

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

*This publication is dedicated with our love and devotion to
Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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—Barbara Bozzani, Editor

Sai's Message

Of what benefit is a heavy shower of rain if you keep your bucket upside down? Can it collect any water?



When you listen to discourses on religion, if your minds are not receptive, you derive no benefits therefrom.

By meditation (dhyana) you develop wisdom (jnana), and by repetition of the Divine name (japa), you develop devotion (bhakti); by both, you cleanse your heart of the blight of ego. You can link yourselves with God, by a chain of love, through the recitation of the name with feeling.

Each one will come in his own good time, out of his own pace, through his own inner urge, along the path God will reveal to him as his own.

Na sreya niyamam viva—no progress without constraint. Control heightens power; regulation puts it to the best use.

Every devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba is familiar with the emphasis He places on the three D's and the four F's for the spiritual progress of an individual. Duty, Discipline, and Devotion are the three D's. (Follow the master, Face the devil, Fight to the end, and Finish the game are the four F's.) I had the privilege of being in the physical presence of Swami for about seven years, serving Him and contributing to His educational programs. During this period He showered His love and grace on me and my family, for which we are deeply grateful. It is His will that we now should live far away from His physical presence; albeit He continues to shower His grace and love on us.

Place duty first, and God will come to you; discipline yourself, and God will certainly come to your rescue; be truly devoted, and God will accede to all your requests. These are three practical lessons that Swami taught me during the first weeks of my coming into His physical presence. Thus, He made me realize that He does not waste any time whatsoever to direct and place a fresh devotee on the right track. In the following narrative, I share some incidents through which Swami chose to teach me the significance and value of duty, discipline, and devotion.

Duty

The first lesson was about duty. About ten years ago a friend of mine, who is a Sai devotee, was planning to open a factory for

My First Lessons from God

On Duty - Discipline - Devotion

the manufacture of foam products, and he requested Swami to inaugurate the factory. Swami picked an auspicious date and time for the inauguration. I was also invited by my friend to attend this function. I was then a professor at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India and had a teaching assignment at the time of the inauguration. As I had to attend to my duty, I had to decline my friend's invitation to the inauguration, which was scheduled from 9:00 a.m. to noon.

On the day of the inauguration, I could not help thinking of Swami in my subconscious mind, though I was busy performing my duty diligently and sincerely.

At about 1:00 p.m. I was returning—walking back from my home after lunch—to attend to my work in the afternoon session. As I walked toward the main gate of the Institute, I noticed a white car approaching. I thought to myself, “How I wish it were Swami's car!” Lo and behold, it was Swami's car, and He waved at me as it passed by. I was full of joy at seeing Swami on the highway; I was also surprised, because Swami had been scheduled to return to Brindavan by noon. I thought perhaps He had delayed this for some reason; I liked to think that He did so for the purpose of giving me His blessings and teaching me a lesson on duty.

As I walked toward the gate, feeling elated at receiving Swami's *darshan* (seeing a holy being), I heard someone call out my name. It was Radhakrishna, Swami's driver, beckoning me to convey that Swami wanted to see me. I ran to the car. Swami made me sit by His side in the back seat of the car and inquired

as to why I had not attended the function. He appreciated immensely the explanation for my absence.

Then He gave me a bunch of *laddus* (sweets) as *prasadam* (consecrated food), asking me to give them to my wife and children. Interestingly, I gave away most of the *laddus* to my colleagues at the Institute, telling them that I just met God and that this was His *prasadam*. Sharing His *prasadam* with others in this manner made me immensely happy. Thus Swami demonstrated to me that God comes to those who perform their duty sincerely.

Discipline

The next lesson He taught me was on discipline. One evening at Brindavan, a group of devotees, including myself, were following Swami as He left the *mandir* (temple) to give *darshan* to the devotees gathered under the tree outside. We stopped at the gate while Swami proceeded to give *darshan*. After *darshan*, Swami moved toward the college hostel, where He was scheduled to meet the students and give a discourse. Some of the devotees in our group, who were following Swami, were talking loudly.

Suddenly, I heard Swami calling my name: *Pappu, if you keep talking, I will send you out!* I felt quite ashamed and a little hurt to be admonished for an offense I did not commit. I decided then and there that I would observe a “vow of silence” for the next twenty-four hours.

A few minutes later we joined Swami in the hostel. He did not speak to me at all. He gave an excellent discourse. After this I had

to leave for the city by bus. I then realized the awkward predicament that I had gotten myself into. Why did I resolve to keep silence for twenty-four hours, especially for a mistake that I had not made in the first place? How would I communicate with the bus conductor for my ticket? How would I explain to my wife and children the reason for my silence? How would I perform my duties at the Institute the next day?

These questions haunted me and tempted me to break my vow, but I did not, because I had given my word to God. Suffice it to say that Swami in His infinite compassion came to my rescue admirably, and the twenty-four hours passed without a hitch.

The next day, I reached Brindavan around 4:00 p.m. and was waiting for Swami to come down. At about 6:00, He walked down straight to me and said: *Is your vow of silence over?* It did not surprise me that He knew about this, though I had not mentioned it to Him or anyone else.

When I responded in the affirmative, Swami whispered into my ear: *By the way, I knew that you were not talking yesterday, but I wanted to discipline others through you.* Thus the lesson on discipline was given to me by God, even though I had not committed a mistake. I cherish this lesson, because it reveals the mysterious ways God works through His chosen instruments.

Devotion

On another occasion, He taught me a lesson in devotion. He had given me an assignment to restructure the format of conducting study circles. I and some other

devotees had worked on this and prepared a manuscript containing guidelines for study circles. I showed the manuscript to Swami. He was pleased with it, and asked me to give it to the printer at the Brindavan Campus. I suddenly realized that something very important was missing from this manuscript—His photograph. I asked Swami for permission to include His photograph. He replied that there was no need for Swami's photograph; instead, to my surprise, He asked me to include my photograph.

It suddenly dawned on me that this was a test of my devotion. Therefore I resolved to do penance (*tapas*) to propitiate Him. I also had asked some of Swami's close devotees to try and talk to Him about giving me permission to include His photograph. I was not surprised when these channels did not work. So I decided to go ahead with my penance.

The next evening, I stood in the hall on one leg, chanting Swami's name. Two hours went by, and there was still no sign of Swami. Meanwhile the hall was filling up, and people were wondering why I was standing there on one leg. Finally, Swami came down from His residence. He walked up to me and said, *Is your penance over? You can put My photograph in the booklet.* My joy knew no bounds when I heard those words from Swami. I fell at His feet, and subsequently rushed to the printer. Thus I learned not only a lesson on devotion, but also a method to please God.

—Prof. Sastry V. Pappu
Wichita, Kansas

The Form of God Is Love

All Are the “Embodiments of Love”

*Forbearance is the real beauty in this sacred land of Bharat.
Of all the rituals, adherence to truth is the greatest penance.
The most nectar-sweet feeling in this country is the feeling of
love toward one’s mother. (Telugu Poem)*

Forbearance

Embodiments of love! In this sacred land of Bharat (India), forbearance is the real beauty. Modern man has no idea of what forbearance is, or that it is the real beauty of this sacred land. One bereft of forbearance is no human being at all. We should have sympathy and forbearance toward the poor and the physically challenged, but modern man shows disgust toward such unfortunate people. In fact, *sahana* (tolerance) is the most valuable and sacred mantra of the Bharatiyas (Indians). Man, out of ignorance, has given up such sacred mantras and gets carried away instead by *yantra* (ritual) and *tantra* (using mantras for one’s own goals). The foremost quality expected of a devotee is forbearance.

What is *bhakti* (devotion)? People are under the mistaken notion that worshipping idols, observing vows, and performing rituals is *bhakti*, but it is not as simple as that. The foremost duty of a devotee, especially of the Bharatiyas (Indians), is to observe the quality of forbearance in daily life.

Adherence to truth is the real *tapas* (penance). Today, man has forgotten this principle. Forbearance is a quality that

inspires people to undertake noble deeds. This noble quality must be taught to others as well, to enable them to imbibe it.

Mother – Divine Love

The nectarine feeling in this country is the feeling of love toward one’s mother. Today, people overlook the most important duty—to look upon every woman as one’s own mother. There is nothing greater and sweeter in the world than motherly love. One who has cultivated such a noble feeling is most fortunate. This motherly feeling is not a quality that can be purchased or hired. It flows from the natural love that one has for one’s own mother. The people of Bharat are forsaking such noble qualities and trying to imitate and cultivate foreign cultures and traditions. In fact, they are running after foreign culture with excessive zeal, treating it as their very life breath.

Embodiments of love! You cannot find anything more sacred than love in the world. Today, you find worldly and physical love everywhere, but it is very difficult to find love suffused with *atmic* bliss.

Embodiments of love! Love is not merely that which exists between two individuals at the physical level. True love is that which

exists between two hearts. Bharatiyas today are neglecting such sacred and noble love. [They do not realize that] it is only their love toward God that has sustained and protected the people in this sacred land of Bharat since ancient times, just as the eyelid protects the eye.

True, divine love permeates the entire universe. Wherever you look, it is present. There is nothing in the world, except divine love. All other types of love are only passing infatuations. Real love emerges from the depth of one's heart. Cultivating such divine love and sharing it with others is most pleasing to me. Today, you find worldly and physical love for achieving selfish ends everywhere. You cannot call it real love. Real love, which is sacred, divine, and selfless, has to spring from one's heart.

Embodiments of love! Cultivate and strengthen such divine love. When you cultivate such love, you will not be lacking in anything. It is only when you cultivate such noble love that you will be entitled to be called "Embodiments of love."

God is omnipresent. Who is God? In fact, you are verily God. You must strive to attain that state. Though God is present everywhere, you should not forget the Divinity immanent in you. Some people think that God exists separately in some distant place.

Prahlada, the child devotee of Lord Vishnu declared: *Never doubt that God is here and not there. Wherever you search for Him, He is there.* (Telugu Poem)

This states the real culture of Bharat, which people seem unable to perceive today.

Everyone chants the name of God, but where is God? In fact, you yourself are God. You and God are not separate. Man forgets the Divinity latent in him and runs after trivial and mundane things.

Embodiments of love! Under any and

We should have sympathy and forbearance toward the poor and the physically challenged.

all circumstances, do not give up love. Love is your greatest treasure. One who forgets this treasure is not a human being at all! We love our father, mother, brothers, sisters, and so on. All these relationships are merely roles in the divine drama. You must try to comprehend true love. In fact, it is always in us. You need not search for it outside.

Unfortunately, today people seek after things that are not real and permanent. (Showing a flower) What is this? This is a flower. Everybody says so, but the truth is, it is a manifestation of Divinity. It has several petals, which represent Divinity. If the petals are removed one by one, it cannot be called a flower. Similarly, if there is no love in a human being, the human being cannot be called an "embodiment of love."

The Source

The source and sustenance for the entire universe is love. This quality of love takes different shapes in different individuals, such as between father, mother, brothers, and sisters, but you refer to it all as love. All

these individuals together constitute a family. But it is not enough if you limit your love to [your personal] family members. The entire universe must live like a family. Whomever you see, offer your *pranams* (salutations) and say, “*Om Namaskar! Namaskar!*” (The God within me salutes the God within you.) Can you come across a nobler sentiment than this?

Divinity

All the forms you encounter in this world are embodiments of Divinity. There is nothing in this universe that is not divine. You consider the different objects in the universe as mere objects. No! No! Consider them as embodiments of Divinity. Unfortunately, today people have become foolish and are searching for God in some distant corner.

Wherever you look, there is God. Therefore, it is the noblest feeling to consider everything in the universe as an embodiment of Divinity. The universe is but a form of God! God is manifest in all forms. Consider this omnipresent Divinity as God. Do not give credence to the outward form of any object, but firmly believe in the divine power that is immanent within it.

We do not experience anything other than Divinity in our day-to-day activities. For example, we are thirsty. Thirst is fire, manifest as Divinity. We quench our thirst by drinking water, which is but another manifestation of Divinity.

Thus all five elements in the universe, the five senses, the five sheaths, and the five vital breaths in the body are all manifestations of Divinity. Today, people misuse their senses.

This is an act of grave sin. All the senses are pure, sacred, and selfless. The senses have no distinction as to caste, creed, religion, or nationality. Housing such noble qualities in our own self, we go about searching for Divinity in the outside world. What a great pity!

What do you think the human values are? They are nothing but divine qualities. God has no separate attributes. Divinity itself is the sole attribute. We are deluded in seeing the attributeless Divine as God with attributes.

Embodiments of love! Whatever I speak, it is only love. I do not have any other voice. There is no other quality greater than love. Hence, we must love the quality of love, which is God.

The different ways by which we describe God—*nirgunam*, *niranjanam*, *sanathana nikanam*, *nitya*, *shuddha*, *Buddha*, *mukta*, *nirmala swarupinam* (attributeless, pure, the final abode, eternal, unsullied, enlightened, free, and the embodiment of sacredness)—are merely for our satisfaction. These terms cannot describe God in full. In fact, God is beyond description. The only word by which we can describe God is *love*. Nothing better can describe Him.

Embodiments of love! You are all the embodiments of love. Your form is love. God’s form is also love. I am very much distressed to see those physically-challenged children seated on the tricycles.* They are, in fact, embodiments of Divinity. To look down

* On that day, Guru Poornima, July 2, 2004, Swami gave custom-made tricycles to many lame and crippled children, so they might move about more freely.

upon those divine children with contempt is a great sin. In fact, there are no lowly people in the world at all! Such low thinking is in people only; it cannot be attributed to God. God has only one attribute, which is love. That is His form.

Lovingly

When someone converses with me lovingly, my joy knows no bounds, but if people employ empty rhetoric without love to describe my qualities, I am not at all pleased or impressed. Speak to me [and about me] with a loving heart. Pray to me with a love-filled heart. Whatever you pray for with a loving heart, I will readily respond. You call me “Sai” with love; I will readily respond saying “*Oyi*” (a most endearing and tender expression for *yes*). Any amount of prayer devoid of love cannot move me. If you call upon me with love, I will respond immediately. Wherever I am, there is nothing greater than love. Therefore, if you wish to have the *darshan* of God and experience Him, pray to Him lovingly.

You may have any amount of wealth and virtues, but they are no match for the quality of love. The sweetness inherent in the word *prema* (divine love) is not to be found anywhere else in the world. The more you cultivate and practice it, the sweeter will be your personality. Therefore, cultivate love as your foremost quality.

Love is your sole refuge, wherever you may be—in a forest, in the sky, in a city or a village, on the top of a mountain or in the middle of a deep sea. (Telugu Poem)

Love is not confined to any particular place or residence; it is universal. Therefore, cultivate universal love. Such a universal love cannot be bought for any amount of money; it can only be attained by a heart filled with intense love. Man must therefore cultivate pure and selfless love. For cultivating such pure love, *bhakti* (devotion) is prescribed as a means. *Bhakti* is not somewhere in some distant corner. *Prema* (love) is *bhakti* (devotion). Devotion without love is like a deep ocean full of salt water, whereas devotion with love is like sweet water.

Love is a nectarous feeling. Love is verily bliss. Love is a wonderful feeling. It is unfathomable. Therefore, never give up such a sweet, blissful, and unfathomable love.

Embodiments of love! Instead of making hollow claims of *bhakti*, keep *prema* as your goal to be attained. There is nothing greater than this *sadhana* (spiritual practice). There is nothing that can liberate you more easily than pure and selfless love. There are four words: *mukti* (liberation), *bhakti* (devotion), *rakti* (attachment), and *anurakti* (attachment or love toward God). Love is the undercurrent in all these concepts. On this auspicious occasion of *Guru Poornima*, love is the most valuable gift I bestow upon you. This is my most precious gift to you. Devoid of love, whatever other gifts I may give, they will be of no use. My love is pure, sacred, and most precious. You also must cultivate such love.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
July 2, 2004, *Guru Poornima* Day

Citadel

My citadel—how small it is:
Just twenty-seven by seven.
Yet, to me it represents
A tiny spark of heaven.

In my miniature domain,
I, in peace, supremely reign.

My kingdom's subjects consist of
Dogs, cats, butterflies, and birds;
Flowers rank as aides-de-camp,
And an elf as guardian angel dwells.

In rarefied hours of silent nights,
Occasionally I am roused
By ethereal troubadours,
Who've come on beams of cosmic light.

Though visibly I can't perceive
The kindreds of my soul,
My felines do pay homage
To guests they seem to know.

My heart, in gratitude, receives
Precious timeless revelations,
Of mysteries, eons apart,
Conveyed through unearthly conversations.

Softly, whispering bougainvilleas,
Dancing in the moonlight aura of my lot,
Weave a faintly shimmering tent,
A gracious gift from Creator-God.



—Hanna Hamilton
In Memoriam

The Hummingbird



A number of months after a near-fatal crash in 2001, I found my poor psyche suffering to a painful degree. The punishing thoughts weren't along the line of Why? Poor me, but rather, Why do I have to continue? What's my purpose? and so on.

Of course I knew the answer down deep, and most of us understand in various ways what this type of discouraged perception is all about. It is a perfect world as viewed from the near top, but perfection becomes obscure and ego-driven when clutched tightly in the illusions of *maya* (false perception of separateness from divinity).

So when the need for "Momma" (divine reassurance) asserted itself in this way, I

found myself reaching for a substitute—a bit of food to eat. A slice of wheat bread folded over a thick piece of avocado was all I needed to carry me through the next few minutes of angst.

I sat on the wooden steps that faced the now-browning hillside. It was mid-morning, and nature had seemingly subdued her creatures; the warmth of the day was approaching, but it was still cool and still in the shade of the gallery wall.

My left hand held the avocado sandwich indifferently, for I wasn't really that hungry. It was the ritual of preparing food that I hoped would bring some comfort and relief from my malaise. Still I sighed a few times, wondering about the recent course of events, why I was still alive, and what was my purpose in God's world? I thought about Sri Sathya Sai Baba and how busy He must be, saving us from problems and calamities of all sorts. I mused that if the job of *Avatar* were offered, I'm pretty sure I would turn it down; no ordinary mortal could hope to handle His job.

However, I still had this disinterested feeling, an apathetic indifference to my role in this life. Placing the sandwich next to my

left cheek and propping the thumb in the jaw area, I probably looked a bit like Rodin's "Thinker" statue. I was beginning to feel like a statue, too, for my senses were becoming dull and inoperative.

Then from seemingly nowhere, a burst of sparkling, green-blue, hovering beauty parked itself in a space no more than a foot from my eyes. A hummingbird looked at me with intense interest, and I looked back at him; the soft roar of his balancing act vibrated my essence. He was such a beautiful bird, with incredibly bright eyes. We were locked for perhaps five seconds in some sort of communication, regarding each other.

Then the magic moment continued: he abruptly changed his position, slid effortlessly in the air toward my sandwich, plunged his long beak into the avocado, and feasted away—while I watched in total fascination.

Just inches away, this hummingbird was going after the color green. For those of you who know about "hummers" and how they fixate on red and yellow, this may come as a surprise, because I have never heard of one going after green avocado.

Perhaps twenty seconds later, off he flew, leaving me with a quizzical smile on my astonished face. The answer to my soul-searching questions—why, what purpose, and so forth—became as plain to me as the magical Sai moment that just passed. It's all perfect, with each of us dancing in wonderful synchronicity. I brought the avocado to the hummingbird, and he verified the ever-eternal truth to me: just allow Krishna to play His *murali* (flute)—nothing more, nothing less.

—Nicolai Billy
El Cariso Village, California

Krishna Speaks to Arjuna

I accept with joy whatever I am offered in true devotion: fruit or water, leaf or flower. The [true] gift is love, the dedication of your heart. Devotion alone gains access to Divinity. Therefore, Arjuna, whatever you do in the world, whatever you eat, sacrifice, give up, or give away—even your suffering—offer it all to Me. Dedicate everything to Me, Divinity.

By offering all your actions to the Divine, you surrender selfish attachment to their fruits, and this frees you from the karmic consequences of your actions—whether the consequences are pleasant or painful. With your mind unshakably on this path of renunciation, you will be united with Me.

—Quoted in *The Bhagavad Gita*:
A Walkthrough for Westerners, by Jack Hawley, page 88

Getting Off the Mental Roller Coaster

Changing One's View of Problems in Life

Those who seek to acquire steadiness of faith must first acquire the strength to bear grief and pain, insult and injury. They should not slide from a period of self-control (yoga) into a bout of excess (bhoga) and end up with a period of illness (roga). Self-control must persist as self-control until the very end. ... The succession of joy and grief must help confirm one's faith and make it immovable. This alone is evidence of true devotion.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Letter to Dr. Hislop in *My Baba and I*,
by Dr. J. Hislop, p. 239

For most of my life I've been on a mental and emotional roller coaster. I've let the mind drag me up and down, from elation to the depths of despair, from anxiety and fear to brief periods of inner quiet and peace.

A few years ago, after I'd been reading about Sri Sathya Sai Baba's teachings and practicing them in my daily life for some time, I expected that the roller coaster of life would turn at some point into one smooth, ride. I felt that since I was now doing the "right" things in my life—thinking good thoughts, trying to help others, and so forth—I would have no more troubles. Problems, however, kept coming. I wondered why I was still having these ups and downs. Shouldn't the ride be smoother and easier by now?

One problem at the time was very painful. A dentist had removed some old metal fillings, and the toxins entered my body, making me very ill. My joints, stomach, and abdomen ached, and my entire body was wracked with pain that I'd never known before. I was in agony and felt weak, depressed,

and bordering on despair. I was also in the process of moving, and most of my furniture had been taken away, except for a small, rigid army cot that seemed to make the pain even worse with every movement. As I lay on it, trying to transcend the pain, I wondered why we have to suffer even when we're on the spiritual path and trying hard to integrate God's teachings?

Then I remembered Jesus. If even He could not escape the calamities of life, then how could I expect to? Jesus held fast to the highest spiritual truth of love. He loved all and gave compassion to all without exception. He was ridiculed and hated by some, and revered and adored by others. He could not escape the crucible of life, but He did remain anchored firmly in His love for God and prayed fervently for God's divine will to prevail, even when the crucifixion was at hand.

This realization marked the dawning of my spiritual maturity. Life would never be smooth, despite my being on the spiritual

path. In fact, the trials seemed to get harder as I struggled to move forward. I finally understood, as Baba says, *Pleasure is an interval between two pains*. This is the nature of living on this earth, and I must accept it.

The good news is, Baba shows us how to be unaffected by it. By going inside, by diving deep, we can transcend both physical pain and the agitations of the mind. We can remember our true nature, which is eternal, unchanged, and unaffected by
 this outer play. I am
 not the body, nor
 the mind. It is only
 when I associate
 myself with these
 and let the mind
 turn outward rather
 than Godward that I
 suffer and feel anxiety and worry.

I can't say that I understand all of God's ways by any means, or that this spiritual path is easy work. I felt shocked and wept tears of grief when the woman with whom I shared a house committed suicide a few months ago. I don't understand why she ended her life, nor do I understand why I couldn't help her.

When it happened, I prayed to God, "You know what's best for all of us. Nothing can happen against Your divine will. I know she is in Your hands, and I accept and have faith in You." I didn't judge her, God's will, or the situation. Even through grief, I was aware of the untouched inner witness, a quiet inner place, and inner peace, which gave me a feeling of solidity and strength. I find that the more I focus on this inner witness, the less I'm pulled outward by the mind.

I realize now that it's not because I engage in certain spiritual practices and live by spiritual truths that I will no longer have any problems. Problems are just a part of worldly life, and if I didn't have any trouble, I probably wouldn't make much spiritual progress. By keeping my mind focused on God, however, none of the problems seem very important anymore.

When noble souls such as Jesus, who was crucified, and Sri Ramakrishna, who endured throat cancer, lived through painful experiences, their minds remained firmly fixed on God. People around Ramakrishna prior to his death remarked that his frail body appeared to suffer enormously from his illness, yet he seemed unaffected by it and even remained in a state of spiritual ecstasy.

So what I've learned is that the spiritual path does give me a smooth inner ride and provide me insurance from the ups and downs of life—when I keep my mind focused on God. Problems will still come in the material world, but by keeping my mind firmly fixed on God within, I can step off the mental and emotional roller coaster and remain with my heart and head in a state of equanimity and inner peace.

—Debra Moffitt

An American in Switzerland

“By going inside, by diving deep,
 we can transcend both physical
 pain and the agitation of the
 mind.”

Ten Important Questions, with Baba's Answers

Continued from the May-June Issue: Questions 5-10



Are there other “gods” besides God? What do they do?

Sai Baba: *Just as the ruler of a petty earthly domain has certain norms to follow in carrying out his duty, the Supreme Ruler of the world, the Almighty, too, [has] such regulations in the matter of the governance of the universe. It is naive to believe that God will do everything Himself simply because He is omnipotent. ... Even as a ruler of a terrestrial kingdom delegates the administration of authority—by which various functions are performed by a number of ministers who are in charge of certain departments and portfolios—in running the affairs of the cosmos, Almighty God too assigns certain functions to certain gods such as Indra, Varuna, and Rudra. Just [as] all earthly matters are not taken directly to a king but are presented to the appropriate ministers for action, not all prayers of man reach God Himself; they are attended to by His ‘ministers’—Indra, Varuna, and others. Only those prayers that have their origins in the spirit of nishkama karma [desireless action], infinite and pure love, and an unsullied heart reach the Supreme Lord directly.* ⁽¹⁷⁾

The Lord will not interfere in the functions of the various deities. He lets Brahma, Vishnu, and Easwara carry out their respective functions according to cosmic laws. ⁽¹⁸⁾

Prayers for worldly ends do not reach God. They reach only those deities who deal with such restricted spheres. But all prayers arising from pure love, unselfish eagerness to render service, and from hearts that are all-inclusive will reach God. ⁽¹⁹⁾



Why do I feel happy when I see someone who is happy? Why do I not feel sad instead?

Sai Baba: *We are not troubled when something is good, only when it is bad, because goodness is natural, and evil is an aberration. We become worried and alarmed when someone slides into wrong or feels pain or sorrow, because nature plans for us to be right, happy, and ever in joy. It is a pity that man has lost his understanding of this truth.* ⁽²⁰⁾



What sets human beings apart from animals?

Sai Baba: *Discrimination ... sets [human beings] apart from the rest of the animals.* ⁽²¹⁾ *Divine power is present everywhere in creation. Only man has the capacity to recognize this power.* ⁽²²⁾ *No other living being [except man] has been endowed with intelligence and [a] discriminative faculty heightened to such a degree that it can visualize the atma (inner Divinity). This is why man is acclaimed as the crown of creation, and why the Sastras (scriptures) proclaim that the opportunity to be born as man is a very rare piece of good fortune. Man has the qualifications needed to seek the cause of creation; he has in him the urge as well as the capacity.* ⁽²³⁾

Man alone can rise through self-effort to higher stages of spiritual evolution. No other animal can do so. Animal tamers in the circus can train a tiger to perform various tricks, but they cannot change its nature. They cannot make it live on grass and completely deprive it of meat, but man is different. His nature can be changed by means of his own disciplined effort. He can control, by his will, the evil thoughts and ideas that arise in his mind. This is why birth as a human being is considered a rare gift. ⁽²⁴⁾

The special instrument that God has allotted man—buddhi or the intellect (the power to discern reality, the truth, and right from wrong)—must be used by man to become master of the down-dragging senses. The intellect must be used to judge and decide the means for the upliftment of the human to the Divine. [Its function is] to help man to realize God. ⁽²⁵⁾ *In a world replete with ... opposites, man must constantly choose between what is right and proper and what is wrong or undesirable. A man who has no such discriminating faculty is an animal. Man should not let himself be guided by the mind. He should follow the directions of his intelligence (buddhi). As long as you follow the mind, you cannot obtain Madhava (God).* ⁽²⁶⁾



When I do something, do I do it or does God?

Sai Baba: *You have to realize that little depends on your efforts alone. You have proof of this in your own body. For instance, what efforts do you make to see that your heart beats regularly? To what extent are you responsible for the breathing process that proceeds continuously?*

What is your contribution to the digestive process that carries on within you? Are these the results of human efforts? Do you continue to live merely by wishing to go on living? Are you able to end your life when you choose? Are you responsible for your birth? Not at all. When you inquire deeply into this problem, you will realize that it is your [separate] sense of doership and enjoyership that causes all [your] difficulties. ⁽²⁷⁾

When [a person] performs actions, regarding himself as the doer, the actions become fetters that bind him. [On the other hand,] all actions that are performed with the feeling that they are intended as offerings to please the Divine, do not lead to bondage. They become “desireless” (anapeksha) actions. One has to recognize that the Divine principle in all beings performs actions using human beings as Its instruments. As long as man regards himself as the doer (kartrutva) and enjoyer (bhoktrutva), he cannot escape from the consequences of his actions. ⁽²⁸⁾



What should I do if I see a crime?

Sai Baba: *Today many indulge in actions opposed to dharma and truth. On the basis of their caste or community, they promote strife and conflict in the country. Elders in the nation remain only as spectators of all the unrighteous and violent actions perpetrated by these evil elements.*

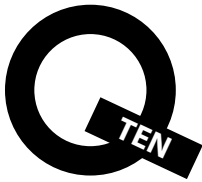
Even scholars and intellectuals remain silent, and persons holding high office merely observe what is taking place. No one makes any effort to stop this menace or to resist the evil elements. It appears as if all their knowledge, position, and influence has been reduced to nothing. Such persons, though they may not indulge in unrighteous acts themselves, give silent encouragement to such acts.

When evil, injustice, and violence are being committed, if individuals look on unconcerned, they must be regarded as accomplices in the crimes. In the end they also suffer as much as the criminals. By their passive association, they provide encouragement to the evil-doers.

When the good are associated with the wicked and do not oppose them, they share responsibility for the deeds of the evil-doers. The Divine destroys even those who do not oppose or remain passive while injustice and wrong-doing are

perpetrated. The Divine will not consider whether they are learned or ignorant, wise or unwise. If they are educated or wise, why did they not stand up for truth and justice? Why did they remain silent? Thus they are tainted with the same guilt. A failure to resist evil is their offense. Only when we resist acts of unrighteousness and injustice, and try to eliminate malpractices in society, can we claim to be assisting in the task of restoring dharma (righteousness) ...

Whoever may commit an offense, whether a son, a relation, or a close associate, one will be free from the taint of being an accessory to the crime only if he opposes the wrong action and tries to correct the offender. If, on the contrary, he allows it or encourages it to be done, he will be guilty of aiding and abetting the crime. ⁽²⁹⁾



I always feel a yearning, no matter what I do. What is it?

Sai Baba: *Man has an inborn thirst for God, a built-in yearning for ananda (bliss) of the highest order, which will never fail or falter.* ⁽³⁰⁾ *The Lord has so shaped man that he is inclined toward God, delighted at the expansion of his vision, and happy when he is moral and virtuous. So man must serve his [own] best interests by adhering to his basic nature, by concentration on Brahma (God), by the cultivation of sathya (truth), and the practice of dharma (righteousness, that which sustains).* ⁽³¹⁾

The deepest yearning of man is to experience the One, the Basis, the Being that has Become. ⁽³²⁾ *It is only by drinking God that [this] thirst can be quenched, not by substitutes or palliatives.* ⁽³³⁾ *Man can obtain shanti (peace) only by returning to [his] native home—God. Until then, homesickness will haunt him.* ⁽³⁴⁾

—Answers by Sri Sathya Sai Baba

References: The references listed below may be from older editions and thus have different page numbers from more recent printings.

(17) *Summer Showers in Brindavan*, 1979, 8.

(18) *Sanathana Sarathi*, 38, April 1995, 87.

(19) *Sathya Sai Speaks*, XI, 68.

(20) SSS, X, 248.

(21) *Yoga of Action*, 41.

(22) SS, 32, Dec. 1988, 309.

(23) SSV, 1.

(24) SSS, X, 189.

(25) SSS, XI, 9.

(26) SS, 31, Mar. 1988, 70.

(27) SS, 33, Sept. 1990, 235.

(28) SS, 36, Feb. 1993, 30.

(29) *Discourses by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, I*, 141-2.

(30) SSS, VII, 362.

(31) *Dharma Vahini*, 79.

(32) SSS, XI, 73.

(33) SSS VII, 362.

(34) DV, 72.

The Lord Accepts Only a Pure Heart

Winning the Grace of God

Oh, Krishna! You don't eat what I give You; You don't eat our home food; You go to the houses of the cowherds and eat their butter on the sly. You spoil Your good name, my dear! (Telugu poem)

Thus, Krishna's mother Yashoda expressed her anguish one day, having been vexed by the complaints of the neighbors. She chided Him saying, "Oh, Krishna! I have to put up with so much trouble on account of Your mischievous pranks. You don't eat the food prepared in our home and always prefer the dishes prepared in the neighbor's home. How shall I manage You?" True, people develop a taste for food from other places. A candy-shop owner sits in his own shop, all the while enjoying the sweet smell of the *laddus*, yet still yearns for a taste of puffed rice from another shop.

Emperor Bali Keeps His Word

Emperor Bali, in *Krita Yuga*, performed many *yajnas* (sacrificial rites). After



completion of 107 *yajnas*, he made arrangements for performing the 108th *yajna*, known as *Viswajit*. As he was performing this *yajna*, Lord Vishnu appeared before him as Vamana, that is, in the guise of a dwarfish Brahmin. Vamana asked for three paces of land in charity from Bali, which the emperor was prepared to give. In the meanwhile, Emperor Bali's preceptor Sukracharya tried to dissuade Bali from giving this gift of charity. He advised Bali, "Please do

not give anything in charity to this short Brahmin, much less the three paces of land. Do not underestimate Him, He is not an ordinary Brahmin. He is an *Avatar* of Vishnu. He is born to Sage Kashyapa, in fulfillment of the boon granted by Lord Vishnu to him."

Emperor Bali did not pay heed to the advice of his preceptor. He asked Lord Vamana, "Sir, What can I do for you?" Vamana replied, "Oh, King! I do not need anything. Just give me three paces of land."

Sukracharya again pleaded with Bali, “Oh, King! You consider this person to be an ordinary Brahmin. No. No. He is capable of filling the entire universe. It is not wise on your part to grant His request.”

But Emperor Bali turned down the minister’s advice, declaring that he could not go back on his promise, because it was a great sin not to stand by one’s word.

In those days, people considered death preferable to going back on one’s word. Today in the *Kali Yuga*, people make promises and break them at will. Emperor Bali was of a pure heart, however. Once a promise was made, he fulfilled it, come what may!

He said, “I gave my word to this Brahmin boy. I am prepared to face any eventuality in fulfilling my promise. I offer the fruits of all the *yajnas* I have performed, including the one I am now performing, to this Brahmin boy.” So saying, he placed the garland of the fruits of the 108 *yajnas* performed by him round the neck of Vamana and prostrated before Him. (As He said this, Swami created a necklace of 108 gold coins.)

Vamana covered all the land given in charity by Bali in one step. He grew in size and next covered the entire universe with His second step. There was no further space to take His third step. Then Sukracharya said, “Oh, Emperor! You did not pay heed to my advice. You underestimated this Brahmin boy and got yourself tricked by His innocent looks.”

Vamana received the offering of Emperor Bali, praised his large-heartedness, and blessed him. Vamana was short in stature, but He

In those days, people considered death preferable to going back on one’s word.

could fill the entire universe. Being an Avatar, He was *aprameya* (beyond all limitations, indescribable, and immeasurable). Humans have limitations, but not an Avatar.

Divine Powers in Nature

Sunrise and sunset happen in a regular, uninterrupted pattern, according to a predetermined divine command. The sun, moon, and stars likewise follow a definite pattern and schedule. The stars shine brightly in the sky at night but are not visible during daytime. All the five elements in the universe discharge their duties as ordained by the Lord. Even God Himself observes the rules that He lays down for all. Everything in God’s creation goes on according to a predetermined order and divine command.

Nothing in the universe, including the five elements, has an independent existence. Unfortunately, man does not recognize this divine force, which regulates the functioning of the universe. Scientists make unstinted efforts to discover this divine force.

The sun rises in the morning and sets in the evening with utmost regularity everyday. The stars glitter beautifully in the sky at night and hide themselves during the day. The wind blows incessantly and sustains the living beings without resting even for a

Today, in the *Kali Yuga*, people make promises and break them at will.

moment. The rivers make pleasant gurgling sounds as they flow perennially. (Telugu poem)

What is the reason for these phenomena? Scientists have probed into this question and concluded that the stars are not visible during the day because the sun shines brilliantly in the sky then. Similarly, they have tried to explain the divine force in ever so many ways.

The Lot of Man

The moment the umbilical cord gets cut and the child becomes separated from the mother, it cries. Why? No one can explain or unlock this secret. However, the moment a drop of milk or honey is put on the tongue of a newborn child, it sleeps happily. When a human being comes out of his mother's womb, he must struggle to satiate his hunger.

Oh man! You struggle hard to acquire various types of knowledge in order to fill your stomach. But despite all your hard work and acquisitions of knowledge, you remain unable to experience everlasting happiness. Instead, why not contemplate on the Lord and seek refuge in Him? He will certainly show you a way to overcome your misery. (Telugu poem)

Every human being thinks that he is born merely for filling his belly. He constantly struggles to acquire food.

Nature displays another interesting phenomenon. The branches of a tree rub against each other due to the wind, and fire is born out of that friction. How does this happen?

Though fire is latent in the wood of a tree, it does not burn right away. Why? No scientist has ever discovered this secret so far. Nature has many such inexplicable phenomena. With a view to recognize and understand such phenomena, man constantly engages in the quest for Divinity, but one need not search for God, who is omnipresent.

Oh man! You struggle hard in life merely for the sake of filling your belly. You acquire myriad types of knowledge from various fields. Examine and inquire for yourself what great happiness you have achieved through spending all your time from dawn to dusk in acquiring worldly knowledge and earning wealth, while forgetting God. (Telugu poem)

The Divine Force

Everything in this universe moves strictly according to divine will and divine force. Man, of his own accord, cannot achieve anything. Divine power manifests itself in several ways in this universe, in the form of various types of energy. People believe they are created by somebody. Strictly speaking, nobody has created them. They are natural phenomena that manifest out of divine will. For example, when two pieces of stone are struck against each other, fire is born. It shows

that fire is latent in the stone, but it does not manifest outside. Thus, all powers are latent in nature.

Darshan of the Lord

A few minutes ago, one boy spoke about Nanda and Yashoda, the foster parents of Lord Krishna. In those days, there was no electricity. People in the village used to go to the house of Nanda (since he was the chief of the village) to light their oil lamps from his lamp. They were of the belief that they would attain plenty and prosperity if they lit their oil lamps from the lamps in the houses of the well-to-do.

A newly-married daughter-in-law by the name of Suguna arrived in that village. Her mother-in-law told her to go to the house of Nanda to get her lamp lit from theirs. When Suguna went to the house of Nanda and lit the lamp, she experienced a vision of Krishna in that flame. Upon having this divine vision, she lost body consciousness. She fixed her gaze on the beautiful form of Lord Krishna in the flame and became lost in bliss. She did not even realize that her fingers were becoming burned, having come into contact with the flame. She was in total bliss.

In the meantime, other ladies from the neighboring houses also arrived there to light their own lamps. They were wonderstruck on witnessing this scene. They noticed that Suguna was not moving away from the flame, even though her fingers were getting burned. They then realized that she was seeing a vision of Krishna in that flame. They sang a song describing this incident:

**...butter symbolizes a pure heart.
Wherever such a pure heart is
available, Krishna takes it.**

It seems Suguna had a vision of Gopala in the house of Nanda. She saw Krishna in the flame! (Telugu song)

On hearing this song, Yashoda came running, literally. She saw Suguna's fingers being burned in the flame. While all the *gopis* (cowherd maids) were dancing in ecstasy, Yashoda approached Suguna and pulled her hand away from the flame. She chided her saying, "Oh! Suguna! Did you not notice your fingers being burned upon coming into contact with the flame? Do you wish to bring a bad name upon us, that if anyone goes to Nanda's house, their fingers will be burned?"

Suguna's mother-in-law was by nature a short-tempered woman. On hearing about this incident, she came running to the house of Yashoda and made a big issue out of this incident. She ordered her daughter-in-law not to go again to the house of Nanda for lighting her lamp.

Several other miracles happened in the house of Yashoda. After Krishna left for Mathura, the *gopis* could not bear His separation and pined for His *darshan* (sight of a holy person). In such a moment of yearning, Krishna appeared in Gokul, their village. However, even though neither Nanda nor Yashoda had seen Him, all the *gopis*

Krishna is referred to as the *chora* (thief). What does he steal? ... the butter-soft hearts of the gopis.

gathered at their house and prayed that they might be allowed to have Krishna's *darshan*. They started complaining, "Nanda and Yashoda! You are keeping Krishna away from us. Please tell us where He is."

This time, however, Krishna did not make His appearance in public. He appeared only to some *gopis*, individually, in answer to their prayers.

A few minutes ago, a student of our University narrated an incident in which Swami had appeared before him in answer to his prayers. No one else was able to see Swami. Then, the boy prayed again, "Swami! What is the use of giving *darshan* to me alone? Please give *darshan* to all the students; otherwise, they will not believe my words and make fun of me." I replied, "It does not matter. Let people think whatever they wish. This is your *prapti* (deservedness); only you deserve to see me." So saying, I disappeared.

A Pure Heart

Yashoda reprimanded the butter-thief child Krishna saying, "Oh, my dear Krishna! You don't eat the food I prepare for you. You go to the houses of the milkmaids and stealthily eat the butter stored in their homes. You are creating problems for me. Is it that the butter suffused with Your own mother's

love does not taste good to You?" So saying, she tied Krishna to a mortar with a rope.

It is a common experience in the world to not like the food prepared in our own homes. The items cooked by others will appear tastier. This is quite natural. However, Krishna did not steal the butter from others' houses for its taste. There is an underlying message in this *leela* (play, sport). Here, butter symbolizes a pure heart. Wherever such a pure heart is available, Krishna takes it. Such a pure heart will be soft and sweet. The hearts of the *gopis* were ripened with devotion. They were pure, soft, and sweet. Hence, Krishna had gone to their houses to steal their hearts.

Win the Grace of God through Song

Krishna is referred to as the *chora* (thief). What does He steal? He steals the butter-soft hearts of the *gopis*, hearts that are pure, soft, and sweet. If you call someone a *chora* (thief), he will be annoyed. But if you call Krishna *chitta chora* (stealer of the heart), He will enjoy this nickname. That is why devotees sing in praise of the Lord most endearingly: *Chitta chora Yashoda ke bal! Navaneetha chora Gopal! Gopal, Gopal, Gopal! Govardhanadhara Gopal!* (Oh, Yashoda's little Krishna! Oh, Gopala! Stealer of butter! Oh, Gopala! Lifter of the Govardhana mountain!)." The song thus sung melodiously with *bhava* (feeling), *raga* (tune), and *thala* (beat) will be enjoyed by everyone.

Great singer-saints such as Thyagaraja made sweet offerings to God in the form of *kirtanas* (songs) suffused with *bhava*, *raga*,

and *thala*, and thereby won His grace. There is so much sweetness in such devotional songs. God's grace can surely be obtained by such devotional singing.

You cannot win the grace of God by empty rhetoric. It is only through devotional

A simple song, sung with intense love and yearning, will move God.

singing suffused with *bhava*, *raga*, and *thala* that Divinity can be attained. God will be moved by such *sankirtan* (devotional singing). Even the *Vedas* have extolled the efficacy of devotional singing.

Even by chanting the *Vedas*, God cannot be attained. There are many hymns in praise of God in the *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda*, and *Atharvana Veda*. Not a single individual chanting those hymns can obtain divine *darshan*. However, when these hymns are set to a tune and sung with devotion, all may experience divine love. That is why God is extolled as *ganalola* and *ganapriya* (pleased by devotional singing). Therefore, pray to God through devotional singing.

You can easily win the grace of God. Some people may express doubts such as, "We cannot sing well; we have not learned the art of singing. How can we please God?" Do not worry. You may not have knowledge of music or a mellifluous voice. It does not matter. Sing the glory of God with intense love, in some tune that you do know. That is enough to move the heart of God.

Sweetness of Music

What is music? It is not necessary to make a special effort to learn music. A simple song, sung with intense love and yearning, will move God. For example, you recite a poem,

"*Rama! Nannu kaapadu* (Oh, Rama! Please protect me)." There will be no sweetness in the recited poem, being simply a literary rendition of your feelings. Similarly, if you make an appeal to God praying, "*Rama! Nannu kaapadu*,"

it becomes another empty repetition of words. The same feeling, however, if it is expressed in a song set to a beautiful tune, "*Rama Nannu kaapadu*," will be so sweet and endearing to Divinity. There is so much sweetness in music. Therefore, if you want to attain God, you can do it completely through devotional singing.

You need not be disappointed if you have not learned music. Why disappointment? If there is an appointment, there will be disappointment. Therefore, do not make an appointment in the first place. Sing the glory of God in your own way. That is the easiest way to attain God. The divine bliss enjoyed by the *gopis* in the *Krishnavatar* in *Dwapara Yuga* is unparalleled. Therefore remember that unparalleled divine bliss, and try to please God with your love and devotion.

In no *Avatar* have devotees merged in divine love to such a great extent as in *Krishnavatar*. Thousands of devotees merged in Sri Krishna during His *Avatar*. Hence, if you want to merge in Divinity, devotional singing is the only means.

God is said to be *ganapriya* (pleased by devotional singing). *Krishnavatar* is the best example for this statement. One simple name, *Krishna*, sung by a devotee, is enough to move the Lord. The *leelas* (pranks), *mahimas* (miracles), and momentous deeds performed by Lord Krishna during His *Avatar* are unparalleled.

Dear students! You sing and participate in *bhajans*, but each one is singing in his own way. This is not proper. If all of you sing in one voice and one tune with divine feeling, God will surely install Himself in your loving heart. *Krishnavatar* is the only *Avatar* that granted *darshan* to different people in different ways, clarified their doubts about His divinity, and merged them in His own Self. *Krishnavatar* is the only *Avatar* that

made everyone happy and blissful by His sweet and loving words.

Embodiments of love! There is nothing superior to devotional singing. What great joy and happiness you derive by singing the song, "*Nanduni yinta Gopaludanta deepaana kanipinchenanta* (It seems Gopala has appeared in the flame in the house of Nanda)." Therefore, sing such heartfelt songs with *bhava*, *raga*, and *thala*, to please God and obtain His grace. You may sing any number of *bhajans* and songs, but it is only when they are suffused with intense love, devotion, and sweet softness of feeling (*bhava*) that you will derive immense happiness and joy.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Krishna Janmashtami, September 12, 2004

JUDAISM

What is hurtful to yourself, do not do to your fellow man. For this is the whole of the Torah, and the remainder is but commentary. Go learn it. (*Talmud, Shabbat 3id*)

BUDDHISM

Hurt not others with that which you yourself would find hurtful. (*Udana Varga 5, 18*)

The Golden Rule

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

—Compiled by Virginia Moore
In Memoriam

CHRISTIANITY

Do for others what you would have them to do for you; this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and of the teaching of the prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

ZOROASTRIANISM

That nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good for itself. (*Dadisten-i-dinik*, 94,5)

HINDUISM

This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others that would cause you pain if done to you. (*Mahabharata 5, 1517*)

ISLAM

No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. (*Sunnah*)

Ever Present

Keep the Mind Centered on Eternal Peace and Happiness

A revolution is taking place, right now, and it is called transformation! Sai Baba, God Incarnate, has for years said, *My life is My message*. Accompanying these words, He first showed us His miracles. These manifestations caught the imagination of many across the continents. This phase in Swami's life continued, with pure love and the message of how to live in truth, right action, peace, love, and nonviolence. Consequently, many more came forth, eager to be a part of this revolution.

So subtle, so magnificent, yet so deep, Sai continued to tell us how to achieve equanimity; to understand the importance of living in harmony; to recognize unity in diversity; to develop tolerance, forbearance, and patience; to love ourselves as well as others; and to live in bliss.

How were we to accomplish all this wonderment? In answer, Swami provided us with simple examples that show us the way. Foremost have been His words, *Practice, practice, practice*. Without our practicing His message, His words are of no avail. Then, in more recent years, Swami began emphasizing the theme, *Your life is My message*—the necessity of personal transformation.

Today, Swami appears to be entering a new phase in this regard. Having enthralled us for years with manifestations of wondrous items, creations of *vibuthi* (holy ash), healings

of the mind and body, and so forth, a change is occurring. This new phase is giving us an opportunity to demonstrate just what He means by: *Your life is My message*.

Who among us have imbued and practiced His teachings? Recently in Prasanthi Nilayam, Swami seems to have taken a back seat. We join Him in *darshan*, listening to *Vedic* chanting, as the sounds elevate us, infiltrating our very being. We witness plays performed by children of India and other countries, plays that stress His message. Talks by both young and old tell of how Swami's teachings have influenced their lives. These then are His exemplars.

And yet, Swami is ever present with His energy, His love. Sai Kulwant Hall is filled with Swami as we sit, hear, see, sing, and receive *prasad*. Whether we are observer, listener, skeptic, or true devotee; whether we are filled with desires or consumed with illness, there is really no difference, for we have been uplifted into the experience of unity, the awareness that God is flowing in us.

Let us take this experience home or feel it anew as we read these words. Let us play the game of life, ever remembering that we are part of Him, and also ever present.

—Bea Flaig
Tucson, Arizona

When God Winks at You

The Delights of Divine Coincidence

God is omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (present everywhere, within and without), and omniscient (all knowing). Swami says, *There is only one guru* (spiritual teacher, or “dispeller of darkness”), *who is God, and there is no other guru*.¹ Swami, as an *Avatar* (incarnation of Divinity), is our guru. He is both within and without. He creates outward conditions and an inner drive to push us to find our inner *Atma* (divine Self). He pushes from without and exerts a pull from within, so that we may get fixed in the center of our being, the *Atmic* principle.

Swami helped me understand this in the depth of silence, without a single spoken word, during our last visit to Prasanthi Nilayam (Sai Baba’s main ashram in southern India) in February of 2004. To me, this was His highest grace.

It is important to ponder one question: Why is it that we are unable to feel God’s omnipresence within us all the time? It is because of our monkey mind, a mind that consists of thoughts that have their own agenda and preconceived notions about how things ought to be. This happens due to attachment to our self-created identity,

referred to as the false self or ego. This attachment closes the door of our hearts to the light of God within us.

Swami says: *Like a lighted lamp, God’s grace spreads on all who approach Him and love to be near Him. If you interpose a shade that shuts out light, you have only yourself to blame when grace does not shine. Open the doors of your heart, so that sun may shine through to illumine the corners and disinfect*



“It seemed as if He could not give enough, such was the intensity of love energy present there.”

*the vices within. The sun will not open the doors and enter.*² Sincere practice of nonattachment to our monkey mind is essential to opening the doors of our hearts.

We were a group of twenty men and women from the Rochester, New York, Sathya Sai Baba Center on a weeklong visit to the abode of our Divine Master. As a group, we were allowed to sit close to the central platform during *darshan*. For the first time in fifteen years I was able to see Swami up close. We felt peace, love, and deep satisfaction in our hearts. However, I suspect we all had expectations that, as a group, we would get an interview with Swami. These hopes slowly

¹ *Sai Baba*, 1999, p. 217

² *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 5, p. 180

turned into disappointment as I observed that I was just a drop in this ocean-like crowd. Even so, close proximity to Swami helped me to keep such monkey-mind thoughts at bay. As a result, I was able to concentrate on my inner feelings. What I found was a deep sense of gratitude welling up in my heart. I did not know how to express it or communicate it to Swami.

As if by a miracle, on the fourth or fifth day of our stay, we had a chance to witness a program presented to Swami by the graduating class of students from the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. For about an hour, several students stood up, one by one, and expressed their gratitude to Swami. Students spoke in many languages. What touched me was their sincerity; I could see and feel it up close. Then it suddenly dawned on me: Is this a coincidence that these boys are expressing to Swami what was in my heart?

Ah! The word *coincidence*—what does it mean? Perhaps by another coincidence, right at this point in the writing of this article, I was led to a book entitled *When God Winks: How the Power of Coincidence Guides Your Life*, by Squire Rushnell. In it the author defines coincidence as a sequence of events that although accidental seems to have been planned or arranged. To “wink” is to give a signal or express a message. A God-wink is a personal signal or message, directly from a

higher power, usually but not always in the form of a coincidence.

So you see, God was teaching me that every coincidence in our lives is like a signpost on the highway, giving us assurance that we are on the right path. In those moments when God winks at you, just the way your father may have winked at you when you were a child, you know the intent is to say, “Hey kid, I am thinking about you now.” Similarly, coincidence is God’s way of telling

us, “I know what is in your heart, my child. Keep your faith alive and strengthen it. You are on the right path. I am with you always, though you may not know it.”

The next few days proved to be a testing period for this student of Swami. I decided to examine my own monkey mind dispassionately. I asked: Why do you want an interview? Do you have any personal problems to be solved or favors to ask? No, I really had nothing to ask. To my great surprise, what emerged from this was a simple truth: I had an urge to witness and experience Swami’s unconditional love.

The interview, which I had often imagined, must of course take place in that renowned little room. This imagining sprung from my reading of numerous firsthand stories from devotees. As soon as this feeling in my heart became evident to me, another one of God’s winks followed. A group of about 200 men and women had come from a



“We will know His guiding hand
if we keep our mind pure and
learn to see things differently.”

village near Kodaikanal for Swami's *darshan*. The next day, as Swami passed them in *darshan* line, He signaled that they should be moved up front where the students usually sit. As we watched keenly, Swami continuously showered His love on them. He instructed His students to bring clothes, saris, *vibuthi*, and photos to be distributed.

At that time Swami had not recovered from His hip surgery. We felt visibly pained to see Him walking with a limp for *darshan*. Can you imagine that in that condition He walked down from the central platform to personally sprinkle holy water on the devotees? He personally checked every sari, discarding those that were not appropriate. As my wife witnessed the whole *leela* (divine play) from the women's side, she commented, "It seemed as if He could not give enough, such was the intensity of love energy present there."

My monkey mind was dumbfounded by the deep lessons it was receiving. Why does it matter that all this did not happen to "this body" in the interview room. Had I not given up this desire in a spirit of nonattachment? What I received in return is more than what I had ever imagined.

The teachings I received are simple yet profound: We must make an effort in the deep recesses of the heart to rise above the bickering of the monkey mind. This is our self-effort, the first step we take towards God. Recall Swami's words: *The sun will not open the doors and enter.*³ So our duty is to create an opening or space for God to function from within. Then He will take ten, or even one hundred steps to deepen our experience. We will know His guiding hand if we keep our mind pure and learn to see things differently. The proof is in the experience.

This is the faith we must have. His grace is available to one and all. God is not partial. When proximity to God is experienced, all else becomes insignificant. Therefore, should this not become our primary goal in life? Could we have a better opportunity to walk toward this goal than when God Himself is present in human form to assist us in this endeavor? *Jai Sai Ram.*

—Navalgund Hemant Rao
Rochester, New York

³ *Sathya Sai Speaks* Vol. 5, p. 180.

Man can realize his mission on earth only when he reveres all others as Divine. Man must worship God in the form of his fellow beings. God appears before him as a blind beggar, an idiot, a leper, a child, a decrepit old man, a criminal, or a mad man. You must see even behind those veils the divine embodiment of love, power, and wisdom—the Sai, and worship Him through seva (service).

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
April 30, 2005

Children's Corner

A Story Told to an Elder Son

A mother once called her elder son aside and told him the following story:

Once upon a time a platoon of soldiers was cutting wood in a forest.

A corporal, while looking on at the other soldiers working, shouted commands to make them work more quickly.

"Faster! Faster!"

A man wearing a long cloak passed by on horseback and noticed the corporal, hands in pockets, hurrying the soldiers to work. The man on horseback asked, "Seeing as you are in such a hurry, why don't you help them?"

"Oh, me?! But I'm the corporal!" came the reply.



The cloaked man got off his horse and helped the soldiers collect wood until the cart was full.

"There you are, sir!" the man said to the corporal. "If you need any more help, just call on me!"

With that he got back onto his horse.

"Who are you?" inquired the corporal.

"Me?" the man replied. "I'm your commander-in-chief, the General!"



The elder son blushed with embarrassment, while his brother and sisters looked on, for now he understood why his mother had told the story!

—Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Magazine
for Children Ages 1 to 99

Announcements: Some 80th Birthday Events

Buddha Poornima was celebrated **May 23 and 24, 2005**. Sri Lanka was the host country, and all were invited to attend, especially the Buddhists throughout the world. It was a colorful and dignified event honoring the One from whom the religion and philosophy emanated—Buddha, Himself. It is to be noted that Sri Sathya Sai Baba honors all religions.

Editors and Publishers Conference will take place in Prasanthi Nilayam on **July 19 and 20**. Many countries throughout the world have their own Sai Publications. The editors and publishers of those publications are invited to attend. The purpose of the conference will be to assess the caliber of translation of the *Sanathana Sarathi* and the caliber of other publications that bear Bhagavan's name. Attendance will be limited to: Zone Chairmen, Central Coordinators, National Coordinating Committees of those countries, one publisher, and one editor.

Sai Interfaith Conference — “The Religion of Love,” July 22-23: There will be a conference of eminent speakers from the five major religions of the world: Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, and Jewish. The speakers will give their addresses in the divine presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. All are invited to attend.

The 8th World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Organizations — “Unity, Purity, Divinity,” November 20, 21, and 24: All are invited to attend the general sessions. Delegates for specific areas of discussion will be designated to speak. We pray that His divine guidance will fill our spiritual needs for the rest of these human lives.

Cultural Events: There will be numerous cultural events during the course of this unprecedented time. These will be spiritually uplifting and inspire love and happiness. They will be announced in due course.

Announcement: Sai devotees from all over the world have demonstrated extraordinary compassion, generosity, and love in response to the catastrophic events of the earthquakes and tsunami in Asia. Many physicians and other volunteers have gone to the stricken areas and extended their love and skill to the devastated victims of this natural disaster.

Many devotees have given to the Earthquake Relief Fund that was established under the Sathya Sai Society of America. One hundred percent of all funds donated were sent to the Sai Organizations in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand for relief work.

Dear Brothers and Sisters: Let us use the forthcoming events for His divine *darshan* and guidance, to realize who each of us really is. Let us come to know our Divine Indweller, who resides in the spiritual heart of every man and woman.

—Excerpted from an announcement by
Michael Goldstein, M.D., Chairman, Prasanthi Council

Holy Days for India and the USA

May through October, 2005

May 30, MondayMemorial Day, USA, recognition of the men and women who died while serving their country.

July 21, Thursday*Guru Poornima*, a time to honor our beloved guru, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

August 27, Saturday*Krishna Jayanthi*, recognition of the birth of Lord Krishna.

September 7, Wednesday *Vinayaka Chathurthi*, honoring the remover of all obstacles.

September 18, Sunday*Onam*, a victory of righteousness over evil forces.

October 12, Wednesday.....*Vijaya Dasami*, a celebration of good over evil.

Announcement for Musicians

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has graciously consented to having a Western Symphony Orchestra perform a concert in Prasanthi Nilayam as part of the 80th Birthday celebrations in November, 2005. The orchestra will be led by Italian conductor Vincenzo Perrone. Musicians wishing to be members of the orchestra can send an email to saisymphony@yahoo.com and request a registration form. Rehearsals will begin around November 16, 2005 in Prasanthi Nilayam. The concert repertoire will be announced well in advance to give musicians time to prepare their parts before arriving in India.

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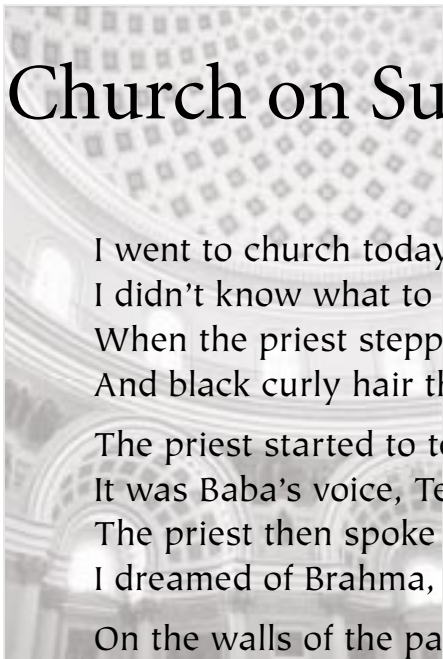
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Church on Sunday

I went to church today, for the first time in years.
I didn't know what to expect; I had a few fears.
When the priest stepped forward, I saw a robe red,
And black curly hair that encircled his head.

The priest started to tell his message and preach;
It was Baba's voice, Telugu, His way to teach.
The priest then spoke of the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost.
I dreamed of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva as host.

On the walls of the parish were large paintings of Christ,
Joseph, and a pregnant Mary, his wife.
I thought of the Poornachandra inside,
The giant pictures all religions imbibe.

The organ began to play deep and clear;
'Twas Krishna's flute I heard in my ear.
The congregation joined together to sing.
I could hear *bhajans* with their unusual ring.

Christ's body was offered in the form of bread.
For me it was *vibuthi*, with a bit for my forehead.
Opening the Bible, the priest then read.
I pictured the *Bhagavad Gita* instead.



The truth I knew in church that day;
It was Baba who answers all when they pray.
The name, the place, the time may vary,
But Swami is there as Jesus or Hari.

The prophecy has been fulfilled well,
The Lord has come, and in each He does dwell.
No matter the race, religion, or creed;
Baba is there when ever we need.

We each worship in our own chosen way,
But 'tis Baba who comes to church on Sunday!

—Joy Ziegler
Gilbert, Arizona

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New Arrivals

Educare for Parents and Teachers by Dr. Hiramalini Seshadri and Dr. Seshadri Harihar. This volume brings clarity and understanding to the concept of “Educare,” and is a must for parents and teachers interested in preparing children for life, not just making a living. Softcover, 128 pages. BI-123\$3.00

Peddabottu: A Contemporary of Shirdi Sai and Sathya Sai, an autobiographical account of Peddabottu, an ardent devotee of both Shirdi Sai and Sathya Sai Baba. Her incredible story details many of the miracles that took place around her family. Softcover, 342 pages. BI-001\$4.00

Sai Baba and Moksha, by P. P. Arya. This book describes to spiritual seekers how to direct their thinking inward and build an “inner life,” in order to enable them to realize the goal of human life. It describes a certain path of *sadhana* (spiritual practice), as instructed by Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Softcover, 201 pages. BI-128\$4.00

The Hungry Heart: One Woman’s Road to Love, by Judith Wookey, is the author’s first book. She has had many incredible experiences in the presence of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. She describes the progress of her own spiritual journey and the journeys of those around her. Softcover, 54 pages. BI-129\$4.00

CDs

A Bridge Across Time, Volumes 1-4. These four volumes are skillfully sung by the students of Prasanthi Nilayam. Each disk is \$6.00. SCE-130-133 ...\$6.00

Veda (Vedic chants) This CD contains a live recording of the *Vedas* chanted in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan in the Prasanthi Nilayam Mandir. SCE-120\$6.00

Love Eternally This CD is sung by the “Norwalk Sai Youth Chorus” of Connecticut and has many popular English *bhajans*. SCE-92\$9.00

Ocean of Love Sung by the group called *Prema*, this CD has many popular Hindi *bhajans*. SCE-90\$9.00

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