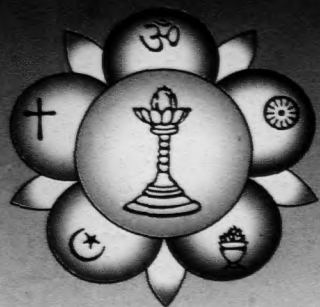




SATHYA SAI NEWSLETTER, USA

Sept. - Oct. 2005

Volume 29 • Number 5



Love

Peace

Truth

Nonviolence

Right Conduct



It is my hope that you will develop your self confidence, strengthen your faith in Divinity and discharge your daily duties in a spirit of absolute surrender. Just as a torch light is superfluous to see the moon, which can be visualized with the aid of its own light, God, the embodiment of Love, is perceived only through Love. Thus, in order to realize Him, we should enrich our hearts with Divine Love.

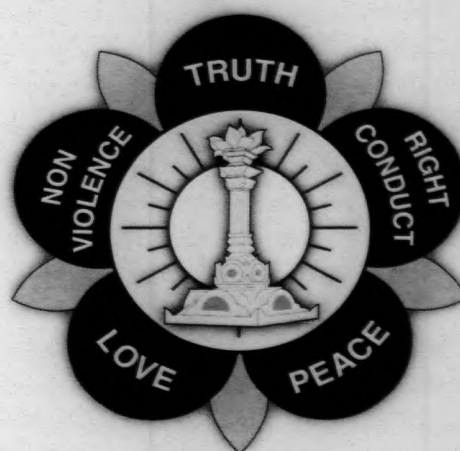
*— Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1979
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Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

*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

My Embodiments of Love!

You are My treasure, even if you deny Me. I am your treasure, even if you say No. I shall be affectionate to you and attach Myself to you; I shall take all the trouble to keep My property safe in My custody, that is to say, in the custody of the Lord—by whichever name you may be calling upon Him.

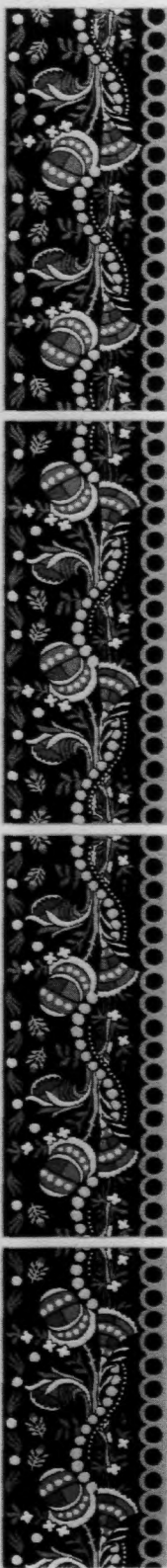


All the powers I have are for you; I am just the store, keeping them ready to be given to you, whenever you ask for them.

I shall give prema (love) even if you do not ask, for it is your right to share in it. There is no one who can change My course or affect My conduct to the slightest extent.

I am the Master over all

—Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Swami in Me

Swami, You came like a flash of lightning
When I called out in pain.
My mortal mind cast seeds of doubt,
Yet You persisted.
Holding me by the hand and guiding me gently,
Ever so lovingly.
The clock turned back. . .
And I was an infant again taking my first tiny steps.
I knew You are there to catch me when I fall
And help me once again to start over all.
Thus, we made our bond,
Never to be severed.

From there on, it was always a ride,
Not so smooth at times, I admit.
You held the reins with a firm hand,
And smiled ever so gently and lovingly.
You gave me knowledge; You gave me wisdom.
You gave me the yearning to seek
You more and more.
You held me close; You held me tight.
I closed my eyes, breathed in deep,
And rode the rough roads,
Bathed in "Sai Love."

—Author Unknown

Unifying and Purifying Thoughts, Words, and Deeds to Achieve Divinity

Seema Dewan sent the following Baba message to me. It has had a deep and lasting impact on my heart. You can find it in a book blessed by Bhagavan entitled *Sai Darshan*. The book is available at the Sathya Sai Book Center of America (address on page 32) or at the bookstore in Prasanthi Nilayam. The whole book reverberates with Baba's words and caused a jolt of energy to stir within me when I read it. With permission, I am sharing this story, so we can learn and practice together. I offer my humble and deepest *pranams* at the lotus feet of our Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, for His 80th Birthday, and always.

—Nazneen Daruwalla, Scottsdale, Arizona

I was researching some of Swami's words on Purity, under the subvalue of Devotion, in the volumes of *Sathya Sai Speaks*, for our study circle on the Unity – Purity – Divinity theme for the 80th birthday of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. I had volunteered to be the facilitator for the Purity part, and thus researched the multitude of volumes on the website from Puttaparthi.

Three hours into my research, I was overwhelmed. I said to Baba, in my mind, "How in the world am I going to separate the Purity part from all this?" Just then, the tune to one of my favorite *bhajans* started to play in my head. It was "Sathya Sai Bhagavan" from the *Sathya Sai English Devotional songs (USA)*, *Path of Love, Volume VI*. I started to sing the lyrics, and in an instant it hit me that the song had all the three aspects of Unity, Purity, and Divinity.

No sooner had I realized that, when I experienced a "mental visualization" of the *Bal Vikas* children at our retreat. I "saw" them as dressed in white, with the little ones holding

Sarva Dharma signs, singing this very same song. Our Memorial Day weekend retreat, called the "Amrit (Nectar of Immortality) Retreat," was scheduled to take place soon. I was excited and puzzled about this vision, and had the idea of approaching one of our *Bal Vikas* teachers for her advice. Just then, the "inner voice" said, "Go through the correct channels."

I stopped, interpreting this to mean that I should contact the SSE (Sai Spiritual Education) Coordinator of our Sathya Sai Baba Center instead of the SSE teacher. I was nervous and reluctant, however, as I had nothing to do with the SSE program and felt I might be perceived as interfering in an area where I had not previously shown any interest. I also thought that the SSE staff probably had their plans well in place for presenting a children's song at the retreat.

It was already April, and Memorial Day, in late May, was fast approaching. Other thoughts entered my mind, trying to dissuade me from listening to the inner voice's

command, yet the voice was stronger and louder than usual. Finally, I could not ignore it any longer.

I called and left a message with the SSE Coordinator, but received no reply, which added to my dilemma. A couple of days later, I tried calling again. It turned out that she had been trying to call me but had the wrong number. I then explained what had happened and made it very clear that I did not want to interfere. Then she confessed to me that she needed a song for the children's program at the retreat and had not yet found one! She thought that maybe Baba intended for me to provide them with a song. She asked me to make a copy of the lyrics and bring them to the next meeting at our Sathya Sai Baba Center. I was so relieved to have carried out Swami's divine command!

Later, I received a call from the SSE Coordinator telling me that the song had been played for all the teachers of all three local Sathya Sai Baba Centers, and that they all had loved it. She even told me that one of the teachers had had a vision of Sai Baba sitting there listening. I was happy, but told her that it was all Baba's *leela* (divine play).

This was a most profound experience of learning to listen inwardly. In this case, I was not thinking or listening for anything. I was just trying to isolate Purity within the subvalue of Devotion—that was it!

Looking back, I see that my mind was trying to decide whether or not to go forward with the inner command. I had a deep urge to ignore all that my mind said and to go forward, no matter what might happen. The way it turned out, I was so relieved to

have followed Baba's command, and I'm now very vigilant in observing what this mind is thinking. Our Lord is always with us; it is up to us to tune into Him.

—Seema Dewan*,
Arizona

The Lyrics of the Song Are as Follows:

You can be sitting at the peak of the Himalayas, and still have a very restless mind. Leaving all, and dressing in an orange robe does not make you a hermit.

A hermit is one who lives among the real world, and is not affected by any of its adversities.

Do your duties, but do not be attached; enjoy your riches by learning to give and share.

Do not be addicted to them.

Learn to live with your physical ailments.

Ignore the pain of the body; concentrate on the ailments of the soul.

Do not be hindered by burdens and suffering.

Know that they are only illusions (that cause you to) stray from your spiritual needs.

Do not respond to the voices of your senses.

Look inward and hear My voice.

Listen to My call, and respond immediately!

*We have altered Ms. Dewan's message slightly so her beautiful story could fit on these pages. —Editor

Your Reality...

Is in Your Own Self—Not Elsewhere

By which power of love does the earth rotate without axle or bearing? By which power of love do the stars remain in the sky without falling to the ground? By which power of love do the oceans confine themselves to their limits without inundating the earth? By which power of love does the wind-god blow cool breezes through all the worlds? That mighty power of love is verily the Atmic (Divine) power. That power of love is most wonderful, unique, and all-pervasive. All of creation is suffused with love. (TELUGU POEM)

Embodiments of Love! Man need not undertake any special *sadhanas* (spiritual exercises) to visualize the all-pervading truth. We call God by different names, such as Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara. These are the names given by man to God, based on some imaginary forms. Who has actually perceived these forms? No one so far.

There is only one power in the world that is all-pervasive. It is the power of love. Only by love are human societies formed. There can be no humanity without divinity. Only when man establishes contact with divinity to some extent can he acquire a little of that divine power, which is omnipotent.

Divine Power Manifests Itself

Embodiments of Love! In fact, all modes of power are immanent in *manavathwa* (humanness) itself. Humanness needs no special agent to vest it with any extra powers. Divine power manifests itself fully in a human being. Human power cannot function without the help of divine power.

There are four *mahavakyas* (major aphorisms) in the *Vedas*, namely: *Tat Twam Asi* (That Thou Art), *Prajnanam Brahma* (Constant Integrated Awareness is Brahman), *Ayam Atma Brahma* (This Atma Itself is Brahman), and *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman, verily). The essence of these *mahavakyas* is further explained in the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Man gets deluded, however, because he is unable to understand the import of these *mahavakyas*. He is not able to realize that divine power is, in fact, in his own self. Divinity in humanity expresses itself as *Shakthi-tattwa* (the Energy Principle).

Today, man strives to acquire various powers and make use of them for relieving himself of sorrows and sufferings. In fact, these sorrows and worries are the stepping stones to divinity. Man should not give too much importance to these worries. If one analyzes the issue carefully, can one find anything in human existence that does not cause worry? Man's life from birth to death

is full of worries. I often quote a poem to illustrate this fact:

To be born is a worry, to be on this earth is a worry. The world is a cause for worry, and death too. All of childhood is a worry, and so is old age. Life is a worry, failure is a worry, all actions and difficulties cause worry; happiness too is a mysterious worry.

(TELUGU POEM)

Embodiments of Love! Some people say they have seen a vision of the Divine in their dreams. Others say they have seen one in meditation. Yet others declare they have seen God through their *jnana methra* (eye of wisdom). Most of these claims are the result of man's delusion; they are not real. Some people claim to have seen God in their dreams.

Where do dreams take place? Where is God? In fact, the dream experience itself is not real. It is only an illusion. People are deluded to think that way. The day man gets rid of delusion, he will acquire divine power. Hence, everyone should wake up from illusion.

Some sit in meditation and think they are contemplating on somebody. Others claim to have seen some radiant light in their meditation. What is meditation? It means *ekagratha* (concentration on the inner vision

of the Omni-Self). It means visualizing a *drisya* (scene) in a state of absolute stillness of the body and a mind free from illusion.

But wherever a man is, there is his mind as well. There is no place in this world without the mind being present. The mind is all-pervasive. It is said that the mind alone is the cause for bondage as well as liberation.

We say we are happy, but where does this happiness come from? Certainly it is not from outside. It wells up from one's own heart. The nature of the mind is *chanchala* (fickleness). This fickleness is in our own nature; it has not come from outside.

All relationships we maintain in the objective world are only illusory. Suppose you marry a girl. From then on, you maintain a husband-and-wife

relationship with her. Prior to the marriage, both of you existed in the world, without being in a relationship. But from the moment of marriage you start to think she is related to you. Thus, it is a mental relationship.

Because of Love

Embodiments of Love! Even *maya* (delusion) is associated with love. You do not find anything in this world that is devoid of love. Love is in everything in this world. All relationships between people in this world



-are established and cultivated on account of love. Then love becomes the cause for the separation of two individuals.

There are several types of *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) in this world; *bhrama sadhana* (emerging of delusion) is one of them. In fact, Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara cannot be visualized in your *sadhana*. What you see in your meditation is only a reflection of your feelings. Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara do not really exist in this world. They are only your imagined forms.

What really exists in the world is humanness. Unable to believe the humanness that is present right in front of your eyes, you contemplate on divine nature, but how can you find it? The names and forms that you attribute to divinity, such as Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara, are not real. They are only a mirage born out of your delusion.

Everything is contained in human beings. You are Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwara, and every conceivable name and form attributed to divinity. When you begin to believe that you are everything, there can be no cause for any kind of worry. When you are able to realize *Aham Brahma, Aham Vishnu, Aham Eashwara* (I am Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara), there will be no scope for any doubt. All these names and forms are products of your own imagination. There is no power greater than humanness in this world.

Embodiments of Love! You say that Swami appeared in your dream last night. This is not correct. I do not appear in anybody's dream. When you intensely desire for Swami to appear in your dream and

You are Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwara, and every conceivable name and form attributed to divinity. When you begin to believe that you are everything, there can be no cause for any kind of worry.

constantly think of the same, that intense desire will assume a form in your dream. God does not assume a form or change into another form.

Some people think that God is angry with them. This presumption is also incorrect. God has neither love toward one nor anger toward another. All these presumptions are of your own making. You attribute anger or other feelings to God. Instead, if you lived in love constantly, you would not see anger in others.

In fact, love is your true form. Man is born out of and brought up with love. Not only human beings, but every living creature experiences love right from its birth. There is no force more powerful than love in this entire world. No power on earth can change love. Do not get deluded by the thought that you have acquired this power and that power. All these are only illusions (*bhrama*). *Bhrama* is not Brahman. Nor can Brahman be equated with *bhrama*.

Realize Your Divine Power

Embodiments of Love! What is meant by *Divyatma*? It means Divine *Atma*. *Atma* is nothing but consciousness, and that consciousness is all-pervasive. You do not find a place where there is no consciousness. Consciousness is omnipotent. There is one aspect to bear in mind in this context: consciousness is active. We are deluded to think that it is static. In fact, the [omnipotence] is within you only [in the form of] *Atma Shakthi* (Atmic Power). We already know that *Atma* is consciousness. Therefore, *Atma Shakthi* is *Chaithanya Shakthi* (the Power of Consciousness). This power is all-pervasive and enables you to witness different forms.

The immense power in humanness is divine in nature. It confers peace and happiness. You may think that divine power is some special power. That is not true. Your own power of contemplation assumes the form of divine power. Therefore, first and foremost, realize your own innate divine nature.

All that is written in books or read by you is not in fact true. There are some kinds of power that are temporary and not eternal. Such transient powers should not delude you.

Reaction, Reflection, Resound

Embodiments of Love! You are learning the *Vedas*. Every sound that emanates from the *Vedas* emerges from the navel only. We experience the sound as emanating from our own navel. Supposing you go to a hill and shout "Oh!" The sound or echo comes

back to you as a resound. Similarly, good and bad emanate from you only. They do not come from somewhere else and then get into you.

For example, suppose you go on repeating loudly a particular sentence taken from a book. After some time, you will know the line by heart, but the memorized sentence is not yours. It is only a resound. All that we experience in the outside world is only a reaction, reflection, and resound of the inner being. We are, however, deluded to think that this reaction, reflection, and resound are real.

Whatever feeling comes out of your heart and takes a shape outside is not the real form; it means [only] that the form has already been conceived by you.

Suppose you imagine a particular form for Lord Rama and then contemplate on that form with your eyes closed. You can visualize the same form as a reflection of your inner thoughts. All that is manifested in the outside world is only the reaction, reflection, and resound of your inner being.

Embodiments of Love! You yourself are Rama, Krishna, Eashwara, and so on. Have the thought that you are Eashwara and contemplate on that form. You will become Eashwara, verily. *Yad bhaavan thad bhavathi* (As you think, so you become). Similarly, think that you are Rama, Krishna, and so on, and you will become Rama and Krishna.

Meditation

These days, people sit in meditation only for developing concentration, not with a view to contemplate on God. People mis-

take concentration for meditation. This is not a correct method. All these exercises are reaction, reflection, and resound. Only you are real; you are the truth. You are able to visualize God only in human form.

You cannot conceive of or visualize anything greater than yourself. You are everything, and everything in creation is immanent in you. Unfortunately, you forget your real nature and imagine something that does not exist. This is the result of delusion, which, in fact, is of your own making. It is only when you come out of this illusion that you will be able to realize Brahman.

Embodiments of Love! Love is the most important factor. If you pray to God with intense love and devotion, your prayers will certainly be answered. Such is the power of love. Devoid of love, nothing can be achieved even in the world. Love is God, live in love! Without love, the whole world becomes a vacuum.

Love alone assumes a form. Realize this truth. You sit in your so-called meditation and try to forget yourself through imaginary experiences. If you forget yourself, how can you visualize the truth? Constantly live in the awareness, "I am God, I am everything, and I am the [one unchanging] reality. All forms are subject to change." For example, an infant at the time of birth will be small in size. Then it will grow into a child, a boy, a youth, and an elder. In all these different stages of life, man alone is the reality. All are one; be alike to everyone. This is the lesson you must try to learn.

If you pray to God with intense love and devotion, your prayers will certainly be answered. Such is the power of love.

No Greater Spiritual Practice

Embodiments of Love! Let the flame of your love be steady, not flickering. There is no greater *sadhana* (spiritual practice) than love. Love is the divine, spiritual practice to adopt. Divinity is omnipresent. You have to realize this omnipresent divinity within yourself. It is present in all the three states of consciousness—namely, the dream, waking, and deep sleep states.

One has to strive to experience that divinity constantly. That [alone] is *Prajnanam Brahma* (Constant Integrated Awareness is Divinity). That [alone] is *Sakshatkara* (Vision of Divinity)—an experience that transcends all the three states of consciousness.

Embodiments of Love! You worship various forms of divinity. However, you cannot afford to forget your own innate divinity. In fact, you ascribe many names and forms to it, but divinity is only One, which is changeless. That changeless, eternal divinity is immanent in you. All external forms and names are like fleeting dreams. Those dreams are not real. Hence, strive to come out of that *bhrama* (delusion). Only when you come out of that *bhrama* will you be able to realize Brahman.

You have witnessed something in your dream. What is it? It is your own Self, nothing other than that. You visualize your own Self in the dream state. Your real nature is love; hence, you manifest your real nature. There are several ideas that you must learn in the future, but what is the future? The future is uncertain; the past is past; only the present is what matters. Both past and future are contained in the present. You alone are present in all three—past, present, and future.

Embodiments of Love! Divine powers and divine manifestations are immanent in human beings; they are not to be sought from elsewhere. By constant *sadhana*, you can realize this truth. Your reality is in your own Self, not elsewhere. In order to visualize that reality, you must direct your vision inward. Reaction, reflection, and resound—all these three exist in your own Self; they are not external.

Suppose you have a brother who has earned good name and fame. Who is he? He is your brother. He represents a particular form. From where did this form come? It came from reality, and reality is his true nature. Thus, a form that manifested from reality deludes us from visualizing reality itself.

That Thou Art

Dear students! If you wish to understand certain ideas more clearly, I will explain in greater detail after some time. The kind of meditation you are doing is not correct. You are keeping one form in your mind and contemplating on that, but where did this form

come from? It is of your own making. You are deluded to think that God is confined only to this form. Thus, right from the beginning you have a deluded belief. Only if you come out of this delusion can you visualize the truth.

Do not ever be under the illusion that God is somewhere in a distant place. You are, in fact, God. Your own form is divine. Your bliss is divine. Your reaction, reflection, and resound are divine in nature. Never deviate from the firm faith that you are God. Always contemplate on one idea: *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman). What is the meaning of the *mahavakya*, *Tat Twam Asi* (That Thou Art)? *Tat* is That. *Twam* is This. Together they become *Asi*. They become One. Thus, all these four *mahavakyas*—*Tat Twam Asi*, *Prajnanam Brahma*, *Ayam Atma Brahma*, and *Aham Brahmasmi*—lead you to the same truth, that you are truly God.

Adi Shankara expounded and explained this great philosophy of *advaita* (nondualism) in ever so many ways and ultimately merged himself in that great truth. Thus, reality is not somewhere in a distant place. It is within you. Your very nature is reality. How can you realize this truth? Only by cultivating pure, selfless, and divine love. Without love, nothing can be achieved in this world. Love is the source and sustenance for the entire universe. Love is God, and God is love.

Embodiments of Love! All of you are embodiments of divinity. Your forms are divine. You and God are one. You are not different from God. Experience this unity. *Ekam Sath* (Truth is One). Unity is Truth.

Unity is Divinity. God is not separate from you. God is manifest in you.

Unfortunately, you forget this truth. If you forget your own nature, it amounts to forgetting everything else. Never forget your reality. Without forgetting that reality, meditate on it. Always remember one fact: Wherever I am, I am always divine. Hold steadfastly to this firm belief. That is the truth contained in the maxim, *Tat Twam Asi*—the inseparable and nondual nature of divinity. Do not be under the illusion that “Rama has appeared in my dream,” “Krishna has appeared in my dream,” or “Swami has appeared in my dream.” This is a sign of ignorance. All these are only dreams. How can a dream be called reality? The very word “dream” explains its nature. As long as you are asleep this experience seems true, but the moment you wake up, the experience vanishes.

Never Forget

Embodiments of Love! Keep your love secure. Never give up love under any circumstances. There is no God other than Love. Love is verily God. Love is your path and goal. Never deviate from the path of love. If you find any difficulty in treading this path, or if you have any doubts to clarify, I am always ready to help you. Try to reduce your doubts, for they will lead you to delusion. Always maintain yourself as firmly established in the truth, *Tat Twam Asi* (That Thou Art; Thou Art That). You are mistaken to think that this form has visualized another form of divinity, for you and God are not separate. Brahman is very much immanent in this

body. *Brahman* (God) and *Aham* (I am) are one and the same. Undertake *sadhana* to realize the oneness of these two. This is the “pathway to God.”

If you wish to meditate on God, never allow your thoughts to be disturbed by worldly objects. Meditate on your own true nature, which is divinity. In that divinity, everything else is contained. If you thus meditate on your own innate divinity, you will realize your unity with divinity. In fact, that unity is divinity.

The four divine maxims—*Tat Twam Asi*, *Prajnanam Brahma*, *Ayam Atma Brahma*, and *Aham Brahmasmi*—are Vedic declarations that emphasize the oneness of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul. They exhort the individual soul to realize this truth. Therefore, you must strive to attain that state of unity. As you gradually progress in that *sadhana*, you will ultimately reach that goal.

Suppose you want to learn the spelling of a word; just think how many times you have to repeat that spelling. In the same way, you must set out [and persevere] on this path of *sadhana*. This is a sacred *sadhana*. If you can understand the true meaning of these *mahavakyas*, you will realize the truth.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

October 25, 2004

The Devotion Coordinator

Ah! The Joys!

The work is hard, the teamwork amazing, the payouts priceless.

What price would you put on:

- the devoted *seva dal** who treks to the market to select the freshest flowers for our Lord
- the loving set-up of the altar, which comes alive with the first *Om*
- the devotee whose prayer was answered when you gave her Swami's bouquet
- the careful thought that goes into choosing the reading for the day
- the balancing act of English versus non-English *bhajans*** to inspire everyone
- the loyal team that handles its devotional duties ever with a radiant smile
- the excitement in a child's face when he hears his favorite *bhajan* sung that night
- the magical flower that falls from Swami's photo halfway through a *bhajan*
- the bliss on a sick devotee's face when we serenade him with *bhajans* at his home
- the playful discussions and learning at the study circle on "hot" topics
- the newcomers' awe at the love and unity the Sai family showers on their first Center visit
- the joyful throbbing in one's hands after playing an instrument nonstop for *akhanda bhajan****
- the absolutely glorious vibrations in the silence after chanting the *Gayatri mantra*
- the little slips of paper Swami takes from your hand with everyone's prayers
- the interview with the speaker that lets one live vicariously with Swami
- the thrill of knowing that one has the responsibility of holding the sign that says:
"This way to God"
- those three little words, *Om Sai Ram*, and their effect on old and young alike,
- and most of all, what price would you put on:
the knowledge that one has actually stumbled into the ideal job with
the highest job satisfaction in the world!

—Harini Narasimhan
Encinitas, California

*service volunteer; **holy songs; ***24-hour continuous singing

"Fake It 'til You Make It"

Swami talks about five human values: Truth, Peace, Love, Right Action, and Nonviolence. I have always felt that love is the central value most important to me.

Unfortunately, I often come up short in my ability to love, not only others, but myself. However, Swami gave me a lesson back around 1985. I was relatively new to Swami but loved being involved in the various activities at the Ojai, California, Sai Baba Center—the devotional singing, study circles, service, *Bal Vikas*, all of it. That is, as long as I could remain in the background.

One day, the selection of new officers was at hand, and I heard that I might be selected for a position. I was scared at the idea. I'd always seen myself as a follower, not a leader, and was happy to have it stay that way. The other problem was that I still had some doubts about Swami. How the heck could I be an officer!?

The night of the selections I paced outside the door of the house where the Sathya Sai Baba Center met, trying to get up the courage to go in and tell everyone that I couldn't be an officer, and that I was also going to drop out of the Center until I ironed out my doubts.

I finally managed to step up and ring the bell. The door was opened by a Sai Center member with an astonished look on her face. She turned to the others and told them that I was there, after which everyone inside started applauding. Now it was my turn to look surprised. I was pulled inside and promptly told

that all the selections had been made and accepted by those chosen, except for the position of president. I had been selected, but they didn't know what to do because I was not present. As it turned out, I had knocked on the door shortly after they selected me. They were applauding the synchronicity.

Amid congratulations and pats on the back, how could I say, "Oh, by the way, I can't do it; I'm leaving the Center because I have doubts." This is what my wife Shelley and I call "a Swami set-up."

I did the only thing I could think to do: I fled to India to seek Swami's help. Of course, Swami pretty much ignored me when I got there, but I had heard that He sometimes makes you "sweat it out" until the last moment, and then comes to the rescue.

Well, it came to that moment. It was the last day of my trip. I got first row in *darshan*. I was desperate for Baba to do something to inspire me.

Sure enough, Swami came walking gracefully, slowly in my direction. My heart was pounding. I psyched myself up to respond when He talked to me as I hoped He would. Fifty feet, 40 feet, 30 feet, 20 feet—then Swami turned and walked back toward the *mandir* (temple). *Darshan* was over!

"Oh no," I thought. "Swami, You can't go back. I can't return to Ojai and be Center president feeling like this!" Swami kept walking. He was halfway up the incline that leads

to the verandah, and I was focusing on a spot right between His shoulder blades, when this thought spontaneously came into my mind: "Swami, I don't know if I really love You, but I'm going to love You anyway."

The very instant I had this thought, Swami stopped, turned around, and started walking back down the incline. "It can't be," I thought. "He can't be responding to my thought. Not with all these other people here."

He reached the sand and then started walking in a diagonal line right toward me. "This can't be happening," I thought. The possibility that He might actually be responding to me frightened and embarrassed me. I was feeling/thinking something like, "You don't really need to do this. I don't deserve it. Please go back." But Swami walked right up to me and stopped. I was stunned into utter silence. I couldn't even look at Him. He was too close!

I did the only thing that came to me. I bent forward and put my hands on His feet. I also felt compelled to put my forehead on His feet and had to scoot back a little to do so. I had touched Swami's feet before, but never felt anything unusual. This time was different.

Once my head was on Swami's feet, all time and space seemed to float away. I lost consciousness of the ashram, of where I was.

I felt as if every empty hole, big and small, of loneliness, disillusionment, disappointment, and unhappiness within my being was filled with peace, contentment, and love. I felt whole for the first time in my life. I could have stayed there forever!

Finally, after a period that was probably

less than a minute, but felt much longer, I felt that it was time to sit up. Swami never said a word to me. He simply turned and

walked back to the *mandir*. I was left stunned, with tears streaming down my face.

I went back to Ojai and served as president for approximately five years. I can't say I did a great job. I know I made many mistakes, but I couldn't have done it at all without that *padnamaskar* (touching of the feet of a holy being).

The lesson was: "Love, even if you don't think you can, for God will respond to your effort and make it real." As my friend Leslie Bouche says, "Fake it 'til you make it."

For all devotees struggling to live up to Swami's teachings, and to love themselves and others more in their daily lives, just try, and keep trying, even if it doesn't feel real. We will make it, because Swami will meet us halfway with His incredible grace.

—John Harrison
Ventura, California

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Reflections on Years of Contact with Swami

I have many great stories to tell, but none are as wonderful as the whole journey. The magic and wonder of His words and actions, as they grow and deepen in my heart, have molded my life.

The first time I saw Sri Sathya Sai Baba, in the physical form, was March 1, 1970. Six months earlier an old friend had played a recording of Swami speaking on the *Bhagavad Gita*. I gathered together my hopes and made the journey to Prasanthi Nilayam. I stayed on with Swami for the next three-and-a-half years. It was an extraordinary time of close proximity and teachings from Baba.

Here are three small stories from the early days that helped form the foundation of the spiritual journey that became my life:

✿ It was *Shivarathri*, 1970. I was only 25 years old, and I was helping happily to clean the grounds of the ashram. As I was working, I looked up and at a distance saw an orange figure. My heart soared with joy—"It's Swami!" On closer observation, I realized that it was a woman dressed in an orange sari.

A voice in my head and heart whispered: *The joy is coming from within. You can feel so much joy just imagining you see Me. You always have the choice to see Me in everyone.*

✿ Many months and some interviews later, I had a passing thought, "Swami has never called me by my name!" That night in a dream, Swami appeared and asked, *What is your name?* I answered, "Michelle." He said, *No, no, Indian name.* "I don't have one, Swami; you have to give me one." Swami replied, *Names are not important, Sir, only shanti (peace)—take it.* I awoke feeling very happy. That afternoon, I was in the garden of Swami's old bungalow in the Brindavan ashram. Swami emerged from the back interview room, and He proceeded to repeat

word-for-word, the entire dream sequence. That experience sparked in me the awareness that Swami is always a part of you, whether you are awake or dreaming. This knowledge has become an essential part of my spiritual journey, and it continues to guide me.

✿ One day, while waiting for *darshan* in Brindavan, a few of us were sitting under the flame trees that line the drive. It was in my mind that Swami had told us that He is our Mother and Father. But it had been a few days since He had spoken to us, and I was mentally complaining to Him, "Some Mother! Ignoring her child!" As I glanced around me, I noticed a mother sitting with her blind child. She held him in her lap, and I had the feeling that she was smothering him with so much attention—that she would, in a sense, make him deaf and mute, too. Then the thought came to me, "See, Swami is not that type of mother. We are all spiritually blind, but He will teach us to be independent and to learn to use all our senses to develop an awareness of our own Godliness."



It may be thirty-five years later, but these experiences, plus many more over the years, along with Swami's other teachings, sustain me and fuel my spiritual growth. Take any of the wonderful words Swami has said to all of us, such as, *I am always in you, around you, above you, and below you*. Make them your own. Only last year, as I was contemplating this quotation, I decided, as a meditation, to conjure up Swami's image standing above me on a stairway. I felt I simply could step into His form. His words took on a grander meaning. *He is always in me, above me, around me, and below me. We can all do this. We can all practice making Swami's words a living reality.*

—Michelle Kaplowitz
Valencia, California

"He is always in me, above me, around me, and below me. We can all do this. We can all practice making Swami's words a living reality."

Divine Love Alone Can Save Us from Sorrows

Face All Difficulties with Courage and Overcome Them

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 by spending all your time from dawn to dusk in acquiring worldly knowledge and earning wealth, while forgetting God. (TELUGU POEM)

Embodiments of Love! Hunger and thirst, pleasure and pain are quite natural to man. One follows the other. Food is essential for man, but filling the belly is not the be-all and end-all of human existence. Man is born not for the sake of *ahara* (food) but to experience *ananda* (divine bliss). One who is oblivious to *ananda* and spends his time and energy in the pursuit of *ahara* will ultimately fritter away his life. The purpose of celebrating festivals is to experience bliss and not merely to partake of delicious food. No doubt the body requires food, but life is not meant for food alone. Unmindful of this truth, man treads the path of unrighteousness for the sake of food and physical pleasures.

The body is made up of five elements and is transitory. The mind is a mere bundle of thoughts and desires. We should not be unduly attached to the body or the mind. We should strive to experience bliss.

Embodiments of Love! The human body has emerged out of love. Hence, we should

lead a life for divine love and not [merely] for food. Man has not understood this truth. He struggles hard from dawn to dusk for the sake of filling his belly. He fails to utilize the gift of the body for its assigned purpose. The body is a den of dirt and prone to diseases; it is subject to change over time. How foolish it is to develop attachment to this impermanent body and strive for its pleasures.

Aspire Only for God

Embodiments of Love! We should lead our lives in such a way as to redeem ourselves. We should love God and aspire only for Him. Our love should be directed only toward God, not the body. Our speech, actions, and the life-breath itself are meant for experiencing the *Atma* (Indwelling Divinity). At times the body may be afflicted with ailments, but these are like passing clouds. Man is born for attaining the eternal truth of the *Atma*. Life is meant for *Atma-anveshana* (quest for the *Atma*) and not for *anna-anveshana* (quest for food). *Anna-anveshana* gives rise to physical

ailments, which come and go like passing clouds. How foolish it is to be depressed about such passing clouds! We should never forget the truth—that we are born to experience the eternal bliss of *Atma*.

Embodiments of Love! You have come here all the way from Kerala to celebrate the holy festival of *Onam* and experience joy and bliss in the Divine Presence of Swami. We should not allow trivial matters to dampen our spirit of enthusiasm. We should march forward with courage and conviction, unmindful of any hurdles and inconveniences along the way.

A few moments ago, when all of you were blissfully immersed in the celebration, all of a sudden my nose started bleeding. I went inside, wiped away the blood, and came out cheerfully as if nothing had happened. How can we discontinue the celebration of a sacred festival of this kind on account of such trivial matters? We should not lose our self-confidence over such minor physical discomforts. They are transient in nature; we should not get distracted by them. Ailments and suffering are but natural to the physical body.

Sometimes even the sun is covered by clouds, but can the clouds ever diminish the effulgence of the sun? No. Just as the sun is not affected by the clouds, you too should remain unaffected by ailments and suffering. When you develop such courage, conviction, and determination, you will not be depressed or dejected by any suffering.

Face Life with Courage

Embodiments of Love! We should sanctify our time by performing sacred actions. This is the spiritual lesson we must learn. We can experience transcendental bliss only when we overcome the difficulties and suffering that come our way. Never be afraid of difficulties; face them with courage. Only then will humanness blossom in you. Once you experience the bliss of the *Atma*, difficulties and suffering will no longer bother you.

Embodiments of Love! Amidst the joyous celebration of this festival, my slight physical discomfort has caused you anxiety. You should never give scope for anxiety or worry. In order to allay your fears and anxiety and to give you joy, I came back immediately. In this world, many difficulties come our way. Truly speaking, they merely cause anxiety; they cannot harm you.

Onam is the most sacred festival of Kerala. You have to understand the significance and message of this festival and put it into practice. *Onam* is an occasion to share joy with others. You cannot experience happiness without undergoing difficulties. One cannot derive happiness out of happiness. Happiness gains value in the face of difficulties. Even insurmountable difficulties will vanish into thin air when you face them with courage and self-confidence.

Problems may appear to be mountainous in nature, but you should not give scope for fear or anxiety in your mind. The mind is like a mad monkey. It gets swayed easily by difficulties. Hence, you should brush aside

the difficulties that come your way and never allow them to get the upper hand.

Mind is the veil of *maya* (illusion), which stands as an obstacle in your path to spiritual realization. You should not become a slave of the mind; you should conquer the mind. Only then can you attain Divinity. You are carried away by the vagaries of the mind, which are nothing but *maya*. You should ignore the dictates of the mind. You consider the mind to be your most important aspect. However, it can lead you to dangers and difficulties if you get carried away

by its whims and fancies. Hence, do not submit yourself to the mind.

Embodiments of Love! One who has control over the mind is a true *manishi* (human being). One who lacks control over the mind is not human at all. How can you call yourself a human being if you are fickle-minded and become depressed over trivial problems? You should make efforts to overcome all problems posed by the mind without being unduly worried about them.

In this world, there is nothing greater than God's love. Hence, we should transcend the mind, which stands as an obstacle in the Godward path.

Withstand Problems and Suffering

Embodiments of Love! You are born out of love and sustained by love. Therefore you must sanctify your life by leading a life

suffused with love. Treat love as the very basis of your life. You are not fit to be called a human being if you submit yourself to trivial problems. Even tiny ants are able to overcome obstacles that stand in their way. Problems are not limited to human beings alone; even birds, beasts, and insects have problems.



*Even insurmountable difficulties
will vanish into thin air when you
face them with courage and self-
confidence*

Saint Thyagaraja sang, "Oh Rama, You pervade everything, right from a cheema (ant) to Brahma. You are in Shiva and also in Keshava. Please take care of me." (TELUGU POEM)

The same divinity that is present in an ant is also present in man. Likewise, difficulties are common for all. The suffering that an ant undergoes is similar to that of man. When a tiny creature like an ant can withstand suffering, why can't man do the same? Man is influenced by his food and habits and thus becomes a slave to his mind. That is the reason he is unable to withstand suffering. We should face the challenges of life with fortitude and brush aside its difficulties. Never be cowed by difficulties. You can attain God only when you face all difficulties with courage and overcome them.

Focus the Mind on God

Embodiments of Love! You should not seek anything other than Divine Love. There is nothing superior to love in this world. You consider gold, silver, and diamonds as most

valuable. In fact, all these so-called valuable things are meant to delude man. We should not have a care for such worldly possessions. Instead, we should focus our mind on God. Perform your daily activities, keeping God as your goal. Only then will your human birth find fulfillment.

We should strive to attain the grace of God and not be deterred by difficulties and losses. When you have God on your side, you can achieve anything. All your difficulties and suffering will vanish in an instant. When Omnipotent Divinity is within us, why should we be worried about trivial matters?

Love is the divine power that bestows on us the courage to overcome difficulties. Anything can be achieved with the power of love. We should be afraid of sin, and not of difficulties. We have to develop *daiva preeti*, *papa bheeti*, and *sangha neeti* (fear of sin, love for God, and morality in society). Instead of developing fear of sin, we get enslaved by sin. Instead of seeking refuge in God, we submit ourselves to difficulties. Morality in society will lead to love of God, which will in turn lead to fear of sin. Hence, we should uphold morality in society and dedicate ourselves to God.

Thyagaraja once prayed, "Oh! Lord, I am deeply concerned about the fear of sin. I am unable to surrender to Your love. Please grant me the strength of conviction to bow

down before Your Divine Love. Please give me the strength to overcome the fear of difficulties."

What have we achieved in our life? What is the purpose of constant contemplation of God? One who constantly contemplates on God should be able to keep himself away from sinful acts and develop love for God. There can be no greater fortune than having love for God. One must strive to achieve that great treasure. One should not be deterred by sorrows and difficulties in such a *sadhana* (spiritual exercise).

Embodiments of Love! You have all gathered here to attain that great fortune—love for God. You should never be subdued by sorrows and difficulties. Sorrow and sin are obstacles in the path of spirituality. They are like waves. When you get into the water and try to swim, the surging waves must be pushed aside in order to move forward. Similarly, in the stream of life, if you want to move forward, you must push aside the surging waves of sorrow and sin.

What Is Personality?

From childhood to adulthood, everyone has to strive to attain the love of God. This struggle for God's love molds the personality of a human being. What is meant by personality? Does it mean height, weight, and a strong body? No, it is a mistake to think so. Undeterred by sorrows and difficulties, one



Morality in society will lead to love of God, which will in turn lead to fear of sin. Hence, we should uphold morality in society and dedicate ourselves to God.

has to march forward with courage and [a sense of] adventure to attain God's love. That is the real meaning of personality. In fact, God has already granted such a personality to every human being. Unfortunately, we fail to realize this truth.

The word "person" implies the great divine force that is granted by God to man.

Our ancestors called this divine force *persona*. It is a great gift of God, granted to every individual, but we find ourselves unable to safeguard this great treasure. All sorrows and difficulties are like passing clouds

that come and go. Why should we be afraid of them? We have the Eternal Divine Principle immanent in our personality. Therefore, we have no need at all to be afraid of anything as long as we are constantly aware of our latent Divinity. March forward with courage and conviction and achieve your life's goal. It is only to instill this feeling of courage in you and to reinforce your faith in God that you are subjected to certain anxious moments.

Embodiments of Love! I am aware that you are most anxious about the physical discomfort that Swami underwent a few moments ago. You are unduly worried about this physical body. Understand and be convinced by the fact that a body is, after all, [only] physical in nature. It is like a water bubble, and the mind is like a mad monkey. You need not be afraid of the mad monkey. You should not worry about any passing

clouds. They are like visitors who come and go. [Instead,] be firmly established in the *Atma Tattwa* (Principle of the *Atma*), which is nothing but Divinity. Develop full faith in the *Atma Tattwa*. That alone will protect you in every way.

Embodiments of Love! God can do anything by His Divine Will. Why should

you fear when the all-powerful God is always with you, in you, and around you? Develop such courage and conviction and march on. There cannot be a more powerful force in this world than faith in God.



*Why should you fear when
the all-powerful God is always
with you, in you, and around
you? Develop such courage and
conviction and march on.*

The Innocence of Children

Embodiments of Love! All these children have gathered here to spend some sacred moments in the Divine Presence of God. They are really fortunate. Their good fortune is the result of the merit acquired by their parents. Here is a small girl (pointing toward a girl). She participated in a group dance program a short while ago. While doing so, she continually watched the steps made by other girls in the group. She developed so much concentration in this activity that she constantly maintained her steps in tune with the steps of the other girls. (Swami created a gold chain and placed it around the girl's neck.)

Embodiments of Love! I will be most happy if all of you can become like children once again. A child will never have the bad

qualities of anger, passion, jealousy, conceit, and ego. Jesus Christ was always appreciative of the quality of innocence in children. Once He lifted a small child from the lap of her mother in the crowd and said, "I like this small child very much; she has all the qualities of Divinity. She is pure, selfless, and is in perfect bliss."

Children in general are divine in nature. As they grow up, they develop bad qualities, such as excessive desires, attachments, anger, and jealousy. Along with advances in age, sorrows and difficulties

also increase; therefore, strive [now] to attain control over your desires. That is, place a ceiling on desires. If you can develop this control, you will come under the influence of divine power. Otherwise, you will be deluded by the power of desires and get sucked into that vortex, from which you can never escape. A childlike simplicity, purity, and innocence is the road to Divinity.

Embodiments of Love! I would like you to be as innocent children at least for one minute a day. You should emulate the noble qualities that are characteristic of children. Suppose you are troubled with desires; chase them away as unbecoming of your noble personality. Only then can you hold your head high.

Exercise Self-Control

A few minutes ago, my nose began bleeding profusely. If I were to submit myself helplessly to the bodily ailment, it would have become aggravated further. Therefore, I decided to defy this bodily discomfort and stand erect with firmness, unmindful of

what would happen to the body. I washed my face and came back to give this discourse. After all, this body and the blood circulating therein are nourished and nurtured only by the food we supply. If we

cannot control our own body, what is the purpose of our living? Wherever we are, we must keep the body under our control. Only then do we become real human beings and move closer to Divinity. The more you control your body and mind, the nearer you move to God.

In fact, love is the only quality that takes you nearer to God. There is nothing greater than love. It is a divine attribute. Love is God. Live in Love. When you cultivate this noble quality, you deserve to be called a human being. This divine love is like the blood that circulates in every human being, nay, every living being. If you can cultivate this universal love, you can love not only every human being, but all living beings. Love is God and God is love. Therefore, take every individual lovingly to your heart. Never show anger or hatred toward anybody.



*Love is God. Live in Love. When
you cultivate this noble quality,
you deserve to be called a human
being.*

The Message of *Onam* Is Love

Embodiments of Love! The quality of love that permeates every human being is one and the same. There are no differences whatsoever in this regard. When you cultivate universal love, it becomes your very life-breath, which is dear to God. Therefore, cultivate only pure, unsullied, and selfless love. Love your neighbor's child as your own child. All are embodiments of love. The message of this sacred festival *Onam* is love. Its purpose is to spread the message of love among all human beings. In fact, the purpose of birth is to cultivate sacred love and share it with others. If we fail in this endeavor, our entire life becomes a waste.

While my nose was bleeding a few minutes ago, the doctors advised me to take complete rest and not give a discourse. I asked them why? The doctors explained that if I went on speaking, the bleeding could reoccur. Then I replied, "Okay! Let me see!" In this way I faced the problem squarely with courage and confidence. Thus, when we encounter a difficult situation, we should not feel sorry and dejected. We must face it with courage. Only then can we overcome the situation.

Embodiments of Love! Whenever you encounter suffering, either bodily or mentally, do not lose your cool. Do not get dejected. Instead, face the problem squarely and undertake activities that will instill a sense of courage and confidence in you. Have no doubt; situations do arise in life when we must undergo sorrows and difficulties.

Express Gratitude, Love, and Courage

When our loving parents depart from this world, we are in deep sorrow. Instead of losing our poise in such difficult situations, it is advisable to face the ordeal with courage and express gratitude to our parents for granting us the gift of the body.

Embodiments of Love! I hope I am not causing you any inconvenience by speaking at length. It is only to instill courage in you that I am giving this long discourse. While my nose was bleeding, all our children were waiting anxiously in the next room. I told them, "Do not feel worried. I will go out and administer a strong dose [of divine medicine] for this ailment. Such is my courage and confidence in facing difficult situations. In fact, this courage is my real strength. Come! Let's go!"

The children collected all the blood-soaked towels and felt very distressed upon seeing them. If they are washed, the blood stains will vanish in no time. Likewise, only God's love can wash our sorrows away! Therefore, cultivate Divine Love. Thereby all your sorrows and difficulties will be removed.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Onam, August 28, 2004

In every one of your spiritual endeavors, you must make the resolution, "This I MUST achieve; this virtue I SHALL acquire." This is the way to love and forbearance. If you proceed in this manner with unshakeable faith and idealism, then without any doubt, your life will be fully redeemed. All your actions and feelings must be dripping with forbearance, love, and compassion. Love knows no hatred and is totally free from desires. Thus God is said to be love personified. Forbearance will grow if you have unshakeable faith in God. Once you have learned to be infinitely patient, love will walk in almost immediately. Love combined with forbearance is the surest way to fulfilment.



—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
May 25, 2000

Summer Showers in Brindavan 2000

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Children's Corner

The Cup of Diamonds

There was a good and generous little girl who lived in a country where there was a terrible drought. All the rivers were dry, and people were dying of thirst. She went into the woods, taking a little cup with her.

There she prayed fervently to God, asking Him to fill the cup with water for her mother who was ill. After her prayer she fell asleep, and when she woke-up . . . what did she see? Her cup was filled with dewdrops!

While she ran home, she stopped to give a few dewdrops to a poor, gasping dog who lay dying on the roadside. Immediately the cup changed into silver! The little girl was very surprised. On arriving at her mother's bedside, she offered it to her, but the good woman refused to drink.

"I am dying, my dear child," she said. "Give it to those who will live!" As the good mother gave back the silver cup . . .





. . . it then changed into gold! So the little girl took the cup to share its contents with everyone in the house.

A thirsty stranger happened to appear on the threshold at that very moment. He needed to drink. Immediately the

little girl offered him the gold cup and lo! . . . it became encrusted with beautiful, sparkling diamonds. A stream of water started to flow from it, and the water restored all the earth.

The results of generous actions shine
through the course of time
and quench the thirst of the needy.

In this world we reap what we sow;
we are forgiven according to how we forgive.
As we go along our way, we create our future
by the way we live.

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

We Ask, Swami Answers

Sathya Sai Baba's Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

On Service

Q

What exactly is service? Is it the way in which devotion manifests itself, a consequence of devotion? Or is it the cause of devotion, one of the methods by which devotion is expressed and developed?

Baba: It is neither. It is not an element of devotion, nor is it the result. It is the very essence of devotion, the very breath of a devotee, and his or her very nature. It springs from the actual experience of the devotee—an experience that convinces him or her that all beings are God's children, that all bodies are altars where God is installed, and that all places are His residences.

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. V

Q

What is the advantage of working on service projects as a group?

Baba: What a single individual cannot accomplish, a well-knit group or society can achieve. A man walking alone will feel tired and miserable at the end of five miles, but if he is walking with ten other people, the five miles will become a happy jaunt. He arrives refreshed and strong. You will find that social living contributes to increased happiness and more efficient effort—even among birds and beasts.

—Sanathana Sarathi, December, 1981

Q

What qualifications must I have before volunteering for a particular service project?

Baba: You must have not merely enthusiasm, but also the intelligence and skill to serve; only then can you be efficient and useful. Enthusiasm without efficiency is often a source of loss and grief.

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. V

Q

When working with the Sathya Sai Baba Center, should I do only the types of service or other activities that appeal to me?

Baba: When you have the goal in view, wherever you are, it will fill you with genuine joy. Do not try to do activities that give you only sensual or temporary satisfaction. Do not crave to do what you like, but train yourself to like what you do or what you have to do. Any work you willingly undertake that promotes your real welfare is a spiritual discipline.

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VII

Q

What attitude must I have to make my activities unselfish?

Baba: *The tonic of unselfish service is . . . : Do not serve for the sake of reward, attracting attention, or earning gratitude—or from a sense of pride at your own superiority in skill, wealth, status, or authority. Serve because love urges you to do so. When you succeed, ascribe the success to the grace of God, who urged you on in the form of the love within you. When you fail, ascribe the failure to your own inadequacy, insincerity, or ignorance. Examine the springs of action, and disinfect all traces of ego from them. Do not throw any blame on the recipients of your service, or on your collaborators, coworkers, or God.*

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. VII

Q

What about devotees who start doing service with some reward or attachment in mind?

Baba: *Let them work for the good of others. Of course, they will not be able to do such service in a detached way at first, but that does not matter. Let them continue this practice of doing unselfish work. That will purify their mind. When they have sufficiently purified their mind and filled their heart with selfless love, they will intuitively feel the existence of God and develop a longing to realize Him.*

—Golden Age, 1980

Q

What attitude do I need to develop to participate in Sai service activities?

Baba: *You have to uproot the egoistic tendency, get rid of all sense of “mine” and “thine,” and burn into ashes the pride coming from the feeling that you are offering service to someone poorer and less fortunate. Do such deeds as are holy and beneficial, untarnished by ego and greed.*

You have to win purity of heart. Examine your motives and skills, your intentions and qualifications, and discover for yourself what you hope to achieve through the service that you offer.

Watch for the Divinity latent in each person. Pay attention to the One that is the truth of the many. God is omnipresent, the inner motivator of all beings. He is ever present, everywhere—in our inner realms as well as in the realms around us. Every [Sathya Sai Baba] Center member must believe firmly in this fundamental truth, and realizing that truth, he or she must be humble and full of reverence toward all. Center members who shine in the splendor of the faith that ‘God is in themselves as well as equally so in all’ can transform their family, their neighbors, the society in which they live, and their entire country.

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. X

Q

In what way and spirit should I do service?

Baba: *Service to cattle, beasts, and humans are laudable spiritual disciplines. Keeping the environment of your residence clean, providing help to those who live nearby, going to hospitals and serving as far as possible the patients in the wards—Sai Center members must take an active part in such acts of service. You should keep God in your mind as the pacesetter, whether you are serving patients in a hospital or clearing a drain in the marketplace. Such austerities are the highest form of spiritual discipline. You can win more bliss by serving others than by merely serving yourself. Wholeheartedly offer service to anyone in need, and experience the bliss that results.*

Every one of you must become a servant, eager to give help to those who need it. When the helper becomes the leader, the world will prosper. Only a servant can grow into a master. Of course, you have to totally eliminate the ego. Service helps you to remove the ego. So do not pay heed to what others might say when you engage in service activities. Let compassion and sacrifice be your two eyes; let egolessness be your breath, and love, your tongue. Let peace reverberate in your ears. These are the five vital elements your life should thrive upon. God will not ask you what service you did. He will ask with what motive you did it. What was the intention that prompted it?

—Sanathana Sarathi, December, 1981

Q

What necessary qualities do I need to be involved in service activities?

Baba: *You have to serve people with special love and care. Do not go about strutting with pride that you are engaged in service. Go humbly among people with love in your heart, softness in your speech, and sweetness in your acts. Only a “servant” is entitled to wear a badge, not a “master” lording over others. If your heart is filled with pride and a sense of superiority over others who have no badge on their chest, then your heart itself will be affected by the evil aroused by this decoration. ...*

The badge is a call and a challenge for you to provide comfort and consolation to those in need, to seek out the means and methods to increase the ways you can help others, and to contribute to others’ joy. Remember, with each act of love and service, you are nearing the Divine Presence; with each act of hate and greed, you move further away.

The ideal of service must inspire those in authority, those who possess riches, and those who are endowed with skills, intelligence, leisure, and health to serve the community; then it will serve you. Exploit it, and it will exterminate you. Put an end to laziness; bury your clamorous ego; bury the greed for power and wealth. Then you will have the qualifications necessary to do service and maintain the high ideals of the Sathya Sai Baba service organization.

—Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol, IX

Q

Why must devotees participate in community work? What is its importance and aim?

Baba: Neither performance of austerities, nor pilgrimage to all holy places, nor study of all moral codes, nor immersion in repeating a holy name will ever help you cross the ocean of samsara (cycle of birth and death). The only path that will help you to be liberated from the birth-death cycle is dedicating yourself to the service of others. Human birth is most sacred indeed. Nothing is nobler than using this life to serve others and help the needy.



Q

If I perform all the duties assigned to me by the leaders and coordinators of my Sathya Sai Baba Center, am I doing enough spiritual discipline?

Baba: Let Me tell you that mere execution of duties enjoined on you as a member cannot be

recognized as devotion or as acts of dedication. Duty done without love is deplorable; duty done with love is desirable. However, acts of love that emanate from a person because it is in his or her nature to do them, and not because someone has imposed them on him or her as a duty to fulfill, make that person truly divine.

—Sanathana Sarathi,
January, 1976

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Faith is a cardinal virtue, and faith in God is a prop in life. Though God dwells in everybody, unless one has faith in God, he cannot become divine. Some people might say that they will believe only after they experience. But that is like putting the cart before the horse. In spirituality, faith always precedes experience.

*— Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1979
Pages 175*

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