

SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER, USA



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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*

Swami's ashram in Mumbai (Bombay), India.

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In This Issue We Explore the Many Possibilities for Service

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



A group of people with curious ideas have cropped up recently, and they strut about with great pride. They have no yearning for God, not even any use for God. They are people dedicated to service, and they are satisfied with giving it. The essence of service, however, is selflessness and absence of desire for its praise. These servants have no right to look down upon the godly, classifying spiritual aspirants as inferior. That is but reaching for the fruit while neglecting the tree. Selfless service is the final reward of godward discipline. How can the fruit be gained without long and laborious nurture of the tree? The very foundation of nishkamakarma (action without any desire for its fruit) is love for all beings, love that seeks no reward. Without a spiritual experience of this higher love, selfless service is impossible.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Jnana Vahini, p. 33

Pathways to Success

At a Shelter Called "Another Chance"

Once a month, you can hear the sweet sound of *bhajans* coming from the kitchen of "Another Chance" shelter, a way station for at-risk teens in Atlanta, Georgia. On this weekend morning, the singers, members of the city's Sai Young Adult group, are preparing a breakfast to serve to the residents before giving them a taste of human values. The young adults include the values in the group's "Pathways to Success" workshop series, which brings Sathya Sai Baba's teachings to the experience level of these inner-city youth.

"We try to communicate with them in their own language," says the Southeast Region's Young Adult contact person. Instead of saying that anger affects your *karma*, he explains, we tell teens that "everything you do has a consequence for you." He says that the Sai volunteers have created workshops based on aspects of Swami's teachings that they feel are most likely to be well received by these young people.

Anger Management, the first in the six-workshop series, was developed about three years ago. Other workshops include

Patience, Peer Pressure, Self-Discipline, Self-Confidence, and Conservation of Resources.

For eight or nine weeks before each workshop, the young adults hold informal study-circle-like sessions to analyze Baba's writings. During this time, they go very deeply into His teachings and research outside sources for supporting information, such as the fact that drinking enough water helps to reduce anger by diluting certain chemicals in the blood.

Teachers, Baba says, should inspire others by example. So while developing a workshop, the volunteers make an effort to apply His ideas in their own lives: they try to control their tempers for the Anger Management workshop, to use less energy and prioritize their time for the Conservation of Resources workshop, and so on.

Only after such intensive preparations are they ready to present a workshop. When the day finally arrives, about 24 teens gather in the shelter lounge. There the teens participate in skits, role plays, games, and other activities. Conservation of Resources, presented this past April by 14 volunteers,

featured a Sai Fair, with a stall for each of four aspects of the Ceiling on Desires program: time, money, energy, and food. At the energy stall, the teens enjoyed a recycling contest to see who could put waste materials into the correct container the fastest, and a water-carrying relay race wherein the team that spilled the least water won.

Following the activity portion of each workshop, the teens participate in discussion, which during the Conservation of Resources day, went on at each stall. The volunteers asked the teens such questions as "How often do you watch TV?" and "How long do you spend in the shower?" Then the teens talked with the volunteers about the consequences of their answers and ways they could change their behavior. The Conservation of Resources workshop ended with an animated PowerPoint presentation summarizing the day's lessons. Other workshops have ended with a short story.

In the sharing session that follows each workshop, teens have shown a remarkable willingness to change their behavior.

Following Conservation of Resources, some of them promised to be more careful about turning off electrical appliances and to do their own food prayer to be respectful of the food they eat.

After one Anger Management workshop, a girl came up to the volunteers. She had been constantly fighting with another girl. Now she said, "You know, peace has to begin with sacrifice." Then she explained that she would try to let go of small things so she could control her anger and gain peace of mind. The shelter staff had tried to help this girl, but she would not listen to them. It took other young adults to make an impact. As Baba says, *Youth alone can transform youth.*

—Vijay Desai and Judith Wechsler

Authors' Note: The Atlanta young adults produced a program for Radio Sai Global Harmony on their Anger Management Workshop, which aired in November 2003. Now in production is a second in this series, focused on Conservation of Resources.

[The] gift is a meritorious act if it is rendered to the needy at the time of need in a manner that fulfills the need. It must be made without pride or publicity, without the superior air of the giver, without rubbing into the mind of the receiver that he is being helped to stand on his own legs, and with no contempt contaminating the mind of the giver. As an act of worship, offer what God has given you to the Divine you wish to adore in a person.

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VIII

Selections from *Voice of the Avatar II*

"...Through Service Comes the Bliss You Seek."

This birth has been undertaken by you for the mission of crucifying the ego on the cross of compassion, an opportunity to be of some service to your fellow humans that comes to you as a gift

from God. Serve with that sense of gratitude, for it is God who accepts it from you. Prepare yourself for serving others not only by

learning the skills of first aid, the rules of the road, ...or how to engage in a trade or profession. At the times when you are not otherwise actively engaged, be busy meditating, reciting the Lord's name, or reflecting on it and the glory it seeks to express. That is, fill yourself with God.

Keep your mind busy with these activities, for once it strays into the byways of the world, it will get infected with evil. Service to others is the duty you owe to society, which gave you the culture you have been fed on, the warmth you crave, and the security you seek. Society gives you a name, a form, a personality, an individuality, an armor of belief, and a playground of doubts and diversions.

Human beings are the only animals who know they have to die and yearn to survive

death. Humans alone have the strange thirst for the nectar that confers immortality. Their special task is the quest for the truth that emancipates. Understand the deep

significance of service: it will direct you to become ideal leaders—you fulfill yourself by sharing.

Touchstones of Service

Look upon all without guilt, lust, or scandal. Speak to all, and of all, with love blooming out of adoration. Let your hands and heart give: treat the distressed, the diseased, the old, the helpless, and the child with great respect. Invite the reverential attention of those who need service by leading simple, unsophisticated, and unpretentious lives. Test every gesture, mannerism, whim, of yours on this touchstone and ask, "Will this win Baba's approval?"

The fulfillment of life consists in the service one gives without any thought of return, in an attitude of selflessness. Service performed in this spirit sheds light in the dark interior of the human being; it widens the heart, purifies the impulses, and confers lasting bliss.

*Speak to all, and of all,
with love blooming out
of adoration.*

The body should be guarded and sustained for the service you can do to others with it or for realizing the *Atma* (divinity within) while in it. Spiritual practices such as repetition of a holy name and meditation are commendable, but if someone needs your service, you will benefit more from giving it than from the gains made by doing spiritual practices. Engage in those activities that you know will please God, rather than in activities that will please you. God is pleased with truth and righteousness—right words, right actions, right thoughts, right character, and a right heart.

Gain Wisdom Through Service

Service to others is a process by which you can gain lower wisdom, and even higher wisdom. Service can instill more intensely than any other activity the sense of the basic One. True service opens your eyes to the comprehensive unity of creation. The eye reveals Him as the universe, as vastness, as magnificence, as order. Through service, the eye is opened. The eye is the scripture that illumines. When you are aware of only 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. *Samajaseva* means “serving the same, the undifferentiated, the One that makes the many the same.”

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Service without any thought of yourself is the first step in the spiritual process. Serving others trains you to transcend all the distinctions artificially imposed by history and geography and to realize that the human community is one—indivisible. Learn this truth; experience it in action. How can you be divine unless you have established yourself in this unity and shaped all your actions and thoughts by it? Any activity solely intended for the individual is barren.

Your service will confer on you and your community untold benefits and will also bring an invisible, but potent, benefit in the form of grace. If you do not feel a call at the sight of human distress, disease, or deviation, how can you master the determination and dedication necessary to serve the unseen, inscrutable, and mysterious God? When you do not love your fellow humans and serve them with love, your heart cannot love God. Despising your human brothers and sisters, you cannot at the same time worship God—God does not accept such hypocrisy.

God resides in every heart, so serve anyone. That service reaches the God within; it brings you God’s grace. The heart that does not melt at the sight of people caught in the coils of ignorance, disease, or deprivation has to be labeled demonic. Give up egotism, sensualism, and greed; believe

in, and practice, the glory of the *Atma*, and love while being of service to others.

Service is primarily spiritual discipline—mental cleanup. Service is the most rewarding form of austerity, the most satisfying, and the most pleasurable. Service springs out of love, and it scatters love in profusion. Without serving the human being, who is your kith and kin, how can you serve God? Train yourself to serve God by serving your fellow human being, in whose heart God is installed. Service to humanity is worship of God.

The fulfillment of your life on earth consists in filling yourself with love of God and transmuting that love into acts of service to the human who is the embodiment of God. If you have not love in you and if you do not share love with all beings, you are but a burden to the earth and to society.

Widen the Horizon of Your Compassion

Society, like God, cannot be seen, only experienced and enjoyed. Through the individual in society, you infer the immanence of the Divine. All are actors on the world stage in His play. Every atom is surcharged with His power, His might, and His glory. Every being is surcharged with His bliss, His beauty, His goodness. Do not claim that when serving, you are using some

skill or force specially yours; it has come out of His grace, His compassion.

To contact God, you have to open your eyes and serve your human brothers and sisters. Each one of them is the God incarnate you can worship and adore to your heart's content. The greatest joy springs from the utmost sacrifice, which is the utmost fulfillment. Giving is gaining. You should offer service from wherever you are, at whatever time you realize the need,

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and ability.*

and to the extent of your capacity and ability. Feel and know that God has given you the chance, the inclination, and the ability; that is the crux of this spiritual practice.

No discipline is equal to service in smothering the ego and filling the heart with genuine joy. To condemn or ignore giving service is to forego these benefits. A wave of service, if it sweeps over the land, catching everyone in its enthusiasm, can wipe away the mounds of hatred, malice, and greed that infest the world. Serve because you can have no peace unless you serve. It is in giving that joy lies, not in receiving.

Service emanates from genuinely understanding the meaning and purpose of life. When you know that, every step will be toward righteousness, which consists in widening the horizon of your compassion.

Believe that all are God; then compassion will compel you to love and

serve. Believe that God is the master and you are His servant through devotion. His command is to wipe away the tears [of the grieving], nourish the sick, and help the lame. Believe that you must adore God by dedicating your service with love to Him. In this way, your devotion to God will reach the utmost heights.

You achieve peace and joy only through sacrifice. Giving yields more joy than grasping. Service is best built on the strong foundation of *Tat twam asi* (That and this are the same; that is this; this is that). There

is no other; there is only One. All humans are kin. Service to humanity will help your divinity blossom. Service to your fellow humans is service to God, for He is in everyone—in every living being and in every stone and tree. Offer your talents at the feet of God; let every act be a flower full of the fragrance of love and sacrifice. Know and feel that God has given you the chance, the inclination, and the ability to serve, for through service comes the bliss you seek.

—Sathya Sai Baba
Voice of the Avatar, Vol. II

Serving the Elderly

Through the “Friendly Visitors” program, I help a woman named Louise, who is 70 years old and all alone. She has two daughters and a sister, but they live far away and do not call her. Because Louise is half-paralyzed and in poor health, she cannot do her own daily chores. I visit her once a week, and we talk as friends. That takes a little stress off her mind, as she doesn’t have anyone else to talk to. I check her mail, mend torn clothes, and shop for her. In addition, I take little gifts to her (such as flowers, fruits, and oil paints), make phone calls for her, and mail her letters.

—Anonymous
Walnut Creek, California

Sometime ago I decided, after reading Baba’s teachings on service, that I needed to do more to help others. So I contacted the “Senior Support Program” in my neighborhood and asked what I could do. They matched me with an elderly couple, Ralph and Alice. Both are in their eighties and have physical problems that prevent them from doing what we take for granted. They love visitors, so every Thursday morning I see them and do their grocery shopping. They are so appreciative of the time I spend with them. I know I’m not supposed to expect a reward, but I am rewarded every Thursday with their smiles and love.

—Anonymous
Walnut Creek, California

A New Way to Serve

Sending Love Is the Basis of All Service

Three of Sathya Sai Baba's most well-known teachings are:

- ♦ Serve the needy.
- ♦ Quiet the mind.
- ♦ Expand the heart.

Our group does a service project that integrates all these injunctions; we pray for missing children. This service came to us in a unique way, through a series of seemingly unconnected circumstances.

First, while I was answering calls for assistance referred to me by a local help organization, I met a couple, both physically disabled, who particularly longed to do something to help return lost or abducted children to their rightful homes. Then while I was watching the television show *There Is a Way*, I found myself listening to a guest speaker who was not only an author and lecturer but someone who rejoices in her awareness of Sai Baba's presence on the planet. Because of my experience with the couple, I was quite receptive to her message.

During the show, she described how one day a friend had called her and asked for help in a frightening situation. The friend's ten-year-old daughter had disappeared, and no one had a clue as to what might have happened. Although she was not a psychic, the speaker had decided to spend time in

silence, listening for guidance on how she might be of service. After five days and five nights, she had still received nothing and was about to give up when she decided to continue a little longer. Within a few hours, she heard quite clearly the names of three men, the make of a car, and an instruction to call the child's parents.

As instructed, she asked the parents to think the most loving thoughts possible about those three men—to put them in the light of God. Both mother and father began immediately to do as asked [although that must have been the most difficult task these two people had ever undertaken]. The parents thought about the men the three names represented, declared them to be children of God, and recognized that in their true spiritual identity they were lovable and loving. After forgiving them for their mistaken behavior, the parents sent many loving thoughts their way.

A Course in Miracles tells us that every attack is a plea for love. Those men were begging for love in the only way they knew how. In sending love, the parents gave them what they had so desperately needed. The results were truly miraculous.

Before the police were able to find the men, the little girl walked into a police station and told the officers there her story.

She said that she had been abducted by force, locked in a dark room, mistreated, and threatened. Suddenly, she said, the men unlocked the room, asked her forgiveness for the way they had treated her, and took her to the car. They drove to a corner just one block from a police station and told her to get out of the car. The police, they said, would return her to her parents. She just had to walk to the station and go inside. This she did, and the outcome not only corrected the immediate situation affecting one family but established a clear procedure useful for every discordant situation.

After hearing this story, our group made a commitment to send loving thoughts regularly toward all the missing, hungry, and abused children in the world. We each participate in this "Bring Home the Children" project according to our own schedule and in our own way. However, many of us find it helpful to start by directing love toward a specific child. Hardly a day passes that we do not see a picture of a missing child, if not in our own mail, then in some public place. After we have surrounded the child with love and God's

light, we expand our hearts to include the child's parents, friends, and relatives. We also include the abductors, if any are involved, recognizing that they are expressions of divine love, no matter how mistaken their behavior may be. Then we gradually broaden our love until it includes all children and all humanity in one embrace.

Anyone can do this spiritual exercise. It takes only a few moments and requires no financial resources. Since physical strength is not necessary, this service is not exclusive to the young or the healthy.

All we have to do is LOVE. Sathya Sai Baba tells us, *Love is the solvent for the hardest of hearts*. He also says, *See God in everyone, even in people you regard as enemies. Seen through the eyes of love, all beings are beautiful, all deeds are dedicated, all thoughts are beneficial, and the world is one vast family*. Love is the best foundation for service. Think love. Send love. Be love. Love is the highest power. Love is God.

—Joy Thomas
(In Memoriam)

Author's Note: In a discourse given at the All India Sai Active Workers' Conference on November 21, 1987, Baba said, *Those who wish to serve society . . . must undertake service activities according to their own capacity*. After contemplating this statement, many devotees have acted in ways that can potentially bless thousands of sick, elderly, infirm, and homebound persons. Some, like me, have begun working in convalescent hospitals and retirement homes. In doing so, I have noted that the greatest pain suffered by the residents is their feeling of helplessness and uselessness. Some perform repetitive hand motions; some carry dolls or stuffed animals that they pretend to care for; others just stare blankly into space. Alfred, Lord Tennyson put the feeling into words succinctly: "How dull it is to pause, to make an end, to rust unburnished, not to shine in use."

Take the Service Elevator

The Easiest Path to Salvation

A Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) teacher mentioned that one of the big difficulties in teaching SSE children is that the values taught by Sathya Sai Baba are so different from the values they pick up from the society around them. This reminded me of what Mahatma Gandhi once said when asked for his opinion of Western civilization. He replied that he thought it would be a good idea. Thus, a Western civilization based on the values taught by Sai Baba is something for all of us Westerners to work for.

We find it hard to break the habit of being controlled by our ego. Sai Baba has emphasized service in many of His discourses. When some people hear about service, their reaction, coming from ego, is: "Selfless service, eh? What's in it for me?"

This question is rather cynical, but we can still take it seriously and give some kind of answer. Baba teaches us that the ultimate purpose of our lives should be to move from the limited ego self to the universal divine Self. Selfless service is essential for this process because we are obviously not going to go beyond our ego self through being selfish

all the time. However, someone might ask why we want to go beyond the ego self. What's wrong with being like the man who said, "At one time I was fighting a relentless

struggle against my ego, but when I finally gave up, it wasn't bad at all."

Our real nature is truth, right action, peace, love, and nonviolence, and we won't be

happy when we are out of harmony with our real nature. The ego self, however, doesn't care about these values, and it stands between us and our own happiness.

A second answer is, what choice do we have? Our only options are to obey the ego self or to obey the higher Self. When we see what the ego self is like, it isn't hard to choose. Did you ever hear anyone say, "What I like most about that person is his ego. It's just enormous." Certainly not! We might also notice that any time we do something successful, our ego wants to step forward and take credit. However, if we look closely, we will see that our ego wasn't there during the work, because to work well we have to concentrate on what we're doing, and the thought of receiving praise is absent.

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enormous." Certainly not!

So the voice of the ego just isn't worth listening to.

A third answer is that as long as we stay with the ego self, we are reborn again and again to experience the effects of our past *karma*. What kind of *karma* does the ego self bring us? I saw a cartoon of a miser looking over all the money he had accumulated, saying, "I deserve what I've acquired!" What he had acquired, without realizing it, was the meanness and greed that showed on his face.

These are some of the reasons why, when we do service, we benefit just as much as the people we serve. However, even when we see that selfless service is important, we may still find enthusiasm and intensity lacking in ourselves and in our Sai Centers. The word *intensity* has a special significance. Baba says, *The main reason we are so slow to achieve enlightenment is our lack of intensity*. Some people also say that a much greater intensity of effort is needed from all of us to make the SSE program successful. Therefore intensity is a point worth pondering.

A man once said, "When I was younger I used to ask myself what I could do in life to serve my fellow humans, but I couldn't think of anything that wouldn't have involved a great deal of inconvenience to me personally." Our lack of intensity when it comes to spiritual activities, in contrast to

our enthusiasm for worldly activities, has been neatly epitomized in a Russian proverb: "The church is near, but the road is icy; the tavern is far, but I'll walk very carefully."

In the same vein, Baba says, *The spiritual path may seem difficult and not enjoyable at first, but if we make the effort it becomes sweeter and easier. However, worldly life seems enticing at first, but it is ultimately stale and unsatisfying*. So if we can just make

the effort to get started doing service, the momentum will build and enthusiasm will grow.

Service should not be some special activity kept separate from the rest of our lives. We should do service all the time until it becomes a



A doctor discusses some of the finer points of using a stethoscope with Sathya Sai Baba.

constant way of thinking.

Sai Baba Himself is an example of constant service. Can we imagine a devotee calling on Him for help and getting the following message? "This is Sathya Sai Baba speaking. I'm sorry, but I'm out at the moment. When you hear the *Om*, please state your name and problem, and I'll get back to you as soon as I can."

As a service, we can repeat the Lord's name and visualize His form with love whenever useful work does not demand our attention. Baba urges us to take up this practice because it is the easiest path to salvation. We could make a habit of asking ourselves when we are not working, "Is this

activity better than repeating the Lord's name?" Then if we say the name, the change in our behavior might surprise us.

In addition, whatever work we have to do, if we dedicate it to the Lord and do it as well as we can, it is service. In this way, we can be involved in service all day long.

Service is ideally something we do ourselves. Merely donating money for a service project, without actually participating and putting in time and effort, can be like trying to keep ourselves physically fit by hiring someone to go jogging for us every day. Those who actually render hands-on, face-to-face service get the most benefit.

It is important to do service with a right attitude, not like the old man, his face lined with bitterness, who complained, "My whole miserable life has been spent in the service of others." Baba wants us to sacrifice our ego, not our joy, in being His devotees.

Three important components of the attitude of service are compassion, detachment, and humility. Baba says:

Service is the blossom of love, a flower that fills the mind with rapture. Harmlessness is the fragrance of that flower. Let even your smallest acts be redolent with compassion and reverence; be assured that your character will thereby shine greatly. The highest happiness is contentment. Where no harshness exists, there holiness will thrive and virtue will flourish. Where greed exists, vice will breed

thick. You must completely destroy the urge to live an isolated life like a lone bull. Do not entertain such a wish even in dreams.

Emphasizing humility, Jesus said, "He who would be greatest among you must be the least and the servant of all."

The idea of maintaining detachment while doing service is probably less familiar to most of us. We have to be detached from the ups and downs of the world and become fixed in inner peace. If we get caught up in

.....
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.....

the negative emotions of people who are suffering, it drains us and reinforces their negativity. However, if we can maintain peace, they may gain

strength from us. So even while we are doing service, it is good to remember that the world is an illusion. This idea is especially emphasized in Buddhism. According to one story, two young monks saw a flag blowing in the wind and got into an argument about the real nature of the event. One argued that the flag was really moving, and the other argued that it was really the wind moving. An older monk overheard them and scolded them both, saying, "The flag is not moving. The wind is not moving. Your minds are moving."

Another Buddhist story tells of two monks who were walking toward a village and came to a stream swollen by recent rains. A young woman needed to get across the stream but was afraid of the swift current and did not want to spoil her clothes. One

of the monks offered to carry her across, and she accepted. Once on the other side, she thanked him for his kindness, which he acknowledged with a nod, and went his way.

As the monks continued on their journey, the second monk seemed to be worrying about something and became more and more uneasy. Finally, the first monk asked him whether something was on his mind. He replied, "As monks, we have taken a vow to avoid contact with women. How could you have carried that woman? Don't your vows mean anything to you, or don't you even remember them?" The first monk said, "Oh, so that's the problem. I set that woman down after we crossed the stream, but it seems that you are still carrying her."

To keep ego from contaminating our service, as well as to maintain a spirit of compassion, detachment, and humility, we may find it helpful to remember that we are not the doer. The Lord acts through us, and the Lord also receives the service we do. It is not so much that other people need our service, but rather we who need opportunities to serve.

Sometimes people ask (as an excuse for not doing service) why we should do service to relieve others' suffering if their suffering is the result of their past bad *karma*. Baba says, *Life is a drama directed by the Lord, and only He knows its ultimate meaning, but we all have our roles to play*. Some play the role of a compassionate person, others the role of an indifferent person, according to their circumstances. Who is to say which is better?

I once read a story that went something

like this: A foreign woman, while riding in a dugout in a river somewhere in Asia, noticed to her horror that a young child had broken away from its mother and fallen overboard. The woman was shocked to see that the mother took no action, and asked her desperately why she wasn't doing something. The mother replied calmly that the fall was her child's *karma*. At this point, the woman reached out as far as she could and just barely managed to get hold of the child before it was too late, pulling him back into the boat and returning him to his mother. Later, upon reflection, the woman wondered how, even though it might have been the child's *karma* to fall into the river, could the mother know for sure that it wasn't her *karma* to try to save the child?

Those who appear indifferent to the suffering of others may either be great yogis, who have seen through all the illusions of the world, or great egotists, who care only about themselves. Great yogis are very rare, so we should be careful about assuming that we are in that group. The test is whether we are indifferent to our own suffering. This is like the doctor who told a patient, "You have a slight fever, but I wouldn't worry about it." The patient answered, "If *you* had a slight fever, I wouldn't worry about it either."

Baba has given us all a great opportunity: instead of climbing the spiritual path to a higher level of consciousness slowly, step by step, we have the option of reaching the top quickly—by taking the service elevator.

—Perry Smith, Ph.D.
Santa Clara, California

Mothers Inspire Great Deeds of Service

Divine Discourse, Easwaramma Day, May 6, 2004

When you emerge out of your mother's womb, you have no garland of any kind around your neck: neither a necklace of pearls nor of gold nor of topaz, rubies, or other precious gems. There is, however, one garland carrying the unbroken link of the strung-together consequences of good and bad deeds done in past lives. Brahma, the Creator, strings together the consequences of your past deeds into a heavy garland and places it around your neck at the time of your birth. (Telugu poem)

Embodiments of love! Every individual has four gurus in this world. The Vedas proclaim: Consider the mother, father, teacher, and guest as God. Among the four, the mother is the first and foremost guru. The mother's teachings have several inner meanings. A true disciple is one who meticulously follows her instructions. A mother may appear to be an ordinary individual like any other, but someone who delves deeply into her teachings will realize that she is a great guru. Those who are not on the spiritual path, however, may take all this lightly.

Once, Mother Easwaramma (Sathya Sai Baba's mother) was returning from the Chitravati River with a vessel full of water. An old woman was walking alongside her with great difficulty, unable to bear the burden of a vessel also filled with water. Easwaramma inquired, "Mother, are you

having difficulty in carrying the vessel?" The old woman, who was perspiring and unable to keep pace with her, replied, "Yes, mother,

I cannot carry this vessel for such a long distance. However, I have no children to help me with this task. I myself have to carry the vessel every day." These words of agony became strongly imprinted on Easwaramma's mind. After walking some distance, she saw a small boy holding a slate and pencil in one hand and carrying a heavy load of books in a bag hanging round his neck. He was unable to walk, but he had



to continue his journey to the school in Bukkapatnam, a village some distance [3 miles] away. Easwaramma asked the boy, "My dear son, what is the slate and pencil for? Why are you carrying such a heavy load of books?" The small boy replied, "Mother, I am carrying these books so that I can write down all that the teachers say." Easwaramma

kept these two incidents in her mind. After walking some more, she came across a frail woman carrying an infant child, proceeding toward Bukkapatnam. Easwaramma asked this woman, "You appear to be frail and weak, unable to carry the child. Why should you have to walk such a long distance up to Bukkapatnam?" The woman replied, "Mother, what else can I do? There is no doctor in this remote village who can provide some medicine for my child, who is suffering from a cold and fever. I have to take him to the Bukkapatnam hospital." This incident, too, made an imprint on mother Easwaramma's mind.

Vidyasagar's Mother

Another mother and her small child used to live in a remote village near Kolkata [Calcutta]. As soon as the child was born, the father died. The mother somehow brought up the child with the meager income she earned by doing odd jobs. They did not even have a lamp in the house for the boy [to use while studying] at night. He used to sit under street lights and study. Thus he continued his studies with great difficulty and earned a high degree of qualification. That little boy blossomed into the legendary Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar.

Once, a fair was being held in Kolkata. Vidyasagar's mother started out to visit the fair, wearing a worn-out sari. He noticed

her going out in this pitiable condition while everyone else went to the fair wearing expensive clothes. Vidyasagar could not bear the sight of his mother going to the fair in a worn-out sari. He asked, "Mother, why are you wearing such a worn-out sari?" His mother replied, "My dear son, I am happy with whatever I have. Please do not worry. You continue with your studies and come up in life."

A few years after this incident,

Vidyasagar prayed... "It is the responsibility of the son to fulfill the desires of the mother and make her happy."

Vidyasagar completed his studies and secured a good job with a decent salary. He bought some good saris for his mother with his first month's salary.

Then his mother told him, "I will not be really happy with these costly saris. If you help the poor people in our village and alleviate their suffering at least to some extent, that is enough for me." She also said that she had three desires. Immediately, Vidyasagar fell at her feet and prayed, "Mother, it is my duty to fulfill your desires. It is the responsibility of a son to fulfill the desires of his mother and make her happy. Please let me know what your desires are."

His mother replied, "My dear son, there are several poor, uneducated, and sick people in our village. Who will alleviate their suffering? I will be truly happy only when you relieve their difficulties. The children in this village have to walk long distances to go to the neighboring village for studies. I am so moved by their pitiable

condition. Why should they have to undergo so many difficulties for the sake of an education? Please build a small school in this village so these children can comfortably study here." Vidyasagar built a small school in his village, as his mother wished, and she was happy.

On another day, Vidyasagar found his mother sitting in a pensive mood and inquired as to the reason. She replied, "My dear son, the people of our village are suffering for want of

drinking water. They have to get water from far away, walking all the while. The well in our village has completely dried up.

How can old women like me fetch water from such a distance? If you could arrange for a well to be dug in our village, it would be a great boon for the villagers. This is my second desire." Vidyasagar assured her, "Mother, I will certainly fulfill your desire. I will try to solve the drinking-water problem in our village."

Initially, he had two or three bore wells sunk in the village, but they were not of much use. The bore wells were able to supply water only during the rainy season. During summer, they used to dry up, yielding not even a drop of water. The mother urged him to find a permanent solution for the problem. Vidyasagar arranged for the digging of a big well, solved the problem of water scarcity permanently, and made his mother happy.

Vidyasagar...cultivated the quality of humility along with education [and] earned a great name...

After some time, Vidyasagar got a promotion in his job. His salary also increased. Then he approached his mother and inquired, "Mother, what is your third desire?" She replied, "My dear son, you have built a school, and you have provided drinking water for the villagers. However, whenever children in our village fall sick, their mothers are compelled to take them to the neighboring village for treatment. I am unable to bear seeing their plight. Hence,

I would be happy if you could arrange to build a small hospital in our village." In accordance with his mother's wish, Vidyasagar had a hospital built in his village. Thus, he fulfilled all his mother's desires.

Gradually, because of his good behavior, he reached a high position in his career. His salary also increased accordingly. In spite of that, he continued to be humble and obedient and thereby earned a good name for himself. One day, his mother called him and gave him another word of advice: "My dear son, I am happy that you have attained a very high position in life; however, do not become arrogant."

For some people, excessive wealth gives rise to ego, which in turn paves the way for many wicked qualities. However, when wealth leaves them, their ego also vanishes, and as a result their evil qualities disappear. (Telugu Poem)

This was not the case, however, with Vidyasagar. He cultivated the quality of humility along with education. He earned a good name for himself as a great orator. Educated people in great numbers used to flock to hear his speeches.

Humility—a Fundamental Human Quality

Once Vidyasagar had to address a meeting arranged in a neighboring town. As he was traveling to that town on the train, he shared a compartment with an ICS [Indian Civil Service] officer. The officer was on his way to the same town to hear Vidyasagar's speech. The officer, however, had only heard Vidyasagar's name but had never seen him before. Soon after alighting from the train, the officer started shouting "Coolie! Coolie!" On seeing this, Vidyasagar approached the officer and asked what luggage he had. The man replied, "Only a small suitcase." Then Vidyasagar asked, "Is it really necessary for you to engage a coolie just to carry this small bag? I will carry it for you. Where are you going?" The officer replied, "I understand that a great scholar and orator named Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar is going to deliver a speech. I plan to attend his speech."

Vidyasagar picked up the suitcase and began walking alongside the officer. They reached the place where the lecture was to be held, and Vidyasagar handed the suitcase over to the officer, who then took out a purse and asked Vidyasagar how much money he required in return for carrying the bag. Vidyasagar politely refused the offer, saying,

"Sir, you have given me an opportunity to serve you. I don't need anything more." Then he silently walked away.

Considering Vidyasagar to be a fool, the officer proceeded to sit in the audience. The organizers of the function had been waiting to garland Vidyasagar upon his arrival. In a few minutes Vidyasagar arrived, dressed in very simple clothing. He was accorded a warm welcome and profusely garlanded. The officer, while observing this welcoming ceremony, realized in utter astonishment that the person who had carried his bag from the railway station was none other than Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar himself! Feeling ashamed, the officer reverentially offered inner *pranams* to this great yet humble individual.

Then Vidyasagar began his speech. He explained that humility is the foremost quality of an educated person, and that pride and arrogance are a result of excessive wealth. Consequently a person with these vices loses fundamental human qualities.

After the program, the ICS officer approached Vidyasagar and offered sincere apologies for his mistake. The officer pleaded with Vidyasagar, "Sir, your speech was a great eye opener for me. I behaved arrogantly because of my pride in being a highly educated person. Please excuse me."

In due course of time, Vidyasagar's reputation as a scholar and orator increased by leaps and bounds. Despite this, Vidyasagar continued to do great service to the people. He provided tuition for educating various poor students.

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*Laugh when there's pain,
Pray when there's sorrow.
Keep firm in the Lord,
Who's directing the morrow.*

*Solitude's an illusion;
You are never alone.
Amid the confusion,
He's leading you home.*

*He's holding your hand;
You're fulfilling His Plan.
He has charge over angels
And power over man!*

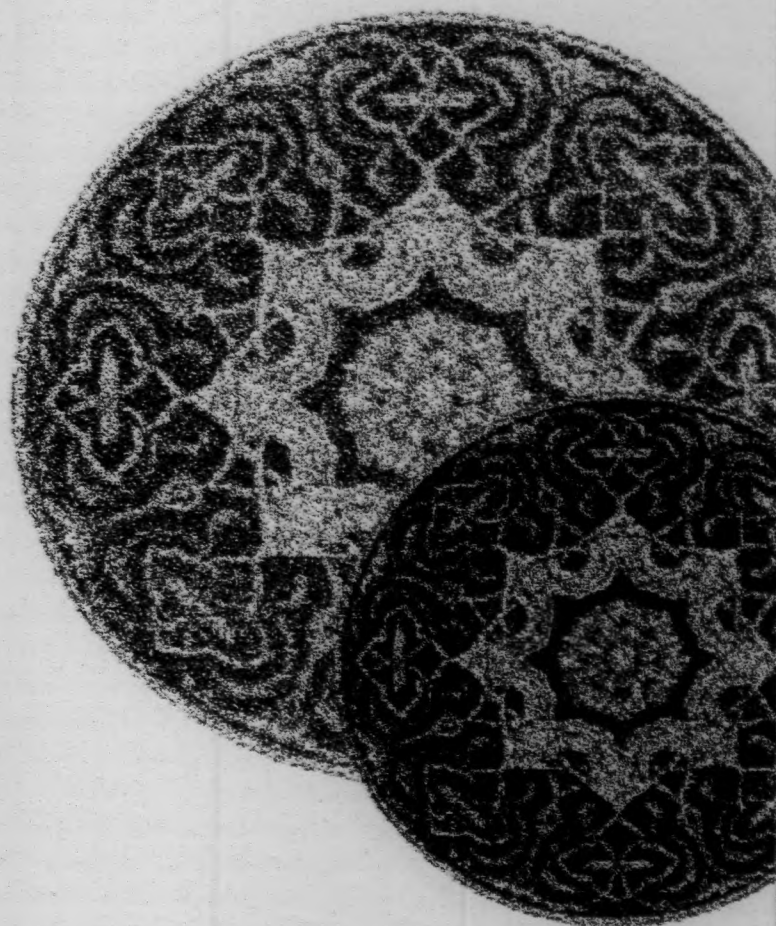
*Look in your heart;
He looks back at you.
He loves you, forgives you,
Whatever you do.*

*So do not despair—
Or worry, or weep—
The Lord is alive!
He's awake, not asleep.*

*If you call, He will listen,
If you beckon, He will come;
If you trust with all your being,
He is here to lead you Home.*

Belief

—Angelina D'Alco
San Pedro, California



I am a physician who works as a medical consultant for one of the most modern, all-male maximum-security prisons in this country. Since I was the youngest and first female physician to treat patients here, initially many people wondered why I picked such a workplace (actually, I feel Baba subtly directed me to it). These people would ask my husband, "Isn't it crazy to let your wife work in a prison?" He would calmly reply, "Her Baba will protect her." And He surely has!

My job can be truly challenging. I know of no other place where negative vibrations—such as anger, hatred, and violence—are more crystallized. Worse yet, my patients are some of the most violent and dangerous men in the prison. These circumstances used to cause me to feel very dejected and disillusioned at times.

One of my visits to Puttaparthi, however, really opened my eyes. I was impressed by these words of Baba's:

Even in a person of unpleasant nature, be aware that the Lord is in his or her heart—even in such a person. Keep this idea in mind and treat the person, to the best of your ability, from that viewpoint. In time, the person will respond, and his or her nature will change.

What an appropriate message for me! I realized that my work was my spiritual discipline, my testing ground to improve myself. Now I find myself more open and tolerant, less judgmental. After my return from India, I placed a small, elegant picture of Baba in my office, and I decorated the

office with flowers and scenic pictures. This action led to a definite positive effect on all who came there. On my birthday, as I entered the office, I found a lovely painting of roses with the following words inscribed on it: "Never in this world can malice be overcome by hatred; it can be overcome by love alone!" This gesture by the staff and patients so moved me that tears welled up in my eyes. I felt renewed hope!

Exactly a year after my soul-stirring experience in Puttaparthi, I was called out to see a patient. On that drizzly, cold morning, I arrived at the prison at about 5:30 a.m. As I waited near the gate to enter the facility, I felt intense pangs of [seeming] separation from Baba and acutely longed to be in His presence. After some time, a petite female officer with an Afro hairstyle came toward me and, giving me the sweetest smile, said, "Doc, be happy and keep smiling." She quickly left as suddenly as she had appeared. I had never seen her before. However, this much I know: I suddenly felt "my Baba's" divine presence. The feeling was similar to what I had experienced in Puttaparthi. My heart overflowed with joy and gratitude. I was overwhelmed and thought, "O Lord, I am so ordinary. What have I done to deserve such grace?"

In His infinite mercy, with perfect timing, I had felt His presence when I needed it most. Such is His grace!

—Rajshree Gaitonde, MD, MHS
Glendale, California

Why Fear When I Am Here?

"In His infinite mercy,
with perfect timing, I
had felt His presence
when I needed it most."



Study Circle Forum #5

*We must confess, we made a mistake, but this one honestly takes the cake.
It's not the first, but we hope it's the last—we're sorry to say we moved too fast.
We have already printed "Forum #6," which has put this Newsletter in a fix;
For now we're publishing "#5"—going backward, but still we thrive,
'Cause Jon Roof's demeanor is good and kind—
and we hope that our readers really won't mind.*

—Editor

A new publication, *Guidelines for Sathya Sai Study Circles in America*, recently approved by the National Council, will soon arrive at the centers. The *Guidelines for Sathya Sai Study Circles in America* have been derived from extensive discussions with national and regional officers as well as with individual devotees. America's first official study circle guidelines give U.S. centers an excellent opportunity to reevaluate and invigorate their study circle programs. If current methods of study and discussion have not worked well in your center, then now is the ideal time to try a different approach. The guidelines give current Sathya Sai Baba Center members a chance to discuss the purpose of the study circle and also help draw new members into this key program.

Sathya Sai Baba has been urging devotees to get to know their own reality for many years. Since 1997, Swami has encouraged Educare and similar programs of inner inquiry. Knowledge of the divine

teachings is an essential ingredient in Swami's plan for personal transformation. Centers should not be content with devotional and service activities alone. Over the past two decades, Sai has asked devotees to take the next step in self-knowledge: *Since the 60th birthday celebrations, I have emphasized spiritual discipline and the nondualistic approach. We have passed the stage of action and worship and must now enter on the stage of wisdom.* (Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XX, p. 253)

It is simply not sufficient for earnest center members to attend only devotional meetings. Even devotional and service activities together are incomplete without the self-inquiry a study circle promotes. That is why Swami has recommended the study circle as a part of His program for centers since the beginning of the organization.

Sai's program for spiritual transformation is similar to a cake recipe. Devotion is the sweet sugar that pleases your

palate. Service is the flour that adds substance and sustains your efforts. To make the mixture rise and become a tasty cake requires an additional ingredient, the “yeast” of self-knowledge. Without this yeast, the other ingredients would go to waste. When all three ingredients are combined and subjected to the “heat” of spiritual effort, the results of your practice will be most beneficial. Without self-knowledge, the recipe is incomplete. Self-transformation requires all three approaches for success; devotion, action, and wisdom are mutually interdependent and reinforcing.

It is recommended that centers use the new guidelines and respect the study circle discipline. The principles embodied in the guidelines have been employed by many centers across this country and abroad for many years with excellent success. If your center uses an existing format that works well for all its members, accomplishes the objective of inner inquiry, and everyone agrees on that format, then continue as usual. However, if there is a lack of consensus on proper format and appropriate disciplines or a wish to improve the existing format, then the center should adopt the model in the guidelines immediately. Emphasis on effective study circles is on the increase, not only in the United States but in Sai organizations throughout the world.

The principles of running a correctly formatted study circle need to filter down to the center level at the earliest opportunity. Regional Presidents and Regional Devotion Coordinators hold the primary responsibility for achieving this

goal in their region. Center Devotion Coordinators should also take this chance to reinvigorate study circles.

Don't lose the opportunity the new guidelines give centers to reevaluate their study circle program. To make sure that everyone understands the objective of the program, your center may find it useful to hold a study circle on the purpose of study circle discipline. Invite all center members to attend to help them realize the importance of the study circle in Swami's recipe for self-transformation.

We invite center members to suggest further avenues for improving study circles, such as holding training sessions during regional or local conferences. If you think we need to develop model study circles or specific study plans on certain subjects, please send your ideas to the National Study Circle Coordinator at the address below. When obstacles prevent your center from implementing the program successfully, the officers can write for suggestions in overcoming these problems or can talk to the Coordinator or regional officers about scheduling training sessions or workshops.

—**Jonathan L. Roof**

National Study Circle Coordinator

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Guidelines for Sathya Sai Study Circles in America is available at the Sathya Sai Book Center of America. See page 36.

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He provided drinking water to certain villages where there were no such facilities. His mother felt very happy that her son was serving the poor and needy so well. She prayed to God that every mother be blessed with such a noble child.

Sai Service Projects

Similarly, Sathya Sai has undertaken community welfare activities in Puttaparthi, such as constructing residential houses for the poor, educating their children, and providing drinking water to the villagers. All this is according to the wishes of Mother Easwaramma. What she expressed in those days were small desires. Over time, however, these projects assumed gigantic proportions and are now making history.

Easwaramma was very happy about the great way Swami served the villagers. She said with satisfaction, "My dear son, you built houses for the poor, you solved the villagers' drinking water problem, and you provided electricity to the village, which was reeling in darkness. Not only that, you have also built a school and a hospital. You have fulfilled all my desires."

She felt extremely happy that her son had undertaken and completed such great tasks. She used to tell the women gathering around her, "I requested that Swami build a small school in Puttaparthi village. Now, Swami has established a great educational institution in its place." Thus, Easwaramma's humble wishes transformed them-selves ultimately into grand projects that provide im-mense benefit to humanity at large.

What the country needs today are children who follow the teachings of their mothers. The teachings of mothers may appear to be simple and insignificant, but over time, they may provide great happiness. Easwaramma's desires were very simple. She wanted me to make drinking water available to the small village of Puttaparthi. Swami, however, provided drinking water to the entire district of Anantapur. She wanted me to build a small school. Sathya Sai, however, built huge buildings and established great educational institutions. In previous days, villagers used to suffer from a lack of basic medical facilities; therefore, Mother Easwaramma asked me to build a small hospital. Swami, however, built great temples of healing, the Sathya Sai Super-Specialty Hospitals—one in Puttaparthi and another in Bangalore. Thus her small wishes resulted in the establishment of great institutions [that all provide services free of cost to the recipients].

Free Services for the Poor

Embodiments of love! You need not follow anybody else. It is enough if you engage yourself in activities that satisfy your mother. If your mother is happy and content, this will confer great blessings on you. Whatever your mother says, obey her command willingly and sincerely. That is what is required today. Obey your mother and become the recipient of her love. Then the whole world will progress. You need not undertake any other acts of merit. Sacrifice your entire life to satisfy your mother. Because I fulfilled my mother's wishes and

satisfied her, my glory and fame have spread far and wide.

Sathya Sai has built great hospitals and provided expensive medical treatment absolutely free to everyone, from the poorest of the poor to the richest of society. In the field of medical services, no institution anywhere in the world compares to the Sri Sathya Sai Institutes of Higher Medical Science. Unfortunately, people do not realize the great value of the services being performed by our hospitals.

In our super-specialty hospitals everything—medicine, surgeries, food—is provided free of cost. People

wonder how we can provide all these things for free in the present-day environment of skyrocketing costs. Today many hospitals advertise their facilities through electronic media to attract people, loot them of their hard-earned money, and even go to the extent of causing death to patients by negligence. This is not right.

Poor people should be given free food, free education, free water, and free medicine. There can be no greater service than providing all these services free of cost. I wish that all students, past and present, would undertake such services.

Ideal Students

We do not collect even a cent from our students as fees. The Sathya Sai educational institutions provide education totally free

of cost. In other institutions, people have to spend huge amounts of money to acquire a higher education. Our students, however, do not have to spend anything for their education here. We provide totally free education, from kindergarten to post-graduate school—with love—to all students. In fact, we provide all our services lovingly and free of cost.

The Sikh student who spoke earlier tried his best for a long time to acquire a

higher education.

Despite these efforts, he did not have the funds to pursue higher studies. Hence, he took a job with a meager salary.

Later on, he en-

rolled in our college and earned his MBA degree. Now he contributes his services to the hostel as a grateful offering to Swami. Various students like him have undertaken service activities in our institutions.

The boy who spoke after the Sikh student hails from Delhi. He also had great expectations of pursuing a higher education but had no funds. He enrolled in our institution and graduated with honors with an MBA degree. All this was free of cost. Since then, he has remained here in Swami's service. He has decided to dedicate his life to the institution that produces such boys.

Spirit of Love and Sacrifice

Thus, all the students of the Sathya Sai institutions have been cultivating broad-mindedness and the spirit of service. You do

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free water, and free
medicine.*

not find any narrow-minded students here. They are filled with love and behave among themselves like brothers. It is my endeavor to train such ideal boys and girls, and it is my wish that all our students willingly undertake free service activities for society, with the spirit of love and sacrifice.

Many of our graduates now work in highly paid jobs in big cities such as [New] Delhi and Agra. In fact, prominent companies in India are seeking the services of our students, offering them high-salaried positions. Our students working in these places are also undertaking service activities, such as providing tuition for poor students. Wherever they are, our students serve others with a spirit of sacrifice and broad-mindedness.

Education is not merely bookish knowledge. It should result in the development of broad-mindedness, a spirit of sacrifice, and the sharing of resources willingly with fellow members of society and making them

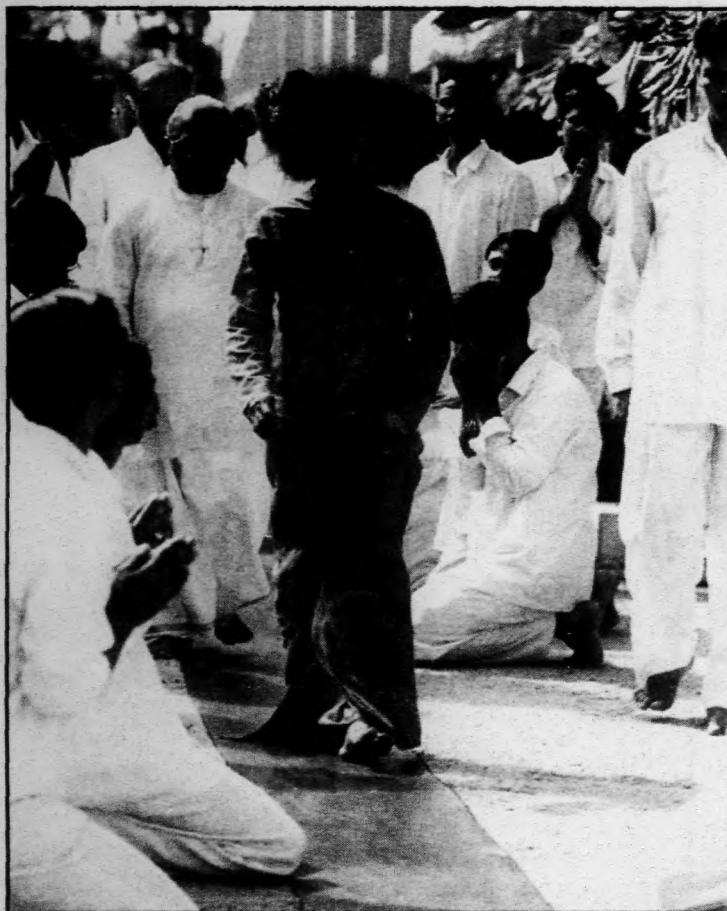
happy—these are the true qualities of an educated person. Several such students in Prasanthi Nilayam are happy and content to serve society. My main task is to prepare

such boys and girls. I provide everything that is required for them. I even send them abroad for higher education, if necessary.

Sitting here is Dr. Padmanabhan, who may be known to all of you. He became a doctor at a very young age and wanted to set up a small clinic in Bangalore. I called him and said, "Doctor, you must acquire higher degrees in medicine. You should not stop your education with the present degree. Your family circumstances may not be conducive to your pursuing higher education, but I am

with you. I will provide for your higher education." One day, I called him for dinner and later sent him to Vienna for more training. Accordingly, he went abroad and obtained higher degrees in medicine.

After his return, he now serves



*I am standing before you today
to describe the good qualities of
My students.*

wonderfully in Brindavan. He is not money-minded. The great name he has acquired in Swami's service is all that matters to him. Can there be greater wealth than a good name? Even though he has undergone heart surgery himself, he still continues to serve poor and sick patients. Thus, Swami has molded him into a loving, soft-hearted, and selfless individual with a sacred heart and prompted him to serve people.

Our students, despite being highly qualified, are very unassuming and egoless. Many of them subsequently take up teaching jobs in our educational institutions. It is My firm resolve to foster such noble souls.

No Disease Can Afflict Me

This body may now and then experience some minor ailments, but these do not bother Me. They are natural for the human body. Last year, one of the boys was decorating a door, attaching colored buntings to it as he stood on an iron stool. Meanwhile, I opened the door and came out of My room. As soon as he saw Me, he became nervous and fell from the stool. As he fell, the iron stool tilted and fell on Me, fracturing the hip bone. That was how it happened. This incident was not due to any past *karma*. I did not, however, in any way mind the injury.

Yesterday, as I was entering My room, I casually leaned on a brick projecting from

the wall. The brick came loose and fell on the floor. Consequently I also fell down, landing heavily on this wrist. It was an accident. However, I will perform My duty, come what may. Of course, accidents due to past *karma* do happen, but this incident was not of that kind. It was due to a mistake, which was inadvertent. Such disruptions may happen now and then, but no disease can ever afflict Me. I carry on My work unmindful of such incidents.

*This body may now and then
experience some minor
ailments, but these do not
bother Me.*

Seven boys are here. All of them have finished their postgraduate work. They want to stay with Swami permanently, doing service here. I am looking

after them. I told them, "My dear children, you must progress in your education. You need not depend on your parents for this. I will take care of all your requirements. Study well and come out with flying colors. Set an example for others." Thus, I am making arrangements for their higher studies. I always help others and do not cause inconvenience to anybody.

As for Myself, I will never be afflicted with any disease whatsoever. Some minor incidents may happen, but I will carry on My work unmindful of such events. Yesterday when I fell down, those present heard a loud noise and were very much afraid that some major accident had taken place. They thought to themselves, "What has happened to Swami? Until recently, He was not able to walk properly because of a

hip fracture. Now He has sustained an injury to His hand. What a misfortune has befallen us!" However, I consoled them, saying that nothing serious had happened and they need not worry.

The devotees had arranged a meeting here in which I had to participate. I do not like to desist from performing My duty, whatever may happen to this body. So I agreed to come here. I got dressed. The students arranged a shawl to cover My gown so that I might not be inconvenienced by this bandaged arm. The doctors, however, advised Me not to move. They were right, but still I volunteered to come—with the help of two boys—even though that was against the doctors' advice.

My Students Are My Only Property

Since I love my boys so much, they also love Me with the same intensity. They constantly attend and look after Me. [Following Swami's instructions, some boys stood up, and He showed them to the audience.] These boys have come from far-off places like [New] Delhi and other cities and have studied here in Brindavan and at Prasanthi Nilayam. They all stay with Me and serve Me well. This problem [the wrist injury] is not something that can be cured with medicines. Their love itself works as a great medicine for Me. Their love alone protects Me in different ways.

[Swami again points to a student.] This

boy has a Ph.D. All these boys are highly educated. Still they would like to stay here and serve Swami. There are more boys inside Swami's residence. For example, Sathyajit and some other boys constantly attend to Me like a shadow and look after Me. Such boys are My only property. Various people ask, "Swami, how much is the value of Your property? Where is it located?" I tell them "My dear, I cannot say that the value of My property is this much

*Selfless and loving service
alone confers great value
on the educated.*

..... or that much. My students are My property. It cannot be estimated in terms of money. Any description of the boys' love will be incomplete."

I cannot go for a single day without this property. They also cannot live without such loving care. These boys set a great example for the world by their service. Selfless and loving service alone confers great value on the educated. I cannot describe how much service they perform so lovingly. No one can adequately estimate and express in words the loving nature of our students. No one can understand their broad-mindedness.

Outwardly, they appear to be like any other students. However, each one of them is highly educated, with double post-graduate degrees. Such boys can provide great service to the world. They serve in [all of the nine paths of devotion:] listening, singing, contemplating on Vishnu, serving His lotus feet, salutation, worship,

servitude, friendship, and self-surrender. They express their total and unconditional love toward Me through these nine paths of devotion.

The doctors advised bed rest. In spite of that, I decided to fulfill My commitments to the devotees. Realizing My firm resolve, the boys stitched a shawl to cover the robe I wear and brought Me downstairs. This service may appear to be small and insignificant. If you inquire into the matter deeply, however, you will understand that it is very difficult to get an opportunity to serve Swami in this way. It is only because of their loving care that I was able to come down to speak to you without much inconvenience. Would it otherwise be possible in this present condition? In fact, it is their pure love that brought Me down here.

These boys have good character along with good education. The service done by the boys here or in the primary school, higher secondary school, or other Puttaparthi institutions is beyond description. Even little boys in these schools behave well. I am standing before you today to describe the good qualities of My students; otherwise, I had no intention of giving a discourse. Following My advice, the students are doing great service to society. I exhort the new entrants coming into the institution this year to cultivate noble qualities, to be healthy, happy, and humble like these boys, and to do good service to society. I conclude My discourse with blessings to one and all.

—Sathya Sai Baba
May 6, 2004

You have to correct yourself before you can help [others], just as the foundation has to be properly in place before construction can start. Whatever you do must please God. Only then will the world around you become happy. Purity of thought and heart is most essential for service. It is not essential to do service on a large scale; serve according to the circumstances and the availability of resources. Do not undertake collection drives.

—Sathya Sai Baba, July 30, 1988

The bliss you derive from service is something you cannot get from any other activity. The thrill that comfort can bring to a distressed heart—[in the form of] a kind word, a small gift, a good gesture, a sigh of sympathy, or a sign of compassion—is a thing beyond description.

—Sathya Sai Baba

Children's Corner

Being Happy Is Seva



Making someone happy by giving them a smile
Is good for you and for them—

it makes your lives worthwhile.

When talking to your parents, your neighbor, or a friend,
Give your full attention; let them know it's love you send.

It doesn't cost you anything to give a happy thought.

What happens is you both can find what is really sought.

And what is it that we all want to give and to receive?

It's that someone really loves us, and *that* you can believe!

He is always with you; talk to Him anytime.

His name is Sai Baba, and He gives you Love Divine.

—Anonymous

—Illustration by June Nissinen

Serving Sai in All

There Is No Discrimination When Giving Service

I can never forget the scene. It haunts me still and keeps me awake at night. It fills me with wonder and awe and tells me something about the depth of human compassion and the efficacy of human love.

I was on my way with a few Sai brothers from Indore to Bhopal. We halted at Sehore, where I spoke on Baba to the staff and students of the Agricultural College at Sehore. Then I went to a leprosy hospital with a group of *Seva Dals* (Indian Sai volunteers), who fed—or rather feasted—the sixty inmates. For this Sunday, like every other, the volunteers prepared a special food item that the inmates themselves had asked for.

This, I thought, was a good idea. It recognized that the lepers were respectable individuals, whose likes and dislikes were as valid and worthy of attention as those of friends or kinsmen. It gave the giver a chance to confer greater happiness and enjoy greater satisfaction. Someone told me that the lepers, who had come from various Indian states (one woman was from Shirdi) to reside under this one roof, met in conference and arrived at a consensus on the item to suggest to the volunteers for the subsequent week's feast. Bear in mind that a

unanimous decision in any group of sixty is well-nigh impossible in India! But the lepers achieve the impossible every week.

The volunteers are also surprised that these simple, unsophisticated rural folk are aware of such a variety of exotic, aristocratic dishes, but however rare, costly, or difficult to make, the item suggested is served on their plates the next Sunday. The group I accompanied to this temple of human suffering had brought a special item prepared at great cost and with extra meticulousness. I noticed that the lepers tottered out of their wards with a glint in their eyes and a tingle on their tongue as the food hampers were unloaded and opened. However, that is not the image that haunts me today.

In the line of male lepers, at the farthest end, nearest the entrance door of the ward, was an old bald patient. I could not take my eyes off him. He had two deep wounds on his face; they had once been his eyes. His lips were blistered off. The germs had eaten away his fingers and left him with two stumps, useless for picking things up or doing any human task. A youthful volunteer was putting slices of the special meal for the day into his mouth, whenever it opened.

Another young man was whisking away the flies from his face. I could see his cheek muscles being cheered by the taste and the flavor. Through the tears that fogged my sight, I saw, even as I stood before that person, a vision . . . an angel was sitting before me, transformed by love into light, shining with joyous gratitude.

I remember another picture, too—also seen on a Sunday. I found myself in the happy Sai-fragrance-filled home of a former student of the college where I had been the principal. His wife was a *Seva Dal* worker. Their two children (ages ten and eight) were in the *Bal Vikas* (same as Sai Spiritual Education) program. We were talking about Baba and His miracles and teachings when I heard a confident knock at the door, and the lady of the house opened it. Not one, but six, children trooped silently in and made a beeline for the shrine room, wishing me *Sai Ram* on the way.

"Children from the slum in the quarry nearby," the woman explained. "*Bal Vikas*?" I asked. "No" was the answer. It seems that these children have been special invitees for lunch every week for the past six months at the house. "Their parents send them at our

request," she said. "Our children join them for *bhajans* (devotional singing) and meals. Last week, I visited their homes and was kindly received. A *bhajan* group is forming in that slum, with these children as the nucleus." Meanwhile, my student's son and daughter had gone with the other children into the shrine room, and the *bhajans* had begun. The singing was pleasantly melodious, and we, too, were drawn in.

After *bhajans*, all the children sat in a row on the floor. We sat apart and watched while the woman served the meal with many a loving word and laughter-rousing joke. All ideas of "we" and "they" were scattered by the breeze of hilarity and loving hospitality. We forgot that the slum children's clothes were not starched and ironed, that their language was not as polished and perfect as that of the two children sitting among them. As I watched this beautiful drama of love, of the "giving and forgiving" Baba would want, I saw a vision—the home had disappeared, and heaven glistened around me.

—Prof. N. Kasturi
(In Memoriam)

Wash your heart with your tears of joy, so that the Lord might install Himself there. When the Lord chooses the heart of a devotee, it does not mean that all other hearts are not His. They are not clean [have not yet been fully purified]; that is all it means. Therefore, have full faith in God and in yourself. Engage always in good deeds and beneficial activities; speak the truth; do not inflict pain by word, deed, or even thought. That is the way to gain peace; that is the highest gain you can achieve in this life.

—Sathya Sai Baba

FOCUS ON REGION 1

CONNECTICUT ■ MAINE ■ MASSACHUSETTS ■ NEW HAMPSHIRE
NEW YORK ■ RHODE ISLAND ■ VERMONT

ESL Program at the Prasanthi Center, West Hartford, Connecticut

English as a Second Language—Taught with Love

For new immigrants, even a simple situation like buying a loaf of bread or speaking to a child's teacher can be overwhelming and embarrassing. How can a recent immigrant buy anything if he or she can't count dollars, quarters, and dimes? How can an immigrant speak to a teacher without first knowing English?

Baba says not to direct service merely toward temporary relief of the problems people face. *Try to determine the cause of their suffering, He says, and attempt to remove it.*

We central Connecticut devotees are trying to do just that by giving Hartford area immigrants the skills they need to function in their new environment. Through our free "English as a second language" (ESL) classes, immigrants can learn not only English but also the intricacies of American culture.

We realized the need for the classes soon after the opening of our Prasanthi Center facility in 2002, when we discovered that some of the area's nonprofit organizations had lost the state funding needed to finance their ESL programs for adults. The cancellation of these programs eliminated a vital resource for immigrants. The Prasanthi Center, we felt, could fill this gap. It had interior spaces already converted into classrooms and was in a location convenient for both walking and using public transportation, making it ideal for ESL classes.

To get the project underway, we selected a program manager, an experienced ESL teacher. Then we asked the Literacy Volunteers of Greater Hartford to collaborate with us in training. We also contacted other local nonprofit organizations, the State of Connecticut Department of Social Services, and the Town of West Hartford Adult Education/Continuing Education, along with local libraries and social service departments. Devotees from the Farmington, Glastonbury, and Windsor Sathya Sai Centers volunteered to tutor prospective students.

Preparations for the classes began with the training of our volunteer ESL tutors in the winter of 2003. Public transportation officials and "2-1-1 Infoline" supplied materials that we could incorporate into our lessons and gave us information on financial assistance for elderly or disabled students. We informed immigrants about our service through

other organizations, ethnic churches, and radio stations, as well as by posting flyers in shops. In addition, we placed public service announcements in local newspapers and on Hartford Public Access Television. The nonprofits and local government agencies also agreed to disseminate information about our classes, and we, in turn, have referred students to these groups when appropriate.

The program manager, another devotee, and the Literacy Volunteers staff tested the students. Literacy Volunteers also created the class schedules and assigned students to classes, based on ability levels. Pilot classes began in late April 2003. These were the first free adult ESL classes offered in West Hartford at that time.

Class results have been truly impressive. Our students gradually began to feel empowered and included in this "melting pot," as their new world became familiar to them. Their self-confidence grew, and many challenges no longer seemed insurmountable.

The classes have been running for one year now, and our tutors have touched the lives of people from Latin America, Santo Domingo, India, France, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Brazil, China, Yugoslavia, and Turkey . . . and the list continues to grow. Some of our students had experienced religious and political persecution in their birth lands. All the students have moved our hearts, and sharing has become a rich and reciprocal learning experience for us all. As Baba says, any service involves receiving as well as giving: *service is not one-way traffic*.

—Monique d'Autcuil
West Hartford, Connecticut

FOCUS ON REGION 10

ARKANSAS ■ LOUISIANA ■ TEXAS

Kenedy Health Fair

Lack of access to adequate medical care is a pervasive, serious problem plaguing several rural counties in Texas, U.S.A. For residents of such counties, even a routine medical checkup is often an unaffordable, rare luxury. Residents may be unaware that diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and cholesterol wreak havoc and lead to medical complications, suffering, and premature death. Such illness and death can be circumvented early on by regular medical screening and initiatives educating patients on proper nutrition and medical care.

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Announcements

Protecting Sai Organization Websites and Internet Discussion Groups

One Sai Center in the U.S. has a Yahoo discussion group for communication among center members. Recently, a negative message was posted to it. We have asked the Sai Center to have the message removed immediately, even if it requires removing/destroying the discussion group completely. We cannot have such messages on Sai Organization websites. It is precisely to protect against such happenings that the U.S. Sai Organization has been very cautious and conservative when it comes to using the Internet. If your Sai Center (or Young Adult group, etc.) has a Yahoo or other similar discussion group or website, **we ask you to do the following, immediately:**

- ◆ Make sure that the discussion group or website is password protected, so that no one can read messages or post messages without knowing the password. (People may see information on the first page, such as the contact e-mail address, and so on.)
- ◆ Change the password, so that *everyone* has to ask for the new password.
- ◆ Give the password *only* to (a) devotees in your Sai Center and (b) devotees whom you or someone knows personally. Do not give it to strangers simply because they ask for it.

In the service of Sai,

—Phil Goselin, President

Sathya Sai Baba Central Council, U.S.A.

A Weekend of Silence

The mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions of the U.S. Sathya Sai Organization announce their "Weekend of Silence" to be held at St. Mary's Villa, Sloatsburg, New York, during October 15-17, 2004. Attendees will participate in a program of prayers, meditation, devotional singing, and service.

For questions regarding the Retreat please contact:

Peter Goldberg
6 Copper Beach Lane
Ridgefield, CT 06877

(203) 438-7511 or e-mail: pig108@comcast.net.



Kenedy Health Fair

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With Swami's grace, an abundance of enthusiastic volunteers from Region 10 Sathya Sai Centers—doctors, parents, medical students, young adults, and children—worked together to respond to some of the medical needs in rural Kenedy County, Texas. The Kenedy Health Fair took place on April 3, 2004 and was organized to allow county residents to receive free medical screening, lab tests, consultations with physicians, immunizations, and information on preventing common medical ailments. Various booths—scoliosis screening, eye exams, blood tests, dental exams, height/weight checks—were set up, staffed by [Sai?]* volunteers, and operated throughout the day. Behind the scenes, volunteers from the San Antonio Sathya Sai Center lovingly prepared large quantities of food and snacks for the volunteers and patients. Along with discussing lab results and disease prevention tips with the doctors present, the volunteers and patients learned not only their cholesterol and blood pressure levels but also the meaning behind the numbers and, most important, how to change and implement daily habits for better health.

Swami's loving presence manifested itself in the cooperation and love connecting the many volunteers, who were united in the singular goal of serving and witnessing Swami in the form of the residents of Kenedy County.

—Anonymous

Subscription Information

To receive the *Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA* regularly (six issues per year), please send a check or money order to:

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Public Meeting in Los Angeles

All Hearts Were Touched

The Prasanthi Council of the Overseas Sri Sathya Sai Organizations conducted a series of meetings worldwide as a prelude to the 80th Birthday celebrations of our Beloved Bhagawan and the 8th World Conference. Under the theme, "Sri Sathya Sai Baba: His Universal Message and Humanitarian Works: an Inspiration to Mankind," the meetings were held in London, Rome, Argentina, and more recently in Singapore, Los Angeles, and New York. Public response was overwhelming and the Divine Loving Presence was felt strongly during the meetings.

The Los Angeles area meeting took place June 5th at the La Mirada Theater in La Mirada. Over 750 distinguished guests, devotees, and members of the public attended. Mr. Robert Bozzani, President of the Sathya Sai Baba Book Center of America, introduced two speakers—Dr. Michael Goldstein, Chariman of the Prasanthi Council, and Dr. Narandranath Reddy, member of the Prasanthi Council.

Dr. Goldstein based his inspiring talk on Bhagawan's teachings, emphasizing that we are all spiritual seekers searching for purpose and identity. We are unique among creation because we have the capacity to realize our personal divinity; therefore we must selflessly love and serve one another, as Sri Sathya Sai Baba has taught and shown us by His example.

Dr. Goldstein went on to emphasize the necessity of faith in divinity. "Faith is like pure water. Water is the elixir for the body of man.

Faith is the elixir of life for the spirit of man." Without water, the body becomes lifeless. Without faith, the spiritual principle languishes and society degenerates into chaos. A lack of faith is prevalent in the world today. Sri Sathya Sai Baba's words and deeds restore faith and spiritual awareness to people everywhere.

Like water, faith without movement becomes stagnant and impure. Action is required for the spirit of God to manifest in the world. Love and wisdom are the currents that move the water of faith and manifest in our lives as selfless love and selfless service. We must not obstruct this flow of love and wisdom. With divine faith, our lives enjoy noble purpose and meaning, and we become selfless. Spirituality means living selflessly, transcending the superficial worldly "self" in favor of the REAL Self. This selfless love is the nature of the all-pervasive consciousness that is God.

Looking within at all times and following the dictates of our conscience in all things is the way to reflect the light of divinity that resides in our hearts. If we look within and seek identification with our divinity, we will come to know that "heaven is just a frame of mind away." Sri Sathya Sai Baba has said that *Heaven is not a superterrestrial region of perpetual spring; it is an inner experience, a state of supreme bliss.* Chaos appears in the world because chaos exists in our minds, caused by our obsession with the "glitter" of the external world, and the "litter" created by selfish desires.

Who are we? We are not the body. We are not the mind. We are divinity encased in human form. Through faith we have the power to go within and experience infinite knowledge, power, and self-realization. Through faith we have the capacity to be a conduit of divine love and wisdom. Our "soul" purpose is to realize our inherent divinity and to uplift our fellow man—to assist our brothers and sisters in need, so that they can also come to realize their divine heritage.

Dr. Goldstein went on to describe Sai Baba's magnificent humanitarian projects: educational systems from primary through accredited doctorate level, multiple general and specialized hospitals, massive drinking water projects, and the Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programs. In closing, Dr. Goldstein reiterated that Sri Sathya Sai Baba brings illumination into this world of disharmony and chaos. His light of wisdom and love bring together people from all places. The qualities of His love are purity and selflessness, and the powers of His love are redemption and transformation. His mission is to light the lamp of love in the hearts of humanity.

The second speaker, Dr. Narendranath Reddy, described Sri Sathya Sai Baba's incredible impact personally and universally—experiencing His pure and selfless love, witnessing His wonderful humanitarian works, and imbibing His universal message of eternal truth that has changed millions of lives worldwide. Dr. Reddy emphasized that one word—LOVE—enshrines Sri Sathya Sai Baba's works, ideals, and lessons to humankind: Sai Baba is the embodiment of love. Dr. Reddy quoted several of Bhagavan's sayings relating to love, and shared stories illustrating His divine

nature of giving and forgiving. Every being receives Sri Sathya Sai Baba's love: saint or sinner, scholarly or ignorant, king or pauper, bird or beast. Dr. Reddy also recounted incidents from the lives of St. Peter and Jesus that demonstrated the qualities of compassion and forgiveness.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba exemplifies tolerance among all faiths and creeds, and the harmony of all religions in practice. Prasanthi Nilayam draws people of all faiths from over 180 countries; major religious festivals of all faiths are celebrated there. Sai Baba refers to love as sacrifice and service. You cannot say you love, without doing service. Mother Teresa likewise emphasized, "The fruit of love is service." Inspired by Sri Sathya Sai Baba, people around the globe are undertaking humanitarian projects—in the U.S., South America, Russia, Africa, India, and many other places.

Dr. Reddy went on to speak of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's greatest gift—teaching the human values of love, truth, righteousness, peace, and nonviolence, and His greatest miracle—transformation by love. Love is seeing unity in diversity; the underlying principle of unity is divinity. In Sai Baba's words, *Stars are many; sky is one. Jewels are many; gold is one. Nations are many; earth is one. Beings are many; breath is one. Real spirituality is when you feel the pain of others as your own, as well as [their] pleasure and happiness.* Dr. Reddy then related a poignant story about Abraham Lincoln's feeling of unity with all beings.

In closing, Dr. Reddy emphasized the need to realize our innate divinity and to manifest that divinity in our lives as the purpose of human life. He wished that we all may experience pure unselfish love and the peace

that passeth understanding, and that we may we share these with all.

The audience then viewed a specially-commissioned film, *His Work: the Work of Sri Sathya Sai Baba*, which moved many to tears. As Bhagawan's *prasad* (sacred offering), DVDs of the film were distributed [free] to all who attended. In conclusion, Dr. Goldstein read Swami's message to western devotees:

My dears, accept My loving blessings. The world today is in the grip of a supreme moral and spiritual crisis.

People everywhere feel frustrated, helpless, and anxiously wonder what is in store for humanity. While science has overcome the barriers of time and distance, it has done little to promote better understanding between man

and man, and nation and nation. Never has there been so much distrust, hatred, and violence as is witnessed today in almost every country. People have forgotten their divine nature and have even failed to observe the basic human qualities that raise them above the level of animals. In the ceaseless pursuit of material acquisition and sensuous pleasures, they have forgotten that the real source of happiness and bliss is the discovery of the soul that is in each of them.

There are, however, heartening signs that earnest people in many countries are turning to [the] way of the spirit as the answer to the crisis that faces humanity. Spiritual hunger is

growing everywhere. Without the conquest of one's passions and desires, and without realizing the divinity immanent in every living being, humanity cannot achieve peace, bliss within, or harmony with the outside world. The message of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, which Jesus Christ proclaimed 2,000 years ago, should become a living faith for the achievement of real peace and the unity of humankind. The oneness of all creation [that was] affirmed by

the ancient seers and sages must be expressed in a transcendental love that embraces all people regardless of creed, community, or language.

This is Sai's message to you all. May you all develop this divine love and stand out as the

harbingers of a new age free from selfishness, greed, hatred, and violence. Let each of you be a light unto yourself and thereby be a light unto others.

—With Love, Baba

Sri Sathya Sai Baba's call for us to embody the light of divine love and to illuminate the lives of others touched the hearts of all present. At least 81 more public meetings are planned to take place before the 80th Birthday celebrations of our Beloved Bhagavan. We look forward to His universal message of love being spread forward throughout the world.

—Victoria Hargreaves
Freelance Photojournalist



Dr. Michael Goldstein describes Sai Baba's humanitarian projects at the public meeting in Los Angeles.

Sathya Sai Book Center of America

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Adventures in Sai Baba Land, Volumes 1 and 2. Written by Susan Caffrey, this is a compilation of stories written for children. In paperback, with illustrations.

Vol. 1: 143 pages; Vol. 2: 164 pages. Sold as a set. BI-031 \$ 8.00

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Bhagavad Gita, Parts 1 and 2. Divine discourses from Swami on the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Jnana Yoga*, and *Karma Yoga*. Sold as a set in paperback.

Part 1: 212 pages; Part 2: 330 pages. BI-034 \$8.00

Guidelines for Sathya Sai Study Circles in America. Published by the Sathya Sai Central Council of America, this booklet outlines Swami's guidelines for study circles. In paperback, 12 pages. BC-010 \$ 2.00

Guide Book for Sri Sathya Sai Study Circles and Work Book Companion. These two volumes, published by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization in Prasanthi Nilayam, consist of a guide book covering a wide variety of the basic spiritual teachings of Sathya Sai Baba, as well as a companion workbook.

Volume 1: 158 pages; Volume 2: 188 pages. Sold as a set. BI-027 \$12.00

Living in the Presence of God, Volume I. Written by Seema M. Dewan, this is a compilation of divine messages received by the author from Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

In hard cover, 264 pages. BI-023 \$ 6.00

Living in the Presence of God, Volume II. A continuation of divine messages received by Seema M. Dewan. In paperback, 234 pages. BI-024 \$ 6.00

Love of Conscience. Written by Rita Bruce, this book details the four aspects of human nature, how to recognize who we are, and how to work with these energies inherent in us. In paperback, 212 pages. BI-033 \$ 7.00

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.

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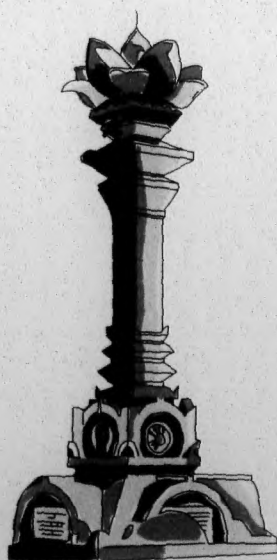
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