

Jan 2002
Vol 28 No 1



BE
HAPPY

Sathya Sai

Newsletter, USA





The Organizations named after Me are not to be used for publicizing My name or creating a new cult around My worship. They must try to spread interest in prayer, meditation, and other spiritual exercises that lead mankind Godward. They must demonstrate the joy derivable from devotional singing and repetition of the Lord's Name, and the peace that one can draw from good company. They must render service to the helpless, the sick, the distressed, the illiterate, and the needy. Their service should not be exhibitionistic; it must seek no reward, not even gratitude or thanks from the recipients.

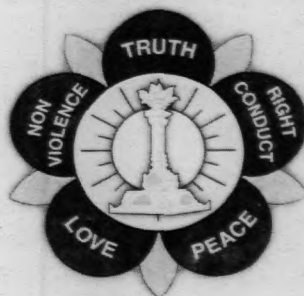
*—Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VII, ch. 36*

*This issue explores the principles in the spiritual
practice of placing a Ceiling on Desires.*

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

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

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—Barbara Bozzani, Editor

Sai's Message

We have taken upon ourselves as an objective the ideal of placing a Ceiling on Desires. Essentially, this means to avoid waste in any form. Regarding food: avoid wasting it. The Vedas have said: Annam Brahma. Food is God.



That which is in excess of your need, share with others. This is particularly so with food.

The second ideal is: don't waste money. Wealth is God, and the misuse of money is evil. Regard money as Goddess Lakshmi herself. For example, suppose you have urgent work in Delhi. Then you may fly to Delhi. If the work is not pressing, why waste money by flying. Go by train and save some money, which could be used in the service of the needy. Likewise,

students—be happy with one or two pens. Why buy more? Menfolk: be happy with three or four suits, and ladies: be content with a few sarees. Place a curb on your desires and save as much as you can. In this way, you can also ensure the economic prosperity of the country.

The third tenet is: don't waste time, for time is also God. God transcends time. If you waste time, you are wasting life. Time is so precious that you should not waste even a second. Some of you, if you wish to harm someone, you do it straight away, spontaneously, without taking time [to reflect]. This tendency should be curbed. If you wish to do something good, however, do not waste any time or put off the opportunity.

The fourth point is: don't waste knowledge. Use what you know in sacred activities. Having knowledge, your power of discrimination grows sharper, which you can use positively for good. In practicing these four precepts, the members of our organization should themselves be exemplars. Like the physical instructor who teaches his wards by actually showing the exercises, our members should demonstrate virtue by practicing these four precepts; only then will those who are to follow them take heed of their words.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Less Is More

Surprised by Freedom

We are told that less is more; the trouble is, we don't believe it. How can less be more? In our culture, the common view has conditioned us to think that more is better. We have absorbed from personal experience that more money is better than less, and more food is better than less. Why then should we ever accept the idea that having less is better when someone tells us so? No, that's not enough to change our minds. So we go on acquiring more and more of everything.

Not only does more seem obviously better, but we believe that if we have more, we get more, and we are happier. Having more protects us in case there are times when things are tight. It is ridiculous to think otherwise, isn't it so? Having less ignores the joys of owning, possessing, and most of all consuming! This was how I was brought up—before I found Sai Baba.

In Prasanthi Nilayam most mornings after *darshan* (opportunity to see Sai Baba) I get breakfast and then saunter over to my favorite spot at the wall outside Baba's *mandir* (temple). I just stand there, waiting patiently, hoping He will come out and give us a second *darshan* during *bhajans* (devotional singing taking place in the *mandir*). Remember—more is better, and what is more delicious than more of the Lord! I must not neglect to tell you that of

course I have brought along my beautiful new super Hi-8 Sony camcorder. Not only do I want to get Baba twice, I want to capture Him on video, so I can enjoy Him again, and again, and again.*

While I am waiting, hoping for Baba to come out, I see a large group of men lining up in a holding area across from where the men usually line up for *darshan*. The men do this every day; I am just more aware this morning of how unnecessary it is for the men to first have to line up across the path and then, at a given hand signal from the head *seva* (volunteer service) person, charge across the path to line up a second time. They do this in the hope that they will be fortunate enough to have their line win the lottery, thus securing a place for them to sit inside the *mandir* for *bhajans*.

Fascinated, I watch as they scramble for what they hope is the best position, the luckiest line, the one that will go in first. There are only a limited number of seats inside the *mandir*, so not all of the men who line up will get in. I continue to watch almost in disbelief as they jockey back and forth, waiting for over 30 minutes. I sigh in relief, grateful that I don't have to go through all that agony.

*The procedure for bringing cameras and entering the temple has changed. However, Mr. Scher's description of wanting more and more is the focus of the article.

Suddenly it dawns on me that the reason I am free and these men are not, is that they are slaves to this desire. They want to get inside the *mandir*, and, in order to do so, they will put up with any conditions required to get what they want. Wow! Wanting can be bad. It can make you suffer, even make you submit to the needless torture of the head *seva* man. This was a revelation. I realized that because I had no desire to sit inside the *mandir*, I was free.

I was free to do whatever I wanted, to come and go as I pleased. I had the freedom just to be. This was a miracle. I saw for the first time that wanting takes away our freedom. We are all actually slaves to our desires. Clearly, the more we want, the more we are going to have to pay, and the payment isn't just money, it's a loss of personal freedom. I was almost shaking with joy from this discovery, when I realized that, as usual, this wasn't my discovery but a

delicious wink from the Lord. Baba was, once again, helping me learn how to live.

I knew immediately that I had to reevaluate most of the things I had taken for granted; all of my old basic assumptions—such as “more is better”—needed to be reconsidered. Instinctively I knew that I was paying far more than I thought, that I would discover huge areas in my life where cutting down on my desires would bring me enormous amounts of personal freedom. With this new discovery, I saw that putting a ceiling on my desires did not mean making a great sacrifice, or even giving up something; it just meant trading wants and desires for freedom. Giving up something to get something seemed a lot easier than being asked to give up something for nothing. I knew Baba would be fair!

—In memory of **Jack O. Scher**
Faber, Virginia

Desires are the luggage in the journey of life. 'Less luggage, more comfort, makes travel a pleasure.' Your destination is 'Prasanthi Nilayam,' the abode of supreme peace—in other words, liberation. Why then do you trouble yourselves with heavy luggage, when you are traveling toward the abode of supreme peace? ...

Control of desires leads to sense-control, which in turn leads to Divinity. Controlling the vagaries of the mind is yoga (union with God), while allowing the senses to have their own way is roga (disease). ... Yoga is attained not by bhoga (worldly pleasures) but by thyaga (sacrifice). Once you attain yoga, you will never be afflicted with roga. True yoga lies in unifying your love with the Divine. ... Fill your hearts with the principles of love and sacrifice.

—**Sathya Sai Baba**
Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. 32, Nov. 21, 1999

Ceiling on Desires

Transformation Through Dedication and Service

People are undertaking [service] activities of varying magnitudes and descriptions. Before embarking on the execution of these programs, we must ask ourselves three questions:

- 1) For whose sake are we undertaking these programs?
- 2) For what purpose?
- 3) How are we going to execute these programs?

These may be three different questions, but the answer is one. If we examine deeply, the answer to the first question is, "All for our own sake." The answer to the second is, "For our own happiness and joy." The answer to the third question is, "The results of our work depend upon what we do. If we do something good, the result will be good; if we do something bad, the result will be likewise."

Why Transformation Is Essential

In this world, it is not possible to make use of anything without transforming it in some way to make it useful. You cannot eat rice without converting paddy to rice-grains and then cooking them. Similarly, you cannot have cloth without transforming

cotton into yarn, and then weaving it into cloth. Also, a human being needs transformation with respect to three things: The first is bodily transformation, the second pertains to the mind, and the third relates these to the *Atma*. The *Atma* is changeless. Only the body and mind require transformation.

How does transformation take place? If we ask the question whether silver can become God or stone become God, the answer is yes, for when a sculptor converts a piece of rock into a beautiful idol to be worshipped in a shrine, that which was inert and worthless becomes sacred. This is transformation. Similarly, an idol made out of silver becomes transformed into an object of worship. In the same manner, everything that is petty and worldly can be transformed in due time into something sacred and divine. Such transformation is essential for humankind.

For instance, take the body: It is an entity that houses much that is bad and undesirable. Externally we take great care of the body through bathing and cleansing. We are aware of external impurities and try to get rid of them, but are we aware of the

internal impurities? How do we purify those? For internal purification, we must acquire sacred thoughts and do sacred deeds.

Consider the concepts of *jeeva* (the individual) and *deva* (God). You are composed of the three *gunas* (qualities)—*sathwa* (balanced), *rajas* (passionate), and *thamas* (dull). As long as you are part of these *gunas*, you are *jeeva*. Once you transcend these three qualities, you become

deva or God. The three *gunas* are like the husk that covers the rice in the paddy. When you remove the husk, it reveals the rice-grain inside.

Whatever we do, whatever actions we undertake, if they are permeated with thoughts centered on God, they become sacred.

Four Aspects of Dedication

Today in our *seva* (service) activities, we do not have such a lofty sense of dedication. We must get rid of the thought that *seva* activities are being done for others and understand that they are being undertaken for our own sake and for our own betterment.

In *Vedantic* parlance, this identification of oneself with others is called *maithri*. In *seva* activities you have to develop *maithri*. Another attitude that must be developed is *karuna* or compassion. The third is *muditha*, the peace of mind acquired through equanimity, and the fourth is *upeksha*, or indifference to worldly concerns. In all these

four ways we must attempt to change ourselves and others.

What is *maithri*? It is commonly equated with friendship. In the worldly sense this friendship is a mutual relationship. True friendship, however, lies in regarding other people's comforts or joys or sorrows as your own. We have an example in the *Ramayana*, in the relationship between Rama and Sugriva. Their friendship was based on the

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fact that each experienced the suffering of the other as his own. The bond of friendship is based upon the recognition of sharing common

experiences.

What is *karuna* or compassion? Seeing a person in distress and expressing verbal sympathy is not compassion. Compassion must express itself in action to relieve the suffering. Nor must one adopt an attitude of aloofness or indifference on the plea that each one suffers due to his or her own folly. Though suffering may be due to one's mistakes—mistakes to which everyone is prone—we must seek to remedy such suffering, just as we seek to alleviate our own suffering. Some people try to show off their sympathy by setting up charitable institutions such as hospitals and foundations. True compassion emanates from the heart, and not in outward manifestations that reveal only one's vanity. In the Sathya Sai Organizations there is no place for such demonstrations of vanity.

Everything that is done to help the poor or the suffering must be based on the feelings coming from the heart and in appealing to the hearts of those who are helped.

Next comes *muditha*. This means acquiring peace of mind through cultivating equanimity in the dual experiences of honor and dishonor, praise or calumny, loss or gain, joy or sorrow. These pairs of opposites should be regarded as things that come and go, like passing clouds. Every person dedicated to service should develop such equanimity of mind.

The fourth requisite is *upeksha*. *Apeksha* binds the individual, whereas *upeksha* bestows freedom. *Apeksha* means involvement with worldly concerns; *upeksha* means getting rid of this involvement. Take the example of a pumpkin. A green pumpkin, when placed in water, sinks. The pumpkin has plenty of liquid inside, and when placed in water, it sinks. The same pumpkin, when it is dried and has no water inside, floats. What is the reason? In the first place, the pumpkin has an affinity for water and makes water part of itself. Similarly, when you are worldly yourself and you move about in the world, you become bound to it. When you free yourself from worldly attachments, you move toward divinity and are freed from bondage to the world. The process of "freeing yourself" is *upeksha*.

Sita's Desire

In the *Ramayana*, when Rama decided to go to the forest, Sita wanted to accompany him, and she gave away all her possessions. By giving up attachments to possessions she gained the company of Rama. Later, in the forest, upon developing a desire for a golden deer, she became separated from Rama. In the first instance, when she removed *kama*—the desire for possessions—she became one with Rama. The meaning of this episode is: so long as you are tied to *kama* or desire, you cannot hope to gain Rama or God.

This does not mean that you have to renounce the world. Living in this world as you are, you must strike a balance between worldly life and spiritual life. Your life is like gold in its native state, associated with dirt, which is impure. Thus, your spiritual life is impure in its initial stages. When you begin to purify your thoughts, speech, and actions through seeking good company and cultivating noble ideals, you embark upon the process of transforming yourself. This process is *upeksha*.

Guidelines for Seva

More than *thapas* (spiritual exercise, austerity) or *dhyana* (meditation), service to others is the means by which one transforms oneself. In rendering service, be moved by genuine concern for those you

serve. Try to ascertain the cause of suffering and attempt to remove it. Only then can you do *seva* properly. Momentary sympathy, charity, or competing with others in exhibiting one's generosity is not true *seva*. In rendering service, if you try to do something that is beyond your capacity, it is a sign of your ego. If you give less than you are able, then you are a thief, denying to others what is due to them. Furthermore, be discriminating in your service. Regard service as a *sadhana* (spiritual discipline).

Adopt the belief that service is a path to God-realization. Service activities are to be undertaken not for the sake of Sathya Sai or even for the sake of society. They are purely and essentially for your own sake. It is to transform your own lives that you undertake *seva*. Through the medium of *seva* you can reap the fruits of *japa* (repetition of the Lord's name) and *dhyana* (meditation). By making your fellow beings happy, you make God Himself happy. Do not do *seva* out of a sense of compulsion or to please others. Rather, let it be wholehearted and spontaneous. In organizing *seva* activities, do not attempt to compare one region with another. Because some regions have taken up work in certain areas, do not feel that you must do the same thing. Do whatever you feel is your duty and whatever is

necessary for the areas in which you are working. Engage in service activities with all your heart, without comparing yourself to others.

Ceiling on Desires Program

A program has been launched concerning placing a Ceiling on Desires. You must realize that this program has not been



initiated to raise funds. The object of the program is to prevent waste of money, time, food, and other resources, and to use the difference for the welfare of the people. The money that is saved need not be kept for the Sathya Sai Organ-

izations. It may be used in the best way of your choice, for the benefit of others.

Do not waste time. Time wasted is life wasted. Time is God. Sanctify all the time at your disposal by undertaking *seva* activities in a pure and unselfish spirit. Today we waste time on unnecessary and unwanted things, indulging in unnecessary talk and meaningless actions. In all these actions, we sacrifice the body to time. Instead, we should make time our servant. This means spending our time in good thoughts and good deeds. Every second of your daily existence you must ask these questions: "How am I utilizing time? Is it for a good or bad purpose?"

Likewise, with regard to food, you must ask: "Am I eating only what I need, or more? Am I wasting food?" So also with regard to money: "Am I using this money for my own selfish needs, or for boosting my name and fame, or to satisfy my ego and vanity?" Once you start seeking answers to these questions, there is no greater *sadhana* (spiritual discipline).

These are the aims of the Ceiling on Desires program. It was never the purpose of this program to collect money for the Sathya Sai Organizations. The object is to encourage you to share your money with others, to give you an opportunity to utilize your surplus resources for good and noble purposes that will sanctify your life.

Spirit of Sacrifice

Three types of strength are given to a person—physical strength, mental strength, and the power of money. It has been said that all these should be offered as sacrifice (*yajna*). This sacrifice is not offered to God. God, who has given you the body and the mind, does not need these for Himself. God is also the source of all wealth. What does He want with your wealth? Instead, use your wealth for sacred purposes. The *seva* program is intended only to provide you with opportunities to make your lives sacred and worthwhile, and to develop the spirit of sacrifice.

Was it beyond Rama's power to discover Sita in Lanka? What need did He have to send Hanuman? Rama wanted Hanuman to go on the search, so that He could show to the world the devotion,

steadfastness, and faith of Hanuman. This gesture was entirely an example of Rama's grace. In the same manner, if Sai were to desire to carry out any number projects by Himself, He could accomplish anything, but this endeavor is not for the sake of Sai. The work done through these *seva* organizations is so that members of the organizations get the chance to do service and redeem themselves. Try to understand this basic truth: These avenues of service have been provided so that you will get a good name for yourselves, and not for the sake of Sai.

If people have any wrong notions about the service program, endeavor to remove their doubts and explain its true purposes. For instance, some people say that for the benefit of the birthday celebrations, they have embarked upon this project of Ceiling on Desires. This is a wrong notion. Tell these people it is not so. Sathya Sai does not need anything, and He does not ask anything from you. The idea is to undertake development programs, so that the villages can benefit. The idea is to save money that is now being wasted in one form or the other, so that it becomes available for doing something good.

Above all, the basic purpose of all service activities is to effect a transformation from the state of man to the state of divinity. Fill your hearts with that which is godly. Then there will be meaning to your *seva*.

—Sathya Sai Baba
July 14, 1984

How to Reduce Negative Desires

Color-Code Your Faults

First, buy a package of index cards in assorted colors. Next, ask Baba to reveal to you your chief negative desires, such as attachments, addictions, and unwelcome emotions, all of which stem either from a strong desire for something, or from the reverse—the fear of getting something you don't want. These unfortunate habits may come to your attention through self scrutiny, in dreams or meditation, with the help of loved ones, or in any number of ways. You will surely be made aware of them, for when we ask with sincerity, Baba always responds.

To work toward curtailing such ego demands, choose a card of a specific color to represent whatever fault you have decided to begin with. For instance, green could be for envy, white for fear, and so on. At the start, it is best to focus on just one problem for a set period of time, say a week, two weeks, or a month. As soon as you've chosen your first fault, ask Baba to help you notice the unwanted tendency each time you exhibit it, and also to make you aware of the circumstances that cause you to react in that way.

Write a few words about each episode on the appropriate card and seek to discover which thwarted desire triggered the negative reaction. At day's end, review what you have written and add mention of any further episodes that may have been overlooked,

checking to make sure that in each instance you have let go of the ego-desire. You will soon be able to see a pattern, revealing the most habitual causes of the particular fault under consideration.

This, in turn, will suggest what steps must be taken to eradicate such behavior. You might ask Baba to show you an appropriate symbol for the unwanted action, such as a clenched fist or a ball of fire for anger. You can then, in your imagination, destroy that symbol in any way you choose.

The process will bring a slow and steady improvement, as fewer episodes are recorded daily. You may also notice that the associated emotion becomes less strong, and is of shorter duration.

At the end of the allotted time, choose another failing and pursue it in the same way, using a card of a different color. At the same time, keep citing on the first card any further occurrences of the initial problem, adding more cards of the same color as necessary. Working privately in this way will help you to free yourself of all kinds of spiritual hindrances. What better gift to present to Baba than this?

—Phyllis Krystal
California

Devotees—What Next?

Taking the Steps Toward Spiritual Maturity

There are said to be fifty million devotees of Sai Baba in the world. I wonder how many of these are truly dedicated adherents. I doubt if there are more than a few thousand, in the sense of those who have made a fundamental and consistent effort to radically change their whole nature, their attitude toward work and service, their lifestyle, and above all, their capacity to love. There are many more fringe members—people who remain at the beginners' stage. Swami would say they are *paddling in the shallows instead of diving deep into the ocean*. Ideally, the impact of Sai makes one feel as if one's life has been divided into two parts: before Baba and after Baba. We have to slowly grasp the mind-boggling concept that Sai Baba is no mere guru, or even an Avatar such as Buddha, Mohammed, or Jesus. He is the *Poorna Brahman*, the God Force made manifest in its entirety. His movement has been described by Dr. Gokak as "the revolution of all revolutions," because its goal is quite literally to "unmake and remake the nature of man."

How do we set about becoming better devotees? I think the first priority is to fully grasp that all of us, indeed all life, are tiny cells in the body of God, so that whenever we inflict hurt upon another, we realize it as a harm done to ourselves. This salutary

thought will surely give us a clearer concept of the Brotherhood of Man. Some cells, it is true, have become cancerous, such as the murderers, rapists, and drug barons, but they are still our brothers; they need healing, not killing.

Self-Awareness

Increased self-awareness and self-honesty is a *sine qua non*. Swami says: *No man can know God who does not know himself*. Most of us rationalize and deceive ourselves, even unconsciously, when we want something that is basically wrong.

Swami says that two-thirds of meditation should be self-inquiry, with the aim of becoming a child of God rather than a child of conditioning. Some people are afraid to look too deeply into themselves out of fear of opening up some kind of Pandora's box. Self-awareness through confession is always a liberating process, however, no matter how many skeletons may be lurking in the closet! It is only retained sin that binds and blinds us.

Love in Action

Next, one should gain a clear understanding of the meaning and goal of life. We are half animal, half potentially divine. Swami tells us that the sole purpose of our incarnation is to crucify the ego (the

lower self) on the altar of compassion. The goal of our life should be, as Swami says, *to grow in love, to expand that love, and to merge with God who is love, and this is best done through service.* Swami Himself serves humanity 24 hours a day. He does not sleep. He is the very embodiment of love.

Our love, therefore, must be love in action—selfless loving service to humankind. Service, or love in action, must become the hub of our life. If practiced regularly, service becomes an attitude of mind that spills over into all relationships—with family, friends, with everybody, even with those whom we dislike, for we can dislike a person through our personality, while still loving that person with our soul.

There are so many little ways of living and serving, and little ways lead to bigger ways. For example, answer the telephone amiably, rather than with a snappy recitation of one's number; it sets the tone of the conversation to follow in the same way that the opening paragraph of a novel sets the tone of the book. Cook lovingly; the food will absorb your vibrations and be more digestible. It is a well-known fact that one of the chief complaints in prisons is constipation, not because of lack of exercise or bad food, but because the food is cooked without love.

Limit Desires

Place a ceiling on desires. Desire is the cause of most of the world's suffering. One can work at this through spiritual discipline, which is certainly good for some people, but it can also lead to frustration, and

.....
Cook lovingly; the food
will absorb your vibrations
and be more digestible.
.....

frustration is disease. I think the better way is through sublimation to grow out of one's desires, and this is best done through service. I can write only from experience.

As a young man from an affluent family, I spent holidays in the South of France and enjoyed so-called high living. But after the past thirty years of service, I live in a small cottage, drive a secondhand Mini, eat very little, and spend very little on clothes. I have foregone holidays and all social life. I work for Swami seven days a week. It is no sacrifice; indeed my nightmare would be to be compelled to lead my former life. I have found the inner joy of service so much more fulfilling than indulging the senses in physical and material living.

Expand a sense of duty and learn to accept duties with good grace. Swami says: *The secret of happiness lies not in doing what you like, but in liking what you have to do.* This is true, for the simple reason that in doing what you have to do, you are following God's will instead of your own, and in time you grow to prefer that.

Wasting things is wasting God, says Swami. Learn to be thrifty and to make do and mend. No one has to follow the increasingly material modern trends. Ask yourself the following questions: How much food do I waste, when millions in the world are starving? How much energy do I waste

.....

Learn to welcome criticism instead of being offended by it.

.....

in long, gossipy telephone conversations, or in reading trivia in the newspapers? How much money do I waste—when part of our income in excess of what is necessary for our reasonably frugal needs should be, as Swami says, *held in trust for humanity*?

Try to resist the temptation to know too much. Swami says: *You seek too much information and not enough transformation!* Strike a balance between Knowing and Being. Knowledge that is not put to use in service is like food that is not digested.

Detachment

Of course, detachment from the characteristics of the lower self should be a major plank in one's efforts at self-improvement—that is, detachment from ego, personal pride, envy, jealousy, anger, and hate. Learn to welcome criticism instead of being offended by it. If there are occasions when you feel jealousy or envy, beat down these negative emotions and try to transmute them into positive ones. To take one small example, if you are sitting in Swami's *darshan* line, and He calls the person sitting next to you for an interview and ignores you, transmute any incipient pangs of envy into feelings of happiness for the one so blessed. Develop this into instant recognition and arrestment, until the habit grows and such emotions no longer arise.

When praying to Baba, do not always ask for something—for faith, a sign, a calling, a dream, or guidance. He once said, after an exhausting tour, *It is your love that sustains me*. He needs our help in His gargantuan task, so sometimes remember to ask Him what you can give Him, or what is the best way you can serve Him.

Finally, let us address a few ideals for those who aspire to become advanced devotees, beyond the steps recommended for beginners. First, one must learn to dispense with the need of the Sai physical form by activating the omnipresent link. I remember talking to some students at the Sri Sathya Sai College at Brindavan. They said they felt closer to Swami when He was away than when He was present. I suspect there is an element of spiritual immaturity, perhaps even of indulgence, in those who make the journey to Swami every year, sometimes twice a year, at very considerable expense. Swami discourages it. He says, *Make your home a Prasanthi Nilayam* (Abode of Supreme Peace).

Finally, we have to accept suffering as necessary for our growth. Swami has said, *Do you think I would confront you with pain if it were not for your good?* On another occasion He said, *Happiness is just an interlude between two periods of suffering*. Conversely, suffering is just an interlude between two periods of happiness.

When I came to Baba, it was the most impacting and consummating experience of my life. In fact, on reflection, it seems that every significant event in a long and checkered incarnation was in preparation

for a final mission—to play a major role in bringing the Sai message to the ethnic nationals of my motherland.

I submit that whatever happens to you in life—be it joy, sorrow, happiness, cancer, disablement, or whatever—is for your ultimate good. I have come to believe this, beyond reason, in the core of my higher Self.

To those who aspire to become quality devotees, it is the highest faith you will achieve. Perhaps this is why Swami always says, *Why fear when I am here?*

—Ron Laing, London
From *Sathya Sai Baba Quarterly Magazine*, U.K., Autumn 1988

A Practical Application of Ceiling on Desires

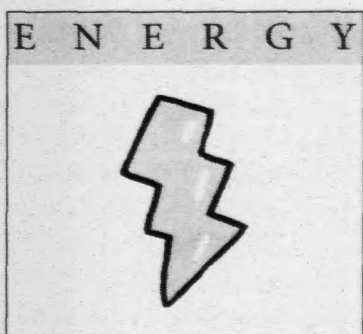
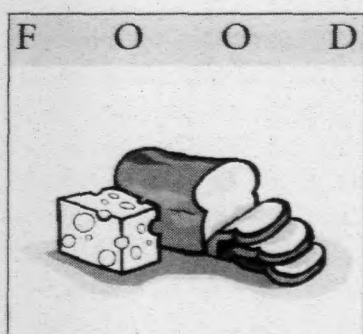
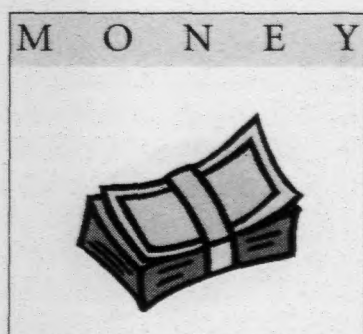
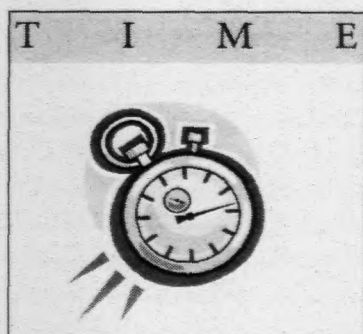
Time wasted is life wasted. —Baba

Do you have a hard time in your attempts to save time? You may be wasting time by doing unnecessary things. Here are ten tips that may help:

1. Plan your day carefully and make every effort to follow the plan you've made.
2. Don't spend a lot of time making simple decisions. For example, try not to search forever for something to wear when you're getting dressed in the morning. Decide quickly.
3. Take shorter showers. You'll not only be saving time but water and energy as well.
4. Do something constructive instead of wasting time while commuting to school—read on the bus, listen to language tapes—or *Sathya Sai Newsletter* tapes—in the car.
5. Travel the shortest possible route to your destination.
6. Make a list when you go shopping and buy only what's on it.
7. Shorten every phone call you make by five minutes.
8. Set a limit on the amount of time spent at friends' houses.
9. Eliminate one or more television shows from those you watch.
10. Try to use all the five major values (Truth, Right Action, Peace, Love, and Nonviolence) during your day. This will help you to focus on what's truly important and eliminate what's not.

And if you don't have time to save time, *make time*.

—Judith Wechsler, Rocky Mount, Virginia
Mid-Atlantic/Northeast Region SSE Writing Workshop, 1986



Desires

The ideal of a high standard of life, instead of a high level of living, has played havoc with human society. A high level of living insists on morality, humility, detachment, and compassion; thus, the competitive need for luxury and conspicuous consumption receives no encouragement and can be destroyed.

Nowadays people are the slaves of their desires; they find themselves helpless to conquer the thirst for pleasure and luxury; they are too weak to keep their nature under control, and they do not know how to arouse the divine consciousness that is latent within them.

Achieving a High Level of Living

Mere moral practices cannot help you achieve this high level of living. It can be done only by spiritual practices (*sadhana*). A basic transformation such as this involves the elimination of the mind. The mind here, which is the arch-obstacle in the path, is different from the intellect. The grace of God, if invoked and won, can endow you with the power to transform the mind—and the necessary grace is available within you, awaiting the call.

The argument may be raised, “If one has to give up the desires for comfort, luxury, and pleasure, why should one be embroiled in society?” This argument presupposes the belief that society is justified only by the provision of worldly joys, but what kind of society can one build on such a slender foundation? If built, it can be a society only in name; it will not be bound by mutual love and cooperation. The strong will suppress the weak. Social relations will be marred by discontent. Even when attempts are made to divide the resources bestowed by nature equally among all, cordiality will exist only on the surface and will not be spontaneous. We can limit the resources available, but we cannot limit greed, desire, and craving.

Desire involves seeking beyond the limits of possibility. What has to be done is to pluck out desire by the roots: man must give up the desire for objective pleasure based on the illusion that the world is multiple, manifold, multicolored, and so on—and not on the truth that the world, nature, and all creation is one.

When a person is conscious only of the one, then who can desire what? What can be acquired and enjoyed by the second person? *Atmic* vision (knowledge of inner, all-pervasive divinity) destroys the desire for objective joys, for one realizes that there is no object distinct from the subject.

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume IX

Pursue Life's Goals in Pairs

The *Vedas* lay down four goals before human beings: *dharma* (right action), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (desire), and *moksha* (liberation). These must be pursued in pairs: *dharma* and *artha* must be aimed at together, and *kama* and *moksha* together. That is to say, wealth has to be earned through right action, and one's desire must be for liberation. People mistakenly take these four separately and thus lose all. They place them

into separate categories and adopt distinct plans to achieve each one. Thus, their personalities do not become integrated; they lead a broken life. They give up right action and liberation as beyond their ability to attain, and waste their lives in pursuing sheer wealth and desire, which lead them into ruin.

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume IX

Use Intelligence to Dig Deep

The precious gems of wisdom within your heart require excavation in order to be of any benefit to you. Intelligence (*buddhi*) is the instrument you must use in order to gain them. At the very outset, you encounter a boulder blocking your way—body consciousness, the ego. Desires are like loose rocks that also need to be dug out and kept aside. Then you come to a layer of sand—good thoughts, good words, and good deeds; when this stratum is reached, you are nearing success. If you keep in good

company (*satsang*) every day, your hearts will maintain their purity unimpaired, but if you seek good company only off and on, it will be difficult to win grace or partake of it, for your vessel will be tarnished and untidy. In your own households you must have noticed that a cooking pot in daily use stays bright and clean, while pots that are stored and used only now and then have to be scrubbed with great vigor to become bright again.

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Volume IX

Attract the Mind Toward Truth

It is the mind that makes or mars a man. If the mind is immersed in things of the world, it leads to bondage; if it treats the world as but temporary, then by that *vairagya* (detachment, renunciation, nonattachment) it becomes free and light. Train the mind not to feel attached to things that change for better or for worse. Do not hold before it the tinsels of worldly fame and riches; attract it toward lasting joys derived from the wellsprings deep inside you. That will bring great rewards. The mind itself will then become the guru, for it leads you on and on, once it has tasted the sweets of meditation and awareness—of *sravana* (listening), of *manava* (becoming enlightened, without a trace of ignorance), and of *nididhyasana* (meditating on the truth you have garnered, and planting it deep in your consciousness).

—Voice of the Avatar, Volume I

Lessons from Krishna

When the desire to attain the fruits of one's actions is renounced with full intellectual awareness, then it becomes what Krishna called *buddhiyogam*. The intellect has to be purified and trained; otherwise it is impossible to give up attachment to the fruits of action and to continue along

spiritual paths such as duty and dedication. Such a purified intellect is called *yogabuddhi*. Cultivate it and then, through it, liberate yourself from the bondage of activity (*karma*). Truly speaking, you, the real, true you, are above and beyond *karma*.

You might resolve to desist from activity rather than practice the difficult discipline of renouncing the fruits thereof. But that is impossible. No, activity is inevitable, as one has to do some activity or other. *Not for a single moment can one free oneself from activity*, said Krishna in the third chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*:

Arjuna! Every deed (karya) or activity (karma) has a beginning and an end. But desireless activity (nishkama karma) has no such, and that is the difference between the two. When activity is done with a view to the gain therefrom, one has to suffer the loss, the pain, and even the punishment. But desireless activity frees you from all these.

Desire the fruits of activity and you get born again and again, caught up in that desire. Give up that desire and you are liberated from the flux. The practice of this type of renunciation ends the state of bondage.

The main point is to stick to the goal. The goal is activity (karma), not the fruits of activity (karmaphala). Let me tell you that the desire for the fruits of one's actions is an indication of rajoguna (the passionate, excessive quality), which does not benefit you. On the other hand, perhaps you prefer to remain inactive. Well, that is an indication of thamoguna (the dull, deficient quality), which is even worse than rajoguna.

How to Disarm and Replace Desires

When Arjuna prayed for Keshava (Lord Krishna, encompassing the aspects of creator, preserver, and destroyer) to tell him the true characteristics of one who has steady wisdom, He replied, *O Partha! He will be free from all desire. He will be stable*

The Lord has laid down four commands. The first one is a *do* and the other three are *don'ts*; the first insists upon the cultivation of strength, and the rest require the avoidance of weakness.

Of course, it is not Arjuna alone who got such advice; all of humanity needs it. Arjuna is "everyman"—the representative human being. Students of the *Bhagavad Gita* must learn this lesson first—that the *Bhagavad Gita* is primarily for every seeker.

Another point to be noted is that the *Gita* is addressed to human beings, not to birds and beasts or to the gods or *devas*. Only humans perform acts prompted by the desire for the fruits thereof. If the act does not yield fruit, they tend not to engage in the action at all. Profit, gain, reward, result—these are what people seek. But this rule does not apply to those who take the *Gita* in their hands to drink the nectar of the Lord's message.

Not all yearn for this nectar, but if you do so, it is evident that you aspire for eternal joy, eternal liberation. Then you must pay the price, the giving up of desire for the fruits of one's action, and the dedicating of everything at the feet of the Lord.

—Gita Vahini, pp. 33-34

in the knowledge and awareness of the Self (Atma).

Now, this involves two processes: the negative process is giving up all the promptings of desire in the mind; the positive aspect is to implant joy, ever-present joy therein. The

negative process is to remove all the seedlings of wrong and evil from the mind. The positive process is to grow, in the field thus cleansed, the crop of attachment to God. The mind is a bundle of wishes, and unless these wishes are removed by their roots, there is no hope of destroying the mind, which is a great obstacle in the path of spiritual progress. When the yarn that comprises the cloth is removed, strand by strand, what then remains of the cloth? Nothing. The mind is made of the warp and woof of desires. And when the mind vanishes, steady wisdom is made.

So the first thing to be conquered is the demon of desire



(*kama*). For this, it is not necessary to wage a huge war. It is also unnecessary to use pleasing

words to persuade the desire to disappear. Desires will not disappear for fear of the one or for favor of the other. Desires are objective, belonging to the category of the "seen," with the conviction that "I am the seer only, not the seen." The one of steady wisdom releases himself from attachment and by this means conquers desire. You must watch the working of the mind from outside it and not get involved in it. That is the meaning of this discipline.

—Gita Vahini, pp. 37-38

Identify with God

Then in reply to another question from Arjuna, Krishna said, *Desire is the root cause of all evil. He elaborated on its nature, cause, and cure: He who is bound by the false idea that he is just this body and nothing more, can never hope to conquer activity. One must acquire the awareness that he is only the Eternal Absolute (Brahmam), and nothing else, in order to be sure of victory. All acts must be performed in the spirit of dedication to the Lord.*

—Gita Vahini, p. 45

Root Out Desire, Anger, and Fear

[Krishna also said,] *Men render the inner consciousness impure by dwelling on the objective world through ignorance. They take delight in mere sound, taste, sight, and so on. When they seek objective pleasure, they are tempted to secure the objects that give them pleasure. Foiled in the attempt, they become restless, hateful, and afraid. Fear robs man of his mental resources. It creates anger that cannot be easily pacified. Thus, desire, anger, and fear are aroused one after the other, and these three have to be removed. Arjuna, resolve these facts in your mind and then act. Become reasonable. Have faith in My words.*

—Gita Vahini, p. 63

Discipline the Body and the Senses

Let all desire and attachment be for God [only]; He alone is eternal, and He alone is the source of all joy. For the rest, love a thing as a thing only. Love man as man only. Love God fully. Those who seek the bliss of the supreme should not always run after the joys of sense objects.

Understand this well; make the body obey your will. Never give in to it and follow

its whims. Be prepared to put it aside; resolve to control it, and keep it under strict control. You have to deal with your body carefully and train it with strict attention. This will cool the passions and endow the body with strength. You will develop virtues, and the body will become suitable for meditation and spiritual disciplines.

The Dawn of Wisdom

As you learn to control your [sense] organs, wisdom will dawn on you, and this wisdom will enable you to understand the aspect of the inner reality or soul (*Atma*) as distinct from non-*Atma*, and you will be able to enter the mansion of God. As your discriminating power arising out of this wisdom grows and you realize the divinity of the soul, you will automatically get self-satisfaction or contentment, and thereby you can enter the mansion.

But, do people have self-satisfaction or contentment today? No, they are never satisfied. They always ask for something more. Here is a small example. An individual who is very hungry will pray for a small quantity of food; he will then aspire for some clothes, and if he has both of these, he will want to have a home. Once he gets a house, he will want to get married, and after that he will want a job. When he gets a child, he will want a promotion. Is there any limit to

people's desires? For a man who originally did not have anything to eat, this is indeed much to ask, for such a desire leads one only to ask for more and more and to gather more worries.

On one occasion, Sankaracharya was asked who was a poor man and who was a rich man. He answered, "He who is a satisfied person is a rich man, and he who has many desires is a poor man." To be satisfied with what you have is to seek entry into God's mansion. Whether we meet with sorrow or with happiness in life, we should be satisfied and regard it as God's gift in our own interest and develop a spirit of satisfaction and equal-mindedness.

—*Summer Showers in Brindavan*, 1978

—**Sathya Sai Baba**

*Compiled by the Sathya Sai Baba
Center of Los Angeles, California*

Focus on Region 1

Group Trip to Prasanthi Nilayam

On August 2, 2003, more than 100 devotees from the Northeast Region, Region 1, came together in Prasanthi Nilayam to enjoy the special blessings of Swami's *darshan* (seeing a holy being). It all started many months before, when Dr. Ravi Dabir and others began to make plans that would result in this wonderful, once in a lifetime experience. Though most of us had been to Prasanthi several times before, this was to be our first "group" adventure.

We were able to see both Baba and Prasanthi Nilayam as never before. With divine graciousness, Sathya Sai Baba allowed for our special accommodations to be taken care of in advance, so that we could all stay near one another. It was also arranged that for the entire week, we would never need to wait in line; our block of seats on both the men's and women's sides were reserved. In addition, special activities were arranged each morning after *darshan*, and a speaker after dinner.

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Focus on Region 10

Arkansas' World Festival

The Arkansas WorldFest to celebrate the World's Communities is organized by the Racial and Cultural Diversity Commission each year in Little Rock. With Swami's grace, the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center of Little Rock was invited to put up a booth at the 2003 WorldFest. Following permission from Mrs. Nandini Mahadevan, President of Region 10, and approval from Mr. Phil Gosselin, President of the Sri Sathya Sai Council, USA, we began preparations for setting up a booth. First, we decided that all the Sri Sathya Sai literature should be on display only, and not for sale. If someone seemed interested in obtaining Sai books or periodicals, we would give them the address of the Sathya Sai Book Center.

When we reached McArthur Park, the venue of WorldFest, we were directed to our booth in a corner of the "Community

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Focus on Region 1

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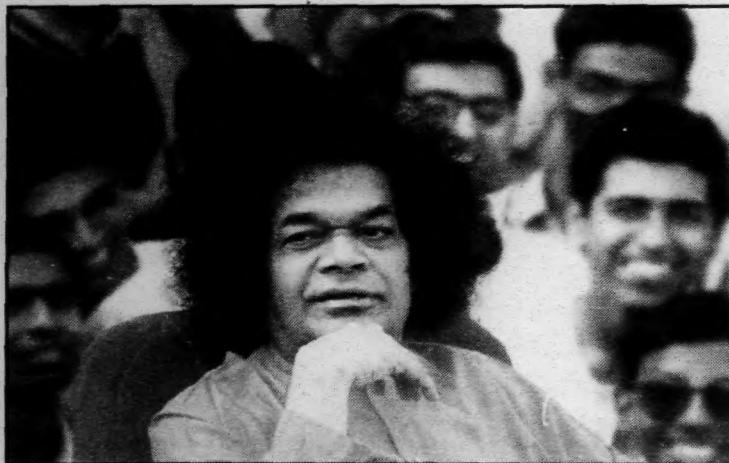
We were given the opportunity to visit the Sai Planetarium, Chaitanya Jyothi Museum, and the Super Specialty Hospital, and we were treated to these by such noted devotees as Dr. D.C. Sundaresh, Anil Kumar, and Dr. Venkataraman.

Throughout the week, at every event, the women wore matching saris and all of us wore our USA scarves with name tags attached. It was a wonderful example of unity in action. Some of us had been part of the group from the initial planning, while others decided to join just a week before the trip, but unity prevailed nonetheless.

Of course Swami's *leelas* (divine plays) abound, and our individual wills often rebelled when some wanted to do things outside the group. However, we learned more wonderful lessons on the importance of unity.

We arrived on a Saturday afternoon in time for afternoon *darshan*. By divine grace, most of us had recovered from jet lag. We talked about the possibility of Swami blessing us with an interview. Of course we knew that our numbers were too great for all of us to fit into the interview room at once, but everyone hoped that Swami would find a way. We were even told to be prepared with questions to ask Him. We

were divided into groups of 25 or 30, each loosely representing their own Sai Centers. One morning it happened! The Farmington Center was called in for an interview. There were 26 in all; some were in Prasanthi for the first time, others for their first interview. They went into the tiny room to enjoy the bliss of being in Sai Baba's divine presence for 90 minutes.



Without wasting a word or motion, Swami set about talking, teaching, joking, and putting everyone at ease. He manifested jewelry for several, then left only to return quickly with fruit for a restless

child—such is His love. This was only two months after His hip surgery.

When we floated out of the interview room and returned gently to earth, we imagined that the other groups would receive interviews as well. But as we all know, predicting Swami's actions is a foolish pastime. Between prayers for our friends to have interviews, we struggled to learn some new *bhajans* (holy songs) in case Swami wanted us to sing for Him. That did not take place, but it kept us focused.

Each pilgrimage is special and bears its own mark, always with fresh and unforgettable memories; for us it was the lesson in unity and love that will always be remembered.

—Devotees from Region 1

Resource" section. We were not too happy about the positioning of the booth because it was in a remote corner, and there was no space to display our banner carrying the *Sarva Dharma* symbol. The next thing we knew, someone noticed a small uneven area right in front of the booth. The ground was deemed too dangerous for people to walk, as someone could trip and fall. We were required to move our booth to the center of the resource section, where it was both visible and accessible to everyone—*Jai Sai Ram!*

The first day, the booth was visited by hundreds of people; most of them were students, and they took with them the pamphlets about Swami, His Message, and His Divine Mission published by the Sri Sathya Sai Council. A number of the students quickly realized that God has come in human form, and they indicated how much they wanted to meet Him. Several adults also requested copies and subscription forms for the *Sathya Sai Newsletter* as well as the *Sai World* magazine (for children), to learn more about the Sai phenomenon. We offered this information only to those who seemed genuinely interested.

The second day, blessings were showered as again hundreds of people came, this time more adults than students. They

thanked us for making this information available and were surprised and delighted to learn about free medical services in the two Super Specialty Hospitals in India, and about a spiritual instructor who teaches that God is here now, that all religions are one, and that we should all join together and sing the Lord's praises.

About 2:30 p.m., our beloved Lord Sai

One of the organizers came by and informed us that our booth had won an award. ...

"The World Best Choice Award"

blessed us again. One of the organizers came by and informed us that our booth had won an award. Only three awards were presented: "The Best

Decorated," "The Most Informative," and last but not least, "The World Best Choice Award," which was given to the Sai Center booth! This award was given for the greatest overall effort and commitment for manning a booth, for its very inviting and friendly nature, and for the presentation skills and eagerness to help the visitors who came. (We think it was also the attractive picture of Swami that was displayed in front of the booth.) Members of the Sai Center of Little Rock thank Swami for taking care of everything, making our job so simple, and blessing us with a trophy. We fervently pray always to be allowed to serve at the divine lotus feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Sathya Sai Baba Center
Little Rock, Arkansas

What Is This Life?

In this world without right education or the divine experience,
How can one rid oneself of this deluding portent,
Of this world — in the midst of chaos & delusion — this veil of *Maya**?
Tell me — how can it be removed without love to the Feet of the Lord?
Living life — taking things to be real — engrossed in sense pleasure,
Where is happiness to be found?
Relatives all die — things do fade — what is real?
Let the Lord of the Solar Dynasty — Sri Rama,
The One who played the Flute — Sri Krishna,
The same One as Shirdi & now Sathya — dispel all ignorance.
Truly — *Maya* bows down only to One who is beyond her.
This is His mystery — though ever One Purusha & Prakriti (Being and
Nature),
We are ever deluded. Still,
She can step aside & He be known;
Without that — what are the fruits of actions we reap?

—Michael Hollander
Montvale, New Jersey

* *Maya* = illusion

The Secret of Having More

Seeking the Best Uses of Time, Energy, and Money

The Canadian humorist Stephen Leacock once gave a series of talks in England. At one of these talks, the chairman introduced him by saying, "Two hundred years ago, we sent people from England to settle Canada. We sent to Canada our criminals, our misfits, our outcasts, and now," (indicating Stephen Leacock) "they are coming back." The Glendale center is the successor to the Hollywood center, which was my first center before I moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan, so I'm coming back too.

Every day, more and more people are moving to California, in search of the good life. What is the good life? All of us are here because we have decided that the good life is the life of a devotee of the Lord. We all know, however, that this is not what most people think the good life is. In this modern age, most people, especially educated people, think that being a devotee of the Lord is "goofy." (That's the word Dr. Sandweiss used for the way most other psychiatrists describe him.) I suppose all of us have friends and relatives who think we don't have both oars in the water. We just have to live with that. As a Hollywood producer once put it, "Don't pay any attention to them. Don't even ignore them."

Baba tells us, in His discourses on the *Gita*, that all of us are being swept away in the river of time, and the only way to escape destruction is to find something to hang on to. Most people are hanging on to their property, their money, and their investments. Baba says, however, that these things can't offer us any security because they are also being swept away in the river of time. Instead, we have to hang on to the Lord, who is outside the stream of time. We need to love God and trust God.

One area where many people lack confidence is public speaking. As more and more people hear or read about Sai Baba, and have questions, we will need more public meetings and more speakers. Baba isn't going to send us a planeload of speakers from India; it has to be us. We can start out by speaking in our own centers. Then you're just talking to your friends about Baba, so there's nothing to be afraid of. Besides, all Sai devotees are committed to nonviolence, so no matter what they think of your talk, you're perfectly safe: they won't lay a finger on you.

So you should recognize that speaking to people about Sai Baba is an important responsibility, and make an effort to do the

best you can, but there's no need to be overly nervous. The first time might be difficult, but the more you do it, the easier it gets, and the more you can relax.

I don't know what the schedule of activities at the Southern California Regional Conferences are like, but in the Central Region we have a tight schedule of *nagarsankirtan*, breakfast, a *bhajan* session, a speaker, lunch, another *bhajan* session, a study circle, a service project, dinner, an evening *bhajan* session, reports on the activities of the various centers in the region, a session for personal experiences of devotees, and late-night videos of Baba.

Some years ago, we had Charles and Faith Penn and Althea Taylor as speakers at the Central Regional Conference, and I told Faith that I enjoyed all these stimulating activities, but after two days I was looking forward to escaping from the stress and pressure of the spiritual path and returning to the peace and tranquility of worldly life. She said she could sympathize with that feeling, but time at the conference was limited and it was important not to waste it. The conclusion from this is that we need to learn a mental attitude of relaxed intensity, or be intent though relaxed.

Sai Baba has this attitude: He is always relaxed but always alert. This is the secret of getting a lot of work done without using a lot of energy and without wasting time. This fits in with the Ceiling on Desires program, because time and energy are two of the things the Ceiling on Desires program advises us not to waste. The secret of relaxed intensity is to dedicate all our work to Baba

without being concerned about the result. Of course we can't be completely indifferent to the result. I saw a cartoon showing two men talking. One of them was saying, "I've often met with triumph and disaster, and treated those two impostors just the same, but I've always had a secret preference for triumph." But if we are too concerned about the result, it distracts us from the work and wastes energy.

The other two things the Ceiling on Desires program asks us not to waste are food and money. Sometimes we think of the Ceiling on Desires as something negative: deny ourselves this, cut down on that. But it is actually positive. I suppose we would all like to have more time, money, and energy. Well, if we waste less, then we'll have more. So think of Ceiling on Desires as a way to have more time, more money, and more energy.

In connection with the program, there is an important spiritual virtue that is usually underrated, namely, laziness. My mother used to smoke cigarettes. This is a habit that wastes time and costs money. One night she discovered that she was out of cigarettes. She doesn't like to drive, especially at night. So she decided it was too much trouble to go out and buy more cigarettes. The next day she felt the same way, and she hasn't smoked since. So laziness is a great advantage in reducing unnecessary desires. If we can put our bad qualities to work for us, our progress can sometimes be all the faster.

The necessities of life are usually listed as food, clothing, and shelter. But, as

someone has said, people can always do without necessities; it's the luxuries we must have. We love our automobiles, our color TVs, and our VCRs. It might help you reduce your desires if you keep in mind that no matter how much you love your VCR, it doesn't love you. And the experience of most people is that unrequited love is not a source of lasting happiness. So we should direct more of our love toward Baba, in order to get a better return on our investment.

Meister Eckhart wrote that anyone who desires God and something else is much too greedy. The Bible says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and everything else will be added unto you." That doesn't mean we should all quit our jobs and go around with begging bowls; our jobs in the world should be done as part of our spiritual training.

We often think that spiritual life is difficult. But Baba tells us that spiritual life is simple; it is worldly life that is difficult. Telling the truth takes less effort than inventing a lie. Getting along peacefully with other people takes less energy than fighting. The U.S. has a military budget of hundreds of billions of dollars a year, even when we are not at war, but peace doesn't cost us anything.

Worldly knowledge is always changing, but spiritual principles are unchanging.



Textbook prices and tuition fees keep going up, making worldly knowledge more and more expensive. Spiritual knowledge is being given to all of us by Baba for free, and His schools and college are free for the students. If you go into a bank, will they give you money just because you ask for it? But if you want liberation, all you have to do is ask.

In this *Kali Yuga*,* Baba says that all we need to do to be liberated is to repeat the name of the Lord, with love, whenever we have no other work to do. In earlier *yugas*, getting liberation was much more difficult, but man has degenerated in

the *Kali Yuga*, and God doesn't want to flunk everybody, so He has to grade on the curve.

Dr. John Hislop [used to] frequently remind us of the precious opportunity we have been given of living while the Avatar is here offering us His personal guidance. If we want to be liberated, now is the time. This offer is available for a limited time only and may not be repeated, so let us always keep Baba in our hearts and be filled with love, peace, and joy.

—Perry Smith
Santa Clara, California

**Kali Yuga*—age of moral decline, when the divine and demonic forces battle within each human being.

Announcements & Subscription Information

Sai Ram! Unfortunately it becomes necessary once again to warn devotees about people who travel to Centers claiming to have Swami's special blessing as spiritual teachers. Sugriv Singh, a self-styled guru from Canada, who has claimed to be Swami's embodiment in the West and who seems to materialize *vibuthi* (holy ash), is touring different parts of the USA and arranging meetings, often involving devotees.

Please be informed that this man was specifically disavowed by Swami, as has been documented in the Indian *Sanathana Sarathi* newsletter publication. Also, Dr. V. P. Singh, President of the Canadian Sai Organization, has sent a strong letter to all Sai Centers informing them of this. Please be advised not to be taken in by these kinds of activities.

—Phil Gosselin, President, Sathya Sai Council, USA

Embodiments of the Divine Atma. ... In order to make known that the Divine has incarnated, miraculous happenings of a divine nature do occur in certain places. Taking advantage of the attraction, many misuse these for personal propaganda and self-aggrandizement. They trade for money the vibhuti (holy ash) that the pictures on their altars shower. They go about pretending that they are "superior devotees" of a higher order, and conferring boons and blessings on the innocent folk whom they fleece. ... I can only tell you that it is not I who speaks [or acts] through them. I do not need media, nor do I need representatives.

—Sathya Sai Baba, *Sathya Sai Speaks*, November 22, 1970

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Children's Corner

What Is Real Wealth?

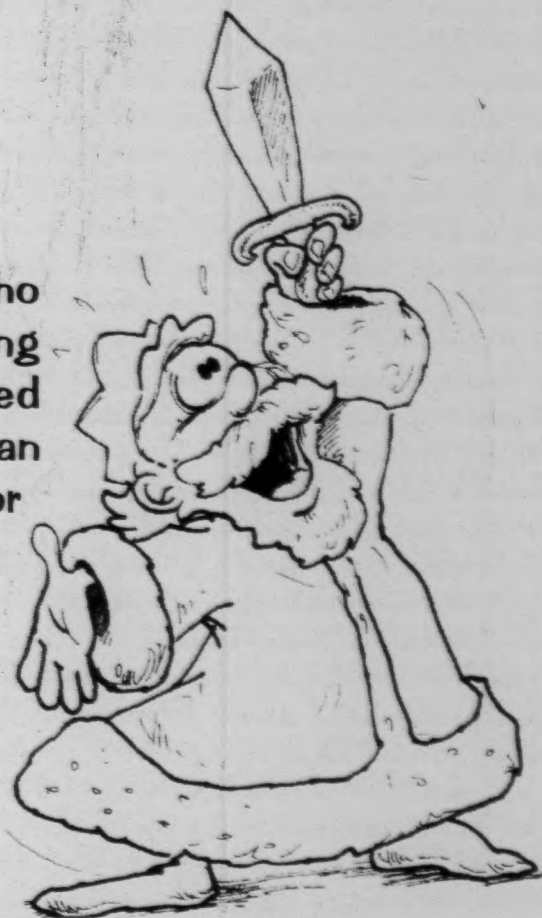
Once there was a rich and powerful king who wanted to invade and conquer a neighboring country. While passing over a snow-covered mountain with his army, the king met a holy man who had no clothes. The king thought the poor fellow must be cold, so he tried to give the holy man his grand and expensive cloak.

The holy man had grown wise from his many years of prayer and meditation. He said to the king, "The Lord has always taken care of my every need. Oh king, give the cloak to someone who is poor – not to me." The holy man went on to say very sweetly to the king, "If you are so unhappy with all your riches that you must conquer another kingdom, and cause your soldiers to risk their lives, then keep the cloak. You are a poor man; you need it more than I do."

The king was wise enough to understand the teaching the holy man was giving him. The king realized how poor and empty his life was. He asked the holy man for the secret to his peace and happiness.

The holy man answered, "I am happy because I have no desires; without desires you are the master of everything."

Then and there, the king called off the war and took his army home. The citizens of his country welcomed him as a hero, for the king indeed had conquered and won a great victory. He no longer had any desires!



—Excerpted from *Bal Vikas Magazine*
for Children 1 to 99, Italy

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discourse given by Bhagavan when He first announced His mission to the world on His 43rd birthday, 1968. The discourse is translated by Prof. Kasturi. Also includes *bhajans* sung by Sai Baba plus an original composition by Lightstorm.

SCE-77\$9.00

The Inward Journey

Make a Temple of Your Heart

As a student at the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School and the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, I was blessed (along with thousands of other students) with many unique experiences in Sai Baba's divine presence. These experiences ranged from singing, acting, and speaking in front of Him, to physical activities such as archery, cycling, hula hoops, and various drills. Swami came into our classrooms, auditoriums, examinations, and prayer halls. He watched our Sports Meet practices and play rehearsals, granted us special group interviews, posed for pictures with us, and spoke with us individually. He even served us food occasionally, such as during the Summer Course in Brindavan.

His compassion and understanding were like those of a loving parent. When we were sick He inquired lovingly as to our condition. I recall one year when over 150 of us contracted chicken pox. Swami had us take tablets made from neem leaves to reduce the itching! He asked the teachers to give us yogurt rice, because it was easier for us to swallow with the pox in our throats. When this epidemic was followed by mumps, our beloved Lord asked that those affected be moved to certain rooms in the ashram so the whole school wouldn't suffer. His example of taking care of any issue was absolute perfection. He thought of every little detail.

We had all left our parents and homes to be closer to Him, and He gave us much more than we ever imagined possible. Things were not easy; in fact, almost everything was challenging. From the daily routine, to studying, to the intense discipline expected in every aspect of our lives, we were tested. Through it all, Sai Baba demonstrated His omniscience in the most interesting ways.

A friend and I devised a spoken code language, just for fun. We spoke to each other in this code and enjoyed the fact that no one else knew our secret. The next time we went to Prashanti, in the middle of His divine discourse, Swami used our code to explain something! We were amazed and thrilled at the Lord's demonstration that He was in on our small secret.

Little did we know how our experiences then would help us in the future. Swami's words came back to reverberate in our lives when we least expected it. The showers of divine grace that we received became reservoirs of strength for future trials and tribulations.

That golden stage in my life is over. After graduating from seven years of studying in Parthi and Anantapur, I missed His physical form very much. In order to feel 'closer' to Him, I tried adapting some of the disciplines we practiced at the hostel to my life at home. Even simple things helped me to feel His

presence. The challenge was to assimilate all that I had learned and put it into practice on a mundane level, but even this didn't seem enough.

Subsequent visits to Parthi were at times painful because the tremendous amount of physical attention that He used to lavish was now diminishing gradually. Even dreams of Swami that I had once had with great frequency started decreasing. I began doubting myself. Was I doing something terribly wrong? Was I now unworthy of His loving attention? Of course I knew He loved me unconditionally, but why was He avoiding me? After tremendous soul searching, I slowly came to realize that He was weaning me, gradually, from being attached to His physical form. He wanted me to feel the Divine within.

Many years ago in the first interview that I had ever had, I asked Swami, "You always say that You are with us, but how do we know?" The divine Lord replied, *I am in your heart; make a mandir (temple) of your heart.*

I thought I understood His statement, but I hadn't really experienced it. Gradually, I started imagining His presence at various times. I derived tremendous joy in consciously including Him in my daily routine. The Light Meditation helped me to expand my love for all. Service of any kind helped to concretize that love. Prayer keeps me connected to Him regardless of what is happening around me.

It is of course a constant struggle to elevate oneself to the Divine, but true joy and happiness come only from having a love affair with God. I have my ups and downs,

and it is extremely challenging, but the God-given gifts of a loving family and friends have helped me to focus on that goal.

I cannot say that I am not attached to His physical form or have reached any advanced level of spirituality. I can only share my heartfelt belief that our dearest Lord is closer to us than the very air that we breathe. It is not always a tangible presence, but a loving power that soothes us in our times of need and can uplift us to great heights. He guides and protects us in ways that we cannot even imagine. His love for each and every one of us is the same. Personal experiences at any level cannot be qualified or quantified by the human mind. It is a divine equation.

The journey from the external world to the universe within is a continuous one. It is not a unique privilege given to some, but it is the birthright of every human being on the planet. However, those of us who are aware that Divinity Himself is walking among us are privileged to feel His direct guidance in our lives. My most ardent prayer is to use this divine guidance to become a worthy instrument of His in any way He sees fit.

On January 1, 2003, I wrote a letter to Swami asking Him to bless all people everywhere, all creatures, and all living things. It was a prayer that He fill us with His love and guide us all to get closer to Him. He accepted the letter. May we all be blessed to live in His presence and be filled with His love—*Jai Sai Ram.*

—Malini Gadepally

Graduate of Annapur, B.A., English
San Jose, California

Working with the Ceiling on Desires Program

Integrated Awareness of Our Use of Resources

Each of the four categories* of the Ceiling on Desires program [the divine resources of food, time, money, and energy, and how we use them] can be considered separately, but it is easy to see that they often overlap in our lives. It is therefore necessary to observe the ways they can interact, in order to do as Baba asks, and it is also necessary to learn to use discrimination. We may save money, but in so doing, we may waste time or energy—or we may save time and energy while wasting food and money, or any combination thereof. So we need to look carefully at the balance of all four when making daily decisions.

Eating in restaurants may save time and energy but waste food and money. Or it could waste time and food, and save energy and money, or any combination of the four, depending on the type of restaurant, the transportation needed to get there, and the kind of food served. These are the constant tradeoffs that we need to take into consideration when making daily decisions in order to avoid waste.

When buying clothes, we might be tempted in our enthusiasm to follow Baba's

* Although not discussed here, a fifth category, knowledge and its uses, is often included as an aspect of the Ceiling on Desires principles.

directions by buying an inexpensive suit or outfit. However, we need to determine if it will hold up with wear and cleaning long enough to be useful. If we need to replace it before the season ends, it would not only involve a waste of money, but also of time and energy. A little more money spent for a garment made of better quality and longer-lasting material would be preferable.

Clothes that are currently fashionable may be easy to find but may go out of style quickly. Planning a wardrobe of basic articles that can be worn with different accessories to provide variety saves money as well as the time and energy used for frequent shopping expeditions.

For short errands, perhaps we could walk instead of drive. Walking takes more time, but it saves money and also improves health.

Likewise, when choosing a mode of travel, we know that a plane costs more than driving a car for long distances, but air travel saves time and perhaps energy. When planning a trip, we may try to follow Baba's advice and choose a moderately-priced hotel, since the room is generally used only for sleeping. However, if it is so far away from the places where we need to be for work or appointments, we would waste time and

energy in traveling to and fro, besides money for extra transportation, so a compromise would be in order.

Attitudes

Most people find they are more conscious of one or more of the four areas than others, depending on the values and attitudes they acquired as children.

For instance, we either accepted or rejected our parents' attitude toward money. If they taught us to handle it wisely, we usually continue to follow the same pattern into adult life. But, if the handling of money was made into such a disagreeable issue that it became associated with arguments and conflict, then we may have rebelled, with the result that we show our independence by becoming spendthrifts.

If our parents taught us by their attitudes to believe that our security lay in money, instead of in God, we would make money too important in our lives and never feel that we had a sufficient amount. Consequently, money and its acquisition would be the motive for all our activities. We would work to make as much money as possible, instead of working to give service, which is a form of worship to God. Baba reiterates that this is the correct way to live.

The same is true of food. If food becomes our main security symbol, it will

be likely to assume too important a role in our lives. We would try in vain to satisfy our innate hunger for God by eating or drinking too much, also a form of waste.

Our attitude about time is likewise formed by our parental programming. If they wasted time, we may either have followed their pattern or rebelled and done the opposite. If they were driven by clock time and always under extreme pressure to be punctual, we may have reacted, either by following their example, or the opposite, by always being late. Likewise, if they were never on time, we may have adopted either that habit or the reverse.

Our attitude about the use of energy was also taught to us, often in very subtle ways, by our parents or authority figures during childhood. If they were of the opinion that work uses up too much energy, which they preferred to devote to their own self-indulgent pleasures, we may also have become hedonists or play-addicts, or the reverse, workaholics. Neither extreme is balanced. We need both work and recreation, or better still, to allow work to be so flowing that we are relaxed, not tense.

Stewardship of Divine Resources

We have been conditioned to regard money, food, time, and energy as our possessions. Actually, they all belong to

We have been conditioned to regard money, food, time, and energy as our possessions. Actually, they all belong to Baba.

Baba. Therefore, we are not the owners, but their managers. He has given each of us what He knows we need for our learning. It is therefore our duty and responsibility to make the very best use of them, not for our personal benefit, but as honest and capable stewards for Baba and His purposes.

So our daily question becomes, "How does Baba want me to use His four gifts of money, food, time, and energy today?" This relieves the heavy burden we carry when we consider each of the four areas as our own personal possessions and use each one for selfish purposes.

We do not really own any of them, so we can enjoy them whether they happen to be in our possession or not. One devotee shared the experience of going to a department store and being tempted to buy unnecessary items because they were attractive. She said silently to Baba, "Thank you, Baba, for allowing me to see all your pretty things whenever I wish, without having to have them with me all the time."

Another devotee, while meditating, "saw" Baba at the door of a house. He invited her to enter with the words, "I welcome you into My house." When she entered, she was astonished to see all her belongings. Baba smiled. She quickly realized that they were

all really His, and she was merely borrowing them for a time. She said her attitude toward possessions changed instantly.

As with the tangible things that money can buy, it is the same with time and energy. They are all Baba's, and we are His stewards

for a period of time. We need to ask ourselves if we are good managers of money, food, time, and energy. Are we using all of these divine resources as He would want us to? Or are we wasting what He has loaned to us for our use in this life.

Finally, ask Baba to show you how you can use your savings in money, food, time, and energy to help someone else, preferably by helping them to help themselves.

—Phyllis Krystal

*Suggestions for Study
Groups and Individual*

*Use of the Ceiling on Desires Program**



*This booklet is available at the Sathya Sai Book Center, 305 W. First St., Tustin, California 92780-3108 (Telephone 714-669-0522), for \$2.50.

Dates to Remember in 2004

February 18, Wednesday, *Maha Shivaratri*, is observed during the new moon, symbolizing a renaissance and rededication to spiritual life.

March 21, Sunday, *Ugadi*, is the Telugu New Year.

March 30, Tuesday, *Rama Navami*, is the day to honor the birth of the Avatar, Sri Rama.

May 6, Thursday, *Easwaramma Day*, is recognized as the time to pay homage to the memory of the mother of Sathya Sai Baba.

July 2, Friday, *Guru Purnima*, is a time to pay respect to one's spiritual guide or preceptor.

July 20, Sunday, Global Handicapped Day, is a time for helping the handicapped and remembering that they need help throughout the year.

August 28, Saturday, *Onam*, is when the people of Kerala commemorate the sacrifices of Emperor Bali.

September 6, Monday, *Krishna Jayanti*, honors the birth of the Avatar, Sri Krishna.

September 12, Sunday, Global Blood Donation Day. Give blood at your local hospital, Red Cross, or blood bank. Always check with your doctor first.

September 18, Saturday, *Ganesha Chaturthi*, honors Ganesha, the remover of all obstacles and ignorance. The elephant-headed one can also set up obstacles to keep us out of harm's way.

October 23, Saturday, *Dasara* or *Vijaya Dasami*, is a celebration of the victory of good over evil.

November 12, Friday, *Deepavali*, is the festival of lights commemorating the victory of righteousness over wickedness.

November 13 & 14, Saturday & Sunday, Global Akhanda Bhajans, is the singing of holy songs to God for 24 hours. It is held from 6:00 p.m. on Saturday until 6:00 p.m. on Sunday.

November 19, Friday, Ladies' Day, is a time to honor women and their accomplishments throughout the world.

November 22, Monday, is *Convocation* or *Graduation* of the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.

November 23, Tuesday, is the **Birthday** of the body of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

December 25, Saturday, Christmas, is the day to honor the birth of Jesus Christ.

Nine Point Code of Conduct

Center members [and other devotees] are expected to do their best to practice the Nine-Point Code of Conduct in order to be examples of Sathya Sai Baba's teachings.

- Daily meditation and prayer.
- Group devotional singing or prayer with family members once a week.
- Participation in Sai Spiritual Education by children of the family.
- Participation in community service work and other programs of the Sai Organization.
- Regular attendance at the Sathya Sai Baba Center's devotional meetings.
- Regular study of Sathya Sai Baba literature.
- The use of soft, loving speech with everyone.
- Not speaking ill of others, especially in their absence.
- Practice placing a ceiling on desires. Consciously and continuously strive to eliminate the tendency to waste time, money, food and energy; utilize the time saved for service to mankind.

*Established by the Sathya Sai Baba Council of America,
and approved by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA
P. O. Box 660908
Arcadia, California
91066-0908

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Arcadia, CA
Permit No. 71

DATED MATERIAL



January – February 2004, Volume 28, Number 1

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