

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

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



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—Barbara Bozzani, Editor

Sai's Message



You may complain that God is heartless and does not respond to your prayers, give signs from His pictures, or speak from 'nowhere' in clear, unambiguous terms, to assuage, assure, and advise. But let Me tell you, God is Love; Love is God. When even a

stony cliff echoes your voice and responds when you cry, will not the sweetest, love-filled heart of God respond?

When there is no response, infer that there was something wanting in the cry. Perhaps it was hollow, insincere, mere play-acting, set to a pattern, or addressed to a Being seen as separate from oneself—a Being seen as distant, a tyrant or taskmaster. Know that God is the One who is nearest and dearest to you, as dear and near as your own heart. Know this, when you pray to Him, and His answers will be vouchsafed immediately.

—Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba
Discourse of October 18, 1969

Bhagavan's 80th Birthday Messages

The following summary by Dr. Narendranath Reddy received praise from Swami Himself and captures the essence of Bhagavan's discourses during the 80th Birthday events of November 19-22, 2005.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has said, *Start the day with Love, Spend the day with Love, Fill the day with Love, End the day with Love: This is the way to God.* If we begin our spiritual journey guided by His Words, adhering to His Words in all aspects of our human lives, selflessly loving and selflessly serving as taught by Him, then surely we will fulfill the Divine Destiny that belongs to each and every one of us.

Let us contemplate the Divine Messages of our Beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba that He so graciously gave to us during the period of the 80th Birthday Celebrations and the 8th World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Organizations.

November 19, 2005

1. Unity in Diversity

We distinguish and differentiate between ladies and gents on the basis of *upadhi* (mode of dress) or physical form. However, the principle of *Brahman* (God) present in ladies and gents is one and the same. *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma* (verily all this is God). God transcends names, forms, and attributes. He is infinite and not limited to a particular form.

2. Avatar

In response to the prayers of sages and seers, God comes down in human form. He strives for the welfare of humanity and bestows joy on one and all. One has to develop inward vision in order to experience Him.

3. God as Director and Actor

Easwara sarva bhutanam (God is the indweller of all beings). In this cosmic drama, God alone is the director and also the actor. He dons all the roles, such as mother, father, husband, wife, daughter, son, and so on.

4. GOD is ALL

Whatever you see around you is also the manifestation of God. Even the small birds that you see here are endowed with the Principle of Divinity. There is no place that is not pervaded with Divinity. There is no form that is not Divine.

5. Accept God's Will

Whatever may happen, accept it wholeheartedly as the Will of God. Have firm faith that it is God and God alone who is

the Doer. Do not consider your fellow human beings as mere individuals. When you talk to someone, think that you are talking to God. When you do not see God in others and treat them as your own, you will be giving room to evil qualities like anger, jealousy, hatred, etc. Develop the spirit of oneness. Only then will your life be redeemed.

6. Selfless Desire

Whenever anyone expresses a truly selfless desire, Swami will surely fulfill it. Mother Easwaramma is an example of this. She prayed to have a primary school in Puttaparthi, which was fulfilled as a complex of educational institutions ranging from a primary school to a prestigious university. She wanted a small clinic for patients, and now there are full-fledged Super-Specialty Hospitals. She asked for a drinking water well for the village; now there is a mammoth project providing free drinking water to thousands of villages. One attains merit by helping others and commits sin by hurting them. Help ever, hurt never. Hence, always strive to help everybody. Selfishness is an evil. Fish is better than “selfish.”

7. Totally Depend on God and See God Everywhere

If you depend on God, He will turn the minds of people in your favor. God is everything. Victory is secured only when you depend totally on God’s grace. Here again your prayers to God should not be for selfish reasons. Wherever you look, God is present. From stars to hillocks, from insects to elephants, everything is pervaded by

Brahman. Fill your heart with such divine feelings.

8. Live in Love

Love is God. Live in love. Love should not be tainted with the narrow feelings of “I” and “mine.” Do not do unto others what you do not want others to do unto you. Consider love as your very life-breath. Grow in love. Be broadminded and share your love with everybody. This is what I call “expansion love” as contrasted with “contraction love.”

.....
*Whenever anyone expresses a truly
selfless desire, Swami will surely
fulfill it.*
.....

November 22, 2005

Educare

1. Purpose of Education

There is a purpose and goal for education—that is, truth. In fact, spiritual education is the only true education, which recognizes the existence of God everywhere. The end of education is character. Devoid of character, all other possessions are useless. Unfortunately today, character-building has been relegated to the background. Modern education may help one to gain control over men and matters, but it utterly fails in uplifting one’s own self. Harmony between thought, word, and deed is of utmost importance. Education should enable one to cultivate good qualities, character, and

devotion. When there is unity between thought, word, and deed, one can acquire purity and realize divinity.

Modern education is totally self-centered. Wherever you look, selfishness is rampant. Contrary to this [trend], true education teaches selflessness. Truth and righteousness form the foundation for character. As the saying goes, *Sathyannasti paro dharma* (There is no righteousness greater than adherence to truth). The mansion of righteousness rests on the foundation of truth.

2. How to Gain Peace

When truth and righteousness go together, love manifests itself. There can be no peace without truth, righteousness, and love. If only one has peace of mind, one can be happy in the world and will have no troubles at all. Peace is something that cannot be purchased in a market. It depends upon one's attitude to life and living. Hence one has to cultivate *Ekatma Bhava* (the feeling of oneness). If this *Ekatma Bhava* is developed, one can move about freely in the world without attachment to any particular individual or object.



The entire world is sustained by the twin principles of truth and love. These are present in everyone. I am the truth that is present in all. I am the love that is present in all.

3. People, Places, and Things

Man's behavior is influenced by *sthana-bala* (the power of a place) and association with people, as well as the company of books. One's association with a particular place has an effect on one's behavior. Youngsters often move in bad company and cultivate bad

qualities. This is not correct. They should always seek friendship with good people and emulate their qualities. Likewise, one must read good books that will bring about a transformation of the heart and uplift the soul. You often find youngsters going to the library and engaged in deep study, but what sort of books are they studying? They read bad

books camouflaged inside good covers.

4. Real Guru

Love all. In fact, love is the most important aspect of education. One who teaches the method by which man can cultivate selfless and universal love is the real *guru* (teacher).

November 23, 2005

1. Equanimity

Human birth is meant for attaining peace and not for occupying positions of authority. One may have all types of wealth and comforts, but bereft of peace, life itself has no meaning. Everyone has to experience ups and downs in life, but these are like passing clouds. Difficulties are a part of life. No one can escape them. Hence, one has to treat happiness and sorrow with equanimity. There is pleasure in pain and vice-versa. One should not be elated by pleasure nor depressed by pain. We have to develop the spirit of equanimity in order to progress in life.

2. “Who Am I”

How can one attain peace of mind? It is possible only when one realizes his innate divinity. Why are we not able to experience peace? Where does the mistake lie? We go around inquiring of others, “Who are you?” without making any effort to inquire into ourselves, “Who am I?” Therein lies the mistake. Once we realize who we really are, we will be free from sorrows and difficulties forever. Hence, first and foremost, we should make efforts to realize our true identity. What is the use of knowing everything without being aware of the Self?

3. Live in Atmic Awareness

Lord Vishnu told the great sage Narada, “I have to assume the form of a human in order to move among men and protect

the world. I am present in everyone in the form of *Atma* (inner divinity). When man constantly contemplates on the principle of *Atma*, I manifest Myself to him.”

The same divine principle of *Atma* is present in all. One who realizes this truth experiences the All-Pervasive Divinity. You are God, and your fellow human being is also God. Develop this principle of oneness and equality.

Who are you? You think you are the body, but you are neither the body nor the mind. The human body is like a water bubble, and the mind is like a mad monkey. Mind is nothing but a bundle of desires. One day or another you must give up all desires; hence do not identify yourself with the mind. Give up body consciousness and live in the constant awareness that you are God. There is no point in merely worshiping idols if you do not realize your innate divinity. Everyone must respect and revere the principle of the *Atma* within.

4. Give Up Desires

You are deluded because of your materialistic outlook. You have to change your vision. Do not expect God to change creation. He has given you everything in its pristine form, but you are polluting it because of your selfish desires. Your heart is naturally pure and sacred, but you are deluded by the clouds of desires. Just as the sun and the moon are not visible to us when they are covered by the clouds, we are unable to visualize our reality because of our desires. Man is ruining his life because of his bad habits. He should lead a life of righteousness.

Do not give undue importance to food and drink. Consider character as your very life-breath. If you lack character, you will have to face innumerable difficulties in life. You should contemplate one name and one form till your last breath, without changing directions like a weathervane. You should remain unperturbed by difficulties and lead a spiritual life.

5. Pray Only for Divine Love

Everything is in My Hand. I can give you whatever you ask for; however, do not crave for materialistic things from Me. Such things are transient like passing clouds. Ask instead for that which is eternal. The entire world is sustained by the twin principles of

truth and love. These are present in everyone. I am the truth that is present in all. I am the love that is present in all. Truth and love are all-pervasive. You may forget anything in life but not truth and love. Bereft of truth and love, one does not deserve to be called a human being at all! Having traveled here and listened to My message, you should practice truth and love in your daily life. Only that will make Me very happy.

Consider whatever work you do as God's work. See God everywhere. I will be happy when you develop such divine feelings.

—**Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

Summarized by Dr. Narendranath Reddy of
Arcadia, California,
Member, Prasanthi Council

From "Report on the 8th World Conference of the International Sri Sathya Sai Organizations." The full Report on the 8th World Conference is available online at <http://www.sathyasai.org/organize/conferences/8thWorldConference.pdf>.



*You are God, and your fellow human being is also God.
Develop this principle of oneness and equality.*

Invitations to the Lord

...to Visit America

Thank you to all who have thus far submitted your loving and heartfelt invitations—which we are still receiving.

INVITATION

Dearest Beloved Lord and our most Loving and Compassionate Sai Ma,

We humbly offer our *pranams* (humble salutations) at Your Divine Lotus Feet. With Your grace we have been blessed many times to receive Your *darshan* (sight of a holy being) in Puttaparthi and Whitefield. You have often assured us that You are always with us, but dearest Mother, our hearts long to have You visit the home You have blessed us with. The rooms also echo our tears as we miss Your physical presence. Today along with millions of devotees who are sending you daily prayers, we join and sincerely pray that You will soon visit the United States and this beautiful paradise called St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Your devotees long for the aroma of Your Divine Presence here.

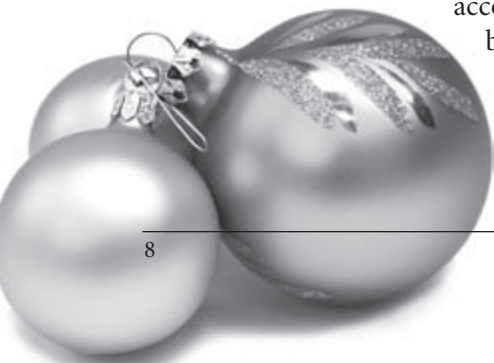
Beloved Bhagavan, no home is a home without the presence of the mother. Therefore, our Divine Mother, please accept this humble prayer of ours in this lifetime and fill our hearts with joy by bringing Your physical presence to the United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We promise that we will make Your stay and the stay of those who you bring with You very comfortable. Thank You, Dearest Ma.

Your loving children,
—**Lal & Jaishree Sakhrani**
St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

Our dearest, loving, and respected Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba,

We wish that You and Your devotees would come to the United States of America, which is just another room of Your mansion, THE WORLD. Your visit would mean so much to many who cannot travel to India and others who long for your darshan. We send our sincere prayers to You that this journey will become a reality. Those fortunate devotees who travel with You will be equally welcome in our homes and hearts. We look forward to accommodating and serving You and your devotees. That would be the greatest pleasure of our lives—of many lifetimes.

With love as always,
—**Cowis and Perviz Patel**
Upland Center, California



Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Our Lord Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Dear Swamiji,

This letter asks You to come visit the U.S. It would be selfish and nonsensical to ask You to come just for us, Your devotees. For we know that You are always with us. Nor does it seem urgent that You visit for those who've realized God through the aid of their religion or independently through their conscience. What does seem important is that You visit for those who are not aware of You, who do not follow their conscience, or who have not realized God in form or without form. They, for the most part, are the spiritually downtrodden, those with little or no hope in sight, whose light and love are—as You've told us—hidden behind the dust and rust layered upon the mirror of their souls. They are the ones who need You now.

Our faith is set. Theirs needs to be mixed with the sweet water of Your sublime love and bliss to cement their faith. Thinking that life is nothing more than a journey from temporary pleasure to temporary pleasure, they march into and toward suffering as they watch their bodies age.

Swami, the expression “when the cat is away the mice will play” can be extrapolated to mean “when the parents are away the children can stray.” How many people know that You are their Divine Mother and Father? How their thoughts, words, and deeds would change, knowing this, coupled with the awareness of Your omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. Lives thought to be banal would suddenly become sacred. Thoughts, words, and deeds formerly seeming to have little or no consequence would suddenly take on monumental proportions. What a wonderful vision!

Swami, You've taught us that ripeness is primary in stimulating the grace of Your *leelas* (divine sport), and that purity of heart, elimination of ego, and unconditional love are the prerequisites for clearing the path to You. Can we not now entreat You to direct the light of Your glory into the hearts of the unknowing, so that they may teach and transform that light to their children, and so that they and their children, who are actually Your children, are not held captive by their parents' temporary blindness. How can they know *shanti* (peace) without Swami?

We act, as we await You. We love, as we await You. We are You, as we await You. *Loka samastha sukino bhavanthu*. May all the people in all the worlds be happy.

In Your Shirdi body, Swami, You taught us that a fruit tree cannot have all its flowers become fruits, for the weight of all the fruits would break the limbs of the tree. Please Swami, cannot everyone's spiritual potential be realized, so that all people everywhere can join us in a loving chorus of *Om Sri Sai Ram* and *Jai Sai Ram*. Thank You dear Lord for reading this as we await You.

Wrapped in Your love,

—The Sri Sathya Sai Baba Center of Lansdale, Pennsylvania

Our Dearest Baba,

The United States of America was founded on the principles of liberty, religious freedom, and universal justice. Yet it has endured many trials. *Maya* (illusion) has confused many of our citizens, and our country's core values often appear to be warped. Following the attack on 9/11, our citizens felt a renewed brotherhood of love, compassion, and trust. People responded and came to New York City from different parts of the country to provide whatever they had to give in support. Our citizens were blind to socioeconomic status, color, or creed. This heartfelt response was once again witnessed with the natural disasters in the South. The divine essence of many of our countrymen was revealed during these crises.

Swami, you have blessed the United States with abundant resources, which should be channeled for the upliftment of all humanity. Unfortunately, much of the ungodly aspects of American culture, including social, entertainment, economic, and political practices, have been held as false ideals, and assimilated into other cultures globally. We yearn for You and pray You will come to the United States of America and light the way for our people, as the world looks to us as an example to be emulated. Please bless us with Your physical presence, transform our people, and elevate this nation into a beacon of Your living message. The Pittsburgh Sathya Sai Baba Center humbly prays to be used to help further the fulfillment of Your mission.

With unceasing love and devotion,

—The devotees of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Sathya Sai Baba Center
c/o Jayne & Stanley Wetschler, MD
Bradford Woods, Pennsylvania

Dearest Baba,

If it is true that You want us to invite you to come to the U.S., then this is my heartfelt wish to have You come anywhere in the U.S., and we will come to You. As you know, You have not called us to India, so we have not come—but it would be an unimaginable blessing if You were to come anywhere near us.

Please continue to guide us in our family healing and work decisions. We have so much confusion and many questions. Thank you for all You have blessed us with so far.

Yours ever,

—Anne and Ira Brous
Ithaca, New York



Yes, dear Swami. I say YES to Your calling. In response to it, I invite You to confirm convincingly to our senses, minds, and hearts Your presence here—in this body, this community, this country, this continent—in any way that pleases You and at any divine hour of Your choice.

Yes, dear Swami, I say yes, yes, and yes to Your Great Play—Your spellbinding and mind-blowing *Maha Leela*—and to You, O Great Enchantress, Mother of All There Is. And I invite You to confirm Your presence in the ups and downs of our daily striving in a way we understand and recognize beyond any doubt. I also invite You to inspire and empower us to play our parts the best we can for the sake of blissful fulfillment of the unfolding Self-knowing-Self.

Love,

—**Janetta Finn**

San Mateo, California

P.S. In particular, I would love You to bless our school—California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco—to reenergize it to be what it was meant to be: a meeting place of different approaches, schools, and traditions, and a fermenting ground of the new, integral consciousness. Help us evolve.

Dear Baba,

All of your American devotees are excited at the prospect that You may be coming to the United States to bless our country. We thank You for Your consideration!

I want to personally invite You to come to the Southern California area, to our Sathya Sai Baba Center in Mission Viejo—and I would love for You to come to my home. (It's pretty messy now and I'd have to do some extensive cleaning before your arrival, but I can't imagine a greater incentive!)

Also, I've always envisioned You on the Sandweiss' deck, in San Diego, giving darshan. The more chances we have to be graced by Your presence, the better! Please come, just because I love You.

—**Suzanne Stein**

Mission Viejo, California



Jerry & I just wanted to extend our invitation to Swami along with all of you. I remember the day about 25 years ago when we were in an interview with Swami, and Muriel Engel asked Baba if He was coming to the States. He assured us that He was, and soon. Muriel tried to pin Him down by asking He if meant in His physical form. He promised that He was coming, but God's time seems to be a bit different than ours! We can only pray that the time is now, when we all need Him so much.

Dearest Baba,

Please accept our petition that we place at Your Lotus Feet. Please come to America. One touch of Your Feet on our soil will bless our country. Your devotees yearn for the sight of Your Holy Form.

With all our love,

—**Patricia & Gerald Graybill**
Atascadero, California

Swami:

Te envío mi corazón; tu ya sabe todo lo que te amo: gracias por llegar a mi casa que es tu templo; gracias por me das la oportunidad de conocerte mas, gracias por acercarme más a Tí. Gracias por mi esposo que me diste y mis tres hijos (o seas, perdoname, tus hijos), enviaste a esta tierra através de mí. Ayudarme a encaminarlos en la luz de su Divinidad. Mi esposo te manda saludas y gracias por llegar a él, él cree en tí y ... te manda a saludar. ¡Esperamos tu amor y misericordia de honorarnos con tu visita aquí en este tu continente de America! ¡Ven, Swami! ¡Te amamos todos! ¡Dadnos la gracia de verte en esta vida que está más en forma física! ¡Te esperamos!

Con amor, Tu hija que pide la bendición para toda América,
—**Maria C. and Enrique, Henry, Anthony, & Andrew**

TRANSLATION: Swami,

I send my heart; You know already how much I love You. Thank You for coming to my house, which is Your temple. Thank You for giving me the opportunity of knowing You more. Thank You for bringing me closer to You. Help me to walk in the light of Your Divinity. Thank You for the husband You gave me and my three children, or should I say, Your children, whom You sent to this world through me. Help me to raise them to walk in Your Divine Light. My husband sends his greetings and we thank You for helping him. He believes in You, and sends You greetings. We await Your love and compassion through honoring us with Your visit here in this American continent! Come, Swami! We all love You! Grant us the grace of seeing You in this lifetime, while still in the physical form! We wait for You!

With Love, Your daughter who asks Your blessing for all of America,
—**Maria C. and Enrique, Henry, Anthony, & Andrew**

Dear Swami!

La verdad no se ni que decirte en este momento solo que siento un amor especial por tí. Gracias por averte presentado en mis sueños dos veces. Me encantaría que me dieras mensajes por mis sueños, me puedes guiar en mi aprendizaje para servirte a tí y a mi hermana humanidad.

Se que puedo y quiero amarte mas todavida y de igual manera amar incondicionalmente. Guía mis pasos por un buen camino al éxito siempre y sobre todo espiritualmente, mentalmente, economicamente, amorosamente, abundantemente, y todo lo que necesite en su momento. Deseo con el alma poder abrazarte y fundirme contigo en un solo ser. Espero que esta invitación que te hacemos—a “America, Los Angeles”—llegue pronto y puedas venir para que con tu presencia vendigas y ilumines este continente. Te amo, Baba, y quiero seas el Padre y Guía de mi hijo, Angel, por la vida y por el mejor camino. Te amo. No te apartes jamás de mí.

Te amo, Sai Baba. ... Cantos bhajans para tí, abriendo los corazones en amor incondicional de cada persona que llegue a mí y a mi pensamiento. ... Te esperamos con prontitud. Te amo, Baba. Te amo, Sai. Te amo, Swami. Te amo, my God.

Tu hija,

—Griselda Cuellar Kalki

TRANSLATION: Dear Swami!

The truth is, I don't know what to say at this time except that I have a special love for You. Give me messages in my dreams that would guide and teach me so I could serve You and my sister humanity. I know that I can love You more, and in the same way love unconditionally. Always guide my journey along the road of good accomplishment—above all, spiritually, mentally, economically, lovingly, abundantly, and in You. I hope this invitation that we make—in America, in Los Angeles—arrives quickly and You can come, so that Your presence blesses and illumines our continent. I love You, Baba. Never leave me, ever.

We sing bhajans to You, opening our hearts in unconditional love for every person who comes to us or in our thoughts. ... We anticipate Your coming quickly. I love You, Baba; I love You, Sai; I love You, Swami; I love You, my God.

Your daughter,

—Griselda Cuellar Kalki



One God: Basic Truth of All Faiths

Christmas Discourse, 1985

All religions, all scriptures, all spiritual teachings point only to one truth: the Unity of Divinity. You may profess whatever faith you like, but you should not disparage another's beliefs—doing so is a travesty of devotion. The propaganda indulged in by some propagators of Christianity, casting aspersions on other faiths, does great harm to the personality of Jesus.

Oh man! Through good deeds and sacrifice, foster the feeling of Love. Get rid of evil traits and lead a worthy life.

(TELUGU POEM)

Embodiments of Love! There is nothing more precious in the world than time. You should not waste even a single minute. People today tend to waste their time in selfish pursuits instead of devoting it to selfless service. They are eager to receive help from others but have no desire to render help.

There are two types of human beings—the degraded and the sublime. The degraded are those who seek or receive things from others and not only forget to repay the obligation, but even try to harm those who have helped them. The sublime are those whose natural trait is to go to the help of others. If they give their word, they will try to honor it, whatever the difficulties and

obstacles. They will not go back on their pledges, regardless of what others may say or do.

Journey to the Divine

Indian culture, which traditionally emphasizes four basic aims of life—righteousness (*dharma*), [which must be used to monitor] wealth and welfare (*artha*) and pursuit of desirable objects (*kama*), [which leads at last to] mergence or liberation (*moksha*)—looks upon life as a journey to the Divine—the attainment of liberation. But how can men caught up in the quest for wealth and sensuous pleasures develop the desire for liberation? Man today makes no attempt to discover his true nature or his real destiny. Forgetting the great truths given to the world by Indian sages and seers, men are leading utterly meaningless lives, unaware of the potential of the human to become the Divine.

We have, for instance, the simple gesture of folding hands when one greets another in offering *Namaskar*. What is the inner significance of this gesture? For one thing, the putting together of the two palms demonstrates the unity that subsumes multiplicity. For another, it represents the offering of the five sense organs and the

five organs of action to the Lord as an act of surrender. Muslims use the term *Salaam* as a form of greeting. What does the word *Salaam* mean? *Sa* refers to *Sat*, the Lord who is the embodiment of Truth, Awareness, and Bliss (Sat-Chith-Ananda); *laam* means *layam* (mergence). Thus *Salaam* means merging in the Supreme, who is also the embodiment of Truth and Bliss. The Christians also have similar expressions for indicating submission to the Divine.

The Basic Truth

All faiths have emphasized one common factor—that there is only One God, and Truth is His form. There are no differences between Hindus, Muslims, and Christians on this basic tenet. All religions, all scriptures, and all spiritual teachings point only to one truth—the Unity of Divinity.

Instead of realizing this, men become lost in wrong paths.

Jesus sacrificed his life for the regeneration and welfare of mankind. Today there are some who exaggerate the so-called differences between various faiths. For their own selfish purposes, they exploit these

differences and thereby bring a bad name to the great founders of these religions, who were spiritual giants. No prophet or messiah asked his followers to hate other religions or the followers of other faiths. Every religion has declared that God is One and that the Divine dwells in every being. Jesus also proclaimed the truth that the One Spirit resides in all beings.

When Jesus was addressing the Jews, an ethereal voice declared, “All lives are one, my dear Son. Be alike to everyone.”

When Jesus was being crucified, the same ethereal voice declared that the human body is only a vesture for the Spirit. The body is subject to constant change, but the indwelling Spirit is immortal. This was the truth proclaimed by Vedanta, which says, “The body is a temple in which the Eternal Spirit

resides as the Indweller.” The inner meaning of this is that wherever you may go, the Eternal Spirit remains with you. You must regard the body as the temple of the Spirit; bear in mind that Divinity is ever within you. Only when you realize this truth can you begin to experience the Divine.



*Whether in Hinduism or
Buddhism, Jainism or Sikhism,
Christianity or Islam, Divinity is
One and ONE ONLY.*

Do Not Decry Other Religions

Whether in Hinduism or Buddhism, Jainism or Sikhism, Christianity or Islam, Divinity is One and ONE ONLY. Those who profess great love for their particular religion are indulging in make-believe when they assume that their religion is superior to others. Hindus regard Hinduism as the greatest religion. Wherein lies its greatness? If you declare that the God of all religions is One, then why claim superiority for Hinduism and decry other religions? Does that bespeak your love for Hinduism?

This applies also to those professing Christianity. They say, "We are Christians. We believe in the unique divinity of Jesus. There is no other divine Savior." One may claim that Jesus is divine, but is one entitled to deride other religions? No religion should allow decrying of other faiths. It is not a religion at all that cavils at other religions; this is but a form of arrogance.

The great saints who worshipped Christ, Rama, Krishna, or Allah were inspired by their profound teachings. But how many of the followers of these faiths live up to these teachings today? If the teachings of the founder of a religion are not followed, can it be called a religion? Those who further their selfish interests in the name of religion are discrediting the founder of the religion.

The first thing to be learned is that THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD. Men may be different in form, name, and color, and their country and historical circumstances may vary, but God has no such differences. Hence you should not cavil at any religion or attack or deride it. You may profess whatever faith you like, but you should not disparage



*You may profess whatever faith
you like, but you should not
disparage another's beliefs,
making a travesty of devotion.*

another's beliefs, making a travesty of devotion. Sri Krishna says in the [Bhagavad] Gita that the mark of a true devotee is absence of ill will toward anyone (*adweshta sarva-buthanam*).

We must respect the Divine, which is in every creature.

Religious Intolerance

It is a characteristic of the *Kali* Age (current era of discord) that one religion is pitted against another. This only reveals the small-mindedness of the followers and is not the fault of the founders. It stems from envious intolerance and egoistic conceit. These afflictions prevent people from understanding their own religion, and cause them to condemn those of others.

No one should cast aspersions on the deities or founders of other faiths. All of them are worthy of worship. It is narrow-minded pettiness to say that Jesus is great and Rama or Krishna is small, or vice versa. Such misguided propaganda is immature

and demeaning. It is not an index of true devotion. It is a form of mental aberration.

We are all aware of the kind of selfless service that birds, animals, and trees are rendering to humanity. But we see many men who out of selfishness are not only ungrateful to their community, their parents, and their preceptors, but even to God. Such persons can never come to anything good. They do not realize the truth of the saying, "As you sow, so shall you reap." If you have good thoughts and do good deeds, they multiply like good

seeds sown in a well-fertilized field. But if you fill your heart with bad feelings, then bad thoughts will multiply many-fold.

The Meaning of True Devotion

You must make continuous efforts to cultivate your heart along correct lines. *Karma yoga* (the path of reaching God through one's activities) and *jnana yoga* (the path of realizing God) are considered important for this purpose. But these disciplines are not easy to practice. *Bhakti yoga* (the path of devotion) is superior to these. The devotee seeks to enjoy the bliss of continuous contemplation of the Divine and does not even desire mergence in the Divine (*moksha*). Devotion means giving up all other desires and dedicating all actions and thoughts to God. When you offer every act of yours to God, it becomes worship.

Everything you do must be done as an offering to God.

The body has been described as the temple of God. You must fill yourself with the feeling that God is in you, beside you, around you, and with you wherever you go. When you love God with this consciousness, that love results in Self-realization.



*When you offer every act of
yours to God, it becomes worship.
Everything you do must be done
as an offering to God.*

Love takes two forms. One binds you to God; the other binds you to the world. The mind is responsible for either result. The mind is like a lock. If you turn the key to the right, the lock

opens. If you turn the key to the left, it gets locked. The heart is the key to the lock of the mind. If you turn the key toward the world, you have attachment (bondage). You must see to it that desire and hatred do not get lodged in the mind. Bear no ill-will toward anyone.

Good Company

Avoid the company of those who are evil-minded. By cultivating the company of the good, you can raise yourself, because your bad qualities get diluted by association with the good, like sewage water when it enters the sea.

In the *Ramayana*, we see that Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, became transformed into a devotee of the Lord, through his association with Hanuman. On the other hand, Kaikeyi, because of the influences of

the evil-minded Manthara, brought infamy and widowhood upon herself, and estranged herself from her noble son Bharata.

Likewise, in the *Mahabharata*, we have the example of Dharmaraja, who had to endure many difficulties and humiliations because of indulgence in gambling with dice during a brief association with the wicked Kauravas.

Association with the evil-minded can lead to endless troubles. Pay any price to avoid the company of the bad, and pay any price to acquire the company of the good. The company of the good takes you nearer to God.

Sadhana (spiritual discipline) makes you dear to the Lord. When you are near and dear, you become one with God. When you have realized God, you have secured everything. Without God, everything else is valueless.

Many are deeply devoted to Jesus. Their duty is to glorify the great message of Jesus. The most important message of Jesus is the establishment of “Peace on Earth and Goodwill among Men.” Without peace, humankind cannot achieve progress in any sphere—material, spiritual, or moral.

Jesus’ Vital Message

In the *Treta Yuga*, Sri Rama came to establish the reign of *Sathya* and *Dharma* (Truth and Righteousness). In the *Dwapara Yuga*, Sri Krishna came with the mission

of promoting *Prema* and *Shanti* (Love and Peace). In the *Kali Yuga* (the present age), all four—*Sathya*, *Dharma*, *Shanti*, and *Prema*—are the purposes of the Divine Mission. Hence you must make these four the guiding principles of your life. When you adhere to these four principles, *Ahimsa* (Nonviolence) ensues as a natural result.



*The most important message
of Jesus is the establishment of
“Peace on Earth and Goodwill
among Men.”*

There is no use merely invoking the name of Jesus and praying to Him without regard to His most vital message: “God is in everyone. Do not revile anyone. Do not cause harm to

anyone.” This was Jesus’ greatest message.

At present there is a growing tendency among propagators of the Christian faith to cast aspersions on other religions. Money is being spent lavishly to spread Christianity. None of you should have any part in such activities. This type of propaganda does great harm to the reputation of Jesus. Jesus was a supremely pure and sacred person. To forget Jesus’ teachings while professing love for Him is no love at all. You must all remember, “God is One. Love is God. Live in Love.” Only by this means can humanity, despite the many divisions that exist at present, be unified.

Absorb the teachings of all the great seers and prophets. Do not despise anyone. Everyone is entitled to accept what is good, from any source. Differences of creed and caste are irrelevant. There is only one caste,

the caste of humanity. There is only one religion, the religion of love. There is only one language, the language of the heart. There is only one God, and He is omnipresent.

Develop a Broad Outlook

No quarter should be given for propaganda that sets one religion against another. All the diverse communities in the nation [and world] should be united. Mankind should become one family. The world will then become a paradise. If differences are allowed to grow, all will disintegrate. It is said that atom bombs will reduce the world to ashes, but those who are promoting religious bigotry and hatred are doing worse damage than what the atom bomb can do, because they are destroying the love and compassion in human hearts. They are breaking up humankind into fragments. There is no sin greater than this.

What the world needs today is the redeeming and unifying force of love—love that continually expands and embraces more and more people. By giving up narrow ideas regarding your religion, nation, or caste, and by developing a broad outlook and cultivating the company of the good, you can elevate your life and make it meaningful and satisfying.

Many of you have come from distant countries at great expense. You must make good use of your stay here by cultivating good company, imbibing good thoughts, developing a large-hearted attitude toward all, taking to heart the wise words of elders, and trying to put into practice at least some of their teachings. Otherwise, you will have

wasted both life and money. I wish you all happiness.

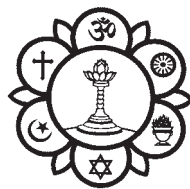
—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
December 25, 1985

Pure rain water acquires the color and taste of the region where it falls. Likewise, prophets and messiahs, landing in different parts of the world at different times, have imparted their messages in terms appropriate to the time, place, and conditions of the people concerned. Religions cannot be considered different from each other on this basis.

All religions have taught only what is good for humanity. Religion should be practiced with this awareness.

If the [people's] minds are pure, how can [their] religion be bad? (TELUGU POEM)

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
December 25, 1991



Dawn

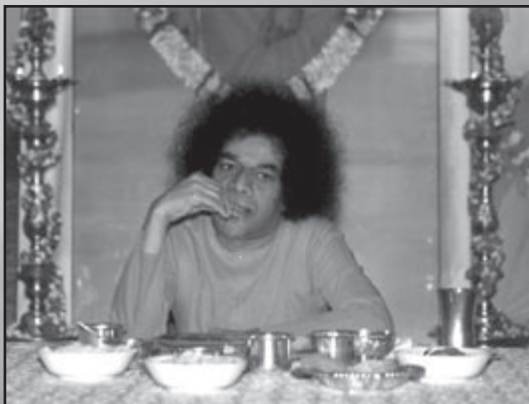
A dawn breaks, and a savior has come,
For all who have died on blood-soaked battlefields,
For the tears cried by broken hearts,
For the lonely, the depressed, the downtrodden.

Alas! Now hear the call of the Righteous One,
Who tells us that we are all One, we are Divine, that we are Sublime.
We have waited for Him, waited, waited, waited;
Down the long corridors of time we have waited.
And now He is here! At last, He is here!

Can we stumble now, after the long and lonely wait?
Can we disregard the call of the spiritual heart?
For all of the treacherous struggles we've endured,
Can we pitifully and uselessly continue to disregard the yearning?

Arise! Awake! The time is now!
Make room in your heart
For the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings!
He is here, He is now, He is forever ours.
He is the Lord of Love, the Stealer of Hearts.

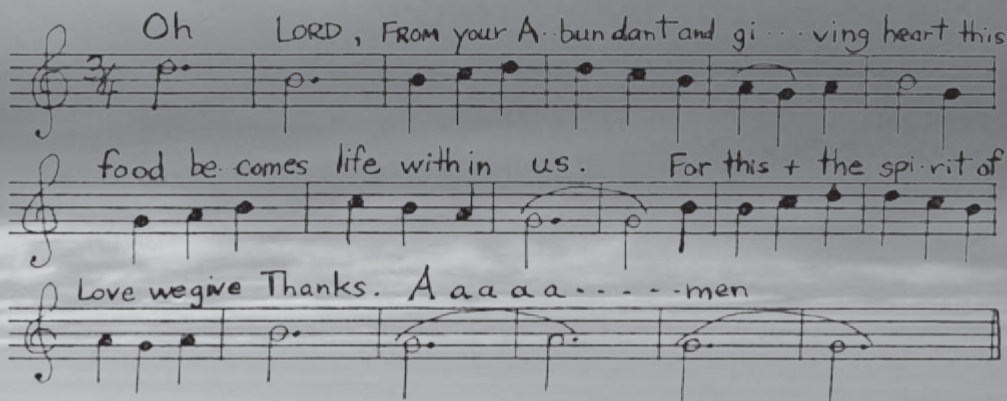
—Steven Alderson
Tallahassee, Florida



A Prayer Before Meals

Here is a simple meal prayer that our family and friends have sung for years. It is easy to learn and so true and sweet. Wanted to share it with all. *Sai Ram,*

—Suzanne Jansen
Hemet, California



Oh, Lord, from Your abundant and giving heart,
This food bcomes life within us.
For this and the spirit of Love we give thanks,
A-men.

Our Pilgrimage to Sai

Region 8—Southern California and Hawaii, December 2005

An Overview

From December 17, 2005 through January 2, 2006, a Region 8 Pilgrimage to Sai took place. During the six months prior to the trip, our group goal was to unify through discipline to achieve purity and divinity, with all participants engaging in nightly *sadhana* in the form of repeating synchronized *Gayatri* and *Om Sri Sai Ram* cycles, monthly large group meetings, and biweekly rehearsals. We had our choice of serving in the choir, *bhajan* (devotional singing) group, children's drama, or other *seva* (service) activities, such as each bringing an extra suitcase of Indian-style used clothing, which had been arranged to be delivered to Gujarat for distribution to the needy. Organizing and carrying through such a large group with all these interwoven activities is no easy feat, and our leaders were outstanding—Harshad and Ramila Patel, Vimala and M. Srinivas, Rohan Balasuriya, Shelley Harrison, Mary Alice Jessup, Rita Stevens, Megan Bennett, and Berniece Mead, among others.

Over 200 members of the region joined this pilgrimage to Puttaparthi, some arriving earlier and others staying later. Some had to demonstrate great faith from the outset, as their airline reservations during the busy holiday season remained unconfirmed until nearly the last minute.

In Prasanthi we were granted special seating in the area usually reserved for Swami's teachers. Swami unexpectedly continued this for us, even after our performance on December 26. Not taking this or even the opportunity to perform for granted, we strove for silence and discipline throughout the long hours of waiting for darshan, and in walking in our long, two-by-two columns the many blocks from the North-6 residence hall to the darshan grounds. The sight of a large, disciplined group of Americans—yes, the very products of the culture of individualism and self-expression, yet here all silent and dressed alike—must have been surprising to some, and was emotionally moving to many.

The men of our group—and delightfully so, even the youngest of boys—did exceptionally well at the discipline of silence. Srinivas urged everyone to adopt a strategy of repeating the *Gayatri mantra* twenty-one times internally every fifteen minutes to help the long hours pass without losing one's focus on God. Swami seemed to reward the men's group effort by frequently accepting a handful of their letters, which were systematically handed forward to whoever was seated closest to the front line. The women put forth individual and group efforts also.

We had daily meetings and practices and sought to help each other and overcome tensions and difficulties through demonstrating harmony and loving service whenever possible. Because of the special seating and the long group walk to the darshan area, we were required to meet extra early before each darshan. So, the schedule was demanding and hectic, leaving no time for individual reflection and barely enough time to eat and meet other personal needs between group commitments.

For many of our group, the high point of the trip took place on December 26, when the choir was invited to present its program, “Life Is a Song, Sing It!” In addition to a special program for Swami, thousands of printed programs with the words to the songs were distributed to those in attendance, so that they could more fully understand and enjoy the meanings of the devotional songs. Although the children weren’t invited to perform their play separately, they sang with the choir in two of the selections and enjoyed Swami’s close proximity with the entire group, including the lengthy session of bhajans that He invited our members to lead. Several of our group were also blessed with individual interviews on other days.

In His enjoyment of our music and the *bhava* (feeling) He reflected and magnified back to us, Swami conveyed in no uncertain terms that He IS with our groups each time we meet, sing, rehearse, and work together with love and sincerity in our hearts. Further, as the divine emanations and bliss swept in waves, reverberating and amplifying back and forth from Swami, to and from and beyond

the ecstatic thousands in the Sai Kulwant Hall, it seemed as if entire universes could have been created, healed, and dissolved during those timeless, rapturous moments.

The divine stories and leelas from this trip are countless, and we will relive them internally and cherish them forever. The following are three personal accounts from our group Pilgrimage to Sai.

—Corinn Codye
Wrightwood, California

One Miracle after Another

On our Pilgrimage to Sai, I had many miraculous experiences. To begin with, during the long journey to reach Bangalore, I discovered I had forgotten to bring along my daily “medicine” of thyroid, and perhaps because of the resulting fatigue, I also lost track of my money belt. After two days of trying to obtain thyroid, a hotel clerk knocked on my door and handed me a bottle of it, free of charge, which he had obtained from a local pharmacist, saying “Sai Ram!” The hotel staff again helped me check with the airport, hospital, and taxi company regarding my money belt.

Then just as we were checking out and paying the porters to load our bags onto the taxis, my previous night’s driver and his boss walked up, introduced themselves, and handed me the money belt! Wow! Who would figure? I dug into it and found a suitable amount for a reward for both of them. (Everything was still in it!) They were happy, and I was happy, partly due to this demonstration of honesty where it would have been so easy to do otherwise.

Later, coming into Puttaparthi, with all the SAI signs around, I noticed a commotion ahead of us. Several young men, dressed in white, were riding on the side of a car ahead of us. I thought out loud, “It must be somebody important,” then realized that it was Swami! He was in the third car ahead of us! We were all happily excited, including the driver, to realize that we were part of Swami’s entourage. A policeman finally waved us over so that Swami’s car could continue on without strangers. So even before getting to the ashram, we had some wonderful experiences.

I was lucky enough to room with a couple of guys who are also in the choir. One of them is comfort-oriented enough to have bought an immersion water heater, so that we could take hot baths, rather than cold showers. (Brrrrr, I did that during my first trip in 2001, getting up at 3:00 a.m. and easing into that frigid stream—which sure wakes you up in a hurry!) So everywhere I turned, things were going great.

I did make one sensible decision and that was to get a wheelchair to get around the ashram without putting my arthritic ankle through lots of pain and swelling, like happened in 2001. It worked wonderfully, and those kind, strong guys who volunteered to push me around added a great deal to the

positive experience this time. In fact, the whole journey and interwoven experiences were wonderful, even when things went “wrong.”

When we had our monumental, rare, and wonderful darshan with Swami on the afternoon/evening of December 26, none of us expected it to be as wonderful

as it was. Some of us thought that He might break it off early and turn and go into the *mandir* (inner temple). But no, we had the full-blown, all out, complete attention and indulgence of the Lord of the Universe for about two hours, within which



He spoke to us, looked into our eyes, and lavished intense, blissful love all over us and the entire assembly of 30,000 people. He even went into ecstatic bliss Himself for five to ten minutes.

Then He waved His hand and made Mary Alice the necklace that He and His attendants worked sweetly to clasp around her neck.

When we were all through and Swami left, the blissful highs caused us all to hug each other and smile from ear to ear. The young guys of our large group spontaneously leapt for joy and burst into songs all the way back to N-6, our residence building!

I noticed while we were all rejoicing in our good fortune, that my foot felt good—no

pain at all! I put this out of my mind and went back to celebrating the joy and happiness we were all feeling. The next day I mentioned to a few people that my foot was feeling good, and wondered what it meant, but I still used the wheelchair, not wanting to challenge the situation just yet.

One day, while wearing a pair of white cotton pants that had a much shallower pocket than usual, I lost my wallet in Sai Kulwant Hall, not realizing it until later. Again without worry or stress, I was preparing to visit the lost-and-found department when someone knocked on the door of our



room. Standing there was a *sevadai* (service corps volunteer), the one who seemed to me to be the boss of the *sevadais*, who ordered people around with aggression and what I thought of as meanness. Here he was, with a big smile on his face, my wallet in his hand, and not mean at all. (I didn't offer him a reward, believing he wouldn't want me to do so.) The next morning at darshan, when our eyes connected, we smiled at each other over that private act of kindness. I never thought of him as mean again.

When rehearsing what I'd say (you know, just in case) to Swami if we got an interview and He asked what did I want, I was planning to say, "Swami, this is what I've wanted for a long time, just what is happening right now,

to be touched by Your gaze, Your voice, and Your love. That's enough for me." Well, that's just what we got on the 26th: we were touched by His voice, His gaze, and His love, plus His smiles and His sweet indulgence for nearly two hours! And indeed, it is enough for me. It was more than anyone might expect, and I'll be forever grateful. I've often wondered

what it would be like to sit at the feet of Jesus during His life on earth, listening to His loving wisdom, and making eye contact. Now I know, and it is wonderful.

Then I began paying more attention to my foot, wondering if it could

possibly be a healing. Prior to leaving for India and up to the day of our performance, I had used arthritis cream daily on my foot and other places on the body that had symptoms of arthritis. But by the morning of the 28th, with the foot still feeling good, and no swelling (they had swollen to twice their normal size during my first visit in 2001), I just didn't put on the cream, figuring I'd just see what happened. On the last march to darshan by our pilgrimage guys, where I was usually pushed in the wheelchair, I asked Srinivas to let me walk at the front of the line. He said OK. There was no ache or pain.

Other fortunate events along this journey just pumped up the main joy and bliss of being so intimate with Swami on the

26th, and in fact since that time, I've been pain free—no pain in the ankle, shoulders, thumbs, wrists, or knees, and suddenly where there was no padding but just skin and bone beneath my feet for years, somehow after India, the padding returned overnight. Also I am taking less than half the pre-trip dose of thyroid.

After returning from Puttaparthi, I felt like either I was different, or everything around me was different. I soon found that I was not the only one who felt this way. I asked my veteran friend what we should do, now that many of the usual activities

suddenly seemed so useless and distracting. He said, "Do more for others, attend Center meetings more often—and increase your acquaintances with other Sai followers." Without even much thinking about it, that pretty much has happened—I've been to nine different Centers since returning, given talks, taken and shared photos, volunteered at Seva projects through the Mission Viejo and San Diego Centers, started delivering "meals on wheels" in the Santa Ana area, and many other useful activities. Have I integrated our pilgrimage experience? Rather, it seems it has integrated me, by changing me and replacing "dumb things" with dharmic things.

—Russ Lisenby
Tustin, California

Interview with Mary Alice Jessup

"Our Lo.....rd is in this very room...!" A beaming Mary Alice demonstrated the song, explaining how the choir sat in absolute silence for the concluding measures of music at Sai Kulwant hall on December 26, 2005. "It was an absolutely awesome feeling to hear

the reverberations of the songs we had practiced for so long," she exclaimed. "We never expected to be given a chance to sing to Baba, yet here we were, our little Sai choir, performing to Baba!"

The original Sai choir group, several of whom were in this



choir, had practiced for the past five years. The rest had rehearsed rigorously for the preceding six months. They had gone on the Sai regional pilgrimage with no expectations or assurances of being allowed to perform at Parthi. On arrival, Mary Alice had to present her "resume" listing her accomplishments. In spite of concerns by some, Mary Alice had picked unusual songs for their performance. They were prepared to sing traditional Christmas songs if asked to perform on Christmas Day, but her heart was set on other selections, handpicked with love for Swami, which they ended up presenting on December 26.

Mary Alice brushed aside my question about the journey to Parthi; I knew that

some of the choir group had faced challenges getting there. “That’s not important,” she chided me. She was so focused during our entire interview on letting me know how happy Swami was with the music. “When I gave Him the flowers I told Him, ‘Swami, the flowers are wilted,’ and He just smiled at me and took them and the handmade program book. We thought He might give the program book back to us [as He usually does], but He kept it! After we sang, He was just so happy with the music. He smiled at me, and I felt like He was an old friend.”

She said that others told her that Swami was looking at her the entire time as she conducted the choir, but she was not aware of it.

“There was this joy welling up in my heart as we sang. I have felt it before while conducting. Every note was perfect, the CD player for the background music worked perfectly, the audience enjoyed the music, and we sang with our hearts.”

“We practiced so much daily at the ashram; our choir was small to start off, and I was getting worried since some members were in other events and had to leave for those practices. Somehow everyone came together, the voices blended perfectly, and it

was the best we have ever sung. ... The SSE children were present and added so much meaning to the songs ‘For the Children’ and ‘Colors of the Wind.’ We had 44 members in our choir at Parthi; I was sad that some of our regular members who have been with us from the beginning could not make it on this trip. The group was wonderful; they



“When I got near, He moved His hand in a circle. I thought He was telling me to come near Him. Instead I saw a glittering chain that He gave me.”

memorized all the songs, and sat on the floor and sang.”

“After we sang, when Swami motioned for me to come over, I did not know what to expect,” she said. “When I got near, He moved His hand in a circle. I thought He was telling me to come near Him. Instead I saw a glittering chain that He gave me. I could not put it over my head, so I said, ‘My

head is too big.’ I meant it literally!” she said with a laugh. “Someone opened the clasp and helped me put it on, and Swami stood up and fixed it. He kept saying, ‘Happy, very happy.’

“After that things are a bit of a blur. When I walked out of the hall, people were coming to me, touching the pendant, and some people tried to touch my feet. I am not used to that and felt really uncomfortable at all the attention.”

The next day Mary Alice was blessed to be called in for a personal interview. “There were about twelve of us [from our Region 8 Pilgrimage group].” The day before the performance a few of them had gone to the canteen, and Mary Alice had been wearing large earrings. One of the ladies in the group came by and gave her a hug; later Mary Alice realized that her earring was missing.

They had searched all over the canteen without finding it. The next day, Mary Alice went in for a shower and saw the earring on the shelf. The matching one was on the dresser where she had left it the previous night! She brushed this aside, however, in the excitement of getting ready for darshan.

When they were called in for the interview, Swami asked her to sit close to him. She told Swami that she expresses her love through music. “I have tried to be under the radar lately and not draw any attention to myself,” she said, “but Swami told me that I have to extend myself and be out there. He did an up-and-down motion and said, ‘Stay in the Atma in love.’ He chanted the Gayatri slowly in an even tone. He said to let go of the past and look to the future. I interpreted it as ‘Don’t let the mind go to old wounds.’

“He materialized a chain for another lady and then pointed to my earrings. In my haste, I had forgotten to wear earrings, and I thought immediately that He was teasing me that I forgot them. When I think back now, I realize He was telling me that He had put my lost earring on the shelf. There is no other way it could have come back! I kept on thinking, ‘Swami I don’t want any earrings.

I have everything; just bless my family, and let me do my work with the choir.’

“I know Swami is always with me; I have already experienced His touch on a family issue that occurred as soon as I landed in the U.S.” She patted the crucifix He had materialized for her. “He is always with me.” A jetlagged Mary Alice almost drifted off into bliss with her eyes closed....

When one is so blessed by the Lord, one radiates love and happiness, and the glow on Mary Alice’s face was unmatched when she talked about her unforgettable December with Swami Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

—**Harini Narasimhan**

Courtesy: *Sathya Sai Pacific Region
Newsletter, January 2006*

The Gift of Divinity at Christmas

Spending Christmas with the Lord of the Universe has always been the deepest desire for both my husband Randy and me. We come from Christian backgrounds, and I spent most of my youth and adult life singing to Jesus in choirs. I came to Swami through a fervent prayer to Jesus: “If You are real, then let me know—let me see You.” How could I have imagined that the Lord Himself would hear my prayer and answer it by allowing me to realize that the One who sent Jesus, the Lord Himself, would reveal His face to me and allow me to know Him.

We sang to the Lord at Christmas last year. We sang, “How beautiful that You would call me as Your Own!” Those words could not have more perfectly expressed the culmination that this trip represented in this life’s journey to the Feet of the Lord.

We were able to go this year because my mother passed away last year. I could never leave her on Christmas, her favorite time of year. My husband begged me each year, and each year I had to say no, even though my heart wanted to say yes. Leaving Mom on Christmas would have broken her heart. I just couldn't do it. But this year we were free to go, and we made plans early in the late spring. Then we found out that a group was going ON THE SAME DAY that our flight had been scheduled for months, and I knew it was Baba's *leela* (divine sport). He wanted us there with this group. It



soon became clear why. There was to be a [western-style] choir to sing to Baba, if He should so allow, and a *bhajan* (call-and-response devotional singing) group also.

I was so torn as to which group to join, because I came to Baba through bhajans. Even before I believed that He was God, I loved singing, and so I joined the Tustin Center in 1983 and began singing. I had so much trouble learning the Sanskrit bhajans, but nobody could follow the English ones I led very well. So after a long struggle I triumphed with a Sanskrit bhajan and was congratulated by my Indian friends. It is a very special bhajan to me: *Jai Jai Vaishnavi Devi Ma*.

From then on I have been singing both Sanskrit and English in a melding of East and West. But my heart longed to bring the Western choir music to Sai Centers—an impossible task, so it seemed for 20 years. So I sang at the local Baptist church, often choked with tears as I imagined Swami in the audience and unable to share the good

news that not only had Jesus returned but His Father was walking the Earth as we sang. It was a secret joy, for my conservative Christian friends were not ready to hear this truth.

I chose the choir group because I could feel the

Lord's hand in giving this chance to share Western choral singing with Him and a very large blending of people from the East and the West. To me it was a dream come true, a joy that would be secret no more. We practiced twice a week and spent up to three hours traveling one way at times to our practices. Each time it was a joy and it felt like having darshan. Sai Baba was truly in the very room when we sang.

How astonished I was a few days before Christmas when, completely out of the blue, I was told that bhajans might be performed after the choir performance and that they wanted more English. Could I sing an English bhajan? Well I guess that would be just about the most incredible opportunity I might have

in my whole life, and so I said yes, with my whole body and soul screaming with delight! How could this be happening to me? Had Swami felt my longing, my love—my pure joy when singing to Him all these years? Had He been there in my daydreams of singing in His Holy Presence? Had He heard the words of the song of my heart?

The day came on December 26th. The choir sang, spreading pure joy throughout the Hall to hearts in bodies of all colors and cultures from around the world. The joy of Western choral music had come alive at the Divine Lotus Feet. Then the Lord ROSE to meet the director. He could hardly sit comfortably, and yet He ROSE to signal His pleasure and respect for the offering! Our hearts leapt with joy! Our Lord was happy!

But it did not stop there. He signaled for us to lead bhajans. The microphone was given to Berniece Mead, who had ushered me into my work as a Sai Spiritual Education teacher twenty years ago. She sang her favorite song, “You Are the Lord of My Heart and My Soul”—the song she always sings for all the talks, all the trainings, and all the sharing events that begin with bhajans.

Then it was my turn. I sang my heart out for the Lord to “Remind Me, O Lord, Who I Am.” I looked right at Him. I wasn’t nervous. Somewhere in the recesses of my soul, I knew that He had heard me each time I had sung this bhajan. Among the very first words He spoke to me back in 1990 were spoken as my mouth hung open in astonishment at His omniscience. Then He chided me gently

as if I should know. He said, “I know. I am there.”

Baba was pleased. He let the bhajans go on and on. The microphone came to me again. I knew what I would sing. I sang *Jai Jai Vaishnavi Devi Ma*, the bhajan that brought me to the place I am now. When I sing that song, I can feel Him singing through me. My worldly mother had passed away, and now I was singing to my Divine Mother, the One I have waited so long to see, to know, and to serve. I sang my heart out, and it was good. The bhajans went on...for an hour. Eighteen bhajans! We all couldn’t believe we had been graced with His presence for two hours! Then, sharing the *arathi* flame—East and West joined in the privilege of saying goodnight to Our Lord.

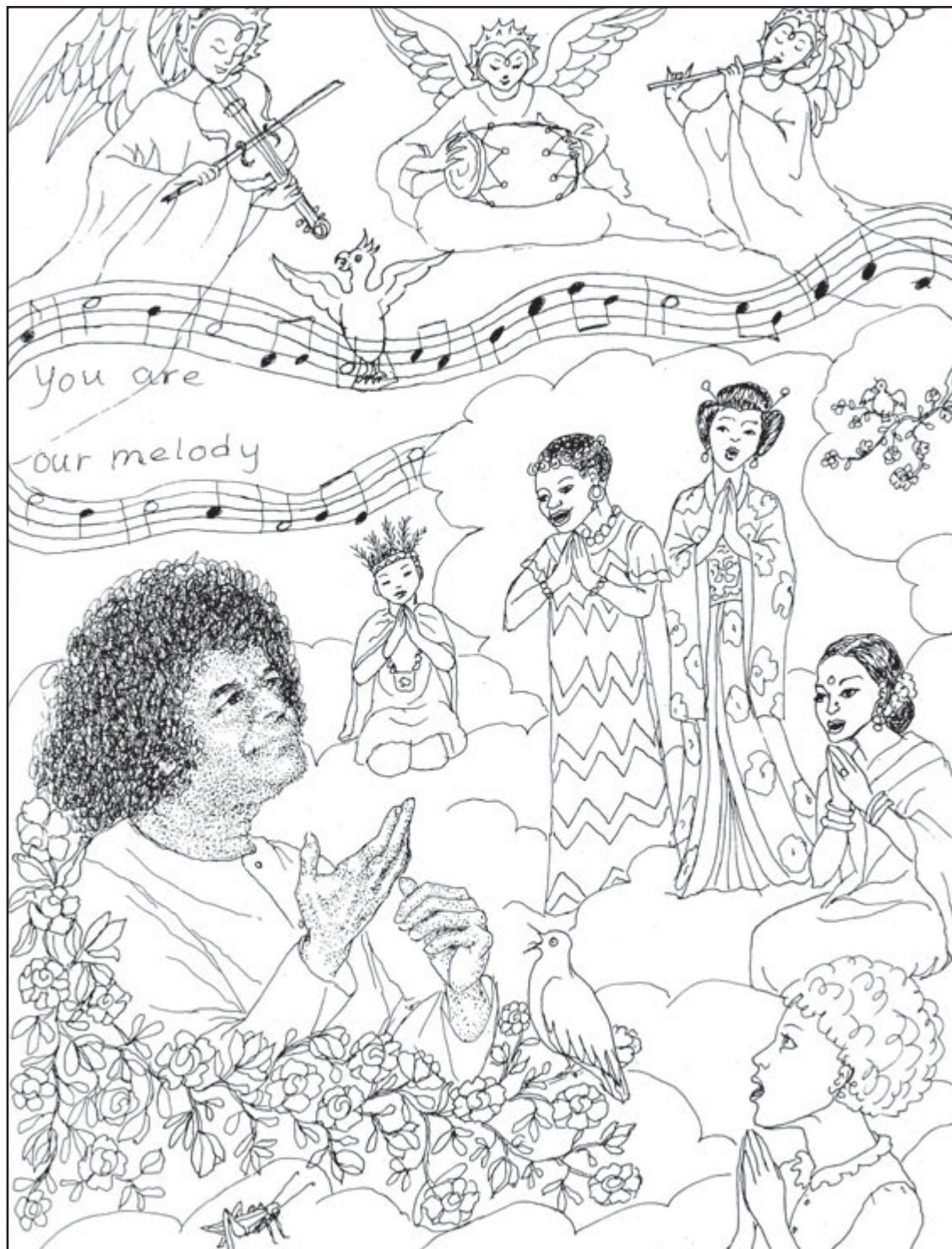
In those moments, singing to Him and not being nervous, I experienced the gift that He has come to give, which He had told me nearly 15 years before: Sai is everywhere at all times. He is with us always. He hears us whenever we sing to him, in the bhajan halls here, in the car, and at home. He is omnipresent. Knowing this in my heart, He also gave me a worldly gift—totally unexpected and yet longed for, for over two decades and perhaps lifetimes—to sing at the Feet of the Lord! Heaven is here. It is now. We are all experiencing the most Holy and sacred moments possible, and in them He is giving us the highest gift possible—the experience of Divinity.

—Susan Kehr

Huntington Beach, California

NOTE: A DVD of the December 26 program is available through the Book Center at www.sathyasaibooks.com (see page 40). Streaming video of the choir program and bhajans may also be viewed at <http://www.saicast.org/festivals.htm>.

Children's Corner



Announcements

Service Opportunity for Physicians

Dear Brothers and Sisters, *Sairam!* Our Beloved Bhagavan has blessed the physicians from overseas with an opportunity to provide medical services on a continuous basis at the Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital (SSSGH) in Prasanthi Nilayam from June to March every year. Instead of providing medical services only on festival occasions, we will serve all the year round except the months of March, April, and May. We will make this offering of love at the Divine Lotus Feet of our dearest Lord Sai. We will provide the best medical care with reverence and humility. The following guidelines will facilitate our project:

- 1) The minimum period of service will be for 2 weeks at a time, namely 1st to 15th or 15th to the end of the month, every month.
- 2) The volunteer physicians will work as part of and along with the staff of the SSSGH and will be governed by the rules and regulations of SSSGH.
- 3) All doctors are subject to the credentialing and selection process under the guidelines of the international medical committee.
- 4) All doctors need permission by the Indian Medical Council to practice in the Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital. To finish the formalities of processing the applications, we need the information from all of you as soon as possible.
- 5) Emphasis is on primary care. However, internists and sub-specialists are welcome, if they are competent and willing to provide primary care in addition to the expertise in their specialty.
- 6) During each rotation, two to four physicians will be working at a time at the hospital.
- 7) Physicians should have a “valid, current license to practice medicine” in their respective countries, and this will be submitted to the Indian Medical Council to get a license in reciprocity to practice in India.
- 8) For effective communication with the patients, knowledge of English is essential. It is also advantageous to know Telugu because it is the local language spoken by most of the patients.
- 9) Dr. Radha Bathina and Dr. Yatish Merchant, who have many years of experience in providing excellent medical services in Prasanthi Nilayam, have kindly agreed to coordinate the necessary details for this project.

For further information please contact: Dr. Radha Bathina, email: bathina@aol.com, tel: 260-625-4949, cell: 260-418-6405, fax: 260-625-5755. Please add the prefix 001 if you are calling from outside the U.S.A. or Canada, or the prefix 1 if you are calling from the U.S.A or Canada.

Dr. Yatish, email: nilayam9@hotmail.com, tel: 609-926-2092, cell: 609-665-2221, fax: 609-926-2221. Please add the prefix 001 if you are calling from outside the U.S.A. or Canada or the prefix 1 if you are calling from the U.S.A or Canada.

Let us all pray to Swami for His love and divine guidance, so that we serve Him as worthy instruments in His divine mission. *Jai Sai Ram.*

Lovingly in the Service of Sai,

—Dr. Narendranath Reddy, Chairman

International Medical Committee, Prasanthi Council

Telephone Bhajans

Satsang for Isolated Devotees



A group of Sai devotees in western North Carolina have worked out a system of telephone bhajans for friends living in remote or isolated areas, or for those who are shut-ins or unable to attend bhajans or Sai Centers for various reasons. Michael Blate offers the following suggestions:

How are telephone bhajans held? Using a conference-calling center, we have successfully offered *satsang* to Sai devotees anywhere in North America on a phone-in basis. With the conference-call center that we used, up to 20 participants could be “seated,” on a first-come, first-served basis. Recently we were able to hold weekly telephone bhajans over an experimental period of time. We were in fact joined regularly by several terminally-ill devotees. It worked well.

Here is the procedure we followed:

- Begin with three *Oms*.
- Follow along with Swami leading the *Gayatri Mantra*.
- First two bhajans led by the call hosts. In our case, this consisted of those of us at Deerhaven Hills Farm in North Carolina.
- Up to four “off-premises” bhajans led by “telephone singers.”
- The final six or so bhajans led by the hosting group.
- Closing song and *Vibuthi* song.

This entire program is designed to last approximately one hour. Afterwards, we often remained on the line for a few minutes to socialize a bit and bring each other up to date on the week’s events, but this was not part of the “official” bhajan program. As a side note, we

have also conducted successful “telephone study groups” in the past and we know it can work well.

We suggest sticking to simple, “oldie-goldie” bhajans that most people know. We also found that it worked well to use mainly the same songs each week so that, once memorized, no “reading” is necessary.

What equipment is needed? Several of our friends used headsets; others used ordinary phones with a “speaker” function. (Please see special instructions, below.)

What are the costs? The cost to callers is only the normal long-distance calling rate from the caller’s own phone, according to whatever long distance call service or plan they use. Our host group paid for the charges from the conference call center in order to host the call.

Special instructions: We noticed two little oddities when singing via telephone. One is that there can be a slight lag time or time-delay, and this might take getting used to. The other peculiarity is that the normal capacity or range of the telephone facilities is designed for “voice-only,” so sometimes the music can momentarily “overload” the system and cause brief “blank spots.”

For those and other reasons, we suggest that, unless a caller is leading one of the bhajans, the others on the call keep their phone’s “mute” function on. That way, listeners can still hear the leaders while avoiding most or all of any disconcerting lapses during the singing.

How do I find out more information? Please e-mail Gail Blate at gblate@skyrunner.net for e-mail suggestions on where and how to connect to conference call centers. If you have family or friends with whom you’d also like to connect in a similar way, you can contact us for the data on the conference call facility we have used. Otherwise, a web-search for telephone conference facilities should get you started.

This service can be especially meaningful to shut-in Sai family members and friends. I know that for the devotees who joined us until they no longer could, even knowing this Sai *satsang* was available was appreciated by them.

To link up a very small group of people, a mini-version of telephone bhajans can be held using the regular phone company’s three-way calling service, without involving the services of a conference call center. We at Deerhaven Hills Farm are currently using this three-way calling system. However, we are ready to re-establish the “expanded” telephone bhajan conference-call service anytime the need presents itself—that is, as Sai devotees indicate their desire for this service. And we are happy to help others form such groups if they wish to contact us. Be well, *namasté* and *Sai Ram*.

—Michael Blate
Deerhaven Hills Farm, North Carolina

What If...?

What if Sri Sathya Sai Baba came to your next Sri Sathya Sai Baba meeting?

Wouldn't that be a joyous occasion! Members would hasten to offer Sai a comfortable chair. All would take care to explain the meeting format and strive to carry out the program in a manner pleasing to Him. His wishes would be solicited, so that He would be happy and would come again. Oh, what we wouldn't do for such an opportunity!

The truth is, Sathya Sai does visit our meetings. But He often attends wearing the guise of a newcomer. He appears unfamiliar with our prayers and songs. Sometimes He arrives clothed as if unfamiliar with our rules of dress. He has been known to wear His shoes, and sometimes He even sits on the wrong side of the room. Alone in the back, He observes without comment. He assumes a form cloaked in innocence. What is this gray powder that is passed among the people? What is this language everyone sings? Leaving as quietly as He came, will He ever come back?

It has been said that Sai sends newcomers to the centers and the results of those

interactions are His will. But are we doing our part to welcome and guide our guests? Do we perform our duty as pure instruments? Why do so many come, never to return again? We must ask ourselves, "Have we served others to the best of our ability?"

Alone in the back, He observes without comment. He assumes a form cloaked in innocence.

How can we even hope to serve in community activities if we remain unable to serve those who seek us out? The message of Sathya Sai is the greatest gift we have to offer. His message will affect the widest transformation on society. Simple good manners and common courtesy demand that we expend our best efforts on behalf of these guests.

Our purpose is not to proselytize and convert. But how can we fail to share the great good fortune that we have found? We are custodians of a sacred flame, which we nurture for others. Ours is not a closed club of secret rituals and uncommunicated goals. If we attend center functions only for our own enjoyment and our own satisfaction, we have missed the very purpose of the organization. In our programs, can we remain attached to our own comforts and preferences while disregarding the needs of

others? Once we have learned of Sathya Sai Baba's love and grace, our goal should be to attend meetings for the purpose of giving rather than receiving.

Several steps can help make Sai Baba Center meetings more friendly to newcomers.

- * Of course we should greet visitors and explain our program. A meeting outline with a description of our prayers and rituals helps newcomers to understand what is taking place. This outline could be placed in the front of the song book.
- * A brochure that lists meeting times and places together with some simple Sai teachings might make a nice introduction to the center.
- * Some centers also have written guidelines for speakers at guest nights.
- * Sometimes we need to remind ourselves to use understandable words and to explain the teachings in a manner that newcomers will understand.
- * A newcomer's orientation session can also be useful to help new people understand our activities and organization.
- * Although many of us have fond feelings and memories of Indian songs and prayers from our trips to Prasanthi Nilayam, perhaps a liberal portion of English songs would help our visitors to understand the love and devotion that we

feel for Sathya Sai Baba. Many beautiful songs in English are now available with audio tapes and simple guitar chords. A little effort in this direction goes a long way in making a center more hospitable to newcomers.

- * We need to speak to our guests and share with them the joy and love that we have found. No rules, handouts, or programs can be a substitute for simple kindness. In fact, newcomers have been heard to say that they have returned to the center because of the love and consideration they received from the members. They may not get the opportunity to find Swami's love if they do not first discover our love for them.

These people whom Swami sends to our centers are a wonderful resource. They hold new ideas and talents that will further our efforts in Sai's service. But first we need to help them to see what we have already found.

So what will you do when Swami comes to your center? Will he wear an orange robe? Probably not. Will he openly reveal himself to you? It is unlikely. Will he come once and never return? Perhaps. The answer is up to you.

Jonathan L. Roof
President, U.S. Central Council

NEWS FROM REGION 5

ILLINOIS ■ INDIANA ■ IOWA ■ MICHIGAN ■ MINNESOTA
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The following report by newspaper columnist Kevin Leininger appeared in the Ft. Wayne, Indiana *News-Sentinel* on Tuesday, June 20, 2006.

Unsung servants

Group promotes service – out of the public eye

With names like Lutheran, St. Joseph's, and Methodist (now Parkview), Fort Wayne's private hospitals are obvious proof of faith's power to inspire generosity and compassion.

No imposing edifice in town bears Sathya Sai Baba's name on it. You've probably never even heard of the good deeds being done in his name, because his followers want it that way. Which is all the more reason to tell their story—a story of how universal themes can unite people of vastly different races, cultures, and religions.

"In their hearts, every person knows that, though the paths may be different, there can be only one god. Our tradition is spiritual, not religious," said Dr. Venkat Kanubaddi, an India-born anesthesiologist and leader of Fort Wayne's 70-member Sathya Sai Baba Center. "The ego divides, but the spirit unites, translating love into selfless action. In service (to others), no one disagrees."

That's a crucial point. Like Dr. Kanubaddi, a Fort Wayne resident for the past 28 years, many of the center's members have Indian and Hindu backgrounds.

But other nationalities and religions are represented too, Kanubaddi said—since the center's universalism accepts all faiths as it promotes personal enlightenment and service to others. The Fort Wayne center is one of about 250 in the United States and 2,200 worldwide. All follow the teachings of their namesake, who was born in India in 1926 and preaches five basic values he says form the foundation of all major religions: truth, right conduct, peace, love, and nonviolence.

Even the name itself—SAI—illustrates the group's mission, Kanubaddi said: "S" for service, "A" for adoration, and "I" for illumination. "Love all, serve all!" Sathya Sai Baba teaches. "Help ever, hurt never!"

Members of the Fort Wayne center are making an impact in ways that belie their relatively small numbers.

Last month, the group sponsored a health fair for about 150 Hispanics at St. Patrick's Catholic Church, and a similar fair for local Burmese before that. Its members—mostly doctors and other professional people—cook spicy Indian vegetarian dishes once a month for residents at the Rescue Mission,

visit the county-owned Byron Health Clinic, and engage in other service projects. You don't hear about it because the center's rules prohibit the seeking of publicity. Nor does it actively recruit new members or solicit donations. Members support the group and its work because they want to help others. They meet weekly for study and devotions at Kanubaddi's home in Sycamore Hills.

Their work is no less appreciated because of its low profile. "They're a very good group of people. We have a great need for medical services, and they wanted to help low-income and uninsured people from the bottom of their hearts. They worked really hard," said Max Montesino, director of the Hispanic Leadership Coalition.

"They've been helping us for years, and people really look forward to their food," said Al Bruner, assistant cook at the Rescue Mission.

Nor did the group's health fairs merely identify medical problems, then leave the treatment—if any—to someone else. Working with local hospitals and free clinics, the center's members provide ongoing care up to and including surgery, Kanubaddi said. They are willing to do that, he said, because excessive attachment to material things "leads men astray."

The Sathya Sai Baba organization operates several free hospitals in India, and may never come close to duplicating that in America, much less Fort Wayne. But, as this city grows more diverse, we should remember how people of various cultures and religions can live together in peace – so long as they do not celebrate those differences at the expense of their common humanity.

—From a column by Kevin Leininger,
kleininger@news-sentinel.com
Reprinted courtesy of the author.



We are very pleased to publish news of Regional Activities in the United States. Happy thanks to those who contributed regional news articles to this issue. —Editors

Homework and Reading Club for Somalian Refugees

In February 2006, the Sathya Sai Baba Center of Beaverton, Oregon began conducting a homework and reading club for Somalians new to the Beaverton area. Brought to the Northwest U.S. by humanitarian groups, the Somalians are refugees from a civil war that has lasted over a decade, and most are members of the Bantu tribe, a group that was persecuted for generations in Africa and has no written language. While most who attend are preschool to high school age, some mothers also attend for assistance in Basic English language instruction. Originally begun as a service project of the Group III (ages 13 – 16) Sai Spiritual Education program, the weekly event now involves many others from the Sai center and some volunteers from the larger community.

Early on in the program, basic computer skills were one focus. To make it more interactive and interesting, children and mothers were directed to online Somalian music and photos of themselves at the homework club. It also had Basic English alphabets pictorially represented. The children also received homework assistance, primarily involving math, reading, and social studies assignments.

After school let out for the summer, the weekly meetings continued. Volunteers read

to the small children and encouraged the older children to read aloud. Crafts projects were also added, since children did not bring homework during the summertime, and volunteers also played basketball and soccer with the children. Some mothers also attended in the summer, socializing and practicing writing the alphabet.

Plans were soon underway for a summer party, complete with food and games, including musical chairs with Hindi music accompaniment. The volunteers learned early on that the children know popular Hindi tunes, and this made for a fast connection with many of the Indian volunteers.

This service project also involves people who contribute from a distance, with other far-reaching effects. Additional books have been donated from New York State (the original books were donated by Beaverton teachers), and two volunteers are considering returning to school to become schoolteachers.

However, the most important aspect of the program, that which seems to bring the Somalian families and volunteers back week after week, is the love and friendship that has developed. While from different cultures, all share the language of the heart.

—Jeanne Lilly

Sathya Sai Baba Center, Beaverton, Oregon

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OUR APOLOGIES: During the printing of address labels for our Sept-Oct 2006 issue, a processing error caused about 500 first and last names to become mismatched. Our thanks to the many readers who inquired about their "new first names." All the names have since been restored to their proper associations. —Editors