

Jan Feb 2003



BE
HAPPY

Sathya

Newsletter,

Where Do We Find Joy?

He who has subdued his mind will be the same in good times and in bad. Grief and joy are but aberrations of the mind. It is only when the mind is associated with the senses and the body that it is affected, agitated, and modified. When one takes an intoxicant, one is not aware of pain, is it not so? How does this happen? The mind is then detached from the body, so it is not bothered by physical pain or discomfort. Similarly, the Jnani too has immersed his mind in the Atma (the Divinity within each of us); he can establish mental peace and quiet by disciplining the mind.*

The Jnani gets full bliss from his own Atma; he does not seek bliss anywhere outside himself. In fact, he will have no desire or plan to find joy in anything external. He is satisfied with the inner joy he gets. The greatness of a Jnani is beyond description, even beyond the imagination. . . .

The thief who has robbed us of the precious gem of Atma is no other than the mind; so if the robber is caught, threatened, and punished, the gem can be regained. The possessor of the gem is immediately honored by being installed as Brahman (the eternal absolute consciousness).

—Sathya Sai Baba

Jnana Vahini, pp 11-13

(Page numbers may vary with different printings)

* *Jnani* is a person who identifies with the basic truths of the universe; one who has reached the summit of spirituality; one who has knowledge of the Absolute.

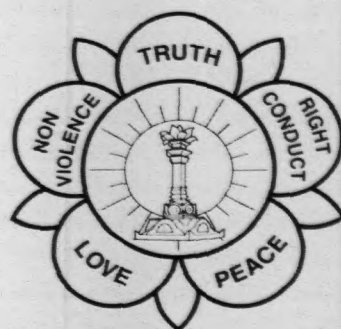
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*This publication is dedicated with Love and Devotion to
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Sai's Message	Sathya Sai Baba	2
Of Faith and Fireflies	Jack Feely	3
Divine <i>Leelas</i> Reflect the Glory of the Avatars	Sathya Sai Baba	5
We Ask—Swami Answers	Sathya Sai Baba	15
An Endless Test of Faith and Surrender	Lita Burgos	17
He Has No Pain	Nicolai Billy	21
Sai's Message to Me	Anonymous	23
The Race and the Prize	Sathya Sai Baba	24
Study Circle Forum	Jonathan Roof	29
Children's Corner	<i>Bal Vikas</i> Magazine for Ages 1-99, Italy	31
Baba Will Answer	J.K. Ziegler	32
Tolerance	Alora Knight	34
Announcements		35
Subscription Information		35
Sathya Sai Book Center of America	Book Center Volunteers	36



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—Barbara Bozzani, Editor

Sai's Message

Modern people have limitless desires. Though they may have plenty, still they want more. What is the use of having plenty if it is not put to good and sacred use? Sacred use does not mean giving money indiscriminately to anyone who asks; it means helping only deserving people. Observing your giving nature, many people may run after you. If



you give to everyone without discrimination, it becomes a misuse of money—a mistake. Instead, discern if the cause is good or bad, right or wrong, and give only to good causes. Then the sacred purpose is fulfilled...

In my view, never give any room for doubts. Through remembering God, all doubts will be cleared away.

Some doubts come and go; they are like passing clouds—do not be mindful of these passing clouds. You may face some difficulties, losses, and sorrows in life, but you should not worry about them. Consider that they are good for you. When you have difficulties say, "This is good for me. This is good for me. God has given me these troubles and difficulties for my own good." Do not be troubled or disappointed: your disappointment is my appointment. If you develop good feelings in this way, you will have bliss. However, if you experience depression from disappointments, even God will not come near you. If you consider disappointments as a gift from God, then He will come to you and relieve you of your difficulties. Some people have many doubts, but this is only because of their ignorance.

Blame yourself—not others. Do not accuse or criticize anybody. Always be blissful. Every Sai devotee should lead a blissful life.

—Sathya Sai Baba
July 27, 2002

Of Faith and Fireflies

The Father and I are together here

In countless discourses, Sai Baba speaks to us of how essential faith is, calling it “the very breath of life.” He describes the benefits of faith, assuring us that it removes anxiety, brings peace and joy, guarantees mental quietude, earns grace, wins freedom and true wisdom, overcomes karma, and gains us liberation. He also cautions against loss

of faith as a primary cause of ill health, confusion, and despair. Although Swami proclaims that He has “come to restore a sense of values and faith in the divinity of human beings,” we may still wonder “How do we get this faith and how do we maintain it?”

Since we cannot find faith outside in the evanescent world, we look elsewhere. “Repeating the name of God,” Swami instructs us, “will induce faith.” We arouse this inherent quality from its sleep inside us and it stirs. Like children catching lightning bugs on a summer evening, we thrill at its faint glow as evidence of something acquired. We grab it and touch it and even play with it, watching it glimmer. Once we have it,

*As we encounter current obstacles,
we might listen to the whispers our
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forsake us, for we are His very own.*

however slight our grasp or small our container, we hold on and preserve its small fire through our own labor. “Faith, an individual asset, is acquired and preserved by

one’s own efforts,” Swami teaches. By exercising our faith, no matter how meager our application, we cultivate it—and it grows. Witnessing its growth, we foster

our faith by conveying energy to it.

If we begin to notice an increase of coincidences in our daily activities, of curious and chance encounters, and do not immediately dismiss them from mind, we enter the possibility of wonder. Could this event or that happening really be other than random? In the vast world of possibilities, the unknown begins to become known. We begin to know that God whispers to us and does not have to scream; we see His signs because we openly let ourselves notice them.

Accordingly, if the object of our faith is also the source of our faith, expansion is the natural outcome. What faith we have aroused soon attains the power to awaken and animate us. Imagine the thrill for the child

as lightning bugs fly in droves into his glass jar. In time the child may even leave the lid off the jar, freeing the small prizes inside to ally with the larger host. Imagine our own delight as we participate in the energy of our expanding faith.

Considering Swami's message that we "get firmly entrenched in faith in the ultimate victory of truth and love," we maintain our delight as we move beyond, expecting to experience triumph always. Obstacles lose their power over us as we recall His words, "Welcome obstacles, for they alone can toughen character and make faith firmer."

Looking back at the past, most of us can relate painful, disappointing losses and circumstances. We can also, upon reflection, marvel at the fortunate and unexpected events that could not have happened had the

distressing moments not occurred. If we could travel back in time to those misfortunes and whisper secret words to our despairing minds, they might be words of encouragement, hope, and promise. Perhaps we would hint that the plan fulfilled later will include surprising gifts. As we encounter current obstacles, we might listen to the whispers our faith softly provides. We might hear Him telling us that He will never forsake us, for we are His very own.

Walking in the summer night air, the flickering lights of fireflies in the dark become shimmering reminders of faith waiting to thrive. The stillness becomes the opportunity to hear hints that "the Father and I are together here."

— Jack Feely,
St. Louis, Missouri

Strive—that is your duty. Yearn—that is your task. Struggle—that is your assignment. If only you do these sincerely and steadily, God cannot keep back for long the reward of realization. The river strives, yearns, and struggles to merge with the sea from whence it came. It has that consummation ever alert in its consciousness. It attempts to make itself pure and clear in order to be welcomed by its source. It overcomes every obstacle of terrain in order to journey successfully toward its goal. People too must utilize all the physical, mental, intellectual, moral, and material endowments that God has granted them so that they may journey to the goal of realization. ...

Of course, it is a difficult task but not beyond the capacity of humankind. A task finished without struggle and sustained effort is nothing to be proud of; it is the difficult task that provides the challenge and brings forth the highest and best in a person. Embark on this task with ardor and faith; that will be sweeter. Once victory is achieved, the rest will be added unto you.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Feb. 16, 1977 (*Sathya Sai Speaks*, 13:30)

Divine *Leelas* Reflect the Glory of the Avatars

Stories from the lives of Krishna and Sathya Sai Baba

Sweeter than sugar, tastier than curd, sweeter indeed than honey is the name of Krishna. Constant repetition of this sweet name gives one the taste of divine nectar itself. Therefore, one should contemplate on the name of Krishna incessantly.

Embodiments of love! Since ancient times, the nectarine story of Krishna has fascinated young and old alike. Right from His advent, Krishna made people forget themselves in ecstasy with His divine pranks, enchanting music, and inexpressible bliss.

A Divine Wildfire

Krishna and Balarama, along with other cowherd boys, used to take cows to graze on the banks of the Yamuna River and immerse themselves in fun and frolic. One day, the cowherd boys were lost in bliss watching the divine pranks of Krishna; consequently they forgot their surroundings and the cows. While resting, all of a sudden the cowherds felt a hot wind blowing toward them from all directions. They realized that they were surrounded by wildfire. The raging conflagration was so intense that they could not even open their eyes. The cows started running helter-skelter, unable to bear the scorching heat. Nobody could control them. The heat grew more intense every moment.

The cowherd boys prayed to Krishna to come to their rescue. "Oh Krishna! You alone can extinguish this fire and save us." Seeing their plight, Krishna laughed and said, "Oh cowherd boys! You have been moving with

me, playing with me, and enjoying bliss. It is rather strange that you are fear-stricken so soon after experiencing my Divinity. Many times in the past you witnessed my slaying of the demons sent by the evil Kamsa, so why are you afraid when I am with you?"

When you have the kalpavriksha (wish-fulfilling tree) right in front of you, why do you wish for trivial things? When you have the kamadhenu (wish-fulfilling cow) with you, where is the need to buy a cow? When you have here the glittering meru (golden) mountain, why do you crave for paltry silver and gold? When you have the omnipotent Lord Krishna in you, with you, and around you, why do you panic over such a trivial matter?

Krishna told them to close their eyes and contemplate on Him for a while. The cowherds implicitly obeyed His command. They closed their eyes and started chanting His name. The next moment, Krishna commanded them to open their eyes. Lo and behold! The wildfire had totally disappeared and all their cows were grazing as if nothing had happened. Their joy knew no bounds. They wanted to return to their respective homes at once and relate the wonderful miracle that Krishna had performed. The

cowherd boys experienced many such miracles that proved the divinity of Krishna.

Wolfe Messing

Not only in India, but also in communist countries such as Russia, many such mysterious powers of divinity have been experienced. A person by the name of Wolfe Messing was born on September 10, 1899 in

Poland. Right from birth, he radiated divine effulgence. He behaved in a mysterious manner even while he was very young. He would make movements with his hands and

laugh to himself. His parents were mystified, as they could not understand his strange behavior. One year passed in this manner. In his second year, he began talking to himself. He would scratch his head as if he were engrossed in deep thought. He would run here and there, laugh to himself, and converse with unseen beings. All this baffled his parents. They wondered why he was laughing to himself and to whom he was talking. They harbored an element of anxiety and fear.

One day a tall person wearing a white robe came and stood in front of their house. He called Messing near him and said, "Your parents are planning to put you in a lunatic asylum or in a school for the mentally retarded. You do not need to go anywhere. How can those who are afflicted with worldly madness understand your madness, which is of a spiritual nature? If only everyone had

such a spiritual madness, the whole nation would prosper. Do not attend schools where only worldly education is taught. Formal or secular knowledge does not appeal to you. Learn spiritual knowledge. I have come here only to tell you this." Messing asked him, "Grandfather, where do you come from?" He replied, "I will tell you later. I am going back to the place I came from. Never forget

*When he spotted me, he started
coming toward me, saying,
"My dear one, my dear one."
He kept repeating, "You are my
everything. I am Your instrument."*

my words. Do not have anything to do with worldly knowledge. Acquire only spiritual knowledge. Now you are very young. Until you attain a certain level of maturity, do not

have any association with anyone. Now I am going back." Saying this, he vanished right in front of Messing's eyes.

Messing wondered, "Where did he come from? Where has he gone? Will I also go back to the place from where I came?" He started enquiring thus. His parents did not allow him to go anywhere and confined him only to his home.

On February 9, 1909, Messing's desire to go in search of spiritual knowledge erupted again, for he was not satisfied with the secular knowledge being taught to him. He remembered the words of the old man who had appeared at his doorstep. He went inside the house and found eight coins in an *almirah* (a cabinet). Putting them in his pocket he embarked on a spiritual journey in the wide world. He wandered and wandered, not knowing where he was going. He toured the

entire world. No one questioned him about tickets or the money required for buying them. Thus he roamed about for ten years.

Then he entered India. He boarded a train that was going from Cuddapah to Anantapur. In between, the train stopped for a while at Kamalapuram where I was studying at that time. In the classroom, Ramesh and Suresh were the two boys sitting on either side of me at the desk. Ramesh's father was a *sirasthadar* (revenue official), and their family was very rich. Every day we would walk toward the railway station and discuss spiritual matters. In those days only one or two trains came through Kamalapuram. The three of us sat on a stone bench on the railway platform.

As we were happily talking to each other, Wolfe Messing saw us through the window of the moving train and at once opened the door and jumped out. In the process he lost his balance and fell flat on the platform. Ramesh and Suresh were concerned that he might have fractured his leg. I told them not to worry, saying, "He is coming only to see me, so nothing has happened." Messing was not carrying any luggage, not even a small bag. He came straight toward me and sat down in front of me at a distance of about ten feet, shedding tears of joy.

Ramesh and Suresh watched this scene unfold. In those days, boys were afraid of white people, that they might take them away and put them into military service. Therefore they wanted to remove me from that place. As Messing was approaching me, Ramesh ran to his house and requested his father to bring a jeep immediately and hide me from

the white person; Ramesh's father at once brought a jeep, lifted me up, and put me in the jeep. When he took me to his house, Messing also followed the jeep and came up to the house of Ramesh.

He sat there for a full day, waiting for me to come out of the house. In the meantime, whenever he spotted me through the window, he smiled at me, called to me, and tried to speak with me, but nobody was willing to permit him to meet me. At that time Seshama Raju (Swami's elder brother) was working as a teacher. Word was sent to him through a messenger, informing him of the situation. Messing waited for three days before going away on a train. Before leaving, he wrote on the door of the house with a chalk piece thus: "The people who live in this house are very fortunate. They are able to keep the Divine Child with them and serve Him. I am not that fortunate. Anyway, thanks."

Messing's Aura Camera

He finally reached his country, Russia. After twenty years, he again visited India. This time he brought a Kirlian camera, capable of taking photographs of the aura around human beings. Those who are of *sathwic* (quality of pure love) nature will have a resplendent white aura around their body. Those who are *rajasic* (intense, short-tempered) in nature will have a red aura, and those who are *thamasic* (dull, slothful) in nature will have a black aura surrounding them. He came straight to Kamalapuram and started inquiring about the whereabouts of Raju—but by that time, I was no longer Raju,

the high school student. Raju had become Sathya Sai Baba. People told him that Sathya Sai Baba would be either in Puttaparthi or Bangalore. Therefore, he left Kamalapuram for Bangalore.

When he arrived at Bangalore, he found a huge congregation gathered there. On inquiry, he came to know that they were waiting for Sathya Sai Baba's *darshan*

(opportunity to see a holy being). He too waited for my *darshan*. When I was moving amidst the congregation, he saw me and thought to himself, "Yes, this is the same person whom I saw as a boy

many years ago. He has the same divine effulgence surrounding him." He approached the principal of the college, who at that time was Narendra, a great scholar in Sanskrit and a very good teacher. Narendra's father Damodar was a judge and his father-in-law Sunder Rao was a reputed doctor. Both of them were present. Messing requested them to take him for Swami's *darshan*. He told them, "You are not able to see the reality. Swami is verily God. You see only His physical form and are deluded. You will know the truth, however, when you observe His aura."

He wanted to observe Swami's aura through the camera he had brought with him. In those days, I used to give *darshan* to the devotees at the end of *nagarasankirtan* (devotional singing in the streets). As I stood

on the balcony giving *darshan*, he clicked his camera. He could see that the entire place was permeated with light. When he showed the photograph, one could see great effulgence around my face. My entire body was engulfed in white light, which symbolizes purity. Nothing else could be seen. Narendra took that photograph and requested the camera also, as it was not available in India.

All her relatives turned against her, but she did not mind in the least. She wanted only Swami and no one else. She obeyed Swami's commands implicitly and had unwavering faith.

Messing answered that he was prepared to give the photograph but not the camera, as he had much work to do with it. He expressed his desire to have an audience with Swami. In the

evening a meeting was arranged in which he was to address the students. I also attended the meeting. Messing was not looking at the students or the teachers; he was trying to see where I was seated and what I was doing. When he spotted me, he started coming toward me, saying, "My dear one, my dear one." He kept repeating, "You are my everything. I am Your instrument."

I have not revealed this to anyone until now. He stayed there for ten days. I taught him all that had to be taught. I told him that when God descends on earth, He acts like a human being. *Daivam manusha rupena* (God takes the form of a human being). He said that the same has been said even in their scriptures. He wrote a book and gave it to Gokak. Gokak was a scholar in English but

had no knowledge of Russian; however, he kept the book with him.

After a few days, Messing left without informing anyone. One day Narendra received a letter from Russia. Messing wrote in the letter, "You are a teacher working for God. How fortunate you are!" He requested Narendra to keep him informed about events related to Swami. One day Narendra was expressing some doubts and I was clarifying them. Only two of us were in the room. All of a sudden, Messing arrived. How he came there was a mystery to Narendra.

He did not have a ticket with him. He came, had my *darshan*, and disappeared. It was not possible for everyone to see this. It was not easy to understand either. Divinity is highly mysterious.

Krishna Entertains the Sages

One day, Krishna, Balarama, and the cowherd boys were playing on the banks of the river Yamuna, jumping from one branch to the other on trees. Some of the boys were tired. Just then, the sages Vamana and Bharadwaja came to the banks of the Yamuna. They asked the cowherd boys to show them a suitable and safe location where the waters were shallow enough for them to have a bath. Krishna and Balarama jumped down from the trees.

Bharadwaja at once recognized that Krishna was the *Paramatma* (Godhead) and Balarama, Krishna's brother, represented the *Jivatma* (individualized soul). He folded his hands in reverence and requested Krishna to show them a suitable location for having a bath. Krishna jumped into the water and

showed them a safe place. He told them that He would keep sumptuous food ready for them.

The cowherd boys were wondering how Krishna planned to provide food for the sages, as He had not brought any food with Him. In those days there were no tiffin carriers. After the sages had completed their bath, Krishna opened a bag that had appeared from nowhere. As he opened the bag, the surrounding air became filled with the sweet aroma of rice boiled in milk. He dished the food onto a plate and invited them to eat.

The cowherd boys were as mischievous as monkeys and could not keep quiet. They repeatedly asked Krishna, "Where did You get this food?" Krishna silenced them, saying it was not proper to indulge in excessive talk in the presence of sages. The sages performed the *sandhya* (noontime ritual) worship and began partaking of the food. They asked Krishna, "Who prepared this food?" Krishna replied, "My mother, Yashoda." They said they had never had food more delicious and expressed their gratitude to Him.

Brahma Plays a Trick

Brahma, who was observing these mysterious happenings, was awestruck at Krishna's mighty powers. He decided to play a trick on Krishna. One day as the cowherd boys were happily playing with Krishna and Balarama, Brahma made the cows and calves disappear from the scene. He even made the cowherd boys disappear. Krishna knew that it was Brahma's trick. He at once recreated all of the cowherd boys, cows, and

calves by His will. These cowherd boys returned to their respective homes with their cows and calves. They were identical in all respects to the cowherd boys whom Brahma had hidden somewhere. Even their parents did not notice any differences. Life went on as usual, with the cowherd boys taking their cows and calves to graze every day in the company of Balarama and Krishna. This continued for one full year. Brahma felt ashamed and accepted defeat. He sought Krishna's pardon and returned all of the cowherd boys, cows, and calves. As he returned them, the existing ones that Krishna had created disappeared at once. In this manner Krishna performed many stupendous feats from childhood on. On this basis the *Bhagavata* says:

"The stories of the Lord are the most wonderful and sacred in all the three worlds. They are like sickles that cut the clinging vines of worldly bondage."

Easwaramma Makes *Vibhuti*

Now I would like to tell of an incident that happened with this Avatar and that I have not revealed to anyone so far. After this Prasanthi Mandir (temple) was constructed, I used to have my meals in the room upstairs. Whenever I ate, *Griham Ammayi* (the mother of this physical body) lingered by my side, urging me to eat more. She often expressed concern that I might be losing weight. I would tell her, "Why should I eat more? Do I need to fight with someone? I don't wish to become fat."

One day someone invited me to their home for a meal. Actually the intention was to poison me. The person felt jealous of my

growing popularity and prosperity. In those days I used to like *vadas* (a fried food) made of grains, so they mixed poison in some *vadas* and offered them to me. Before going over there, I told Easwaramma (the mother of this body) and Subbamma (a neighbor lady) not to be afraid if any untoward incident took place. When I returned, my entire body turned blue and my mouth started foaming. I told Easwaramma to wave her hand in a circle. She did so, and to her utter amazement, *vibhuti* (holy ash) appeared in her hand. She mixed it in water, gave it to me, and I instantly became normal. She wondered, "Swami can create *vibhuti* with a wave of His hand, but how is it that *vibhuti* appeared in my hand?" In fact, I gave her that power for that moment.

When I was staying in the old Mandir, I used to take children to the Chitravathi River every day. In those days, there were no students, and the village boys would gather around me. I would tell them to make a small mound of sand, out of which they could pull out whatever they wanted, such as pencils, pens, *laddu* (sweets made from chickpea flour), and so on. Since they were small children, they would ask for trivial things.

Subbamma and the Snake

After one such evening session at the Chitravathi, we were returning to the old Mandir. Kuppam Sushilamma and her sister Kumaramma, author of the book, *Anyatha Saranam Nasthi*, who were young at that time, started running toward the old Mandir to offer *arati* (camphor flame ritual) when Swami reached there. Then I signaled to Subbamma to stop them and instead go

herself to make arrangements for the *arati*. Subbamma implicitly obeyed my command. These two other ladies felt that because they were housewives, they were qualified to offer *arati* to Swami while Subbammawas not, because she was a widow.

When Subbamma went into the old Mandir, she encountered a big serpent. It was for this reason that I sent Subbamma; she was always vigilant. When she saw the snake, she called out "Sai Nageswara! Sai Nageswara! Sai Nageswara!" Meanwhile, the rest of us reached the Mandir. Subbamma did not want to kill the snake, as she recalled Swami's words that God is in all beings. She wanted to catch the snake and turn it loose elsewhere. As she caught the snake, it coiled around her hand. I made fun of her, saying, "Subbamma, are you playing with snakes?" She said, "Swami I know that you sent me ahead in order to save the lives of those two ladies."

The Deceased Husband

In this manner, Subbamma witnessed many *leelas* (divine plays) of Swami. She was very fortunate and highly meritorious. She served me right from the beginning. Not only me, she served the devotees who came for my *darshan* by serving them food. All her relatives turned against her, but she did not mind in the least. She wanted only Swami and no one else. She obeyed Swami's commands implicitly and had unwavering faith. One day, I asked her whether she would like to see her deceased husband. I used to crack such jokes now and then. She replied that she had no such desire, and that

she had nothing to do with her deceased husband. She further said that her husband had passed away because he was not fortunate enough to serve Swami. She felt that it was her good fortune that she was able to serve me.

I insisted that if she had any desire to see him, I would grant her desire. I told her to go out and look over by a drumstick tree that was nearby. She found her husband Narayana Rao there, smoking a cigarette, sitting under the tree. She saw the scene very clearly. She was happy to see her dead husband again, but she also scolded him saying, "Even after death you have not given up your bad habits." She came back at once, as she did not wish to see him any longer.

Narayana Rao had two wives, Subbamma and Kamalamma. Kamalamma is still living in the ashram at present. I told Kamalamma to go and see her deceased husband. She did not want to see his face again. She said having come to the lotus feet of Swami she had no such desire, but on my insistence she went and looked. She found her late husband, who was now sipping hot coffee. Both Subbamma and Kamalamma saw their deceased husband exhibiting the same habits as when he was alive.

Radha's Hardships

When Krishna lifted up Govardhana Mountain, it was a matter of celebration. The unmarried *gopikas* (cowherd girls) performed *Varalakshmi Vratam*.^{*} Even now

^{*} *Varalakshmi Vratam* is the observance of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and welfare, the personification of the grace of the Lord

ladies perform *Varalakshmi Vratam*. Radha was a great devotee, but those who did not believe in the divinity of Krishna subjected her to many hardships. Atheists, theists, theistic-atheists, and atheistic-theists are present in every age.

The atheists put Radha under house arrest. (Taking this theme, I wrote a drama and had it enacted by children.) These people felt that Radha's family reputation was being tarnished because she was following Krishna. They wanted to stop her, so they locked her up in a room. She started crying and praying. Krishna heard her prayers, opened the doors, and released her. He reproached those people saying, "Is this the way you treat a devotee? It's all right if you have no devotion to me, but it is a great sin to harass a devotee." Krishna took Radha with Him. Radha then prayed to Krishna to play a song on His divine flute.

"Sing a song, oh Krishna, with each word dripping with honey, and talk to me to my heart's content. Take the essence of the Vedas, let it flow through your divine flute, and transform it into a melodious song. Sing a song, oh Krishna...."

Listening to His melodious music, Radha breathed her last. From that day on, Krishna

never touched His flute again. Krishna performed numerous divine *leelas*. He was truly God in human form.

None can comprehend or describe His divine nature, which is infinite and unfathomable. Nothing but divine love flows from Him. (Poem)

Women Recognize Divinity

In *Dwapara Yuga* (the era when Krishna incarnated), women experienced

Krishna's divinity the most. In fact, it was they who revealed the story of God through their devotion. Once some Brahmins were performing a *Gayatri yajna* (ritual invoking the Gayatri principle) in a forest. Krishna told the cowherds to bring some food from the ritual, as He and His brother, Balarama, were very hungry. When the cowherds requested food from the Brahmins they were turned away. The Brahmins said, "Do you

think it is our obligation to feed you as and when you ask? No. Wait until the ritual is completed. If there is anything left after we eat our food, then we will give some to you."

When this was conveyed to Krishna, He advised the boys to approach the women who were preparing food. As per His advice, the cowherd boys asked the ladies preparing the



EASWARAMMA

*Were it not for women,
men would not have
any devotion at all;
thus it is said that a
house without a lady is
literally a jungle.*

delicious foods, saying, "Mothers, our Krishna and Balarama are hungry; can you give them some food?" The women were extremely happy to have the opportunity to serve Krishna. Immediately they packed whatever food items they had prepared and took them to Krishna.

Some other women raised an objection as to how they could serve Krishna, who belonged to the cowherd clan, before offering food to their husbands, who were Brahmins. The women brushed the objection aside, as they considered Krishna to be God, and proceeded to serve Krishna and Balarama the food they had prepared. Learning of this, the husbands scolded their wives, saying it was a sacrilegious act.

Later on, while the Brahmins sat in meditation, a realization dawned. They recognized their own fault and hastened to exonerate their wives for their correct behavior. The Brahmins bathed again and requested their wives to serve them the food blessed by Krishna, as *prasadam* (consecrated food).

I wish to emphasize in this context that during the lifetime of any Avatar, it is only the women who first recognize Divinity. They are the ones who then lead their husbands to Divinity. It is only due to the devotion of women that men cultivate devotion to the least extent. Were it not for women, men would not have any devotion at all; thus it is said that a house without a lady is literally a jungle.

Women have been identified with *bhakti* (devotion) and men with *jnana* (intelligence) from time immemorial. Women are allowed

to enter even the inner precincts of a palace, whereas men are permitted to go only as far as the *darbar* hall (courtroom). This signifies that intelligence will lead you up to God, but only devotion can take you to His heart. That is why such a great value has been attached to devotion. In fact, it was the Gopikas who were responsible for the spread of the path of devotion throughout the world.

The chanting of the divine name is the only path to liberation in this difficult era, the age of *Kali*.

Easwaramma's Fear

In the early days of this Avatar, even in Puttaparthi, no one was aware of God [in their midst] except Karanam Subbamma. *Griham Ammayi*, the mother of this body, used to observe uniformed officers coming for my *darshan*. She was afraid of anyone in a police uniform. She requested Subbamma not to allow any police personnel, thinking they intended to cause inconvenience to Swami. Subbamma would alleviate her fears saying, "Why shouldn't they come? They too are devotees of Swami. Everyone has to come to Swami. Do not maintain such differences. Don't worry; nobody can harm Swami." Hearing Subbamma's words, Easwaramma would express her anger, saying, "Since Swami has been residing with you, several police officers have begun coming to your house. Please do not allow them to come."

Once I.G.P. Ranganayakulu came from Madras and wanted to take me away with him. *Griham Ammayi* was in a sorrowful state and started crying. She considered

Madras to be a far-off place, like a foreign country, so she sought to prevent me from going. Due to her intense love for Swami, she was afraid that Swami might be taken away from Puttaparthi permanently.

Easwaramma's Prayer

Actually, it was because of her prayer that this Mandir was built. Once Sakkamma came and said, "Swami, due to the lack of proper roads and transportation, we find it very difficult to come to this remote place. Neither cars nor bullock carts can reach this interior village. Every time we travel to You, we have to leave our car near Penukonda. Hence, please come to Bangalore and settle there. We will build you a big palatial mansion." I told her that I did not need huge mansions, that all I needed was only a small room, but Sakkamma would not listen to me. Then Easwaramma said, "If a sapling has to grow into a gigantic tree, it has to be manured and watered well without disturbing it. If it is shifted from place to place, it cannot grow. Hence, please remain in Your birthplace, Puttaparthi. Then your work will certainly progress." I promised her then that I would settle in Puttaparthi.

When it comes to devotion and surrender, women are superior to men. They are the repositories of all forms of scholarly wisdom, higher consciousness, discriminatory wisdom, and supreme wisdom or constant integrated awareness—so never look down upon women. Do not speak derisively about others. Pray for the well being of all: *Loka samastha sukhino bhavantu*. (May all the beings in all the worlds be happy.) The main

teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita* is to work for the welfare of all. *Ekoham bahusyam* (the One willed to become many): the same Divinity is present in all. All forms are His.

The Switched Villages

Before I conclude, I would like to narrate a small *leela* performed by Krishna in the *Dwapara Yuga*. So long as the evil Kamsa was alive, he used to send demons to fight with Krishna. Kamsa had two wives; their father was a mighty king. After Kamsa was killed, his father-in-law tried to wage a war against Krishna. The gopikas were worried and asked Krishna, "How long are we to suffer these ordeals?"

He told them not to panic and pacified them, saying "Try to understand my powers and potentialities. Tonight you go to sleep in Repalle and tomorrow morning, see for yourself where you will be."

When they woke up the next morning, they found themselves in Dwaraka. Where was Repalle and where was Dwaraka? A distance of 1000 miles separated them. In this manner Krishna could change one village into another.

God can do anything. He can go anywhere. He can change anything. Do not allow room for doubts. One who doubts Divinity will certainly be doomed. Develop unwavering faith and follow the divine command. True *dharma* (right action) lies in following the divine command. When you follow God, you will be blessed with all goodness and auspiciousness.

—Sathya Sai Baba

August 31, 2002, Sri Krishna's Birthday

We Ask — Swami Answers

Guidance on conduct in Sai Centers

.....
Q What must the Sai Centers constantly guard against?

A: The great evil that undermines the units of this organization is pride and the jealousy that it engenders. When one person exudes pride that he alone can sing *bhajans* (devotional songs) well among the group, others develop anger, jealousy, hate, malice, and other deleterious traits.... Spiritual pride is the most poisonous of all varieties of pride; it blinds and leads the person suffering from it into ruin. Beware of pride; always be aware that you are but instruments in my divine mission--the revival of righteousness. Try to be more and more efficient as such instruments. The hand that wields the instrument knows how and when it has to be applied.

—*Seva Dal*, April 1983, p. 4

Do not infect those seeking my grace with the virus of rivalry and factions. Do not inquire into the caste of anyone or develop partiality or prejudice. Strive to win the gift of my grace, not the glitter of president or secretary. Pay attention to your duties and responsibilities; this is the ordinary burden that you are privileged to carry. I

can see you through and through. Do not carry your head high and taunt people. Stoop, so that you can pick up your burden and place it on your shoulders.

—Nov. 20, 1969 (*Sathya Sai Speaks*, 9:32)

.....
Q Can the Sai Centers collect funds, Swami?

A: I do not like the collection of funds. Nonetheless, since some expenses have to be incurred, I must allow it under very stringent conditions. Each organization has a membership of about 10 or 15 people. Whatever expenses they decide to incur for the work of the organization, they must collect among themselves, without seeking help from those outside the circle. They must of course contribute according to their ability and limit the work to the resources they can pool among themselves. Do not plan beyond your capacity and move about with lists from person to person to collect funds. By such practices the institution gets a bad name, and you too will not be spared.

—April 21, 1967 (*Sathya Sai Speaks*, 7:18)

Q What should we do with Sai Centers that are inactive?

A: In some places units do not carry on any activity, or if they do, the activities are quite contrary to the principles and practices of Prasanthi Nilayam or to the rules laid down for the organization. Wherever there are such units, the state president or the district president must take steps immediately to remove them from the organization.

—Nov. 21, 1970 (*Sathya Sai Speaks*, 10:33)

Q What are Baba's views on "cliques" in centers?

A: This kind of group politics has no place among Sai devotees and cannot be tolerated in Sai *bhajan* groups. I find this evil trait spreading in most *bhajan* circles—with members divided into rival groups competing for chances to sing and attempts to attract the attention and appreciation of the people.

—Nov. 24, 1974 (*Sathya Sai Speaks*, 7:54)

Q How does Baba want the various centers to behave?

A: The conviction that I am everywhere—watching everything and aware of everything—must keep you on the straight path of *sadhana* (spiritual practice), through service and study. I want every organization, and every unit complementary to it, to be bubbling with joy at the work already achieved and with enthusiasm for the work ahead. Love, respect, tolerance, mutual cooperation, forbearance—these must flow from the hearts of each to all. There should be no eagerness to capture an office from another's grasp or to hold it back when another is ready for it. The units too should cooperate with each other and not compete in a spirit of envy or faction. You are all limbs of one body, namely the Sai body. The organizations should be guided and if necessary corrected by the district president, the district presidents should be guided and if necessary corrected by the state president, and the state presidents should have constant contact, advice, and guidance from the centers.

—Nov. 22, 1970 (*Sathya Sai Speaks*, 10:35)

Please note that volume and chapter numbers are from recent editions of *Sathya Sai Speaks* and may differ from past editions. —Editor

An Endless Test of Faith and Surrender

Walking the divine path with detachment and equanimity

Baba says, "Be sincere. Talk only about your genuine experiences. Do not distort, exaggerate, or falsify that experience." With Baba's grace, I can only try to adhere to these directions.

Swami has given me so many opportunities to put His teachings into practice. Each opportunity has left me with memorable experiences of realization, which have led to my inner transformation and to my becoming transcendental.

My first encounter with Sai Baba on June 24, 1971 had a profound and powerful impact on my life. It confirmed that, indeed, Divinity resides in me, and that the experiences and revelations pouring into my life were proof of the oneness with the Divine.

Swami filled my heart with bliss beyond description when He said to me, "Mother's heart, pure heart; pure heart, mother's love; pure love, pure love." The four interviews that Swami granted to me and my son over three days' time sustained me for fifteen

years until I returned to Puttaparthi on November 1, 1986 to receive His *darshan* again.

*However, no matter how noble
and good our intention may be,
if God does not will things to
happen, they will never happen.*

Over the years of my encounters with the Sai form, I have had the good fortune to witness wondrous miracles

manifested in my life. Baba was true to His word that He would cure my son's eyes, which He did in accordance to the prayers I had uttered while sitting for *darshan*: "Oh, God, I believe in your divine power. I believe that You can cure my son's eyes, but before You give his eyesight back, please give him spiritual light first—for what good is it for him to have his eyesight back if he remains in spiritual darkness?"

Swami told me not to let my son undergo an eye operation, for he would then surely go totally blind. Swami said He would cure my son. In two years, my son's eyesight was restored.

Another comment to me by Swami was, "Mother, you worry too much. You worry about everything—children, husband,

business—everything, everything. From now on, do not worry. Do not worry about the children. I will take care of them. They are mine, not yours. They are my responsibilities, not yours. Do not worry about anything. I will take care of you.”

One day in 1975, my son was driving downhill in Millbrae, California, with his two sisters. He was driving so fast that the car swerved three times and hit a tree, which became uprooted. The car was totally wrecked but no one suffered even a scratch. It was truly a miracle.

In 1976, we moved from Millbrae to San Francisco. One day, my daughter was driving our car with five friends in it. A drunken driver hit the car. The car was totally wrecked, but once again, nobody was hurt or even scratched. Again, a miracle.

In 1979, another daughter in the Philippines was driving at two o'clock in the morning. An obstruction from a road construction project suddenly appeared before her, and she slammed on the brakes. The car skidded on a pile of sand and turned over a couple of times, yet my daughter was able to get out of the car relatively unhurt, with only a small amount of broken glass piercing the skin on her arms. Another great miracle.

All these accidents occurred without my seeing the wrecked cars, for I was out of the country each time they occurred. All I could say was, “Thank you, Swami. You are indeed taking care of my children.”

Looking back now, I realize that my gratitude was not deep enough. I did not express my gratitude in a much deeper form

of service. Though I had always wanted to serve, even before I came to His lotus feet, I had always thought that the time to serve would come according to His will, not mine. A couple of times, I asked for permission to perform a certain service while talking to His picture in the Christ form, but the permission had not been granted.

Swami had answered, “Relax, my child. Take your time. There is a long, long way for you to go. Now that you have found me, you will never let me go. Wherever you go, wherever you are, you will always be with me, and I will always be with you.”

It is in our human nature to want to do things in our own time and through our own will, even when serving God. However, no matter how noble and good our intention may be, if God does not will things to happen, they will never happen.

I became preoccupied with my duty toward my family, and work became a form of worship for me. I had never been attracted to leisure or pleasure, for self-sacrifice was a virtue to me.

Nevertheless, the Lord was not satisfied with me. He would not settle for less. So He plunged me into a series of tests.

For years I had practiced detachment and had flowed with the course of events. I had left a flourishing department store business in the Philippines at its peak. I had started it and built it up through much hard work, but after meeting Swami, I became a witness to the dissipation of my wealth and possessions. One by one, the six stores were closing in my absence, but I did not lift a finger to stop the erosion. I acted as if nothing was

disappearing. What was left of me was my renunciation *in action* but not *of action*, and my attachment to work as worship.

Then our garment factory in the Philippines for my import/export firm in California was hit by a severe strike. The manufacturing operations stopped, and all my orders were canceled. I was hit from both directions—left and right. I knew that there had to be a purpose behind it all. I was at a crossroads in my life. Should I say goodbye to the material world and live a purely spiritual life? The answer was no. The physical and spiritual are one—*advaita*, non-duality.

I had to see Swami again. I felt I must have His *darshan*, so I returned to Puttaparthi. For thirty-three days, I sat for *darshan* morning and afternoon. Not one personal interview was granted me. However, very powerful inner views were taking shape.

They were all divinely satisfying and fulfilling. Let me share with you some of my revelations from Baba:

“Do you think that I would confront you with pain without a reason for it? Open your heart to pain as you do now for pleasure, for it is my will, brought by me for your own good. Welcome it as a challenge. Do not turn away from it. Turn within; develop the strength to bear it, and benefit from it. Do

not listen to your mind. The mind is but another word for ‘need.’ The mind engenders need. It manifested in this world because it needed this. It is all part of my plan to drive you—by the pangs of unfulfilled need—to listen to my voice, which, when heard, dissolves the ego and the mind with it.



Plant the Lord in your heart and you will feel light, burdenless, and even strong.

“Be equal-minded in success as well as failure, fame or dishonor, gain or loss. Plant the Lord in your heart and you will feel light, burdenless, and even strong. Keep the memory of the Lord and His glory within you always, and you will soon arrive at the goal. Moreover, learn to live in His glory, in His memory, in contemplation of Him every moment.

“You may be subjected to calumny, insult, and dishonor. You may be sent plunging into poverty or pain, but the person who has surrendered to the will of God will welcome each of these occurrences gladly and bear them with equanimity. The

Lord will never give up His children.

Those devoted to God must be patient and calm under the most provoking of circumstances. The fact is that the pious and God-fearing are those who are visited by travails and troubles in order to teach humanity these great truths.”

I realized that the drama has to be enacted and we are the cast. Every incident

in our life is but a scene in His play. The Lord created this drama to test our intensity of devotion and its efficacy, and to hold us forth as examples of faith in the underlying divinity within.

Should I go back to the Philippines and face the greatest calamity that had ever hit the business, or should I just leave the spoils to the victor? Every time this question arose within, Swami in His presence always answered.

“Duty is God,” my inner voice said. I foresaw that the downturn in the business would keep happening due to the surrounding forces that were mounting as the days went by. I continued to remain a witness, for I had realized that I could do nothing if God’s will was to take back what He had given. I believed that all was His—and that I was only His trustee.

I knew that I must give others the opportunity to play their roles, no matter how wrong their roles caused them to be. On the other hand, my mind said, “You have intelligence and discrimination. Why did you succumb to all these things? Don’t you have the courage to fight for your position?”

I feared becoming entangled in a messy family battle, for the business involved my family members. I chose to safeguard my peace of mind. Could I not once again have spiritual wealth and material wealth at the same time, I reasoned, since the latter was the manifestation of the One?

The day before I left Brindavan on December 13, 1986, I got hold of the series of “Mahabharata Comics” from my roommate. The comic book answered the

questions I had been asking. I saw Arjuna in me. Arjuna’s indecision in facing the enemy in battle taught me a lesson.

I also saw my life reflected in Dharmaraja’s. Despite knowing that the Kaurava brothers were cheating him in the game of dice, Dharmaraja still had to experience losing his possessions to the extent of losing his wife, being exiled to the forest, and living in extremely austere conditions with his brothers. With humility, Dharmaraja accepted these misfortunes and surrendered everything to the Lord. He walked on the divine path and practiced detachment. The Kauravas’ greed and evil acts served as an opportunity for Dharmaraja to experience and live the truth.

I was overwhelmed by amazement as I read the epic *Mahabharata* story and also reflected on all my deeds. I felt reassured, confirmed that I was truly walking on His divine path. I was in divine ecstasy upon finding myself experiencing calmness and equanimity. Indeed it was Swami’s grace that had granted me the boon of perseverance and the faith to bear all my trials with overpowering love. I felt nothing; I was in absolute nothingness. Everything was stillness, absolute silence.

Swami did not let me leave India that year without providing me with all the inner strength, courage, truth, faith, and love needed in facing the battleground of life.

—Lita Burgos
San Francisco, California

He Has No Pain

Proof of Swami's constant care

An ancient live oak, perhaps 300 to 400 years old, had finally fallen on the cottage property. After years of fighting root-rot, drought, and heavy infestations of parasitic mistletoe, the poor tree succumbed to the recent heavy rains and high winds. Down it came, all ninety feet, fortunately missing the cottage, landing only a few yards from the side road.

My neighbors told me that its fall created quite a sound, and a young passerby who saw it drop said he wouldn't forget that sight for a while. He had been walking to the general store when the old giant fell, and he was still shaking a bit.

That left me the tedious task of trimming and separating the many small branches so that the larger limbs and the grandfather trunk could be size-cut and split. Soon it was time to contact a woodcutter and rent a log splitter. All seemed to be moving along nicely according to my plans.

The woodcutter had a big pickup truck and was able to tow a very large log splitter up the mountain. A couple of friends were able to help on the morning we split the oak rounds.

The woodcutter and I rolled each heavy oak section up to the opening of the log splitter. When the log was centered, a third

person released a huge hydraulic ram by working a simple lever. The lever moved to the outside to open and release, and to the inside to operate a crushingly powerful wedge. The cracking and splintering sound was quite awesome and so was the sight of

Just at that moment, the Indian radiologist came around his side and said "Oh yes, doctor, he has no pain; he is a Sai Baba devotee."

metal splitting a massive piece of oak. The split pieces were thrown to the side and the procedure would begin again.

What happened next shall always belong in my own personal book of Swami miracles. The person working the lever either lost his attention or became distracted somehow. Just as my left hand provided the final effort to seat the oak round into its position, he pushed the lever to close the ram instead of opening it. My left hand in its leather glove was being squeezed. I screamed "Stop!" and ripped my gloved hand just barely out of the ever-diminishing space. I felt the friction of my flesh rubbing against the oak, which caused me to scream again, as there was instant pain. I looked at the oak. Had there not been just a bit of a bevel cut, my hand would have been caught tightly, pressure against pressure, and the entire hand would have been mush.

In the next moment, there was no pain. I didn't know whether I was in shock or not.

I looked at the glove; the finger sections were in tatters. I was afraid to take off my glove, and we ran to the cabin, where frozen vegetables and ice cubes were put into a large bowl of water. I plunged my hand in and watched the water turn a slow orange red. Still no pain. Bandaging the hand gently, my friend then watched as I sprinkled *vibuthi* over the gauze.

Not having medical insurance, I had to be driven to San Diego to the Veterans Hospital at La Jolla, a distance of about a hundred miles—depending on traffic, maybe a two hour drive, possibly more. I reached the emergency ward and was eventually checked in. Almost three hours had elapsed since the accident. The radiologist was an Indian doctor who asked what happened and then took x-rays. We talked very briefly about Swami. I told him I had no pain whatsoever. He then dispatched a request for the micro-surgeon on duty. I awaited his arrival while sitting on a gurney.

Another half hour or more and the young doctor arrived. Showing his best doctor manners, he said "Hello, you're Mr. Billy. Well, don't worry; we'll take quick care of you. Let's have a look at your problem." He quickly cut away the bandage that the ER had put on. Then his face blanched a bit. "Oh boy, maybe you'd like a shot for your pain."

For the first time I had enough courage to look at what had happened. The machine had ripped the ring finger and the little finger had been demolished from the middle joint down to the end. Skin was hanging loosely. *Wow*, I said to myself, and then

turned to the doctor, "But doctor, I have no pain." I showed him I could move my finger.

He stood there, somewhat transfixed, looking at me and then at my finger. Again the young doctor asked me if I had any sensation of pain. Just at that moment, the Indian radiologist came around his side and said "Oh yes, doctor, he has no pain; he is a Sai Baba devotee." More medical personnel arrived, looking as puzzled as the young surgeon. I had to smile. For hours I had been thanking Swami, and now I felt almost happy—as if nothing had happened.

The doctor put on his surgeon's magnifying eye and did his work. He commented on how clean the injury was and that I was a very fortunate person. (Yes, Swami, thanks to You.) When he finished the gauze wrapping, he prescribed heavy doses of antibiotics, and then, looking a little strangely at me, also placed an order for pain pills, stating, "You may need these to sleep...." (I never had to use them.)

That was over two years ago. My finger still has a very small crook that you would never notice, and just a very tiny bit of tightness, which I can hardly feel unless I think about it.

Sometimes I smile when I think how busy I keep Swami watching out after me, and realize how true His words are to me: "I am with you, always."

—Nicolai Billy
El Cariso Village, California

Sai's Message to Me

I treasure each *Sathya Sai Newsletter*. Each time I receive this beautiful package in the mail, I excitedly wait for the chance to read it in the silence of my room.

In the room next to mine is a young woman with her children, praying for safety and guidance. You see, I am a volunteer for domestic violence cases, work I have done for many years, aside from the time spent in India. I love my work, because I see in every person such goodness and great potential. This has been my *seva* to my beloved Baba. My reward is His love and trying to do my best.

I had been conversing a lot with Sai lately because this work has now become my place of residence. Also, I was fitting in a full schedule at the university to finish my education and become a teacher. During my

prayers, I had been crying more often, asking Baba, "Tell me what you want." Reading the July-August 2002 Newsletter like a hungry child, I came across the article entitled "Take One Step." As I read on, Nicolai told how a woman had wanted to come to view some of his paintings; he had wanted to meet this woman because she helped battered women find shelter, and he felt that such work was "real Swami Service...." I stopped reading and began to sob, knowing this was Baba's message to me through another person. (He does this for me often.) Through my streams of tears, I felt Baba's love.

Now each night, when I go to bed, I look at Baba's wee picture taped by my bed and rub my heart. I never feel afraid; I know Baba and I do this work together.

—Anonymous

The only way to cleanse hardheartedness in people is through service to humanity. One must recognize that life is meant to be spent in selfless service, and in the service of the Self (Atma). Such a life of service is not to gain either name or fame, to allow expression of one's ego, or in the furtherance of one's own ends. Service done for selfish gain is not service at all....

A life not spent in service is a life of darkness. Understand that society is the source of whatever pleasure you derive and whatever pleasure you achieve in life. Society and nature are the fountain of your joy, wealth, and enlightenment, and they deserve your service.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Vision of Sai, Part II, p. 228

The Race and the Prize

Keep your eye on the glory of the Divine

People's lives have a beginning and an end; the beginning and the end are both governed by the law of cause and effect. The nest of a bird, built with arduous circumspection on a branch, is swayed by a gale and felled by a storm. The lovely petals of the rose, dancing in the breeze and spreading fragrance all around, are blown to the ground by a sudden gust of wind. People too are felled at the height of their triumph by the stroke of some unseen hand. People become aghast, overwhelmed at the consequences they experience. They are unaware of the causes of these events because they have no inclination to seek them out. The cause for birth is the same as the cause for death; it is fascination for sense objects and the trail of activity that this fascination engenders.

Our Genuine Nature

Children are happy, since they have not yet gotten involved in such activity. They scatter joy and enthusiasm, innocence and confidence. Why are they so fresh and happy? Their minds are free from the infection of sense-pleasure-seeking. They revel in the untainted joy of their own innate nature. That is why Christ held a child on His lap and advised all the grown-ups to become like children, in order to be saved.

How sweet is the smile of the babe in the cradle or the child playing in the garden? Such is the genuine nature of human beings, which they tarnish foolishly, year by year, as they grow.

In the pure translucent lake in the heart of people, the lotus of divine aspiration is blossoming; instead of offering that flower at the feet of God, you attempt the trick of placing there flowers that fade, fruits that rot, and leaves that dry. Offer the heart—that which He has endowed you with—filled with adoration and love! Your bliss is my sustenance, so cultivate bliss. It grows only when you meditate on the source of bliss, the embodiment of bliss, and the goal of bliss—namely, God.

The cruel King Ravana impounded Sita in the most beautifully laid-out garden in Lanka, called Asokavana, the Forest of No Sorrow. The flower beds, lawns and shrubs, trees and creepers, bowers and groves were most pleasing to the eye and refreshing to the mind, but Sita derived no joy from them. She found therein only empty vanity, lust for power, and foul pleasure. However, Sita felt real bliss when an ugly monkey began repeating the name of Rama from the branch of the tree under which she sat! Rama's name was for her the source of unending bliss.

Cleanse the Inner Mirror

Your stage in life, your status in society, your profession, the company into which you are ushered, the recreation you prefer—all these are to be used by you for cleansing the inner mirror, so that God may be reflected clearly therein. *Grihashtasrama* (the householder stage of life) is a step on the ladder to God-realization. You do not settle down on a step, stay on a rung, or build a home on a bridge. Move on, climb ahead, cross over toward the goal of God.

From this world you proceed to the world beyond. From the practice of righteousness (*dharma*) pertaining to life in the world as a member of the human community, you transcend the *dharma* of this world and earn the right and qualification to know the *dharma* of the beyond, the nature and glory of the Divine. Worldly *dharma* gives *ananda* (bliss), but transcendental *dharma* reveals to you the very source of bliss and merges you into that source.

The Lord Himself, who incarnates to restore righteousness, advises the renouncing of all *dharma*, for the sake of ultimate liberation (*moksha*). In the *Bhagavad Gita*, He recommends in the last chapter the giving up of even the craving for liberation, for there is in reality, “no bondage and no release.” It is only a delusion born of ignorance, which disappears when the light of knowledge is allowed to illumine the place where darkness prevailed.

When you know that you are ill, take the medicine that will cure you of the need for any other medicine, ever afterward, and prevent you falling ill ever again. When you

engage in activity, choose such an activity that will not involve you in its chain of consequences. Activity (*karma*) must be such that it does not involve you in further *karma*. Activity dedicated to God, activity done in a spirit of surrender without concern for the consequences—these alone can prevent the sprouting of further shoots from each individual action.

Undertake Spiritual Discipline

As a result of recent movements in world thought, people's hearts are being hardened by hate and greed, not softened by love and sympathy. Intelligence (the ‘*dhee*’ that the Gayatri prayer urges into enlightened activity) blinds people from recognizing—in the beauty of nature, in the sublimity of space, time, and causation—the might and majesty of God. Intelligence has been perverted so much that questions such as “Where is God to be found?” and “Why does He not reveal Himself to me now?” arise in the mind.

You can find God only by looking into yourself and understanding yourself. He can be realized only after a long process of cleansing and at the end of systematic, disciplined preparation. Without learning the alphabet, how dare a person condemn a classic? The culture embedded in the ancient texts promoted the composure and mental poise that is needed to delve into the depths of one's being. This culture is concerned with making every one aware of the *Atma* (innate Divinity)—the basic truth, and the only entity of which everything else is a byproduct.

Confusing religion with social customs such as taking a bride, dining with someone, or declining to do certain things, people talk glibly of discarding or disregarding religion. Religion is the Mother; how can anyone do without her, deny her, or discard her? You can divorce a wife and marry again, but you cannot deny a mother and declare another as the person who gave birth to you.

Religion is not constituted of human fancies; it is the call of the spirit from which we have come, of the sea in the heart of the river. It is the sense of kinship one feels at the sight of other beings immersed in grief or joy. It is the exultation one feels upon experiencing truth, beauty, and goodness. He who denies religion has no discrimination, no heart, no feeling, and no emotion. Religion (*matham*) is the product of awareness (*mathi*). Only the person who has none of these will argue that religion is harmful or superfluous.

The Nature of Dreaming

You can pluck a few leaves off a tree or chop off a few of its branches, but the tree of religion is deep-rooted in the human heart; it can never be destroyed or ignored. The fact that the body is but a shaky receptacle—liable to crash at any moment, that the senses are imperfect instruments of knowledge, that objects are not *per se* the source of pleasure or happiness, that the sense of *I* persists in deep sleep too—cannot be denied by decree or by swearing them off. Like all attainments, the attainment of self-realization also involves hard discipline and concentrated effort. The price has to be paid!

Let us suppose you are abused, reviled, and grievously hurt in a dream. Though you are pained at that time, when you awake, you are not aware of what happened so realistically a few minutes ago. So too, when you awaken into the higher consciousness of wisdom (*jnana*), all the grief and joy, the pleasure and pain you experience in the waking stage are found to be as ephemeral as your current dreams. Report to the police that you killed a person, and they will throw you into prison. Tell them you killed the person in your dream, and they will brush you aside as a nuisance.

Of What Profit Are Your Activities?

Having come upon the world stage as a human being, you must act the role effectively. A tree is known by its fruit. The human body is the temple of God; He is installed there. Yearn for the realization of this truth, seek to discover it, and derive bliss therefrom—that is devotion, the path of love (*bhakthi*). Love the highest, love the most lovable—not anything lower.

Once a pundit was teaching grammar and rhetoric to a group of pupils. After finishing a course of lessons, he gave them an assignment: to compose four lines of poetry. One young man, struggling within himself to produce a suitable rhyme, came up with these first two lines: *The full moon is shining bright; The tree has fruits at a height.* In his despair, he completed the quatrain with two lines more absurd than the first: *The food is not cooked right! Ganganna's face is a horrid sight!* The

assignment was of course completed, but how futile, how pathetic, how worthless the result!

Years of people's lives are also spent in such futilities—they complete the assignment of spending their allotted years, but how worthless is the achievement! Everyone composes their four lines, but do they make any sense? Do they deserve attention or appreciation? No. People pursue every will o'the wisp, every chance desire, every line of thought—and feel that they have 'lived,' but their complacency is entirely misplaced. When the accounts are closed and debit and credit calculated, what is the profit earned?

You have wandered far and wide but neglected your home. You peek into the stars in space but keep your inner sky unexplored. You peep into other's lives, find faults, and speak ill of them, but you do not care to examine your own thoughts, acts, and emotions, and judge whether they are good or bad. The faults you see in others are but projections of your own; the good that you see in others is but a reflection of your own goodness.

Fill the Mind with God

By meditation (*dhyana*) alone can you cultivate good vision and a taste for good listening, good thoughts, and good deeds. *Dhyana* immerses you in the idea of universality and the omnipotence of God. Is it not your daily experience that a bigger worry overpowers a smaller one and makes you forget it?

Likewise, when you fill your mind with the idea of God, yearn for Him, and pine

plaintively for Him, all lesser desires, disappointments, and even achievements will pale into insignificance. You will forget them all; they will be submerged in the flood of divine yearning and very soon, in the ocean of divine bliss.

I shall give an example from the *Ramayana* to make this point clear. When Emperor Dasaratha died, no one was at hand to perform the obsequies, so word was sent to the two younger sons, Bharatha and Sathrughna, who had left for their kinsman's capital. They were not informed of the death, and when they came and saw the body, they were so shocked at the inert silence of their dear father that they ran to Kausalya, the queen and their stepmother.

She burst into tears when the two boys ran into her apartments. They were shocked at this display and inquired why. She then broke the sad news of the death of their father. Bharatha was plunged into grief at this tragic news; he wept aloud, beating his breast in inconsolable agony. Then amidst his distress, he said, "Mother, how unfortunate I am. I had no chance to take care of him in his illness, during his last days. Alas, dear brother, you too lost the precious chance of service," he said, patting Sathrughna on the head.

After some moments, he continued, "Mother, how fortunate are Rama and Lakshmana. They were with him. They cared for him and ran little errands for him. They were with him when he breathed his last. Since we were far away, did father leave

any command for us? What was his last wish regarding us? Did he remember us or ask that we be sent for?"

Kausalya said, "Son, he had only one word on his lips, only one form before his eye: that word was *Rama*; that form was

an exile? Why did he have to go?" "Your mother wished for him to go, and so he went," said the queen.

When Bharatha heard this, the grief that he had sustained upon hearing of the death of his father paled, and the grief that arose



*You can find God only
by looking into yourself
and understanding yourself.*

*He can be realized only
after a long process of cleansing
and at the end of systematic,
disciplined preparation.*

Rama." Bharatha looked surprised. He asked, "How is it that he uttered the name and craved for the form of Rama, who was by his bedside, and did not yearn for me who was far away? Oh, how unlucky I am, having lost the affection of my dear father!"

Kausalya replied, "Well, if Rama had been by his bedside or near him, he would not have passed away." Bharatha exclaimed, "Mother, where did Rama go? Why was he away? Where is he now? Did he go hunting in the forest? Was he on a pleasure trip on the Sarayu?" The mother answered, "No, no. He went into the forest for fourteen years."

Bharatha could bear it no longer. "Alas, what outrageous tragedy is this? What crime, what sin did Rama commit to deserve such

at his mother sending Rama into exile for fourteen years overwhelmed all else.

Thus, the greater grief scours off the smaller. So too, the greater yearning will dominate and deluge the lesser. So, yearn for God, and all lesser yearnings will disappear. Loss or gain, honor or dishonor, health or ill-health, joy or grief—keep the mind steadily pointed toward God. That is the goal; that is the prize for the race of life. Overcome all obstacles by means of that faith, treat the obstacles as ineffective and futile, and have the goal alone in view. Visualize God, seek God, and merge in God—that is the duty of a human being.

—**Sathya Sai Baba**

April 23, 1967

Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha, Madras

Study Circle Forum

An invitation to discussion

Here we will present one of the most commonly used study circle formats as a baseline for evaluating useful techniques for increasing participation and interest. This model provides some proven methods for success and suggestions for avoiding common mistakes. It is also open for evaluation and improvement. All those who have strong feelings on the subject are invited to take this opportunity to share their views through this forum. As explained in the first *Newsletter* study circle forum, we have initiated a fourfold process: 1) assess current practices, 2) develop guidelines on what is working, 3) train leaders and disseminate those guidelines, and 4) provide appropriate study materials for groups to use. Your participation at this point will help us “assess current practices.”

Rotating Group Leader Ideally, the task of introducing the study material rotates regularly among participants. If asked to present a day's subject, most people will agree. They may not volunteer, but if asked by the study circle facilitator, they usually consider it a prompt from Swami. Of course, no one is compelled to present a topic, yet it is important to give everyone the choice to participate in this role. Avoid setting up certain participants as experts, whose opinions carry more weight or who regularly get the last

word; such a practice is usually detrimental to the group process.

Regular Facilitator There may be a regular facilitator (such as the center devotional coordinator) who will introduce the “protocol” of the study circle before beginning discussion. The facilitator, or moderator, compassionately attempts to keep participants on subject and within time limits. The facilitator can make clear from the start that there are no counter points to what others have said. All should feel open to respond without fear of criticism or rebuttal. Respondents may present their own views, but avoid criticizing the views of others.

Source of Study Materials The best study materials for discussion are from the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Whatever study materials are used should be considered authoritative by all who participate.

Opening of the Meeting It is helpful to begin the meeting with three *OMs* or a prayer to set a sacred and focused atmosphere before starting discussion. Next, the presentation of the subject by the rotating group leader should not take more than 10 or 15 minutes. It is important for the summary of the main points of the study material to be presented from the heart. Participants are

easily bored or put off by long readings and lectures, and readings in languages not understood by all should particularly be avoided. The introduction is not a stage to show off the knowledge or presentation skills of the leader but a catalyst to prompt everyone's sharing.

Sharing Responses The main benefits to participants derive from the sharing of ideas. In fact, members of the circle often benefit more by what they hear themselves saying than from what others say. There tends to be little obligation to act on what others say but much motivation to act on what we ourselves voice in the circle. To open and prompt the discussion, have the presenter ask a single question relevant to the study material for the participants to answer. The question should be prepared ahead of time and involve a practical problem that will help participants understand a point of spiritual practice.

Pause for a 20- or 30-second meditation on the question before participants begin to answer. This helps group members to focus their thoughts and allows a deeper response to what is being asked. After the meditation, a volunteer may be asked to begin the sharing. After the first person responds, the

order of sharing proceeds around the circle, with everyone in turn having the opportunity to either respond or pass. Bear in mind that new or quiet members often will not respond unless given a specific break in the conversation to do so. Participants who feel that their views are not respected or accepted will become quiet and may not return. After everyone in the circle has been given a chance to respond, return to those who passed on their turn and offer them another chance to share.

Concluding the Discussion After everyone in the circle has had an opportunity to respond, the presenter may give his or her own view and summarize the discussion.

—Jonathan Roof,
Tucson, Arizona

This model of study circle has proven successful for many groups in both the United States and abroad. Can we improve on it? If you believe so, please respond to the National Study Circle Coordinator, Jonathan Roof, by mail: PMB 318, 3661 N. Campbell Ave., Tucson, AZ 85719, or email at jonroof@aol.com.

There is no kinship so dear as the kinship forged by spiritualities. Family relationships are not so firmly based on identity of aims and sameness of effort. You are bound by bonds that are more longstanding and pleasant. Let people return home and exult in the discovery that ... they have kith and kin who respect them and love them as no relative has done thus far.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Feb. 24, 1965 (*Sathya Sai Speaks*, 5:6)

Children's Corner

Who Do You Want To Be?



The result of a thought is an action; an action becomes a habit; habits form character; and character shapes one's destiny.



If you want to change your destiny you must change your character. Character is the result of habits; habits are the result of actions; actions come from your thoughts. Now you know that you can choose who you want to be.

—*Bal Vikas Magazine* for Ages 1-99, Italy

Baba Will Answer

The difference between trusting and expecting

In his poem, "If You Want His Answer," Yogananda wrote, "Even if He (God) makes no reply in the way you expect, ever know that in some subtle way He will respond."

Thinking of these words, I entered my *puja* room, turned, and walked out. I didn't think I could talk to Swami; I was too upset. Would He even answer?

I am a writer and recently one of my books for children was to be published. After months of rewrites, meetings with the lithographers, and art decisions, the publishers were not sure it would be wise to continue. A series of very expensive advertisements in a national magazine had proved all but fruitless. Subscriptions and newsstand sales of the publication reached 450,000 readers, but the publishers netted only about a fifth of the orders expected. We were floored with the dismal response as the prepublication research had indicated a greater interest. We were, much to my distress, reconsidering the investment of publishing my children's story. If we all bailed out now, the financial loss would be bearable, but to continue—well, no one knew what to do.

I had felt so guided in my meditations, so positive about the project. Now I felt betrayed by my intuition, let down by my higher self, and most of all confused about what Swami wanted me to do.

*No matter how it appears
to the world or to my senses,
trust that He hears all, sees all,
and cares for all—even those
who know Him not.*

Meanwhile, due to the failure of our advertising campaign to garner capital to continue, our plans had come to a halt. We were so close, yet so far away.

Should we continue with the publication?

I reentered the *puja* room with this question in my heart, holding back tears of disappointment. I prayed to Baba for success but mostly asked that I accept His will with an equal mind. No anger, no tears, no disappointment. I wasn't making a good start, I thought, as I asked Baba to give me a sign if we were to continue with the book before more disasters found us.

During the afternoon I did my household chores but kept a close watch for my sign. While dusting I would glance casually from the corner of my eye to the picture of Swami over the fireplace to search for a message. I also checked the *puja* room often for any signal that might help me with the decision.

The rest of the afternoon transpired in much the same way, with me subtly checking for anything unusual. Late into the evening, I was still waiting for a sign, but my faith was waning and my heart was heavy.

At nine o'clock, I turned on the television to watch the program *20/20*. Teddy Pendergrass, favorite artist whose music I enjoy a great deal, was scheduled to be Barbara Walter's guest. I was shocked to learn of the car accident that had left him paralyzed from the neck down. This was his first interview since the crash, coinciding with the release of a new album.

Barbara began her interview, and I rested quietly in my recliner with a doubting mind. Dozing, I lost track of their conversation but was instantly pulled to alertness when I heard Barbara exclaim, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah!" Then she said, "I am so glad your new album is a success—I'll say Hallelujah again." Teddy Pendergrass replied, "Yes, Hallelujah!" I was by now sitting on the edge of my chair, intently involved with the interview. Then Barbara asked Teddy the name of his new album and he replied, "Joy."

Sobbing, unable to catch my breath, I thanked Swami for His care and guidance,

even though He is thousands of miles across the sea. His ways are unfathomable.

The work with the book will continue and somehow the money will come through. How do I know? I received my sign. The publishing company I am involved with is named Hallelujah Press and my name is Joy—how could I miss!

Yogananda wisely states in the final words of his poem, "...And in the midst of the dance of life, disease, and death, if you keep calling Him, undepressed by His seeming silence, you will receive His answer."

I learned a big lesson with Swami's response. I realized that I *expected* Him to answer. It was only because of His great compassion that He did answer. See, I expected rather than trusted. There is a big difference between trust and expectation. Next time I am seeking a response or guidance, I will try to trust that He will give me what is best for me. No matter how it appears to the world or to my senses, trust that He hears all, sees all, and cares for all—even those who know Him not. Trust in the Lord Sai: yes, trust—not expect.

—J. F. Ziegler
Gilbert, Arizona

Give each problem the attention it deserves, but do not allow it to overpower you. Anxiety will not solve any difficulty; coolness comes from detachment. Above all, believe in God and the efficacy of prayer; the Lord has said that one who does good, thinks good, and speaks good will not come to harm. That is the way to get equanimity and peace.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XV, Ch. 8

Tolerance

Perpetuating hatred...
It's happening every day,
While many who contribute
Would be the first to say,
"Don't call me a bigot,
I'm broadminded as can be.
It's just that I don't believe
In a mixed society."

So deep has this poison spread,
The roots have long been buried.
Still, in a small child's fertile mind,
Some seeds will still be carried.
If they have heard somebody
Speak out with great contempt
About a color or a race,
Then hatred will ferment.

It later on will flourish
If no one interferes;
Racial slurs and epithets
Will frequently appear.
There is an old Indian quotation,
One that clearly speaks,
"Don't judge a person 'til you've walked
In his moccasins many weeks."

There is no person living today
Who wouldn't somewhere be an outcast;
If everyone would just remember that,
We might have peace at last.

Alora Knight
Gardnerville, Nevada

Announcements

There Is a Reason

Dear Subscribers: We at the **Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA** office enjoy hearing from you, even if we get complaints—sometimes we do. The most recent “suggestion” from some of you is that the date of each issue should be posted on every copy of the *Newsletter* on the front cover, or at least on the back cover. We are in agreement with this idea. However, the problem is that we must print many thousands of identical covers at the same time, to offer this publication at the lowest price possible. Of course, that prohibits putting different dates for various issues. We are working on a solution; perhaps a stamp or a label could be fixed on the cover during the mailing process. Any other suggestions? Your ideas and participation are always welcome.

Good News for Children of All Ages

Some of you may not be aware of a charming Sai Newsletter (besides this one) for children, called **Sai World: a Newsletter for Children and Youth**. It has many Sai adventures, such as my personal favorite, a series called **Indy, the Wonder Cat**, plus loads of drawings, photographs, stories, and poems in easy-to-read large print. Other features include **Shining Stars** for children, **Sai Teens' Corner**, and **Parents' Connection**. I won't part with my copy; you'll have to get your own. Address: **Sai World, P.O. Box 7722, San Diego CA 92167—4 issues for one year @ \$5.00**. Must leave now; I'm going to color the pictures—where did I put those crayons!?

To receive the bimonthly (six issues a year)

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New Arrivals

Love All Serve All, 2002. This book was prepared in Prasanthi Nilayam and published by the Sathya Sai Publications of New Zealand. This pictorial message of Bhagavan is an offering solely for spreading Sai's incomparable, divine love. The inspiring text and the many photographs depict Swami's service projects in glorious color and some pictures in black and white. It is done on a grand scale, measuring approximately 10 by 13 inches. In hard cover, 396 pages. BW-093 55.00

The Wish-Fulfilling Tree, written by Mario Mazzoleni, whose previous book was *A Catholic Priest Meets Sai Baba*. He narrates his incessant quest, and the fulfillment he found in Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Printed in paperback, 356 pages. BI-106 4.00

Badri Yatra, written by Smt. Vijayamma, tells of Bhagavan's journeys to Bardrikshetra with a group of devotees who experienced His divine *leelas*, wisdom, and knowledge. Printed in paperback, 146 pages. BI-008 4.00

Chaitanya Jyothi, by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, India. A beautiful pictorial book that highlights the Millenium Museum in Prasanthi Nilayam and depicts the message and mission of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Available in both paperback and hardcover. Paperback, 122 pages BI-004 9.00
Hardcover, 122 pages BI-005 14.00

Audio Cassette Tapes

Cassette Tape, Discourse of July 27, 2002. Sathya Sai Baba surprised the USA devotees with a private discourse behind closed doors in the Mandir in Prasanthi Nilayam. This cassette, translated by Professor Anil Kumar, is a specific message for devotees from the United States. The *Sathya Sai Newsletter* apologizes for the misprint in the September/October 2002 issue, which gave an incorrect price.

90 minutes C-055 3.00

Swami's words from that discourse are also available in a booklet: BI-007 1.00

There are other divine discourses available in booklet form. Please check with the Book Center for more information.

The Vahinis

The *Vahinis* are a series of books containing the spiritual wisdom of the ages written by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Sai Baba honors all religions, and He has written about a variety of subjects from a spiritual point of view: righteousness, meditation, wisdom, peace, divine love, and the ancient *Vedic* teachings such as the *Bhagavad Githa*, the *Upanisads*, the story of Rama and more. In these texts, Baba has gifted us with modern day implications of these ancient wisdoms, and has made His words within reach of our understanding.*

Bhagavata Vahini This is an epic of the Mahabaratha War which was a war of righteousness against evil forces. Baba explains that this war represents the inner turmoil that we all experience. He indicates how the inner battle can be won, and we emerge victorious.

Dharma Vahini In this volume, Sathya Sai Baba clearly explains how to live in a *dharmic* (righteous) manner. The moral codes are outlined for men, women, and even children. The codes of conduct are applicable no matter what a person's status, or situation in life.

Dhyana Vahini Here Baba councils, consoles, and encourages the faltering spiritual seeker to march forward and attain the goal of living a joyful life of high standards and good values.

Githa Vahini This stream of divine teachings was given by the Avatar, Krishna, to His devotee, Arjuna, just before the launching of the Mahabaratha War. The war, as mentioned above, was a very real battle, but it is also symptomatic of today's complex life-style. Baba teaches that the inner war is caused by lack of control over the senses, mind, and desires. He describes methods for winning self-control over negative characteristics and thus attaining inner peace.**



* While Baba has written these books within the understanding of most of us, there remain many Sanskrit words and phrases that are not always explained by the translator. Because of this, we suggest the small *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* available at the Book Center for \$3.00 plus tax and shipping.

** For a complete list of the *Vahinis*, and *Sathya Sai Speaks*, and other books about Baba, please contact the Sathya Sai Book Center for a free catalog. The address, phone and fax numbers are always on the last one or two pages of each issue of the *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA*.

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