

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

“World Youth Conference, 2007”

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INAUGURAL DISCOURSE

SRI SATHYA SAI WORLD YOUTH CONFERENCE 2007

Only Love for God Is True Love

We see a large number of living beings in this world. But none of them has the greatness, wisdom, and discrimination of man. That is why it is said, “Among all living beings, a human birth is the rarest (*Jantunam nara janma durlabam*).”

Develop the Power of Discrimination

Everything in this world is constituted of five elements. These five elements are present not only in man but in animals, birds, insects, and trees also. But what is the use if man does not make proper use of these five elements? Today man is engaged in the pursuit of knowledge. How vast is his knowledge? It is as vast as an ocean.

Similarly, man makes efforts to develop common sense. His common sense touches the height of the Himalayas. But in spite of all his knowledge and common sense, man's discrimination power is zero. What is good and what is bad? What should be done and what should not be done? This power of

thinking is zero in man today. That is why humanness has suffered a great decline. The value of humanness depends only on discrimination power. Man may possess anything and everything, but what is the use if he has no discrimination?

People keep on comparing themselves with others in many ways, but nobody is making efforts to know if his discrimination power is greater or lesser. Today man is engaged in amassing money. But he does not use his knowledge or discrimination to know whether he needs that much money or not. Wherever we look today, we find people hankering after money.

The mind of man is very powerful, but man today has filled it with delusion. (Bhagavan shows his handkerchief.) What is this? This is cloth. How does it take the form of cloth? It becomes cloth by weaving thread. But where does this thread come from? It comes from cotton. So, first cotton, second thread, and third cloth. In the same

way, you are not one person, but three: the one you think you are, the one others think you are, and the one you really are (loud applause). The thread and cloth come only from cotton. Similarly, man is constituted by five elements. Krishna declared in the Bhagavad Gita: “The eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being (*Mamaivamsho jivaloke jivabhuta sanathana*).” This means that we all are parts of the Divine. All of you are in search of God, but there is no need to search for God, because you yourself are God. When you have light in your own house, where is the need to go to others’ houses in search of light?

Body Attachment Is the Cause of all Delusions

You develop the feelings of “I” and “mine” due to the delusion caused by body attachment. The body is, in fact, the cause of all attachments. But how long does this body last? It is wanted as long as there is life in it. When the life principle goes out of it, the body is placed mercilessly on the fire. Then, to whom does this body belong? Therefore, you are not the body.



You say, “This is my body, this is my hand, this is my leg, this is my mind, this is my intellect (*buddhi*).” Everything is my, my, my. Then, who is that “my”? When you say “my leg,” it indicates that you are separate from your leg. Then who are you? You are you only. In this way, man today is deluded by his attachment to his body and his senses. But you are not the body, you are not the senses, you are not the intellect; you are you.

You should realize, “I am I.” That universal “I” principle is only one: “Truth is one, but the wise refer to it by various names (*Ekam sat vipra bahuda vadanti*).” The individual “I” represents ego. When you cut across this “I,” it

becomes the cross that is worshipped by the Christians. It means, when you give up your ego, you become your true self.

You are not an ordinary person; you are God yourself. There is no need to search for God. Wherever you look, God is there. This cloth is God, this flower is God, this table is God; everything is God. Only from ignorance do you give scope to differences such as “I” and “you.” You are not a separate entity. I am I. I am not Sathya Sai Baba. Sathya Sai Baba is the name given to this body, but I don’t have

any particular name. Your body is the gift of your parents. This body is endowed with five elements, (*pancha bhutas*), five senses (*panchendriyas*), and five life principles (*pancha pranas*). These life principles or vital airs are *prana*, *apana*, *vyana*, *udana*, and *samana*. They are the same in everyone. Therefore, you are not different from others. Those who are unaware of this spiritual principle become victims of ignorance and are subject to delusion.

Everything in this world is reaction, reflection, and resound. Where does the resound come from? Here I am speaking. From where do my words come from? They come from

my heart. You think that you hear with your ears, but it is not so. All your senses are in fact like decorations to your body; they cannot function on their own without the life principle within you.

There is no need to search for God. Have faith that God is within you. When you have faith in God, you develop love. From love emerges peace; peace gives rise to truth. This truth is God. Truth does not exist separately. There is no need to search for truth. Truth has no form. Truth is truth. Who has created peace? Peace is peace. It also has no form. Love is love. It is not anybody's creation. Love is God, live in love.

Educare Manifests Your Innate Values

What are the human values? They are truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence (*sathya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, *prema*, and *ahimsa*). They have no form. These formless principles are imprinted on your heart. All that we read and write corresponds to physical and worldly education; it cannot be called education in the true sense of the term. What is true is educare. Educare means to bring out our latent values. They are immanent in our heart, but we cannot see them. They have to be manifested through self-inquiry. True *sadhana* (spiritual practice) lies

in recognizing and manifesting the peace, truth, and sacrifice that are present in our heart. You undertake various spiritual practices like meditation and repetitions of God's name (*japa*). What do you understand by *japa*? You think *japa* means counting the beads of a rosary, but this is not so. All these spiritual practices are merely one's imagination. They are all artificial, not real. Science teaches many things. It gives only the knowledge that can be acquired through the senses. There can be no science without senses. We are leading an artificial and mechanical life by acquiring this knowledge; it is not true life.



You are not an ordinary person; you are God yourself. There is no need to search for God. Wherever you look, God is there.

True Love Originates from God

First and foremost, you must have faith. You can recognize your true form only when you have faith. From faith comes peace. Truth emerges from peace. This truth is God. God does not have any separate form. God manifests from the truth within you. You undertake many spiritual practices. In spite of all these practices, you are unable to experience truth. Do not waste your time in unnecessary pursuits. Time waste is life waste. First of all, you should understand that truth is your goal. You will have no obstacles when truth is on your side. Your senses and mind are very strong when you are young. Your intellect is also very sharp. Being endowed with such great power, why should you feel weak and helpless?

Love is not your individual property; it is universal and belongs to all. Love is in everyone. Love is present in you, me, and everyone. We attribute various names to this love and try to experience it. You should not think otherwise. Today even school children develop a tendency for artificial love, but this is not correct. This artificial love makes man weak, and this weakness can cause many diseases. Do not have the love that gives rise to diseases.



True love originates only from God. God is the embodiment of love. Love is God. Live in Love. You should experience only divine love, not worldly love.

The principle of love is the principle of divinity, nothing else. Accept only the love that comes from God. Do not accept the love that comes from others. Your love for God is true love. Whoever you love, other than God, cannot be called true love. Man develops attachment to many people, but he remains unable to experience true love. True love originates only from God. God is the embodiment of love. Love is God. Live in love. You should experience only divine love, not worldly love. I will explain to you this principle of love in detail later. We have already exceeded the time limit. Therefore, I don't want to cause inconvenience to you.

It is very easy to attain God. If you ask what is the easiest thing to attain in this world, the answer is only God. You can attain God in no time, without undergoing any strain. It is very easy to experience love. Love is very powerful. Nothing in this world can surpass it. When you look at it, the word *love* appears to be very small. But love is as deep as an ocean and as high as a mountain. It is inexhaustible and infinite. You should realize this principle of love. Man cannot describe the principle of love, because of his limitations of circumstances and experiences.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
July 26, 2007



REGION 1: CONNECTICUT ■ MAINE ■ MASSACHUSETTS ■ NEW HAMPSHIRE
NEW YORK (NORTH OF NYC) ■ RHODE ISLAND ■ VERMONT

WYC Reflections: Core Learnings—Love, Discipline, and Determination

1. **Being aware of our actions.** We all “know” that everyone is part of the same Atma, but oftentimes that is difficult to put into practice. Just think of the Golden Rule: Treat others the same way you want to be treated.
2. **Respect, gratitude, and appreciation are all aspects of love.** We may be unable to “love” others in the way we think of love, but we can acknowledge them and respect them. Swami says that we may not always be able to oblige, but we can always speak obligingly.
3. **We each have a special relationship with Swami, and many of us love and revere Swami in a way that we don’t love and revere anyone else.** Hold on to that love! It has a way of driving us. Remind yourself of your experiences with Swami and listen to others’ experiences, just to keep connected.
4. **Sometimes it is difficult to love selflessly and expansively.** Although we should make an effort to be selfless and expansive in our love, when it is out of our reach, we can ask Swami to love an individual. As before Phyllis Krystal said, “Ask Swami to love through you.”
5. **When we want to achieve something, the reason we get it done is that we have a motivation or driving force.** If we can focus on that driving force (whether it be a broad goal, such as “to please Swami,” or a narrow one, such as “to run a marathon”), we can identify our aim and work toward it.
6. **We often chide ourselves for not achieving our goal immediately.** Think of dividing in order to conquer. Most anything is more “swallowable” in pieces.
7. **Let’s not be too hard on ourselves, but also let’s not use the difficulty of achievement as an excuse.** As we progress from day to day, introspection is key. If we feel that we want to achieve certain goals, we should make an effort in that direction. If it doesn’t happen, we can always re-evaluate; don’t despair!
8. **Finally, let’s not measure ourselves against others.** We are all in different places, and someone else’s method may or may not work for you. Determine your comfort level, and let Swami’s teachings be your guiding yardstick.

—Region 1 YAs



REGION 2: MARYLAND ■ NEW JERSEY ■ NEW YORK
PENNSYLVANIA ■ VIRGINIA ■ WASHINGTON, DC

From Clueless to Clarity

When I first learned that the theme of this year's World Youth Conference was "Ideal Sai Youth: Messengers of Sai Love," I was completely clueless as to what that meant. What did it mean to be an ideal Sai youth or to be a messenger of Sai love? From my experiences at the conference, I came to understand what Swami expects of the youth and what his mission means for us. These ideas can be summarized by three quotations: 1) "Purify the mind and focus it on divinity"; 2) "We are blessed, we are blessed, we are blessed"; and 3) "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!"

"Purify the mind and focus it on divinity."

When it comes to spirituality, I am not the quickest to pick up on Swami's messages. Swami often has to hit me over the head several times before I come to understand what he wants of me. But when I hear the same message repeated over and over from various sources, it serves as my clue that the message is from Swami.

In this way, Swami was adamant in making me understand the message, "Purify the mind and focus it on divinity." In the days preceding the conference, the Sai group from Mumbai performed a play about the

importance of the mind, called "Master the Mind, Be a Mastermind!" In the play, SSE children participated in a game-show, much like "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire," which tested their knowledge of the mind. In order to use the mind to progress spiritually, they said, we must first understand the mind. During the conference workshops, the topic of the mind came up again and again. Swami has often emphasized the importance of the mind for attaining liberation. In fact, he spoke of the mind during his "Always Be Happy and Peaceful" discourse on July 28, 2007, the last day of the conference:

The mind alone is responsible for all sorrows and difficulties as well as the happiness of human beings. Several people consider mind as very bad and call it 'monkey mind.' In my opinion, it is not monkey mind; it is mankind. It is always kind. It is the mind that gives you joy and happiness. It is again the mind that causes you worry and sorrow. If only you can keep the mind in the proper state, nothing can be bad. Consider the mind also as divine. Then you will always be happy.

We usually think of the mind as a bad thing, a monkey mind. Yet, in this discourse, Swami tells us that the mind can be a good

thing—that it is divine—and that we can use it to attain happiness if we keep it in the proper state. What is the proper state? It is purity of the mind:

Purity of the mind is of utmost importance. Keep your mind pure, free from all kinds of pollution. Whenever evil thoughts enter your mind, remind yourself, 'These are all not my property; my property is good thoughts and good ideas only.' Constantly remember the truth that love is God. Live in love. If you can cultivate such positive and noble thoughts, everything will turn out to be good for you.

To me, purity of mind has always seemed a very abstract concept, but disciplines we undertook while at the conference elucidated its meaning. The youth undertook several *sadhanas* (spiritual disciplines), including not leaving the ashram, not interacting with the opposite gender, and not talking during darshan, and instead silently repeating the Gayatri Mantra. I felt an amazing difference by not talking during darshan. Instead of thinking about the next thing to say to our neighbor, we could think about Swami and engage in *namasmarana* (repetition of holy names). These disciplines allowed us to gain more spiritually from our time in Parthi (Puttaparthi, Sai Baba's home town in India) by enabling us to focus on Swami instead of worldly distractions. Therefore, to me, purity of mind means not obsessing over worldly matters, and instead focusing on the name and form of God.

"We are blessed, we are blessed, we are blessed."

When we delegates were given our scarves, we did not realize the blessings that came with them. Swami treated the young women like his princesses. Beginning July 15, we were given special seating. For the girls, this meant seating in the section across from the veranda. Every day we had the wonderful boon of seeing Swami up close. He circled our section, taking letters and chatting with us, just like he does with the students of his schools. When we were thirsty, *seva dals* (ashram volunteers) brought us water on trays. Almost daily we received *prasad* (blessed food), and Swami was fully aware of how much the delicious sweets delighted us. On more than one occasion we received two pieces of *prasad* each, because Swami knew that we were hungry. Swami even took pains to insure that we were well fed during the conference, having tents constructed where we were fed food especially prepared for the youth. He himself approved the menu, telling the chefs that there were too many potatoes, that they should instead make salad because the youth like salads, and that there should be two sweets for the youth to enjoy. In this manner, Swami paid attention to the most miniscule details of the conference in order to insure that we did not lack anything.

On the first day of the conference, we entered Sai Kulwant Hall from the main entrance in the back. Two brass bands played as the thousands of youth in matching dress marched into a lavishly decorated hall.

The decorations for the conference put the birthday and Christmas decorations to shame, they were so extravagant. We felt like celebrities! That day, Swami skipped darshan and instead spent the afternoon watching an international basketball game with the youth at the Indoor Stadium. It was clear to us that Swami was focusing all of his attention on the youth.

During the last darshan of the conference he delivered a divine discourse entitled “Always Be Happy and Peaceful.” I had the privilege of sitting directly across from the veranda with an unobstructed view of Swami, who sat hardly twenty feet away. When Swami sat down in the middle of the lengthy discourse, my spirits sank, as Anil Kumar’s podium blocked my view of all but Swami’s hair. But Swami, the ever-loving mother, keeps on giving and giving. I had had a desire to distribute Swami’s prasad in Sai Kulwant Hall.

On that day, the last of the conference, I truly wished with every part of my being that I could distribute prasad. Swami, knowing this wish of mine even before I did, had me sitting in the front row near our youth leader. When the time came to distribute prasad, even though I was not one of the seva dals who regularly distributed prasad, our youth leader saw the pleading look on my face and how earnest I was to do this *seva* (volunteer service), and gave me the go ahead. In this way, Swami fulfilled this most trivial desire.

When the youth left the hall after that darshan, we were glowing, radiating Swami’s love. Swami, during his discourse, praised our sincere devotion and gave us his

blessings, telling us that we would always be happy and peaceful. He told us that this love would cure his leg and enable him to walk again. More powerful than these wondrous words, however, was his presence.

During that discourse and darshan, Swami radiated love to all of the youth. Many youth felt as if they were swimming in an ocean of Sai love. He said during the discourse that this was not human love; this was divine love—true love for God—which can only come from Swami. He was giving us a taste of *prema* (spiritual love) and the accompanying divine bliss, *ananda*. Why did he give us this experience? Why did he shower us with so much grace, before, during, and even after the conference?

They say that from those to whom much is given, much is expected. We were blessed with countless boons, but with privileges come responsibilities. Swami filled us with his divine love so that, having experienced this love, we, the youth, could go forth and spread his love in our regions and our centers. We can now be messengers of Sai love.

“Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.”

These words from the Upanishads (Hindu scriptures), often asserted by Vivekananda, have always been among my favorites. During the workshops, several speakers repeated this quotation. After hearing this thought over and over and over, I started thinking to myself, “Maybe Swami wants us to ‘Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.’” Swami wants us to be messengers

of Sai love—that much is clear, but he wants us to start *now*. We cannot wait any longer; *now* is the time for the youth to take their places as the future leaders of the Sri Sathya Sai organization.

Lessons Learned

Swami showered the youth with his grace and blessings during the conference in order to enthuse and rouse us to action. Swami tells us that if someone were to show

him one devoted youth, that one could change the world. Just like a water ripple that expands into larger and larger circles, one inspired and transformed youth can transform the people around him or her. We must become ideal Sai youth by cultivating purity of mind. With pure minds, we can focus our energies on doing Swami's work. We can become messengers of Sai love.

—Pooja Virani
Washington, DC

Jumping into Action

After a few of our Young Adults (YAs) returned from the World Youth Conference, the energy levels were high. Everyone was pumped to try to be ideal Sai youth; however, we didn't have any way of directing this energy. Therefore, we decided to get organized and unified. We planned on doing our first project as the new and rejuvenated New Jersey YA group.

On Saturday, September 15, 2007, nine YAs from New Jersey prepared peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches, which we took into New York City at about 11 a.m. to walk around and distribute, along with juice, to homeless people we found on the streets. We split into small groups and began to walk around the Madison Square Garden and Penn Station areas, focusing on areas around and in subway stations, near Times Square. We tried to canvas the area up to about 50th Street.

Many of the people we gave sandwiches to were grateful for the food and thanked us for it. We were also very friendly and loving in our interactions with them—this way, we were distributing Swami's love as well as food. Afterward we ate lunch together, discussed future plans for more Young Adult service projects, and got to know each other better. We plan to do this kind of activity again in the future, and would gladly welcome other young adults in the area to join in. The more hands and smiles, the better!

—Ria Nair
New York City, New York

Enthralling Universal Discipline

My name is Sagar Adhikary and I was part of the USA delegation to the WYC this past July. Although a few months have passed, the conference meant a great deal to my spiritual well-being; hence, I could not resist this opportunity to share some of my experiences.

I arrived two days before the inauguration of the conference; most people had already arrived and were busy with the formal preparations. Upon entering the ashram, I was overwhelmed by the sight of thousands of youth and aspirants thronging the different quarters of the sanctuary. I felt an urge to lose myself amid this holy gathering of people from all walks of life. The one aspect I always admire about Sai devotees, be they youth or elders, is the kindness and warmth that they exhibit in a very disciplined yet loving manner. Whomever I walked past in the ashram welcomed me with a pleasant smile, accompanied by the usual *Sai Ram*. Devotees were always willing to go out of their way to assist me. I had never seen any of these delegates before, yet in all my first encounters, I instantly felt an immediate, spiritual connection.

The WYC afforded me a unique opportunity for inner reflection, as the discipline was exceptional. Nowhere in the world have I ever witnessed such patience, reverence, and calmness. To see thousands

of people from varied backgrounds and cultures come together, to this extent, was simply awe-inspiring. I was reduced to tears on the day of the inauguration, when I saw all the flags of the different countries being represented. I have no way to describe the manner in which our beloved Baba has reached almost every country in the world.

Baba blessed me and thousands of others with the chance to receive his powerful darshan in close proximity—something I had always imagined impossible! The conference speakers addressed us with elegance, wisdom, and love, and the lessons they relayed left a permanent mark on my inner being. Through Bhagavan's guidance, I am striving to imbibe everything that I have learned, and although I have numerous struggles ahead in my life, the time I spent in the presence of such wonderful, angelic brothers and sisters has undoubtedly reinforced my will.

What a wonderful opportunity it was, and I am ever so grateful to Baba, my most merciful and loving Lord. I am also grateful to my family and to those who worked tirelessly make this WYC a possibility! I also wish to thank the people of Puttaparthi for their hospitality.

—Sagar Adhikary
Williamsburg, Virginia

A Supercharge of Grace

I attended the WYC as an advisor from the Medford Lakes Center in Cherry Hill, New Jersey. We have a very small center, so I was the only one attending. It was a thrill to see how much Swami cared for the youth. The detail of each food selection was on par with a three-star restaurant. Swami meticulously went over each item on the menu. When he saw that there was only one dessert, he immediately said, "One dessert, why? Give them two desserts!" The selections were chosen to please all tastes, with western cuisine including two kinds of pasta dishes, and both Northern and Southern Indian selections.

The tent in which the meals were served was beautifully arranged, with soft, clean, blue matting for the ground, tablecloths, and lovely designed paper for the walls. Fans were positioned in a such a way to make all the delegates quite comfortable while they ate. The tables were laden with fresh fruit salad and hot dishes served in silver

plates. The taste of each item was great. All delegates and advisors were invited to the feast and felt as if Swami was giving them royal treatment. Volunteers served with a cheery disposition and love in their hearts.

The youth were like sponges, absorbing everything that happened. As the days passed, their tolerance of difficult situations grew and their love of each other blossomed.



I felt graced to be one of those volunteers and to speak with several young adults from all over the world. For most of them, this was their very first trip to Puttaparthi. The joy that they exhibited was unparalleled. It gave me instant bliss and inspired me so much.

Even as many had their daily struggles, I saw so much love in all of the young adults. With long rehearsals for those who were hoping to sing and perform for Swami, they each exhibited a sense of compassion for one another and true love and understanding. I was thrilled to experience the unity among youth from so many different countries.

To me the WYC experience was an outpouring of Swami's intense love for young adults and everyone. Because several had come for the first time, spending every

“I could see transformations happening before my eyes, especially in the seven young adults I roomed with. They began announcing personal pledges to go home and practice what Swami had said.”

cent they had, and with little hope of being able to return again, Swami gave them as much as he could. He supercharged them with his grace, so that, on returning to their respective countries, they would be true messengers of his love and live ideal lives. I have not ever witnessed anything of this magnitude. And as Swami kept giving and giving, their joy and love kept growing. I could see transformations happening before my eyes, especially in the seven young adults I roomed with. They began announcing personal pledges to go home and practice what Swami had said. One girl shared that the discourse was not like a regular discourse, but felt more like a conversation. Swami touched each and every youth in a very personal way, giving them the individual strength and faith to move forward and live

as he wants them to. This was incredible to witness first hand.

The youth were like sponges, absorbing everything that happened. As the days passed, their tolerance of difficult situations grew and their love of each other blossomed. They were so grateful and renewed in their resolve to live their lives according to Sai's ideals. This resolve was demonstrated in their behavior in the room and wherever I encountered them, either in darshan line or in the food line. Each sacrificed for the other in a unified spirit of pure love. As they shared with me what was conveyed in the divine discourses and the numerous talks given by guest speakers, it was clear that Swami's love would have a permanent effect on their lives. I can say that I felt blessed to be part of this sacred event.

—**Fran Kesselman**
Cherry Hill, New Jersey





REGION 3: ALABAMA ■ FLORIDA ■ GEORGIA ■ MISSISSIPPI
NORTH CAROLINA ■ SOUTH CAROLINA

We Must Realize Our Oneness

The World Youth Conference (July 26-28, 2007), held in the august presence of our Divine Mother at Prasanthi Nilayam, can best be described as a giant leap in our collective spiritual journey, and through us, hopefully, that of all mankind.

Several pages could be written if I were to describe all the beautiful experiences of that pilgrimage. However, I feel a strong urge, instead, to share all of Swami's message to the world's youth, which was delivered in a style that can only be Swami's. Words that are worth saying and listening to are our Swami's alone. Then, is there a need for me to describe anything else?

God Alone Exists

We were extremely fortunate to hear Swami's sweet voice twice, once during the inaugural ceremony, and then during the valedictory address. The most powerful divine command given to us all was to realize our true reality as the eternal soul and not the body or the mind. Swami wants us not just to know but to live this, every moment, from here on. He commanded us to focus on the mantra, *I am GOD. God is love, live in love*. He wants us to evolve to the level of the Atma, which is the form of truth within

each and every one of us. Atma is the God within and our only reality.

We must believe that we are not different from the Atma and hear only its resound; when we do that, we will have no need to perform any other *sadhana* (spiritual discipline). The Vedas declare, *He is one without a second*. What does that really mean? God alone exists, and everything else we see with these physical eyes is but a reflection of him! All is his manifestation: the body is God; the air that envelops it is God; the cloth that protects it from the very air is God; the sounds that one hears is God; the one who speaks is God; the one who listens is God; the people we interact with are God; the one who praises is God; the one who ridicules another is God; the one who gives is God; the one who receives is God; the one who feeds is God; the food is God; and the one fed is God.

There is no "I"; everything that "is," is verily God himself. The Atma that exists within us is God, and, therefore, we ourselves are God. That is why Swami declared, on that momentous day, that the whole audience was but a cosmic manifestation of God, and that he exists in each and every one of us.

Therefore, it follows that, if everything is God, then we are all one. The second important instruction that he gave us was to understand and realize this unity. We are all the same Atma/God that exists in various forms—one consciousness in various bodies.

I often wonder how Swami always knows how to respond to the millions around the world who demand his attention all the time, almost simultaneously. How is it that he responds with exactly the right encouraging words? How many times has it happened that when we need it most—the message reaches us through an e-mail, from words on a page to a book that we randomly open, or from someone mentioning the most amazing thing?

How does this all happen? It is the principle of unity at work. The Atma that is our true identity is part of Paramatma. Swami says that the individual consciousness is like the drop, and God, the Paramatma, is like the ocean. The difference is only in quantity, never in quality; the drop is the same as the ocean. The individual consciousness is the expression of the Divine in all of us. He is constantly present. So why should it surprise us that he is aware of everything all the time and knows exactly what to do? The One who is omnipresent, has to be omniscient—and omnipotent as well. No, there should be no wonder in us about this. What is marvelous is the fact that we are also this! It is Swami's love and his teachings that give me the audacity to make this claim.

Today, fifteen years after reading Swami Vivekananda's words, I finally understand

them. He said, "Feel, my children, feel; feel for the poor, the ignorant, the downtrodden; feel till the heart stops and the brain reels, and you think you will go mad—and then pour the soul out at the feet of the Lord. Then will come power, help, and indomitable energy." Vivekananda was urging his brother monks to realize their divinity and feel one with everyone and everything that exists.

Once we become one with all, then it is only natural that we will feel the other man's hunger, his thirst, his sickness, his needs, and his pain as our own. From this unity will spring forth overwhelming divine love, and this love will then guide our thoughts, words, and actions. We all will be able to do exactly what is needed. The day we realize this sense of unity and commune with the cosmos—and as a direct result become pure love—our service will acquire true meaning.

Swami Vivekananda reached those great heights because of his guru, Sri Ramakrishna. Dear brothers and sisters, then how much more must we do in our own lives when Bhagavan, himself, is our guru? So come, let us not waste any more time, and let us dedicate ourselves only to him—our goal, our truth, our love, and our very own reality.

With learned humility, sincerity, and love, I pray to Swami that he may give us what we need to achieve transformation and become ideal Sai Youth, deserving of the honor and love that he so graciously bestowed on us during our wonderful stay at the heavenly abode of eternal peace.

—Meena Kaluri
Charleston, South Carolina

WYC International Choir— A Personal High Note

The WYC International Choir was an amazing experience. In it, I personally made a lot of friends. It was a really great environment to be in, though a bit stressful from time to time. I happened to get drafted into the bass section the day before rehearsals started. You see, most of the basses that had originally signed up, didn't show up! Therefore, there was a big effort to recruit bass singers. What ended up happening was that half of the final bass group switched over from the tenors. So, most of our time as bass singers was spent learning, and in most cases re-learning, the proper notes, rhythms, and harmonies. As a result of the huge amount of time this took, the whole chorus was forced to repeat and perfect as we learned. On top of having to learn about eighteen to twenty new songs, there were constant changes in the program, with songs taken out, others added, and occasional changes in the melodies of some songs.

Our conductor was awesome. Sure she was a bit strict, here and there, but what conductor isn't from time to time? One of the most important things she did was to have the composers of the individual songs come up and properly teach us each song. She also appointed section leaders to help and guide us.

We practiced four hours a day, in two sessions, morning and afternoon. Though we did have to sacrifice a few darshans in order to practice, it was all worth it to get to sit in front of our beloved Swami. During the program, we were instructed to watch only our conductor, in order not to be distracted and make mistakes. Unfortunately, we were only able to perform three songs. However, we were fortunate to keep our seats during the next program, and that was when we were able to watch Swami. If you've ever been as close as we were, which was about fifteen feet away, you know the feeling. You can see as he keeps the tempo, where he's looking, and how much he likes the song by how he reacts at certain parts. Those are things you don't see further back. I mean, you could literally feel the energy in the atmosphere around him. In all, the international choir was definitely one of the best experiences of my whole life.

—**Satish Ramdat**
Orlando, Florida





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

Reconciling the Spiritual and the Worldly

Sharing my experiences of the World Youth Conference with the Memphis, Tennessee, Sai Center, took me right back to the immediate experience of being in Puttaparthi, surrounded by my fellow youth, amid the high energy and enthusiasm of 7,000 worldwide delegates. Although I am from the USA, I had been living in Chennai, India, the entire year, so I came to the conference having had little prior contact with other Sai Youth, and to be honest, little involvement in preparing for the WYC. But it did not take even a day for me to tap into all the energy and love!

I was in awe of all that I observed and the emotions that I felt, not only from being in Swami's presence, but more profoundly, from being in the company of such wonderful peers. Meeting people of my own age and witnessing their efforts to do good and be good was so motivating. It was amazing to see the unity, faith, and discipline among the international youth. I couldn't believe that they themselves had initiated various service and values projects, globally, or that they had put together many elements of the conference through long distance and transcontinental communication. The content, meticulous details, hard work, and creativity that went into the making of the nine-point sadhana exhibition, for example, was especially inspiring to me.

The conference gave me exposure to the legacy that Swami is passing on to the world, and the messages and values that he wants the youth to embrace and spread. We are destined to be the leaders of tomorrow, and we have the duty to share positive values with future generations, and older generations too, for that matter.

Each conference day, various speakers, including youth delegates, shared their own experiences as Sai devotees and advice on spirituality and values that we should implement into our lives and pass on. As a youth and even a "full-fledged" adult, it is sometimes still difficult to unify spirituality and worldliness. The internal and the external seem to be in conflict, and we see often see them as separate. However, I learned that it is possible to fuse our spiritual and worldly lives into one. We can work toward making every worldly endeavor one that has God (Swami) at its core.

The reconciliation of the spiritual and worldly had been on my mind so much of this year while I ventured abroad, exploring my own identity and cultural roots, so it was perfect timing to hear this subject addressed and to feel a sense of youthful community.

Being a violinist, I wanted to take part in a music group, but I did not arrive well-informed of all the musical activities going on during the conference. After meeting a

few girls in the international bhajan group, I made efforts to meet the coordinator and join in. Although these girls had already been practicing diligently and had no sense of my musicianship, they gave me a chance and welcomed me into the group with pure warmth and love. Luckily, my violin playing enhanced what they had already put together, and they all showed much gratitude about having me there! The experience of playing with such a talented group of girls was certainly a lesson in humility; they each were so musically gifted, whether having had formal training or just interest and love for the art, and I was blown away by the expression and soul they put into each bhajan.

We did have a chance to present a few bhajans during darshan, but for me, that didn't compare to the thrill of being a part of the high-energy music-making that

happened in the practice sessions. Even within a few days, I felt extremely close to those girls; it became a true example of sisterhood. Participating in this group really made my WYC time very special. Although I know that I have much more growing and opening up to do, and that my faith is still just taking root and in need of nurturing, I can see how much the lessons that I learned at WYC and the exposure that I had in those few days has already made a profound difference in my life. I feel more confident, more determined, and more connected to my family, friends, and to the world at large. I am truly grateful for having been a part of the experience and for the honor of being in the company of such incredible youth and Swami.

—**Preetha Narayanan**
Memphis, Tennessee

Vibrant Unity in Diversity

I was also blessed to be a part of the amazing WYC week. The best part was the unity and love among all the youth there, a perfect example of "unity in diversity." I was lucky enough to be a part of the exhibition team, where the unity was especially striking. All the international zone representatives worked together and helped each other finish their kiosks. Although Swami never physically came to the exhibition hall, I know he was present in the heart of every young adult there. Swami also greatly emphasized that we are messengers of his love.

Phyllis Krystal explained that the way we spread his love is to open our hearts so that Swami's unconditional love can flow; then we have to share that love with the rest of creation. This is one of the main things I learned and have been putting into practice. I am happy that I could take this moment and share the vibrations and love I experienced during the conference with all my brother and sisters who could not attend, but who were definitely there in spirit.

—**Disha Sheth**
Memphis, Tennessee

A Whirlwind of Experiences

This trip was a whirlwind of experiences. I fell ill with flu shortly after getting there and was quite disappointed to miss both the second day of the WYC and Guru Purnima. However, I also had very special and wonderful experiences. Our idea of a good trip and Swami's idea of a good trip for us are often two different things! In the end, we have to accept all as his grace. As Swami has said, mishaps and illnesses experienced in his presence at Prasanthi burn away karma that would have been much worse if experienced elsewhere.

I spent a lot of time with the Zone 1 drama practices, and felt privileged to meet and work with many wonderful and dear devotees. The play evolved from a rough start to a beautiful and touching drama/dance/musical. Although the play never made it into the Sai Kulwant hall, it was performed twice for program coordinators, and as one of the group pointed out, Swami surely "saw" it both times.

I have been to see Swami many times, yet what I witnessed on this trip was new—Swami rolling out the red carpet for the YAs, and the YAs exhibiting amazing discipline and devotion. Besides the wonderful dining tent and food provided free, the YAs had special seating—before, during, and after the conference. The YAs responded with such discipline during their treks to darshan, while waiting for Swami to come, during darshan, and during the presentations. I sat behind all the male YAs, an excellent vantage point,

and I was impressed and proud beyond all expectations. I believe Swami felt the same way. His love for the YAs was something to behold—a spiritual gem to treasure. Likewise, Swami said that because of the pure love the YAs have for Swami, he will soon be walking again. After Swami gave such a wonderful and long valedictory discourse on the third day, the devotee aides who sit on either side of him pleaded with him to retire for the day, but Swami refused. He stayed for quite some time longer, supervising the distribution of *prasad* (consecrated food).

For me, another highlight was the basketball game between India and Sri Lanka at the huge indoor stadium—not so much because of the game, but because Swami stayed for the whole game, and thus blessed us with his darshan the whole time. So much energy and excitement was evident, by "the wave" and such, and especially when Swami came in—a thrilling experience.

Then our North Central Region YAs gave a musical presentation in Swami's presence. My wife and I know many of those YAs, and we were so happy and proud that they got that opportunity. For me, anytime a speech, drama, or musical program is performed in Swami's presence, I am supremely happy, because it means that we all get such a long darshan. We certainly had our share of those opportunities during the WYC.

—John Schiermann
Mascoutah, Illinois

The Master Planner

On every trip I make to see Swami, he takes me through a roller coaster ride that rearranges my priorities and reenergizes me till the next time, and this trip was no different. Swami taught me that whatever plans I may have, he is still the master planner.

I set out with the plan of attending the WYC for three days, but Baba allowed me to experience very intensely in twelve hours what I might not have felt in the entire three days! As soon as I reached Parthi, I was lucky to get in to see the beautiful international exhibits while the Canadian and Malaysian youth were still putting on their final touches before closing the exhibits to the public. Then I waited in the registration line and received the lovely saris and my badge; during this process I met up with many friends from different parts of the U.S. and made new friends from various parts of the world. Then I went and looked at the huge blue tent and all the arrangements for the food.

As I had arrived so late for the WYC, I had no idea what the next day might bring. As I was walking the grounds of the ashram and drinking in the vibrant atmosphere of multicultural youth all around me, I heard wonderful accents—British, South African, Singaporean, Australian, Nepalese—all chattering in excitement. I got caught in a torrential downpour, drenched to the bone but cleansed to the soul! With his grace I bumped into two St. Louis YAs and arranged

to meet them the next morning for the procession.

I was ready the next morning at 4:00 in the exquisite white sari when I got a call from my husband in Chennai; my baby girl was very sick, and he wanted me to return ASAP. I went through a whirlwind of emotions—worry, guilt, fear, disappointment, joy to be so close to Swami, and sorrow that I had not had a chance to see his physical form. A taxi was arranged for me to return to Chennai that day. Then a series of *leelas* (God's sport) unfolded. I felt that I had had a perfect glimpse of the conference and was satisfied, but still I prayed hard for the gift of darshan.

My taxi was late; it drew close to 7:00 on that Thursday morning, and Swami was due in the hall at 7:45; on an impulse I ran to the darshan line reserved for special group seating, coordinators, residents, and so on; the *seva dals* ushered me in as if they knew me. Mrs. Shourie, who seats everyone, greeted me warmly and gave me a corner seat in the VIP section! Was this a case of mistaken identity or Swami's miracle? In my bliss, I felt as though I were sitting on a cushion with a cool breeze on my face! The two ladies who had stitched the falls for the 1,000-plus saris for the youth were seated behind me, and I marveled at the service they had provided.

Baba arrived in the car; he smiled at me and blessed the photo I held up of my two girls. He made eye contact with me from

the stage several times, as if to say, *I know you are here; enjoy this gift of darshan from me.* I was able to stay for the entire opening ceremony and the procession of all the youth in their countries' costumes and banners. It was breathtaking!

I left Parthi very blessed and content, having gone from the depths of despair to the heights of ecstasy before returning to my first duty, my family. My little one did need hospitalization, but with Baba's grace and vibhuti, she bounced back and is doing great.

I got to attend a small but complete piece of the conference, and I feel very grateful to our Lord for all the experiences he gave me, as they are lessons for me to learn and grow from. I am enjoying hearing all of the many experiences from our regional youth and others who attended and look forward to hearing many more.

—Anu Diwakaran
St. Louis, Missouri

He Is the Embodiment of Truth and Love

I had the amazing opportunity to be in the presence of our beloved Bhagavan for the World Youth Conference. Although skeptical at first as to whether I would be able to attend the conference, Swami's will prevailed, and I booked my tickets. Swami made all eight days of my visit to Prasanthi very memorable. The youth were sectioned off during darshan from the first day, and we had amazing morning and afternoon darshans.

I was very involved with the Zone 1 play and completely missed darshan on one day. However, working on the play with so many people from our zone was a beautiful experience. There was much unity and hard work throughout that entire week. In our hearts and minds, the play was a big success. Because Swami says he is everywhere, we felt we performed our play over and over for Swami during our numerous practices.

I found Swami's two discourses to be most amazing. He talked about how the youth are his creation and truly divine. What I found most touching in both his discourses was his statement that the love and devotion from the youth will cure him soon, without doctors or any sort of medical attention—that love and devotion from the youth will be enough. Swami also stressed that he is not in pain, even though it seems to us that he is.

Swami talked often about love and truth and how he is the embodiment of both of these. I was really touched to be in the presence of our beloved Swami for such an auspicious occasion.

—Anshul Sathyam
St. Louis, Missouri

My Kulwant Hall—the Exhibition Hall

I can sum up my entire WYC experience in one word: exhibition. I do not know what I did to deserve such an opportunity, because I didn't start with such an attitude. I received an e-mail from my regional representative asking if I wanted to be on any of the committees or help with anything. I had no idea what I wanted to do or if I wanted to do anything. My rep suggested the exhibition team, so I thought, "Why not?" I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I didn't really understand the size and scope of the project until I got to India.

Once I got to the exhibition hall in Prasanthi Nilayam, about five days before the conference, I realized that this was a BIG deal. The work began, and it was amazing! The first day, I went to the exhibition hall at 8:30 a.m. From then on, I was at the hall until 2:00 p.m. I left only twice during those hours, once to eat at the North Indian canteen, and another time to go tell my dad that I was still alive.

In the kiosk, we had to change so many things so many times, but the end result was amazing. Normally, I would have been completely and utterly exhausted, but during my entire time at the conference, I was constantly filled with energy. It seemed that the only times I felt the fatigue was when I left the hall. I was able to work tirelessly while there, but the moment we

left, my feet hurt, my back ached, I was hungry, and I felt tired. It was like when Krishna made Arjuna leave his chariot first, and when Krishna got out, the whole chariot burst into flames. While I was in the hall I had things to be concerned with and a duty to do, just as Arjuna did. At the moment that magic was broken by leaving the hall, I felt the effects of what I had been doing to my body. But Swami took care of that.

We had bhajans in the afternoon to energize us, and they always came exactly when we needed some energy and spirit. People took such good care of us. We had food brought to us for every meal AND in-between, and a constant supply of water. But, in fact, I ate and drank less total than usual.

The day before the conference, we began to do *namasmarana* (repeating God's name) in the hall, hoping that Swami would himself come to open the exhibition. My "shift" was supposed to be from 2:00-3:00 p.m. (darshan line-up time), but instead, we went to the exhibition hall at 11:30 a.m. and stayed until 11:00 p.m., singing and chanting. Several of us from Zone 1 got to listen in on the big committee's meeting. Dr. Harvey came and boosted everyone's morale with just the right words, telling us that Swami was well aware of our work and that Swami assumed we would know that. But that was

not enough for most people. Everyone still prayed ardently that Swami himself would come.

Sometime during the hours of *namasmarana*, I realized that if we had been doing this in the U.S., I would have been more than satisfied with the small signs and manifestations of Swami's omnipresence, like realizing he was in the moth that stayed in the hall for two days while we did *namasmarana*. He was in each of us when we worked so hard together. He gave me that yellow flower to put in my hair. I felt him, but because we were in Prasanthi, in his physical abode, we had higher expectations. To teach us that he is inside each of us and to remind us that this is all we need, he didn't come. And he gave us pillar darshan. (Pillar darshan: people working on the exhibition got special seating in the first block, but in a neat line directly behind a pillar.) One of the girls almost cried, but I burst out laughing at what a joker Swami is!

I honestly felt that Swami was more in the exhibition hall than in Kulwant Hall. I saw him in each person who walked through our

kiosk. So, at the hall, I tried to greet each and every person as if greeting Swami—with a huge grin on my face. I think most people thought I was crazy, but I didn't care. I felt him during the bhajans and I heard his voice when others spoke. He even sent us his students—what more could we have asked for? Everyone wanted his physical form, but he sent us thousands of himself, instead of just one of him in his physical form.

He showed us his approval in so many ways. He also showed me that he knew exactly what was going on in our kiosk. He told us during his closing discourse always to smile—through everything and anything—to be joyful, happy, and not to have a “castor oil face.” I burst out laughing, because I had been smiling so much during the past few days—at everyone and everything. I must have done something right, at some time, to have deserved all these experiences and insights. Something ... I don't know what I could have done.

—Sharda Umanath
St. Louis, Missouri

The Darshans Were the Best

I was returning to Parthi after a very long time (19 years!), and it was wonderful to be there. As others have said, the darshans were the best. I hope I'll get another chance like this—really great vision of Swami—the next time I go. It was amazing to see youth from all around the world following Swami's teachings, and the speakers were great. The youth did a great job with the exhibition; it was very professionally done, and I wish I'd had more time to read all the information.

—Prathapan Thiru
St. Louis, Missouri

Many Lessons Brought Home

This was the most wonderful trip. Swami treated us literally as if we were princesses. The day I arrived was the very day Swami requested all the delegates to come to darshan together and sit as a unified group, so we were blessed with amazing darshans. Not only did I feel immense energy from Swami, but also from all the devotees around him. The entire hall was filled with so much love. Also, we were asked to be as disciplined as we could, so during the times we were waiting for Swami, this helped me to focus my mind more.

However, I noticed that when Swami was outside, circling us in his wheelchair, everyone's focus was only on him, but a few minutes after he entered the interview room, I noticed my own mind wandering. It wasn't as if he was not there anymore; he was just sitting behind some doors. I realized that Swami is always around us everywhere, and we are the ones who forget his existence. This really hit me hard, and I really tried and am still trying to see Swami all around, all the time.

In Parthi, it seemed so easy to place a ceiling on desires. We got food in small portions, so there was no question of wasting it; there was no hot water, so we

didn't waste any. Even the lights and the fan were turned off immediately when we didn't need them. But when I got back home, it was easy to slip back into the old ways of wastage. I guess I would like to make a move forward and learn from the experience.

One of the days, while working on the play, I lost my shoes, so I went without shoes for about ten days. One day we had to walk to the stadium on burning hot tar, and literally I thought my feet were going to burn off. The whole way we kept saying *Sai Ram*, and wondered why Swami did not allow us to bring our shoes. Then I realized it was to teach us

Not only did I feel immense energy from Swami, but also from all the devotees around him. The entire hall was filled with so much love.



that we were fortunate to have the money to buy shoes. Lessons such as these made my trip wonderful.

Lastly, I was blessed to work on the cultural program and exhibitions for Zone 1. It was remarkable, because we had such limited time and resources, but our zone really worked together. The unity between the countries was just amazing. Everyone put everything they could into it, and even though we did not perform, I know Swami was working through us the whole time through.

For example, one day I was working with the music group, and I told the group that the chance of our performing was very slim. I asked them if they still wanted to practice. ALL the girls said yes, we still want to sing, now! We still want to sing for Swami, now! I then realized the love my Sai sisters have for Swami, and it was really moving. The conference itself was also great, with all the speakers and Swami's amazing discourses.

I had many other experiences, but it would take a book to tell everything. Swami truly blessed all the delegates who were able to go, and even the ones who could not, because he mentioned how we all love him so much. He said, *You are God*. So I hope we can work together to really benefit from this youth conference in every way possible.

—**Preethi Rangachari**
St. Louis, Missouri

A Grand Re-Energizing and Re-Tuning

Before I started on this trip, I asked myself what I wanted to get out of this conference, beyond the benefits of the many retreats I have attended. I left it at that and just wanted to enjoy being a part of the grand event, but Swami's presence puts things into perspective. I came away feeling certain that these meetings re-energize and re-tune our spiritual focus, and appreciating how important it is to have that focus on our spiritual journey.

What an amazing week in the divine presence! I will treasure the experience for many reasons. Every day was grand. It was like a festival! There were some 7,000 youth from about 86 countries who attended the conference! Young adults from our region were blessed to be part of cultural and musical presentations, or the exhibition, and I'm sure it was a great experience for

them. The three-day conference was filled with talks by about 20 eminent speakers, interspersed with question-and-answer workshops. [NOTE: The speakers' talks have been collected in a post-conference publication entitled *His Message: Love*. —Ed.]

Swami's two discourses and the talks by the many speakers brought home several important points. Swami repeatedly stressed that we are all divine! But one thought stands out: we are in the midst of a spectacular event, in our lifetime—that of God walking the earth and guiding us every second. As a young adult, it is a great blessing from Swami to be able to shape our lives to live his message as messengers of his love.

—**Vishu Srinivasamurthy**
Kansas City, Kansas



REGION 5: ILLINOIS (EXCEPT BELLEVUE) ■ INDIANA ■ IOWA ■ MICHIGAN
MINNESOTA ■ NEBRASKA ■ OHIO ■ WISCONSIN

Performance—or Every Moment Practice?

Shortly after we arrived at Parthi and got accustomed to daily activities, practices for the choir and the Zone 1 drama began. The initial work of writing the script, creating a sample video of the play, and compiling the lyrics and melody for the musical piece had all been accomplished prior to the India trip. The main task of combining all the work and assigning character roles to youth from Zone 1 proved to be quite an undertaking. First we needed to assign the voices of each character to young adults. The first voice auditions took place on July 17. The auditions went well, and I was chosen to be one of the voices of the main characters, “Guy 2.” We practiced several times, pouring a lot of time into it, even until after 9:00 p.m., which marks the end of the day at Parthi. Our first full run-through of the play didn’t go as expected; we needed to reduce significantly the speed of our dialogue. We made several recordings and were finally satisfied with the last one. Through these recordings, I came to learn about auditions for the *bhangra* or North Indian folk dance that was also part of the play.

Bhangra auditions started on July 21. The dance brought both African and

Indian cultures together. The Trinidadians among us selected a few people, most of whom had helped choreograph the dance prior to the Parthi trip. Three new young adults, including myself, joined the team. We participated in the practices but were interested in helping choreograph some steps for the dance. We ended up staying late with the Trinidadians, trying to improvise a track with good bhangra lyrics. We were only able to compile a few minutes that day and continued to work on it for the next couple of days. It was very exhausting; falling into bed around 1:00 a.m. and waking up early to line up for darshan wasn’t easy. My roommates and I were always up earlier than anyone, not only hoping for a chance to sit in the first row during darshan, but also for experiencing the aura of spirituality and peacefulness of the morning.

The first play practice was on July 22, after morning darshan. The practice lasted until 8:00 p.m. Most of these cultural program practices required us to practice through lunches and dinners, due to the short amount of time we had to put together a seamless, perfect play for our Lord. But Swami was so kind to us; he allowed us to

arrange for packaged food from the North Indian canteen, brought by our brothers.

One of the days, as we were practicing for the play, an unusual event happened. We had received word from one of the ashram volunteers that Swami was arriving. Hearing this news, we quickly got ourselves in proper order, ready to receive him. Suddenly, a stray dog happened to arrive on the scene and took up position in front of center stage. The dog lay down, calmly watching all of us. We all knew it was Swami! At that time we were feeling ambivalent about our situation. We were sad to miss darshans due to practice, but then, knowing that we might perform in front of Swami and feeling that he had visited us in a different form convinced many to stay happy and to trust Swami to do the best for us.

As practices intensified, we had to overcome many obstacles and hurdles. About 50 people were part of the play, the bhangra dance, and the concluding music piece. It was very difficult to coordinate this, as many of the leaders came from across Zone 1; in addition, we were unable to find a big enough place to accommodate

everyone. The first day we practiced behind the North 7 building; the only building where practices were allowed. We practiced there a few times before we were forced to stop practicing there, due to the commotion we created.

Prior to the WYC events, we had to perform in front of one of the conference program coordinators. In the midst of performing the play, the power went out, but we were still able to perform until the end. To me, the power failure indicated a direct message from Swami. The play needed to be more refined, the acting needed to be better, and the dances too.

Contrary to how "Prasanthi Nilayam" (abode of highest peace) is supposed to be, everything seemed chaotic. We didn't have a large enough place to practice; multiple events and practices were conducted at the same time; and maintaining a consistent number of participants seemed to be a problem. Lack of food and sleep didn't help much either.



Performance is not only to conduct an act in front of audiences but also to be able to live every moment of every practice with Swami in our hearts and to practice daily what we were attempting to portray...

When everything seemed to be falling apart, Swami re-energized us through a WYC speaker. Jeremy Hoffer, a former youth representative, spoke about his experiences and how they defined the time to act in service, to be that ideal Sai young adult. Mainly

he spoke of his experience the first time he performed a play with a group of YAs. Before they performed, they were really worried about the quality, the overall structure, and the content of the play. Everyone seemed to be just too nervous to perform the play in front of Swami. But then, Swami, being the loving mother, had come behind stage and joked around with them, as if he were just another friend. Jeremy mentioned this act of care and how it gave them all more confidence,

relieving them of any anxiety.

This inspired us to continue with our practices and to strive for perfection in the play. We practiced every night and tried to arrange a better place for our daytime practices. We edited the background music several times with the help of a few brothers. We used Adobe Audition software to select background music and merge it with the recorded dialogue. This took a few days to

fully complete, and as soon as it was done, Swami put us through another test. That night, despite a conflict with another practice session, we were asked to perform the play in front of Dr. Michael Goldstein, Chairman of the Sri Sathya World Foundation; Dr. William Harvey of the Prasanthi Council; and Umberto Frascati, Chairman of the Cultural Committee at Prasanthi Nilayam. This turned out okay, but the music track was not complete. By that night I had a feeling that the play wasn't going to happen. But as one is never assured of anything at Parthi, we held onto that little glimmer of hope and continued to strive for perfection in the play.

In the end, our play was not performed in front of Swami. This was very hard to accept at first. I let my mind turn to Swami, asking him questions. I analyzed the situation and thought about what it really means to perform. Performance is not only to conduct an act in front of audiences but also to be able to live every moment of every practice with Swami in our hearts and to practice daily what we were attempting to portray in the play. That's when I realized that we succeeded, because we had learned our lesson—that he is omnipresent and did watch our play every time, even though it wasn't through his physical form. The play was still an offering on our part, while also presenting us with a very good lesson. With this new revelation I have learned to appreciate every moment, remembering that everything is His will.

—Srinu Raghupatruni
West Bloomfield, Michigan

An Offering at the Lotus Feet

Dearest Swami,

From the time my mind first became aware of your presence, I have asked you for so much. In the beginning, when I was young, I asked for things: a new bike, a chocolate-vanilla birthday cake, a trip to Disney World. As I grew older, I turned to you when I needed help—everything from scoring well on a major test to making a dentist’s appointment on time (when every traffic light refused to turn green, it seemed!). Later, as I agonized over “grown-up” (and not-so-grown-up) decisions—where to attend college, whether I should quit my investment banking job to enter a completely different path, what I should buy for my sister’s birthday—I begged you to decide for me.

I felt you next to me in my deepest and darkest times. When I was in trouble, when I cried, when I was hungry, when I was cold and lonely, when it seemed the wind blew even fiercer, when the snow fell even harder and my friends left me one by one, I pleaded with you to make it better. When I made mistakes—and you know better than anyone that I’m pretty much an expert at making those, some small, and some not-so-small—I could only pray that you would forgive me and still love me.

When I started singing, the asking didn’t stop, of course. I asked you, at first, to help me hit every note of a complex *gamakam*

(microtonal ornamentation) as I performed in concerts, to render a song with technical beauty and perfection. As you know all too well, I have prayed to you many times when starting a bhajan extemporaneously: “Swami! *Sruti* (sound) check: please don’t let me start too high; I don’t want my voice to crack!” I found, in music, I could instantly connect with you on a more profound and personal level than any of my cacophonous mental whining and rambling could ever hope to achieve. My asking continued, but it changed, somewhat: “Swami,” I prayed, “please bless me to express my love for you through music. Please bless me to sing for you and you alone.”

Now your smile means more to me than anything I have ever acquired, anything I have achieved. This summer, you called me to Puttaparthi. There I sat, mere steps away from your lotus feet. I looked up at your face for hours on end, close enough to see the wind part your hair gently, to see your smooth unlined feet gently rest on the plush cushion, to see you raise your eyebrows in playful jest as you teased a devotee, to hear the gentle lilting murmur of your voice, to see each finger of your hand rise and fall in perfect *thalam* (beat), to see the sunlight glint off the gold buttons of your robe. You granted me the glorious opportunity to sing in your physical presence, to sing to you with my dear Sai sisters, to experience the unity

of love that connected us as we gave you our offering.

As I found, it mattered little if I were one of a group of thousands or one alone, for the Sai connection riveted each one of us with the same humbling power and might. And as I remembered how I had prayed earlier for you to bless me to be able to sing for you and you alone, I realized that, unfolding before my eyes, was the most magnificent experience of my life, the fulfillment of that dream.

Swami, I have pelted you through the years with request after request—from the petty and trivial to, I suppose, the less petty and trivial—and how did you respond? I showered you with desires, questions, calamities, miseries, worries, wishes, prayers, thoughts, “please-help-me-with-this,” and “please-make-sure-I-achieve-that”; you showered me with grace throughout. Even as I created my barrage of desires, I envisioned you sitting majestically on your throne, gracefully waving your hand in divine bliss, smiling in that beautiful *prasanna vadanam* (ever cheerful, ever smiling) way: calm, placid, all-knowing, infinitely powerful, all at once.

Maybe now I have an inkling of why you sat just so, completely calm and unperturbed by the ramblings of my mind. In the past, I have asked and asked. My devotion to you was not unlike the child who hugs his mother when she buys him the toy or extra cookie he or she demands, and who throws a tantrum when she refuses. I came to you for many things, so many desires, so many requests—some fulfilled, some forgotten,

some answered but only seeding countless more desires, like weeds in a garden.

Now, as I relive my most cherished moments in your divine presence, my devotion to you has been transformed. It is anchored by surrender, by love, by a newfound clarity of your lessons and messages to me. No, I will admit that I haven’t yet succeeded in ceasing all the requests, surrendering all the worries, or stopping all the whining (sorry!). I’m still asking away. But Swami, I know the request that is most dear and precious to me, the one that I now ask of you every day and pray fervently that you will fulfill. It is for me to act in a way that brings that beautiful beaming smile of satisfaction and *ananda* (bliss) to shine across your face; it is for me to serve you as a doctor, volunteer, human being; it is for me to have the wisdom, good *buddhi* (power of wise discrimination), and courage to act per and accept your will.

Dear Sai, be as close to me always as you were when I sat next to you that beautiful, blessed day. Protect me and hold me in your hand as I embark upon the game of life. Bless me to have constant and full faith in you always, and never let me go. Swami. I guess in the end, it’s pretty simple. I ask for you.

Love,

—Janani Krishnaswami
Ann Arbor, Michigan



REGION 6: ALASKA ■ IDAHO ■ MONTANA
OREGON ■ WASHINGTON ■ WYOMING

His Loving Care: The List is Endless

Throughout the World Youth Conference, the most apparent and amazing impression was Swami's love for us. He took such good care of us all and showered us with his affection and grace. Our Swami is so wonderful; he even took care of the minutest details. One of the examples was the food at the conference, which was delicious. He made sure he decided the details of the menu, and he even went as far as making sure that it was edible to people from all over the world. There were many types of food, including pasta and a few western dishes, so that all the youth felt welcome and comfort.

The sari-tying volunteers were another such example. Swami graced all the YA women with three beautiful saris. He made sure there were also people to help tie these saris on youth who did not know how to do it. On the sari, if you look closer, it has an *Om Sri Sairam* printed on the *pallu* (end panel). This was another minute detail that could have easily been overlooked, but it just showed the care he took and the perfection of work that he does. He knew the weather conditions were harsh, and YAs were standing in lines for long periods of time, so he arranged for regular distribution of

water and made sure to give out some kind of sweet every darshan. The list is endless.

The youth with whom I interacted were one of a kind. All of them were really being "embodiments of love." We had a very busy schedule at the conference. We would be in lines by 4:30 a.m., and we also had various activities on top of darshan and speakers, so we wouldn't get to bed till midnight. Even though this would have taken a toll on anyone in their hometown, we somehow never felt tired. Every moment of the conference was energizing, the speakers were inspiring, and Swami's love was mesmerizing. Overall, it was just an incredible, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

—Sridevi Pochincherla
Seattle, Washington



A Garland of Inner Treasures Gained

Aum Sri Sai Ram, with Humble *Pranams* at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet!

My overall experience in preparation for the World Youth Conference 2007, heading there, and actually being there in the thick of things, was that of a lifetime. I was lucky enough to be chosen to work for various teams: primarily, the Zone 1 exhibition team, the USA task force, and the international exhibition family.

All this began in early 2007, when Baba chose me to help with the exhibition Team for the Zone 1 kiosk. Planning and working with fifteen to twenty other individuals from varying backgrounds and different parts of North America was unique in itself. When we arrived in Parthi, we started creating the kiosk that we had envisioned, not knowing that Baba had other plans. After a whirlwind of changes in two days, the

Zone 1 kiosk looked nothing like the one that we had planned; in fact, it was better, because our beloved Lord had designed and implemented it through us.

The exhibition hall was my Sai Kulwant hall. I didn't really feel the need to go to the actual Sai Kulwant hall, as I felt Swami's presence in every breath we took in the exhibition hall. Once all the kiosks were done, Swami gave me the opportunity to bring flowers for him in the exhibition hall every day, twice a day. In addition, I got to work with the international exhibition family, and I use the word *family* because it truly was. The room was brimming with love, respect, sincerity, sacrifice, trust, faith, and so many ideal qualities. It was extremely



“The exhibition hall was my Sai Kulwant hall. I didn’t really feel the need to go to the actual Sai Kulwant hall, as I felt Swami’s presence in every breath we took in the exhibition hall.”

hard to leave the exhibition hall at the end of the conference. Somehow I felt that I was going away from Swami, not knowing that the lasting inner jewels he had given me during this experience would end up making me feel much closer to him.

Today, when I reflect on the various teams that I was a tiny part of, I can distinctly see these things:

- The unfathomable stream of love continuously flowing from our Divine Master to every single person.
- Swami being so involved in making sure that the conference went so smoothly, not to mention the minute details.
- The immense love that each youth showed for our Sai Ma.
- Our beloved Baba’s presence in every single communication—be it e-mail, phone call, conference call, or in-person meeting.
- Our Lord’s hand in our thoughts, words, and actions.
- The paramount unity and camaraderie between the youth.
- The team spirit between the youth, to be recalled and practiced in daily life.

- How every individual I have come into contact with was—and is—a source of inspiration and has ton of good qualities embodying an ideal Sai youth/messenger of Sai love.
- How each lesson learned from this conference is applicable to daily life.
- That none of this would have happened if Baba hadn’t WILLED it.
- And last but not least, that the time for us to use the World Youth Conference as a stepping stone to create this level of harmony—not only among the Sai family but beyond it—is NOW.

—A Young Adult from Region 6





Reflections of Our Journey to Sai, through “S.A.I.”

This summer, young adults of USA Region 7 were blessed to participate in a pilgrimage to Puttaparthi for the third World Youth Conference (WYC). Although the physical journey began in mid-July, the actual pilgrimage began many months before. Our journey to Sai was rendered and made possible through “S.A.I.,” the letters of Swami’s name, which he has declared indicate the very path to him, namely Service, Adoration, and Illumination.

Service activities were ongoing locally among the YA groups in Region 7, but we had not embarked on a regional service project in a long time. Many ideas were tossed about, but selecting a meaningful project that YAs could be excited about was a challenge. After earnest prayer to Swami to provide us with an opportunity to serve him, a wonderful service activity suddenly landed in our laps. It turned out that the Ashland Free Medical Clinic, which provides free medical services to underprivileged members of the Ashland community in the San Francisco Bay Area, could use a big helping hand from YAs to renovate the clinic. When the day of the project arrived, 30 YAs showed up, and with great gusto they helped to renovate the

entire clinic. Tasks varied from vacuuming and cleaning carpets, to washing windows, installing new furniture, and recycling large amounts of old materials. At the end of the day, we were physically drained but mentally and emotionally recharged, having reorganized the clinic to the delight of the clinic volunteers and having brightened up the facility for the benefit of the patients.

Adoration proved a less difficult endeavor, as YAs found creative and multifaceted ways to glorify the Lord through prayer and song. Many centers in the region supported YAs by having them lead devotional singing every month. At a regional level, YAs from several centers began meeting weekly to chant the Gayatri mantra 108 times in an effort to purify themselves and the environment. These activities continue to this day.

Illumination was likewise an ongoing project among local YA groups in Region 7, in the form of study circles. These activities received a great boost during a regional YA retreat on April 28, 2007. Eighty-six YAs and supporters of the YA program attended the all-day event, which centered on the theme, Ideal Sai Youth. YAs contemplated what it

meant to be an Ideal Sai Youth, and also heard from such distinguished speakers as Dr. Hymon Johnson, Dr. Joe Phaneuf, and Beth and Judy Sandweiss. In addition, YAs were given opportunities to share insights on service initiatives being undertaken by the different local YA groups. We also played values-based games and enjoyed a dramatic presentation by one of the groups, entitled *Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara* (Speak Truth, Act Righteously).

Young Adults in Region 7 were not alone in their spiritual practices but in fact shared these disciplines with thousands of youth around the globe as part of the International Sadhana Program, a nine-point set of spiritual practices for guiding our hearts and minds toward our inner reality as we all prepared for the WYC. The sadhana program included principles like *namasmarana* (remembering the Lord's name), regular study of Swami's teachings, group service activities, practice of dietary discipline, speaking softly and less, taking an active part in Sai centers, respecting and improving communication with our parents, placing a ceiling on desires, and daily meditation and prayer.

Thus the pilgrimage to Sai began many months before the actual conference. This proved to be a great exercise in purification, and when the WYC time arrived, over fifty Region 7 YAs were fortunate to attend the event in Puttaparthi. Thirty YAs, including several from Southern California, participated in a group pilgrimage. The group had many memorable experiences, such as chanting the Gayatri mantra together on the plane during takeoffs, sharing Swami stories

during the long flight, and singing devotional songs on the chartered bus from Bangalore to Puttaparthi.

Once in Puttaparthi, with conference time approaching rapidly, it was exciting to see so many youth arriving from all over the world. Over 6,000 youth were present, from 86 countries, with 450 youth from the USA. The first day of the conference, young adults lined up inside Hillview Stadium and marched from there in procession into Sai Kulwant Hall. Groups of four YAs at a time entered the hall, each group having an opportunity to stop just before the dais, where Swami sat, and offer personal obeisance. Some of the Region 7 boys were fortunate to join the Puttaparthi students in Vedic chanting as part of the procession. They were doubly blessed to wear the *dhotis* (clothing) gifted by Swami during this occasion.

The next three days of the conference were filled with bliss. Each day, the ladies and gents would line up separately in the early morning to be led into Sai Kulwant Hall. Instead of wearing country-specific scarves, all YAs were given bright orange scarves, so we could identify ourselves as Sai Youth of the world, as opposed to American Sai Youth, Australian Sai Youth, and so on. The daily schedule included talks and workshops by illumined and distinguished speakers, many of whom were youth, and women speakers who spoke about living Swami's teachings.

A beautiful exhibition was organized on YA experiences in implementing the International Sadhana Program. Several Region 7 YAs were able to participate

in this massive project, which involved contributions from youth all over the globe.

But the greatest undercurrent throughout the program was undoubtedly Swami's boundless love. Everywhere we went, at every turn, Swami's love and concern for the youth delegates could be experienced. He displayed over and over again that he was simultaneously the perfect mother, father, teacher, and host, all rolled into one.

As the ideal mother, he ensured that his children were always properly fed. A special canteen was erected to serve three meals a day to all the delegates. Every item on the menu was personally checked by Baba, and he insisted there be a balance between North Indian, South Indian, and Western food, to cater to the diverse tastes of all the conference attendees.

As the ideal father, Swami insured that all the delegates were housed close to him, inside the ashram. This was a logistical miracle, considering that over 6,000 youth attended the conference, during one of the busiest times of the year (Guru Purnima). In addition, Swami looked after our health through a free medical clinic, so that anyone suffering from illness could be treated and put on the road to recovery.

As the ideal teacher, Swami blessed the youth with not one, but two divine discourses, which he delivered during the inaugural and valedictory sessions, respectively. On both occasions, his topics ranged from the profundity of absolute truth and pure love, to the practicality of

dietary discipline and how to deal with bad thoughts. Many youth felt that he answered all their personal questions and clarified their doubts through these discourses.

Finally, as the ideal host, Swami arranged perfectly even the smallest details, with his children's welfare in mind. For example, throughout the conference, participants were blessed by world-class entertainment, which kept our minds happy. From the soul-stirring ragas of Hariharan to the rich classical melodies of the Leipzig Orchestra, there was never a moment to feel homesick or bored! In fact, on the first day of the conference, Swami blessed the youth by having us attend a two-hour basketball match between Sri Lanka and India, at the International Sports Stadium. Has there ever been another time when youth could sit down casually with the Avatar and Lord of the Universe to watch a game of basketball? This was something special, to say the least!

In the end, all the YAs felt very blessed with the opportunity to participate in the conference, and each gained something unique from the experience. With heavy hearts, we left the grounds of the abode of highest peace. The first question on everyone's minds on the flight home was, "When shall we return for our next pilgrimage?"

It is our humble and heartfelt prayer that Swami will grant the youth many more opportunities to return to him, to experience his love always, and to make our lives his message.

—Region 7 YAs

Beyond Saturated with Satisfaction

I offer this at the feet of my dearest Swami. It's truly a joy to be reliving the World Youth Conference by sharing my experience. I realize that every time I go to Parthi, Swami instills a different aspect and level of spirituality within me. I have a few experiences to share.

First Day The conference was an amazing, revealing, and humbling experience. Swami had lots of surprises in store for all of us. The last time I had been in Puttaparthi was in 2005, as part of a Region 10 pilgrimage. This time, I didn't know what to expect. I remember hearing something about Swami giving wheelchair darshans, but I really didn't know what that meant.

But when Swami came in his car, I got a glimpse of him and got chills all over my body. He did not go and sit on the dais like I expected him to, but came down the sloped area in his wheelchair and started approaching the ladies. He kept coming and coming. Even though I was in the front, I was so far to the right in the line that I didn't expect him to come to the area where I was sitting, but Swami is ever so compassionate. He kept coming in my direction. He passed a few people to the left of me. As he got closer and closer, the energy emanating from him was indescribable and literally breathtaking. After that moment, looking at him, everything was a blur. By this time, I was fully in tears, shaking, and didn't know

what to do. In a few seconds, the Lord of the Universe was right in front of me! Literally a foot in front of me! All I remember is him looking into my eyes for what seemed like eternity. I was speechless, breathless, and I just remember saying, "Thank you!" I don't remember anything else. For those few moments, when Swami looked at me and smiled, it seemed like nothing around me was moving. I was speechless the rest of the day. I just absorbed it and let everything soak in! Swami is just too kind and ever so compassionate. I couldn't have possibly asked for anything more!

For me, more than anything, realizing that there are so many of Swami's young adults around the world, very much on the same frequency, and very much connected to Swami, was the most amazing and humbling experience. I felt like I had known all these young adults a long time because we related to each other so very well!

Girls' International Bhajan Group Program

I would like to share an experience from the music program, which consisted of a collection of songs, including English and Sanskrit medleys, multilingual bhajans/songs, and some Karnatic (classical music of Southern India) fusion songs. Practice sessions started long before the conference. After the conference began, we were advised to practice bhajans as well, because we might get a chance to sing "after-darshan

bhajans.” In other words, if Swami were to ask for bhajans during this time, we should be ready!

We practiced the music program—about ten bhajans and some Karnatic songs—preparing to sing anything asked of us by Swami. On the morning of July 27, the YA boys were allowed to perform their music program. We were almost certain that since the boys got to do their music program, we would get to do so in the evening. But in the evening, Swami asked the YA boys again to sing bhajans!

The following morning, after the darshan, speakers, presentations, and plays, it was bhajan time again. Swami signaled AGAIN for the boys to sing! Shitu Chudasama, the international YA coordinator, told Swami that the girls had prepared something and would like to present it to him. Swami looked at the boys, looked at the girls, looked at the boys again, and looked at the girls again—and finally asked us to sing bhajans! This was a funny moment, watching Swami look at the boys so many times before agreeing to let the girls sing!

Mine was the seventh bhajan scheduled. I prayed to Swami to be able to sing for him, but I didn’t think I would get to, as it had already been such a long darshan. But I prayed really hard and really yearned to sing for Swami. It’s always a great feeling to yearn to do anything for Swami! Swami, though, had other plans. The first bhajan, *Jai Ganaraya*, was sung by three girls from Nepal. Upon our advisor’s suggestion, we decided to sing a group medley of English songs for the second bhajan, as this way,

more of us could participate. The last part of the medley included a portion of the song, “In Every Moment of My Life.” After singing, “We’re Never Away from the Avatar Eyes,” we started the line, “When I slip, when I fall, lend me a hand . . .,” and finished by singing, “Baba, Sai Baba!” four times. Sitting right there in front of Swami, calling out, “Baba, Sai Baba!” so many times from the heart, was the most liberating, satisfying, and enjoyable moment ever! I felt frozen in time after singing this medley. Then I realized Swami had his own way of satisfying me. I would have loved to lead the bhajan that I had practiced, but after this amazing moment, I was beyond saturated with satisfaction. I just looked at him for a long time, thanked him, and enjoyed the moment. Swami, ever loving and compassionate, knew exactly who should sing for him and made sure we all were happy and satisfied.

I would like to end with a quote from Shitu Chudasama, the international YA coordinator: “Swami, life without you is a hopeless end, but life with you is an endless hope!” I am ever grateful to Swami that I am able to truly appreciate and feel like that, too!

—Lakshmi Jagannathan
Berkeley, California

Swami's Loving, Inspiring Examples

The World Youth Conference was momentous on many levels. That it was only the third such conference in ten years is one reason. That over 5,000 youth attended, representing 86 countries, is another. Swami's outpouring of love and joy to the youth certainly ranks high on the list. Yet hidden in this list is a quieter outcome that resonates loudly within me; it started even before arriving at Prasanthi Nilayam two weeks prior to the conference.

What was nothing short of life changing was the intense love and camaraderie-in-Sai that the youth showed one another. Throughout the past eight months of planning and executing the conference, youth worked in a collaborative fashion to insure that their part was played well. Combined with Swami's loving grace, the conference now endures in memory, with far-reaching effects. The entire Sai organization is studying the proceedings and discourses of the conference. The organizational structure has been retooled, to insure youth inclusion on all levels. And the transformation of the youth who attended is already apparent.

Well before the delegates arrived in Prasanthi Nilayam, it was evident that there would not be enough space for accommodating all the expected youth. Upon hearing this, the youth of Nepal (the largest single country's contingent, 800

delegates) volunteered to stay in the sheds. With love, they welcomed the opportunity to assure the comfort of a room for other overseas youth! As delegates arrived at the conference, they were greeted by teams of youth volunteers who efficiently and lovingly assisted them through the registration process and the allocation of accommodations. Youth teams visited each room, to make sure that all delegates were comfortable and happy. While this started in a planned manner, it wasn't long before youth delegates took the initiative themselves and began checking up on their brothers and sisters. It became a common sight to see a delegate stop another, while in passing, to ask if anything was needed. Left and right, youth from all countries bent over backwards to assist each other.

At one point, a couple of cases of chicken pox broke out among the Nepali female delegates. Since they were staying in a shed, it was determined by the medical staff that a temporary quarantine should be placed on the group. It is difficult to imagine how that felt, being confined to your room while missing Swami's darshan. In the spirit of compassion, youth volunteers worked tirelessly to bring food and supplies to the Nepali women. Volunteers also brought fruit and soda at nonmeal times to show that it wasn't just essentials that needed to be met. Often the volunteering youth

would forego their own meals in meeting the others' needs. Yet then, in such cases, other youth would step up and bring food for those volunteers! Each took care of others, looking after each person's needs and sharing Swami's love.

Many will make mention of the delicious food, which was provided free of charge for all delegates during the conference. Even more impactful is the realization that 200 youth chose to forego all conference proceedings so that they could manage the food distribution. For these youth, their experience of the conference was not the panel presentations, the international exhibition, or even Swami's darshan!

Instead, with smiles on their faces and love in their eyes, they served the delegates with devotion to Sai!

These moving vignettes sit side-by-side with my recollection of Swami's darshan and discourses. These examples of ideal Sai youth practicing the theme of the conference resonate so strongly and are as inspirational to me as receiving His divine darshan. One could easily see that Swami, through these youth, acting as messengers of Sai love, raised this conference to a point worthy of such praise.

—Daniel Scovill
Oakland, California

We Are His Message

The message that I feel Swami wanted to convey through the 2007 World Youth Conference is that every one of us represents our beloved Lord. The ones who could not be part of the conference may feel sad or down that they could not attend. But what I feel is that the conference participants were just Swami's medium for conveying his message. What Swami expects from us, I feel, is that we conduct ourselves in such a way that the world admires us and tries to follow our disciplined example.

We were provided with group seating before, during, and after the conference. The delegates were disciplined in entering, sitting, and leaving the Sai Kulwant hall,

and the audiences were impressed to see the disciplined behavior of the youth. This is just an example. If we really think about it and maintain discipline in every act, the good name and reputation we will get, will make Swami happy. One thing we have to remember, according to Swami, is that if we cannot be heroes with Swami, we cannot be heroes anywhere else.

Dear brothers and sisters, please keep the thought in mind that we are representing Swami, and that our thoughts, words, and actions have to be such that they do not bring bad a name to our Lord Swami.

—Niranjen
Vallejo, California

The Promise of Peace and Happiness

When I first heard about the 2007 World Youth Conference (WYC), I had no immediate desire to go, because I had my mind set on taking summer courses. Then, as the registration deadline came near, a limited number of seats were left on a plane that most of the YAs were traveling on. I talked to my older sister about the conference (she had attended a previous WYC). She strongly insisted that I go. She told me it would be an amazing, once-in-a-lifetime experience. I also talked to a friend who had gone before, and he told me that his life changed after he went to the WYC. I was amazed at his comments and was inspired to see Swami. Also, I hadn't been to India in over ten years.

After we arrived in Puttaparthi, we went through registration and settled into our rooms. Several people had to stay in one room. During the first two days, the weather was hot, humid, and rainy. The rain created a lot of mud. I felt uncomfortable and realized that the stay was going to be tough. In those couple of days prior to the start of the conference, I realized that I was spoiled and very attached to my comfortable lifestyle in America. I had trouble sitting patiently during the morning and afternoon darshans.

It was very hard to sit on the floor for many hours with very little leg room. I was unable to appreciate the great seating that we, the YAs, received in Sai Kulwant Hall.

The night before the WYC formally began, I was just outside the ashram, when all of a sudden, it started raining hard. The streets instantly flooded. The water rose

to at least six to twelve inches high in some places, and it rushed through the streets. At this point I felt very frustrated. As I walked to my room in the rain, I didn't understand why Swami would create so much rain and make us all

so uncomfortable. I went to sleep that night wondering if this trip would ever make me feel closer to Swami.

The next morning, the first day of the conference, all the YAs lined up early, as usual. We were told that we were going to walk outside of the ashram and stage a rally—barefoot! I wondered if things could get any worse. However, as we walked outside the ashram on the streets, I noticed that the streets were so clean! They were completely free of pebbles and rocks. That's when I realized that the rains from the night before had cleaned up the streets. As we walked back into the ashram and into

I instantly felt satisfied.
Swami himself had told me
that I would be able to live
happily, blissful and at peace.



the hall, we all were singing bhajans as we marched right past Swami. He was only ten to fifteen yards away from me, closer than I had ever been to him. Once everyone got seated, a few guest speakers talked about their experiences. Then Swami himself took the podium. It was amazing to hear his voice. His speech started off quietly, but then it became powerful. Jokes were made, and everyone left the inaugural morning darshan happy. Afterward, we all ate and later attended a special basketball game between India and Sri Lanka. The gymnasium was amazing, and it was very weird seeing Baba at the game. Being a big sports fan myself, I wasn't sure if I should just sit and watch Swami or watch the basketball match. Day one of the conference was definitely a turning point in my trip.

The greatest day of the trip was day three. This was the second to last day of my trip, and I was still feeling a little unsatisfied with the trip and my experiences, especially after I thought about what my friend had said about his life being changed at a previous WYC. Day three started well; the morning darshan and the guest speakers were great. Then everyone departed for lunch and came back for the afternoon program.

Bhajans were sung and instruments played beautifully by other young adults from around the world. Then Swami gave his second WYC discourse. The weather was again very nice, for the third straight day. It was cloudy, and a nice breeze wafted through the hall. I was still waiting for that moment when I would get to truly feel Swami's presence in me. Swami spoke about

several topics: what is truth, what to eat, what not to eat, and so on. Then, as Swami concluded his speech, he said to all those attending the WYC, *You will all go back home happy, blissful, and at peace.* WOW!

Hearing those words, my body felt relieved, my mind felt clear, and I just smiled. That was it! I instantly felt satisfied. Swami himself had told me that I would be able to live happily, blissful, and at peace. All the young adults that I talked to after Swami's last discourse had smiles on their faces and agreed that they felt some strong vibrations.

Another miracle took place during Swami's last discourse. All the questions Swami addressed during his talk—what is the meaning of truth, what we should or should not eat, and so on—were all asked by my friend, Parth, who had written Swami a letter with a list of all these questions. Swami had answered all the questions, in the order they had been asked in the letter.

Attending the conference was a great experience. Swami's darshans were amazing. Also, going to India was a reality check. I saw a lot of poverty and the tough conditions that many people live in. The world still needs a lot of help. Now I can more truly appreciate my comfortable lifestyle in America.

—Ravi Patel
Sacramento, California



His Words—Alive and True!

Youth: Your mission has begun. Those are my words to you. ... Each of you has a unique and valuable part to play in this lifetime. Only those whom I have called can serve me. My mission has now reached that point in time when each one of you now has work to do. ... To successfully perform your part, always remain centered upon me. ... Do not reach for the fruits of your work. ... You are my instruments, from whom my love will pour. This I say to all devotees, from the Lord's mountaintop where all the universes become one. Be about my work, my beloved devotees. Your example will be that of angels. Your joy will be my joy.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

As I walked toward the exit of the exhibit on the Nine-Point Sadhana program created by Sai youth from all over the world, the quotation above made me linger a moment longer. It was the last evening of the World Youth Conference, and after Swami's valedictory discourse, I still felt like I was floating on air. A week before, these words might have seemed interesting and inspiring, but now, they were much more—they were true! Over the three days of the conference, and especially in his overwhelmingly loving final discourse, Swami had imprinted on our hearts the very essence of this quotation. I left Puttaparthi with these three messages singing inside of me:

1) Swami has called each of us to him, specifically! We have not come to Swami by chance, and we have not chosen him—he has chosen us! He has called us not only to shower us with his love and to grant us the grace of his darshan, but to do his work.

2) We are the instruments; he is the musician! We must harness our mental and physical energies and transform ourselves into the most perfect instruments of Swami's love. As we purify our mind and stop reaching for the fruits of our work, we will begin to "live in love," and feel the magic of being flutes in the divine hands.

3) Our joy is Swami's! Swami reminded us that sorrow and worry will take us farther from God, for God is always blissful. What a wonderful duty we have, as messengers of Sai love, to simply be happy.

Through the World Youth Conference, Swami lovingly planted the seeds of these sermons in our hearts. Let us nurture these seeds with our sadhana and our satsang, and answer Swami's call to be about his work, to be his message, to be his joy!

—Rucheeta Kulakarni
San Diego, California

Sai's Love Knows No Limit

The limitless love and grace of our beloved Bhagavan poured forth as a gushing river on the occasion of the third World Youth Conference in Puttaparthi. The many cultures and diverse backgrounds of individuals in attendance fashioned a most beautiful tapestry. During our stay, Swami blessed us all with the opportunity to hear two discourses and witness countless miracles as evidence of his divine love. Swami spoke individually to each of us while giving a discourse to thousands. A bouquet of diverse speakers reaffirmed Swami's divine presence both externally and in our hearts. One of the most poignant messages was from Prof. Anil Kumar, who assured each of us that spirituality did not have to be strict and unnecessarily difficult, stating, "Seriousness is sickness."

Often we hear of the many trials and tribulations that a trip to see Swami can present. I assure you that this trip was no different; however, the difficulties seem so insignificant when compared with the love experienced. Special seating was given to all the delegates, not only during

the conference, but before and after, per the request of Sai himself. Swami filled my cup beyond the limits I thought possible when, several days after the conference, he decided to give each of us a robe, either

blessed or worn by him. In addition I was given the opportunity to be a seva dal and serve my fellow young adults. What a blessing! The pinnacle of my trip, and this opportunity to serve, was being given the chance to pass out

prasad. As I approached my beloved Lord, filled with anxiety at the prospect of making a mistake, he turned and gave me the most beautiful smile. I am confident that no other reassurance could have been more effective in imprinting Sai's infinite love upon my heart. His gaze was transforming, and I am just beginning to digest the powerful impact upon my consciousness.

His gaze was transforming,
and I am just beginning to
digest the powerful impact
upon my consciousness.



—Joshua Pesavento
San Diego, California

Forever My Mother

I am thankful to Swami for giving me the opportunity to participate in the third World Youth Conference (WYC), which took place in July 2007. Throughout my entire trip in India, I felt Swami's presence and love. Prior to arriving in Puttaparthi, I visited my grandparents and close family, who took us to various places of worship in India. At each temple, I would try to see Swami in the idols and feel the joy of anticipating seeing him in his physical form in the upcoming weeks. Though I had scaled over 3,600 steps in the luscious forests of the seven-hilled Thirumila to see Lord Venkateswara, and traveled for two days by train to see the shrine of Shirdi Sai Baba in the state of Maharastra, I felt the most soothed by the tranquil presence of our beloved Bhagavan, the moment we arrived in Prasanthi Nilayam. For me, this feeling was different from that of the other places we visited. As early as my first morning darshan, I knew that Swami knew that I had arrived in Prasanthi. My family had just come in, and because we did not officially pick up our WYC scarves, we planned to sit among the general public.

While I was being frisked by the seva dals, one of them told me that my purse was too big, and that I would have to check it in the cloakroom. I was escorted by a kind

seva dal to the cloakroom, and while all this was happening, I quietly wondered if Swami knew I had arrived, and why he had delayed my seeing him. At the cloakroom I was given the token "84." Later I realized this was Swami's sign to me—I was born in the year 1984.

My first darshan of Swami during this trip was most memorable and touching. Though I sat far away, Swami graciously came out in his wheelchair, affording all the people in the hall a wonderful opportunity to see him. Once I saw Bhagavan, resplendent in his orange robe, tears welled up in my eyes, and I knew I was home with my divine mother.

During this trip, to me, Swami was like a close mother, taking care of every need of daughters numbering in the thousands. A couple of days before the conference, Swami had given word to distribute three saris and a conference messenger bag to all of the girls. All the girls loved Swami's impeccable selections, which ran the gamut from the pen included in our messenger bag to the color and design of each of the saris. Many times I would converse internally with Swami and comment about certain things, and then notice, a short while later, that he had listened and changed things.

For instance, during the first of our sumptuous lunches provided by Swami, we were told to eat standing up, so that all the girls could be fed in a short amount of time. Being a spoiled American, I was complaining inside to Swami about how uncomfortable it was to stand and eat. In addition, we were served yogurt rice that was very spicy, and I quietly asked Swami why it was too spicy to enjoy. Later that evening, we had another delicious dinner, but this time we all got to eat sitting down and had yogurt rice with the perfect mild amount of spice.

Moreover, throughout waiting for Swami's darshan in Sai Kulwant Hall, Swami provided us with drinking water brought to us in cups arranged on trays by the seva dals. We were told that this type of hospitality had never happened before in the hall. Though these were minor details that one could easily overlook, Swami always paid attention to these things, which taught me that we must all strive for perfection.

I have had the good fortune to see Swami in Prasanthi Nilayam many times before this unique trip. Prior group trips have kept me

busy with practices for drama performances and singing bhajans for Swami. This trip was different, in that I had the time to listen and learn from the speakers Swami had selected to address the youth from all over the world. Many of the speakers emphasized how fortunate it is that we are all born as humans. We are the only ones out of 8.4 million species that can realize the ultimate truth and attain liberation. It was inspiring to hear many of Swami's devotees speak to us and give us their advice.

In addition to older speakers, we had speakers from the world youth congregation who spoke about their experiences of applying Swami's teachings in their daily lives, and how we all can be messengers of Sai's love.

On the last day of the conference, Swami gave a valedictory address. He started his speech by materializing a golden lingam. He affectionately asked all of us to look at it, and even asked a couple of times during his divine discourse if everyone was able to see it. This lingam, he declared, represented the Eternal Truth. Everything was created from it and everything will go back and be one with it. During the entire discourse, Swami repeatedly said that he was very happy with his young adults.

I have never had a private interview with Swami, but I felt as if Swami was showering his grace on each and every soul inside the hall with the same amount of attention he



would shower in his interview room. It was touching the way he joked around with us, particularly on the subject of food. Like a mother watching her children, he advised us to have food at regular intervals and to avoid eating cheese. I, and many people around me, felt bad about ceasing our intake of cheese, after hearing this. Swami at once clarified that we could have soft cheese and other milk solids—in moderation.

Swami also told us that all we need is eleven seconds of one-pointed concentration for him to come in his physical form and talk to us. Of course, we all tried doing that in the next couple of days; we found that a lot of practice is needed before attaining that state of concentration. Swami also emphasized that we must be happy and smile all the time, and not have “castor oil faces.”

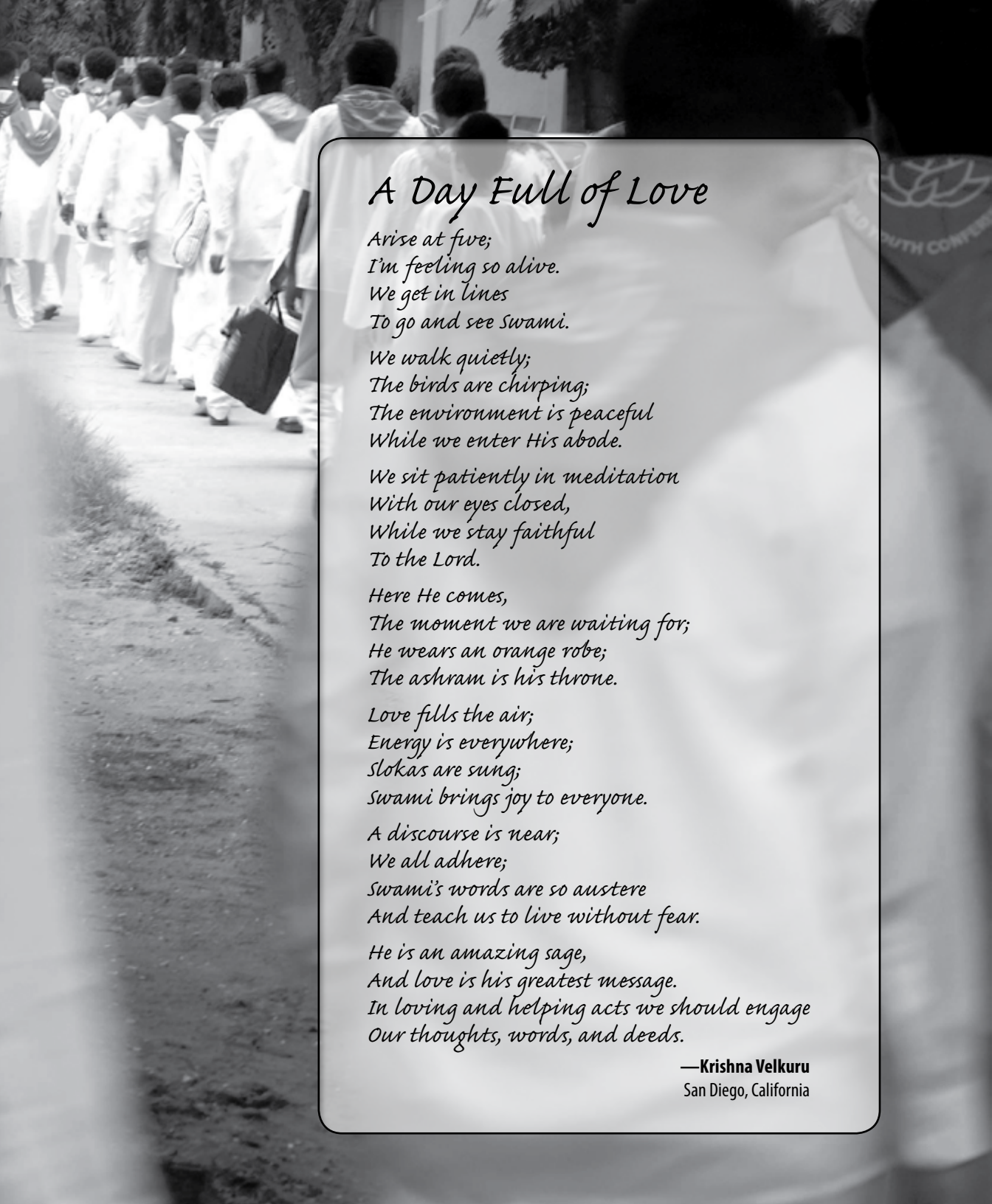
The three days of the conference went by very quickly. I remember a stirring speech given by a Croatian young adult, who shared his experience about dedicating all he does to Swami and how, once he did this, Swami immediately asked him to take part in the planning of the World Youth Conference. The speaker asked us all to raise our hands if we were ready to say “yes” to Swami, to dedicate everything to him, and to take part in his divine mission. As I raised my hand, I saw Swami turn his head and look at me. I felt very energized, but at the same time a little scared, because I know that this mission is not always easy. Upon returning home, I know that Swami will help all of us to be effective messengers of his love. When we say “yes” to Swami, we reject the option of being like everyone else.

Guru Purnima celebrations followed the next day, and all the WYC delegates continued to receive special seating. Swami came out in a yellow robe, following the debut of his new pet elephant, Sathya Gita, who led the procession. It was endearing to see Swami openly shower his love on Sathya Gita by calling her up to the veranda to feed her. Sathya Gita is a young elephant, symbolic of the energy of Swami’s youth. I thought that we all should have her enthusiasm, so that Swami might shower his grace on all of us.

On July 31, Swami gave word that he was going to give a gift to all the delegates. About 1,000 of us sat in distribution lines in Sai Kulwant Hall and were given his robes! When I received one, I felt a tingling sensation go through my body. It felt as if Swami were coming with me to be with me all the time. I felt that he was going to be there for me and guide me in everything that I do. It was my last day there, and Swami made it most memorable. This youth conference is only the beginning of my journey of transformation into an ideal Sai youth—a messenger of Sai love.

Upon returning home, I know that Swami will help all of us to be effective messengers of his love. When we say “yes” to Swami, we reject the option of being like everyone else.

—Sumati Bavisetty
Irvine, California



A Day Full of Love

*Arise at five;
I'm feeling so alive.
We get in lines
To go and see Swami.*

*We walk quietly;
The birds are chirping;
The environment is peaceful
While we enter His abode.*

*We sit patiently in meditation
With our eyes closed,
While we stay faithful
To the Lord.*

*Here He comes,
The moment we are waiting for;
He wears an orange robe;
The ashram is his throne.*

*Love fills the air;
Energy is everywhere;
Slokas are sung;
Swami brings joy to everyone.*

*A discourse is near;
We all adhere;
Swami's words are so austere
And teach us to live without fear.*

*He is an amazing sage,
And love is his greatest message.
In loving and helping acts we should engage
Our thoughts, words, and deeds.*

—Krishna Velkuru
San Diego, California



“What Have We Done to Be So Lucky?”

“Dam Dam Dam Dam Damaru Bhaje!”
We were singing at the top of our lungs, right outside the stadium in Parthi. It was very early in the morning, quite hot, and we were all barefoot, but none of that seemed to matter. It was the day we had all been waiting for, the inaugural day of the World Youth Conference! With one quick signal from the seva dals, all 3,000 of us boys started marching down the street toward Sai Kulwant Hall. With flags flying high in the air, representing every country on the map, and thousands of devotees lining the streets, it all started to sink in.

What a tremendous honor and privilege it was to be part of something like this. To be among other youth from all over the world, all unified in our love for Swami. When we finally made it to the gates of Sai Kulwant Hall, there sat our beloved Bhagavan, awaiting our arrival. This itself was a very humbling experience, to see the Lord of the Universe waiting in anticipation of our arrival. This question, “What have we done to be so lucky?” kept playing over and over in my mind. And that feeling grew stronger and stronger as the conference unfolded.

Being at the World Youth Conference was truly one of the most powerful and shaping experiences I have ever had. I am not

sure if it was the specific time in my life that made it so powerful, or the specific messages Swami gave to us. But I am certain that I left Prasanthi Nilayam feeling privileged and honored to be a Sai Young Adult. The main message I took home with me was that Swami is not concerned with how involved our seva projects are, or the number of homeless we are able to feed, or even how strict we are in our prayers. What matters to Swami is how each one of these practices affects our personal transformation. Whether helping one person or a thousand, if that act makes us more peaceful, loving, and caring, then that is all Swami asks of us.



—Neil Gholkar
Tucson Arizona

Receive Me . . . I Am Coming Back to Thee

I surrender this work at the lotus feet of my most benevolent Mother Sai!

I had often heard the terms, *Mother Sai*, *Divine Mother*, and so on, and always wondered about their meaning. Having only been in Swami's physical presence once before, I was yet to truly feel and understand what these phrases implied. Their depth remained a mystery to me.

And then came the opportunity of a lifetime—not just an opportunity to serve, be a leader, sing, and so on, but an opportunity to be in the presence of my beloved Lord. For the first time, I finally came to understand the depth of motherly love and what that meant.

It all started with the announcement of the World Youth Conference. As a regional representative in the U.S., I quickly became involved in various aspects of planning and execution, from the exhibition design team to writing scripts for the Zone 1 cultural program. There wasn't a conscious minute when the World Youth Conference wasn't on my mind. Every time I thought about it, my body tingled with excitement and

anticipation. I would be in the presence of the Lord once again! Memories from my first trip flooded my mind.

The summer soon came, and I was on my way to Parthi. The sadhana program we were all working on was reaching its pinnacle. Months and months of conference calls, planning, and practices had flown by, and the moment of truth was only a few hours away. From the minute I landed in Bangalore and boarded

the bus to Parthi, Swami's presence was evident: a friendly co-passenger shared her idlis with me and explained the route to the ashram, and her compassionate husband drove me in so I didn't have to drag my luggage through the village. To me, all this was a sign that Swami knew I had arrived.

I followed registration guidelines and made my way over to Shed 32, ground zero of the conference, to receive a room assignment. We were told that groups of six delegates would receive a room, while the others would be in the sheds. As we glanced down the line at each other, six of us quickly formed a group, Sai sisters who had

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never met before this day. But in an instant, nerves were overcome and international boundaries blurred. We were all Sai youth, basking in divine love and ever-ready to share it with the other. Two of my roommates were making their way to the choir auditions, so I joined them, since that was why I had arrived a week early for the conference. As we walked to the double-decker building, I was told that everyone who wanted to participate would be allowed to, and there would be no auditions. Another one of Swami's signs! Due to my recent wedding, I'd had barely a week to learn and memorize all the fourteen choir songs. Throughout my plane ride, I was stressed about auditioning. What if I were asked to sing a song I hadn't learnt yet? What if I didn't make the choir! My lifelong prayer to sing in front of Swami would fade away in front of my very eyes. After hours of listening to my MP3 player and memorizing lyrics in various languages, I was thrilled to hear that I would now have the chance of a lifetime: **the chance to be a hollow flute and let His divine melody flow through me.**

Practice came and went that morning, and the choir group started lining up for darshan. We walked into Sai Kulwant hall, and my childhood memories rushed right back. I wondered where I'd be seated and if I'd be able to catch a glimpse of my beloved Lord. I had heard that Swami was no longer walking through the crowds, and it was hard to spot him in the car. The choir group was seated behind the rest of the delegates and we were all a little disappointed. After hours of practice, we couldn't join the delegates'

line and hence had to be seated behind. This thought had merely crossed my mind when a seva dal asked the choir to stand up and move to the front. Front row! The exact row where I had sat during my first visit to Prasanthi Nilayam, years ago. Who else but Swami could know this yearning deep inside?

This was the first day that Swami granted the delegates special seating, and the privilege continued through the conference and beyond. Whenever we yearned for just a little bit more, we received it—with so much love, love that only a mother would know—unconditional love with no strings attached—Swami's love for us, his children.

The journey of a lifetime continued. Over a year ago, I'd heard a story about Radha and Krishna, where Krishna explained that the reason he held the flute closest to him was because it was hollow and ego free. All the flute did was to allow Krishna's melodious music to flow through, with no emotions attached, and no conditions. From the moment I heard this story, I started my sadhana of surrendering to Swami—especially when I led bhajans. All I had been asking for over the past year or so was to be a hollow flute, letting divine music flow through me. I repeated this constantly and always remembered to thank Swami for singing through me. Little did I know that a year later I would serve as just that, a hollow flute in the presence of the Lord—not just once, but over and over again.

Soon after I joined the international choir, I had the opportunity to try out to be

part of the international bhajan group. This was an amazing group of girls, all dedicated to Swami, each one more talented than the other. Before we knew it, we functioned as one team, with one goal in mind: *May we all be flutes within your hands; let us be your melody, we'll sing at your command.* With this in mind we practiced with utmost sincerity, bhajan after bhajan, song after song, ready to sing anything our divine conductor asked of us. July 27 came, and even before the sun rose we were ready, chanting the Gayatri mantra and praying internally for Swami's grace to sing for him. The more we yearned, the harder it was to adjust to the disappointment when Swami signaled for the boy's group to perform—both in the morning and the evening! Our hopes were shattered, and grief took over.

During practice that night, a Sai sister shared some inspirational stories that brought the group back together, and we continued to practice. We visualized Swami being right there in our practices, and our melodies hit such wonderful highs. Another dawn emerged, and we were back in the hall. Speakers came and went, panel discussions came and went, and it was now time for bhajans. Our group nervously looked at the clock as we waited for divine direction. Our hands joined in prayer; we yearned for one chance to pour our hearts out through the medium of music. Swami, in his ever-playful way, looked at the boys and signaled for them to start. We were heartbroken yet again, as this was the last day of the conference, our final opportunity to be one with the Lord. And in an instant, he turned to

look at us. We were practically on our knees, saying, please let us sing, Swami!

Bhajans? I heard him say, with a quizzical smile on his face. "Please, Swami, please," I could hear my sisters whispering. Ever so lovingly, he smiled—his radiant unforgettable smile. And he granted his divine blessing. The harmonium gave us the pitch, and we started chanting three *Oms*. The vibrations I felt then will carry me through lifetimes. And *Jai Ganaraya* started, led by our Nepali sisters. I was co-leading a Devi bhajan and was slotted to be the seventh bhajan. Although a little wary of getting my chance, I continued to pray to Swami. We didn't get a chance to lead our bhajan, but an English medley we sang was enough to pour out every feeling and every yearning I had ever had:

*Thank you, Baba, for today. Thank you
for the things I've learned today.
It was you who made me walk and talk
and think and act,
Sing a song for you today,
As I lay at your feet, dear Lord, all these
thoughts and words and deeds.*

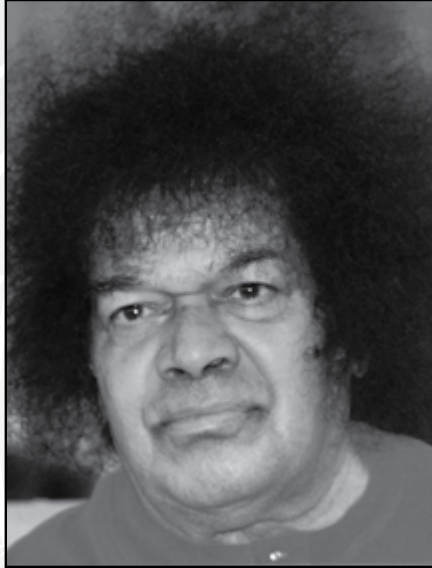
The medley continued, and it is only now that I realize the importance of all the different lines and bhajans that we fused together. It is only now that I think back and reflect that I realize the value of the lines:

*May we all be flutes within your hands.
Let us be your melody; we'll sing at your
command.*

For an entire year I had repeated this mantra. And now I was singing these very lines to Swami, surrendering in his presence! After this experience, it didn't matter what I sang, when I sang, if I sang. All that mattered

was that I had surrendered to the Lord, and he was the divine conductor of it all.

Before I could even savor this experience, I was rushing between exhibition duties and choir practice. The next morning came, and it was the day the choir had been waiting for—Guru Purnima. We lined up early and made our way into the darshan hall. Swami arrived in all his grandeur. It was my first experience seeing him in a yellow robe, and what an experience it was. Swami's new elephant marched in, as playful as ever, and we witnessed another play of motherly love between Swami and the elephant. The choir didn't get to sing that morning, but we got our chance that evening. After several performances by the Latin American youth, our turn came—about 150 youth from across the globe, tuned together by the strings of love. Swami gave us our signal and we began: *Om Gananam Twam*... I looked intensely at Swami and saw that he was chanting with us! Every syllable, every word. It sent chills down my spine to watch him. Right after the Vedas, we broke into a guru song, very apt for the occasion. Two more songs and Swami signaled for another group to perform. Some of us were a little disappointed—angry even, because we thought that if we had sung in the morning, we probably would have had



a longer time slot. But since our conductor wasn't at darshan, we didn't perform. Swami dispelled this myth as well, by giving us all a huge smile before he left the hall. He got up to leave, paused, turned, and smiled—a smile that every single member of the choir saw and cherished, a smile that made us understand he has a plan for everyone, and that all the stress we went through to get here was worth it, whether we sang three songs or fourteen.

The memories continue, and realizations of the experiences do as well. Every time I think I've figured it out and reconcile my memories of the World Youth Conference, a new facet gets revealed. The journey of a lifetime has only just begun, and I have miles

to go before I sleep, walking hand in hand with my Divine Mother Sai. As the lines of our medley said:

When I slip, when I fall, lend me your hand;

When I stray far away, lead me back again.

Baba, Sai Baba, Baba, Sai Baba!

Receive me...

I am coming back to thee...

—Ramya Kumar
Phoenix, Arizona



He Is Always There for Us

The World Youth Conference Exhibition was a collective effort by young adults from all the different zones around the world to showcase the *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) program that was the essence of the WYC. It was truly a unique experience to work with YAs from around the world, who, despite diverse ethnic backgrounds and varied accents, were joined by the bond of Sai Love. We all worked together with one goal: to showcase the *sadhana* points for all conference delegates to come and see.

Along the way, I learned there was a chance that Swami might come to inaugurate the exhibition. This was enough for me to change focus. My focus went from “I am lucky to be here” to “I cannot wait for Swami to come and inaugurate the exhibition, so that I can be in close proximity to the Lord.” I think we all yearn for his physical presence, but I realized later that his physical presence should not be our ultimate goal. I waited and waited, yet Swami did not come to the hall to inaugurate the exhibition physically. Rather, he sent word that the exhibition

should be opened. While this was enough for me to realize that he knew everything that was going on, in my heart I still had that longing, that he did not come and physically inaugurate it like I wanted him to.

Swami is always there for us. Swami never disappoints.

We only disappoint ourselves.



But later, almost 45 days after the WYC, he came in my dream and did exactly what I was longing for. In the dream setting, we were all in the exhibition hall, and it was bustling with activity. There were people in every kiosk,

sitting on the floor, the visual kiosk full, and all one could see was the V-shape of orange scarves on everyone’s backs. All of a sudden, we got word that Swami was coming to the hall. Immediately we cleared out the area except for all the volunteers who had helped out with the exhibition, and the zonal representatives. Then Swami came in his wheelchair, surrounded by his entourage. I could tell that this time there were more students than usual around Swami. Swami came in, and we all lined up. He did not go from kiosk to kiosk, as we had originally planned. Instead, all the zonal representatives come forward and made a

circle around Swami. We all (I really could see a lot of familiar faces) had our hands folded and our bodies bowed down before him. All of a sudden, Swami did something that surprised a lot of people. He first initiated a conversation with a student:

Bhagavan: I don't want a wheelchair.

Student: Swami, are you going to walk?

Bhagavan: No, I am going to sit down.

Student: Okay, Swami.

Swami then got up, gently pushed back the wheelchair, and sat on the ground. From the minute he entered the hall, he had been smiling. There was so much love in that characteristic smile of Swami's. His orange robe was so bright that it was almost blinding when I tried to look my eyes on him, yet his smile and love made me not want to blink. He sat on the ground with his legs folded, and we were all bent down, waiting for him to say something. Then Swami said, continuing to smile: *Are you all doing okay? I came to see the exhibition. I told you that*

I was going to be here. He smiled in such a way as to imply, "If I tell you that I will be there, I will be there."

Then I told him briefly about the Zone 1 kiosk, and with that, he was ready to leave. The first two days we had a flowery arch that said, "WYC Exhibition." Swami seemed to go through this arch, but then he was standing quite a distance away from it with his entourage. From a distance, we all wondered what was going on. Swami seemed to be waiting for his car. Bhagavan then said, "Wait; the people with my car will come, and then I will leave."

I thought this was an amazing dream and wanted to share it with you all. My wife said, "See, Swami was in the hall every day, but he had to come in your dream to convince you of it." And convince me, he did—simply because of his love. Swami is always there for us. Swami never disappoints. We only disappoint ourselves.

—Sai Ganesamoorthy
Dallas, Texas



A Life-Changing Experience

Introduction A few Region 10 young adults were blessed to participate in the World Youth Conference held from July 26-28 in Puttaparthi this summer. It was truly a life-changing experience, a rare opportunity to witness such a diverse gathering of youth coming from different parts of the world to see our divine Mother Sai. As Swami says, *You are only actors on the stage before the footlights. The director, who knows the play, who assigns the roles, who gives the cues, who calls you in and puts you on, is behind the curtain.* Thus, it is his will alone that brought us to Parthi. It was a great honor and a privilege to know that our beloved Lord had heard our prayers and called us to take part in the WYC.

Preparation The thrill of being at the World Youth Conference began with hard work and discipline. Swami always presents us with challenges to make us stronger and test our faith, and we had to face many obstacles in preparing for our journey.

Some faced the challenge of getting time off to travel to Parthi. One young adult was amazed to find that he was able to work late and not have his family complain about it for a change! This was his sign that Swami was calling him. Another young adult didn't think he had any chance of going, because he was a consultant with no holidays. But Swami gave him a path to come when the company suddenly agreed to hire him permanently, giving him the days

needed to take his trip. Still another young adult had a dream where a friend told him he should go to the WYC. The next day his friend confirmed this sentiment, and the young adult knew that it was a sign from Swami. While these may seem like trivial coincidences, Swami made everything fall into place, even when the likelihood of going seemed next to nothing.

Just being free to come to the World Youth Conference, however, did not guarantee smooth sailing. To be prepared for such an event, one must strive to better oneself and be worthy of the journey. Thus, young adults across the world practiced spiritual discipline and sacrifice to open their minds to the Lord. As a group, we collectively chanted 21 Gayatri mantras at 9 p.m. daily. Also, every young adult group held study circles discussing topics related to bettering ourselves. Workshops at regional retreats were conducted to make us aware of our duty to the Lord. Even more important were the individual sadhanas practiced by each young adult. One young adult would imagine that Swami was in his passenger seat while driving to work, carrying on a conversation with him. Another young adult would imagine that he was taking care of Swami while doing numerous service projects. Other young adults practiced daily not wasting water. Before arriving in Parthi, we wanted to wipe away bad thoughts from our minds, as one wipes dirt from one's

shoes on a doormat, before entering the home of our Lord.

Travel After long hours spent preparing for our journey, the long hours of the trip itself awaited us. For the lucky ones, a long flight can be shortened by a relaxing nap. For the unlucky ones, it can be hours of nonstop torture!

Swami can make a trip a bit more pleasant. One young adult, after being harassed for hours by screaming kids, was pleasantly surprised to find he had been upgraded unexpectedly to business class.

At customs in India, after being stopped by an agent inquiring about a package, one young adult explained that the package was going to Puttaparthi. The young adult was amazed when the customs agent immediately changed his tone and said, "Everything goes to Puttaparthi? NO PROBLEM!"

After the long plane ride was over, the true experience of traveling in India began. For many of us, this was a rare time to experience an Indian train, taxi, or better yet, an auto-rickshaw! We also got to experience the chaos and crowds of India. A few young adults suddenly found themselves in the middle of a huge traffic jam because a giant tree branch had fallen on the road, blocking the entire street. No maintenance people appeared on scene, but some locals started hacking at the branch as car horns bellowed from every direction.

First Impressions in Parthi Arriving in Parthi is like entering a hidden universe. In the middle of this chaotic world sits our Lord's abode. All the headaches of preparation and journey fade away as we set foot in the

tranquil red grounds of Puttaparthi. It brings about an indescribable feeling. Some young adults had the sensation of being back home. For others, pleasant memories of past visits flashed through their minds as they breathed the holy air. At no other place can one feel so much peace, harmony, and love. Slowly, the relaxed feeling of arriving in Parthi gave way to the hectic schedule of the World Youth Conference.

The conference began with a grand inauguration. For many, this was their first glimpse of our beloved Swami. A large procession showcased all the countries represented. It was incredible to see devotees of so many different nationalities, ethnicities, and faiths, united to hear Swami's message to young adults.

Daily Routine The WYC daily routine was intense. Many young adults would wake up around 4 a.m. Most rooms were filled with six people, so getting ready in a short time was a necessity. As everyone scrambled to line up for darshan, the air would heat up quickly. Soon mats and pillows became a staple for darshan, to help alleviate the pain of sore tailbones and knees. Sitting in darshan could last a couple of hours, and the heat made it feel doubly long, but this was

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a small price to pay when we saw Swami. Swami was kind to us by providing us free lunches and dinners, and by handpicking all the details for the meals. Every day we were also blessed with *prasad* (blessed food distributed during darshan).

If we weren't in darshan or planned workshops, we were busy running around for practices. With hopes that we would be blessed to perform in front of Swami, we practiced every day, making sure we were ready to play. Pleasing Swami led to many questions. What if Swami wanted us to sing additional bhajans? Questions like this would then lead to more practices! The energy from the practices and the hope of performing in front of Swami caused many young adults to skip sleep and meals. Many would be up until 3 or 4 a.m., only to go to sleep and wake up an hour or two later for darshan.

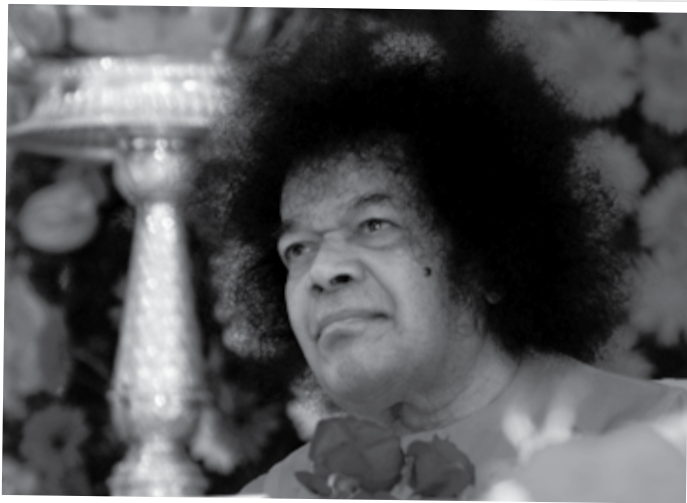
Finding time to unwind was critical, and the local food stands served as a way to escape the rush of the day. What better way to experience India, than eating samosas

and guzzling down coconut water! It gave us time to reflect and enjoy the sprinkles of the summer rain falling down on us.

Exhibitions Two exhibitions were in progress. The Prema Jyothi exhibition was organized by Swami's students, while the international exhibition was set up by young adults from around the world.

The Prema Jyothi exhibition was an eye-opener. All of Swami's messages to the youth were on display. It was as if the answers to your questions were right in front of you as you walked around. After seeing all the effort put into the exhibition, many young adults felt like they needed to be an example of a Swami student. The message of doing service from the heart and the heart only was conveyed clearly. We constantly felt the message of Swami's immeasurable love for all beings.

The international exhibition was a marvel in itself. Combining the exhibits from all around the world took a lot of work, and the result was fantastic. Many young adults sacrificed sleep and even darshans to make



sure everything went smoothly. The exhibition really displayed our dedication and motivation to please Swami. It was the fruition of countless hours of preparation that had started months ago.

Programs Swami planned a special treat for us sports fans, a basketball game between India and Sri Lanka. While the male dance team was a strange sight, the sound of a basketball hitting the hardwood was pleasing and familiar. Who won? Bharat (India)!

Cultural programs provided an opportunity to view the diverse talents of young adults from around the world. Days of practice would lead only to more anxiety. Would Swami allow us to sing in front of him? Please, Swami, let us play in front of you! Many of us did not get a chance to perform in front of Swami, but we were entertained by programs from around the world. The programs were varied—and everyone's love for Swami was evident. A few boys from our group got to sing in front of Swami. Some girls got to sing bhajans in front of Swami as well. Singing in front of Swami was liberating. Being able to sing in a group brought a feeling of oneness among all of us.

Discourses Swami gives us opportunities to perform and sing in front of him, not for his pleasure but for our own. But when Swami speaks, all our thoughts of "I," "me," and "we" vanish. Gone are worries such as, "What key is that song in?" "Do we need to practice that bhajan again?" or "Will we have to set up that exhibit?" Instead, we realize the true purpose of being in Swami's presence: Swami, himself! To think of the

lifetimes we have spent for this moment, to hear the sweet words of the Lord in person!

Swami spoke of the true love relationship in life, which is between you and God. All other relationships are of no importance. Swami energized the youth, proclaiming that he will walk again because of the youth's love! Swami also materialized a lingam for all to see. How blessed we are! Please, Swami, always remind us of you!

Leaving Leaving Parthi brought a wide range of emotions. Some young adults were filled with sorrow at having to leave their newly-adopted home. Others were relieved to finally be going home after months of travel. But most returned with newfound energy and the start of a new chapter in life. Swami showered so much love on all the young adults; now we have a responsibility to spread Swami's love and follow his teachings, not just for ourselves but for all of mankind. No matter where we are, we will always follow you, Bhagavan, and pray to be instruments in your hands.

Swami showered so much love on all the young adults; now we have a responsibility to spread Swami's love and follow his teachings, not just for ourselves but for all of mankind.

—Region 10 YAs

No Other Number Except “One”

The honor of attending Bhagavan’s World Youth Conference has filled the heart of every youth with a lifetime of gratitude. Bhagavan’s love is all-encompassing; it reaches across every expanse of time and space into the deepest recesses of our hearts. Bhagavan is the Mother who listens to more than what we say—she knows all that we can never express in words. A few months ago, I had a dream of Bhagavan, in which I sat close beside him and started to apply pink nail polish to his left toenail. Even within the dream, my mind questioned this feminine adornment, and Bhagavan gently touched my head to explain, “See, I am Father and Mother.”

This Mother’s care was applied to our well-being throughout our stay in Puttaparthi, which included the three days of the World Youth Conference. From the grand processional entry into Sai Kulwant Hall on the first day of the conference, to the saris presented to us completely ready to wear, to the water so lovingly distributed to us in Sai Kulwant Hall as we waited hours on end for Bhagavan’s darshan, to the generous and delicious food provided for us from Bhagavan’s carefully designed menus; each and every act of loving care was that of a divine mother welcoming her child home and into her arms.

To answer this call of our beloved mother, youth from around the globe spent months transforming themselves into ideal

Sai youth—messengers of love. And yet, it was only when we arrived at his lotus feet in late July that we realized that Bhagavan had been preparing us for lifetimes for this golden opportunity to be with him.

Like excited children, one of our token offerings to Bhagavan was an international youth exhibition, displaying the achievements and ideals of youth from around the world. Another such offering was an international bhajan group. Thinking that singing in his presence might lead to an incredible darshan, I immediately resolved to join the bhajan group. It soon became apparent, however, that the group already had enough members. So, a little disheartened, I joined the exhibition group. This group worked throughout the day and into the night to construct an example of global unity and love for Bhagavan. Joining hands with them taught me two very simple lessons: first, Bhagavan will always guide us to be in the exact place where we need to be, and second, Bhagavan sees everyone, whether we are before him and performing, or working out of sight.

It happened that, in working on the exhibition, many of us, including me, did not see our Bhagavan for two-and-a-half days before the conference. Looking back now, I begin to giggle at the work Bhagavan had us doing. Being without a proper vacuum cleaner, we used scotch tape to clean off the carpets inch by inch. The hall was

mostly decorated with fresh flowers, so we became gardeners, caring for each and every flower. What a way to declare to our beloved Bhagavan, “Whatever you want us to be, we will become! Guide us, and we shall follow.”

I remember with particular fondness that first morning waiting for him. Having worked continuously from the evening before, we arrived back at our rooms in the early morning, foregoing any sleep, then quickly washed and dressed in new saris. Returning again to the exhibition hall, we took up brooms and cleaned the roads upon which Bhagavan’s car would arrive. With each brush of my broom, I thought to myself, let me clean my heart as I clean this road, to prepare both for Bhagavan’s arrival.

Two-and-a-half-days of separation from seeing Bhagavan in Puttaparthi felt like two-and-a-half lifetimes. Then, when we finally arrived in Sai Kulwant Hall and were seated, we noted to our great misery that our vision of him was completely blocked by a pillar. This would later become known as “pillar darshan”—an experience that regularly happened to one youth or another. Thoughts of Prahlada and Lord Narasimha breaking through the pillar crossed our minds, but we closed our eyes, seeking Bhagavan within, even as tear after tear slipped down our cheeks.

I knew by then that if everything happens for a reason, then this hiding from our sight was also a doing of our beloved Lord. What happens when that which you want most is kept away from you? Your intensity grows, like water slowly arriving at

boiling point. A look from Bhagavan was all we needed, for there was no wanting food and no sleep without him! Sitting behind the pillar, I reminisced then about my first sight of Bhagavan in December, 2003. My diary from that day reads:

I am still dumb-struck where I sit, Your presence washing over me in waves. This vision of You is trickling into me like rain, humming inside me, and I realize that I had forgotten what it feels like ... hadn't known how dried out I was until now.

I feel like a plant that is naturally turning itself toward light, like a compass needle adjusting toward true north, and this feeling is familiar. I have known this before.

I breathe in, something in me threatening to burst. Sai Kulwant Hall around me is slipping away softly, until nothing remains but the hypnotizing depths of your eyes and, over the rushing of blood in my ears, the calming sensation of having arrived somewhere ... knowing this to be that single most ecstatic peak of my existence ...

The second day of the conference, these eyes found Bhagavan’s most enchanting form. The words in the diary came alive again,

We cannot put off our transformation, and we cannot move slowly—we must run, for our Mother has come, and she is waiting to receive us in her arms.

as I sat, transfixed, only a few feet away from him, and his eyes locked with mine. I could scarcely breathe, as all movement stopped within and around me. Then, all of a sudden, I sneezed, but even as I did so, I tried my hardest to keep my eyes locked with his.

As messengers
of love, we have
received the
message of love at
his lotus feet, and
now we must carry
it in our hearts
to be shared with
every other beating
heart.

Throughout the conference, it became a cliché to tell a fellow youth that you were feeling unwell or had flu-like symptoms—we all had those symptoms! So much so, that Bhagavan announced in his concluding discourse that we would all return home “happy and healthy!” I remember it now and think what fortunate children of God we are.

As I continued sitting before Bhagavan, with his eyes intently gazing into me, I was no longer aware of that kindergarten lesson about wiping my mouth after a sneeze. So, Bhagavan took the opportunity to show me. Keeping his eyes on me, he picked up his own white handkerchief and carefully wiped his mouth. Intuitively knowing that this was for me, I blindly reached for the edge of my sari and mimicked his actions. Giving me a slow and full smile, his eyes twinkled momentarily with merriment. How grateful I am to our beloved and mischievous Bhagavan, who creates these small moments in order to

interact with us. Any ordinary person can organize a conference for thousands, but only the Avatar can invite thousands to his lotus feet and allow each youth a one-on-one interaction with him!

Sitting among thousands of youths, we could not remember any other number except One. Everything exuded an incredible sense of unity. One of the speakers joked that we must all become one—and that we had already achieved it, for with the tight seating arrangement in the darshan hall, we had been squeezed into one organic, loving mass of youth. One pulse rang through us all, and it was beautiful to experience what Bhagavan had done with us. Strangers from all over the world were called to one place, awarded the honor of one name, “Sai Youth,” clothed as one, fed as one, and seated as one—until we marched as an army of one, to the rhythm of our one love for Bhagavan.

Bhagavan’s concluding discourse was more than a personal interview; it was a loving talk like a mother gives to her children as they leave home to make their way in the world. Bhagavan took care to mention that we must not overexert ourselves, that we must eat and rest properly, and know that he is always with us, and that he and we are One. We arrived with our hearts as empty bags, and we were returning overfilled with love and grace.

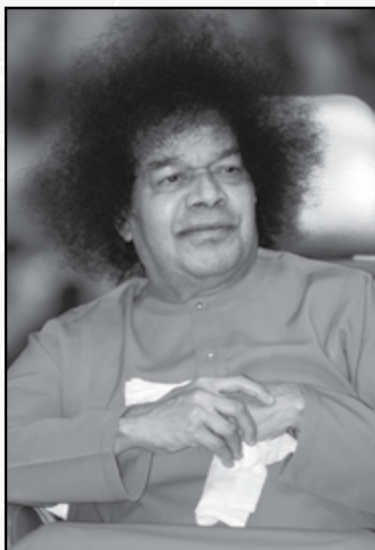
A singular understanding has become clear to me. There have been so many lifetimes, those in the past, and more in the future. In perhaps each one, we have slept and eaten, worked and studied,

desired much, and attained more than we deserved. But this lifetime—this lifetime can be only about Bhagavan. We cannot put off our transformation, and we cannot move slowly—we must run, for our Mother has come, and she is waiting to receive us in her arms. How can we let this opportunity, every moment of every day, pass, without knowing this, without reaching for Bhagavan even more? Each day must contain more yearning than the last, each hour must include more surrender than the last, and each moment must resonate with more love than the last.

As we all returned to our individual lives, in all the different corners of the world, we felt as if awakened from a dream. Having no more vacation hours left, I had taken all my sick leave from work to attend the conference. Though I felt the strong vibrations of Bhagavan's love in my heart, I also felt the anguish of realizing that my bad habits—and my not-so-ideal thoughts and words—were still with me. How could they still remain within me, after all those beautiful moments with Bhagavan?

The answer was simple—it came as a gift, actually. On the first day back to my office, a large bouquet of pink and yellow flowers greeted me from atop my desk. The card very simply read, "Get Better!—Every One." My entire office had pitched in to buy

the flowers due to my "sick" leave. I started laughing as I realized that "Every One" was written as two words! Who was the One in every one? Bhagavan, of course! And his message was simple: *Practice what I have taught you and "get better!"*

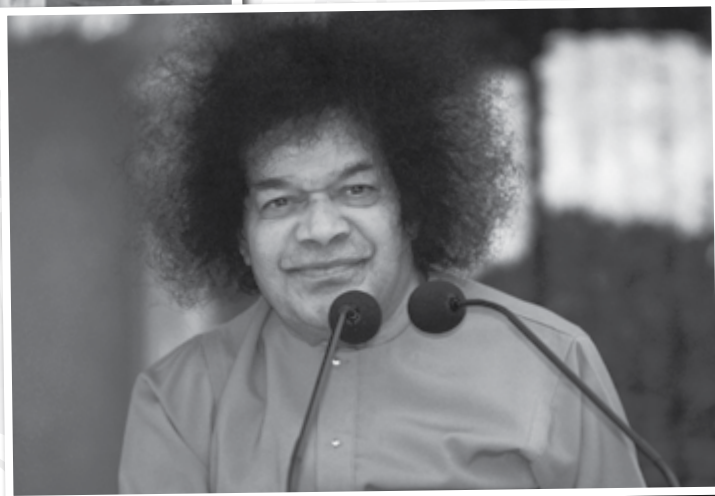


Life is a set of circumstances that easily changes; when Bhagavan sets change in motion, it is but for the greater good of transforming the individual. We had all returned to the same lives, but with the promise of a transformed way of living. I thanked my office mates, joyful inside at the courage that only Bhagavan can provide for overcoming our bad habits ("our sickness"), and told them that I might need to take another trip next year

for a "reassessment" of my health!

Young adults are important, only because Bhagavan has given them importance. Otherwise, there is nothing special about us. In the name "Sai Youth," only the adding of "Sai" before "Youth" makes the name so magnificent and powerful. So, with this truth in mind, we must begin the journey that started after the World Youth Conference. As messengers of love, we have received the message of love at his lotus feet, and now we must carry it in our hearts to be shared with every other beating heart.

—Ira Kumar
Austin, Texas



VALEDICTORY DISCOURSE

SRI SATHYA SAI WORLD YOUTH CONFERENCE 2007

Always Be Happy and Peaceful

*All of creation emerges from truth and merges into truth.
Is there a place in the cosmos where truth does not exist?
Visualize this pure and unsullied truth. (TELUGU POEM)*

Every living being in this world, from ant to insect, bird, beast, and animal, has emerged from truth only! Those who realize this truth are real yogis. Devoid of truth, nothing will move in this universe, and that supreme truth is embodied only in one person. He is truth (*sathyam*). (Here Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba materialized a *lingam*—an ovoid object—and showed it to all.) Who else can manifest such pure consciousness? Truth is omnipresent. When you think of this and contemplate on it, it can manifest in you also. Hence, constantly contemplate on truth.

Why was this body named Sathya Sai? Truth alone manifests from this Sai. Whoever contemplates on truth, then truth is present in the heart of that person; hence, one should never forget truth. *Dharma* (righteousness) is the reaction, reflection, and resound of *sathyam* (truth). In fact, there is no dharma greater than adherence to truth (*Sathyannasti paro dharma*)."

Today, we are teaching various branches of knowledge in secular education, but this

is not true education. True education relates to the truth that emerges out of one's heart. It has no name and form. What could be the form of truth? What is the form of dharma? What is the form of peace (*shanti*)? Truth, righteousness, peace, love and nonviolence (*sathya, dharma, shanti, prema, and ahimsa*) are all formless. One has to manifest these human values from out of one's heart. If one cannot find divine energy in a human being, one will not find it in any other living being either. In other words, a human being is verily God. He is God in human form.

You all consider a human being as a "mere human being." That is the reason why you are committing so many mistakes. You are not merely a human being! You are God, verily. Think that you are God, and you will become God. "As are the feelings, so is the result. (*Yad bhavam tad bhavati*)."

When you think of bad, you will get only bad thoughts.

All people in this world love someone or another. However, there are differences in such love. Students love their fellow

students. Ladies love other ladies. God is present in this lady as well as the other lady; both are embodiments of divinity. The one God is present in all bodies. We must love every human being. Love all, serve all—since God is present in all human beings. There is no place in this universe where God is not present. God is present in the sky, in the water, in the sound, and in the light. Thus, everything in this universe is the embodiment of divinity.

● We forsake this omnipresent divinity and worship God in the form of some idol in a temple. No doubt, you can worship those idols; there is nothing wrong in that. But you must realize the truth, that the same God in that idol is present in every human being, nay, in every living being. I don't say it is wrong to worship those idols. But you yourself are God. Consider yourself as God first, and then begin to see the same God in every living being.

Your body is a temple. There is divine energy in that temple. However, a little discrimination must be exercised in this context. You have to inquire whether this energy is God. In fact, the body is also God. God is immanent in every atom and in every cell of the human body. There is no place in this universe where God is not present, so do not entertain any doubt about the existence of God. Do not forget God. In fact, if you forget yourself, it amounts to forgetting God. Hence, do not forget yourself. It is for this reason that one is advised to “always be careful.”

You must constantly inquire of yourself, “Am I forgetting God?” You must always be

aware of your true nature; remind yourself, “I am I.” If you are firmly established in that truth, there will be no scope at all to entertain any evil thoughts about others. Not realizing their own true nature, fools and ignoramuses think otherwise, but God is present in all human beings. All the heads of all the human beings in this world are God's own heads, verily. That is why God is described as the embodiment of cosmic divinity (*virata swarupa*). His is the cosmic form.

Each one in that cosmic form has a different form, and God is immanent in every form. Krishna declared in the Bhagavad Gita, “The eternal Atma in all beings is a part of my being. (*Mamaivamsho jivaloke jivabhuta sanathana*.)” I alone am present in each one of you. You are not different from me. Do not entertain any doubts or differences of opinion in this regard.

Strengthen your love; that is the proper spiritual practice. If only the fruit of love in your heart becomes ripe, the juice of that fruit can be shared with one and all. Hence, let that fruit of love ripen in your heart first. If you fill your heart only with pure love, that love can be shared with all. All people then will become embodiments of love. Then there will be no scope at all for hatred and violence in the world.

Today, wherever you look, you will find hatred and differences of opinion. In fact, these are not differences in the real sense. There may appear to be differences in secular life, but from the spiritual angle, all are one. Strictly speaking, all are zeroes, and only God is the hero. He alone is one. All others are zeroes next to him. He is the sole reason

that they acquire value. Remove that one, and all will be reduced to mere zeroes. Hence, God is the only important entity in our life.

The mind alone is responsible for all the sorrows and difficulties, as well as the happiness, of human beings. Some people consider the mind as very bad and call it “monkey mind.” In my view, it is not monkey mind; it is mankind—always kind. The mind gives you joy and happiness; it is again the mind that causes you worry and sorrow. If only you can keep the mind in the proper state, nothing can be bad. Consider the mind also as divine; then you will always be happy.

The Atma is the embodiment of eternal bliss, wisdom absolute, beyond the pairs of opposites, expansive and pervasive like the sky, the goal indicated by the great statement:

Thou art That: one without a second, eternal, pure, unchanging, witness of all functions of the intellect, beyond all mental conditions, and beyond the three attributes of purity (*sattwas*), passion (*rajas*), and inertia (*tamas*). (“*Tat Twam Asi: nityanandam, parama sukhadam, kevalam jnanamurtrim, dwand-wateetam, gagana sadrisham, tattwamasyadi lakshyam, ekam, nityam, vimalam, achalam, sarvadhee sakshibhutam, bhava-teetam, triguna-rahitam.*”)

Call it Atma, mind, or consciousness—all are one. We ascribe different names to the same principle, according to our convenience and reference. For example, this body has been given the name Sathya. This name is given to the body and not to me. I am not the body. I am not the mind. I am

not the intellect. I am not the *chitta* (memory and determinative faculty). I am not imagination. Bhagavan is Bhagavan. You must develop such firm faith. It is possible that the minds of some people are susceptible to some disturbances due to variations in food habits and recreation. It is also possible that they may be influenced by their friends in this

regard. Frequently, I repeat the saying, “Tell me your company; I shall tell you what you are.” Hence, I advise you to join the company of noble souls.

Good company leads to detachment; detachment leads to freedom from delusion; freedom from delusion leads to steadiness of mind; steadiness of mind confers liberation. (*Satsangatwe nissangatwam, nissangatwe nirmohatwam, nirmohatwe nischalatattwam, nischalatattwe jivanmukti.*) (SANSKRIT VERSE)

Everyone can attain liberation (*mukti*), but when? The moment you establish yourself in the truth, “I am Atma,” you will attain liberation. Always think, “Swami is in me;



Good company leads to
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I am in Swami.” However, there will be no use if you simply repeat, “I am Swami; I am Swami,” with a fickle mind. Develop firm faith: “I am Swami; I am God; I am God.” Only when you develop that firm conviction, will you attain divinity, which is attributeless, unsullied, the final abode, eternal, pure, enlightened, free, and the embodiment of sacredness (*nirgunam, niranjanam, sanathana niketanam, nitya, shuddha, buddha, mukta, nirmala swarupinam*). On the other hand, if your mind is polluted with bad thoughts, everything will turn out to be bad for you. Nowadays, even water is polluted. The human body will be afflicted with diseases on account of this water pollution. It is therefore necessary that the physical body also be protected to a certain extent.

For what purpose do you think this body has been gifted to you by God? It is for realizing your own Self. But you forget this purpose and concentrate your mind on the physical body. What is there in the physical body? The body is like a water bubble. The mind is like a mad monkey. Don't follow the body. Don't follow the mind. Follow the conscience. If only you can learn this simple principle, your life will be sanctified.

You need not pay heed to whatever people may say. Purity of consciousness is the fruition of knowledge. Only when your consciousness is pure, will you attain wisdom. Purity of the mind is of utmost importance. Keep your mind pure, free from all kinds of pollution. Whenever evil thoughts enter your mind, remind yourself, “This is not good; this is not mine, not mine,”

and drive away those evil thoughts. Tell yourself, “These are not my property; my property is only good thoughts and good ideas.” Constantly remember the truth, that love is God. Live in love. If you can cultivate such positive and noble thoughts, everything will turn out to be good for you.

Various people here are deluded by ephemeral things. No doubt you are pure at heart, you have only pure thoughts, but a certain amount of pollution sets in now and then. You must insure that this does not happen. That is the sadhana for you. What is sadhana? Is it sitting in meditation and repeating the divine names? No. This is not spiritual practice. What do you think is the meaning of meditation? You think it is sitting in a lonely place and contemplating on the Lord's name. Not at all! Contemplate upon the pure thoughts in your mind. Contemplate on the truth in you.

If you really wish to know the secret of sadhana, it can be explained through very simple methods. For example, make your mind steady and still for as short a period as eleven seconds! You can attain realization even in such a brief period. Realization cannot be achieved by becoming restless like a clock. Just eleven seconds of stillness of mind would be enough. But you don't do even that. You can achieve a lot during such a period.

Hence, do not trouble yourself unnecessarily. You are at present putting your body to a lot of trouble. You are wasting a lot of money too. Time waste is life waste. Money waste is an evil. Therefore, do not waste money and time. Time is God, and

God is time. Hence, whenever you find time, think of Swami. I will certainly appear before you. Not only that, I will even talk to you. I have received several letters from people saying that Swami has appeared before them and talked to them. You can also do such sadhana. Develop unflinching faith in Swami. You will surely succeed in your spiritual practice.

Various people have come here as devotees. They have, no doubt, deep devotion towards Swami, but what is devotion? What is the hallmark of a devotee? This has to be analyzed. First and foremost, you have to develop faith: Where there is faith, is love; where there is love, is truth; where there is truth, is God. Truth is God. You need not make any special efforts to know truth; in fact, eleven seconds are enough to realize truth. Just contemplate on truth in your mind for a period of eleven seconds, and you will be able to have God's darshan.

You are unnecessarily taxing your body by sitting for hours on end in meditation. Afterward, you suffer from backache and pain in the legs and hands. Do not give scope for such painful joints. You ultimately land in a doctor's clinic, where your trouble gets diagnosed as rheumatic pains. These are not rheumatic pains at all; they are the result of misguided sadhana. Stick to the time sched-

ule of eleven seconds, and you will have no pain. In addition, you should also have timely food (on a regular schedule).

With regard to food, you have to know certain subtle things and observe some restrictions. You should not consume nonvegetarian food like meat and fish. In fact, foreigners are used to nonvegetarian food only. This type of food causes diseases like cancer. Hence, give up such food, totally. Not only that, they also like cheese very much. The more you consume cheese, the weaker you become. You also should not take milk in excessive quantity. Too much milk is very bad; its intake should be

limited. Milk should be diluted with water in equal proportion; the same applies to curds. Curds (cheese) should not be thick; they should be semi-solid. Thus, you have to control the food you eat daily. Eating proper food at the proper time is very much necessary for contemplating on God. If you thus take proper food and observe discipline in your habits, you are sure to have God's darshan at that very moment. You need not undertake rigorous sadhana for months and years. You can always be blissful. Bliss is the form of God.

You desire to have bliss. But where do you get bliss? From a shop in the market? Or from eating a sumptuous meal with a variety



Constantly remember the truth, that love is God. Live in love. If you can cultivate such positive and noble thoughts, everything will turn out good for you.

of dishes in a hotel? No, not at all! Bliss has to come from within. You are, in fact, the embodiment of bliss. You were blissful at the time of your birth, but once you started developing attachment in the world, you began crying. Therefore, you have to reduce your worldly attachments. You at present have a lot of attachment to the world, and you are weakening your body by it. Ultimately, you will end up in sorrow.

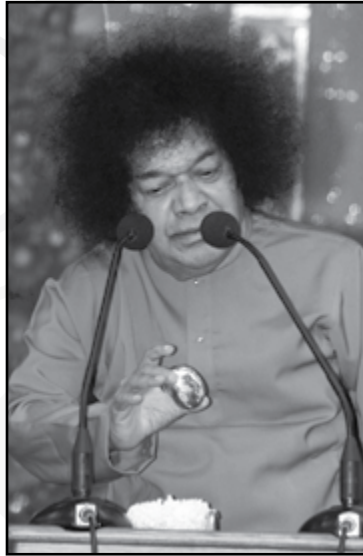
Worry is a very bad quality. Hurry, worry, and curry—these three together make the heart very weak. Hence, keep them at a distance. Whenever you are in difficulties, just assure yourself that these are passing clouds and will move away, and therefore you should not be worried. Whatever comes has to go. Conditions are momentary, as is the human body. Hence, give importance to the body, only to the extent required. The body has to be maintained within proper limits; otherwise, it will decay, so you have to be very careful. Those who are engaged in spiritual practice and wish to have the sight, touch, and conversation (*darshan, sparshan, and sambhashan*) of God must follow my advice in this regard. Then you are sure to have his darshan and can even talk to him.

Devotion does not mean merely performing certain forms of worship, undertaking religious vows, or doing

japa (mantra repetition). Real devotion presupposes unshakeable love toward God, devoid of delusion. You have to cultivate such steadfast love toward God; then you will certainly attain divinity. Since people are at present attached to the world, demonic qualities are growing in them. Desire (*kama*) and anger (*krodha*) are a human being's worst enemies. You must always be happy, smiling, and loving. When you are smiling, love will automatically develop in you.

There are, of course, some people who will put on a "castor oil" face, but you must always be smiling and cheerful. God is always blissful. He does not worry at all about anything. Sorrow and worry are nowhere near God. Observe me; I am always cheerful and smiling. I have no pain or suffering. I am revealing the truth.

Sometime ago, I sustained an injury to my leg due to a mistake committed by the students. My hip bone suffered four cracks. The doctors examined me and decided to put my leg in a bandage. I refused. I walked to the balcony and gave darshan to the devotees. Even now, one of my legs is shorter by two inches. Several doctors, including Dr. Pillay and his son from Singapore, came and wanted to examine me. They are specialists in orthopedics. Also, several experts from America and other places came. They prayed,



“Swami! Please spare just five minutes to us to examine your leg.” I told them, “I will give you five hours for a spiritual purpose, if you wish. But I don’t give this body even five minutes for a clinical examination.”

Even now, the students hold my body as I walk. I shout at them, saying,

“I will not go, if you follow me.” Thus, I give strict instructions to the students accompanying me. I am able to manage myself. I have no pain or suffering in the least. I can walk in the normal way. I do not stumble while walking and can keep my normal pace. I have maintained the same body weight for many years. My body weight then was 110

pounds; there has been neither an increase nor a decrease in the body weight, not even half a pound.

I am always hale and healthy. No one need worry about my health. I will always be happy. When you look at Swami from an external point of view, you will think that Swami is perhaps suffering from severe pain. Not at all! I have no pain, whatsoever. Even if there is some pain, your love for Swami will remove that pain. It is enough if I look at you; all my pain is gone! I will be happy and cheerful. My pain, if at all there is some, must be removed by your love for Swami and not by the doctors. What could be the reason for people in such large numbers gathering here

today? What does it connote? I am extremely happy that I am able to win the love of so many people. You also should be happy, wherever you are. I am always happy.

I am extremely happy to see you all here. This is your good fortune. This time,

people have all come here with intense love and devotion. That makes me very happy and cheerful. I am very eager to come to the Sai Kulwant Hall by walking from tomorrow to give you darshan. There is no medicine more efficacious than love. Your love is my medicine, the most powerful medicine. Equally, my love is a powerful medicine to all of you.



*Real devotion presupposes
unshakeable love toward God,
devoid of delusion. You have
to cultivate such steadfast
love toward God; then you will
certainly attain divinity.*

Always be happy and peaceful. Live like members of the same family, with love and affection. Do not be weighed down by petty difficulties and suffering. Do not give scope to any worry. Even if your wife or children suffer from disease, do not get perturbed. Go back to your places with firm faith that everything will turn out to be good. Lead a happy and peaceful life. (Swami, at this point held up the lingam he had created earlier and inquired,) Did you see this lingam? It is heavy. A much bigger lingam will emerge from Swami’s mouth, come Shivaratri.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba
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