

79th Birthday Issue

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

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

Sai's Message	Sathya Sai Baba	2
Faith in the Father	Brian Dunn	3
"I Am I"	Sathya Sai Baba	4
Speak Now	James R. Todd, Jr.	9
First Darshan	Bijoy Laxmi Mishra	10
Signs of Inner Peace	Author Unknown	11
The Meaning of Time	Fredrica R. Halligan, Ph.D.	12
Because of You	J. F. Ziegler	13
Region 2: Birthday Presents	R. Wadhvani and R. Balagangeyan	14
You Are God	Sathya Sai Baba	16
Christmas with Swami	Karen Chenoweth	18
Transformation Through Service	Beth Clark	20
Joyful Service in California	Members of Sai Organization	22
Joyful Service in Illinois	Members of Sai Organization	24
Announcements:		
Public Notice	Secretary, S.S.S. Central Trust	25
Holy Days for 2005	Prasanthi Nilayam	26
We Are Pleased, and Subscription Information	S.S. Newsletter Staff	27
Bloom Where You Are Planted	Adithya Bala	28
Children's Corner: Give Your Sunshine	Bal Vikas Magazine, Italy	29
Sathya Sai Book Center of America	Book Center Volunteers	36



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—Barbara Bozzani, Editor

Sai's Message

When you celebrate Christmas, the birth of Christ, you should celebrate also your own birth and the fact that you are here on earth in this form. Christmas should be a time of self-examination.



Christ came 2,000 years ago to awaken humanity to the truth. Today the Sai Avatar is here with the same message. It is such an opportunity that you have, and yet so few of you are taking [advantage of] it. How many have really become awakened? How many have really changed their lifestyle as a result of My teachings? How many of you are motivated by love in all that you do? The Lord cannot be deceived.

My children, awaken before it is too late. The present life comes and goes, and time passes ever more quickly. What are you doing as each day passes? Are you really changing your way of life and moving away from earthbound darkness into the light, back toward the Godhead?

Celebrate Christmas; celebrate your own presence on the earth; then come to terms with the truth of who you really are. Celebrate the wonderful opportunity that lies ahead in the light of that understanding, and start afresh on a new path—the only path that will lead you out of the wilderness and back to the Godhead—where liberation and the total merging of the soul with God brings divine bliss.

—Sathya Sai Baba

*Christmas: A Joyous Celebration of Divine Love & Peace,
Compiled by the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centers
of Northern California & Nevada*

Faith in the Father

A Highlight of the Season of Giving

Some years ago our Sai Center in Tucson, Arizona, worked with the Salvation Army in their feeding program. We made bag lunches, loaded up a truck, and drove to the City Hall, where 200 to 250 people lined up waiting to receive food.

One Sunday in December as people filed through the line, I noticed a young man and his two daughters standing under a palm tree, observing the proceedings. The man was nicely dressed and wore a *yarmulke*;^{*} his two girls, about six and eight years old, wore pretty little dresses.

We continued our work, and the three observers continued to look on until the line had been entirely served and people were seated here and there enjoying their lunch. At that point, my friend Scott approached the little family and asked if he could be of service. The young father introduced his daughters, Rebecca and Rachel, and told a beautiful story.

Each year the girls saved their allowance and decided how they would spend it. It had become their custom to give half of their savings to charities. This particular year, Rebecca had donated her portion to Casa Maria, a local soup kitchen where our group now works. The three had visited that facility the previous week to observe their program and to make Rebecca's donation.

Rachel, however, had chosen the Salvation Army's food program. She had brought with her a brown lunch bag, heavy with quarters collected over the past year. She presented the bag to Scott, who thanked her, telling her that while the program received a lot of donated food, they still had to purchase certain items, which by law could not be donated. This donation would help to pay for those items.

After Scott told us this wonderful story, as we drove back to Salvation Army headquarters, I tried to guess the motive of this remarkable child. Was it the innate goodness of children? Was it a feeling of sympathy or unity with others? And what of the father? How had he imparted this golden lesson to his children? Was he the example from whom his daughters learned?

These two girls must have had an unshakeable knowledge that they would be provided for, no matter how much of their wealth they gave away.

For me, this quiet little event was the highlight of that season of giving. I marveled that this pure-hearted little girl, Rachel, could have such faith in her father that she could give an equal share of all that she had in order to care for those who had less.

—**Brian Dunn**
Tucson, Arizona

^{*}The *yarmulke* is a small round hat worn by men of the Jewish faith.

“I am I”

Notes from the 72nd Birthday Address of Bhagavan Baba

Embodiments of Love! You are not virtue or vice, not pleasure or pain, not sacred word or pilgrimage, not Veda or sacrifice. You are not the enjoyable or the enjoyer. You are the embodiment of eternal bliss (anandam), knowledge (chit), and auspiciousness (sivam).

You get carried away [from the truth] by form and perceive a multiplicity of names and forms due to ignorance of reality. Everyone from a pauper to a prince, from the ignorant to the *paramahansa* (realized sage), whether man or woman, child or adult, invariably uses the word *I*. Scriptures declare this *I* to be the center of compassion. All are embodiments of kindness and compassion.

If only every individual could realize this, the world would be prosperous. Now, though you pray *loka samastha sukhino bhavanthu* (may everyone in all the worlds be happy), you forget the basic principle, which is *I*. No one can introduce himself or herself without this *I*. Even birds and beasts will proclaim, “I am a cow,” “I am a goat,” “I am a dog,” “I am a crow,” and so on, through their faculties of speech.

Cosmic Principle of “I”

The cosmic principle is this *I*, and the whole world rests on *I*. The existence of all things in creation is indicated by *I*. Because

people think they are the body, they associate themselves with the body, resulting in egoism. The whole world is replete with duality—one is *I* and the other is *this*. You say “this is a cloth,” “this is a table,” “this is a hall,” and so on. The word *this* demonstrates the existence of an object. Both name and form, seer and seen, are represented by *this*.

When you see a light bulb burning brightly you think it is the bulb that gives light, but it is the electricity that provides the light. The bulb is only like a body. *Chaithanya* (consciousness) is the life force [and can be compared to the electric current that powers the bulb].

If I ask a boy, *When did you come?* He answers that he came on the 21st in order to attend the convocation on the 22nd. Here he refers to his body as himself. However, when he hurts his leg, he says, “My leg is hurt.” On one occasion he considers his body as *I* or himself, and on another occasion, he calls it *my body*, showing he is not his body. In truth, *I* represents *Atma* (inner divinity).

Atma, heart, and truth are all synonyms. Names are used only to facilitate communication and identification. Rama and Krishna are names given to a body, but the primary name of all is *I*. Even Bhagavan is *I* in the beginning. That is why the *Vedas* say *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am the Eternal Absolute). *I* or *Atma* comes first, then the word *Brahman*. We fail to understand the basic truth that *I* is the fundamental name.

Do Not Limit the Infinite Principle

People undertake various spiritual practices to search for God. When God is in you, what is the need for such a search? If you say you are searching for yourself, people will call you a fool! If you ask someone, “Who am I?” you will be considered mad. It is a wonder that humankind, the embodiment of *Brahman* (the Supreme Absolute), is not able to recognize this truth. There is a saying that you can straighten a bent tree or sculpt a boulder to any shape, but you cannot set right a perverted mind. Mind is the cause for every action. You must quiet and control the mind and turn your attention toward experiencing *Atma*. All the *sadhanas* (spiritual practices), including the nine steps of devotion, are strictly for quieting the mind and not for the realization of Self. The only *sadhana* needed for realization is to eradicate *anatma* (untruth). In fact, *anatma* is only a reflection of the *Atma*. When you

switch off the light, darkness sets in. Darkness is not the coming and going of light; it is the absence of light. So also, the absence of awareness is *anatma*, which is an illusion.

People do meditation, devotional singing, and other spiritual practices. These are only for mental satisfaction. In meditation, who is the meditator? What is the object meditated upon? Actually the one who meditates, the act of meditation, and the object are all one. One who knows this

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*The mind is a thief. You
 must get hold of the thief
 and drive him out. Because
 of the mind, you lose peace.*

truth need not do anything at all. Before you say, “I am *Brahman*,” you should know first who *I* is. There is only one, without a second. That is

Brahman.

God has no particular name or form. Based on the work one does, one is referred to accordingly. For example, a *Brahmin* (priest) who conducts *puja* (ritual worship) is a *pujari Brahmin*; one who cooks is a cooking *Brahmin* and so on. Bhagavan, however, is *nirguna* (attributeless).

You peruse countless books without knowing what you seek. You have to search through your mind. The mind is a thief. You must get hold of the thief and drive him out. Because of the mind, you lose peace.

God has no other name than *I*, which is *aham* in Sanskrit. *Aham* is the master of body, intellect, senses, and mind. We are not able to understand the cosmic principle, which is divinity. We try to confine this limitless, infinite cosmic principle to within

the four walls of a temple or the small frame of a picture. In fact this demeans God.

A song by a saint asks, "Is it possible to limit the cosmic principle to a small room? Can you compare a flame of light to the One who gives light even to the sun? Can you feed the One whose stomach is the whole world? Is it sane to attempt to give water to the One who is vaster than the ocean?" We are deluded by the obsession to give things names and forms. God is everywhere in the form of *I (aham)*. If

you realize this, all the agitations in the world can be calmed. The principle of unity should be developed from the basis of the *I* in everyone. When the same *I* is in all, from where can the question of hating another arise? Husband-wife, parent-child relationships are temporary. The only relationship that lasts forever is with God, the current that passes through all forms. Truth is one but is described in many terms. Names and forms are many, but God is one and has no birth or death. The Eternal Principal is *Atma*, or *I*, or *Brahman*. The *Bhagavad Gita* explains that the same *Atma* is in everyone.

Can You Catch God?

The *gopikas* (milkmaids) wanted to catch Krishna. They tried in vain. Krishna Himself helped them by putting His feet in milk. Then he ran off leaving footprints so that they could follow and catch Him. They

sang, "How can we understand You who are tinier than the smallest atom and mightier than the macrocosm?"

When you go to a temple to have *darshan* (the blessing of seeing) of the Lord, you close your eyes as you stand before the idol installed there. Why? You close your eyes because you want to meditate on the same Lord within you. You want to use the eye of wisdom. Spiritual practices have many subtleties, but pundits do not often explain these to people.

When you are on the divine path, you don't indulge in wicked actions. God never harms any one. All suffering is brought about by one's own actions, while God is only a witness. You are not born with a necklace of gems or precious stones around your neck, but you do bring with you a yoke made up of the results of your past actions.

When God is in you, how can you blame God for your suffering? The mind is a thief and tries to separate you from God. The mind wanders far away from God, and it has to be controlled before you can realize God in you. It should not be left embroiled [in its delusions].

The one who controls the mind is one of valor and courage. In the *Ramayana*, chief among the historical epics, Hanuman shone as a great warrior; before Rama he was all humility, while before Ravana, he stood up in his full glory as a warrior. In the presence of divinity, you must be humble. *Aham* (or

You need not give up all your activities, but do everything with the feeling that it is an offering to the Divine.

I) with the body is *ahamkara* (ego). *Aham* with the *Atma* is divine. Aim to lead your life with this latter *aham*, and not *ahamkara*. Visualize this *aham* in all creatures.

Worshipping the infinite Divine in a small picture is silly. This represents the outward or external tendency. Instead, turn your vision inward for reaching the goal [of merging with divinity]. You need not give

up all your activities, but do everything with the feeling that it is an offering to the Divine. Don't harp on the name and the form given to the body. When asked who you are, think *I am I* rather than your name. Students taking degrees, as

B.A., M.A., and M.B.A. should understand that degrees pertain to the body. God has no degrees at all! He is pure and unsullied. This is the core of all philosophies.

Happy Birthday

As I was entering the *mandir* (temple), some people wished me happy birthday. This is meaningless. I am ever happy. You must tell this to people who are not happy. Like the brilliance of lightning through a dark cloud, God shines forth. Education should bestow such a light, the radiant wisdom that illuminates the dark clouds of ignorance.

You can say, "Truth is God," "that which is present everywhere is truth," and "that

which is changeless in all periods of time is truth." You have love on one side and hatred on the other; both are reflections of your feelings. You should exercise self-examination and realize that you are the eternal *Atma*.

Dark clouds arise out of sunlight, which heats the water in the ocean, making it evaporate to form the clouds that hide the

sun. Similarly, ignorance is within, and you have to dispel it. The sun is hailed as *Atma* and the moon as mind. Compared to the brilliant radiance of the sun, moonlight is insignificant. Only in the absence of daylight does the moon shine. So

control the mind by turning it toward the *Atma*, which is *I*. Forget the body-mind principle and practice the *I* principle.

You may ask, "We are engaged in family life. How can we discard our families?" I never ask you to discard your duty to family. Instead, do your duty as an offering to God. The restlessness in the world is due only to people forgetting the *Atma* and turning to the body. The *Atma* principle is that of both "seer" and "seen." You have sugar and water; if you mix both, you get syrup. Because you consider the world as separate, you get into troubles. The whole world, however, is the temple of God. Your body is also a mobile temple. How can you forget the thing that



is part of you and your very basis? Even your physical mother may forget you, but the Divine will never forsake you. All the *sadhanas* (spiritual disciplines) done now are in fact external. Do not misunderstand Me when I say this.

Who Is a Devotee?

You all say that you are Sai devotees. However, I actually have no devotees. In fact, I am your devotee.

When people come to Prasanthi Nilayam, they go about visiting other people's rooms like cats and rats. Avoid such searching for friends and company. Concentrate instead on spiritual *sadhana*. Why do you talk to others unnecessarily? Make your time sacred. Experience the divine vibrations here; reflect and ruminate [on your experiences] when you return home. The cow grazes wherever it finds green grass, then returns to its shelter to leisurely masticate [what it has imbibed]. People waste large amounts of time in talking, gossiping, and squandering their valuable energy.

For whom did you come here? Maintain a relationship with God only, and work for the welfare of others to the best of your capacity. Many people read numerous books and talk a lot. What is the use? This is the same as merely spelling the names of sweets, such as *gulabjaamoon*, and so on. You can get the essence, the sweet taste, only

by eating them. Likewise, only when you practice at least some of what you read, will you do real *sadhana*.

There is no use in reading so many books and burdening your head. There is no use in merely chanting the Lord's names with your lips. You must install the Lord in your heart. It is only a stunt if you repeat the names of Rama and Krishna without practicing the ideals [they stand for]. Do not ask others, "Who are you?" Instead, ask,

"Who am I?"

Avoid bad company; keep company with good and godly people. Engage in meritorious deeds day and night.

Always think of God. You become good by following these precepts and principles. Help ever; hurt never.

Bhagavan does not like these pompous birthday celebrations. It is only to please you that I accept them. I have no desires for Myself. Whatever I do is for you. Everyone belongs to Me, and I belong to you. Earn a good name and experience divinity.

Eight Cardinal Principles

I want to give you eight cardinal principles to be followed by way of controlling desires:

- ♦ Avoid wasting money. Misuse of money is evil. You need not waste money by buying many photos. You should have only one to worship and not more.

- ♦ Avoid wasting food. Food is God. Your body has come out of food consumed by your parents. It is precious.
- ♦ Avoid waste of time. God is time. We say *kala kalaya* (time wasted is life wasted).
- ♦ Avoid wasting energy. Energy is also God. Seeing, hearing, thinking, and speaking are all energy-consuming activities. Restrict everything to an absolute minimum.
- ♦ Do not forget God. At all places and at all times, think of God. He is in you, around you, and with you. The heart is your temple. When you understand the principle of the *Atma*, you need not even visit here frequently. Don't even waste love. Love is life. Without love, one is a lifeless corpse.
- ♦ Don't try to acquire new friendships while you are here. You may end up being spoiled by bad company, and you will have no one to blame but yourself. Say, "Hello, how are you? Goodbye," and depart. That is all.
- ♦ Don't think you know everything. Make frequent use of self-inquiry for self-protection. This is necessary to sustain self-confidence.
- ♦ Lead life in peace by keeping within limits. As devotees of Sai, you should serve as ideal examples to others. If you get a good name, it is for your benefit, and not for Me.

—**Sathya Sai Baba**
November 23, 1997

The preceding notes of Swami's discourse were taken by Mr. K.S. Srinivasa Raghavan.

*If I must speak now,
Let me utter what I see,
Love doesn't argue.
Love knows no theology.*

—**James R. Todd, Jr.**

First *Darshan*

That Initial First Glimpse of the Divine

I saw Baba for the first time on a memorable day in 1990. My husband and I had traveled from Delhi to Puttaparthi, but upon our arrival, we learned that Baba had left for Bangalore. We were a bit disappointed, but as soon as possible we caught a bus to Bangalore. We reached our destination that evening and decided to try to stay near Baba's ashram. Due to His grace, a family staying nearby agreed to accommodate us.

The next morning, we went for Baba's *darshan* (the blessing of seeing a holy person). A long queue of devotees was already waiting outside the gate. The gate opened around 7:00 a.m., and we all went inside. This being my first visit, I was not sure what to expect, although my husband and mother-in-law had earlier described their experiences to me several times. I was wondering when I could see Baba, and what He would do. Meanwhile, I saw a beautiful image of Lord Krishna inside the campus and placed flowers under His feet. Then we sat down and waited for Baba's *darshan*.

After a while, Baba came to the prayer ground clad in His traditional orange robe, just as I had seen earlier from His picture.

“For a nervous moment I
couldn't move. He looked at me
with a smiling face, knowing my
deepest thoughts.”

However, He looked so different from His pictures! His movements emanated a calm and silent grace, and His gaze seemed to know one's thoughts. Baba started to move among the rows of disciples, pausing often, and sometimes creating *vibuthi* (holy ash).

I was sitting in the first row. My husband was sitting in the area for men. I saw some people writing letters and asked a lady about this. She explained that Baba takes letters from His devotees during *darshan*. She gave me a piece of paper for a letter. My letter was quickly written, since all this took place while I did not want to take my eyes off Baba. Slowly Baba went to the gent's side, took some letters, and stood in front of my husband and looked at him for a few seconds. Then He turned around, came toward the ladies' side, paused near me, and extended His hand toward me for my letter. For a nervous moment I couldn't

move. He looked at me with a smiling face, knowing my deepest thoughts. I touched His feet and gave my letter to Him. He blessed me and slowly went toward the area where He sits. The lady who gave me the piece of paper hugged me, saying that I was very lucky that Baba took my letter.

After Baba sat down, the *bhajans* (devotional singing) began. Everybody joined in. Then Baba went out the way He had come, slowly walking through the rows of devotees. The few moments of His *darshan* did not seem to be enough, even though His presence seemed to linger in the area. We remained there for some time before returning to our lodgings. We had

great difficulty sleeping that night. My husband and I stayed up talking about Baba for a long time.

We have visited Baba a few times since then, and we always return home wanting to visit Him again. As a result of my first *darshan*, Baba is no longer a distant someone. I feel His presence around me everywhere.

—**Bijoy Laxmi Mishra**
San Jose, California

With the holy Birthday and Christmas seasons upon us, let us all remember our first *darshan*, or look forward to having that first *darshan*. —Ed.

Signs of Inner Peace

Frequent attacks of smiling
A loss of interest in conflicts
A loss of interest in judging self
A loss of interest in judging other people
An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment
A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others
Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature
Loss of the ability to worry (this is a very serious symptom)
Increased tendency to allow rather than force things to happen
Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation
A tendency to think and act spontaneously
An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others,
and the uncontrollable urge to extend it [ourselves].

—**Author Unknown**

The Meaning of Time

Every Minute Counts

If you waste time, you are wasting life. Time is so precious that you should not waste even a second.

—Sathya Sai Baba

In December 2001 I was sitting on the floor of Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam, among a choir of 600 foreigners, singing Christmas carols to our beloved Sai Baba. Baba's discourse that Christmas Day emphasized that if we want to honor and worship Jesus, then we must follow His teachings. He also spoke of the compassion of Gautama Buddha, instructing us to follow the teachings of these great religious leaders as guides for our lives.

We know that it is time well spent when we sit and listen to Baba, when we read His discourses, and [especially] when we practice His teachings as well as those of Jesus and Gautama Buddha. These teachings are quite similar, even though they are expressed in very different words. We guide our lives by the messages of such spiritual leaders. However, does this give us enough encouragement to use every second of our lives with the profound wisdom that we have been given?

Two years later, in December 2003, I was driving down a dark country road in Connecticut, on my way to Friday night *bhajans* and a holiday potluck supper that we had planned at our Sathya Sai Baba Center. As I was driving I noticed the lovely

Christmas lights on the early American houses along the roadside—a very picturesque and beautiful scene. With joy in my heart, I thought: Christmas is all about incarnation, the celebration of God come to earth to be with us. How fortunate we are to know that God is with us in person—incarnated, embodied, and with us today!

I came to a four-way stop and proceeded after stopping at the intersection. To my right a pickup truck did not stop. He ran the stop sign at full speed and crashed into the passenger side of my small car. Even as I felt my car spinning and felt the crashing again and again, I knew that Baba was with me. Without words I knew that this might be the end of my life. In my quick, shouted prayer, I knew that I might be going to God at that very moment. I surrendered as I repeated “O God!” After what seemed like several minutes, the car stopped spinning. I was still alive. My prayer was then one of gratitude and petition for rapid recovery, so that I could get back about the task of helping others.

Life can be wiped out in an instant. What will be our final thoughts, our final prayer? We may often wonder if, like

Gandhi, we will end life with the name of God on our lips. Even more important, the inevitability and unpredictability of death gives us the unparalleled opportunity to remember how vital life is. Are we wasting it? Are we following Baba's teachings? Are we bearing in mind that every minute, every second, counts? Are we using our time to unite with Him, to serve Him by serving our fellow humans, and to remember Him by devoting every action to Him?

The *Bhagavad Gita* tells us that we unite with God when we dedicate all our actions to God, leaving the results to Him: every small act, every breath, every thought, and

every word and deed. The Buddhists teach us to live with awareness—in every breath, every thought, every feeling, and every act. In the light of our mortality, of our all-too-short and unpredictable lives, can we practice such awareness and such dedication? All we are, all we have, and each moment of our lives belong to Him. With awareness and frequent re-dedication, we can use our time wisely. Life and time are too precious to waste.

—**Fredrica R. Halligan, Ph.D.**
Stamford, Connecticut

**I saw You and Your beauty was so great.
I tried to memorize each hair on Your head.**

Because of You

**The way it framed Your liquid eyes,
Your mouth and each smile line.**

**I wanted to hold Your beauty in my heart forever,
But it was so grand it spilled from my heart into my whole being,**

**And now I am beautiful too,
Because of You.**

—**J. F. Ziegler**
Gilbert, Arizona

Birthday Presents

Gifts for the Swami in Everyone

On November 15, 2003, over seventy Sai volunteers gathered at New York City's Coler-Goldwater Specialty Hospital and Nursing Facility for a day-long Mid-Atlantic Regional service event, organized and run by the Sathya Sai Young Adults.

The air was crisp and cold on Roosevelt Island, where the hospital is located, but a feeling of warmth and love prevailed as the devotees prepared to serve the hospital's chronically ill patients as an offering to Sathya Sai Baba for His seventy-eighth birthday. Holding Sai in their hearts, the devotees began unloading trunk-full after trunk-full of the day's meal provisions and gifts they had generously donated for the patients.

Inspired by their love for Swami, the Sai Young Adults had eagerly collected blankets, clothing, and toiletry items through several drives held around the region. Since the event took place in the month of Baba's seventy-eighth birthday, they had set a minimum quota of collecting enough items to serve seventy-eight patients.

Throughout the weeks of collecting, Baba had made His presence known in many ways. His support was especially evident during the toiletry drive. Up until a week before the event, devotees were nowhere near filling the seventy-eight-item quota. They

had planned on putting together hygiene kits with toothbrushes, toothpaste, chapped-lip sticks, combs, and lotion, but hardly any of these items had shown up. However, Swami's never-ending grace soon made everything fall right into place. One of the toiletry drive coordinators was overflowing with enthusiasm as she described what happened. "We were beginning to freak out," she said. "But, somehow, days before the event, miraculously, we began receiving all the items we needed, and we even had more than we expected!"

By the time the drives were finished, over one-third of the region's thirty Sathya Sai Baba Centers had contributed items for the patients. On the day of the event, volunteers poured in from the Brooklyn, New York City, Flushing, and Manhattan Centers to help at the hospital. Some young adults even traveled with their families the long distance from the Bethesda, Maryland Center to serve the patients.

The atmosphere was filled with excitement as the Sai volunteers assembled in the hospital auditorium. Soon they set to work organizing the various donations into categories and making personalized cards for patients who had November birthdays. Afterward, the volunteers, while visiting

four wards, gave the gifts and cards to the birthday patients and, of course, sang the birthday song.

Toward the late afternoon, most of the patients in the wards visited were brought down to the auditorium for a meal and a lively game show competition, as well as a devotional concert performed by a young adult musical ensemble. Although the group's music was generally derived from Indian roots, their performance that day was universal, moving the hearts of every member of the audience. One patient in particular was so delighted by the young adults' display of warmth, devotion, and creativity that he was inspired to share a poem of his own with the crowd.

As the eventful day came to an end, the Sai volunteers and patients sat side by side, like brothers and sisters, watching the show and enjoying the meal that was both prepared and served with the utmost care and love.

For over twenty years, New York City Sai Centers have been serving at Coler-Goldwater, whose two campuses are home to hundreds of chronically-ill patients of all ages. And recently, New York metropolitan area devotees have intensified Center service there. However, the Fall 2003 event was the largest Sai effort ever to take place at the hospital.

More important than size was the feeling that pervaded the day's activities. Divine love was the reigning theme. "When I was serving the patients," one of the young adults explained, "whether it was presenting them with gifts or bringing them a plate of food, I realized that I was giving each of them a token of God's unconditional love. I feel so blessed that Swami has given me the opportunity to serve people who need to be reassured that they are never alone and will always be loved by our young adult group."

There were many gifts distributed to the patients that day, but the most valuable gifts were actually given to the Sai volunteers by the patients—their appreciation, kindness, and enthusiasm. "I shared so many special moments with different patients," recalled a young adult. "One sang 'You Are My Sunshine' with me as I escorted him back to his room."

What began as a simple idea for a birthday present for Baba culminated in a gratifying experience for all involved. Swami Himself has stated that the greatest gift He could ask for would always be service to mankind. After all, according to His well-known proverb, *Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray.*

—Reena Wadhvani and
Rami Balagangeyan
New York, New York

You Are God

Take Up the Ultimate Spiritual Practice

Embodiments of Love! Where is God? When does He incarnate? Where does He incarnate? These are the questions that trouble the minds of people today. God is omnipresent. All are the embodiment of God. Today, people attribute various names and forms to God, such as Rama, Krishna, and Jesus, and celebrate their birthdays. Truly speaking, can there be a birthday for God? No. To think that God took birth on a particular day and year is a sign of ignorance.

God exists in the form of breath in every being. *Soham* symbolizes the process of inhalation and exhalation. *So* means *That* (God); *ham* stands for *I* (the individual). Though there are two words, namely *God* and *individual*, there is no difference between them. They are one and the same.

God in fact has no birth. He does not need to achieve any goals. In order to instill faith in the minds of people, however, He incarnates. If there is birth, there has to be death too, but God is beyond birth and death. He has neither a beginning nor an end. To think God has a birthday is only one's imagination. Devotees limit God to a

physical frame, worship Him, and celebrate His birthdays. All such ideas are figments of their imagination and do not correspond to the truth.

You need not give up all your activities, but do everything with the feeling that it is an offering to the Divine.

Every day in this world, many are born and many die. What is meant by birth and death? To assume a body is birth and to cast off the same is death.

Out of illusion, people experience the dualities of birth and death, whereas God transcends both. With hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth, and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe. Out of ignorance, humanity is caught in the cycle of birth and death. Birth and death are caused by the will of God.

Develop More Love

God is the very personification of love. He is present in all beings in the form of the life-breath. Since ancient times, people have made concerted efforts to understand the mystery of birth and death. One need not go that far to understand this mystery. The body that we have assumed makes us experience this inevitability every moment.

The process of inhalation and exhalation likewise symbolizes birth and death. Man is unable to understand the inner significance of this breathing process.

What is it that a person must do, to escape from the cycle of birth and death? The answer is to develop love more and more. Today people do not even love their fellow human beings. That does not mean that they lack love. They have love but are unable to experience it. They must learn to attach value to the principle of love and not merely to individuals.

When we inhale (corresponding to the syllable *so*), the life principle enters our body, and when we exhale (*ham*), it goes out. Every moment this process of inhalation and exhalation reminds us of our inherent divinity—I *am God*. So long as there is life-breath, the body is considered to be *shivam* (auspicious). Once the life-breath ebbs away, it becomes *shavam* (a corpse). Both birth and death are related to the body and not at all to the life principle. Many changes take place between birth and death in a mysterious way. God is responsible for all these changes.

God Does Exist

Some people deny the existence of God and waste their time in vain argumentation. God DOES exist. He neither comes nor goes. He is present everywhere at all times. People experience birth and death because

of body attachment. They will be released from the cycle of birth and death only when they give up body attachment and surrender themselves completely to the will of God.

Oh God, I offer this sacred heart—which You have given me—to You. What else can I offer at Your lotus feet? I pray that You accept my humble offering. (Telugu Poem)

Birth and death arise out of illusion. They happen according to time and circumstances. Between birth and death,

You all say that you are Sai devotees. However, I actually have no devotees. In fact, I am your devotee.

people become deluded by the physical body and develop various relationships at the physical level. Identifying themselves with the body, they get carried away by the feeling of *me* and *mine*. This is a grave mistake. Only as long as the body lasts are you related to *so-and-so*. Once the body perishes, what happens to your relationship? True relationship lies at the *atmic* level and not at the physical level. Prior to birth, who is related to whom? What happens after death? In fact, both birth and death are the results of *bhrama* (delusion), which prevents you from realizing *Brahma* (Divinity). Because you are enmeshed in worldliness, you are unable to comprehend this transcendental principle.

True spiritual practice lies in understanding one's true identity. One should inquire, *Who am I?* All spiritual practices are meant to help you realize who

continued on page 30

*Silver doors are flung wide; out steps the form of the Lord,
The One dressed in white whom we love and adore.
We sing "Joy to the World" while He's standing right there,
My eyes fill with tears; I can do nothing but stare
At His radiance and glory—that sweet loving smile,
All the travel and waiting have all been worthwhile.*

*Last night when I thought it just couldn't get better,
It's Christmas Eve—Swami won't be taking letters—
I tucked in my feet, sat tall, pinched myself; I am here,
And God will walk by—the One I love sweetly, the One I hold dear.
All eyes watched the gate for Swami to enter,
The focus of thousands, at our hearts He's the center.
I sat in the front row; I surely was graced
To be having God's darshan, seeing His Divine face,*

*And I thought to myself, do you know where you are?
It's now Christmas Eve, and you have followed the star,
Like the wise men of old, to see God incarnate on earth,
To present your heart's treasure—frankincense, gold, and myrrh.
So close He walked by, I could have touched those soft feet;
After lifetimes of prayer, my Lord and I finally meet.*

*In that moment I was pure Love, unaware of the small me;
So this is what it means to be God for all of eternity.
If my body had died at that moment sublime,
My prayers had been answered in all those lifetimes,
I had now received the greatest of gifts—to have a body in space,
To be with the Lord Christmas Eve, at that time, in that place.*

Christmas WITH SWAMI



*It's now Christmas Day; the carols are ringing,
And all who are gathered full-throated are singing
To greet our beloved Swami as He blesses the multitude,
Thank you, dear Lord, our hearts filled with gratitude.
Yes, we know we are standing on such hallowed ground,
And we know that there are angels above and around;
Merry Christmas, dearest Swami, from all of us here;
May we be your vessels of Love to spread Christmas cheer.*

—Karen Chenoweth

Transformation Through Service

Service opens the eyes of man to the comprehensive unity of creation. When you open your eyelids, you see the world, the stars, and the galaxies that are far out in the depths of space. When you close them, the scene disappears; there is only gloom, emptiness....When you are aware only of your own joys and sorrows, you are blind to the joys and sorrows of others: your eyes are closed, you are apart; the others are afar. There is no One. Disparate entities drift in the fog, frightened by every stump and shadow. Samajaseva means “serving the same,” the One that makes the many the same.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks, August 7, 1971

Swami says that the purpose of service is to help you move from the human to the Divine. In the Washington, DC metropolitan area, devotees have countless opportunities for this kind of transformation. The area is home to an ever-increasing number of homeless, hungry, and destitute people, more than public and private agencies can handle.

Members of my Sathya Sai Center in South Bethesda, Maryland, felt a strong desire to help in this crisis, and in so doing, truly make our lives His message. The Center now offers many ways for members like me to provide food for the needy as part of our regular spiritual practice.

Two Saturdays each month we feed up to 300 homeless men, women, and children on the city's streets. Center members purchase the food, cook the hot dishes, prepare bags with fruit and utensils, transport and serve the food, and clean up afterward. During the winter, we distribute blankets and gloves along with the food. I've noticed that when our van is spotted turning a

corner, people start to line up, thanking and blessing us for the hot meal. And, of course, we thank them back for the opportunity to serve them.

The serving is only a small part of what we do. Baba has defined service as *...any thought, word, or deed that brings joy and confidence to the heart of another, to draw him or her nearer to God.* Thus when we serve the food, or talk with people at the distribution site, we are really increasing God-consciousness in the world by allowing Swami's message of love to flow through us.

On the fourth Saturday of each month, Sathya Sai Baba Center members sort and package groceries at the Washington, DC Capital Area Food Bank. We never see the needy people who ultimately receive this food, but it doesn't matter. As Swami says, *You perform service because it helps you, not just the people you serve.*

In addition, every Thursday, another devotee and I take packaged meals to terminally-ill people through the Food & Friends program.

Delivering these bags of love really uplifts me. As we start our drive to pick up the food, we repeat the *Gayatri Mantra* and feel Swami's presence in the car accompanying us throughout the day.

As a new devotee in 1999, I started participating in Sathya Sai Baba Center service projects in order to meet other devotees while doing something I enjoyed. The first time I attended a service activity, I was a bit hesitant and didn't know what to expect. How would I be received by the men served? What would long-time volunteers think of me? I quickly learned that turning over my fears to Swami and serving all with love transformed my hesitation into bliss.

I've always looked at volunteering as a way to give back to society, but it wasn't until I came to Swami that I realized it could be so much more. Service gave me the opportunity to grow. It filled my heart with love, peace, and joy, and these emotions were reflected in the people I served. How effortless even the most daunting task became when I did it with the proper thoughts in mind. When I acted from the heart, love just naturally shone forth. Truly, Swami's message flowed from me when I undertook service with His name on my lips and in my heart.

I have found that through service I also developed the spirit of sacrifice. Baba says, *Sacrifice is the means of attaining liberation. You should, therefore, serve society, help the poor and*

needy in distress, and thus manifest the human quality of compassion. By doing service to people, you are doing service to God.

Service, Baba says, allows you to develop awareness of the underlying unity between yourself and those you serve, to see that all are one, unified in diversity, so you can realize that everyone is an embodiment of the Divine.

Through service, I have begun to understand the meaning of seeing God in everyone. "There but for the grace of God go I," has taken on a new meaning for me. Yes, I

am that person on the street, in the shelter; I am the person battling AIDS. The grace of God has given me a chance to serve—me.

Each time I do service, my heart fills with bliss and gratitude that Swami has given me that chance. As He says, *The fulfillment of your life on earth consists in filling yourself with love of God and transmuting that love into acts of service—service to the human being who is the embodiment of God.*

—Beth Clark
Springfield, Virginia

"Service gave me the opportunity to grow. It filled my heart with love, peace, and joy, and these emotions were reflected in the people I served."

All articles and photographs on group and individual service are welcome. Send contributions to the Service Opportunities Editor, Judith Wechsler, 2965 Hopkins Road, Rocky Mount, VA 24151, or e-mail her at jwechsler@leapmail.net.

joyful service NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

An Enrichment of Skills

Ashland community, with a population of 30,000 residents, is a significantly under-served locale in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Sathya Sai Organization was influential in planning and organizing the Ashland Spring Fling and Wellness Fair on June 14, 2003. This is an annual event that brings together Ashland residents for a day of fun-filled activities and education.

Many booths are set in place to create an awareness of the services available. [For health care and learning new skills, the Sai Baba volunteers man the booths, hand out brochures, and give one-on-one personal information to the residents of Ashland.] In addition, a Family Values Art Contest is organized for the children attending the event. Over 120 children participated during a three-hour period. They depicted the themes of family love, caring, concern, and community service. Prizes were distributed to all the winners as well as to all participating children.

Beginning in February of 2001, the Bay Area Young Adults, with the involvement of other local Sathya Sai Baba Centers, offered courses to provide training in basic computer skills for the residents. With these skills, students of the classes have been able to find employment or advancement in their current jobs. Other projects have provided the Sathya Sai volunteers with opportunities to work shoulder-to-shoulder with the local people in such activities as Ashland Beautification Days, which is a plan to regularly clean the streets and instill community pride.

The volunteers have also joined the residents in holy day celebrations and festivals. They have collected childrens' toys for the holiday gift drive, which has served over 100 local families. A school has approached the Sai Young Adults to teach enrichment classes to ten-year-olds. Working with a Charter Public School, Sai volunteers teach ongoing classes in chess, soccer, business, art, computer skills, and robotics to the children, who would not otherwise have those opportunities.

joyful service SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

They Needed Food

In downtown Los Angeles, where a large population of homeless people reside, Sai Centers serve food to nearly 500 homeless men, women, and children every Sunday. On December 28, 2003—during the Christmas holidays—over 425 warm blankets were distributed to the needy, along with nearly 600 bags of toiletries. Sai Centers have also initiated the Sri Sathya Sai Food Bank Project, following the example set by Swami's *Grama Seva* (village upliftment) projects in India. Devotees visit the homes of poor families in dire need of assistance for food. Based on the nutritional needs of each family, the devotees assemble food items from the Sri Sathya Sai Food Bank and deliver food packages to the recipients.

Ravaged by Fires

In October 2003, severe fires ravaged Southern California, and hundreds were forced to flee their homes. On October 31, following an urgent request from the Red Cross, the Sathya Sai Organization mobilized and acquired 200 blankets, 32 chairs, and eight tables within a few hours to help set up emergency shelters for those affected by the disaster.

A Day at the Beach

On August 28, 2004, many Sathya Sai Baba Centers, along with the Sai Young Adults, organized a "Day at the Beach" for over 50 physically and mentally disabled children and adults. Nearly 100 volunteers participated in this project, bringing joyful smiles to the faces of those children. Owing to their disabilities, they do not enjoy a normal childhood; some of them had never been to the beach before. Swami often reminds us, *Self-confidence is the very foundation on which the mansion of human life is built*. The Sai volunteers, inspired by Swami's axiom, instigated a program of "Looking Beyond Disabilities, Focusing on Capabilities, and Expanding Possibilities." The entire day was comprised of therapeutic projects involving music, dance, human values' songs, and games aimed at helping the children to express their innate, God-given abilities. The gleeful exhilaration on the tender faces of the children and the profound gratitude of their parents were a beautiful affirmation of Swami's oft-quoted maxim — *Love without Duty is Divine!*

joyful service CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Children's Health Fair

A free Children's Clinic and Health Fair was organized by Sai volunteers on March 14 and 15, 2003. Over 200 children were examined. After registering and receiving name tags, the children and their parents enjoyed fun at educational booths while waiting for their doctor's appointments. The games, toys, and gift items waiting at each station brought endearing smiles to all the little faces.

Volunteer nurses and medical students took the children's vital signs and drew up growth charts. The medical services included a general physical exam, minor procedures, medications, and follow-up care in a local free clinic as needed.

To increase awareness in the community about lead hazards and the risks of lead exposure to children, pamphlets in English and Spanish were given out. To keep the little ones busy, stickers and coloring books were also handed out.

The Department of Health offered free lead testing, follow-up education, and financial support for rectifying in-home hazards. General vision screening and follow-up referrals were also provided.

An interactive booth was in place to teach the children about the importance of good dental care and proper brushing techniques. Free toothbrushes, toothpaste, dental floss, posters, and brochures about proper dental care were given out.

All children and parents received a healthy snack, and each child received a book appropriate to his or her reading level.

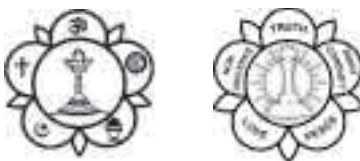
Last but not least, the members of the community were encouraged to participate in other local service projects, which included clean up, painting, and beautification of their neighborhoods.

Announcements

Public Notice:

It is hereby informed that the Government of India has amended the schedule to the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act of 1950 recently to include the following as protected names and emblems under said Act:

1. Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust
2. The following emblems:



3. Sri Sathya Sai

In view of the above, no person shall use or continue to use for the purpose of any trade, business, calling, or profession, or any patent, trademark, or design, the aforementioned protected names/emblems or any colorable imitation thereof without the previous written permission of the Central Government. Any person who contravenes the above is liable to be proceeded against and punished under the provisions of the law.

Any person who is using the aforementioned names and emblems in contravention of the provisions of the Act is hereby notified and required to cease and desist from using said names/emblems with immediate effect.

Dated: July 22, 2004

—**Secretary, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam,**
Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh – 515134 India



Makara Sankaranthi

A time of rededication to spiritual life.
January 14, Friday

Maha Sivarathri

A day to pay homage to Lord Shiva.
March 9, Wednesday

Ugadi

Telugu New Year.
April 9, Saturday

Sri Rama Navami

Honoring the birthday of Lord Rama, and
His profound love and bravery.
April 18, Monday

Easwaramma Day

A time to express gratitude to the memory
of Easwaramma, the mother of Sri Sathya
Sai Baba.
May 6, Friday

Guru Poornima

A time to honor our beloved Bhagavan Sri
Sathya Sai Baba, and all other great gurus.
July 21, Thursday

Krishna Jayanthi

Recognition of the birth of Lord Krishna.
August 27, Saturday:

Ganesha Chathurthi

Honoring Ganesha, the remover of
obstacles.
September 7, Wednesday

Onam

A victory of righteousness over evil forces.
September 18, Sunday

Vijaya Dasami

A celebration of good over evil.
October 12, Wednesday

Deepavali

A festival of lights to help us remember that
innate goodness will prevail.
November 1, Tuesday

Akhanda Bhajan

Twenty-four hours of holy songs to all the
great spiritual beings who have guided
humanity.
November 12 & 13, Saturday and Sunday

Ladies' Day

A time to pay homage to the female aspect
of the Divine.
November 19, Saturday

Birthday

The 80th birthday of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai
Baba; a time to acknowledge His divine love
and guidance to all humanity.
November 23, Wednesday

Christmas

A time to revere Jesus Christ, His teachings,
and His sacrifices.
December 25, Sunday

We Are Pleased

The *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA* staff is pleased to inform you of the events to take place during Swami's 80th Birthday Celebrations. The President of the Prasanthi Council has given us an overview of those events for next year. To keep you informed, the *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA* will be publishing a resume of those noteworthy happenings in the next issue, January-February 2005.

We hope to explore ways in which each devotee can enhance his or her spiritual progress and dedication to the One whom we all love and trust. These are very exciting times to be on planet earth and to know Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba—let us make the most of it!

—Ed.

Move toward the light, and the shadow falls behind; move away from the light, and you have to follow your own shadow. Go every moment one step nearer to the Lord, and then illusion, the shadow, will fall behind and not delude you at all. Be steady and resolved. Do not commit a mistake or take a false step and repent later. To make the right decision first is better than having regrets for a mistake committed.

—Sathya Sai Baba,
Thought for the Day, August 30, 2004

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Bloom Where You Are Planted

Young Performers Rise to the Occasion

Summer 2004 was a season to remember for a group of Sai Spiritual Education students from Region 9 (Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah). The story of the play, “Bloom Where You Are Planted,” started a year before the actual performance, which would take place at Prasanthi Nilayam. The students from the different areas of Region 9 met at a location in Arizona for three-hour practice sessions every Saturday. Those who did not live locally would be driven or flown down for the weekly practices. [This required much dedication from both students and parents.]

[A year later, the children were deemed ready, and the big day in India arrived!] Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall promptly at 3:30 p.m., blessed devotees with His *darshan* (seeing a holy being), and proceeded to the dais. Upon a swift wave of His hand, the play began. The children offered salutations to Swami, gave Him an invitation and program of the play, and presented Him with a floral bouquet. The performance then began with a rendition of the song, “Remind Me, My Lord.”

The drama consisted of three different acts describing the inspiring lives of three Americans: Sojourner Truth, Abraham Lincoln, and Eleanor Roosevelt—all of whom changed the country through their pure thoughts and actions. The main theme concerned the divinity in all humanity, and

it was beautifully portrayed. Even though the dialogue was prerecorded, the children knew all their spoken lines and actions, and their love for Bhagavan showed in their eyes.

The cast’s devotion and practice was put to the test when some electrical equipment backstage shorted out, causing the lights above Swami to actually explode! [The audience showed great concern for Bhagavan’s safety. However, the children remained calm, and like true professionals continued performing and speaking their lines.] During that time the sound equipment went out. Swami’s *leela* was evident when He showed disregard for what was going on behind and above Him, and motioned for the children to keep acting. They did just that. Without fail, they delivered their lines out loud, making sure that Swami could hear.

After the drama concluded, all the children gathered in front of the dais to sing “In Every Moment of My Life.” After listening to the *bhajan*, Swami invited all the children to come stand in front of Him for a series of pictures, and then asked the SSE teachers to come and have their photos taken with Him as well. Bhagavan gave all the children *prasadam* (holy food), tossing a fresh apple to each boy, and speaking to many of them. The afternoon program ended at 5:00 with *Arathi* sung to Swami.

—**Adithya Bala**
Scottsdale, Arizona

Children's Corner

Give Your Sunshine



Who are you? Who would you like to be?
Would you like to become more like our beloved Swami?
Are you always happy when you look in a pond or mirror
and see yourself? Can the message be any clearer?
To cheer up the world and make the seasons bright,
Wear a happy face—go ahead—shed some light!
So it's up to you, just start with one person at a time;
Give them a smile or a kind word—give them your sunshine.

Poem—Anonymous

Illustration—*Bal Vikas Magazine*, Italy

you really are. Everyone uses the term *I* while introducing oneself. This shows that the principle of *I* (Self) present in you is the same principle as in others. People remain unable to understand this oneness. Their minds get carried away by differences based on the physical body. Consequently, this gives rise to conflicts and unrest.

Shackles of Illusion

Birth and death are related to the body and not to the individual. Mind is responsible for both birth and death, and everything [in creation] is of man's own making.

Life is a dream. How can anything that appears in a dream be true? It is all a mere illusion. So long as you are immersed in this *bhrama* (delusion), you cannot have the vision of *Brahma* (the Eternal Absolute). Only by breaking the shackles of illusion can you experience reality.

You can understand your true identity by observing your breathing process. Most people, however, are not interested in such an easy and simple path. They take to rough and difficult paths and ultimately become

frustrated. As long as there is a thorn in the flesh, it hurts. Body attachment is like a thorn and is the cause of all suffering. Once you give up body attachment, you will know your true Self. You suffer because you identify yourself with the body, which is but an illusion. That is why Sankaracharya said:

“From birth to birth, from death to death, from womb to womb, tarrying a while—such is the sojourn of this transient life. Oh destroyer of the demon Mura, be my boatman on this turbulent ocean, by your bounteous grace.”

One need not undertake intense spiritual practices to cross the ocean of *samsara* (illusory existence). All that one must do is contemplate on God incessantly.

Though God is within, people remain unable to realize their divinity. In the dream state, you may experience death and feel sad about it. Upon waking, you heave a sigh of relief, realizing that the events were only a dream. Then who was the one who died in the dream? It was all just a creation of the mind. Similarly, even in the waking state, whatever you experience is a creation of the mind. The feelings of *my* and *mine*—*my father, my mother, my wife, my children*, and so on—



all such feelings arise out of illusion. They do not correspond to reality. Because of illusion, people develop physical relationships and ultimately subject themselves to suffering. Once they develop pure and unsullied love, they will not experience pain or suffering. Love for the physical body is false and fleeting. Love for the [higher] Self is true and eternal. In order to understand the truth of your identity, you must inquire within.

Realize Who You Are

Once Sankar-
acharya was pro-
ceeding to the
Ganges River along
with his disciples. On
the way, he found a person sitting under a
tree repeating “*dukrun karane, dukrun
karane*”—quoting the rules from *Panini’s
Grammar*. Sankara took pity on him and
advised him to contemplate on the Lord
instead of wasting his time in the acquisition
of worldly knowledge: “Oh foolish man,
chant the name of the Lord Govinda; the
rules of grammar will not come to your
rescue when the end approaches.”

Bhrama (delusion) and *Brahma*
(Divinity) are based on your mind. They
are not present outside. *Brahma* is within
you. However, as you are immersed in
bhrama, you consider *Brahma* to be a
distant entity. Once you realize that you are
Brahma, you will be free from *bhrama* once
and for all. You suffer because you identify
yourself with the body. Once you get rid of

body attachment, you will experience
everlasting happiness.

What Is Real?

Pleasure and pain are of your own
making. They are not given by God. You are
the cause of your suffering, no one else.
Understand this truth. From the spiritual
point of view, pleasure, pain, and worldly
relationships are illusory. They are not real.
Right from dawn to dusk, you lead a life of

*Once you realize that you
are not the body, and nothing
in this world belongs to you,
you will not suffer.*

delusion. Having
been born as a
human being, you
should experience
the truth. The
physical body grows
for a certain period
and later on
becomes weak and decrepit. Birth and
growth are related to the body, which is
unreal. However, you consider the body to
be real, and thereby you suffer. When you
see with your eyes wide open, you are able
to see many people. When you close your
eyes, you cannot see anybody. From where
do so many people come when you open
your eyes? Where do they go when you close
your eyes? You do not know. In fact, you do
not know the place of your origin or of your
destination. That is why you suffer. Once
you realize that you are not the body, and
nothing in this world belongs to you, you
will not suffer. Everything in this world is of
your own making. None of it is true.

Embodiments of Love! It is only God,
the embodiment of love, who is with you
and in you always. Bereft of love, you cannot

exist. Love is your life. Love is the light that dispels the darkness of ignorance. One who does not cultivate love will be born again and again. Whoever is born must die one day, and whoever dies will be born again. Birth and death are the effect (*prabhava*) of the objective world. Being deluded by the *prabhava*, you subject yourselves to danger (*pramada*).

The Ultimate Discipline

Embodiments of Love! Worldly love is transient; it cannot be called love at all. True love is immortal, so cultivate immortal love. A physical body grows and decays. How can you consider it to be real? In fact, nothing in this world is real. Body attachment is the cause of delusion. Therefore, gradually reduce your body attachment. This is the most important *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) to undertake. *Japa* (chanting), *thapa* (penance), *dhyana* (meditation), *yoga* (communion with God), and all other such disciplines do not constitute true *sadhana*. The things you consider to be real are in fact unreal. Whatever is unreal has to be given up [in order to reach reality]. This truth has to be understood in the first instance. It is very easy to give up body attachment. I wonder why people are not able to do so!

You can see a number of electric light bulbs glowing in this hall. The electric

current passing through them is the same. Bodies are like bulbs, and the principle of the *Atma* is like the current passing through all the bulbs. Understand this oneness and share your love with one and all. Do not consider anyone to be your enemy. You tend to consider the one who loves you to be your friend, and the one who hates you to be your foe. In fact, there is neither friend nor foe. Both are only your imagination.

Get Rid of Delusion

Today, people perform various *sadhanas* to experience divinity. Will God come closer to you because of these *sadhanas*, or does He

go away from you if you do not perform them? No. It is only the *bhrama* (delusion) that goes away from you when you perform the *sadhanas*. As a result, you become closer to *Brahma* (God). You should strive to get rid of delusion.

Give up the feeling that you are the body and the doer. Only then can you be free from delusion and fear. Reduce body attachment. That is the *sadhana* to undertake. Spiritual practice does not lie in the performance of *japa*, *thapa*, *dhyana*, and so on. These are done only for your mental satisfaction and not for having the vision of God. Give up all these practices. Instead, develop firm faith that you are God. Remind yourself constantly, "I am God, I am God, I am God." Then you will become God. A body is merely the vesture you have put on. It is not your

Remind yourself constantly,
*"I am God, I am God,
 I am God." Then you will
 become God.*

true Self. As body attachment increases, suffering also increases.

Give up bad company; join good company and perform meritorious deeds day and night. In this world, you see many names and forms. Does this mean that they are all different from each other? No. All are One. It is only the Divine that expresses itself as mother, father, brother, sister, and so on. Names and forms may be different, but the underlying truth is one. When you keep this principle of

truth in view, love will flow from you incessantly. Immerse yourself in the river of love. Do not give up love under any circumstance. Even

if someone begins to hate you, treat him as your own brother. If you meet him on the road, do not show anger; greet him with love. Your love will certainly bring about a transformation in him.

True happiness lies in the spirit of sacrifice. *Thyaga* (sacrifice) is the true *yoga*. People today do not cultivate *thyaga*. On the other hand, they seek *bhoga* (pleasure) and thereby subject themselves to *roga* (disease). When you develop the spirit of sacrifice, you will be free from suffering. True spiritual practice is that which helps you to overcome delusion. What is the use, if you get drowned in delusion more and more with the advancement of age?

No One Can Cause You to Suffer

I am not the body; nothing is mine. This is what you should know. Question yourself, *Who am I?* You will get the reply, *I am I.* When you understand and experience this truth, nobody can cause any suffering to you. You cannot escape from suffering so long as you are immersed in the dualistic feeling that you are a mere mortal and God is separate from you. The feeling that *I am*

*In order to be free from
worry and to attain
everlasting peace, you need
to realize that I am I.*

separate from you is your own imagination. When *I* and *you* are joined together, it becomes *we*. However, *we* + *He* (God) becomes only *He*, who is changeless. The feeling of *I* [as separate from] *you* changes constantly.

Embodiments of Love! Many people do *sadhanas* such as *japa* and *dhyanam*, but they are not of much use. They do lead to some change in due course of time, and they may confer temporary results, but they cannot grant eternal bliss. Do not hanker after temporary results. The feeling of *me* and *mine* is the root cause of all worry. You will be haunted by worry so long as you don't realize *Hari* (God).

You worry because you identify yourself with the body. Once you identify yourself with the Self (God), you will be free from all worries, so make every effort to realize your true Self. Whatever the circumstances, do not shed tears of sorrow. You will be free from sorrow when you give up body

attachment. In order to be free from worry and fear and to attain everlasting peace, you need to realize that *I am I*. When you have unshakeable belief in this statement, nothing can make you waver or doubt.

Do not develop undue attachment to the body and material possessions. You will be redeemed only when you lead your life with a spirit of sacrifice. What you should achieve is *thyaga* (sacrifice) and not *bhoga* (sense gratification). To consider something as yours—i.e., mine—is *bhoga*. To realize that nothing is yours—i.e., not mine—is *yoga* (union with the Divine). This *yoga* bestows on you true strength.

About Jesus

Jesus performed various types of *sadhana* and ultimately realized the Truth. One day Mary and Joseph took their child Jesus to a fair in Jerusalem. Among the crowd, the parents lost track of Jesus and searched for him everywhere. All the while, Jesus was sitting in a corner of the temple, listening to the sermon of the priest. The parents searched for him outside the temple, and Mother Mary ultimately found him inside the temple. She rushed toward him with an affectionate embrace, saying, “My son, what happened to you? Where have you been? We have been looking for you.” Jesus replied, “Mother, I have not stepped out of the temple. I have been listening to the

sermon of the priest. Why should you have any fear? Those who believe in the world will have fears. Why should anyone who believes in God fear at all? I am in the company of my Father; why do you fear?”

Forgetting your innate divinity, you search for God in the external world. You in fact are God yourself. Is it not foolishness to search for yourself in the outside world? Look within; only then can you find God. Understanding this oneness is very easy, but first, you need firm faith. Believe that God is not separate from you. Upon deeper inquiry, you will realize that God is inside you and also outside.

Look within; only then can you find God. Understanding this oneness is very easy, but first, you need firm faith.

The Ten-Rupee Note

Embodiments of Love! Turn your vision inward and search for your true Self. Self-inquiry leads to the true *sakshatkara* (vision of God). Once you have *sakshatkara*, you will be free from all worries. It is a mistake to say that you have not experienced God. He is present in you.

A person kept a ten-rupee note in a book and forgot all about it as he carried it with him from day to day. One day he needed ten rupees and asked a friend to lend it to him. His friend readily agreed, but before handing over the money, his friend asked to see what book he was carrying. Upon opening the book, the ten-rupee note fell out. The man was happy to discover the required amount with him and to have no

need to borrow it from his friend. He had been carrying it all along. Likewise, today people go looking for God outside themselves because they have forgotten their innate divinity. Humanity can realize God only by looking inside.

Embodiments of Love! Students! You are making various efforts to experience divinity. Do not search for God outside. God is in you. Everything is in you. All that you see outside is illusory. Do not be swept

away by the illusory world. Inquire within. Only then can you attain peace and ultimately realize the truth that *I am I*. To know this simple truth, you need not pore through various sacred texts. Set the texts aside. Enjoy the sweet taste of divinity within. Develop the inner vision and visualize your true Self.

—Sathya Sai Baba

December 23, 2003

*D*velop love for the Divine...
Never give room for doubts or
hesitation, nor question or
test the Lord's love. You say,
"My troubles have not
ended—why? Why is that He
did not speak to me? How is it
that I did not get a room for
staying here?" You whine,
"Why did He not call me?" Do
not think that I do not care for you, or that I do not know you.
I may not talk to you, but do not be under the impression that
I have no love for you. . . . Whatever I do is for you, not for Me.
For what is it that can be called Mine? Only you!



—Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. IV, chap. 19 (old edition)

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