

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



“Scientists and Spirituality”

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**PLEASE NOTE: NEW WEB ADDRESS FOR SATHYA SAI BOOK CENTER OF AMERICA:
www.sathyasaibooksUSA.org**

SAI'S MESSAGE



Search, or Research? Love Is the Test

Scientists today have produced many inventions, and the powers that these inventions show are, in fact, immanent in man. But the scientists do research on outer objects, without undertaking inner research. . . .

People may do any amount of scientific research, but all research should be suffused with love. . . . First, search yourself: "Am I good or bad?" When you conduct such self-inquiry, with sacred feelings, you do not need other witnesses. . . . This was the fundamental principle of research in ancient times. . . .

The search that man makes today is . . . artificial, whether in the field of worldly matters, science, or spirituality. One's search should be suffused with love, which is the only method for knowing God. All efforts are futile without love. These days, research is only for selfish ends, and education is merely for earning a livelihood. When you conduct research with the broad feeling of "may everyone in the world be happy," you will certainly attain your objective.

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**, June 16, 1996
(*Sanathana Sarathi*, May 2008, p. 151)

More to Life Than the Material

A Scientist's Journey to Sai

The following story of Michael W. Congleton, PhD MD, has been adapted from a radio interview. The original interview was conducted by Prof. G. Venkataraman, an eminent physicist himself and former vice chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai University. The transcript appeared in two installments, in the December 2007 and January 2008 issues of *Heart2Heart* e-journal at www.radiosai.org. We encourage our readers to refer to those issues online to enjoy the full interview, including Prof. Venkataraman's equally interesting portion of the conversation, spoken as one scientist to another. Dr. Congleton currently serves as president, Region 8 (Pacific-South), Sathya Sai Organization USA. —Ed.

Let me introduce myself by saying that I am originally from Texas and started out in physics, completing my PhD in plasma physics. I tried to get a job at a national lab to do some things that I was interested in, but at that time, in 1972, there seemed to be an overabundance of physicists.

Failing to get that job, I applied for medical school. I wasn't discouraged; I had actually wanted to go to medical school, too, but when I had finished my undergraduate degree, I had received a National Science Foundation scholarship to continue on in physics. I was interested in how things worked. So I just continued on and put off the medical training. But with not getting the job at the national lab, I applied to medical school and got accepted at a large medical center, a 1,200-bed hospital at the University of Texas, Galveston.

After medical school, I was initially interested in surgery as a specialty, but then

I worked with some surgical patients who were also psychiatric patients, and I got very keen about psychiatry. So I specialized in psychiatry.

After finishing a residency in psychiatry, I thought about continuing on with research involving physics. I had done studies in microwave spectroscopy in plasma physics, and I thought that by using microwave-resonant-cavities-and-analysis sorts of methods, we could apply that to the study of nerves or neurological disorders. So, that was in the back of my mind.

I talked with the Navy, and they offered me a commission, which I accepted, as a commander in the Navy Medical Corps. I was stationed in a laboratory, a naval health research center, but I also traveled a lot, often on ships, doing studies and research. I researched, for instance, the effects of long working hours on fatigue, job performance, and so on, and

on ways to enhance the working environment to reduce stress responses and improve performance levels.

While I was finishing my residency in psychiatry, which was around 1978, my wife, Carol, and I got interested in yoga. I went along with her to some classes and read some books on the subject. So, having this interest, on weekends we would go to Houston, which is right up the road from Galveston, and buy books on yoga, Chinese philosophy, and so on.

Hit Over the Head

Initially I had been attracted to yoga for the physical *asanas* (postures), the *hatha yoga*. But eventually I discovered *raja yoga*, which covered a lot more than just the physical postures, and I studied that for many years. Trying to understand this led me to other pursuits, too, in trying to see how the spiritual exists within us.

Later, after we came to Swami, I came to know about the Bhagavad Gita. I also discovered that Einstein had a copy of the Bhagavad Gita, and that he had read it, too.

In 1978, I was in one of the rooms at a bookstore in Houston, browsing the books, and a gentleman asked me, “Have you ever heard of Sathya Sai Baba?” I said, “No.” He said, “Well, I just got back from India; he is a man of miracles.” Apparently, he was a customer in the bookstore. He said, “You need to buy a book about Sai Baba.” So I went over to the part of the bookstore where there were books about Swami. And I noticed a book on the very top shelf. As I was a chief resident in psychiatry, you

can guess which book I was attracted to—*Sai Baba: The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist*, by Sam Sandweiss.

Picking the book off the shelf, I saw a picture of a youthful, good-looking Swami—he looked like a westerner to me! I said, “Thank you,” and added the book to my growing stack of books.

Carol came up after a while, looked at my huge stack of books, and said, “You are not going to buy all those books, are you?” So I went through the books and pulled out the ones that I was least interested in. When I came to the book about Swami, I thought, well, I don’t really need this book, and put it back up on the top shelf. But when I turned around, the book just flew off the shelf and hit me on the head! Carol said, “You’d better buy that book!” So we bought the book—and as fate would have it, and Swami would wish it—I ended up in San Diego, working at the Naval Health Research Center, which is right around the corner from the Sandweisses’ home. But we didn’t realize this until quite a few years later.

In 1984, we started thinking about traveling to India, due to our interest in yoga. I wanted to go to Rishikesh, in the northern part of India, where many yogis live. We also had read Paramahansa Yogananda’s *Autobiography of a Yogi*, which had stimulated our interest even more.

We still had our home in Galveston, and about then a hurricane came through and damaged the home, leaving five feet of water in the house. After we had it repaired, we had enough insurance proceeds left over to take that trip to India. So, Carol planned out an

itinerary, to start in Bombay (now Mumbai), go up north, across to Agra, to Delhi, over to Kathmandu, then back down to Calcutta (now Kolkata).

But then I thought, “What about that holy man in India that the book we bought in Houston talked about? Let’s see if we can find out where he is.” So I looked in the book, and the author was Sam Sandweiss in San Diego—which is where I was living! So I called the operator, got the number for Sam’s home, and called him. He said, “Tomorrow night is our first open house; come over, and I will tell you how to go and see Swami.”

When I got there, he couldn’t have been more helpful. In fact, that night, I think Elsie Cowan was at his home as the guest speaker. Hearing her story—and the story of her late husband’s resurrection by Baba—was also very interesting to me. In any case, going to see Swami in Prasanthi was the last and greatest part of our trip.

Overcoming Obstacles

After visiting Kathmandu, when we got to Calcutta, we discovered that India had been on a general strike for the past four weeks while we had been traveling around in Nepal. And Andhra Pradesh was the state that had instituted the strike; the governor of Andhra Pradesh had been ousted from Parliament, and everyone was upset about it. So the ashram

had been closed for four weeks by the time we reached Calcutta. But we were desperate to see Swami. The attraction was so strong that we felt like crying, because it didn’t look like it was going to happen.

Suddenly, we were able to catch a plane to Bangalore, and we took a hotel room there. When we checked in, we were told that all

bus service to Puttaparthi was unavailable due to the strike, and that there was no chance to get there. We put our clothes in our room, came down, and spoke to the concierge. She said, “I just heard that the buses have started running to Puttaparthi.”

So we took a cab over to the bus station, and sure enough, the buses were running! But thousands of people were vying to board them, because they had been shut down for four weeks.

At that point, the taxi driver said, “My brother can take you; maybe he can drive you up there.” So we drove around and found his brother. This gentleman looked at his watch, then looked at us, and said, “Okay, I will take you, but we have to leave right now!” I looked at my wife and son, and they were, obviously, a little puzzled! The car was an old Ambassador that had threadbare tires, and I said, “Okay, but we need to stop by the hotel so we can get some clothes, first.” But he insisted, “No. If we don’t go now, we don’t go.” So I looked at the family, stared at him, and said, “Okay, we are going!”

“Swami just seemed to glide across the ground and also seemed to be transparent—as if you could see the buildings and all, right through him; it was a mystical experience.”

We got into the car, headed toward Puttaparthi, and about five minutes into the trip, he ran out of gas, right in the middle of a busy street, and of course, Carol was shaking her head, as if to say, “What have we gotten ourselves into!?”

My son and I got out, pushed the cab over to a gas station, gassed up, and away we headed to Puttaparthi. Along the way were some roadblocks, where the villagers were stopping traffic because of the strike. They said, “You can’t travel by car while the strike is on.” But as I said, the strike had just ended, so when we came to roadblocks, our driver stopped, and I got out, ran around, and pulled the rocks out of the way. The local villagers came out, waved at us, and smiled. We just carried on in this manner, eventually reaching Puttaparthi. I think we were the first people to arrive at the ashram after the month-long strike, and we were thrilled.

We checked in and were directed to a shed; I think four other couples were in that shed. Of course, Carol’s idea of camping out was staying in a four-star hotel, so you can imagine what it was like for us. After a few bewildering moments wondering what to do next, we went outside to a tailor, had some clothes made, got mattresses, came back in, got comfortable, and settled in.

“He is God!”

The next morning we saw Swami in darshan. There may have been 30 or 40 people in all. My son John was eleven years old at that time, and we had never even talked about Swami. But upon seeing Swami, John’s first

comment was, “He is God!” At first look, in the innocence of childhood, he just knew! I was impressed with that.

Swami just seemed to glide across the ground and also seemed to be transparent—as if you could see the buildings and all, right through him; it was a mystical experience. But then we felt we had to leave, so after that darshan, we headed back to the hotel in Bangalore. On the way, the driver said, “I know of a place in Mysore. There’s a devotee; he has a little orphanage. Swami gave him a couple of medallions, and they are miraculously producing *amrita* (nectar)!”

I was guessing that this place wasn’t too far out of the way, so I said, “Sure! Let’s go there!” At that time, this little man named Halagappa had a small metal building next to the Kaveri River. There was a temple, and in it, all the pictures of Swami were covered with vibhuti. He showed us the little medallions; one of them was of Shirdi Baba, and the other was of Sathya Sai Baba. They were copper-clad, kind of enameled pictures of Swami—Sathya Sai and Shirdi Sai—and they were exuding the liquid *amrita*.

More to Life Than the Material

I am a physicist, trained to deal with pure science. My basic approach to life at that time was that if I couldn’t replicate it in a laboratory, then don’t talk to me about it. I didn’t want to know any mystical stuff. If people believe in telepathy, they needed to see somebody about it!

But then I saw those medallions flowing with this nectar, and I started timing how

fast the liquid formed. The liquid from the medallions flowed down into the center of my palm, at the rate of about a drop every ten or fifteen seconds. This was amazing to me. No tubes were attached, and the liquid was just coming out of nowhere. It was like energy being transformed into matter!

After experiencing all this in India, after we made it back to San Diego, we started attending the San Diego Sai center, at the Sandweisses' home. As I started reading more about Swami, I started to think that there was more to life than material pursuits, and that the spiritual element of life was very important, which I had pretty much neglected until then. Although I have always been a strong believer in God, I had been focused mainly on intellectual pursuits.

After we started going to the San Diego area Sai centers, as fate would have it, the US State Department asked me if I could go to Bombay, India, and see if some medical technology could be transferred between the two countries. I gladly accepted the task and traveled there in 1987; I worked with the Bombay municipal corporation and interfaced with King Edward Memorial Hospital and others.

After finishing with the meetings and studies, and writing a report for the State Department, in the back of my mind, I thought I would take two weeks' vacation and go see Swami. So I came down to Bangalore and

was told, "Swami is in Kodaikanal; he will be coming back to Whitefield in two days." I found a place in Whitefield, right across from the main gate, and waited.

When Swami returned, he had a group of only about 50 devotees with him. I thought that was a large crowd, but of course it's nothing like today! There was a darshan tree, and we

formed lines. Even if you were the last in line to go, you still had a great seat. But when Swami came walking by, I felt like I was being totally ignored! Then I noticed that people had notes that they were writing and holding up for Swami to take.

A man from Africa gave a presentation and read some poetry that he had written. So I decided to write a little poem and ask Swami for an interview.

The next time Swami came out, he took my request—in the little letter—and said, "Go!" So I went into the compound and had my first interview with Swami.

Once we got into the interview room, the ladies sat on one side and the gents on the other. Swami walked over to the wall switch, looked up at the ceiling fan, turned on the switch, turned around, held out his hand, and said (jokingly), "Okay, 60 rupees, service charge!"

Then he walked right over to me and swept his hand through the air, once. Right in front of me, he fanned out \$10,000, in thousand-dollar U.S. bills, and held them up real close to my face! I was looking at them; they were used

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notes. I had never seen money in that large a denomination, and I couldn't imagine that somebody was actually using them! He then turned his hand upside down, and they fell into nothing; they disappeared right in front of me. He said, "Money means nothing; it comes and goes. Love is the only thing that lasts!"

I was sitting toward the front, right across from a couple of Indian sisters who were twins. He looked at those ladies and again swept his hand through the air and materialized a rosary, a *japamala* (108 beads). He held the mala at its very top, and it looped down under his two hands. Then he pulled a little bit at the top of the mala, and split it into two malas—like peeling a banana. He was splitting it apart; one mala was going up, and two malas were coming out—and click, click, click—there were two identical malas, one for each twin!

"I will worry about all those for you"

He also materialized a watch for one of the students who was present. Later I learned the significance of **W-A-T-C-H**: Watch your Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character, and Heart. Then Baba called each person into the back room for a private interview. Eventually, he came out and called me inside, saying, "You are next!"

I was carrying a *japamala* and a quartz egg that looked somewhat like a *Shivalingam* (ovoid symbol of creation), and I wanted Swami to bless those items for me. At first, he said, "You worry too much! You worry about the past, the future, your family, and about your job! I will worry about all those for you; you just worry about the present!" He pointed his fingers

toward himself and swept them up and down, saying, "The Omnipresent!"

He looked at the items I was carrying, and picked up the quartz egg. "This isn't a Shivalingam," he said. "I will make you a real Shivalingam tomorrow; be ready!" He told me several other things of a personal nature, and then we went back to the outer interview room.

He continued seeing others, and when he was finished, he passed out *vibhuti* (holy ash) to everyone. He picked up a small basket of *vibhuti* packets and handed each person a handful of them. I was the last person leaving the room; someone had dropped a packet of the *vibhuti*, and as I reached down to pick it up, he laughed and said, "You want some more?" I turned around and said, "Sure!" So he gave me another big handful of *vibhuti* packets.

Afterward, I wondered what he had meant by, "Be prepared." That evening I didn't want to talk to anyone; I just wanted to remember and think about the interview with Swami. Suddenly, there was a knock at my door. I had been staying in a room at someone's home, right across the street from the main ashram gate. I opened the door, and a lady with an English accent said, "We just got here from Australia. Can my son stay with you?" I wasn't very eager to have a guest that night, because I just wanted to remember my interview with Swami from earlier that day. However, I quickly thought over her request and said, "Sure! Why not?"

She left to go get her son, and fifteen minutes later, there came another knock on the door. I had expected her son to be small, ten or eleven years old. Instead, her son was

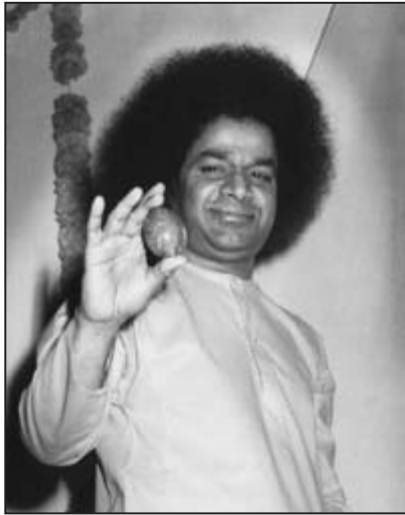
at least six-and-a-half feet tall and must have weighed over 200 pounds. He was the size of a football player, but he was wearing cowboy boots, a cowboy hat, and cowboy clothes. He was an Australian cowboy! I looked up at him and said, "You're welcome to stay here; come on in." He laughed and said, "No, I'll sleep out here on the porch!"

The next morning, as I was leaving for darshan, this fellow was still asleep on the porch. I woke him up and said, "We need to go over for darshan; Swami is coming out very soon." I left for darshan and was lucky to get a seat on the front line. I was still wondering anxiously what Swami had meant by his statement, "Be prepared." Anticipating that Swami might do something in front of me in the darshan area, I asked someone sitting near me to take a picture if anything happened. (At that time, you could carry a camera into the darshan area.)

A "Real Shivalingam"

As Swami passed by me during darshan, he said, "Go!" So I went to the waiting area outside his residence. As I turned the corner to join the other devotees who had been picked for an interview, I caught sight of the Australian cowboy and his mother. Swami had also chosen them for an interview.

Everyone went into the interview room, and Swami spoke immediately to the pair from Australia and called them back for a private interview. When they came out, he motioned for me to come forward and give him the quartz egg that I had been carrying.



He took the quartz egg, held it up for everyone to see, and asked the group, "What is this?" As he held it up, nobody answered him. Then he said, "This is glass; it's only glass. I am going to make a real Shivalingam." He put the quartz egg into the palm of his right hand and held his hand, palm up, for everyone to see. He gently blew on the egg several times without moving his hand. It transformed from a reticulated quartz egg into

a similar-size, solid black Shivalingam!

He held it up and said, "This is a real Shivalingam; it is made of the five elements." He stopped and looked at me, asking, "Who does this belong to?" I looked up at him and said, "To you, Swami." He smiled, nodded yes, and pulled a silk handkerchief out of my shirt pocket. He wrapped the Shivalingam in the silk handkerchief and stuffed it back into my shirt pocket. He said, "Put it in water every night, and it will help calm your mind."

I have been carrying this Shivalingam with me now for twenty years, and I place it in water

every night. The Shivalingam is on loan from Swami and it still belongs to him alone.

Many nights, when I go to take it out from the silk handkerchief and put it in water, I wonder, is it still here, or did Swami take it back? I believe he is beyond space and time, and his reach is unlimited. Swami has unlimited power, and he can create (or uncreate) what he wants, when he wants. I believe he can transform his creation as he wills. During the last twenty years, I have traveled over two million miles—with the Navy, as a health care business professional, and on vacations—and the Shivalingam has always traveled with me.

Omnipresent Protection

As a result of so much traveling, I have been exposed to a lot of uncertain situations and have come through those situations with flying colors.

Upon leaving the Navy, I was recruited by a company to help manage some of their large healthcare projects. One of the projects was to create an automated information system for hospitals, which has become one of the largest of its kind in the world today. As part of my job, I traveled around the world, briefing various ministries of health about the value of switching from manual, paper-based medical records to automated, electronic medical records.

In the process of traveling a lot, one passes through many airports, catching connecting flights, and once when I was traveling through the Frankfurt airport, the German police had set up a barricade in the middle of the airport.

The police were searching everyone and all their possessions.

As one of the policemen was patting me down, he noticed the small pouch I was wearing around my neck. He said, “Let’s see what that is.” So I took the pouch out slowly and said, “Please don’t touch it!” I took out the Shivalingam, held it up, and he squinted his eyes, looking at it closely. Satisfied that it was safe, he said, “Okay.” So I put it back in the silk handkerchief, kissed it, and touched it to my forehead. He laughed and exclaimed, “Oh! A good luck charm!” In other words, Swami has saved me—and he has saved all of us—on many occasions.

Another example is the experience my wife and daughter-in-law had while traveling to Puttaparthi in 2007. While they were in Heathrow Airport, there was a bomb scare, and the authorities closed the airport, and evacuated about 3,000 people, including my wife and daughter-in-law, from the terminal to the parking lot. They announced that all the flights to continental Europe had been cancelled, along with many long-haul flights.

My wife and daughter-in-law began to worry that they might not be able continue their trip to Bangalore. The authorities told them that only passengers on announced flights could return to the terminal. They also learned that their flight to Bangalore had not been cancelled, and for several hours they listened very closely for their flight announcement.

As they waited outside, it started to rain. The stranded passengers started to move closer and closer to the front door of the airport, hoping to get inside, and consequently they

were blocking the doors for all the other passengers. Suddenly, a man walked up to them and asked, "Are you ladies going to Bangalore?"

Carol, my wife, told me that the man called himself "Andy." They answered him, "Yes, we're going to Bangalore." As I mentioned, they had been listening very closely for any announcement concerning their flight, and they had heard nothing. However, Andy said, "I'm going to Bangalore, too, and your flight was just announced! You need to go back into the terminal and go through security."

He then helped guide them through the packed mass of people to the front door of the terminal. As they entered the terminal, they turned around to thank him, and he had disappeared! They looked for him on the plane to Bangalore when they got on board, but he was not on the plane; he didn't fly to Bangalore.

I was thinking – Andy? I think he really said, "Handy!" This was definitely Swami's doing! Thank you, Swami! These miracles happen in our daily lives, and most of the time we don't notice them, or we take them for granted. Many times in our lives, someone helps us unexpectedly, and I think that Swami has prompted that to happen. To tell you the truth, I think it is Swami himself who is actually doing the helping!

Experiments with Plants' Emotions

People wonder if I have difficulty reconciling my scientific background as a hard-core physical scientist with my belief in Swami. I was trained in a certain point of view, but I believe that even then Swami helped prepare me for things a bit out of the ordinary, from a scientific perspective.

As a graduate student in physics, I had worked on an advanced degree in experimental physics and enjoyed building most of my experimental equipment, such as high-vacuum glassware. One afternoon, my major professor came and told me he had a graduate student coming from China who would be working on her master's degree, and he wanted me to help her set up her lab equipment for the experiment.

I agreed to help, and subsequently, I met with her to learn what she would need help with. Up to that point in my scientific career, if anyone had tried to convince me of the possibility of telepathy, ghosts, telekinesis, or other paranormal subjects, I would doubt their credibility and think that maybe they were not normal.

During our meeting, the graduate student from China said, "I want to prove that plants have feelings." At the time, as a pure scientist, you can imagine how that struck me. I thought, what am I getting myself into? How did she get accepted as a master's candidate? In spite

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of my doubts, I agreed to help her set up her experiment. I hooked up some sensory equipment to the root systems of her plants, and I showed her how to operate the equipment.

At that time, I was completing my PhD, and I worked every night in the lab collecting data and writing my dissertation. While working late one night, about two weeks after meeting the student from China, I wondered how she was getting on with her experiment. I went down to her lab, and no one was there. I just turned on the equipment and stood on the other side of the room, away from the plants. Silently, I thought, let's just see if the plants have any feelings or emotions.

So I projected this thought strongly: "I'm going to rip you out of those pots, set you on fire, and throw you out the window!" Immediately, the readings on the experimental equipment peaked. Many were suddenly oscillating at their extremes! I was very startled. So I wondered if I could repeat this.

Once again, I threatened the plants mentally (to rip them apart, burn them, and throw them away). This time, the meter readings were much lower than before. I tried

again, and this third time, the meter readings did not change at all. Now I was wondering if the plants could tell that I was bluffing! This experience made me start to consider that there might be something beyond the purely physical.

I have come to believe that if we follow Swami's teachings, we can experience our spirituality more and more. The aspect of Swami's teachings that appeals to me most is to love Him above all, and to love our fellow man as our selves. I have learned that love transforms whomever you are interacting with.

Swami also teaches that desires result in frustration and anger, and that the satisfaction of worldly desires never brings true happiness, especially in material things. The more "things" I get, the harder it is for me to keep them all repaired. As Swami said, "The lighter the luggage, the more pleasant the trip." So, I am trying to do that, to lead a simple life. It's a lot happier life.

—Courtesy of: Dr. Michael W. Congleton and
Heart2Heart e-Journal, www.radiosai.org

God can be known only by experience and not by experiments. Spiritual effort is needed for this purpose. Men who are engaged in exploring space do not make the slightest effort to explore the divine within them. Of what use are experiments aimed at exploring space, while there is no genuine cultivation of human qualities and the practice of such basic virtues as showing reverence for the mother, the father, and the preceptor? Everyone should act up to the motto, "Help ever, hurt never." Every educated person should engage himself or herself in selfless service to society, with humility and a pure heart.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 27:16, June 5, 1994)

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>.

September 3 (Wednesday): Ganesh Chaturthi Honors 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.

October 9 (Thursday): Vijaya Dasami “Victory” or culmination day of the seven-day yagna, or Vedic prayers and sacrificial rites, of the Dasara celebrations, Oct. 3-9.

October 20, Monday: Avatar Declaration Day Commemorating the day in 1940 when Sathyanarayana Raju, at age 14, declared his identity as Sai Baba and his mission.

October 28, Tuesday: Deepavali Festival of lights, symbolizing the victory of good over evil.

November 8-9, Saturday-Sunday, Global Akhanda Bhajan Twenty-four-hour devotional singing for the upliftment of all, by Sai groups worldwide, 6 p.m. Saturday to 6 p.m. Sunday.

2008 Retreat Dates - USA

Region 8 (Southern California), San Diego Area Oct. 24-26 at Camp Buckhorn, Idyllwild (www.campbuckhorn.org). Speakers: Jon Roof, Ladd Bogdanoff, and Gene Massey. Contact: Vickie Jewell (619) 405-7090, saijewell@yahoo.com.

Region 9 (Southwest), Colorado: Oct. 3-5, 2008, at Templed 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.

Dear Readers

In our July-August issue, the children's feature and puzzle were unexpectedly made even more puzzling by the appearance of oddly-placed question marks in the text. We apologize for this unintentional error, which occurred during the printing process and was discovered only after the issue had been mailed out. We hope especially that our younger readers were able to figure out that the “?” appeared where the letters fi or fl belonged—in words such as flower, fifteen, fire, selfish, find, and five. Sai Ram! —Ed.

The Scientist and the Saint

Scientific Truth vs. Spiritual Truth

*“The spirit of love is spirituality;
the splitting of love is science.”*

The word *manava* (man) has several meanings. One of them is that mankind has an ancient origin. *Ma* means “not,” and *nava* means “new,” indicating that man is “not new.” He has a long past.

Another meaning of the word *manava* is “one who lives without ignorance” (*ma* = ignorance; *na* = without; *va* = lives). This meaning is based on the fact that in man there is a sacred principle composed of the five basic elements (ether, air, fire, water, and earth).

If we examine the human state from a scientific point of view, it is found that the tissues of the human body are composed of four elements—hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon. The unified expression of these four elements is the human state. Ignoring this unity, scientists today are seeking to explore the nature of matter by breaking up the love principle. “The spirit of love is spirituality; the splitting of love is science.” Scientists are exploring matter by dividing love. They are unaware of the nature of love and are ignorant of purity. Scientists are imbued only with a sense of inquiry into matter; consequently, today there is a complete divorce between science and spirituality.

Matter and Energy Are Not Separate

Scientists are not engaged in examining the relationship between matter and energy correctly. They hold the view that matter is convertible into energy and vice versa, but in fact the two are not separate and are inseparably interlinked and interdependent. Scientists’ attempts to divide matter and energy have given rise to much doubt and confusion.

What new discovery have scientists made today? All their discoveries are of what already existed. Take, for instance, gravity. Gravity has existed from the beginning of creation. Newton sought to find out about the laws governing gravitation, but he did not discover the phenomenon anew. He only looked into what already existed. That the earth exhibited gravitational attraction was known even before Newton began investigating it. Likewise, matter and energy have existed from the beginning of creation. Both are comprehended by the mind only.

When the mind functions in relation to the Divine, it acquires the form of energy. But when the mind is turned toward nature, nature assumes the form of matter. Mind is the cause of experiencing joy or sorrow, and also for comprehending matter and energy.

Recognizing this quality of the mind, the sages declared, “The mind is the cause of liberation or bondage for humanity.”

Consider the two concepts, *drishti* (seeing) and *drishyam* (that which is seen). The power of sight enables us to see visible objects. Because the objects are there, we are able to see them. Thus, an inextricable relationship exists between seeing and that which is seen. Today, it is because we separate seeing from the things seen that sorrow arises. Seeing and that which is seen must become one.

The One in the Many

What is purity (*pavitram*)? Purity has been characterized as energy or power (*shakti*), and as the state of desirelessness in man. When there are desires, sorrow dogs them like a shadow, and when there is sorrow, there can be no purity. The mind is the cause of both desires and purity.

The Vedas have declared, “I am One; I shall become many.” It is the One that has become the many, and this is the unity that underlies the diversity. In this context, three concepts have to be understood: *sajatiyam*, *vijatiyam*, and *swagatabedam*.

Sajatiyam: though human beings differ in form and characteristics in various respects, they all belong to the human species. *Sajatiyam* refers to the oneness of the

species. In terms of the human body, every human being has this one thing in common, regardless of other differences. Differences of race, religion, caste, language, or community do not affect the oneness of humanity. This is *sajatiyam*, belonging to the same species. Whether a person is American, Chinese, or Indian, he is a human being.



When the mind functions in relation to the Divine, it acquires the form of energy. But when the mind is turned toward nature, it assumes the form of matter.

Vijatiyam, then, relates to differences between species. For instance, in terms of species, there is little in common between a human being and a tree. The tree belongs to a completely different species than man.

There may be innumerable varieties among trees, but all of them belong to the vegetable kingdom. There are differences between the human species and all the tree species. These differences are covered by the term *vijatiyam* (differentiation between species). Finally, *swagatabedam*: this term relates to functional differentiation. For instance, humans have hands, legs, ears, eyes, mouth, and other organs, all in the same body.

The same blood is pumped throughout the body, and the heart is one only. But each organ discharges only its specific function. The eyes can see but cannot hear. The ears can hear but cannot see. The body is one, but each organ or limb performs only its particular function. This functional differentiation is called *swagatabedam*.

Power of the Divine Is Inestimable

Scientists today are accomplishing any number of things, but they remain unable to recognize the divine potency that exists in the human being. Here is an example. The earth is one. When a lemon seed is planted, the fruit that comes from the lemon plant tastes sour. But if a mango seed is planted and a tree grows from it, the fruit of that tree tastes very sweet. Or if a neem seed is planted, the fruit from the neem tree will be bitter in taste. The soil may be the same, but the fruits from the different trees have different tastes.

Likewise, although all human beings are made up of the same elements—hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon—individuals vary in their mental and other qualities. What is the reason for these innumerable differences? What is the force behind these genetic differences, and how do scientists account for them? When they are able to understand the reason for these infinite differences, then scientists will achieve fullness in their knowledge. But the truth is that no one can determine the magnitude or the range of the powers of the Divine.

Science Is Partial, Spirituality Is Holistic

The fundamental difference between science and spirituality is this: science is

concerned with investigating the external, phenomenal universe, while spirituality is engaged in exploring the inner workings of the Divine. A scientist is one with external vision. A saint is one with internal vision.

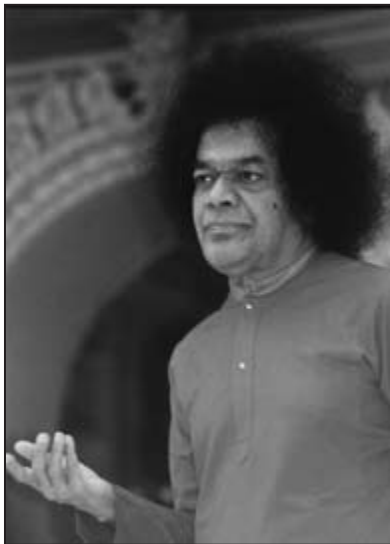
Here is an example of the difference between scientific truth and spiritual truth. In drawing the figure of a circle, the line

that ends where it started in the full circle has been described as *purnam*, which means full or whole.

*“Purnam a d a h ,
purnam idam, purnat
purnam udachyathe.
Purnasya purnam andaya
purnameva avasishyathe.”*
 (“That is full. This is full.
When full is taken from
full, that which remains is
still full.”) (UPANISHADIC
SCRIPTURE) Thus, the full
circle represents spirituality,
for, in it, the end and the
beginning are the same.

Spirituality recognizes no difference between beginning and end. The very term *adyatma* (spiritual) means “that which has no beginning or end.”

To understand what science is, cut the full circle into two halves. The left half is a semicircle resembling the English letter C. The C represents science; that is, it begins at one point and ends at another. Between the two points is a big gap, which is *agamyagocharam*—beyond reach, invisible, and incomprehensible.



Matter is Creation, Spirit is Creator

Matter and spirit may be regarded as two semicircles. Scientists today are only investigating matter and are ignoring spirit. These two concepts have been described in Vedantic terms as *prakriti* (nature) and *Paramatma* (God).

Scientists concern themselves with inquiry into the nature of creation; saints are concerned with knowing the Creator. Once you understand the Creator, you can understand all of creation. This was the basis for Saint Thyagaraja's saying, "O Rama, if I have your *anugraha* (grace), then all the *grahas* (planets) will be within my grasp." Therefore, if you comprehend the Creator, you can easily know all about creation. Creation or the phenomenal universe is within the comprehension of the senses; all that we hear, see, and experience is within the purview of our senses. We refer to things as "this," "this," and "this" (*idam*). But what is beyond the senses is referred to as "that" (*adah*). "*Purnam adah, purnam idam*." ("That is full; this is full.")(ISOPANISHAD) The term *that* refers to something distant. From what is "that" distant? To what is "this" near? We use the term "this" to refer to things that are within the purview of the senses, while "that" refers to what is beyond the senses.

So, what is beyond the senses has been called *adyatmic* (spiritual). What is below the senses has been called *bhuthik* (elemental, constituted by the five elements). Human beings are simultaneously below the senses and above the senses. Below the senses is the body. Beyond the senses is the *hridaya*

(spiritual heart). The eternal *hridaya* is encased within the perishable body, which is comparable to keeping valuable jewels in a relatively cheap, iron safe. Divinity is the valuable treasure kept in the metal safe of the body. This indicates that divinity is our true form.

Bend the Body, Mend the Senses, End the Mind

If you wish to understand your true nature, you have to do these three things: bend the body, mend the senses, and end the mind. The first step is "bend the body," meaning you should not allow the ego to develop within your body. Cultivate humility and do your duties sincerely. This is what is implied by "bend your body."

"Mend the senses" means examining how the senses behave and whether they are tending to go astray, and correcting and restraining them when necessary.

"End the mind" means quieting the vagaries of the mind. How is this to be done? It is accomplished by turning the mind in a different direction. For example, take a lock and key. When the key is turned toward the left, the lock gets locked. If the key is turned toward the right, the lock opens. Thus, the key performs both functions, of locking and unlocking.

End the Mind by Turning Godward

In man, the heart is the lock; the mind is the key. When the mind is turned toward God, the heart develops detachment. When the mind turns toward the world, the heart develops attachment, and thus, both

detachment and attachment result from the way the mind functions. When the mind is directed toward *prakriti* (nature or the phenomenal world), bondage ensues; when you turn your mind toward divinity, you experience *ananda* (bliss). “End the mind” means turning the mind Godward. To accomplish this, all you have to do is to dedicate every action of yours to the Divine. Then everything becomes easy and a source of bliss.

Science can offer you only temporary worldly comforts. Only spirituality can give you lasting bliss. All the amenities

that provide temporary comfort also give rise to unhappiness. A person may be sitting in an air-conditioned room, but his mind is filled with anxiety and worry, and his brain is overheated. One who has peace of mind, however, will experience no discomfort, even if he is in a forest. Peace, therefore, cannot be attained through science.

In fact, science and technology today are leading man away from peace. Is any scientist enjoying peace of mind? No. He is

leading an utterly artificial life. He is filled with worries. His mind knows no rest. All the ills of man today are due to the fact that his mind is never restful and quiet, and ever occupied with worries. Even an inanimate machine needs some period of rest, but no rest is given to the mind.

If we desire peace for the individual, for

the society, and for the nation, it can be achieved only through spiritual means.

Hence, recognizing this truth, without attaching excessive importance to worldly comforts, we must make every effort to

acquire peace of mind. No doubt physical comforts are necessary, up to a point: they should be limited to meeting the basic demands of nature. For instance, man requires sleep. Similarly, peace of mind should be attained through spiritual means. The spiritual path is the only way to achieve “the peace that passeth understanding.”

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba**
(SSS 21:13, May 6, 1988)



*Science can offer you only
temporary worldly comforts.
Only spirituality can give
you lasting bliss.*

Mankind's problems today cannot be solved by science and technology alone. Only a transformation in the character of man can serve to solve the present crisis. Men should strive to become human and progress toward the Divine.

—**Sri Sathya Sai Baba** (SSS 24:7, May 20, 1991)

THE BIOLOGY OF *Chanting & Meditation*

I wish to make clear up front that I am neither a scientist nor a physician, but a curious seeker or *jigyasu*, searching for understanding in the wake of experiences, which has led me to explore studies, research, and literature in this arena.

Personal Experiences

All the world's faiths incorporate some sort of "quieting," such as prayer or chanting, into their traditions. Chanting itself is a form of meditation.

I have felt the occurrence of spontaneous detachment from sensory stimuli—the trance-like "inner ecstasy" Swami speaks of—extend through an entire congregation, in African-American church services. The participants seem caught up in another realm, oblivious of their surroundings, and exude peaceful vibrations that charge the premises with noticeably uplifting energy.

I have likewise noticed and experienced the same gentle, harmonic synchronization with the inner Self, among the Sufi "whirling dervishes" (mendicants) and their chanting in Turkey, and in sessions of Taizé (named after the ecumenical Christian community in France that developed this form of chanting), which consists of short songs based on scriptural phrases, repeated again and again, giving the experience a meditative character. Using just a few words that express a basic tenet of faith, the concepts being named become a focus for the mind



to grasp. As the words are repeated many times, the scripture or spiritual principle gradually penetrates the whole being, while outer distractions and extraneous thoughts are gradually excluded. Meditative singing thus becomes a channel for tuning in with one's higher consciousness.

Various musicians and recording artists, as well, have adopted meditative singing formats, using a repetitive refrain or mantra, especially in spiritual music. The meditative music and/or chanting brings forth similar feelings of inner serenity. For example, Krishna Das (K.D.), born on Long Island as Jeff Kagel, is a practitioner of *kirtan* (devotional singing or chanting), using Hindi or Sanskrit words.

Kirtan originated as an integral part of *bhakti yoga* (the devotional path to God). Kirtan format is antiphonal or call-and-response. Other well-known, western-born kirtan devotional music artists include Jai Uttal (Doug Uttal), Bhagwan Das (Michael Riggs), and Dave Stringer. Chanters repeat short phrases or mantras invoking the names of Hindu gods.

Besides using the traditional Indian-instrument accompaniments of harmonium and tabla, these artists often also incorporate western musical instruments and styles into their practices and performances.

Unlike concerts, where the audience watches performers on stage, at a kirtan, everyone participates, making it a *sankirtan* (community singing/chanting experience). I have found that singing and experiencing this process with others is both empowering and enlivening.

Swami has said that chanting the names of God is very potent for attaining a state of peace:

The Lord's name is like a boat for a man crossing the ocean of life. It is supremely important in the Kali Age. It has been declared that there is nothing greater than the name of Hari (the Lord) in the Kali Age. By no other spiritual or religious practices can peace be attained in this age. The Divine name can turn poison into nectar. It can revive a lifeless thing. It is surcharged with infinite power. (SSS 22:15, June 22, 1989)

From personal participation in chanting the Heart Sutra at a Vietnamese Buddhist temple, I believe that benefits do result, even when the words are unfamiliar or not understood. The vibrations or the sounds themselves have power, even if the conscious mind does not grasp the meaning. However, Swami has often mentioned that it is important to pay attention to and express the meaning of what is being sung or chanted:

It is essential to ensure that the meaning of the words, the emotional feeling of the composer, and the melody of the song are all brought out in rendering the songs during sankirtan and in bhajans. Where one does not understand the meanings of the words, he should get the meaning from those who know. (SSS 25:8, Mar. 3, 1992)

Thus, if the mind can also dwell on the meanings of what is being chanted, and express the feeling behind the meanings of

the words, the power and efficacy of the chant can only increase.

Indian scriptures posit the concept of *Nada Brahma*—that creation of the cosmos is rooted in sound or vibratory energy. Chanting the divine names of God with the *Pranava* (*Aum*)—the all-pervading primordial sound—has the power of transforming one’s impulses and proclivities:

Plunge the wayward mind, which flees in all directions, into contemplation of the name of the Lord; the effect will be like concentrating the rays of the sun through a piece of magnifying glass. The scattered rays develop the power of a flame to burn and consume. So, too, when the waves of intellect and the feelings of mind attain one-pointedness through the converging lens of the Atma, they manifest as the universal divine splendor that can scorch evil and illumine joy. (Dhyana Vahini, pp. 5-6)

Scientific Research

Intrigued scientists have been prompted to investigate, understand, and authenticate the effects of chanting and meditation on stress responses, blood pressure, state of mind, neurotransmitter activity in the brain, and so on. In fact, such research has led to the development of the science of *neuroplasticity*, the power of mind to change the brain.

The following is a broad and composite summary of information gathered from the works of various scientists. The upshot is that eastern mysticism and western science have now converged, and doctors are now espousing meditation, not because it is hip,

but because research shows that it works! It is an antidote to stress.

The following is but a partial list of scientists and researchers who have been active in this field and who have helped shed light on why and how we experience what we do when we meditate, chant, or pray. Interested readers may pursue the contributions of these individual researchers through accessing information available about their studies on the Internet. Also available online are colorful images of comparative changes in the brain, as recorded before and during meditation/chanting:

- B.K. Anand, of India (effects of yoga on heart and pulse)
- T. Hirai, of Japan (biofeedback studies involving zen meditation)
- Dr. Gregg Jacobs, psychologist (research into the benefits of using the “ancestral” or “being” mind vs. the “thinking mind”), and Dr. Alvaro Pascual-Leone, neuroscientist (whose works led to the coining of the term, *neuroplasticity*), both from Harvard
- Dr. Andrew Newberg, neurosurgeon at the University of Pennsylvania (pioneer in neurotheology—the relationship between brain function and mystical or religious experiences)
- Dr. Richard Davidson, director of the Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience, University of Wisconsin, Madison (the neuroscience of compassion)
- Dr. V.S. Ramachandran, director of the Center for Brain and Cognition, University of California, San Diego
- Dr. Herbert Benson, Director Emeritus,

Mind/Body Medical Institute, Harvard Medical School (identifier of the *relaxation response*)

- Dr. Lynda H. Powell, Chair, Dept. of Preventive Medicine, Rush University

As a result of, and part of, the ongoing body of research, meditation techniques are increasingly being used by prison inmates (e.g., Travis County Jail in Austin, Texas), firefighters (e.g., Chicago Engine Company 32), drug and rehab programs, and in spas as well as corporations. Some of the studies have involved Buddhist monks and nuns, including well-known figures such as the Dalai Lama, as well as lay people.

Resetting the Brain, Training the Mind

Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), researchers have shown that meditation can change brain activity and improve immune response. Other studies have shown that it can lower heart rate and blood pressure. A significant finding has suggested that via meditation we can train the mind and reshape the brain, and that the meditative experience can “reset” the mind.

Results showed that during meditation, the frontal areas of the brain, which receive and process sensory information, deactivate. Likewise, activity in the parietal lobe (space-and-time-orientation zone in the brain) lessens or shuts down. The sense of boundaries dissipates, and feelings of oneness with the universe emerge. It appears that the brain does not shut off in meditation but rather blocks information coming into the parietal lobe.

The prefrontal lobes of the brain seem to correlate to emotional states. People who show a tendency toward right-prefrontal brain activity compared to their left-prefrontal activity, tend to be prone to negative emotions such as sadness, anxiety, and worry, while those who show higher left-prefrontal activity tend to demonstrate higher levels of enthusiasm, happiness, and alertness.

Research has further shown that during meditation, the most striking brain activity differences occurred in an area in the left prefrontal cortex—the region that registers happiness, compassion, and similar values. Also, the activity in the left-prefrontal zone during meditation has been found to “swamp” activity in the right prefrontal cortex, associated with negativity. This result had not been previously recorded from studies involving purely mental exercise.

Daniel Goleman reports a study by Dr. Richard Davidson, involving observations of a Tibetan Buddhist lama who was meditating intentionally on compassion. The MRI data showed a huge leftward shift in prefrontal lobe functions, that was “unlikely to occur by chance alone” and that indicated the presence of an “extremely pleasant mood.” Goleman observes:

The very act of concern for others’ well-being, it seems, creates a greater state of well-being within oneself. The finding lends scientific support to an observation often made by the Dalai Lama: that the person doing a meditation on compassion for all beings is the

immediate beneficiary. (Goleman, Daniel. *Destructive Emotions: How Can We Overcome Them?* NY: Bantam Books, 2003, p. 12)

The terms *left-brained* and *right-brained* are familiar to most people, and these refer to functions of the large brain hemispheres known as the left and right cerebral cortices. The left hemisphere is associated with linear, methodical, and logical thought, and with the “monkey mind” of endless chatter and details. The right hemisphere, by contrast, is associated with awareness of the present moment, sensory impressions, visual imagery, and a consciousness of connectedness.

Neuroanatomist and brain researcher Jill Bolte Taylor had the unique experience of observing and later recalling changes in her own brain function that occurred while she was having a stroke:

I lost my balance and I’m propped up against the wall. And I look down at my arm and realize that I can no longer define the boundaries of my body. I can’t define where I begin and where I end, because the atoms and molecules of my arm blended with the atoms and molecules of the wall. All I could detect was this energy. Energy. And I’m asking myself, “What is wrong with me, what is going on?” And in that moment, my brain

chatter, my left hemisphere brain chatter, went totally silent—just like someone took a remote control and pushed the mute button and—total silence. At first I was shocked to find myself inside a silent mind. But then I was immediately captivated by the magnificence of energy around me. And because I could no longer identify the boundaries of my body, I felt enormous and expansive. I felt at one with all the energy that was, and it was beautiful there. (“Stroke of Insight,” Interview with Jill Bolte Taylor, February 2008, www.TED.com)

She reflected later that if she had stumbled upon nirvana by accident through having a stroke, then perhaps others could reach a similar state purposefully, simply by choosing to “step to the right of their left hemispheres and find this peace.”

Put into scientific terms, these studies and stories suggest that through meditation we can think of emotions, moods, and states such as compassion, as trainable mental skills. The brain can be reset and the mind put on a leash, so to speak, harnessing or reversing negative habits or tendencies, and opening up states of joy, peace, and connectedness.

—Asan G. Tejwani
Memphis, Tennessee

Sankirtan is the process of singing that originates in the heart, not from the lips or tongue. It is the expression of the joyous thrill that wells up from the heart when the glory of God is remembered. It is the spontaneous manifestation of inner ecstasy.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 13:24, Nov. 14, 1976)

36 Godly Ways to Reduce Stress

1. Pray.
2. Go to bed on time.
3. Get up on time so you can start the day unrushed.
4. Say no—to projects that won't fit into your time schedule, or that will compromise your mental health.
5. Delegate tasks to capable others.
6. Simplify and unclutter your life.
7. Less is more. (While one may seem like not enough, two may be too many.)
8. Allow extra time to do things and to get to places.
9. Pace yourself. Spread out big changes and difficult projects over time; don't lump the hard things all together.
10. Take one day at a time.
11. Separate worries from concerns. If a situation is a concern, find out what God would have you to do, and let go of the anxiety. If you can't do anything about a situation, forget it.
12. Live within your budget; don't use credit cards for ordinary purchases.
13. Have backups: an extra car key in your wallet, an extra house key buried in the garden, extra stamps, etc.
14. K.M.S. (Keep Mouth Shut). This single piece of advice can prevent an enormous amount of trouble.



15. Do something for the child in you every day.
16. Carry a book of scripture with you to read while waiting in line.
17. Get enough exercise.
18. Eat right.
19. Get organized, so everything has its place.
20. While driving, listen to a tape that can help improve your quality of life.
21. Write down thoughts and inspirations.
22. Every day, find time to be alone.
23. Having problems? Talk to God on the spot. Try to nip small problems in the bud. Don't wait until it's time to go to bed to pray.
24. Make friends with godly people.
25. Keep a folder of favorite scriptures on hand.
26. Remember that the shortest bridge between despair and hope is often a good, "Thank you, Lord!"
27. Laugh.
28. Laugh some more!
29. Take your work seriously, but yourself not at all.
30. Develop a forgiving attitude (most people are doing the best they can).
31. Be kind to unkind people (they probably need it the most).
32. Sit on your ego.
33. Talk less; listen more.
34. Slow down.
35. Remind yourself that you are not the general manager of the universe.
36. Every night before bed, think of one thing you're grateful for that you've never been grateful for before.

—Author Unknown



Love, Altruism, and Science

It's abundantly clear from a number of studies that people who live generous lives also live happier lives.

—Stephen Post,

Director, Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics,
Stony Brook University, New York

Love and altruism have become the subject of increasing scientific and academic inquiry. For example, the Institute for Research on Unlimited Love (IRUL), based at Stony Brook, New York studies and sponsors grants for research projects involving the benefits of benevolent love and applications of the “science of love.” The Institute’s mission statement declares its dedication to developing “ongoing dialogue between spirituality, theology, and science around the idea of unlimited love as the ultimate ground of reality.”

Stephen G. Post, PhD, director of the IRUL and co-author (with Jill Neimark) of *Why Good Things Happen to Good People: The Exciting New Research That Proves the Link between Doing Good and Living a Longer, Healthier, Happier Life* (NY: Doubleday Broadway, 2007), issued a January 2008 review of research relating altruism to health entitled, “It’s Good to Be Good: Health and the Generous Heart.” The findings state that “the evidence that ‘doing unto others’ is good for the giver has reached a high threshold, with regard to everyday kindness and good

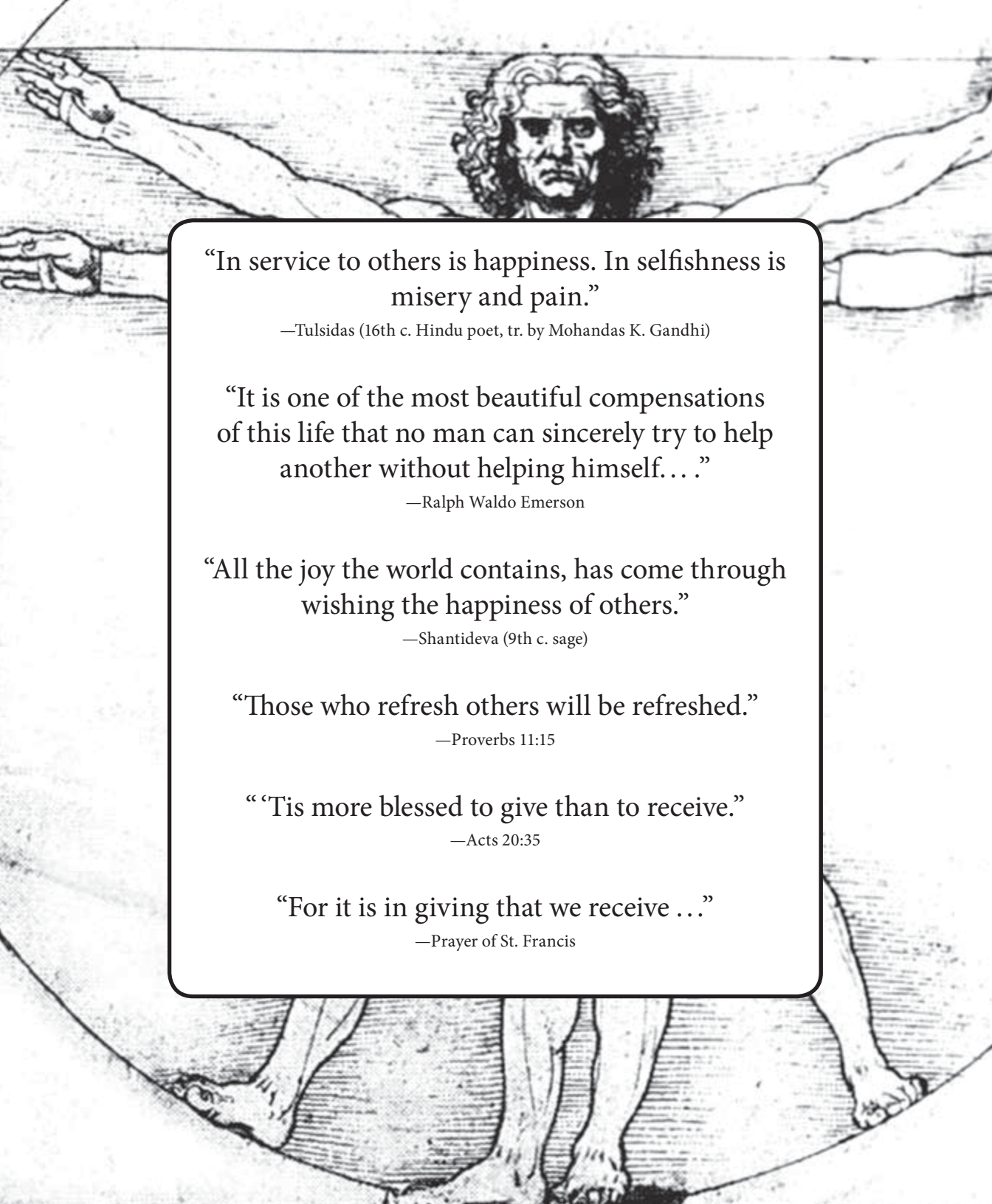
deeds that bestow upon the giver a feeling of meaning, buoyance, and warmth.” (www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org/publications/goodtobegood.html, Abstract)

As an explanation, Dr. Post cites Martin Buber’s (1878-1965) description of a spiritual and moral transformation of shifting from “I-It” to “I-Thou”—from a life centered on self as the center of the universe to one of relating to others as “I-Thou” in compassion and respect.

Post concludes, “There is still an ‘I’ of course, but a deeper and better I; science now shows [that as a result of doing good, there is] a happier and healthier ‘I’ as well. Every major religion recommends the discovery of a deeper and more profound human nature, designated in various ways as the ‘true self.’ ... Now science says it’s so.” (www.unlimitedloveinstitute.org/publications/stephenpost-goodtobegood.pdf)

The IRUL distributes an e-newsletter entitled “Works of Love,” which is aimed at networking researchers in this developing field.

—Ed.

The background of the entire page is a black and white line drawing of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. The figure is shown from the waist up, with arms and legs extended, inscribed within a circle and a square. The drawing is detailed, showing the man's curly hair, facial features, and the texture of his skin and clothing.

“In service to others is happiness. In selfishness is misery and pain.”

—Tulsidas (16th c. Hindu poet, tr. by Mohandas K. Gandhi)

“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself... .”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

“All the joy the world contains, has come through wishing the happiness of others.”

—Shantideva (9th c. sage)

“Those who refresh others will be refreshed.”

—Proverbs 11:15

“‘Tis more blessed to give than to receive.”

—Acts 20:35

“For it is in giving that we receive ...”

—Prayer of St. Francis

Prayer for the Subtle Elements and Senses

O Divine,

As subtle fire, burn away
the useless habit chitchat of the mind!

As subtle water, bring the coolness of peace
and flow everywhere equally.

Let the waters of the mind
cascade in harmony
and emit the soothing blessing
of contentment.

As subtle earth, O Divinity, satisfy the mind
with the certainty of sustenance and strength.

As subtle, fluid air—let the atmosphere of the divine,
the feeling of love,
expand everywhere
in all directions
throughout the mind,
connected to all mind.

May that love saturate all thoughts,
all emanations of mind!

As subtle ether—what is subtler than ether?
Your bliss is the matrix
for all the elements and senses.

Come, permeate our gross and subtle senses
with the bliss of Divine Awareness.

—Corinn Codye
Wrightwood, California

The Gift of Learning

Scientist and Inventor Art-Ong Jumsai Explains Why He Chose to Dedicate the Rest of His Life to Education

Groups of teenagers surround the man and bombard him with questions. “Do not think that you cannot do something!” responds Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai na Ayudhya. “Do not tell yourself you are too tired. Do not compare yourself to others.” The youngsters take in these words of wisdom, responding to the doctor’s talent for providing moral support and useful study tips.

Art-Ong’s audience with these teenagers was part of the British Council’s Thai-UK Education Festival 2008. Entitled “Teen Voice Talk on Global Citizens, by Dr. Art-Ong Jumsai na Ayudhya,” the free event drew a full house. The two-hour session had Art-Ong giving an inspirational talk on why and how we can be quality citizens of the world, followed by a group discussion and presentation.

“Did you listen to what they were saying? Isn’t it brilliant?” asked Art-Ong during our interview, which began nearly 30 minutes late due to the teenagers’ demands to talk with him. One didn’t need to ask what Art-Ong thought of the youngsters’ response to his talk: you could read it in the glow of his eyes.

Though Art-Ong’s face is less recognized in Thailand than his high-profile siblings’—National Artist big brother Dr. Sumet, and omnipresent socialite younger sister Dr. Parichart—his professional achievements are no less distinguished. Art-Ong’s career has ranged from university lecturer, researcher, and business advisor, to politician and education

pioneer, and has also been complemented with a cameo role in the film *Khang Lang Phap* (“Behind the Painting”).

He began to attract public attention following an advertising spot that cited his success in developing a landing device that allowed NASA to successfully land the Viking 1 and Viking 2 Mars landers in 1975—an achievement not widely acknowledged by his fellow countrymen until the release of this ad over 30 years later.

As Art-Ong recalled his fascinating past, the 67-year-old revealed that his life first took a dramatic turn following three nights of spiritual awakening during his teenage years. He described himself as “a troubled boy” who “fought back with those racist bullies with fists,” particularly during the period he spent in a boarding school in the UK. At the age of 15, however, he was awakened over three consecutive nights by a voice calling his name and asking “Art-Ong, why did you do that?”

“I began to realize what had gone wrong with me. Since then, I have taken an interest in Buddhism and meditated every day. My life changed. Back then, I meditated for an hour every day and I became a calm person. My study improved, and I got the highest marks in all my exams, [up to my] PhD.”

Art-Ong credits his daily one-hour meditation sessions as a direct source of wisdom. He said the subject of his PhD, the theories he used, and the research methodology he employed, all appeared before

his eyes while he was meditating. “Meditation leads to wisdom, in whatever subject interests you,” he said.

Little did the then-PhD student know that the strategy that helped him earn his doctorate would be useful again later when his task became one of aiding mankind’s exploration of space by helping to devise a landing system that enabled US spacecraft to land on Mars.

At age 30, while lecturing in engineering at Chulalongkorn University, Art-Ong was contracted by NASA to develop a landing device. He spent the first year tackling the mission scientifically—gathering information, developing a theory, creating a prototype, and, when he failed, revising the theory and resuming the process.

After four failed attempts, Art-Ong decided that, as the western scientific method was not proving successful, he would do it the eastern way. “I climbed to the top of a mountain in California and spent five days and four nights meditating. On the fifth day, everything just came to me. I just knew how I had to do it. I made three machines for them to install on the Viking 1, Viking 2, and projected Viking 3 Mars landers. The first two were launched, and they landed on Mars successfully.”

As one of the people behind a huge stepping stone in space exploration, Art-Ong was enticed to remain in the US and develop more projects. He was offered US citizenship, a twenty-fold salary increase (which he described as “capable of buying twenty cars a month”), and even a project of his own to develop an aircraft that could not be shot down. But Art-Ong turned down all

offers, insisting that he wanted to return to his homeland.

“I told them that I was Thai and had no intention of changing my nationality, and that I did not come to America for money. I knew, deep in my heart, that I would never want to help any country become so invincible that it could do whatever it wanted to the rest of the world. So I decided to return to Thailand and continue my teaching at Chulalongkorn University.”

After seven years at Chula, Art-Ong decided to explore some other challenges. He became a successful businessman and subsequently a much-admired politician for the now-defunct Palang Dharma party, serving in several posts, including secretary to the foreign affairs minister.

It was during his five years in politics that, despite his disappointment with that time, Art-Ong developed his life’s mission: to develop and improve the local educational system. “As an engineer, I had created many significant inventions. I then thought, perhaps it’s time I created quality people,” he explained.

Art-Ong’s role in pioneering a new direction for Thailand’s education system is noteworthy. Through numerous stints on the Standing Committee of Education, he was charged with drafting a new education bill—and eventually presenting a scheme to parliament—that emphasized ethics and morality alongside academic achievement. It was passed almost without debate.

“It was approved easily because nobody really cared. It had no impact on business or the economy. Most people just sat listening with a smile and let it pass,” Art-Ong recalled,

his smile revealing understanding and humor rather than bitterness. Fed up with politics and the change in the Palang Dharma party that came with the arrival of its new leader, Thaksin Shinawatra, Art-Ong quit politics to devote himself fully to education, which has been his life mission ever since.

"I met [revered Indian spiritual leader] Sathya Sai Baba during a trip to India. He looked into my eyes and said the only thing he would ask of me was to devote myself to developing education for the rest of my life," said Art-Ong.

"I came back and did so. I traveled the entire country to give lectures for thousands and thousands of teachers on how to make students both academically and morally excellent. After one workshop, the participating teachers told me that they wanted to see a school that truly put those theories into practice—hence, the establishment of the Sathya Sai School."

A "virtue-oriented" institution that aims to equip students with as much moral integrity as academic capability, Sathya Sai boarding school opened in Lop Buri in 1991. Located in a sublime area near the Pasak river with views of a nearby mountain, the 300-rai (about 120 acres) plot, housing over 300 students, is an inspiring educational environment.

"The school employs the principle of 'educare,' which aims to bring out the positive side of children by interacting with them in a positive way," said Art-Ong.

"The most crucial factor in realizing this goal is the teachers. You need to have a good mold or template in order to shape a good person. Teachers here do not punish students

with force. They lead students through daily recreational routines and short meditation sessions prior to each class."

Sathya Sai School has students from grades one to twelve, with its first generation of graduates now on the verge of completing their bachelor's degrees.

So, does a man with honors degrees in engineering and a strong faith in Buddhism ever look back and question his life's path? Does he ever regret turning down all those lucrative offers? Has he, as one who underwent an early spiritual awakening in life, ever thought he should have ended up in a monastery instead of a school?

"When I do something, it comes from a will, and nothing in the world can ever turn me away from that will. I went to America to seek new knowledge for the students, and no matter what offer I received, I would never take it up, because it wasn't the reason I went there," Art-Ong explained.

"As for monkhood, it's not that I had never thought of it," he admitted. "However, I knew from the age of fifteen, when I had my awakening, that I could do much more as a layman. Also, there was something telling me deep down, that in this age of science and technology, who would listen to what I said, unless I had high degrees, particularly in science or engineering? I knew then that I needed to have a PhD in engineering to make people interested in listening when I talk about dharma." Nowadays, people are interested in listening to what Art-Ong says. Just ask those teenagers!

—**Courtesy of:** *Bangkok Post*/Staff Reporter
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Village Uplift: A Taste of Practical Vedanta

Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva, October 2007

While we generally feature reports of service activities from around the USA, this year marks the 8th anniversary of Sathya Sai's *Grama Seva* or village service project, in India. This service program was initiated in the year 2000, with Sri Sathya Sai Baba sending his students out into the villages surrounding Prasanthi Nilayam to deliver truckloads of food and clothing to the needy, during the Dasara week celebrations. This report covers the week of the 2007 distributions.

The hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

With Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, practice precedes precept. He himself would serve food with the love of a thousand mothers to the poor and the distressed on special occasions in Prasanthi Nilayam during years past. And his chosen mother, Easwaramma, always did so with gusto, even in the 1960s, when she distributed clothing to the poor villagers who assembled on the premises for the tender care of the loving mother. Bhagavan has now directed his students to do both—serve food and distribute clothing—at the very doors of the needy, in their villages and homes.

The Beginning

Bhagavan has said that the real wealth of India is in its villages, which play the role of the provider. It is rural India that feeds the entire country. Not only that, but Bhagavan exhorts his students:

Indian culture and civilization have been built up from ancient times on rural communities. Even today, this culture survives predominantly in villages.... When the villages grow, the states grow, and the nation on the whole prospers. The prospect of the nation is based upon the progress of the villages. Everyone should be interested in the welfare of the villages.

Bhagavan therefore wanted the student community in general and the alumni of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute/University in particular to be meaningfully associated with the rural uplift program in a big way. He decided that the seeds of service to rural areas must be sown in the minds of the young men and women before they leave the portals of the Sri Sathya Sai University. A new service campaign thus got initiated in 2000, which deployed his students into the field of operation.

As with every activity undertaken by the Lord, serving food and clothing to the rural needy also called for meticulous attention to myriad details—from gathering materials to preparing road maps and obtaining population statistics. Trucks and tractor-trailers were mobilized and equipped with wireless radios. Since the year 2000, this service campaign has taken place in Prasanthi Nilayam during the Dasara week, covering nearly one hundred thousand residents of over 100 villages and an equal number of hamlets.

Thus the grama seva program became indeed a new “mantra.” And Swami enjoined his students to march forth in their purity, as ambassadors of peace and love to the villages, with food and clothing. The experience was and is a prime lesson in practical Vedanta—the *adwaita* or nondualistic philosophy in practice.

How It Happens...

The students are associated with the work at all stages. Cooking, which starts the previous evening, goes on until about midnight. After cooking, comes packing, which continues through the wee hours of the night. The food packets are sorted, then loaded in the trucks, and by the time this is completed, it is 5:30 a.m. The students and staff set out from the mandir after circumambulation at 8:15, heading toward the line of trucks that are ready to go. Note that sanctity and a spiritual ambience have been maintained all through these activities. Bhagavan prefers to call this service not “poor feeding” or “feeding of the poor,” but “*Narayana seva*,” that is, service to the Lord, who resides in every being.

The convoy of trucks now head for the villages, laden with sweets, food packets, and clothing. The villages thus visited are some thirty kilometers or so from Puttaparthi. Upon arrival at the villages, the gifts are unloaded and readied for house-to-house distribution.

On to the Villages...

Bhagavan is very particular that all good activities must start with prayer. So, before distribution, students and teachers march in procession, singing devotional songs, with villagers also participating. The distribution parties are invariably headed by teachers and senior students. Different parties then fan out and go to the different areas of the village, to commence distribution. Service is done door to door, and care is taken to ensure that no family is left out.

A question may arise as to how this short-term project can solve the problems of rural India? Baba has the answer. Briefly, the idea is to sensitize the students so that the seeds of compassion are sown in their hearts.

One will not fail to observe that moving about in the rural areas might give a culture shock to others, but not to Bhagavan’s students, charged as they are with Bhagavan’s love. The serving of food packets and other gifts is done methodically. At every house, they first offer greetings and say that they are privileged to convey Baba’s blessings, after which they hand over, with love, the gifts he has sent.

Once the distribution is over, the students and staff eat some of the same food for their lunch, making the entire event an exercise in love, devotion, and unity, rather than a mere distribution of food packets. Both the giver

and the receiver thus experience feelings that go deep into their hearts. The real giver is Bhagavan, and all the students are doing is a courier's job. Yet, how great it is even to be a mere courier for the transmission of the selfless love of Bhagavan.

Obviously, the problems of the villages are too massive to be solved by brief service campaigns. But Bhagavan's approach to the subject is different. He says that in the first place, such service programs convey to the villagers that someone loves and cares for them. Secondly, such projects give students an intense exposure and valuable experience that they would not otherwise get. Even more important, in the process, they get highly sensitized. By going to the villages day after day, the students learn to feel in their hearts the troubles constantly suffered and endured by these poor villagers.

This sensitization will remain with the students, and one day, when they occupy positions of authority with leverage, their experiences will induce them to keep doing things to uplift rural India. In this context, one should not fail to remember that the One who facilitated this unforgettable experience for them, the Eternal Witness, sits in their hearts, to watch and prompt their actions at the appropriate moment.

Off and on, Baba tells students, "Do not see the person you are serving as different from yourself. In a spiritual sense, that person is none other than you, the Universal Self. When you serve in this spirit, you will discover your true nature."

Bhagavan has said:

If you pour spirituality into the ears of those who are tortured by hunger, it will not be assimilated. First, satisfy their hunger. Give them God in the form of food; give them God in the form of clothing; give God in the form of peace to those afflicted with anxiety; give God in the form of medicine to those suffering from ill health; give them God in whatever form will assuage fear, pain, and sorrow. It is only when this is done that spirituality can soak into the heart.

Further, in his discourse of February 16, 1992, Bhagavan revealed the significance of grama seva in unequivocal terms:

Grama seva is Rama seva (service to villages is service to God incarnate). You need not strive for salvation as a separate goal. Service to villages will itself ensure mukti (liberation). Bear this truth in mind and act upon it in your daily life.

Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva 2007

It was indeed a hectic week for the students of all the three campuses who were ordained to carry out the task of reaching out to the villagers with food and clothing packets of God's love. This lucky lot, with minds fresh and enthused, and hearts vibrant and expanded, set out with the song of "Sai Ram" on their lips, arrived at the doorsteps of the villagers, and conquered.

It was not the sweets, food packets, or clothes distributed that mattered, but the feeling behind the action; this was the message of grama seva, the message that Bhagavan has

emphasized all along: to reach out to the needy with his divine love, true to his saying, *Grama seva is Rama seva; jana seva is Janardhana seva.* (Service to villages is service to God; service to people is service to the Lord.)

More than 470 women students from the Sri Sathya Sai University, Anantapur Campus, and over 200 girls from the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, along with faculty members and staff from both campuses, were engaged in packing the food and clothing materials. Puliyora rice was cooked and handed over for further processing by an expert group of sevadal devotees, and *laddu prasadam* (sweets) arrived in huge amounts from the South Indian Canteen, prepared by devoted women *sevadals*, assisted by the higher secondary students.

These students and staff from the women's campuses were busy nightly from 10:00 p.m. until 3:00 a.m., engaged in phased activities, namely, cooking of the rice to perfection and packaging appropriate quantities to cater to the villagers the next day. Then, boys from both the Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan university campuses, along with faculty members and staff, would go out every day to various villages, following a detailed plan for carrying out the task within the schedule.

The scope of the 2007 plan was to cover the three administrative areas of Puttaparthi, Bukkapatnam, and Kothacheruvu, or approximately 150 villages, representing over 250,000 in village population. With the entire bunch of students and staff divided into six groups of 120 each, with fifteen staff members in each group, assisted by over 40 vehicles at their disposal, the entire plan had been

organized most meticulously under Bhagavan's divine guidance.

Every day they planned to serve over 30,000 people in 6,000 households, in order to complete the task in eight days' time. Each household was to be given one dhoti and one sari, along with puliyora rice and laddu prasadam for each household member. The last day was reserved for distribution within the ashram by female students from the Anantapur campus, assisted by staff members from Anantapur and the primary school. Per divine command, puliyora rice and *chakkara pongal* (a sweet dish made out of rice and unrefined sugar) were distributed at each and every doorstep inside the ashram, along with saris and dhotis.

Indeed, it was an event worth emulating, and one could easily wonder whether the Gods of highest heaven were watching this "army" of students, clothed in white, who were immensely lucky and privileged to carry out this task, at the direct command of God.

Thus, the program launched in the year 2000 as an ideal-setting, model operation, has come to stay as an annual feature of the Prasanthi calendar—and a practice to be continued throughout one's life, wherever one ends up. Indeed, grama seva is an example of "practicing the precept," as inspired and taught by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

—Sri Sathya Sai Books & Publications Trust

www.sssbpt.org

The Purpose of a Sai Spiritual Marriage

Some questions that pop up in the minds of Sai young adults on the subject of marriage include: Do I get married? If so, when? Whom shall I marry? Shall I choose my own partner for marriage? Should I have my parents arrange a marriage for me? Many pray to Sri Sathya Sai Baba, seeking answers to these questions in their minds and hearts. I will share with you in this article my awareness of some of the answers to these questions that Sri Sathya Sai Baba has given.

One instruction that Sai Baba has given devotees is this: *If you wish to have a relationship with a partner in this life, then get married.* I heard Swami say this to all the students at the Brindavan campus, in his 2000 Christmas discourse, with many alumni girls and boys present in the audience: *All of you here whose parents want you to marry, go home and get married.*

Swami also instructed my husband and I in an interview, *When you do these workshops with the young adults, and you break into your small groups, do not allow the single girls and single boys to sit in the same group.*

These are clear, simple, and direct instructions; there is no hedging with Sai Baba. His rules are for our benefit, and he expects us to follow them. Even though the number one reason people give for living together is to see if they are compatible, this

is neither an option expressed by Sai Baba, nor a valid test of a marriage situation.

Recent data from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2006) suggests that over 60 percent of women ages 25-39 have cohabited at least once. Among 51 percent of young men and 56 percent of young women, the reason for endorsing the importance of cohabitation was, “couples can be sure they are compatible before marriage.”

The sincerity and innocence of youth is endearing. They believe that dating or living together will allow them to get to know each other before making a marriage commitment. This is a false belief. Why? You do not truly get to know one another until many years later.

Let me explain. The marriage of your parents—and your relationship with each of them—is programmed inside you. While you were growing up, during the daily observation of your parents’ relationship, a program was created inside you concerning married life. This program exists in your subconscious. When you get married, this program, which was dormant within you, gets activated, because marriage is the function key that runs the program. If you are only dating or living together, the program does not get accessed, and even when it gets accessed by marriage, it takes time to surface fully.

The main reason for devotees to commit to marriage is for the advancement of our spiritual growth.

The daily experience of a married couple rubbing against each other's egos over an extended period—especially when we add in more stressors, such as having children—the pressure builds inside us, and we can react with negativity. At some time we might hear, or find ourselves saying, in a tone of accusation, “You’re just like your mother/father.”

Fast Track for Spiritual Progress

However, a time of great opportunity exists during any time of stress or crisis, because our emotional pain can cause us to look below the surface at our thought patterns, our behavior, our relationship, and what options we have for changing. If we take this approach, we can make the most of the moment, which means we have a chance to understand the source of our behavior.

Baba has advised many young people and married couples over the years:

First, you must understand each other. After that, adjustment will be easy. First, understanding; second, adjustment. Ninety percent of people try adjustment first. This is the wrong way. First, understanding. (Vision of Sai 1, p. 129)

In our immaturity, we may try to make changes in order to relieve temporary emotional pain, without understanding fully

the reasons behind our habits, responses, and behavior. But it can take years for this process of understanding to develop, depending on our level of awareness and the depth of our desire to change our automatic responses.

Swami is telling us that, in relationships, it is necessary to develop the ability to communicate and understand our own and our mate's needs, motivations, and behaviors. In other words, if you understand each other, your communication skills will help you when emotions and pressures build up. Not only that, but by these words Swami is cautioning us to avoid making premature changes, or to avoid making changes without having understanding. Even further, he is encouraging us to live in understanding—in an attitude of compassion, trust, and unity.

Swami elaborates:

Understanding and adjustment between each other are essential for the smooth functioning of any family. For example, when there is proper understanding between wife and husband, the wife will not mind even when the husband returns home very late from the office. In fact, she will be anxiously waiting for him, thinking that he may be busy at the office or held up in a traffic jam.

But if there is no proper understanding between the two, even if there is a delay

of just five minutes, there will be a fight between them. Adjusting will become easy only when there is proper understanding.

Whether it is among students, teachers, or members of a family, understanding is very essential. When a teacher goes on leave, another teacher can engage his class. Such understanding and adjustment among teachers will help students to a great extent. Help ever, hurt never. (SSS 33:17, Sept. 29, 2000)

The main reason for devotees to commit to marriage is for the advancement of our spiritual growth. Marriage, like any other relationship, is a laboratory that allows us to apply Sai Baba's teachings on giving unconditional love. But marriage, due to the closeness of the living situation between the parties, upgrades us to a fast track for ego reduction, sacrifice, self-assessment, and changing oneself, as well as for helping God to mold the character of our offspring.

Conditional vs. Unconditional Love

When you are dating, living together, or newly married, you are still in the honeymoon stage. You are trying to please one another, because you are still operating on your outside image. This is the image that you show to the world.

On the other hand, your inside image is what you truly think and feel. Your personality problems, bad habits, anger, yelling, and so on, are mainly released inside your household. At home, your inside image comes out, less guarded than the outside image, and sometimes it is sweet and good,

and sometimes it is not so sweet, patient, or kind. Nevertheless, this is the side that we tend to hide from the general public, but we cannot hide it forever at home.

When our inner image starts coming out, it ricochets and rebounds within the relationship. In marriage, you have the long-term opportunity to work to understand and adjust, but in a less-committed relationship arrangement, you might be tempted to think, "We are just not compatible, so we can break up and find someone else." Unfortunately, this type of thinking also causes problems for those who are married, adding to the reasons for divorce rates. But Swami says, *Marriage means your life, a whole lifetime together, not just a few days, or a few weeks, or a few years.* (Golden Age, p. 145)

Often unconsciously, we tend to look for someone who we think will give us what we want, on our terms and conditions—conditional love. Relationships are often filled with expressions of conditional love. Conditional love is childish love. It is based only on getting what one wants, fulfillment of one's desires or expectations, and a backdrop of "I will love you only on certain conditions." This can lead not only to exposing our untamed negative emotions but also to a withdrawal of our love when we feel those conditions or expectations are not being met.

Unconditional love, in contrast, is mature love. Unconditional love expands us through selflessness, to think of each others' needs, instead of strictly our own desires.

To move toward unconditional love, it is helpful to view our marriage relationship

Your marriage warranty is your love of God, trusting him, surrendering to his will, and endless effort on your part.

in this manner: “What can I bring to the relationship that will help us progress?” The most important reason for a marriage commitment is having a spiritual partner who can help you to evolve toward your divine heritage.

Compatability Develops over Time

Compatibility does not come out of attraction or from having a few things in common. It comes from years and years of sincere self-examination; communicating in a kind, respectful, and honest way; and becoming more and more loving—the love that you are in truth. Eventually, you have a trustworthy, committed person who is your partner, a friend with whom you can share your innermost thoughts, who loves you in all situations, who will help you when you have an illness or a problem, who forgives you, and who will never, ever let you go.

Compatibility develops, not because you are handsome, wealthy, fun, or entertaining, or because your personality is always sweet or kind, but because you two have suffered and faced life’s challenges together, worked through forgiveness, stayed loyal, and were present together in the good as well as the so-called bad. You are each half of a whole, and together you are a team. This is the kind of trust that comes after years of working on your relationship together.

You have to earn this status with each other; it does not come automatically with the marriage contract, or with living together. Sai Baba says,

The feeling of friendship and love among people is lacking today. Just as a honeybee sucks nectar from a bitter flower, so also should you be able to see good even in bad. You should be able to draw the water of happiness even from the well of misery. That is the true quality of love. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. Pleasure and pain coexist in God’s creation itself. (Gurupurnima discourse, August 3, 1999)

When you say, “I will marry you,” you are in the birth canal. Think of a newborn infant; that is where you are beginning. You may expect each other to be as pure as a newborn infant, in love, but such purity in love has to be earned and learned. That is one of the best reasons for your marriage. Your marriage warranty is your love of God, trusting him, surrendering to his will, and endless effort on your part.

Swami says, *Selflessness is God. The self that is selfless is God. To feel “mine” and “thine” is ego. Ego is very harmful. It is to kill the ego that two souls are brought together. It is so they can learn to adjust to one another and forget their egos.* (Golden Age, p. 143)

The ego barriers that show up in our relationships provide us with opportunities to sacrifice our wants and desires for another. This is the true meaning of a *yagna* (a sacrificial rite), of sacrificing our ego. We all have problems, and it seems that we have unavoidable misunderstandings, disagreements, and hurt feelings, from time to time; this is natural in all relationships. This is expected. These situations are challenges for growth. Don't be afraid. Return again and again to the ideal of being sweet and kind to each other, especially after a fight or disagreement. When one is hurting in a relationship, which of you will be spiritually mature enough to overlook your ego? Go to your partner, hold his or her hand, and say some of the most important words in any relationship: "I'm sorry."

Who Arranges Your Marriage?

Swami tells us that when we are born, we have an invisible garland around our neck, consisting of the results of our past actions, and everything that is destined to happen to us in this life is in this garland. Therefore, consider that your marriage partner—and the type of challenges that you will face in your marriage—were likely determined before your birth. So, who is doing the selecting, after all? Is it your parents, yourself, or God?

The mass media message says just the opposite. We are bombarded by media that seems to promise that we can find the right partner—who must be beautiful, smart, witty, educated, alluring, and so on—an illusory image, like the most recent

Bollywood/Hollywood film star. But have you considered what are the true qualities of a good lifetime partner, or the qualities that you must develop in order to be a good lifetime partner to your mate?

I have heard that marriage arrangements have come to the internet via web pages such as *e-harmony.com*. Isn't this a similar version of a marriage arrangement, but advertised as fashionable, for finding a partner who has a similar background, and so on. But there is at least one huge difference between this type of arrangement and one made through your family or extended relations; you don't know if the person on the other end, a complete stranger, is telling the truth.

But whether your parents arrange your marriage or you stumble onto this individual in a seemingly random meeting at an airport, whomever God selected will appear. Trust that this will happen at the most perfect time of your life. You do not need to test the waters in order to find the correct person for you in this life. According to your karma and the lessons you need to learn, trust that God will choose for you.

When your parents arrange your marriage, they want to find someone who has a similar background, in order to minimize the hardship in your future. They know the obstacles that can happen in a marriage, and they are trying to find someone who has a similar background, as much as possible, because they love you very much.

It is essential, before jumping into a situation that can dramatically change your life, to carefully consider the consequences. Give up the media images and go inside.

The union that exists in marriage is a laboratory that prepares us for spiritual union with God.

Write out a list of the qualities that you wish in a spouse. Send the letter to Swami, and pray for his guidance. The media tends to focus on outward appearances, without giving equal time to concepts of inner beauty and character ideals. Swami says:

In ancient times, the sages and saints sacrificed everything for the sake of the welfare of humanity. Even the youth of those times followed suit. They are remembered even today because of their spirit of selfless sacrifice. On the contrary, the youth of today are becoming exceedingly greedy, totally selfish, and harboring feelings of hatred and jealousy, while those in ancient times led a life of thyaga (sacrifice and sense control) and yoga (union with God). But present-day youth want to lead a life of bhoga (worldly and carnal pleasures), which results in roga (disease). (World Youth Conference, July 17, 1997)

Sisters and brothers, the dating game is a lion's den, fraught with danger. It is not advised by Sai Baba or your parents. Trust God to bring the right person to your doorstep, without endangering you. God loves you very much.

If you have made a mistake, forget it, move on, and improve your life. Swami says, Past is past. Forget the past. Don't worry about the future. Stay in the omnipresent.

Working on Yourself

Young adults ask me, "What can I do while I am waiting?" I love to hear that question. My answer is, "Work on clearing the personal issues that exist between you and your family members." If you have an issue with one of your parents, and can understand it and resolve this reaction within yourself, then that issue is much less likely to create a problem in your marriage.

Also think about your expectations in a marriage partner, and remove those too. Expectations are traps. If your spouse doesn't meet your expectations, you will feel hurt and disappointed. Any time you can spend in "house-cleaning" your subconscious from its pre-set programs, is time well invested in helping to release patterns that can cause you problems in your marriage relationship.

If there is an appointment, there will be disappointment. Therefore, do not make an appointment, in the first place. (SSS 37:15, Sept. 6, 2004)

This means, don't appoint yourself into the position of expecting a certain outcome, reaction, response, or recognition.

This is another way of saying, release the results of your actions and thoughts, and hand them over to God; accept that whatever happens is for your best; be happy and look for the good in whatever happens.

Also, increase your devotion to God; get close to him. All of these actions will help you in your relationship, when the right partner comes along. The maturity level of our character is the spiritual strength that we bring into our relationship. Work on yourself while you wait; it will increase your success rate in loving each other.

Marriage is not easy, especially today, with all the temptations, but God's love and your commitment and effort can bring great spiritual advancement. Your marriage is but a stepping stone to your final goal, union with God. In marriage, we can sacrifice our ego desires to help each other. Marriage is a spiritual vehicle that allows us the opportunity to practice Sai Baba's teachings. The union that exists in marriage is a laboratory that prepares us for spiritual union with God.

The qualities we need to practice for a successful marriage are: devotion to God, discipline, serving our spouse and family members with love, forgiveness, humility, respect, control of senses, sacrifice, extreme effort, and sweet, honest communication.

All these qualities are necessary for our spiritual union with God—to attain liberation. We must have discipline in our behavior, control our ego and desire, sacrifice and serve God with love, and communicate with him constantly, in prayer, *japa* (repetition of holy names), or *mantra* (repeating sacred phrases or formulae), as well as communicating all day with our inner divinity. Sai Baba says:

By pure love, establish unity with the Divine. The path of love is the straight-forward road for realizing the Divine. Human life is a journey from "I" to "we." It is also progressing from shivam to soham (from the individual self to the state of merger with the Divine). (World Youth Conference, July 17, 1997)

—Rita Bruce
Austin, Texas

Rita Bruce is the author of several books, including *Vision of Sai (I and II)*, *Sathya Sai Parenting*, and *Love of Conscience*.

The divine love in you has neither birth nor death. Direct your love toward that divine love. That love is always with you. If you cultivate such love, you will always remain as embodiments of love. Have firm faith in this divine love. Do not believe worldly love, lest you be deceived. Worldly love is like a passing cloud. Such clouds come and go. They are not permanent. Love the eternal love, the principle of divinity. Do not be deceived by worldly love, which causes only disappointment. Cultivate the type of love that will not cause disappointment. (SSS 36:18, Oct 28, 2003)

Nature as a Vesture of God



The theme for this year's Easwaramma Day and the curriculum for three months of SSE Group III was "Nature as a Vesture of God." Although we know very well that God exists everywhere, we rarely take the time to truly appreciate

the divinity in our surroundings. To better analyze nature and understand it spiritually, we narrowed its scope by considering it in four subsets. As we prepared for Easwaramma Day presentations, we spent a great deal of time reflecting on what we can observe and learn from nature.

Subset 1: Sky, Sunrise, and Sunset These three are consistent and dependable. They teach us to start each day fresh, with a positive outlook and carrying no baggage from the past. The sky is limitless in the ways it provides inspiration and protection to all without discrimination.

Subset 2: Seasons and Trees Each season has its own characteristic value: winter symbolizes peace and nonviolence; spring rewards us for having faith; summer gives us an abundance of love and warmth; fall teaches us moderation and detachment from the fruits of our labor. The trees experience all the seasons while performing their duties of providing food and shelter with equanimity.

Subset 3: Clouds and Rivers Clouds teach us not to identify ourselves with our physical body, because it is not permanent. Rivers show us how to overcome obstacles using will power and determination.

Subset 4: Insects, Flowers, and Birds Insects show us how cooperation and teamwork result in great achievements that cannot be attained individually. Flowers show us we should always reveal our inner nature of truth, our most beautiful state. Birds behave as a community, with a unified sense of purpose.

Each of the above subsets of nature depicts important qualities of character. The divinity in each aspect of nature really shines through when we take a closer look. Our class went on to adopt behaviors to show our respect and love for nature. We decided to do our part by conserving energy and water (such as pulling plugs on TV cable boxes, computers, and all appliances; and collecting shower water while waiting for hot water). We also decided we could improve our recycling skills (such as reusing our paper lunch bags and using metal or glass bottles for drinks). Even something as simple as turning off the lights in a room when they are not necessary has an impact in our attempts to conserve resources.

One of the most important lessons our class learned was that we, as humans, are dependent on nature. Nature has the ability to survive on its own, but we can't even manage to get through one day without relying on the resources that nature supplies. Instead of trying to name one of the two (nature or humans) as superior to the other, we realized that God created both of these groups, and therefore nature and humans are equal. It is our job to become less dependent and more interdependent with nature by respecting it and never taking it for granted.

—Nishita Conjeevaram, SSE Group III and Co-Editor of *SSE Matters*,
Bimonthly Newsletter of the SSE Students of Southfield, Michigan

The Universe is a university! *The whole universe is a university for you. You can imbibe wisdom from the sky, the clouds, the mountains, the rivers, the daily phenomena of sunrise and sunset, the seasons, birds, trees, flowers, the insects—in fact, all beings and things in nature. Approach these teachers with awe, reverence, and humility; they will respond with their lessons.*

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba (SSS 12:30, Mar. 3, 1974)

At the Hanuman Temple

A Story from Swami's Youth

This is a story from Swami's childhood. One day, young Sathya was with a group of boys from the village. The other children looked up to Sathya as their teacher and called him "Guru."

The group came to a Hanuman temple, and Sathya's friends decided to show their respect to Hanuman, the great servant of Rama.

The boys suggested that they should do so by completing a *pradakshina*, or walk around the temple, in a clockwise direction, one or more times. In this way, their right sides would always be nearest the Hanuman figure that was installed upon the altar inside the temple.

But for some reason, Sathya was not willing to go along with the boys. However, they insisted that he come with them and walk around the temple. Finally, he gave in and started to walk with them.



Sathya had only walked a few steps when a gigantic monkey appeared. This monkey placed himself in front of Sathya, completely blocking Sathya's path.

The other boys tried to shoo away the huge monkey. They tried in every way possible, but the monkey would not budge. He would not allow Sathya's *pradakshina* to continue.

Finally, the plan had to be given up. But then, no sooner did the boys leave the temple grounds than the huge monkey just disappeared.

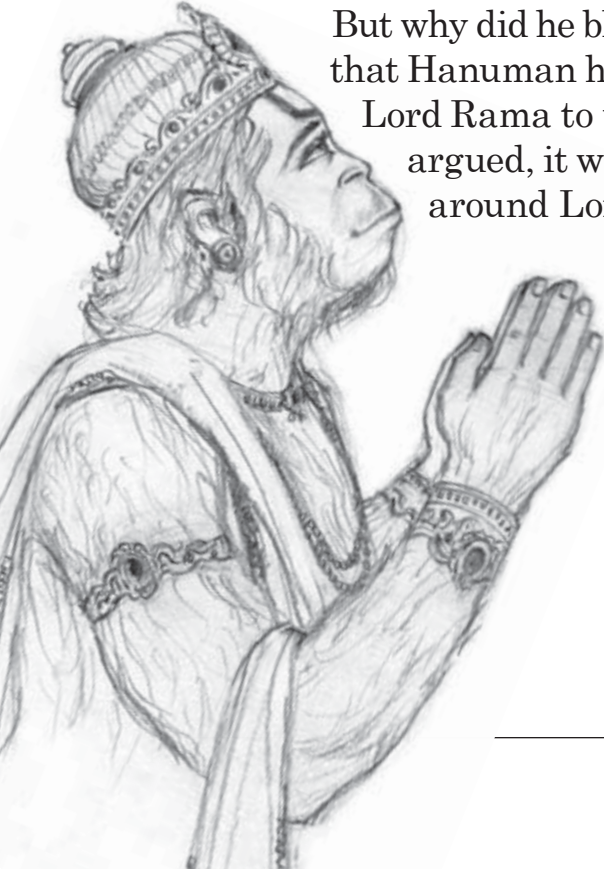
Only later was the mystery solved. Sathya revealed that the monkey was no ordinary monkey. The monkey had been Hanuman, himself, appearing in the form of that monkey.

But why did he block Sathya's path? Sathya explained that Hanuman had insisted that it was not proper for Lord Rama to walk around Hanuman. Instead, he argued, it was only proper for Hanuman to walk around Lord Rama!

Hanuman had recognized young Sathya as Lord Rama, himself, and paid respects to him as such.

—Adapted from “Sai Rama,” Heart2Heart e-journal, March 15, 2004, www.radiosai.org.

Illustrations by Ashwini Jambotkar.



Sai Spiritual Education Lesson Plan (Group 2)

At the Hanuman Temple

VALUE: Truth • **SUBVALUE:** *Discrimination:* Recognizing God in whatever form he appears.

QUOTE: *Recognize that it is the one divine Self who resides in all beings.* (SS, May 1995, p. 131)

PRAYER/AFFIRMATION/SILENT SITTING: Like Hanuman, help me to recognize God in the form of Sai Baba, and in everyone. “I see God inside.” (Sit silently 1-2 minutes.)

SONG SUGGESTIONS: “You Are My Mother” or “At Your Feet, Dear Lord, We Pray”

PRE-STORY DISCUSSION: Ask students what they already know about Hanuman, and fill in background as needed on Hanuman, and on the devotional practice of circumambulation.

STORY: “At the Hanuman Temple” (See pages 45-46.)

DISCUSSION/ACTIVITY: *Materials:* paper plates; crayons, paint, or markers; collage materials; scissors; glue; wooden tongue depressors or popsicle sticks

- Have students: (1) make three masks each—the faces of Hanuman, Rama, and Sathya—on three different paper plates, and cut “eye” holes in each plate; (2) glue wooden stick handles onto each mask; (3) glue or staple the backs of the Sathya and Rama masks together (one side shows Sathya’s face and the other side, Rama’s). Leave the Hanuman mask as single.
- **Skit** Have one student play Hanuman and one, Sathya. Have the whole class act out the story, with a slightly different ending: When Hanuman blocks Sathya’s path, say: “Let’s take turns playing Hanuman. Say what you think Hanuman says to Sathya, about why he is stopping him.” Have “Hanuman” pass his mask to each student, to say why Hanuman stopped Sathya. For any answer that is close to “Rama and Sathya are the same—God in human form,” have “Sathya” turn his mask around to reveal “Rama” on the other side.

EXTENDING ACTIVITIES: I See God Inside Have students: (1) hold their “Sathya” mask in front of their face and move around the group, looking into each other’s eyes behind the masks; (2) repeat, using the “Rama” masks; (3) repeat again, with no masks. Discuss how “no mask” (a face) is also a kind of mask (*disguising the inner divinity*). Ask: “What do you see that is the same, even when the masks change?” (*the eyes*) “What is the same about all of us, besides our eyes?” (*We all have God inside, just like Rama and Sathya.*)

- Students can take their masks home and (1) ask their parents to watch them hold up each mask in front of their face; (2) ask them if they can guess what is the same for each mask (*the eyes*); and (3) ask them what else is behind the mask. (*God/the Divine*)

LIFE APPLICATION: Have students practice seeing the Divine in all as they look into people’s eyes during the week. They can think of the faces as just masks, like the ones in the activity.

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