

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



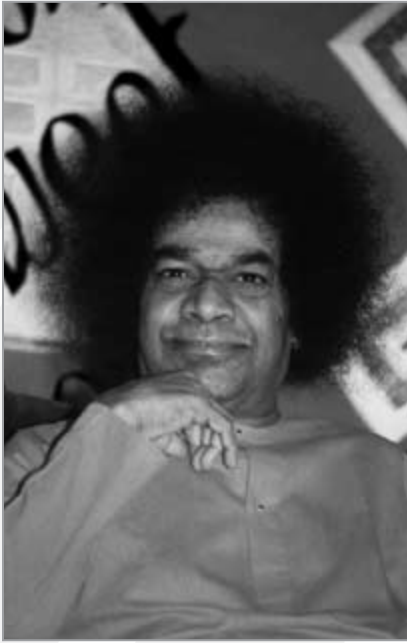
“Follow the Master”

Sai's Message: Knowledge and the Four Fs.....	Sri Sathya Sai Baba	2
The Ultimate Wisdom.....	From <i>Gita Vahini</i> , by Sri Sathya Sai Baba	3
Significance of the Name, Krishna	Sri Sathya Sai Baba	9
Practical Spirituality: A-Z Steps for Applying Swami's Teachings	M. Sairam	10
2008 Festivals and Events – India.....		15
2008 Retreat Dates – USA		15
The Master, Jesus	Sri Sathya Sai Baba	16
Guru Yoga: Following the Master.....	H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche	17
Higher Learning	Sri Sathya Sai Baba	18
Krishna's Footsteps (Poem)	Cara Galluci	20
Sai Service: Love in Action		
Searching for New <i>Seva</i> Opportunities?	Michael Rakoff, MD	22
Region 4: <i>Seva</i> at Ronald McDonald House Family Room.....	Swapnil Deshpande	25
Region 8: Free Pet Health Screening in Southern California.....	Jennie Cornsweet	26
Young Adults (YAs)		
Young Adult USA Report	Sangeeta Lekhi, Daniel Scovill, Dr. Joe Phaneuf	28
USA Youth Program Action Items for 2008.....		30
Region 9: “God Is Love, Love Is God, Live in Love”	Nirmala Venkataramani	32
Sai Children		
What Swami Taught Me in a Dream	Bhavani Ananthabothla	34
Honor the Many Faiths		35
Let's Have a Game.....	<i>Bal Vikas Magazine for Children Ages 1-99 (Italy)</i>	38
SSE Lesson Plan (Group 1): Honor the Many Faiths		39
Sathya Sai Book Center: Selected Books from Our List	Sathya Sai Book Center Volunteers	40

PLEASE NOTE THE NEW WEB ADDRESS FOR THE SATHYA SAI BOOK CENTER OF AMERICA:

www.sathyasaibooksUSA.org

SAI'S MESSAGE



Knowledge and the Four Fs

Students! As I have told you repeatedly, knowledge can be classified into five categories: bookish knowledge, superficial knowledge, general knowledge, discriminatory knowledge, and practical knowledge. [First,] general knowledge and common sense are very much essential. [Then,] you should set an ideal by exercising practical knowledge and following the four Fs.

The first F is “Follow the Master.” Who is your master? Conscience is your master. So, follow your conscience.

The second F is “Face the devil.”

The third F is “Fight to the end.”

The fourth F is “Finish the game.” Play the game of life in the true spirit of sportsmanship.

Students lack self-confidence. Confidence in the Self (inner divinity) is very essential. Lack of confidence in the Self will lead to depression. Today, 90 percent of the people are afflicted with depression. Depression will lead to weakness of mind. “A weak-minded person cannot realize the Atma.”* If you have confidence in the Self, you will never be weak-minded.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

SSS 31:42, Nov. 22, 1998, “Fuse Spirituality with Education”

* “*Nayamatma balahinena labhyah.*” Mundaka Upanishad 3.2.4.

The Ultimate Wisdom

Krishna and Arjuna: The Ideal Master Instructs the Ideal Disciple

Who, then, is the genuine guru? It is he who teaches the path of destroying *moha* or delusion. And who is the genuine *sishtya* or disciple? It is he who seeks to control and conquer the outward-fleeing mind. The gurus of today shout every day from their platforms what they have stuffed into their heads the previous night under the midnight lamp. Their performance is only like regurgitating food that has been swallowed, nothing more. Their speech is like parrots, reproducing what they have learned by rote.

Even children know that greed and anger have to be mastered. But in these people, greed and anger, envy and hatred, lust and pride, pop up their devilish heads through every little utterance, every little deed they do. If those who claim to be gurus do not themselves master these propensities, then how can their unfortunate disciples succeed?

If the guru is supremely self-sacrificing, saturated with selfless *sarvajana-samana* (sympathy based on equal treatment to all), seeking to sustain truth, his soul suffused with strength-giving thoughts, striving to secure sorrowless lives for all, leading a sweet and simple life, satisfied only by the chance to show others *san-marga* (the noble path) and *sath-guna* (true and noble

qualities)—perhaps a few disciples will gather around him.

And even then, those few will impose upon him faults that sully him and cast doubt upon his integrity and genuineness! But the guru will remain as serene as ever, for he suffers no loss. The loss is all for the *sishtyas*, who let go the great chance.

Cast Aside Body Consciousness

Of one thing, be certain. As long as the delusion that one is the body is not cast aside, God cannot be realized, however far one may wander, whatever the number of gurus one might select and serve. Stick to that delusion, and all the *dhyana* (meditation), all the *japam* (repetition of the names of God), all the waters of all the holy *thirthams* (sacred waters, pilgrimage centers) that you bathe in, cannot win success for you! All your effort is as useless as trying to bail water with a bucket riddled with leaks.

Householders who carry out their duties are any day preferable to such *sadhus* (seekers). For, such householders follow their *ashrama dharma* (life duties, social role) and tread the correct path in unceasing remembrance of the Lord, and so these householders realize the goal.

If the nature of the gurus and *sishtyas* of today were to be fully expounded upon, volumes could be written. But that would use up precious time for nonessential discussion. So we shall revert to our main topic. For, to dwell on the sacred teacher-student bond of Krishna-Arjuna even in the same breath with the relationship of the present day “gurus” and “disciples” would be a sacrilege.

The Supreme Pair

Krishna and Arjuna were unique and incomparable; they were a supreme pair, unmatched by any other. They should be taken as an ideal by all aspirants and teachers. Arjuna bowed in humility and carried out sincerely the precepts of the guru. Krishna, in turn, fostered what was really beneficial to Arjuna. He paid full consideration to what would truly promote Arjuna’s reputation, *Atmananda* (bliss of realizing the Divine Self), and *dharma* (duties, role). He tended Arjuna and fended for him as his very life-breath. The Lord was that type of guru for Arjuna.

Krishna is *Paramatma* (the Creator). Arjuna is *jivatma* (the embodied being). Krishna is *Purushothama* (Lord of all, highest of the *purushas* or persons). Arjuna is *narothama* (the best among men). For these reasons, they constitute the ideal master and disciple.

Others are guru and *sishtya* only in name. Self-willed *sishtyas* and power-drunk gurus are simply wasting their lives in vain pursuits.

Krishna was an ocean of *prema* (love). He watched over Arjuna as one watches

over the eye or the heart. He taught holiness and transformed Arjuna into holiness. He loved and was loved beyond compare. Such qualities make the guru a genuine guru.

And Arjuna? He too was no ordinary being. His *thyaga* (detachment, surrender) was unapproachable. Whatever the crisis, he stuck to Krishna’s command and Krishna’s word. He wore the comradeship of the Lord as a protective armor that could save him from all harm, as if the very body in which he dwelt was something that he must foster, strengthen, and guard. And though a mighty force, he was ready to efface himself when necessary. This is how master and student should be bound together.

The Benefits and Glory of *Atma Jnana*

The Lord, the embodiment of love, realized the sincerity of such a disciple, estimated Arjuna’s attainments, and thereupon detailed to him the benefits and glory of *Atma jnana* (knowledge of the Self):

“Kauntheya,”* Krishna said, “by means of *jnana* (wisdom), you can see, in yourself and in me, all things. Then, duality and the consequent delusion will disappear, as darkness disperses before the rising sun.

“Arjuna, I know well your past and the background of your birth. Yours is no ordinary birth. You are born with divine (*daivi*) accomplishments and a divine heritage. I, alone, am aware of this, and no one else. Since you are unaware of it, you are now condemning yourself as a sinner who kills kith and kin, teachers and elders!

* “Son of Kunthi” (Kunthi was Arjuna’s mother).

“Even if you have sinned, are not sinners saved? Repentance is enough to transmute sin into sanctity. The Lord graciously accepts contrition and thereupon pours out his blessings. The one known as Rathnakara, who was engaged in sinful acts until the moment wisdom dawned, became a saint through repentance. He became the great sage, Valmiki, is it not so? His story alone is proof of the value of contrition.

The Mighty Fire of Wisdom: Develop Faith, Destroy Doubt

“You may ask, is it enough if one is free from the effects of sin? Should not the effects of *punya* (merit, good deeds) also be given up? Why, one does have the freedom to give up the accumulated merit of *punya*, though one may not have equal freedom to give up the demerits of *papa* (sin). But the roaring forest fire reduces to ashes everything in its path, and so, too, the mighty conflagration of *jnana* (wisdom) consumes and destroys both sin and merit.

“To acquire this sacred spiritual wisdom or *jnana*, one thing is essential: *sraddha*, unwavering faith in the *shastras* (scriptures), in the teachers, and in the acquisition of *jnana*. Without such earnestness born of faith, no task, however tiny, can be accomplished by man. Therefore, you can see how essential this earnestness is for earning wisdom.

“*Sraddha* is an incomparable treasure chest containing *sama* (control of senses), *dama* (self-control, patience), *uparathi* (mind control through withdrawing the senses from sensory objects), *thithiksha* (vigilance, fortitude), and *samadhana* (mind control through equipoise)—each one by itself a coveted possession.



The roaring forest fire reduces to ashes everything in its path, and so, too, the mighty conflagration of jnana (wisdom) consumes and destroys both sin and merit.

“But *sraddha* is only the first step. You must yearn to imbibe the teachings I am imparting. This is most necessary. Along with these, you must also be vigilant; you must not yield to sloth. Again, you may fall

into company that is not congenial or encouraging. To escape the evil influence of such company and to strengthen your mind to avoid it altogether, mastery over the senses is required.

“Do not admit doubt into you. Want of faith or steadiness is not as destructive as the venom of doubt. In its operation and consequence, doubt is like tubercular bacilli. It is born in *ajnana* (ignorance) and penetrates into the cavity of the heart and breeds there. Doubt is the parent of disaster.

“Therefore, destroy the demon of doubt with the sword of Self-knowledge (*Atma jnana*). Arise, Arjuna! Engage in activity as if duty bound, and having full faith in my words, do as I bid, with no thought of the fruit therefrom. Be a practitioner of

nishkama karma (action without attachment to results). By such renunciation, you will become established in wisdom; you will win liberation from change, from birth and death.

What to Give Up

“Give up the idea that you are the doer and that you are the beneficiary. You can do this by dedicating both the deed and its fruit to the Lord. Then, no sin can affect you, for you are not the doer, and the deed must perforce be holy. Like oil on the tongue, collyrium (eye balm) on the eye, or a lotus leaf on water, the deed is with you, but not of you. Whatever you do, hear, or see, you remain unaffected, devoid of deeds, innocent of listening or seeing.

“Joy derived from the external world opens the gateways of grief; it is fleeting. But you are eternal, the very source of bliss, above and beyond all this, the *Atma swarupa* (embodiment of the inner consciousness, God) itself.

“This is your genuine nature. You are unrelated to these activities that you call deeds and these consequences that you now mistake as real. You are not the doer, you are just the witness, the onlooker! All your perplexity has arisen from the delusion that you are the doer, from your ego and the sense of ‘mine.’

“Know God(*Brahman*). Take up the tasks but renounce the consequences. The giving up of the fruit of activity is far superior to the giving up of activity itself. *Karma yoga* (achieving union with God through action) is far superior to *karma sanyasa* (renunciation of action).

“But *dhyana yoga* (achieving union with God via meditation) is superior to both, and I shall tell you why: *dhyana yoga* is supported by *karma yoga*, and this is why *karma yoga* was taught to you first.

“Those who renounce the fruits of actions while actively engaged in them are very dear to me; they are the true *sanyasins*, the real renunciants. But I have no affection for those who give up the ritual fire and desist from all activity except eating, sleeping, craving for sensory pleasures, and behaving like Kumbhakarna’s* kinsmen, idling and wasting their time. I am unapproachably far from idlers.

“He who has not renounced the pursuit of desires can never become a yogi, however industrious he may be in *sadhana* (spiritual practice). Only he who is careful to stay unentangled in the senses and who is unattached to the consequences of his deeds can become a *sarva-sanga-parithyagi* (renouncer of all attachments).

* Kumbhakarna was a monstrous, ravenous demon in the Ramayana epic.



Joy derived from the external world opens the gateways of grief; it is fleeting. But you are eternal, the very source of bliss, above and beyond all this.

Dhyana Yoga (Meditation)

“*Dhyana yoga* is possible only on the basis of this *nishkama karma* (action without attachment to results). If the mind is not under control and amenable to one’s orders, it can become one’s greatest foe. So, live in solitude, in order that you may master the senses. A horse without reins, a bull unused to the yoke, and a *sadhaka* (spiritual seeker) whose senses are not mastered are all like a river without water. Such *sadhana* is a waste.

“So arise, Arjuna! Practice *dhyana yoga* (meditation). Resolve to master the senses through this yoga and follow it steadily, systematically, regularly, at a stated time, and in a stated place, and without changing these as the whim takes you. A regular system is essential for this yoga. Observe it strictly. Do not alter as fancy dictates; that will bring about dire consequences.

“For those who eat too much and get exhausted with the task of assimilating it, for those who eat too little and suffer from exhaustion, for those who sleep too much or too little, for those who indulge in *dhyana* according to ‘convenience’ (that is to say, those who do it for long hours one day because they have no other work to do, and do just token *dhyana* the next day because they have lots of work to do), for those who give free rein to the six inner enemies (*kama* or desire, lust, greed, *krodha* or anger, and the rest), for those who do not confer joy on their parents, especially the mother—more than all these, for those who entertain doubt and have little faith in the Lord, or in the

guru whom they have chosen and installed in their hearts—meditation will yield no fruit at all.

“The mind of the yoga adept should be like the steady, upright, unshaken flame of a lamp, kept in a windless windowsill. Whenever the slightest sign of unsteadiness occurs, endeavor to curb the mind and not allow it to wander.

“Develop the consciousness that ‘you’ are in all, and the feeling of oneness that ‘all’ is in you. Then you can take up and succeed in all the yogas. Then you are free from all distinctions, such as ‘I’ and ‘others,’ or ‘*Atma*’ (soul) and ‘*Paramatma*’ (God). The joy and grief of others will then become equally yours. You can then never harm others. Then all can be loved and adored in the awareness that they are *Sarveswara* (the Omnipresent Lord).”

The Mind Can Be Mastered by Steady Practice

Lord Krishna thus declared that those who have attained this vision are truly supreme yogis. Meanwhile, Arjuna was beset by doubt and asked for some elucidation and explanation, so that he might become convinced:

“Krishna! All that you have been telling me is very pleasant to the ear, and I can well imagine that it must be a source of *ananda* (bliss) to those who attain success. But it is so difficult and beyond the reach of all! The yoga where everything has to be realized as equal (*samathwam* or equanimity) is fraught with obstacles, even for the fully-equipped seeker. What hope then is there for people

like me, who are common aspirants? Is it ever possible for us? Krishna! Is the mind so easily controllable?

“Alas, even an elephant cannot drag as the mind does. The mind is a nursery of waywardness. Its mulishness and obstinacy are also very powerful. It is a terrible shrew. It can never be caught. It never stays put in one place. Attempting to catch the mind and tame it is like capturing the wind or bundling up water. How can anyone enter into yoga with such a mind?

“One seems as hard as the other—the twin tasks of controlling the mind and practicing yoga. Krishna, you are advising an impossible task, one that is beyond anyone’s capacity!”

The Lord broke into a smile upon hearing these words.

“Arjuna! You have described the mind and recognized its nature very well. But taming it is not an impossible task. The mind can be mastered, however difficult the task might be. By systematic practice (*abhyasa*) and by relentless inquiry (*vichara*) and detachment (*vairagya*), the mind can be mastered. There is no task that cannot be accomplished by steady practice. Place faith in the Lord, and practice with the certainty that you have the power and the Lord’s grace—and all tasks become easy.

“Therefore, whoever embarks upon this *sadhana* (spiritual practice) with determination will attain the supreme goal, available only for souls who have become transmuted through various births. Remember that the person who has achieved *yoga* (union with God) is superior to the

person who is the master of ritual *karma* (actions). So strive, O Arjuna, to become a *yogi* (merged one), to attain that high and holy status.

The Ultimate Wisdom

“But this is not all you must do. There is a status higher even than a yogi. Whoever fixes his entire consciousness in me, whoever earnestly meditates on me, to the exclusion of everything else—he is superior to all; he is a *mahayogi*.

“*Dhyana yoga* (the path of meditation) and *jnana yoga* (the path of wisdom/insight) are both inner disciplines based on *sraddha* (steady faith) and *bhakti* (devotion). But without these two qualities, both disciplines are unattainable; their pursuit itself is in vain. A *sadhaka* who is deprived of steady faith and devotion will remain like a wooden doll, lifeless and unaware of the goal.

“The basic requisite for these is deep-rooted love for the Lord. How can you get this deep-seated love? By getting to know the glory, the splendor, the nature, and the characteristics of the Lord, his *swabhava* (essential quality or feeling), and his *swarupa* (reality, being), which is why I am now instructing you about these. I am imparting to you fully the wisdom of the *shastras*, supplemented by the wisdom of inner experience. Know that there is nothing further for you to know.”

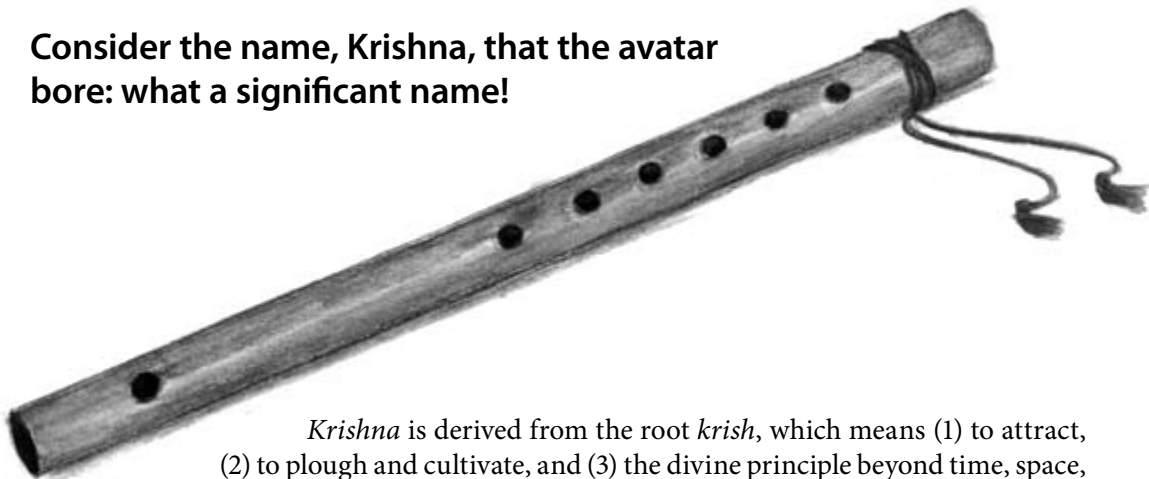
—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

From *Gita Vahini*, Chapter 11

Significance of the Name, *Krishna*

The One Who Attracts All and Cultivates Wisdom in All

Consider the name, Krishna, that the avatar bore: what a significant name!



Krishna is derived from the root *krish*, which means (1) to attract, (2) to plough and cultivate, and (3) the divine principle beyond time, space, and causation. Krishna, like all avatars, attracts not only seekers, saints, and sages, but also the simple, the innocent, and the good. He draws also the curious, the critics, the skeptics, and those who suffer from atheism.

He draws them toward himself by the irresistible charm of his person, by his invincible look, his voice, his flute, his counsel, and his undaunted heroism. He is ever in a state of bliss, spreading harmony, melody, and beauty all around him.

He sings everywhere—in the peaceful pasture and lands of Brindavan, and on the blood-soaked battlefield of Kurukshetra. He holds the flute in one hand and wields the whip in the other. But what emerges is meaningful, moving music—either the melodious song of the flute (*venugana*), or the [mighty truth of the] Bhagavad Gita! *Gana* and *gita* both mean song!

Why does he attract all to his presence? To plough the heart, to prepare it for receiving the shower of grace, to grow the seeds of love, to weed it of all evil thoughts that smother the crops of joy, and to enable it to gather the harvest of wisdom. That wisdom finds its fulfillment in Krishna himself, for *Krishna* also means Pure Essence, Supreme Principle, and *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss).

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

SSS 11:45, Aug. 31, 1972, “The Simplest Remedy”

Krishna Janmasthami, a day honoring the incarnation of the Lord as Krishna in the Dwapara Age, over five thousand years ago—that same Lord who has taken birth as the Sai avatar today, will be observed this year on Sunday, August 24, 2008.

Practical Spirituality

A-Z Steps for Applying Swami's Teachings



~ a ~

Awaken with God (Swami) when you get up in the morning. Awaken him from within your heart, and accept him into your life at all times. Even though he is ever awake (he never sleeps), be aware of his presence within.

As Swami says, "**Awareness** is life," so we must develop "constant integrated awareness," which is our true **awakening**.

~ b ~

Believe that he will guide your day to fulfill your purpose in life (which is to go back to him, for, we all came from him).

Be aware of his presence at all times.

Bring him into your thoughts, words, and actions/deeds, so that you can **become** him.

~ c ~

Call on him at all times. Of course, when you are in trouble, if you call on him from the bottom of your heart, he will protect you.

Gajendra, the elephant, called on God, not from ego but from the bottom of his heart, and God came and saved Gajendra. Similarly, he saved Draupadi from being put to shame and saved her from the curse of sage Durvasa. So, call on him both in good times and troubled times, sincerely giving up your ego, and he will **come** to your rescue.

Cultivate the three Ds that he teaches: duty, discipline, and devotion.

Consider your attitude and feeling when you think, speak, and act, for according to your feeling (*bhavam*), God will **come close** to you and take **care** of you.

Chant his name whenever you can, either silently or aloud.

~ d ~

Dedicate all your activities and their results (fruits), in thought, word, and deed—laying everything done with your ten sense organs, mind, and *buddhi* (intellect, discrimination), at his lotus feet, and you will be relieved from the resulting karma. This is true surrender. So, take a moment when you awaken in the morning and remember this dedication prayer.

~ e ~

Empower yourself to adhere to his teachings throughout the day.

Enthusiastically follow his words of wisdom, day in and day out.

Entrust your troubles, worries, plans, and projects—**everything**—to him.

~ f ~

Find opportunities to **feel** his presence within.

Fear will run away, when we have **faith** in his omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience.

Find peace and contentment in him.

~ g ~

Give truthfully, from your heart, whatever you give throughout the day, feeling that you are only giving what Swami has given you in the first place. Be aware that when we were born, we came in with nothing!

Gratitude is the true prayer to him. So, be grateful, truly, from the bottom of your heart, for what you are, what you do, and what you have.

Get God involved in all you think, speak, and do throughout the day.

Give God the *first* choice of your time, effort, money, and thinking; then, see what happens!

~ h ~

Have faith in his presence within you as you go along with your life, and **hear him** speak, in the form of your conscience.

~ i ~

Invite him into your life daily. Invite him to think with you, speak with you, and act with you.

Install him in your heart.

~ j ~

Join in his *satsang* (company). Join his company, so that he can mold you into a beautiful **jewel of wisdom**, to be offered again to him only!

~ k ~

Know him to be your Indweller. Know that he is your oldest friend, who was with you before, is with you now, and will be with you forever and ever, for eternity. Know him, and he will confer on you all that you need to know!

~ l ~

Let him work through you, and there will be no more duty. Let him shine forth. Let him show himself.

Live God, eat God, drink God, breathe God. Live in truth.

Love yourself and others truthfully; love all creation and the Creator.

Leave the results (fruits) of your thoughts, words, and deeds to him. Just do your duty, with discipline and devotion to him.

Life with God is an endless hope; life without him is a hopeless end!

~ m ~

Meditate on him.

Make him your partner in all you think, speak, and act, day and night.

~ n ~

Never deviate from truth, for he is truth itself.

Nonviolence is one of the five pillars he teaches, so be nonviolent in thought, word, and deed.

~ o ~

Offer him everything you think, speak, and do. Offer your body (a leaf) to Swami. Offer your compassionate heart (a flower) to Swami. Offer the results of your actions (fruit) to Swami. Offer the joyful tears (water) that emanate out of your compassionate heart when you are grateful to him for all he provides.

~ p ~

Put aside your worries.

Picture him in your heart, and know that he will offer you solace when you most need it.

Practice or **put into practice** his words and messages.

~ q ~

Qualify yourself to receive his grace, by totally surrendering to him your every thought, word, and deed.

Remember that he seeks **quality** of spiritual effort, not quantity.

~ r ~

Respect all of creation. In this way, you respect him, the Creator. When you respect all things, both inanimate and animate, you will not misuse or waste time, money, food, or energy.

Remember him, even if it is just for a moment, before taking action. This is what he calls “constant integrated awareness.” Even a small task becomes an offering to God, if you just remember him before starting, and then concentrate on what you do.

~ s ~

Speak to him—he who resides in your heart—at any time. **See him** in everything and everyone.

Slowly, steadily, bit by bit, when you follow this practice, it enables you to “help ever and hurt never,” as he says, and to “love all and serve all.”

Sacrifice your life to truth.

When you do this, you experience Swami as love in thought and word (truth), love in action (*dharma*), love as understanding (peace), and love as feeling (nonviolence).

Swami is before you; he will be your guide. Swami is behind you; no evil can follow you. Swami is beside you, to comfort and cheer you. Swami is around you, so why should you fear?

~ t ~

Trust him, 100 percent, sincerely, with all your heart and mind.

Think of him whenever you can, day in and day out.

Consider these **two steps** in implementing Swami’s **teachings**—accepting them, and acting on them!

~ u ~

Understand that he is the divine director, or string-puller, and that we are the actors; listen to him and play your role as best you can, surrendering the results to him.

Use your time with wisdom.

~ V ~

Value his teachings, and take them sincerely to heart. When you follow whatever he says, he will give you the ultimate goodness, joy, and bliss.

~ W ~

Worship him through as many of the forms of devotion as possible.

WATCH your **W** (words) – **A** (actions) – **T** (thoughts) – **C** (character) – and **H** (heart)!

Whenever you have time, repeat his name, keeping the form in your mind.

~ X ~

“Xerox” him. Swami says, “My life is my message,” so imitate him, for who else other than God can be your best role model!

~ Y ~

Yearn for him, and all other things will beat their way to your door.

You are him, as he is the Indweller or Atma.

~ Z ~

Have unending **zeal** for him, as he is *sathyam* (truth), *shivam* (goodness), and *sundaram* (beauty).

Have **zest** for the goal—to realize yourself!

Zzzzzzzzzzz ... All right, it is time to go bed. So, take a moment and say to him, “Swami, I dedicated all the activities undertaken today in thought, word, and deed, through the ten sense organs, mind, and buddhi—and all their results (fruits)—by laying them at your lotus feet.

“Your divine *sankalpa* (will), divine love, and divine blessings have made me aware throughout the day that you are the thinker and the thought, the speaker and the spoken, the doer and the deed, and that you did everything through me, for I am your instrument.

“Now this instrument (me) has come back to rest in your divine lap. With your divine lotus feet installed in my heart and your divine name in my mind, I will sleep peacefully and be ready for service to you in the morning.”

—M. Sairam

Columbia, South Carolina

Festival and Events - India

For further background on these and other holy days observed in Prasanthi Nilayam, please visit: <http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/Pages/AshramInfo/festivals.htm>.

July 13 (Sunday): Ashadi Ekadashi Culmination day of a mass pilgrimage, on foot, of devotees from Maharashtra and Goa, honoring Vishnu, combined in recent years with *grama seva* (village service projects) en route.

July 18 (Friday): Guru Purnima Annual day honoring one's spiritual preceptor or guide.

July 20-22 (Sunday-Tuesday) Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference (Although delegates for this conference are by invitation only, the plenary sessions in the divine presence will be open to all.)

August 24 (Sunday): Krishna Janmashtami A day honoring Krishna, the Avatar of Vishnu of the Dwapara Age, who has taken birth as the Sai Avatar today.

September 3 (Wednesday): Ganesh Chaturthi A day honoring the Lord as "Remover of Obstacles."

September 12 (Friday): Onam Keralese cultural and harvest festival symbolizing surrender to Vishnu, just as Emperor Bali surrendered ages ago to Vamana, an avatar of Vishnu.

2008 Retreat Dates - USA

Region 5 (North Central): Devotional Music as a Pathway to God. Aug. 29-Sept. 1, 2008 (Labor Day weekend), at Camp Henry Horner, 26710 W. Nippersink Road, Ingleside, IL 60041. Speakers: Linda Gallagher, Paul Erhard. Contact: Vijay Sai Reddy, Regional Communications Coordinator, 847-452-2777, info@sathyasaicenters.org.

Region 6 (Pacific North): Aug. 30-Sept. 1, 2008, at the conference center at Silver Falls State Park, Oregon (silverfallsconference.com/index.htm). Contact: Ram Pochincherla, 503-531-0490 (h), 503-261-3452 (c), rampochincherla@yahoo.com.

Region 9 (Southwest), New Mexico: Land of Enchantment Retreat, Aug. 29-Sept. 1, 2008, at the Bodhi Mandala Zen Center, Jemez Springs, NM. Speakers: Leonardo Gutter, Wendy and Jeremy Hoffer. Contact: Elaine Hausman, 505-660-0283, ehausman@rockridge.biz.

Region 9 (Southwest), Colorado: The Golden Age: We Are His Message! Oct. 3-5, 2008, at Temple Hills (outside of Woodland Park, CO). Contact: Terri Dodd, 303-371-6160, t.dodd@att.net.

For retreat updates online, refer to: www.sathyasai.org/organize/z1reg01/contents.html.

The Master, Jesus

Learn the Language of Love

This “negative” body has the “positive,” divinity, within it. When you become all-embracing infinite love, the divine will manifest in and through you. Try to be like Jesus. Jesus was a person whose only joy lay in spreading divine love, offering divine love, receiving divine love, and living on divine love. ...

We become true Christians only when we live according to the teachings of Christ and practice them in daily life. If we could follow even two of his teachings, that would be enough. Christ said, “All life is one, my dear son! Be alike to every one.” ...

Men may have different languages and lifestyles, but God is one, and he is present everywhere. All religions speak of God as love and as attainable through love. Forms of worshipping God differ, for they are shaped by time and place, but love is the basic content of all the forms. **The language of love is understood and spoken by all hearts.**

There is only one race, the race of humanity. People now consider petty distinctions such as nationality, race, religion, and language as vital. They hold back love, but love must flow to everyone from the heart. That was the life and message of Jesus. Nurture his message in your hearts. Experience Jesus as your messenger sent from God.

Love alone can reveal the divinity latent in all. Love is God. Live in love. ... Love is self-lessness; selfishness is love-lessness. Do not waste your life pursuing the narrow interests of the self. Love! Love! Become what you truly are—embodiments of love.

No matter how others treat you or what they think of you, do not worry. Follow Jesus Christ. Love for your own evolution and not for what others say. Do not imitate others. Cultivate your own life. You have your own heart, your own opinion, your own ideas, your own will. Why then imitate? Imitation is human, they say, but creation is divine. Follow your chosen path. Let your own experience of God be your guide and master. Do not go to your grave, weakly copying others. You won’t find God by searching in the outside world. Your own heart, shining with love, is God’s love. Follow the master. Face the devil. Fight to the end, and finish the game. You are God. The true you is God. ... Constantly remind yourself, “I am God, I am God, I am God.” The day you see yourself as God, you become God. ...

Jesus teaches infinite love and compassion. To resurrect love and compassion, you must kill jealousy and selfishness, and purify your hearts. Earn the true mercy of Jesus. Follow the path shown by him and reach the position he holds.

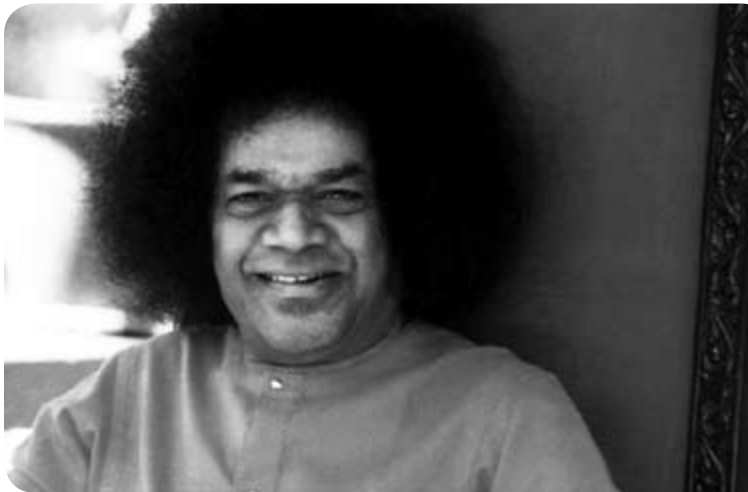
—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

(SSS 14:45, Dec. 25, 1979, “The Way of Jesus”)

Guru Yoga: Following the Master

The words *guru yoga* mean “union with the nature of the guru,” and in this practice we are given methods by which we can blend our own minds with the enlightened mind of the master. The master—the guru—embodies the crystallization of the blessings of all buddhas, masters, and enlightened beings. So, to invoke him or her is to invoke them all; and to merge your mind and heart with your master’s “wisdom mind” is to merge your mind with the truth and the very embodiment of enlightenment.

The master is like a great ship for beings to cross the perilous ocean of existence, an unerring captain who guides them to the dry land of liberation, a rain that extinguishes the fire of the passions, a bright sun and moon that dispel the darkness of ignorance, a firm ground that can bear the weight of both good and bad, a wish-fulfilling tree that bestows temporal happiness and ultimate bliss, a treasury of vast and deep instructions, a wish-fulfilling jewel granting all the qualities of realization, a father and a mother giving their love equally to all sentient beings, a great river of compassion, a mountain rising above worldly concerns unshaken by the winds of emotions, and a great cloud filled with rain to soothe the torments of the passions. In brief, he is the equal of all the buddhas. To make any connection with him, whether through seeing him, hearing his voice, remembering him, or being touched by his hand, will lead us toward liberation. To have full confidence in him is the sure way to progress toward enlightenment. The warmth of his wisdom and compassion will melt the core of our being and release the gold of the buddha-nature within.



—H.H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910-1991)

Higher Learning

Awareness of Divinity Is the Ultimate Goal of Education

The human body is the most wondrous machine in the world. It has a bewildering multiplicity of limbs, organs, veins, nerves, and cells, which cooperate to maintain it under varied conditions. If any one of these rebels or refuses to rescue another, the body is bound to suffer.

So, too, a society, community, or nation, can be safe, secure, and happy, only when the individuals comprising it are mutually helpful and bound together in skillful and sincere service. Every generation has to receive education and training in such intelligent cooperation and service, or else the world will face confusion and chaos.

The educational process has not received proper attention from thoughtful persons. The institutions that ought to have been temples of Saraswati (the goddess of transformation through learning) have become in all lands temples of Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth). The ideal held before tender, innocent, unselfish children is one of attaining a lucrative job instead of a life of peace, contentment, and love. Narrow loyalties, contest, and competition are polluting the minds of children. Parents, teachers, and all interested in the progress of humankind must take note of this situation.

Teaching and learning have become mechanical routines and have lost the freshness and joy that vitality alone can give. **The value of the teaching process lies in raising the level of consciousness of the learner, in heightening the sense of wonder and awe, and in emphasizing the unity of one with all.** The destiny of a country is decided by the ideals implanted by the teachers in the minds of the boys and girls entrusted to their care. Education must pay attention not merely to the material and intellectual progress of the pupils but, even more, to their moral and spiritual progress. Education should help man to live a meaningful life. It should not direct all efforts toward providing a livelihood.

Education can claim success only when it results in the student gaining awareness of the divinity that is inherent in himself and others. No academic degree can confer as much self-confidence and self-satisfaction, or lead students as quickly and gladly to self-sacrifice and self-realization, as that awareness. Awareness of one's divinity must be transmitted by teachers who have it, through a sense of duty and a spirit of love. Then, it has to be accepted by students who have cultivated faith in the teacher and

Education can claim success only when it results in the student gaining awareness of the divinity that is inherent in himself and others. . . .

reverence for the teacher's role. The pot that pours and the pot that receives have to be steady and straight, eager to give and gain.

If the teacher has the responsibility to inspire and illumine, the student has the responsibility to respond to that love and light, discarding all contrary thoughts. Thoughts that arise from the region of the pleasant (*preyas*) cannot coexist with those that arise from the tough challenges of higher life (*sreyas*). The student must be equipped to prefer the latter to the former.

The higher life that makes man human and a fit candidate for the unfoldment of the divinity that is his reality, depends on the cultivation of the five cardinal virtues—truth, right conduct, love, peace, and nonviolence. These virtues elevate the individual as well as the society of which he is a part.

The teacher must watch his or her every word and gesture, every action and reaction, in order to avoid any compromise of these virtues. For, the teacher is, for the pupils, the ideal, the example to whom their parents have entrusted them. Women teachers can discharge this responsibility better than men; children can be molded more easily through the sweetness and softness that maternal affection implies, rather than through fatherly advice and admonition.

The atmosphere of love should not be disturbed by any uncharitable remark against anyone's faith. Nor should anyone be ridiculed or slandered. Children's minds should not be polluted by fear, hatred, or disgust. The doors of their hearts must be open to all. Later on, as the impact of society and the state grows, pupils can be led to an understanding of the political and religious forces that will affect their lives.

Students must be encouraged to “*follow the master* (the inner voice of conscience), *face the devil* (the down-dragging anti-social urges), *fight to the end* (until one is able to overcome the inner foes of lust, anger, greed, undue attachment, pride, and hatred), *and finish the game* (of life on earth).” This duty is referred to in the Bhagavad Gita as *swadharma* (one's ultimate obligation to oneself); one's duties related to the world are defined as *paradharma*. Of these two, *swadharma* is more vital and valuable.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
(SSS 19:29, Dec. 28, 1986,
“The Teacher and Tomorrow”)

The Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference will take place July 20-22, 2008, at Prasanthi Nilayam.

Krishna's Footsteps

*Tonight the sky
is vermillion and orange,
the silk of your robe, my Lord,
spread out across the horizon.
Black silhouettes of trees,
bony fingers raised in prayer
to touch the hem of your garment,
and flames of light
dancing on the water
as your footsteps ripple
the dusky pond.*

*You come in silent splendor
to catch me half-aware,
a flame that burns
with such serenity
that I don't mind its sear.
You are the fire and the salve,
you the bitter herb and then
the healing sweet.*

*The sound of your flute
is this musical silence
filling the sky, so beautiful
and so vast,
my heart stops to stare.*



*And then, of course, I know
it's you—coming with silent sweetness,
the One who steals hearts
to churn them into butter
and melt them into ghee,
separating out the impurities,
until all that remains runs gold and clear.*

*Tomorrow is your birthday,
and this vision is your gift to me,
as you steal to earth for this brief moment
to remind me that nothing I do
is ever without you!*

—Cara Galluci
Hingham, Massachusetts

*Composed at Strait's Pond, Cohasset, Massachusetts
For Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

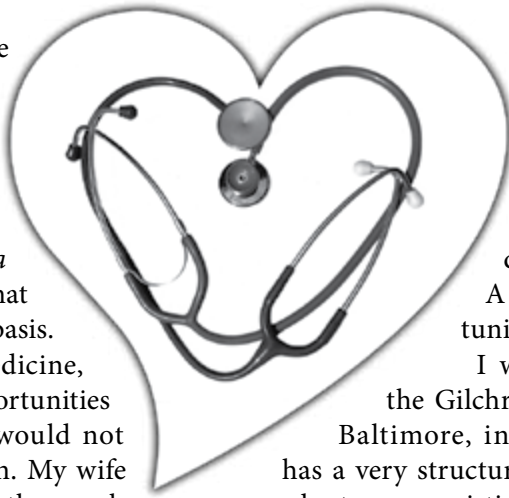
Searching for New Seva Opportunities?

A Retired Physician Branches Out into Hospice and Healthcare Volunteering

Over the past couple of years I have been fortunate to be able to decrease my work week in half. With the new time available, I was searching for new *seva* (service) opportunities that I could do on a regular basis. I no longer practice medicine, so I was looking for opportunities in healthcare where I would not be serving as a physician. My wife and I now spend every other week in rural West Virginia, and alternate weeks at our home in the Baltimore area, so I wanted to find *seva* opportunities in both locations. I am writing about my search and the resulting experience to share with other devotees who may also be looking for such opportunities.

Hospice Volunteer

Because of my experiences as a physician and as an emergency room director, I have often worked with dying patients and families of patients who died. I knew that I would feel comfortable working in a hospice situation. The funding rules set up by Medicare require that every hospice must provide a significant amount of volunteer hours for helping patients



and their families. Therefore, all hospices that receive federal funding must have a volunteer program. Various volunteer opportunities exist, depending on the hospice. A variety of training opportunities are also possible.

I was fortunate to locate the Gilcrest Center at Hospice of Baltimore, in Maryland. This group has a very structured training program for volunteers, consisting of three-hour sessions over six consecutive weeks. The staff from the hospice (mostly social workers) teaches the philosophy of hospice: patients, when they have exhausted all standard medical treatments, should be allowed to die with dignity and without pain. Some patients are admitted to a hospice facility for their last days; others are helped at home. In addition to the services of doctors, nurses, and social workers, many volunteers help by talking with patients, helping with housekeeping chores, driving patients to medical appointments, and so on.

The Hospice of Baltimore also offers bereavement counseling to families of those who have died. Volunteers who want to lead groups must attend three additional three-

hour trainings, observe a six-session group counseling cycle, then co-lead another six-session group counseling cycle. This is the area where I chose to participate.

My experience has been extremely rewarding. Our first group of twelve client participants started their first 90-minute session as very quiet, obviously-in-pain mourners. Their loved ones had passed from three to twelve months earlier, and they were struggling with their grief. Through carefully structured curricula and expert leadership, over the six-week session, the participants worked through their pain, became friends, and were able to start moving on with their lives. The sessions are spiritual and nondenominational.

Volunteers do not need a medical background. The only requirements are a desire to serve, being nonjudgmental, and being an engaged listener and supporter. From speaking with other Sai devotees in other cities, I have found that not all hospices have extensive training programs, and some volunteers just talk to patients or sing to them. If you inquire, you can easily find a program that you are comfortable with.

Free Clinic Volunteer

My wife, Susan, and I were in rural West Virginia and needed to do some house repairs. A friend told us about a new Home Depot about 20 miles away in Charles Town, so we went to find it. We didn't realize we had missed a turn. We drove through the small town, realized our mistake, and pulled into a parking lot to turn around. It was the parking lot for the Eastern Panhandle Free Clinic. When we saw *Free Clinic*, we knew that Swami had directed us

there, so we went in and asked if they had any volunteer opportunities. It turned out there were lots of things to do.

Since I have many years of physician, hospital, and healthcare consulting experience, the best fit for me was to be a volunteer management consultant, working with the executive director. Presently I'm helping to design and negotiate a much-needed new clinic. (I am grateful to Swami for the opportunity to use my knowledge and experience.)

Susan's works at the clinic in "triaging" new patients, that is, helping to sort them according to their needs. This seva gives her the opportunity to have direct, first contact with the patients, helping to calm them and allay their fears before they meet with the doctor or nurse practitioner.

There are over 100 free clinics in the United States. In general, they receive community support and donations, and practicing physicians are asked to donate their time or to see some of the clinic patients in their private offices. The Eastern Panhandle Free Clinic serves only people who are poor and have no insurance. It took in more than 6,000 patient visits in 2007, representing a 40 percent increase in requests for treatment in the past year. The clinic also provides free medicines to patients.

Sai doctors who want to serve have often been limited to helping out at medical camps that offer only screening tests. These medical camps are generally held on a random basis and take much planning. For Sai healthcare professionals who want to volunteer on a more regular basis, free clinics are ideal.

Physicians can volunteer to work in the free clinic, usually being able to set their own regular schedule (such as once a week or once a month), or they can offer to see a certain number of referred specialty patients at no charge in their regular offices. Most free clinics have arrangements with local hospitals and facilities for referring patients for laboratory, x-ray, and hospitalization services.

To locate a free clinic, go to the web site of the National Association of Free Clinics at: www.freeclinics.us.

“Caregivers” Volunteers

Another volunteer seva opportunity we have is with the Good Shepherd Interfaith Volunteer Caregivers, a Faith in Action program, which is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1990 by a small coalition of individuals, various denominations of churches, and the Shepherdstown Rotary Club. Its mission is to create a stronger, more caring community in Jefferson County, West Virginia. By mobilizing resources and support from faith congregations and the wider community, they reach out to our older or disabled neighbors in need, filling the gaps left by formal support services.

Free, nonmedical, care-giving services are provided by volunteers and include transportation to medical appointments, yard work, light housework, friendly visits, reassurance phone calls, and medical equipment loans.

The Caregivers organization is part of a national network of similar organizations that have individual and group volunteer opportunities. Each local organization sets

its own plans. Here’s a description from their website, www.fiavolunteers.org:

Faith in Action Volunteers: *Faith in Action is an interfaith volunteer caregiving initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Local Faith in Action programs bring together volunteers from many faiths to work together to care for their neighbors who have long-term health needs.*

Faith in Action volunteers come from churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship, as well as the community at large. Volunteers help those in need by providing nonmedical assistance with tasks such as:

- *Picking up a few groceries or running errands*
- *Providing a ride to the doctor*
- *Friendly visiting (talking and listening)*
- *Reading or helping to pay bills.*

With this volunteer assistance, members of the community who have long-term health needs can maintain their independence for as long as possible. Each Faith in Action program is unique in the services provided and care receivers being served.

If you have questions about any of these opportunities, please feel free to contact me at 443-831-9915 or rakoffm@aol.com.

—**Michael Rakoff, MD**
Washington DC Sai Center
RakoffM@aol.com

SAI SERVICE: LOVE IN ACTION

REGION 4: BELLEVUE, ILLINOIS ■ KANSAS ■ KENTUCKY ■ MISSISSIPPI
MISSOURI ■ TENNESSEE

Kansas City Seva at “Ronald McDonald House” Family Room



The Sathya Sai Center of Kansas City is actively involved in community service. One such activity is providing food service at the Ronald McDonald House (RMH) Family Room, located in Children’s Mercy Hospital of Kansas City. This service is offered once every month. Volunteers from the center prepare food for approximately thirty people. This food is served, usually by four or five Sai devotee volunteers, to the visitors and relatives of patients at the hospital.



Apart from serving food, Sai devotees also talk to the visitors and comfort them. This activity is highly appreciated by the visitors and relatives of the patients, because many of the relatives attending the patients cannot leave them long enough to get food for themselves. Our volunteers enjoy preparing the food and serving and interacting with the people at the RMH Family Room.

—Swapnil Deshpande
Sai Center of Kansas City



Free Pet Health Screening Day in Southern California



On Sunday, January 27, 2008, devotees from Region 8 worked together to put on our second Free Pet Health Screening Day. This time, the event took place at Memorial Park, Chula Vista, California, a community south of San Diego, close to the Mexican border. Our vision was to host the event in a beautiful park, filled with canopies, signs, balloons, fresh air, and a good open space where the dogs could feel comfortable. The flow of the camp was set, the volunteers were in place, all the supplies were in, and we were ready! Swami, however had other plans.

The day of the event, as we drove to the park at 5:00 a.m., rain came pouring down, the wind was high, and there were even some predictions of thunder and lightning. We had to let go of all attachments to our original plans and quickly make a decision as to where to set up.

Across from the park was a two-story parking structure, which then became our site for the camp. We set up our signs, tables, supplies, and waiting areas, and despite the rain that dripped down inside, the wind that blew, the oil on the ground, the lack of light, and everything being on a slope, we opened with smiles on our faces and the willingness to serve whomever would be sent by God. We had no expectations and no attachments, just a lot of gratitude that we had found another place to hold the event.

Within a short time, pet owners began arriving with their dogs and cats, and registration began. With eight veterinarians, 22 veterinarian technicians, 23 local high school student volunteers, totaling 108 volunteers, we served 240 dogs and 58 cats. All the dogs received de-worming medication, flea

SAI SERVICE: LOVE IN ACTION

control treatments, a full examination, and an evaluation that included health care recommendations. Groomers were on site to trim nails, clean ears, and give grooming tips, educating any pet owners who had no prior knowledge about basic care. The animals' temperature, pulse, and respiratory rates were noted prior to their examination by a veterinarian. Vaccines were administered, depending on the animal's needs, age, and circumstances. The city of Chula Vista provided personnel to license dogs, after the dogs received the required rabies vaccine for free. In this manner, 100 dogs received licenses.

The veterinarians were able to provide extensive education about the challenges pets face when they have not received proper physical and psychological care. Attendees were given explanations on the benefits of having pets "fixed," in order to reduce the number of homeless dogs and cats, as this is one of the biggest problems in low income areas. The next day, 85 families followed up by making appointments with a low-cost, referred clinic.

Ten dogs and two cats had blood drawn, and the results were referred to the three local veterinary hospitals that chose to participate in our efforts by offering discounted prices for the participants.

Ninety percent of the volunteers were non-Sai devotees from the community, people who joined us in our efforts to serve those in need, without desire for anything in return. Before leaving the camp, exit volunteers reviewed with the pet owners what treatments were given and where to go for ongoing care. The volunteers also handed out educational materials on preventive care. Participants received a complimentary bag filled with dog food, gift coupons, and a medical record booklet. Nor were the humans forgotten; they were given snacks and juice to take away.

Pastries, water, and dog biscuits were handed out to all the participants throughout the day, as they waited to be seen. Pet owners seemed filled with gratitude, and some expressed a wish to volunteer at the next veterinary camp. Respect, compassion, kindness, and patience were felt throughout the camp, and instead of a "rain-out," unity in diversity reigned on this day.

—Jennie Cornsweet
Encinitas, California



Young Adult USA Report

Sai Ram, Young Adults,

Heartfelt greetings to you all! We hope that you have been enjoying the year thus far. We are very excited to share several opportunities that are in front of us for 2008.

First, with intent to follow Swami's directives, we, as Sai youth in the USA, will continue to practice the Nine-Point *Sadhana* (Spiritual Discipline) Program that was implemented prior to the World Youth Conference in 2007. As you recall, the nine points are the following:

Spiritual Discipline 1: Practice *namasmarana* (chanting of the Lord's names).

Spiritual Discipline 2: Read Swami's discourses/books daily and conduct/participate in youth study circles.

Spiritual Discipline 3: Engage in selfless service activities as a group.

Spiritual Discipline 4: Practice dietary discipline.

Spiritual Discipline 5: Learn to speak softly and speak less.

Spiritual Discipline 6: Take an active part in Sai center activities.

Spiritual Discipline 7: Improve communication and interact respectfully with parents.

Spiritual Discipline 8: Practice placing a "ceiling on desires" by not wasting food, money, energy, or time.

Spiritual Discipline 9: Practice daily meditation and prayer.

Study Circle Program

In addition, youth have come together to develop a series of study circles to focus specifically on each of the above nine points of the *Sadhana* Program, and the discourses given by Swami during the World Youth Conference last year. These study circles were to commence in March 2008.

SSE and SSEHV Training & Projects

In conjunction with the study circles, exciting developments have been occurring in the realm of youth involvement with SSEHV (Sathya Sai Education in Human Values) and SSE (Sai Spiritual Education). During 2008, SSE/SSEHV training sessions for young adults will take place. We encourage all youth to register for these sessions as they become available. This training will enable the USA youth to be actively involved in the community in a wide array of service activities as members of the Sathya Sai organization. Stay informed by keeping in contact with your regional young adult representatives.

Other National Initiatives

Opportunities to participate, contribute, and lead in these programs are plenty. The attached document summarizes the national young adult initiatives already in motion, such as a national consolidation project, a national young adult database, and much more!

Please take a moment to review the following list of 2008 action items, for more detailed information and ways to get involved. As always, we are at your service and welcome the opportunity to speak with any of you.

It is only by Swami's blessings and grace that we are a part of his mission, and as Sai young adults, let us continue to work as his instruments and reach the goal!

Lovingly,

—**Sangeeta Lekhi**, Female National Youth Coordinator

Daniel Scovill, Male National Youth Coordinator

Dr. Joe Phaneuf, National Youth Adult Advisor

March 2008

The future of the country depends on the skill and the sincerity of the youth. Therefore, the necessary enthusiasm and encouragement must be generated among the youth. All my hopes are based on the students, the youth. They are very dear to me.

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba** (SSS 13:1, Jan. 5, 1975)

Sri Sathya Sai Organization of America Youth Program Action Items for 2008

❶ Youth Study Circle Programs

- **Objective:** To continue a discipline similar to pre-World Youth Conference activities.
- **Action Items:**
 1. Topics will focus on WYC resolutions: Studying Swami's discourses from the Third WYC (2007), and the Nine-Point Sadhana Program.
 2. Each region will be given the opportunity to create a study circle outline to be shared nationally.
 3. Study circles are to begin in March 2008 and continue throughout 2008 on a regular basis.

If you would like to participate, please contact your regional representative to be part of a study circle group within your region.

❷ Regional or Multi-Regional/Coastal Youth Conference Planning and Workshops

- **Objective:** To host retreats that bring young adults (YAs) together, building national unity.
- **Action Items:** To help YAs assimilate learnings from the WYC, retreats will feature interactive workshops, games, and activities to tie in with resolutions from the WYC.

Workshops will be posted on www.saiyausa.net, to be accessible by regional youth representatives and advisors.

③ SSE and SSEHV Trainings

■ Objectives/Action Items:

1. To fulfill the need for youth to be trained in SSE and become mentors and teachers to young children within the Sai Organization.
2. To train youth at the regional level to gain better understanding of the SSEHV program, and how best to work with youth in the community.

All young adults are encouraged to register for upcoming SSE and SSEHV teacher training sessions. Regional representatives, please contact your regional EHV coordinator to arrange SSEHV training sessions for YAs.

⑤ National Consolidation Project

■ Objectives/Action Items:

1. To collect materials, including but not limited to study circle activities, workshops, plays, skits, musical presentations, SSE activities, and other similar resources.
2. To compile and make available all content for sharing and re-use by youth groups nationwide.

The consolidation team is currently reviewing all material collected thus far, to be posted on www.saiyausa.net.

④ Values-based Service Projects

- **Objective:** For youth in the Sai Organization to serve community youth at the grass-roots level, by integrating human values through various activities, such as: mentoring, tutoring, and classes such as art, music, drama, and computer science.
- **Action Items:** At regional and national levels, youth can contribute to SSEHV programs by submitting ideas on values-based activities, music, and songs.

Youth group leaders and regional representatives, please maintain regular communication with your regional EHV coordinator, and provide him/her with updates of existing and new projects that involve youth within the community.

⑥ National Database Project

■ Objectives/Action Items:

1. To compile names, contact information, and skill sets of all registered youth affiliated with the U.S. Sai organization.
2. To be prepared for immediate service project needs, service relief efforts, or opportunities in various events (i.e. Prasanthi performances, local/regional events, etc.)

There will always be a need for youth with specific technical skills. Please contact your regional representative to get involved. Soon, an online database skill form will be available for all registered USA Sai Young Adults to fill out.

“God Is Love, Love Is God, Live in Love”

82nd Birthday Drama Presentation

With the divine blessings of our most beloved Lord Sai, we, the youth of Northern California and Nevada, were blessed to prepare a dramatic presentation for the regional “birthday celebrations” of the 82nd year of advent of the avatar, on the theme, “God is Love, Love is God, Live in Love.” The program took place at Foothill College in Los Altos, California, and young adults from at least five centers in the area participated. Three YA sisters were instrumental in writing the script, and over fifteen YAs participated in the actual offering.

Once the roles and logistics had been finalized, it was decided that the actors should mime their lines with voiceovers. We knew this would require extensive practice but were undeterred. For two months straight, the group met every Friday, after chanting the Gayatri mantra 108 times, a regular practice that has been taking place since the World Youth Conference. Aside from acting and practicing lines, we took time every so often to reflect on the larger purpose of the drama, and how it serves as a vehicle for connecting to Swami. As the day for the 82nd birthday celebration drew near, we realized we had grown closer to Swami and to one another, learning much through the process.

Throughout the practices, we envisioned the play as having minimalist props and backgrounds. But the overall organizers of the birthday program encouraged us to work on backdrops and props. After exploring various options, we decided to project backdrops from behind an eight-foot-high screen. However, there was no time to have a dress rehearsal to test this setup, and on the day of the celebration, it became apparent that we did not have a ladder tall enough to project the backdrops, and the projection cloth kept getting caught in the stage lights, which would have created a fire hazard.

In all the confusion on the morning of the birthday program, we were unable to stage a dry run of the play, and everyone was nervous. Just before we were to go on, the group met and prayed intensely to Swami for his guidance and blessings. When the time came, the entire play took place in front of a large, beautiful image of Swami, which was part of the altar, as the only backdrop. It could not have been a better background for all of the scenes!

The presentation went very smoothly, with an uncanny level of synchronization among all the components of the program. In particular, one could not tell that the actors’ voices were being voiced over! Even

more important, Swami's divine presence was felt by each of us, guiding every moment of the play.

Once the drama concluded, we all gathered to watch a video recording of the presentation, as captured by one of our Sai brothers. Watching the video, we were overjoyed to observe tangible evidence of Swami's presence. For one, it was observed that the wings on a brother who had played the lead role of an angel flapped repeatedly on their own. Second, we could not believe it, but the robe placed on Swami's chair moved during the course of our program! It was another reminder of his omnipresence and beneficence.

In the next days, feedback came in, and it was humbling to hear comments from devotees who were touched by the play. One

member of the audience confessed breaking into tears during the course of the play, relating personally to the plight of the lead character as he struggled to cope with death and the awareness that God had carried him every moment of his life. Another had resolved to begin service activities after watching the lead character become transformed and reach out to the needy.

We are extremely grateful to Swami for granting us the opportunity to play a role in his divine drama. We offer our humble salutations and gratitude to the Divine Mother for carrying us in her arms throughout this memorable experience.

—**Nirmala Venkataramani**
San Jose, California



How Swami Taught Me to *Do* the Play

I had an experience that I would like to share with you all, from our 2006 regional trip to Prasanthi Nilayam.

When we arrived in Parthi, everyone was praying for Swami to accept our play. But at the end of the trip, we found that Swami did not accept the play. At that time, I was trying my hardest not to be upset. I knew we had put in our best efforts, but only Swami knows what is best for us.

After leaving Puttaparthi, I went to Hyderabad. One day, I was getting really bored. So, I took a piece of paper and started writing Swami's quotes, such as *Love all, serve all; Help ever, hurt never*; and so on. I wrote a lot of quotes, maybe twelve or fifteen of them. I still don't know why I wrote them, but it was really fun!

That night I had a dream, in which Swami appeared and came down the road to me where I was standing. He bent down and, in my ear, said, *Try to put into practice all the quotes you wrote on the paper.* He then told me, *Be good, see good, do good—and then you will do the play.*

When I woke up, I sat thinking about the dream. I decided it was all Swami's message to me, and I immediately told my mom. I know that Swami's message will come true one day. We all have a chance to *do* the play, if we do our best in listening to Swami, who is in our hearts—and of course, being good, seeing good, and doing good.

—**Bhavani Ananthabhotla**

Group 3, Flushing Center, New York, Mid-Atlantic Region

All Faiths Lead to God

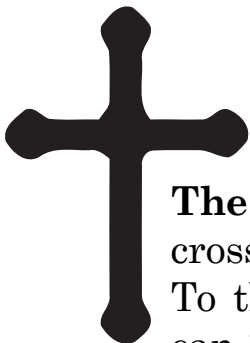
The following symbols remind us of different religions. But their meanings are for everyone. We should know and practice the meanings of the symbols. This will help us grow closer to God.

The Om: *Om* is the symbol for truth. What is truth? It is the answer to the question, “Who am I?”

Keep very still. Watch your breath go in and out. Listen! The in-breath makes the sound *so*. The out-breath makes the sound *hum*. *So-hum* means, “I am God.” “I am God” is truth, *Om*.

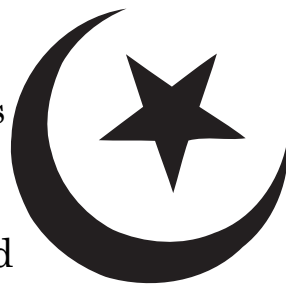


The Light of God: Fire, or light, is a symbol of the Parsi faith. Zoroaster, its founder, wished for all to have the brilliant fire of wisdom and goodness. We can invite the divine “fire” to burn away, or purify, our bad feelings and habits.



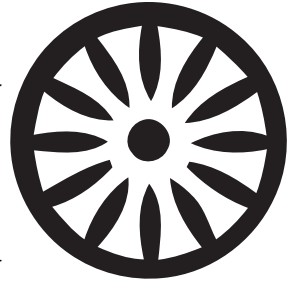
The Cross: The letter “I” is part of the Christian cross. The “I” is crossed out by the cross mark. To think only of what “I want” is selfish. We can “cross out” the “I” by thinking of God and helping others.

The Crescent Moon: *Islam* means “surrender to God.” Mohammad founded the Islamic or Muslim faith. He taught that surrender to God brings peace and harmony.



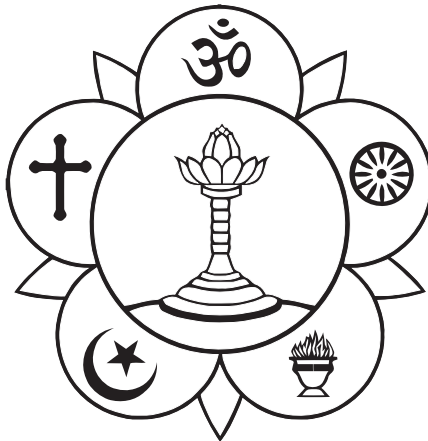
The Muslim calendar is based on the moon cycle. Each year, Muslims pray and fast during the month of Ramzan. At the beginning and end of this holy month, the moon appears as a tiny crescent.

The Dharma Wheel: The dharma wheel is a symbol of Buddhism. When a wheel turns, things move ahead. So, this symbol stands for making spiritual progress. God's divine love helps us grow into our divinity. The wheel reminds us to practice right conduct, to live in divine love, and to *help ever, hurt never*.



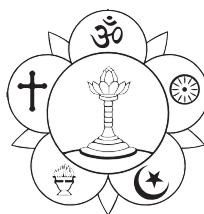
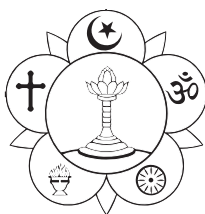
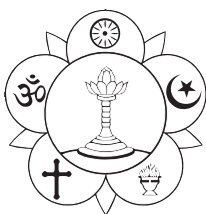
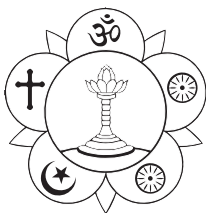
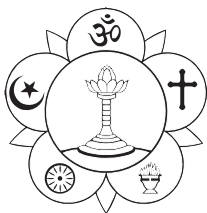
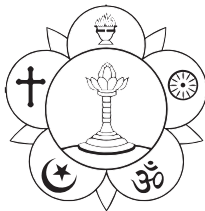
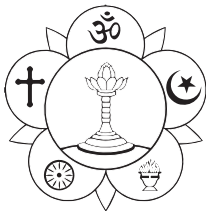
All-Faiths Symbol: This symbol contains all five symbols. It shows how the ideas of all faiths lead to God. The lotus symbol means that we can blossom by putting these ideas into practice.

Can you find each of the five symbols in this symbol? Can you explain each one?



—Based on discourses of Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Let's Have a Game



All these symbols look alike, but ...
only two of them are the same.
Can you find them?

—Bal Vikas Magazine for Children Ages 1-99 (Italy)

Sai Spiritual Education Lesson Plan (Group 1)

All Faiths Lead to God

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE: Unity of Faiths • **AIM:** Create awareness of symbols of various faiths and the spiritual meanings of each symbol, which contain ideals for all to practice.

QUOTE: *Look at the emblem of the Sathya Sai organization! It tells you that the Hindu, the Muslim, the Parsi, the Buddhist, and the Christian are all adoring the same God, for the same purposes.* —Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 12:15, April 1973, “Love Is the Key”)

PRAYER/AFFIRMATION: May everyone in all the world be happy. I pray for everyone’s happiness, in all the countries of the world, and for all beings everywhere.

SONG SUGGESTIONS: (select one) “There’s Only One God, but Many Are His Names” “Why Fear When I Am Here?” “There’s Only One Religion” (or other song reflecting the unity of all faiths)

SILENT SITTING: Have students sit in silence for 1-2 minutes.

STORY: “All Faiths Lead to God” (See pages 35-38.)

DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY: *Materials:* drawing paper; crayons, paint, or markers; poster of the *Sarva Dharma* symbol and/or individual symbols for the five ideas discussed.

- Read aloud about each symbol and discuss its meaning. Have students look at or point to each symbol in turn. (For younger students, introduce only 1-2 symbols per week.)
- Display an “all faiths” or *sarva dharma* symbol (example: p. 37, bottom) and have students identify each symbol it contains. Check their understanding by asking questions, such as, *Where is the symbol that stands for the light of God? Which symbol comes from the Christian faith?* (Children can take turns pointing to the correct symbols.)
- Give each child some drawing paper and pens or crayons. Model for them how to draw each symbol, and then let them practice drawing the symbols.

EXTENDING ACTIVITY: *Sarva Dharma Mobile* Have students make and decorate cardboard cut-outs of each symbol, and then “unify” the symbols with yarn, making a mobile.

LIFE APPLICATION: Have children repeat the prayer with their families during the week and continue drawing the symbols for the different faiths. During the week, students can write a caption for each symbol that summarizes a meaning of that symbol.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: See the following discourses: SSS 24:29, Dec. 25, 1991, “Develop Spiritual Oneness”; SSS 16:14, July 12, 1983, “Unity and Purity: Message of Ramzan”; SSS13:23 Oct 1, 1976, “The Sai Religion.”

NOTE: SSE lessons may be adapted for use in SSEHV settings.

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Expanding the Boundaries of Self, by Oliver H. Jobson, is a log of spiritual gems from the author's life, and how a spiritual aspirant can embark on the inner journey. BW-055 \$14.00

HIStory as told by Himself (Pertaining to His Younger Days) is a compilation of divine discourses given by Swami himself, relating stories of his younger days. BW-160\$4.00

Sri Sathya Sai Gita: All About Spirituality in Q's & A's, compiled by P. P. Arya, is presented in question and answer format, covering many aspects of spirituality. All answers are taken directly from Swami's discourses. BI-162..... \$5.00

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