you are a human being constitutes only half of the total truth. The other part of the truth lies in understanding that you are not an animal. You should keep reminding yourself. "I am a human being; I am not an animal." Do not stop at that stage. Inquire further as to which sex you belong, and which stage of life you are in, meaning: whether you are a celibate, a householder, a recluse or a renunciant. Then follow the appropriate code of conduct. When you are a celibate, you should not follow the conduct of a householder. That would cause a decline in righteousness. It gives rise to troubles and turmoil when people fail to adhere to conduct appropriate to their stage in life.

Today, people are unable to understand the principle of righteousness corresponding to each of the four stages of life.* The code of conduct is different for different stages of life. Never be under the mistaken notion that the code of conduct is the same for all people irrespective of the stage of life they are in. The cause of unrighteousness is that people are trying to follow the righteousness that is not appropriate to their age or stage in life. Each should strictly adhere to the conduct corresponding to his or her age and stage in life.

Different Faiths and Communities

Nowadays, people do not understand the significance of different faiths and different modes of worship that are prevalent in Bharat.

*The four stages of life are already mentioned: celibate, householder, recluse and renunciate. However, other categories to be considered are: age, gender and caste (an hereditary social group). (Ref., Random House Webster's Dictionary p 323).

They feel it is the existence of different castes, communities and religions that are responsible for all the violence, unrest and conflicts in this country. Existence of different religions has nothing to do with the violence and conflicts in this country. Absence of inner purity is responsible for all this. Here is a small example:

After World War II, countries like Germany and Japan were divided, though there were no religious or communal differences in those countries. Thus, we see that it is the mind of humankind which is responsible for conflicts and agitation, not differences in religions and communities. It is a grave mistake to attribute unrest and agitation in a country to the existence of different religions. For thousands of years, people in India lived in unity and fraternity in spite of the existence of various religions and communities.

Religions are many, but the goal is one.

Jewels are many, but gold is one.

Stars are many, but sky is one.

Cows are many, but milk is one.

Beings are many, but breath is one.

Nations are many, but earth is one.

Flowers are many, but worship is one.

Different religions have come into existence to lead people to divinity, not to create conflicts and agitation. There is nothing wrong with any religion. Mistakes lie in the mind (*mathi*), not in the religion (*matha*). If the mind is good, how can one find fault with a religion? All people belong to one race (*jaathi*), i.e., the human race (*manava jaathi*). You should understand the meaning of *jaathi*. It is based on form. For example, all flowers belong to one *jaathi*. All trees belong to one *jaathi*. Likewise, all human beings belong to one *jaathi*. The mango tree and neem tree be-

long to the same *jaathi*, but you cannot get mangoes when you sow a neem seed. No doubt, all trees belong to one *jaathi*, but their fruits and their tastes vary. There are 450 varieties of tastes corresponding to the fruits of various trees. Such being the case, it is rather difficult to understand their underlying principle of unity. The same can be said of the human race. The human race is one, but human beings are different, their feelings, thoughts and behaviors are different. It is utter foolishness to think of annihilating the *jaathi* as a whole. It may be possible to kill a few individuals, but it is not possible to annihilate the entire human race. The human race is true and eternal. It is highly sacred. It is a sign of ignorance to project differences and agitation without understanding the unity of the human race. The ancient culture of Bharat emphasized understanding the unity in diversity. This is possible only through love.

Love is God; God is love. Cultivating love is the true spiritual practice. If one holds on to the principle of love firmly, one becomes eligible to attain the state of nondualism.

Telegu Poem

Love Is the Fundamental Basis

The state of nondualism is contained only in the principle of love. But people being carried away by body attachment and physical relationships fragment their love in various ways. This cannot be called love in the true sense of the term. As Swami repeatedly stresses the need to cultivate love, some people may wonder what that form of love is. The answer is: love is God; God is love. Love is the fundamental basis. Divine Self (Atma), God as Creator (Brahma), spiritual heart (*hridaya*), existence (*uniki*)—are all synonyms of love. Love is Atma. Love is Brahma. Everything is suffused with love. Such being the case, how can anyone describe the form of love?

The same principle of love exists in one and all. Once you understand this principle of unity there will be no scope for hatred. Conflicts are on the rise because unity is forgotten. Bodies are different, but the same Atma exists in all. Give up the body attachment and strengthen faith in the spirit of oneness. It is only the body attachment that is responsible for evil qualities like anger, jealousy, greed, etc. Some people go to a temple and pray, "Lord, if you fulfill my desires, I will perform ceaseless contemplation on Brahma for you." Some others pray, "Lord, if my daughter gets married, I will conduct your marriage." Can there be a marriage for God? Does God fulfill your wish, so that you may perform his marriage? With such prayers, people are even trying to cheat God. One should pray to God out of love, not expecting any favors from him. Prayer born out of selfishness is no prayer at all. You should see Atma everywhere, think that you are always in the company of God.

Embodiments of Love!

I often address you as "Embodiments of Love" because love is your true form which is pure, unsullied, eternal, ancient, formless and nondual. You love your mother because you have the confidence that she is your mother.

Where there is confidence, there is love.

Where there is love, there is peace.

Where there is peace, there is truth.

Where there is truth, there is bliss.

Where there is bliss, there is God.

Peace, truth and bliss are not elsewhere; they are in you. You are the embodiment of peace, truth and bliss. It is foolish on your part to search for peace and bliss in the external world. Nothing exists separately from you; everything is a reflection of the inner being. Love one and all, just as you love your own reflection in the mirror.

Try to visualize your reflection in everybody. In order to propagate this truth, Lord Krishna said, "You are a part of my being; you and I are not separate. The principle of love is one and the same in both of us." All your spiritual practices will prove futile if you do not adhere to the principle of love.

Like a Mirror

The world is like a mirror. All that you find in the mirror is only a reflection, not reality. Your right eye appears to be the left eye in the mirror. Then how can you consider it to be real? When the mirror is removed, the reflection also disappears but reality remains. That is called, vision of the Self (*Saakshaatkaara*). Some people claim to have the vision of the Self in meditation, but that is only a reflection, an illusion. The vision of your reality is true *Saakshaatkaara*. All the worldly relationships are temporary, like passing clouds. They are subjected to change in the passage of time, but reality is absolutely changeless. That is the principle of love. Worldly love may turn into hatred with a change in time [and circumstances]. What is liked today, may not be liked tomorrow. Divine love has no likes or dislikes. There is no divinity other than love.

Everything Is Suffused With It

You may adore and love the Lord as Jesus, Zoroastra, Allah, Rama, Krishna, Buddha or Guru Nanak. You may call him by any name. All these are names given by somebody. Love is the real name. The names given are bound to change, but love is changeless. You should aspire for that love. That is true devotion. Devotion confers on you discrimination, detachment and liberation.

In this world, everything is suffused with divinity. Other than divinity nothing exists. Even

this cloth [handkerchief] is divine, this flower is divine, everything is divine. If there is no divinity in this cloth, no one will want it. Love pervades everything. You should make every effort to understand this. The human heart is full of love. Many students write to me, "Swami, I love you." They use the symbol of a spiritual heart (*hridaya*) to denote love. This means the spiritual heart is that which is filled with love and compassion. *Hridaya* is the very form of God. God dwells in all beings. God permeates the entire universe. Brahma pervades the entire universe. Share your love not only with your fellow beings, but also with birds and beasts. Stand united, consider the entire universe as a single family.

In this age, you find agitation and unrest all over the world. The reason is that people are not magnanimous. There is no expansion of love in them, only a contraction of love. Narrow mindedness is humanity's own creation. God has given you a large heart. You are subjected to hardships because you are trying to limit the infinite Atmic principle.

Honoring the Spiritual Preceptor

Embodiments of Love! Today we are celebrating the festival of *Gurupoornima*. Who is a Guru? *Gu* stands for attributeless. *Ru* signifies the formless. There is another interpretation for the word Guru. *Gu* signifies darkness, and *Ru* denotes that which dispels darkness. So God, who is attributeless and formless, is the true guru. In the word *Bhagavan*, the syllable *Bha* stands for effulgence. An ordinary electric bulb illumines only a limited area, but God, who is all-pervasive, illuminates all creation. Divinity shines forth in everyone, so do not hate anyone. In this world, people are driven by hatred and narrow feelings. They even go to the extent of killing each other. What a heinous crime that is!

Miracle Glow from Miracle-Gro

Last year, a group was formed to go to Prasanthi Nilayam for Swami's *darshan*. A family of three was planning to join the group. A few days before the family was to leave, they wanted to make sure that their papers and passports were in order. The wife began looking for their passports, visas, etc. She looked in the place where she normally kept those important documents, but they were not to be found. She turned the house upside down looking for them. Finally in sheer desperation, she prayed for Swami's help. After praying, a feeling of calm descended upon her. Over the next two days the documents continued to elude her. The family felt that they were probably not meant to go, so they reconciled themselves to what they thought was inevitable.

Four days before their date of departure, the wife regretfully informed the group leader that she and her family would have to drop out. She was just about to request the airline to cancel their three tickets, so they would not have to forfeit their deposit.

In the meantime, she was going to get something out of a drawer. To her surprise, the drawer came out into her hands. At the back of

the drawer her eyes were attracted to the word, "Miracle," which was glowing brilliantly. Her curiosity was aroused, and she looked at the sign more closely. Lo and behold! Their passports and tickets were found behind the miracle sign. The sign was from a Miracle-Gro packet. Her husband is an avid gardener and he had purchased some Miracle-Gro products.

What was surprising is that they are a very well-organized couple who never misplace anything, so much so that their house had been featured in *National Housekeeping* magazine.

How did the papers get misplaced? How did the drawer become loose and come into her hands? All this defies comprehension and is beyond imagination.

Finally, they were able to take the trip to see their beloved Lord and have his *darshan*. This miracle set the tone for the trip. Upon hearing this, the group was in a state of joy when they departed for India. The Lord, in his infinite mercy and compassion, had started their blissful experience even before they reached their destination.

—Anil Kaushal
Wallingford, Connecticut

Study well the disciplinary rules laid down for all who wish to be in Prasanthi Nilayam. These rules are for your own good. Wherever you are, you can make that place a Prasanthi Nilayam. Become shares in my history. Do not get far from me. You have acquired nearness through the accumulated good fortune of many births. If you cut this contact and get away, a time will come when you will weep outside the gates clamoring for entry. Be free from silly delusions and doubts, be free from taudry desires and I will take you into me.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. II, Chapter 30

Sai Marriage and Parenting

At the First Overseas Convention of Chairpersons in November 1998, brother Jagadeeshan asked this question: "How many of you know the Nine Point Code of Conduct?" Many hands went up. Then he asked, "How many of you will come up here and recite them?" About four hands went up out of 1,000 delegates. That gave us the opportunity to face what we think we know versus what we really know.

I too, would like to pose some questions concerning Sai Baba's teachings on marriage and parenting: What does Swami say is the primary job of parents? What does he say about divorce? What are the roles, virtues and nature of men and women? What does Swami say is the most important thing we can do in marriage to have a good relationship? What is the purpose of marriage? Why is it important to teach our children discipline? If children do not listen to what we are telling them, what does Swami say we can do? These questions are all equally important for us to know; and yet, how many devotees can answer them?

We think that devotees are well prepared for marriage and parenting. But in reality, many parents are overburdened with both husband and wife working as well as being householders. Time is scarce, but often it is spent in front of the television. The truth of devotees being prepared and familiar with Sai Baba's teachings on marriage and parenting is, most are not prepared.

About three years ago, Swami blessed us with permission to hold "Sai Marriage and Parenting Workshops." I asked Swami, "If we are not here in Prasanthi Nilayam to ask your permission, Lord, what should we do?" He replied:

You go wherever you are asked. Swami will bless; this is Swami's work.

Swami said, *The home, too, must feel the change in the child's behavior. It may be advisable to gather the parents together, and give them guidelines on childcare, and on the higher ideals of family and social life.*

SSS Vol. X, pp 207-208

For ten years my husband, Robert, and I have been giving talks on Sai's teachings on marriage and parenting. In the last two years, we have also given them in an eight-hour workshop format. In every country, irrespective of culture, people tell us the same thing, "We need more programs like this."

We know that over 60% of all marriages end in divorce. We know that the family unit is disintegrating into a single parent situation. We know that babies are being left at daycare centers before they are eight weeks old. We know that children are going home to empty nests. We know that parents are exhausted from their stressful lives, so how can they have the patience needed to work with a child? How can "quality time" compare with parents being there all of the time?

Is there a need within the Sai Organization [to address these issues]? The answer is an emphatic and definite, yes! We are working with the Sathya Sai Spiritual Education (SSSE) teachers who are working with the children. They do a wonderful job, but as Baba says:

For lakhs (one lakh is 100,000) of students and children who go to school, the mother is the first teacher.

Today through science, we know that from zero to five years, children develop their personalities, language skills, IQ and more. Sai Baba says:

Since children spend 85% of their time in their homes and in the community, the parents carry a big responsibility for their children's development.

SS, January 1994, p 24

Isn't it common sense that parents who spend more time and carry the major responsibility for the child's development need help?

When parents gather together and talk about their mutual problems at the workshops, they get support from one another. They realize that they are not alone. In their small groups they find solutions to the problems that confront them. We give handouts of Swami's teachings on these subjects, and the participants are grateful to have this help. One father said, "To realize that the solutions to these problems are within us, is an important aspect of this workshop."

You see, Swami's children are unique because from birth they know that God is on earth. The worldly values and methods of raising children are light years away from what Swami expects. How can these children become instruments in his divine mission if they do not have spiritual discipline? Swami wants these children to be raised in a home of love and discipline. Swami has said:

Ninety percent of the blame for spoiling the behavior and character of children goes to the parents. They show too much unintelligent affection and give too much indiscriminate freedom to them.

SS, January, 1994, p 24

The world is teaching parents to spoil their children by giving them what they want. To quote Swami:

Parents, for instance, do not set a good example for the children. In the modern age, the father does not correct the child, and the child does not listen to the mother. Therefore 90% of the fathers are like Dhritarashtra; they will accept anything that their children do. This is the reason why the world has come to such a sorry state.

SS, November/December 1995, p 294

Now, in order for these corrections to be made, first and foremost, the parents must be educated in Sai's values for parents. Then, they need to have the opportunity to speak with other devotees who have the same values. There is a need for a support system, like a parent study group in our Sathya Sai Baba Centers. The family needs to be strengthened. We are in a crisis of losing the entire family structure. These steps will arm the parents with new tools that will improve and strengthen their families.

Marriage is equally important; it is the very foundation of the family unit. Marriage is the first institution God gave to mankind. If couples don't have a solid, loving relationship with each other, the children sense and experience this. The relationship between the mother and father is the first example of a relationship and love that a child learns. It is their emotional foundation. Sathya Sai Baba says:

In marriage, first, you must understand each other. After that, adjustment will be easy. First, understanding. Second, adjustment. Ninety percent of the people try adjustment first. This is the wrong way around. First understand!

Communication is the number one problem in relationships. Swami is telling us that we must understand each other. The only way to understand is through communication.

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Autumn 2001

Hurting others amounts to hurting God. Your hatred will certainly rebound on you. Today, people derive demonic pleasure in causing harm to others without understanding the truth that one day or other they will have to reap the consequences of their actions. Make others happy and you will certainly be happy. Violence and murders have become the order of the day. Greatness does not lie in killing others, even an insect is capable of doing that. Greatness lies in saving lives.

Facing the Consequences of Actions and Forgiveness

Embodiments of Love! You are bound to face the consequences of your actions. So do good and you will certainly reap good results. Do not get disheartened if there is no immediate reward. Wait for a while; you will certainly be rewarded. Your suffering is nothing but the consequence of bad deeds in the past. Prayer alone can alleviate your suffering to some extent. Prayer is a way of expressing your gratitude to God. The sun god is extolled as a salutation to the destroyer of the ungrateful meaning: he will withdraw himself from the eyes of those who have no gratitude.

The quality of forbearance (kshama) is most essential for one and all. Forbearance is truth, forbearance is righteousness, forbearance is nonviolence, forbearance is the teaching of the Vedas, forbearance confers happiness and heavenly bliss.

Telegu Poem

Forgive those who have harmed you and criticized you. Have the faith that whatever happens is for your own good. If someone heaps abuses on you, do not retaliate. Inquire whether they have criticized the body or the Atma. If they have criticized the body indirectly, they

have done a favor for you because the body is nothing but a heap of flesh, blood, bones and fecal matter. On the other hand, if they have criticized the Atma, it amounts to criticizing themselves because the same Atma exists in both of you. One should cultivate this kind of forgiveness and be broad-minded.

Don't Give Up Your Values

Embodiments of Love! Guru is one who dispels the darkness of ignorance arising out of body attachment. The body is but an instrument. God has given you the body to take to the path of action. The body is God's gift. The body is the temple and the indweller is God. Consider all bodies as temples of God and offer your salutations. Salute even your enemies. Whomsoever you salute, it reaches God, and whomsoever you censure, that also reaches God.

I often address you as "*Bangaru*" (Gold) because you are the embodiment of the divine personality (*Hiranyagarbha*). The principle of *Hiranyagarbha* is present in your heart. You may change the shape of a jewel, but God remains changeless. The value of gold decreases as it is mixed with various metals like copper, brass, etc. Likewise, people, by birth, are highly pure and most valuable. But on account of their association with evil desires and bad company, they lose their value. Run away from bad company; perform meritorious deeds day in and day out, and inquire into that which is permanent and that which is ephemeral. This is your *dharma*, your code of conduct.

Embodiments of Love! It is said, to be born as a human being is the rarest of all blessings. So sanctify your life by making proper use of your senses. Do not talk as you please, speak softly and sweetly. Have proper control over your vision.

You all know what happened to Keechaka when he looked at Draupadi with evil intentions. Bhima smashed his head into pieces. That is why Buddha gave instructions to cultivate sacred vision (*samyak drishti*). Buddha attained enlightenment only after he cultivated sacred vision. Consider all that you see as a form of God. Think what is good, see what is good, hear what is good, say what is good and do what is good. Only then can you attain divinity.

Embodiments of Love! This body is approaching its 75th birthday.* All these years, I have remained blissful because I am aware of the principle of unity. You too can experience bliss if you understand this truth. I do not hate anyone, nor do I have any enemies. I have absolutely no fear because everything is my own form; the same Atma exists in all. When an innocent child smiles at you, you smile at it. Likewise, when I smile blissfully, seeing me, all of you do the same.

What Can We Do for Him?

Have a sacred heart; cultivate sacred feelings. Then the result will be sacred. Have faith that God is everywhere. You may have to undergo trials and tribulations, but never lose faith in God. Consider faith as your very life breath. Each one of you is an embodiment of love, but because of food and [bad] habits, evil qualities of jealousy and anger arise in you. As is the food, so is the head; as is the head, so is God. Consume only calming, soothing (*sathwic*) food. Then, you will have only sacred feelings, and your speech will also become sacred.

In order to put you on the right path, I sometimes pretend to be angry, but in reality I am

never angry. The only harsh name that I use is, "He Buffalo" (*Dunnapotha*). You are truly a buffalo if you do not undertake good actions. If you do good, you become a good person. When there is a heavy downpour, the cow and calf may run hither and thither, but the male buffalo remains wherever he is, totally unmindful of the rain. You should not become inactive like a male buffalo; there should be transformation in you. Human life is highly sacred. Do not put it to misuse. I love everybody. Love is my true form. All of you being the sparks of my divinity share your love with your fellow beings, just as I share my love with all of you. Then you will become divine. When you follow the sacred path, the world will attain peace and prosperity.

Embodiments of Love! Give up ignorance, light the lamp of wisdom and ultimately merge in the divine. This is Swami's message for you today. Develop love. Through love alone you can annihilate the mind; through love alone you can be cured of any disease. Only love can eradicate the evil qualities in you. So love all. Love the *hridaya*, not the physical body; love the divinity that is installed in your heart. The body, mind, intellect and senses are merely instruments; you are the master. So master the mind and be a mastermind. Never become a slave to your mind. Day in day out, contemplate on the divine. That alone can bring about your transformation. You may chant any name, contemplate on any form, but understand the truth that God is the one and only one.

—**Sathya Sai Baba**

Divine Discourse, *Gurupoornima*
Prasanthi Nilayam, July 16, 2000



*This discourse was given four months before Bhagavan's 75th birthday.

I am engaged in activity from dawn to dusk in order to set an ideal. From top to toe, there is no trace of selfishness in me. Believe it or not, I always spend my time for others. I always give, but I never receive. I ask for only one thing, and that is pure love. I am ready to give my life for those who offer their pure love. You cannot understand my work. Only people of sacrifice can understand this. I am always engaged in activity; I do something or the other. Even while resting, I am working. I have to take a rest for the sake of others. Otherwise, they will not rest. So they will rest, I take a rest. How do I do that? Doing devotees' work is my rest.

For a Devotee

The previous speaker, Narsimhamurthy, spoke about this incident. One day, suddenly, I left this body. Gangadhar Shetty, and Narsimhamurthy were surprised at this. As it was not possible for others to enter my room, only these two were there. I told them about a widow who always thinks of Swami. She has two children. After the death of her husband, she took a small job to maintain her family. She sustained a heart attack. The loss of her husband, and her inability to provide for the family made her depressed. As the money was not sufficient, she took a part-time job. Every moment, she would wholeheartedly chant the name, *Sai Ram, Sai Ram, Sai Ram*. In such a situation, she suffered a heart attack. In fact, she was to die. So I took the heart attack on myself. For seven long days, I did not come down [for *darshan*]. I took upon myself all her sufferings and pain, and made her healthy. After

three days, she sent a telegram saying, "Swami, you came and protected me and my children." She did not know that I had taken her disease on myself. After a week, she came with her children.

I am ready to do anything for the sake of those who have total faith and pure love. However, it is very difficult to find such devotees, but there are a few of them. If there are no noble people, how is it that you find daylight in this world? There are many sacred people in this country as well as in the world.

No Limits, Express Gratitude

Do not limit spirituality to Bharat. It is present all over the world. Truly speaking, it is more in foreign countries than in Bharat. Indians do not know what *Brahmasutras*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita** are. But foreigners have learned the *Bhagavad Gita* by heart. In Italy, there is a devotee who has learned *Brahmasutras* by heart. She can chant *Rudram*. In Italy, she constructed a building and named it, "Mother Sai," spread over 25 acres of land. Having full faith that one day Swami will certainly visit that place, she also built a spacious hall like the Poornachandra Auditorium, so public meetings can be held there. She also constructed some rooms to accommodate the students who will follow Swami. Do you know how clearly our primary school children from foreign countries chant the *Vedas*? This is the result of being in good company. If the company is good, the children's futures will be good. Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are. As is your company, so you become. Wherever you go join good company, Let

**Brahmasutra*, *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita* are holy texts. *Brahmasutra* is compiled of aphorisms on supreme reality, the divine principle. *Upanishads* describes the spiritually steady, disciplined mind. *Bhagavad Gita*, means celestial song, and is the teachings of Lord Krishna as told to Arjuna. The *Bhagavad Gita* is the essence of the *Upanishads*.



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

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

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

—Sathya Sai Baba

Prasanthi Nilayam, September 29, 1998

What Is Educare?

There was an International Conference of Sathya Sai Educare during July 2 through July 4th at Prasanthi Nilayam. Teachers came from all corners of the world. A rough estimate was that 6,000 qualified Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Gurus had come for the Conference of Sathya Sai Educare. This is a somewhat new term, so what does it mean? Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba touched on the subject of Educare in 1999 and in 2000 here are some of the things he said then and on July 4th, 2001:

The term education has its origin in the Latin word *educare* which means to elicit. Educare has two aspects, the worldly and the spiritual. Worldly education brings out latent knowledge pertaining to the physical world. Spiritual knowledge brings out the inherent divinity in mankind. So both worldly and spiritual education are essential, without which human life has no value. Spirituality finds no place in the modern educational system. Only worldly education is given prominence. . . .

As I have told you earlier, educare has two aspects: one is *pravritti* (outward) and the other is *nivritti* (inward). God is the indweller, so all that originates from the heart is essentially divine. Let all your thoughts, words and deeds originate from the heart. (PN, July 26, '99)

You have to understand the true meaning of these two words, education and human values. Education has two aspects: The first is related to external worldly education which is nothing but acquiring bookish knowledge. In the modern world, we find many who are well versed and highly qualified in this aspect. The second aspect, known as *educare* is related to human values. The word *educare* means to bring out that which is within. Deep within every human being are the values—truth, righteousness, peace, love and nonviolence (*sathya, dharma, shanti, prema* and *ahimsa*). One cannot acquire them from outside, they have to be elicited from within. But mankind has forgotten human values, so they are unable

to manifest them. Educare means to bring out human values. To bring out means to trans-late human values into action. . . .

The word *educare* has sacred inner meanings. That which is manifested by *educare* cannot be seen by the eyes, cannot be heard by the ears and cannot be felt by the mind. But all that [worldly] education confers can be seen, heard and felt. Education fosters desires and leads to rebirth, whereas *educare* confers immortality; there will be no rebirth. The innate divine qualities like truth, righteousness, peace, patience, forbearance and love cannot be seen by the naked eye and they lead to no [future] births. Modern education is giving rise to desires which form the basis for rebirth. You need to develop detachment to control desires. [Listening to] the inner voice leads to detachment. You must inquire into the difference between attachment and detachment. To attain detachment, you must obtain release from worldly bondage. (PN, Sept. 26, '00)

There should be transformation at three levels: individual, social and spiritual. This is what Sai is bringing about. The three letters in the word SAI stand for Spiritual change, Association change and Individual change, respectively. SAI also denotes Service, Adoration and Illumination corresponding to work, worship and wisdom. Understand the inner meaning of every letter of this word SAI to sanctify your lives.

Today thousands of Bal Vikas Gurus have gathered in Prasanthi Nilayam. Worldly educa-

tion is essential, but children should be taught spiritual education from a young age. In conferences held elsewhere, you find an ocean of differences among the delegates who are supposed to participate and the people who actually take part in the deliberations. Our conference is unique in that all delegates attend. Nobody gets up in the middle except a few out of physical constraints. You cannot find such conferences being held anywhere else in the world. Though I know everything, sometimes I watch the proceedings of the conference from behind the screen or from above. All delegates are attending the meetings with utmost sincerity and devotion. Such conferences should be held more frequently. Many more members should be trained and should be taught these procedures. Only then will the whole world have the benefits.

Yesterday the Prime Minister [of India], Vajpayee, sent a letter to me which said, "Swami, our government with all the power at our disposal cannot undertake such noble tasks. It is not possible for anyone but you. Please take up more and more responsibilities and involve even the government in these matters." They write such letters out of love. But we do not involve ourselves in the matters relating to government because their temperament and influence do not match with our activities, experiences and happiness. We take care without involving others.

Many conferences are being held here, but do you find any collecting of funds? No! Each one is taking care of his or her own requirements. They are coming here wholeheartedly and enjoying the bliss. Such conferences should be held not once but thrice a year. Each time, new delegates should be given a chance. All of you must be prepared to put forth any amount of effort for the purpose of education. . . .

Many speakers have taught you many things on the basis of their experiences. I have been hearing them. Try to understand their experiences, put their teachings into practice and teach the same things to others. I will tell you one thing. Having been born as human beings, you should overcome *maya* (incorrect perception), instead have the vision of Atma. That is the purpose of your life. Where is the Atma? It is your very form. You are not the physical body, it is temporary. The mind is like a mad monkey, do not follow the body, do not follow the mind. Follow the conscience which is your true form. How can you have the vision of Atma? You need not search for it outside; turn your vision inward. Only then you can have the vision of Self.

For example, there was a person who remained silent even though he was being criticized. When his friend wanted him to react he replied, "The same Atma is present in me as well as in the person who is criticizing, so why should I be annoyed when he is criticizing himself?" A deep inquiry into the truth will reveal that when you love or hate others, you love or hate yourself. In fact there are no "others." You consider yourselves different from others because of body attachment. Once you give up body attachment, you will realize that there are no others; all are yours. The Atma does not have a specific form. Bliss is Atma, consciousness is Atma. Conscious is related to the senses; conscience is the inner witness and consciousness is the all-pervasive Atma. You should understand the unity of these three. Take the path of service, then proceed along the path of adoration and ultimately attain illumination. To the extent possible, serve everyone. True happiness lies in service.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Excerpted from a discourse, July 4, 2001

It takes time to communicate with spouse and children. Another thing that is necessary for our families is to rearrange our priorities. Our children simply need to spend more time with us, and spouses need to spend time with each other. To build a relationship, it takes an investment that grows with effort.

We need to learn to communicate without criticism, judgment or anger. We as individuals all seek understanding, acceptance, recognition and above all—love. Each of us hurt when we get rejected. When issues arise in the family, communicating with understanding, patience, and compromise can heal the hurtful feelings that bring separation instead of togetherness. It's amazing, just listening to each other is extremely helpful. It does take awareness to stop what we are doing, and to sit down and listen. Listening is so simple. We can all do it, but the desire must be there to improve our family life. Swami said in our interview:

The young adults should have the same program on marriage and parenting as the married couples.

Our young adults are educated, many obtain university degrees. Yet too few of them have attended a single class on marriage and parenting. Lord Sai tells us:

Molding the character of our children is the most important job of a parent.

Where is the training? Parents pass their skills on to the next generation, often without being taught how to improve family life. What happens to us in our families influences us throughout our lives. Nothing has a more profound effect on our development, and yet we are the least prepared. It is quintessential that this be corrected, especially by Sai devotees.

Why has this lack of importance of education on marriage and parenting slipped through the cracks in our society? Because there has been very little value placed on motherhood. There is no glamour in this job, only sacrifice. It is our beloved Sai who has taught us the role of women, and restored honor to the position of wives and mothers. Swami says:

Women are the fountain source of love. Devotion is considered a feminine quality, while wisdom is considered masculine. Let me not be misunderstood if I say that for the presence of all the male devotees here, women alone are responsible. It is they who by their sacred feelings brought their menfolk here. Their work is sacred in every respect. They seek not only to sanctify their lives but the lives of all others in the family.

Young adults in the Sai workshops have expressed their concerns about marriage commitment. Since the divorce rate is so high, they wonder if their marriages will last. They have known of so many marriages ending in divorce, and they are concerned that theirs will, too. I can only imagine how they must feel. When I was young, divorce was never a possibility except in extreme cases.

When we have a session with the young adults, we share our years of experience in marriage—the good and the not so good. And they learn that even though problems arise, the very struggle of working together creates a bond that empowers the relationship. They learn that problem solving is fundamental to marriage and parenting. With Swami's guidance and grace, we can resolve any problem. Love is the main ingredient. This gives us hope.

With Sai Education, we can help devotees increase their awareness, so they will recognize

their problems more quickly, take the necessary steps to correct the problems and to know that, through their efforts, they can become the benefactors of a mature, loving relationship. But it takes time and effort. They must realize that building a relationship does not happen in a week, a month or a year. It takes a lifetime commitment. As Sai says:

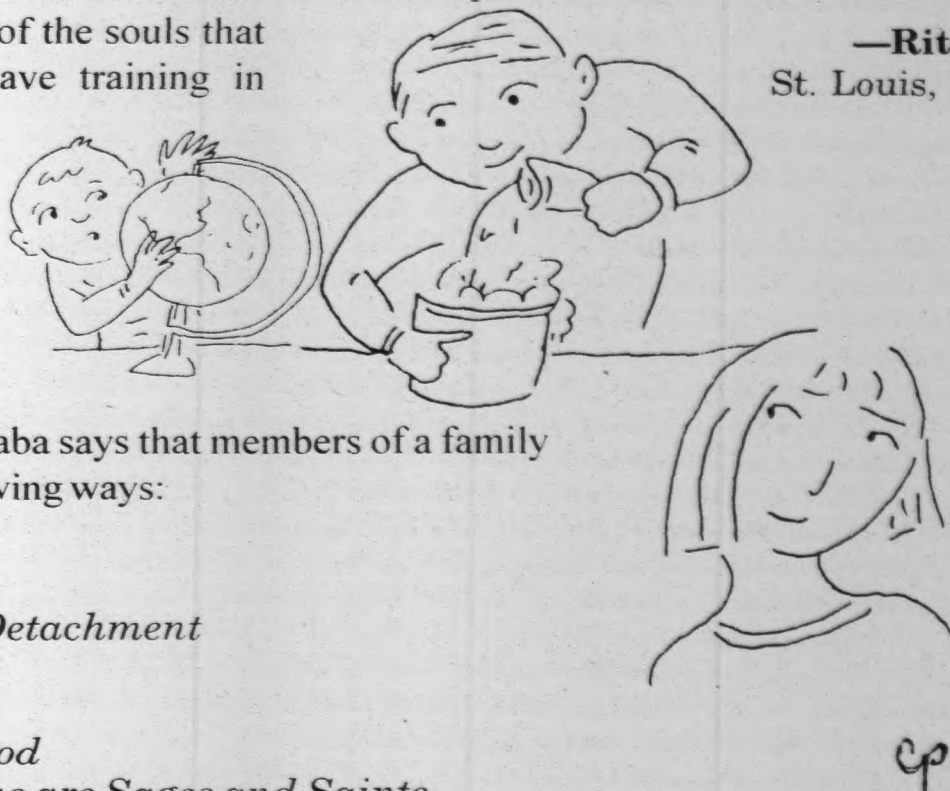
In marriage, one should give one's heart to another.

If these young adults—who are our the future leaders, and the future parents of the souls that Swami is sending us—can have training in

marriage and parenting, then they will have a greater capacity to solve problems as they arise. It is awareness and knowledge that help us to overcome ignorance. We must make the effort, and Swami will provide the grace to make our marriage and parenting skills more virtuous. Our beloved Swami has taught us the importance of the family. He says:

The home and the family is the basic social institution everywhere in the world. When the home improves, the whole world will be better.

—Rita Bruce
St. Louis, Missouri



Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba says that members of a family are represented in the following ways:

Father is Truth

Mother is Love

Wife and Husband are Detachment

Son is Wisdom

Daughter is Fortitude

Kith and Kin are the Good

Friends and Companions are Sages and Saints

You speak of yourselves as the Sai family, believing yourselves to be Sai devotees. But it is not enough if you label yourselves as devotees. I must accept you as such. And I will accept you as such only when you act upon the teachings that I give. They are not difficult: Be true, be just, be full of love and remain unaffected by the ups and downs of life. Take everything as a sign of God.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Mahashivaratri 1966

If you revere your parents today, your children will revere you in the coming days. For the present shapes the the face of the future as it was shaped by the past.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. IX, Chapter 13

Householders on the Sacred Path

For liberation, clearness of vision to see the Atma is enough; that is the essential thing—not caste or color. How does one get that clear vision? The answer is through the practice of *dharma* [which is conditioned by one's situation in life]. Righteousness enables the Self to be realized without any mist or fog hiding it from view.

Those who have attachment or hatred, even if they dwell in the forest, cannot escape harm. Those who have conquered the senses, even if they are householders, can be *thapaswis* (pursuing a life of austerity, controlling the mind and senses). If engaged in acts which are not harmful or condemned, then they are entitled to be called *jnanis* (wise ones). Liberation cannot be won by progeny, nor by charity, nor by riches, nor by sacrifice nor by yoga. What is wanted for liberation is the cleansing of the self.

In order to decide what is right action or wrong, the *Sastras* (collective wisdom) alone are the authority of whatever is one's stage of life. If the person has the realization of the Supreme Absolute (Brahman) as the goal, that is his own reality. Then he will succeed in removing the veil of ignorance and know himself as Brahman. Attention fixed on one's Atma or soul is the means of liberation.

When moved by the desire to be finished with the rounds of births and deaths (called crossing the ocean of *Samsara*), both the husband and wife must have harmony of mind. The resolution to reach the goal must be equally strong and steady in both. Otherwise, monastic life is only a

refuge. Even the midday sun is associated with its consort.

The mistress of the home must be bright, patient, calm and good. She must have all the virtues. Then the home will shine and it will be a home of victory in the spiritual field.

There is no rule that when a person meets with difficulties in the spiritual field at home he should become a renunciate and flee. If *sanyasa* (renunciate) is taken by a husband without the full approval of the wife, it will never be fruitful. The best that can be done is for the husband and the wife to leave the home together and live the life of a reclusive life in the forest (*vaanaprastha*). They must adhere to the code of conduct of that new stage. If there are children who need attention and care, then even *vaanaprastha* is not favored in the wisdom of the *Sastras*.

One has to make the children independent of one's care, and then they can be left to themselves. The *Sastras* therefore require that a person has to be in the householder stage until the age of 48, whether it is favorable or unfavorable. One has to be in it and struggle to follow one's own code of conduct, known as *Swadharma* without hindrance. If hindrances come, dedicate them to the Lord, and take them quietly as his divine play, his plan (*leela*). That is the way to follow the discipline for both men and women householders.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Excerpted from:
Dharma Vahini, Chap. 8

In 1988 Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba asked the MBA students and some guests in Kodaikanal, "Do you want to know the secret of liberation?" We were excited, and prepared ourselves for a long discourse. Baba then leaned forward and in a very quiet voice said, "Liberation is God seeing God."

Children's Corner: Children Can Serve Too!



One of the best ways to practice Swami's teachings is through service. Sathya Sai Baba says, "*Service to the human community is the best offering you can make to the Lord.*" Involvement in service projects such as volunteering with your parents or Bal Vikas teachers—at soup kitchens, distributing supplies to the homeless or teaching adults to read—are only a few of the various services that need young people to help.

Another popular service activity is visiting elderly people in nursing homes. Older people are usually very interested in what you are doing. It's easier to talk to them than you might think. They like to know about your school activities, your family and your pets, if you have any. Some youngsters have even "adopted" a grandmother or a grandfather, so they can visit and send cards and letters to their newly chosen grandparent.

Remember, any of these service activities require the consent and permission of your parents. You must have a reliable adult to go with you. One of the best ways to learn how much fun service can be is by participating in the *seva* projects in your own Sathya Sai Baba Center or with your Bal Vikas group.

In the meantime, remember that helping your parents at home is also a way in which you can be useful. Be happy, Baba loves you!

Theme and Illustration by
—Pravin Wagh

What Is True Education?

Modern education fosters only intelligence, not virtues. Of what avail is education if it does not inculcate virtues in people?

The Five Elements

Since ancient times, the Bharatiyas (Indians) have been using the word *prapancha* while referring to this world consisting of mobile and immobile objects. *Prapancha* means the manifestation of the five elements—earth, air, water, ether and fire. Since time immemorial, Bharatiyas have been worshipping these five elements as the manifestations of divinity. They are called by their sacred names: earth is *Bhudevi* (mother earth), air is *Vayudeva* (wind god), water is *Gangadevi* (water goddess), ether is *Sabdabrahmam* (primordial sound) and fire is *Agnideva* (fire god). But the students are not making any effort to understand the divine nature of these five elements, nor are the teachers making them aware of this truth. The students are interested in acquiring only bookish knowledge and not in understanding the sanctity of these elements. True education is that which confers virtues, good intellect, devotion, duty and discipline. Teachers today are imparting only book knowledge to the students, but not the spiritual aspect of education. Today, all the five elements are polluted; consequently, people are gripped in insecurity. The need of the hour for students is not mere acquisition of degrees. They should make proper use of the five elements. This is the true value-oriented education the world needs. Value is for education; education is for life. Life is for love; love is for humanity. Humanity is for spirituality; spirituality is for the world. The world is for peace. So one should travel from values to peace.

Currently students are acquiring education with selfishness and self-interest in mind. They crave money. Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows.

Skill, Not Kill

Students should strive hard to cultivate morality. They should hone their knowledge into skill, not kill it. Only then will their lives be in balance. But modern students are killing their knowledge, meaning that they are putting it to misuse. Consequently, their mental power is lost and their inner reality is subdued. Today, boys and girls acquire education with a view on the external world. They do not realize that all that is seen in the external world is transient. One can develop inner vision and maintain balance in life only when one hones his or her skills from knowledge. Nowadays, humanness has declined because people lack balance in their lives. If human values are to be fostered, one should sharpen one's knowledge into skills and maintain proper balance in life.

Ecological Balance

In this age, the ecological balance is lost as humanity, out of utter selfishness, is robbing the earth of her resources like oil, petrol, iron, etc. As a result, we find earthquakes, floods and other devastating calamities. Human life will find fulfillment only when ecological balance is maintained. Balance in human life and in nature is equally important. In these times, even marine life is dwindling due to so called advancement in science. Advancement in science is welcome, but

it should not lead to ecological imbalance. The world at large should benefit from science. But everyone is interested in selfish gains. No one seems to care about society.

The food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, are all polluted. It is the foremost duty of students to cleanse the world of pollution. Cleanliness is godliness. Keep your body, mind and the environment clean. Let all your actions be sacred. Speak sweetly and softly to everybody. The culture of Bharat teaches, "Love everybody because God is present in all. God dwells in all beings." God has another name, Viswa, meaning the entire universe is his form.

Knowledge Into Skills

Modern education cannot be called education in its true sense. What is the use of intelligence if one lacks the power of discrimination, and of what avail is knowledge if it is not sharpened into skill? True education is that which develops love and confers well-being on others. The modern system of education has undergone many changes, but no change has brought about tangible results. First of all, the minds of people should be transformed. Then, the entire world will be transformed because mind forms the basis of the entire world.

Students do not know how to convert their knowledge into skills. Where does the mistake lie? Does it lie with the parents, or the teachers or the leaders? It is the mistake of everybody! All students are pure and tender-hearted. It is the responsibility of parents to teach them the importance of human values like truth, righteousness and love. But the parents are not making any effort to teach the children to speak the truth. In fact, some parents mislead their children in this regard. As a result, they lead a life of untruth once they grow up. Under any circumstances, one

should not speak falsehoods. Help ever, hurt never. Those who adhere to this dictum will certainly advance in life.

One does not find unity among students as they do not have love for each other. You should consider love as your very life. I often tell my students, "When the electric current of truth flows through the wire of righteousness and enters the bulb of peace, you get the light of love. In order to cultivate love, you should adhere to the values of truth and righteousness. Speak truth. Speak in a palatable way. Do not utter truth that is unpleasant. The first saying is a moral value, the second is a social value and the third is a spiritual value.

Does Money Help?

The rich and the educated are not interested in spirituality. They consider money as the be all and end all of existence. Money does not confer peace and bliss on you. Devotion is most essential. The country is facing hardships because people lack devotion. They do not think of God who is manifest in the form of the five elements. Who are human beings? Are they merely bodies? No. One with purity, love and devotion is a true human being. Nowadays, people are in mad pursuit of money. No doubt money is essential, but it should be within limits. Once you have love for God, money will follow you of its own accord. Some are ready to sacrifice even their lives for the sake of money, but they do not spend even a minute in the contemplation of God. They do not undertake even a single sacred activity. Time is God. Time wasted is life wasted. Each one has to inquire whether he or she is making proper use of time. Today, people waste a lot of time in vain gossip, television, etc.

One may be wealthy but all his wealth is useless if he lacks character. After death, are you able to carry even a fistful of sand with you? No. Your bank balance will not follow you. It will remain in the bank. Character is most essential, not money. True education is that which drives away pollution of the mind and develops character. It is not enough if students get good marks, they should take care that they do not get bad remarks. Only then will their marks have value.

Knowledge of Self Is Eternal

Embodiments of Love! Everyone should foster divine qualities, be they students or elders. Do not depend on others, depend on God. In fact, you are not human, you are God. God is present in all beings. You will remain a human being as long as you think you are. Have the firm conviction that you are God, and share your love with all. This is the very essence of true education.

The goal of education is to confer purity. Worldly education is transient. Knowledge of the Self is eternal. It can be acquired only through devotion and love for God. Human beings are born to set an ideal to the rest of the world, not to amass riches. Where are all those kings of yore who amassed riches and conquered kingdoms? So long as they were alive, they enjoyed physical comforts, but they ultimately died leaving everything behind. What is the use of such a life? One should attain immortal bliss.

A foolish person boasts of high education and intelligence, yet does not know himself. What is the use of all the education you have acquired, if you cannot give up your evil qualities? All the worldly education will only lead to vain argumentation, not total wisdom. It

cannot lead you to immortality. So people should acquire that knowledge which will make them immortal.

Telegu Poem

That is true education. It will protect you wherever you are. When you have such education, all will become your friends, even if you do not have money and are in a foreign land. Under any circumstances, never give up human values. Only then can you set an ideal to the world. Human values cannot be acquired from textbooks nor can teachers confer them. They are with you right from your birth. You have to cultivate them through self-effort. The whole of creation has emerged from truth, is sustained in truth and ultimately merges in truth. In order to lead a peaceful life, one should always adhere to truth and righteousness. In the beginning, you may have to face problems, but you should take them in stride and proceed along the path of truth. Purity, patience and perseverance are very essential for humanity. But people are becoming impatient as they lack patience. Each one has to question oneself whether he or she has these virtues. It is not enough if you proclaim that you are pure, let others say it.

Reduce Desires, Be an Example

Embodiments of Love! Do not give scope for excessive desires. It is said, "Less luggage gives more comfort and makes travel a pleasure." Your desires are the luggage in the journey of your life. You will have peace of mind only when you reduce your desires. I am the best ideal in this regard. I don't have any desires. I don't want anything. As you are aware, we have a very big hospital at Puttaparthi and there are many educational institutions. They are functioning very smoothly because they have been started with love and noble intentions. My only desire is that all people should live like ideal human beings.

After singing *bhagans*, you chant the prayer *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the worlds be happy). It is not enough if some are happy and some are not. All should be happy. That is possible only when human values are practiced. There are many who give lectures on human values. But those who are true human beings put values into practice. Elders should sow the seeds of human values in the tender hearts of children, so they will grow into gigantic trees and give shelter to many in the future. It is said, "Start early, drive slowly, reach safely." Human values should be taught to children right from primary school level because they are the future leaders of the nation. Parents and teachers should strive to inculcate ideals in them.

It Cannot Be Done by One Person

It is said, "Tell me your company, and I shall tell you what you are." As is your company, so shall you become. So run away from bad company, join good company. Undertake good activities day in and day out. Even the bad will be transformed seeing your good conduct.

Love is most essential for mankind. Whatever country you are from, whichever clime you belong to, however rich or destitute, you must adhere to truth and righteousness. Possessed of a tongue, you must utter only truth. With your God-given hands, perform acts of charity. With ears capable of hearing, hear only pure words. This is the purity of the limbs of humanity. In the same way, you must maintain the purity of the five elements. It is solely for this purpose that [Art- Ong] Jumsai has done a lot of work. This issue of human values cannot be established by a single person. All have to get together. Will a single thread make a cloth? When several threads are interwoven, a cloth is produced. All worthwhile causes can be achieved only by the co-

operation of several people. This handkerchief is strong only because of the togetherness of all the threads. If you take the threads singly they will break easily. So for our movement to advance, unity is essential. The faltering of a few must be compensated by others and all must move forward together. Unity, goodness and good actions must be practiced. If this is practiced well, you can grow and increase in numbers.

Sathya Sai Educare

It is not enough if you start an institution. The students must be brought up in the right way. Speak gently. Never show anger toward children. You cannot always oblige, but you can always speak obligingly. Talk to children softly and sweetly. The transactions between teachers should also be pleasant. Then, children will be encouraged by example. Jumsai has great hopes in the growth of this movement. In the coming three or four days, a lot of matters and ideas will be coming forth. Every little thing should be taught to children to the best of your ability. Then children will learn and react with enthusiasm. Mathematics, physics or chemistry can be learned from books or by experiments in labs. But these human values cannot be learned that way. They are not something that can be acquired from books. They cannot be taught by a teacher with mere oral instruction. It is like training in physical exercises. Athletics can be taught only by example. The drill master shows the actions, and the students follow the steps. Children imitate elders; therefore, you should teach the children these values—*sathya* (truth), *dharma* (righteousness), *santhi* (peace) and *prema* (love)—by practice rather than by mere precept. Then, children will progress in the right way. The whole country will grow. Not only this country, all countries of the world will transform. There are

few who teach these things today, and fewer who practice. This is why the world is in a bad state.

What Are You Doing?

Many of you may be wealthy, many are scholars. You will not be judged great merely by your possessions. To what extent are you spending your wealth in a good way? To what extent are you using your learning for a good purpose? To what extent are you using your intellect for the good of the community? That is what counts with Bhagavan; I seek quality and not quantity. One teaspoonful of cow's milk is of use, while a barrel of donkey's milk is worthless. What you have not put into practice is of no use. Practice and demonstrate, then you become truly wealthy, and you are a true scholar. Wealth, scholarship, intelligence—all become worthwhile only when used in the right way. Money may come and money may go. These are mere passing clouds. Love comes and never leaves, it only grows. You have to realize this, with all sincerity and earnestness. Then, you become truly human. You also attract all those around you. If you are bereft of love, none will come to you.

About the Conference on Educare

Bhagavan is the embodiment of love. That is why there is such a large gathering here. No invitations have been sent forth; this love has attracted all of you here. Hence, enlarge your love. With love you can achieve anything. There is some time left, so put together any queries or doubts. Analyze them and arrive at answers. With these, you can improve yourselves. You have to make this conference an ideal for other such gatherings. Many people go to numerous seminars and conferences, but hardly any understanding results. This is not such a conference. These transactions should appeal to your feel-

ings and intellect. That is a proper conference. All should be united. Develop love and share love. Speak the truth. Practice righteous conduct. Lead a sacred life. That is true living. Your life will then become meaningful.

Many of you have come from far-off places, spending a lot of money. For this effort and expense, take back a modicum of sanctity. Even buying a handkerchief needs the exchange of a few rupees. For the expense incurred, share the sacred love from here. Fully internalize the four human values. Truth does not mean merely to repeat faithfully what you have seen. Truth is eternal. It does not change through the three modes of time—past, present and future. You must seek such truth and practice righteousness. That which sustains life is righteousness. Fire is that which burns. If it does not burn, it is merely coal. Only when righteousness is well-established, then humanness manifests. The principle of love must shine in you; then you practice truth.

In the next few days, if you have any doubts ask without hesitation. Bhagavan is ready to clear all your doubts. Make full use of the presence of Bhagavan's proximity. Ask and be satisfied. You are mine, and I am yours. You and I are one. We are not different. Many say, "Thank you, thank you." It is a meaningless habit. Thanks is only for strangers different from you. Bhagavan is not a third person. He is a second person. You should not be thanking the second person. If your mother serves you good food, do you say thank you to her? No, no. It is her duty. To love you all is the duty of Bhagavan, don't you ever say thank you to Bhagavan. It is your right to ask. It is your right and Bhagavan's responsibility. When right and responsibility get together, bliss results.

—Sathya Sai Baba
September 25, 2000

The Best Tool for Developing Our Students' Character

Today, there are three kinds of teachers. The first type consists of teachers who revel in complaints. They are the teachers with grouses of one kind or another. The second type consists of teachers who explain. They explain what the students have to learn. The third type belong to teachers who inspire.

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Take a moment to recall the qualities of a teacher who inspired you to become a better person. Often when we think of these teachers, it is not so much their words that sets them apart as it is the qualities they consistently exuded. Perhaps they preached about values, but what lingers in our memories and what continues to inspire us to this day is who they were—their character. Swami offers the greatest example of a teacher whose entire life radiates such an endless, silent stream of inspiration.

When we inquire into how our own character developed, we appreciate how such teachers influenced us. More than just modeling values, they embody them. A teacher might model certain values in the presence of the children, but it is those teachers who embodied values that we recall most fondly. To embody a value, it must be something that we understand, cherish and practice regularly in our words, thoughts and deeds. It must underlie and shape all those qualities that others experience while in our presence.

In a study of how good teachers nurture character, Laud (2000), found that the qualities of who the teacher is, essentially the teacher's character, seemed to influence the child's character development most abundantly. While stra-

tegies and teaching techniques are important, they pale in comparison with the enormity of the teacher's own character. Essentially, as suggested in Lickona (1991), "We teach who we are." Similarly, Agne (1999), research on good teachers found that values are not so much internalized through instructional methodology, as they are through the teacher's way of being, perceiving, thinking and believing—the teacher's overall state of mind and heart. She argues that values are not taught so much through behaviors that can be replicated, as through one having personally experienced them and integrated them into one's being. She concludes, "[Children] learn by absorbing who you are to them, not by memorizing what you say. They will become you, like it or not." (p 166)

Take a moment to reflect on how well we embody those values that we wish to develop in our students. We can begin simply by examining those values we believe we currently hold, then evaluating our words, thoughts and deeds to see if they are constantly congruent with these values. The word, "constantly," is the rigorous test. For it means not only in the classroom but also in the teacher's lounge, on the playground, in the grocery store, in the car and at home. As we begin to discover the incongruencies between our avowed values and our actual actions, we can begin the process of remodeling ourselves.

As we teachers begin to practice these values more consistently in all aspects of our lives, we will unconsciously exude them through our body language, through the countless daily encounters we have with students, and even on subtler levels because they have been incorpo-

rated into the most fundamental levels of our being. When a value is so deeply integrated into who we are that we practice it without hesitation, we begin to radiate it all the time, whether we are consciously aware of it or not.

Moreover, when we teach about the values that we have internalized, students will gain an experiential understanding of them by experiencing them through us and observing our example. Additionally, when we directly teach values that we have internalized, we teach from a level that is not merely cognitive, therefore, we influence the child on deeper and more experiential levels. When we teach on a heart to heart level (Jumsai, 2000). Students will more readily accept us as role models because we will be appreciated as sincere and genuine in their estimation. Furthermore, teaching in this way is consistent with what we know about good teaching—that learning must begin with actual experience, and that children learn through observing behaviors which are modeled.

Try to imagine how much more powerful and enduring the values develop in students if teachers give greater focus to living the values they wish to convey, than to strategies they might implement or behaviors they might replicate. In our own journeys as educators, we have each experienced the value of teaching from this perspective. When our students are not practicing certain values, our first inclination is to look within ourselves and examine how well we are practicing them. In retrospect, we have all found that when we look within, deeply and honestly, we find that those values which have been most difficult to teach have been the very same values that we most struggled with in our own lives.

Each of us has searched for the ideal way to develop character. While we still believe in the importance of actively developing character

through building community and using appropriate strategies and lessons, our journeys have taken us to the understanding that we teach person-to-person, not program-to-person. The teacher translates the program, and in this case, the translator is everything. As Swami says:

Your character is the best tool for the profession you have entered upon. Your learning is of course valuable; but one can excuse a little less of it. Character, on the other hand, must be cent per cent, perfect.

SSS Vol. VII, Sept. 5, '68

Perhaps if we viewed the teacher's character as the primary tool for influencing students' character development, we might begin to devote ourselves more fully to the exacting, humbling and most rewarding task before us—that of nurturing our own character first and foremost. Only through sincerely walking this walk ourselves at every moment, will we empower our talk to inspire others. And as we are all teachers, perhaps this is one of the greatest services we can offer to the world in our daily lives.

—Leslie Laud, New York, NY

—Stephanie Mew, Kailua, HI

—Kathy Feely, St. Louis, MO

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Sathya Sai Book Center of America

A Brief History

The Sathya Sai Baba Book Center of America began with the vision that Elsie and Walter Cowan carried in their hearts after their first trip to India in late 1967. They returned to India in 1968 to attend the First Sathya Sai Baba World Conference. Their remarkable experience, as well as the books they brought back, were shared with many friends.

By the time the Cowans were planning another trip in 1969, the original books were literally bundles of loose pages clipped together or stored in Manila envelopes. These books touched many people and changed many lives.

In 1969, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba gave his handwritten permission for the Cowans to open a Book Center in California to distribute his teachings in America. This document can be seen in the archives at the Book Center.

On their third trip, the Cowans shipped cartons of books to America. They were available at monthly meetings and people came from many areas to purchase books and to learn about Sai Baba and his teachings.

It soon became obvious that the group had outgrown the Cowan Ranch as well as the new Cowan home. In 1971, the Cowans moved to a condominium, so office space and book storage became a problem. At first, the monthly meetings were moved to a series of public halls such as Psynetics, the YMCA and meeting rooms in banks and churches. Next, the Cowans purchased three adjoining condominiums. One was used for book storage, one for an office and one as a home for Sai Baba, where it was hoped that he would stay when he came to the U.S.

Baba's quarters were beautifully furnished with the Cowans's treasures from a lifetime of travel. Weekly *bhajan* meetings were held there on Thursdays. Elsie never relinquished her belief that Sai Baba would come to California. Dr. Gokak stayed there when Sai Baba sent him to California to discuss the plans for the development of the Sathya Sai Book Center of America.

At that time, letters were pouring in with requests for books and information about Sai Baba. The office was staffed by volunteers, as it is today. News of the Avatar drew many who were eager to learn more and to work in that atmosphere. In spite of the increasing volume of work, no letter was answered nor order packed without the approval of Elsie or Walter.

When Walter died in 1973, Elsie continued to open all the mail personally and would often add a note in her own handwriting. She maintained her hopes and dreams that there would be a center to support and contain all Sai activities. Also at that time, the reprinting of Sai Baba's books in the USA was being planned.

During that period, the Book Center and the Santa Ana/Tustin Center became separate entities. Elsie sold Baba's house to a young family of devotees. They were musicians and singers, which turned the Thursday *bhajan* meetings into a whole new experience.

Next, the monthly meetings separated into the Santa Ana Center (now called the Sathya Sai Baba Center of Tustin) and the Book Center. Each had separate locations and functions.

Walter Neubauer came to join Elsie in the work of establishing the center. They made many trips to India to learn what Swami's expectations were regarding that project. The sale of Baba's books continued to increase and the Book Center moved from the condominium to a small office building in Tustin. Elsie began to look for a new building or land to build a new Sathya Sai Book Center.

At that time, Sai Baba took an active role in the Book Center plans. He made the final decisions as to the location and size of the building. He said the Center should be near Elsie's home, but not in it. When the final plans were taken to Sai Baba, he said, *Too small, must be larger*. So it was back to the drawing board.

Prior to that time, there had been no way for devotees to share in this project, as it was entirely dependent upon Elsie's love for Swami and her generosity. The building project was under way with the purchase of Hove's Garage on First Street in Tustin.

Indulal Shah came as Swami's representative in 1982 to help Elsie turn over the first shovel of dirt on the new property. He later came back to help celebrate the opening of the Sathya Sai Book Center and gave a beautiful message from Swami.

As the old building was torn down, and the new building became a reality, many devotees came forward to contribute in a variety of creative ways to make the place beautiful and efficient. Volunteers completed much of the interior work—painting, creating a work center, office areas, making a proper display for Baba's robe and sandals and the intricately hand carved doors. A work of art inspired by great love for the Lord. Not the least was Baba's quarters

which still reflects Elsie's flair for the beautiful.

It is impossible to recall all those who made their contributions in special ways, but Swami remembers. He often refers to the center as, *My Book Center*. He still takes great interest in who works there, and how many books are handled. Often he tells people who are in the midst of sorrow or loss, *Go work in the Book Center*.

When Elsie Cowan died in 1988, the work was expanded and grew rapidly. The creativity and dedication of the Book Center volunteers continues as Elsie and Walter Cowan had envisioned—to bring Sai's message to the world.

Currently the work of the Sathya Sai Book Center includes:

1. Republishing Swami's books in the USA.
2. Retail book sales.
3. International mail order sales.
4. Nationwide mail order sales.
5. Hosting an open monthly meeting with area Sai Baba Centers and the public.
6. Travel desk to assist travelers to India with information, not recommendations.
7. Free book fund for overseas and prisons.
8. Quarters that Elsie had planned for Sai Baba are now a devotional room for meditation and an office for Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV).
9. Publishing the quarterly *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*.

Many people come to pray or meditate in the devotional room, and some have told the Book Center staff that they have had their first encounters with Swami's love there.

—A Devotee

Amazing Gifts from Our Lord



“Let us share these amazing gifts with others.”

Our Lord showers his grace on us in so many different ways that he makes everyday a learning experience. He is always reminding us that he is everywhere, watching our thoughts, words and actions.

It was my first day as a volunteer in a home for the elderly. I was told to keep company with a lady for about an hour and a half. The two of us started to get to know each other and we gradually drifted to more personal topics. I learned that she was about 90 years old. Immobility and physical pain had handicapped her since she

was 13-years-old. But she had grown to accept the pain. Since her parents were avid church-goers, their spirituality had helped her through the difficult years.

In spite of all that, I did not read a single sense of discomfort on her face. That made me wonder why we complain about petty things. Instead, there she lay on her bed, telling me what a wonderful life she has had. She said, “Give the world the best you have and the best will come back to you.” My mind was making mental notes as I wondered, is that Sai Baba talking to me?

A few moments later, she said, “In spite of my disabilities, I did whatever little I could to help others.” That made my heart quiver as I realized how little I’ve done to help others.

When I told her it was time for me to leave, like a child she said, “You are God’s gift for me today.” My eyes filled with tears as I hooked into her blue eyes, held her hands and said, “No, you are God’s gift to me today.”

I left the home in a trance, thinking that God has given us all these amazing gifts of patience, forbearance and love. What else could we ask of him? Let us share these amazing gifts with others. I truly think that he wants us to share our God related thoughts and experiences.

—Tara M., Greensboro, North Carolina

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305 West First Street, Tustin, California 92780-3108
Phone: (714) 669-0522 Fax: (714) 669-9138

Book Center hours: Monday-Friday 10:00 to 4:00, Saturday 11:30 to 3:00

Books

- Faith in God*** compiled by Vijay C. Amin and Neal V. Amin, is a compilation of 250 referenced quotations on faith in God from Sathya Sai Baba's discourses with a glossary and an index.
336 pages.....BI-019 \$5.00
- Vision, Path and Progress*** edited and published by Chandrahas H. Shah, provides discourses on the process of individual and societal transformation as presented at the "Symposium on Spiritual Upliftment" convened by northeastern USA devotees.
106 pages.....BI-079 2.00
- Love Is My Message*** written and published by Valentina B. Patacsil, offers the wisdom of Swami's discourses.
249 pages.....BI-021 5.00
- SAI 2000 Standardization, Accreditation, Inspection***
published by the Institute of Sathya Sai Education of Thailand provides well-organized, quality-assured guidelines for Sathya Sai schools based on the research of Stephanie Mew.
151 pages.....BE-010 2.50
- Supplement of Facts on Sathwik Diet*** by Elizabeth J. Featherstone, Ms. Featherstone gives a clear outline of what a *sath-wik* diet really consists of based on Baba's teachings.
71 pages.....BW-188 7.00
- Sanskrit-English Dictionary*** is a compilation of Sanskrit words in English as they appear in Sai literature.
185 pages.....BI-050 3.00
- Christmas Messages*** compiled from Baba's Christmas discourses between 1970-1998 and is filled with references of Jesus.
211 pages.....BA-112 3.50
- Children's Sai*** by Bea Flaig is a volume for children, nicely illustrated by Shari Abramson. The story tells of Sai's life from birth until age 14 when he declared that he is Sai Baba.
20 pages.....BW-037 3.50

Sathya, Sivam, Sundaram, the Life of Sathya Sai Baba, Part I

by N. Kasturi, now available in Vietnamese, is a popular classic detailed account of Sathya Sai Baba's life through his early years, from birth in 1926 to 36-years-old in 1962.

Vietnamese version.....315 pages.....VNBA-201 \$ 4.50
English version.....238 pages.....BA-201 4.50

Audio Cassette Tape

Sathya Sai Baba Discourses on Values, Gossiping and the Internet is a discourse given on October 15, 1999. Baba addresses the Divine Principle, scientific discoveries and more.

39 mins.....T-C052 3.00

Audio CD

Love Songs to God, CD Volume I produced by Ladd Bogdonoff with contributions from several artists, presents beautifully arranged English songs and prayers set to music.

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