

Sathya Sai Newsletter, USA

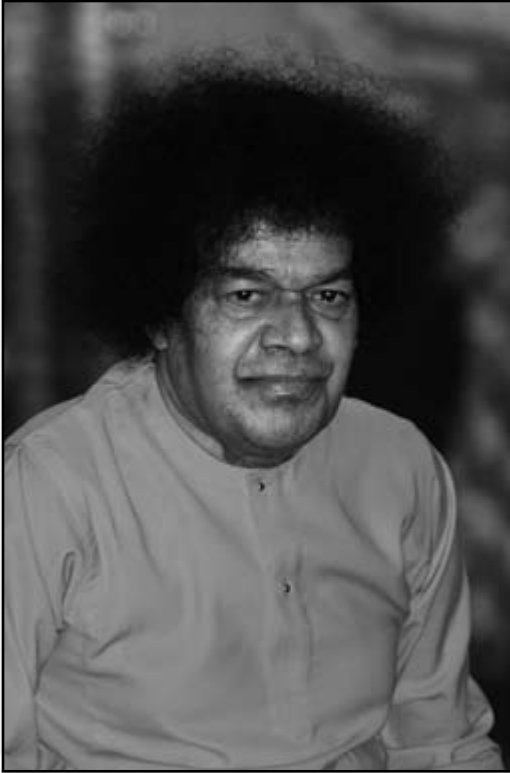
Dedicated with Love and Devotion to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Stories of the Lord

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SAI'S MESSAGE



Stories of the Lord

Depending upon the ailment, some medicines are prescribed for external application, while others are recommended for internal use. But for the universal ailment of being caught in the cycle of birth and death, hearing the stories of the Lord, singing the name and glories of God, and other medicines are prescribed, for external and internal use. One must utter, as well as hear, the Lord's name. (Prema Vahini, ch.12, p. 33)

The name Bhagavatha (Bhagavan + bhaktha: Lord and devotee) can be applied to every account of the experiences of those who have contacted God and the godly. God assumes many forms and enacts many activities. The name Bhagavatha applies to the descriptions of the experiences of those who have realized God in his many forms, and of those who have been blessed by his grace and chosen as his instruments. (Bhagavatha Vahini, ch. 1, p. 1)

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Effects of Hearing the Stories of the Lord

An aspirant might win God's grace, the guru's grace, and the grace of the devotees of the Lord. But all this grace will be of no avail if he does not secure yet another grace—the grace of his own inner consciousness. Without this grace, he falls into perdition, for all the rest will be of no account whatsoever.

The grace of God is not easily attainable. The feeling of [a separate] “I”-ness, which makes one say “I am the doer,” must be plucked by its roots from one's heart. Everyone, be he learned or illiterate, should feel an overwhelming urge to know God.

God has equal affection toward all his children: to illumine is the nature of light. Utilizing that illumination, some might read good books and others might do their daily tasks, whatever they are.

So, too, while uttering God's name, one person may progress in the realization of God, and another may even do wicked deeds! It all depends on how one uses the light. But the Lord's name is always and forever without blemish. (*Prema Vahini*, ch.12, pp. 33-34)

Sravaṇa

First among the nine forms of devotion is *sravana* (hearing, listening to the names

and stories of the Lord) ... *Sravaṇa*—those occasions of hearing the voice of God, hearing about God—represent important events in one's life, for they are events that transform the individual.

Arjuna “heard” the Bhagavad Gita and Parikshit “listened to” the Bhagavatha; both were liberated from bondage thereby. In the epic of the Mahabharatha, Karna (meaning the ear!) is the most outstanding character; the text is known as *Karna-rasayana* (sweet medicine to be heard and assimilated into one's life). Sound and the *Pranava* (*Om*) are important keys to bliss. The Vedas are to be heard and recited. They are *shruti* (“that which is or has been heard”)—heard, in moments of supra-conscious ecstasy, by purified scholars doing spiritual practice.

Listening to Bhagavatha, stories of the Lord, leads to the constant remembrance of the Lord and detachment from the ties of the objective world.

The Robber Who Casually Overheard

There once was a famous robber who advised his son while initiating him into the ancestral profession, “Never for a moment listen to stories of the Lord! Do not linger to listen to any Puranas (mythological

stories) or any reading of the Bhagavatha, such as tales of the incarnations of Vishnu,” he exhorted his young aspirant. The son observed this injunction scrupulously for years and amassed a good fortune.

One night, however, while running with his loot on his shoulder through a side street of the city to avoid the police, a piece of glass cut the sole of his foot; he sat for a while to pull it out and stop the flow of blood. He was at that time behind a house where someone was reading and explaining the Bhagavatha to a small group of listeners; he listened perforce for a short two minutes.

The spark had fallen on the heap of cotton! During that short period, he heard the pundit explaining the nature of God as having no ears, no eyes, no limbs—that God has a thousand forms and is without form—“with hands and feet everywhere,” as the Gita says. The description took root firmly in the robber’s heart. He could not shake it.

A few days later, the police came to know of his exploits and those of his associates and kinsmen. In order to learn more about the gang’s activities, they entered the area incognito, with one constable disguised as

the Goddess Kali, and others as worshippers and priests. They shouted and yelled, cursed and terrified the thieves, calling upon them to come out of their homes and fall at the feet of Kali.

Many did so, but the son who had heard the Bhagavatha, albeit for only two minutes, knew just enough to save his skin. He was not terrified at all. He challenged the constable who was acting the role of Kali, tore off his disguise, exposed the plot, and instilled courage into the hearts of the other members of the gang.

Then, after the police left, discomfited, he argued within himself thus: “If two minutes of the forbidden fruit could help me so much, what could I not gain if I devote myself entirely to the stories of the glories of God?” He left off the evil path and became a *sadhaka* (spiritual practitioner).

The grace of God descends upon the eager sadhaka who listens attentively to the story of that grace... . (*Sathya Sai Speaks* [SSS] 4:21 July 29, 1964, “The Guru Is the Guide”)

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

When you listen to my story, you forget the story of the world and live only in my story—until there is no separate story for you to relate or live. To make you story-less is the scheme of my story.

—Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

SSS 2:17, Oct. 20, 1961, “Experience Unity”

How Swami U-Turned My Life

Mr. Robert A. Bozzani was a successful U.S. businessman when he traveled to Baba for the first time in the early 1970s at age 45. For the 35 years since then, he has visited Puttaparthi at least once a year and has been an active instrument in Bhagavan's divine mission. Currently, he serves as a trustee of the Sathya Sai Book Center of America, Tustin, California.

GOD DRAWS PEOPLE TO HIMSELF IN MYRIAD WAYS,

and every traveler bound to the divine pilgrimage has a different and interesting tale of how he was first drawn to the Lord. So too is

my story. My spiritual questioning began when I was a boy of 12, studying in a public school in Pasadena, California. My mother, influenced by counsel and pressure from her friends, decided to switch me over to a church-based school. Three weeks into this school, I encountered something that sowed the seeds for a transformation later. At the church school, our teachers told us, "There is one thing we must tell you: God will not like it if you go to another church. If you do so, you will be doomed to perdition."

THREE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

I did not feel comfortable with that statement. Instead, three questions raised themselves to my mind: (1) If there is a God, shouldn't he be there for everybody? (2) If he has manifested as Jesus Christ, does that mean that he has not manifested earlier, or will not manifest hereafter? (3) Shouldn't there be more to this universe than what I can think of? This thought had stirred the depths of my consciousness every time I

looked up at the night sky, even as a young boy, and saw all the beautiful stars twinkling and shimmering in the heavens.

I stopped going to the church school, yet unknown to myself, the seeds for a spiritual journey had been planted. Then it must have been essential that I lose my way in the labyrinths of worldly goals, for only then would the urge strengthen in me, someday, to look for spiritual bliss and peace.

Thus, I took to the path of the temporal and the mundane, because my path, being born in America, was to seek happiness in a materialistic way. So I carried on—full barge, as one would say—finished school, and later became a flourishing businessman. Then I got married and even had wonderful children.

I had, in fact, everything that was supposed to make a person happy; I could not have asked for more. But at age 45, I was so unhappy inside that I didn't want to be around any more. This feeling was, in fact, deeper than that. I thought that life was useless, and that nobody could feel or know how I felt about it—absolutely nobody, not even my wife, family, or mother. I was trying to find happiness in the pursuit of the great American dream, but still I felt that

**Bhagavan talks to each one of us,
heart to heart. If we know this, we will
be sure to get a message from him ...**

despite “having everything,” I had nothing but inner emptiness.

HATHA YOGA: THE BAIT IS SET

Around this time, unbeknownst to me, Bhagavan began to draw me toward himself. This happened in the early 1970s, through my wife, who developed an interest in hatha yoga. Keen in her intent of pursuing this ancient form of exercise, with its spiritual roots, she got in touch with Indra Devi, a leading yoga practitioner in the West, who was an ardent follower of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. My wife went twice to Indra Devi’s establishment in Tecate, Mexico, supposedly to learn hatha yoga, but while she was there with Indra Devi, they apparently spent a lot of time talking about Sai Baba.

When my wife returned to California, she told me that she had learned about Sri Sathya Sai Baba and would like to go India sometime. Reluctant and unconvinced, I dropped it at that. But my wife wanted to go the following year, and toward the end of 1973, about December, she made a statement that was so unlike her. She said, “I am going to go to India, whether you come or not.” I did not say no entirely to the idea of Sai Baba, because, fortunately, we had had an open-minded upbringing. So, I said, “Well, I guess I am going.”

HE APPEARED IN PERSON

Something very significant happened in this same month of December 1973. Actually, I was deeply depressed at this point, and one night Sathya Sai Baba appeared to me—not in a dream, but in person. I woke up in the middle of the night on December 9, and there was Sri Sathya Sai Baba standing at the end of our bed! He was clothed in a white robe, and with a raised hand, as if blessing and comforting me, he said, *Don’t worry, everything will be all right.*

The unique thing about this experience was that Swami spoke to me in the voice of my physical father, who had passed away the year before! I remember saying, “How are you, Father?” Swami again answered in my father’s voice. He sweetly said, *I am fine but working very hard.* I found out some years later that Shirdi Baba often spoke to newcomers in a voice they would recognize, to help them feel comfortable.

That momentous visit did not stop at just speaking. Next, Baba took me out of my body; I remember looking down on the bed where my wife and I were sleeping. It was such a unique experience. He then put me back into my body and said again, *Don’t worry, everything will be all right.* After this, Swami left. It wasn’t until a year later that I understood the message that Swami wanted to give me that night: “We are not the body.”

So, filled with such experiences, we arrived in February 1974 in Bangalore, India. I had planned to escort my wife to Puttaparthi and make sure that she was

safe; then I was to go back to Bangalore and start touring India while she stayed at the ashram. Despite the unusual experiences I'd had, I still was not convinced about Baba's divinity.

Way back in 1974, when coming to Puttaparthi, it wasn't very easy to make a same-day turnaround from Bangalore. We didn't reach Puttaparthi until the evening, and it was impossible to return to Bangalore that day, so I decided to stay on for the night and return the next morning. In fact, I hadn't even checked out of the Bangalore hotel, since I had expected to return.

ANSWERS TO THE THREE QUESTIONS

The next morning, Swami was kind enough to call our group into the *mandir* (temple/bhajan hall). It was not an official interview but a sort of small discourse. Professor Kasturi was there, translating Baba's words for us. Then, something very beautiful transpired—for me, something quite extraordinary. For, as I was to realize later, Bhagavan talks to each one of us, heart to heart. If we know this, we will be sure to get a message from him, whether it comes to us through a discourse, in darshan, or otherwise. Directly or indirectly, Swami has a message for each of us, if we are alert to it. Sometimes we get it, sometimes we don't.

In my case, that day's message was direct. Swami was giving us a sweet talk, and suddenly I recognized that he was answering the three questions that I had asked of an unseen Creator when I was 12 years old. I heard his message distinctly,

addressed straight to my heart, though not verbally, and felt its import and impact: (1) Yes, there is a God, and he is here for everyone. (2) He has come before as Jesus; he is here now, and he will come even after. (3) No doubt, there is much more to this universe than what man thinks there is.

After the discourse and that wonderful get-together, I walked out of the *mandir*, found my wife, and said to her, "He is God! We are staying." I found somebody who was going to Bangalore and had them check out of my hotel for me and send my luggage to Puttaparthi.

INSTANTANEOUS REALIZATION

For my wife, this was a dramatic twist of events. She, who had been enchanted by Sathya Sai Baba and initiated our trip, was dumbfounded because I, the nonseeker, had made such a startling about-face and realized Baba's divinity instantly. Ironically, it took her three more years to accept the fact that Sathya Sai Baba was God incarnate and avatar of avatars.

Acceptance or not, Bhagavan sweetly made sure that we felt comfortable when we were with him. Another time, we were fortunate to have a private interview with Swami. On that occasion, Bhagavan told us things that we didn't know, revealing to us both our past and our present. It was surprising that he knew events from our lives that nobody else could know.

But what struck me the most, even more than his overwhelming omniscience, was that he had such a beautiful way of

personalizing any moment spent with him. He could somehow make one think, “Here is God of the universe, and I am the only thing existing at this moment.” That is the divine love he is able to pour out. One cannot explain it, but it’s there.

Sometime later we were standing up with Baba, and he was standing too—and we found we did not have to look down at him. He had somehow raised himself up to our height! My wife and I are both tall, yet Swami and the two of us were all looking at each other, eye to eye. It was such a natural flow, back and forth, at that particular time, and an unforgettable experience of how he made us feel so comfortable. He did this not just at that moment but also during all the moments we’ve spent with him, over all these 34 years.

That first time, we stayed at Puttaparthi for about two weeks. We were then fortunate to follow Bhagavan to Anantapur, where he stayed for a couple of days. From there, we left for America.

Meeting Baba came to be a major turning point in my life. For, when I returned to the USA, I felt absolutely sure that my life was about to take a total U-turn. During our interview with Baba, Swami had said to me, *You are very unhappy*. I must say that at that point I thought to myself, “He might be God, but he doesn’t know how unhappy I am right now!” But now I know that he did. Bhagavan, in his infinite mercy, reassured me, saying, *Do not worry. Things will change.... You are unhappy with your work. Don’t worry. That will change.*

So I came back to the USA, invigorated by hope and suffused with optimism, thinking, “Oh, wow, work is going to change! A new job must be coming my way! How exciting!” Soon I was to discover, however, that it was not my work that was going to change; it was I who was about to change—it was the beginning of my transformation.

LEARNING TO LOVE

The seeds of change had barely started to sprout when I listened to a recording of a discourse that Bhagavan Baba had given in 1968. That particular message to me is still one of those that is most important; I replay it even today. In that discourse, Bhagavan clearly stated the reason behind his divine descent. He said that he had come to protect the righteous, but that since everybody in the world was so tainted with sin at this particular time, he had come to “transform.” To me, that really hit home. I tried to dive deep into that message and listen intently to the voice of Bhagavan, and to put into practice any particular idea that he might point me toward in my path of transformation.

Also guiding me was a message Swami had pointed out to me in that interview: *Duty without love is deplorable. Duty with love is desirable. Love without duty is divine.* From that message, I started my conscious journey of transformation. For though I always did my duty with a sense of moral righteousness, I could not say that it stemmed so much from love. Thus, Swami set me on the path of “love without duty.”

Now it has been over 34 years since I first met Swami, and I am *beginning* to get his message. I would not say that I have learned fully to practice “love without duty” in its truest spirit, but I’ve been fortunate enough to get parts of it, and when I do, it is really beautiful.

Swami’s message is love: *Love is God. Live in love. Do everything with love.* Swami has been dragging me along, encouraging me to dive in and really get that message. Even more, practicing this love was essential to my

personal and spiritual growth, because my heart was very dry, and I didn’t know it. I thought I was being nice, but the fact was that I felt completely devoid of love from within.

SAI CAN SPOT YOU, WHEREVER YOU MAY BE

The next time we went to Puttaparthi was in 1975, for the World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations. That was when the American chapter of the Sai organization was first put together. Dr. John Hislop was appointed as first chairman of the American Council, and it so happened that I was appointed as one of the council members.

During that meeting, I had a very interesting experience. I was seated halfway back in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Bhagavan Baba was there, and Dr. Hislop was announcing the names. When my name was called out, Swami acknowledged me

in that crowd, even though I was seated right in the middle of the jam-packed hall. Amazingly, Swami can see you, pick you out, even in the midst of a multitude of people. I was touched, truly overwhelmed!

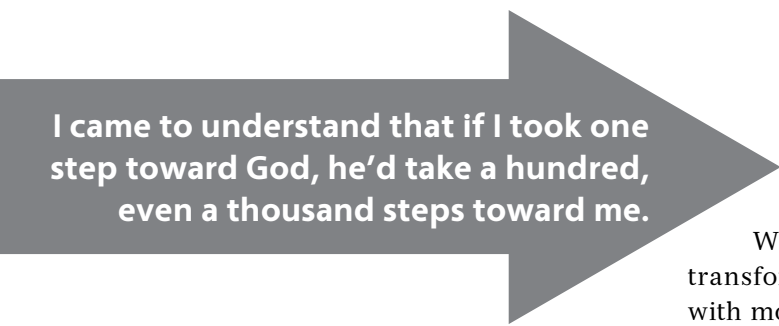
Swami has an inimitable way of

uplifting one’s spirits. With his soothing words, he can make you feel that when you return to your world, you are going to be happy immediately, and that everything is going to be perfect. But I learned that this was not quite the case, because afterward, things began to change only slowly. They neither changed overnight, nor by themselves. I encountered this, even in my work, where I found it difficult sometimes to handle certain people; there were a few of these with whom I had to interact by necessity. I eventually realized that Swami sent such people to me so that I could learn to open my heart.

Thus it was that when I began getting his message of love and doing everything in love, I could feel the change, both in my



Baba has been an integral part of Bob and Barbara Bozzani’s lives for nearly 35 years.



I came to understand that if I took one step toward God, he'd take a hundred, even a thousand steps toward me.

workplace and in the Sai work. This has been my wonderful and fortunate path all the way. When I began to get this subtext of love—really get it—I became a happier person. Thus, I went back to the same society and environment, and yet started to fit in, in an entirely different way.

It was a slow yet steady process of metamorphosis. On the one hand was the wonderful feeling that God is here and now. On the other hand, it took a while for my desires and habits to loosen their hold on me. Although I wasn't satisfied under the influence of the endless merry-go-round of pleasures and pain, I still got entrapped in their vicious cycle, in my quest for happiness.

Bhagavan had said that everything would change for the better, and I thought it would happen instantly. Instead, Swami taught me through many experiences that first I needed to put his words into practice. What mattered most was not the change, which would, in due course, effect itself, but the effort that went into working that change.

It's the effort that really pays off. That's when I came to understand that if I took one step toward God, he'd take a hundred, even a thousand steps toward me, and that he would pour his grace on me. What was essential was that first individual step.

BHAGAVAN UPROOTS AN UNSEEN WEED

When I made a conscious effort to transform myself, Swami would pitch in with more lessons and guidelines, so that I made some headway on this path to progress. One instance of this is very dear to my heart. This occurred in the 1980s. Bhagavan walked up to me when I arrived at the ashram, and said, pointing his finger, *No ill-will*.

When Swami turned and left, I said to myself, "In my heart, I've never had any ill-will against people. That's not in there. But Swami, you are the one who knows if there is even a little bit of such 'weeds,' and I know that you are going to pull them out of me." Nevertheless, Swami's statement got me thinking and triggered an introspection as to what I had done in all these days to warrant such a statement from him. I tossed and turned in my bed, night after night. Finally, after 10 days, the "why" of Swami's message dawned on me. When it came, it was a revelation!

The day after I was supposed to return, I was scheduled to meet with an automobile manufacturer. I was in the automobile business, and this was a meeting with a factory representative, whom I felt was not comfortable with me; I too did not feel compatible with him. In fact, I thought he had "ill-will" against me. I somehow felt that he wanted me out of his path. When that struck me, I said to myself, "Oh, my goodness, that's the ill-will I hold, against this person." The next morning, during darshan time, Swami came

up to me and said, *When did you come?* Then I knew I had got the message right!

Indeed, Swami's message, *no ill-will*, has a great meaning in today's complicated setup, where everyone looks at the other with suspicion and malice. If only we would go out and reach out to people, the world could be a different place.

I returned to the USA, and went in to work on the day of the meeting. The gentleman I had been expecting came in with his team of managers, and my team of executives were supposed to meet them all at this big meeting.

I do not recollect the agenda of that meeting now, but I remember saying to this man, "Before we meet, won't you come into my office?" Once in my office, I told him, "You know, I really understand that you are doing the best that you can for your company, and I admire you for that." I really meant that.

Wonder of wonders! This gentleman began to cry. We hugged and went out, and it ended up that the "big meeting" didn't even take place. We had coffee and tea, and it was over. That's the divine guidance and grace that Bhagavan Baba can give us. Afterward, that gentleman and I became very good friends. This miracle was achieved by one simple yet powerful force—love.

NOT U-TURNS, BUT L-TURNS: SWAMI TRANSFORMS US THROUGH LOVE!

Speaking of love takes me back to that 1968 discourse, where Swami stated that

he would be known all over the world by how we devotees conduct ourselves and put into practice his teachings. That discourse has always been my touchstone throughout these 34 years, whenever I wander off-base from Swami's teachings.

I have found that whatever we do in a moment of true love or sharing, catches people's attention. I have encountered this in America, with people wondering as to who this guy is who goes to India so often, and why. The point is, I realized that as I made an effort to practice what this beautiful Sai avatar is trying to teach, I began to see that a change was occurring. It was not that other people were changing; in fact, whether they changed or not became irrelevant to me. What was important was that I was changing. And what really mattered was how I interacted with them.

I knew that a metamorphosis had been effected for certain when my mother told me, "You know, I don't quite understand who your Sathya Sai Baba is, but he must be something really special, because you have changed so much." That's a beautiful statement to come from one's own physical mother!

—**Robert A. Bozzani**
Pasadena, California

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e-journal, Dec. 2008, www.radiosai.org.
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One morning early in 2009 I found myself singing *bhajans* (devotional songs) on a chilly platform waiting for a Jersey commuter express. Finally the train came and I found a seat in a car with blinding fluorescent lights. It all seemed like a scene right out of a 1930s “B” movie.

Glancing across the aisle I was mystified by a tall gentleman pounding away at a white laptop. Was he 75? The age wasn’t easy to tell. The whole appearance of the fellow was incongruous. He seemed to get taller as I gazed at him. Where did he get the energy to pound away at that laptop with such speed? He never even stopped to correct a typo.

I wondered—is he real? Where have I ever seen such speed before? Besides, why was this fellow four-eyed? He wore two pair of glasses, one on his nose and the second perched above the first pair in front of the *ajna*, or third eye. I wondered—why four-eyed? Perhaps it was a clue.

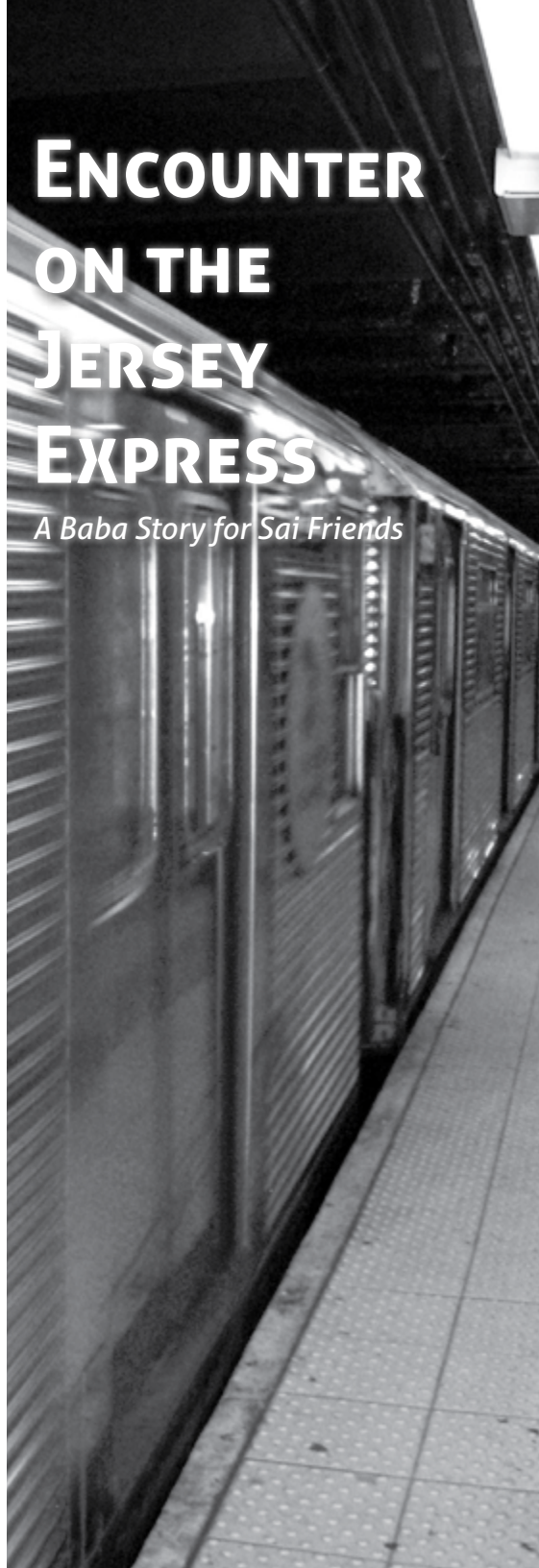
I shouldn’t have been spying, but this man was far more fascinating than the book I was pretending to read. Suddenly I realized that the fellow’s aura was expanding. Waves of light were racing from this chap. The outlines of his body became blurred as energy rippled out in every direction. I knew immediately where I had seen this phenomenon before. Even the white laptop was glowing.

Abruptly, he removed the four eyes and packed up the white laptop. So, I retreated to my book. After 10 seconds he turned to me and without making eye contact said with an authoritative voice, “Isn’t that Sai Baba on the little medal around your neck?”

I had chills. Nobody could accurately identify Swami on that tiny medal from such a distance—we were seated eight or nine feet apart across the aisle. How could he see my tiny half-inch Sai medal from so far away and identify it as Sai Baba? Something wild was going on.

ENCOUNTER ON THE JERSEY EXPRESS

A Baba Story for Sai Friends



Quickly he asked if I had been to visit Swami. When I told him about my many trips to Prasanthi, I was thinking in my head, “*You alone know how many times I’ve been to the ashram, so why ask me?*”

He told me that he knows people who visit Baba; however, the ensuing conversation was mostly lost in the mist. Actually, it was more of a monologue than a conversation. I couldn’t easily respond because the air was thick with sweet vibrations—just like in *darshan* (when Baba comes into view) when your mind flies away. I do remember him saying that he hears Baba’s voice—to which I boldly replied that all you have to do to hear Baba is listen with love all the time.

All too soon we arrived in New York. The gentleman politely said goodbye and assert-

ively walked away. I was stunned. His walking was a wonderful sort of floating. He didn’t touch the ground. In a second he merged into the crowd of commuters and vanished. And I mean *vanished* into thin air, because I tried to keep up and found it impossible. He was gone—into a part of the station with no exit, of course. Who else vanishes like that? Only Swami. I went home with tears, floating and dazed, and thrilled to have had a visit from Swami.

Every time I tell a Baba story like this, I get so emotional. I think it’s important to share these moments with other Sai friends. It reaches something deep in our relationship with Swami.

—Lorenzo
New York, New York

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“I Am Happy”

P.S.: The recent issue of the *Sathya Sai Newsletter USA* on silence (January/February 2009) was most interesting. It brought to mind an unforgettable Baba incident that I again and again share with students and clients who are desperately longing for peace and quiet in their noisy lives.

The year was 1981 or 1982. Construction at the ashram was bustling, as the round houses were rapidly going up. Actually, work was going on all the time—24 hours a day—and nowhere could one hide from the constant hammering, banging, and drilling.

Swami was walking around, giving darshan. The construction sounds continued during darshan too. He approached an elderly Indian lady and asked her how she felt. She responded, quite agitated, “Oh, Swami, I am not well. I never get any sleep. The pounding continues all night. It’s terrible!”

Baba looked at her and said, “*Charla Santhosham* (I am happy),” and continued walking. That Baba moment makes for a great lesson on interior silence.

—Lorenzo
New York, New York

Swami's Messengers

Swami has his ways of communicating with us; I have found he provides the perfect messengers at the perfect moment.

In November 1998, I made my first pilgrimage to see Swami in Prasanthi Nilayam. As a relatively new “devotee,” I was full of arrogance, ego, and immersion in the senses. I am still dealing with these, with the hope that I have made some headway toward transcending them. Feeling homesick and wondering why I was there, I could not have felt more open and vulnerable.

Usually at such a point, Swami sends us an angel, a messenger, to comfort us and bring us back to equanimity. In this instance, the angel was the *seva dal* (security volunteer) stationed at the front of the building where I was staying. His name was Mr. Appalanarassiah. “Mr. A” was a retired bank president who had come to Prasanthi to do loving service for his beloved Swami. I don’t think he slept very much, because he always seemed to be on duty. His sense of humility and loving helpfulness to all was a constant, no matter what the situation. As a devotee, he evoked in me visions of Hanuman.

Due to various factors, I was unable to sleep at night. So most every night I would go down to the verandah, where I would find

Mr. A writing in a book. We would talk most of the night. He even listened to some songs that Swami had given me.

This was during Swami’s 73rd birthday celebration. Once in a while at this time, one could find silver coins for sale, with an image of Swami on one side and Shirdi on the other. The coins were made of sterling silver and reminded me of Mr. A’s sterling character. I purchased one for him, plus a few others to give as special gifts. When I presented the coin to Mr. A, he was visibly touched. I told him it was a very small way that I could thank him for all his help.

The next day was his last as a *seva dal*. Swami called all the *seva dals* for a group interview and allowed Mr. A to have *padnamaskar* (the blessing of touching Swami’s feet).

I saw Mr. A just afterward, and he said he felt that the gift of the coin had opened the way for the *padnamaskar*. I told him that it was his beautiful character, devotion, and heart, which Swami could see, that had manifested into this boon. We said our goodbyes and exchanged addresses, with promises to keep in touch.

When I returned home, I plunged back into the world with hands and head.

I received a nice card with Swami on the cover and a very nice note from Mr. A. I put it away, with the thought that I would write him soon. But I never did. As time went on, I became increasingly guilt-ridden that my word had not produced the deed. Still, my thoughts went merely to conjecture and then to prayers for health and happiness for Mr. A and his family.

In November 2008 I made a second pilgrimage to Prasanthi and Swami's divine lotus feet. I was still working on transcending the senses, especially the long sittings waiting for Swami's *darshan* (blessing of seeing a holy being). I'd had a hip replacement two years prior, along with some weight gain, which made it difficult for me to sit anywhere but the men's ledge. Those choice seats get taken very quickly by men who have waited as long as two hours in line for them.

One day when I was a little late and could not get a ledge seat, I decided that I would take a chance and sit at the very back of Sai Kulwant Hall. There, if I couldn't last till Swami came out, at least I would not disturb anyone if I needed to get up, and also I could hold on to the wall and wrought-iron fencing to help lift myself from the ground.

It would be about three hours before Swami would come out for darshan. I wondered how in the world I could possibly sit there that long. But Swami has his ways. This time, Swami's messenger was a wonderful fellow named Fize Mohammed, from Trinidad, who sat next to me. We became fast friends and shared our stories. He'd had no fewer than 23 interviews with

Swami, and he shared with me some of those wonderful experiences and how they related to his current life. Fize listened to the songs that Swami had given me and wanted me to send them to him for their large Sai Spiritual Education group to learn. Before I knew it, Swami was entering the hall.

This day's darshan was extended because of a musical program. My discomfort in sitting reached epic proportions, but I did not want to leave till darshan was over. Then all of a sudden two mosquitoes decided to have their way with me. I couldn't take it; this annoyance tipped the scales, and I decided to get up and walk out. Little did I suspect the role of these "messengers" in what was about to occur.

Because everyone else was still seated, I was in full view of everyone else as I walked toward the exit. Suddenly a gentleman got up and ran over to me. He said, "Do you remember me? I was the seva dal at the building where you stayed ten years ago."

I couldn't believe it. What were the chances that I would see him, or he, me? We hugged and went to one side to talk. He would be leaving in the morning, having only come for the day. I apologized for not having written him. He said he'd been thinking about me all this time. We parted with my firm promise that this time I would write. I marveled that this had just happened, and I thanked Swami for this resolution to my lapsed communication.

An hour later, I was having dinner at the Western canteen with a gentleman named Sathya Kumar. I related to him what

had just happened. He in turn shared with me that one time he had been in his hotel room reading a book; he was so absorbed in it that he decided not to go to darshan. All of a sudden a mosquito started buzzing him and distracting him. He then decided to go to darshan, whereupon Swami called him for an interview. When he told Swami

about what he had planned to do instead of coming to darshan, Swami said, "Yes. In the past, I used to have to send a messenger to call someone. Now all I have to do is send a mosquito!"

—Gary Kauftheil
Mullica Hill, New Jersey

Retreat and Conference Dates, 2009

Updates and information on regional retreats may also be viewed at the official Sai website:
<http://us.sathyasai.org/> or <http://us.sathyasai.org/infoconf.htm>.

Region 5 (North Central): Sept. 4–7, 2009 (Labor Day weekend), 19th Annual North Central Regional Retreat, at Camp Henry Horner, 26710 W. Nippersink Road, Ingleside, IL 60041. Theme: *With Love, We Are Divine*. Speakers: Dr. Samuel Sandweiss and Sharon Sandweiss. Contact: Vijay Sai Reddy, Regional Communications Coordinator, 847-452-2777, info@sathyasaicenters.org, or www.sathyasaicenters.org.

Region 9 (Southwest), New Mexico: Sept. 4–7, 2009, Land of Enchantment Retreat at Bodhi Mandala Zen Center, Jemez Springs, NM. Theme: *Love in Action: Head, Heart, Hands*. Special workshop in preparation for Region 9 Walk for Values to take place in Arizona, Spring 2010. Speakers: Berniece Mead (National Education Coordinator) and Ladd Bogdanoff (devotional musician). Contact: Elaine Hausman, 505-660-0283 or ehausman@rockridge.biz.

Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Conference: Oct. 11–12, 2009, organized by the Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Committee, at the Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, California. Theme: *Sri Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare and Sri Sathya Sai Global Health Mission*. Physicians and dentists are invited to register online at www.saiconference.org starting on July 5, 2009. Contact: inquiry@saiconference.org.

Region 9 (Southwest), Colorado: Oct. 23–25, 2009, at Highlands Presbyterian Camp and Retreat Center, Allenspark, CO (south of Estes Park), www.highlandscamp.org. Theme: *The Five Gems: Living the Values in Challenging Times*. Speakers: Jon Roof, Charlene Leslie-Chaden. Contact: Terri Dodd, 303-910-0132 or t.dodd@att.net.

An Amazing Dream

He commanded me to take up U.S. citizenship!

On March 1, 2007, early in the morning around 4:00 a.m., Sri Sathya Sai Baba appeared to me in a dream and commanded me to take up U.S. citizenship! He said that I would have to take part in an historic election.

I was really stunned. I was a citizen of India and had been a permanent resident of the U.S. for many years. I had never seriously entertained the idea of becoming a U.S. citizen.

Also, I had learned the hard way during my stay for about seven years in Swami's physical presence to obey his commands without hesitation! So, that very morning, I downloaded the application form from the Internet and completed it.

On March 5, I sent my application to the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Nebraska Center. To my utter amazement, it was processed in record time, and I took my citizenship oath on September 21, 2007. Immediately after the oath, I registered to vote, at the same place. Swami had alerted me well in advance to exercise my voting right in the U.S., which I never expected would happen at my age of 76. Indeed, God's (Swami's) ways are inscrutable!

In the following months, as I listened to the speeches of the presidential candidates, I felt intuitively that the senator from Illinois

would win the election. On November 4, 2008, I voted for him.

While marking my ballot, Swami's words were ringing in my ears: ***There is only one race, the race of humanity.*** After casting my ballot and listening to the results that night, I realized why Swami had wanted me to take up U.S. citizenship.

Also, I recalled a conversation that took place several years ago between Swami and a devotee. One day I was sitting on the verandah of the *mandir* (temple) at Prasanthi Nilayam. A friend of mine, an ardent devotee of Swami, sat next to me. Swami came out of his residence and went straight to that gentleman. A brief but very interesting conversation ensued:

Devotee: Swami, people tell me you appear in their dreams. How is it that you don't appear in my dreams, even though I try very hard to get you to?

Swami: What is the use of you trying! I must decide to appear.

The dream I had on March 1, 2007, is but one of many I have had so far, whereby Swami demonstrated to me in concrete terms the profound meaning of the above conversation.

—Sastry V. Pappu
Wichita, Kansas

Shining Sai

Oh, beautiful, for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain ...

The broken heart that cannot mend
Without the help of a loving friend.
The young blonde boy in his new wheelchair,
The shepherd guide dog doing his share,
The motherless child who finds a home,
The childless mother who takes a babe unknown.

For purple mountain majesties, above the fruited plain ...

The broken wing of a bluebird bright,
The gentle hand that tends it all night.
The lost wallet returned when found,
The gent who helps a motorist northern bound.

America! America! God shed his grace on thee ...

In these acts of service, it is Sai Baba I see;
'Tis his hands that are lifted, I think you'll agree.
'Tho' Swami's feet have not touched American ground,
He lives in the USA, as well as India, I have found!

**And crown thy good with brotherhood,
From sea to shining Sai.**

—J. F. Ziegler
Gilbert, Arizona

Fear into Hope

An Epiphany of Prayer

I felt privileged to volunteer at the Obama headquarters during the 2008 election campaign, where I experienced an epiphany. For a week before Election Day, 2008, I worked at the reception desk with an American Indian woman, who was full of energy and commitment, a role model if ever I saw one.

As the volunteers filed in before us to man the phone banks, my coworker and I greeted them and gave instructions on how to get started. It was interesting to see the different shapes, sizes, ages, and genders pass before us—all different in form, but one in commitment, with a single purpose of mind. They came early in the morning before going off to work, returned on a lunch break, and showed up again after work in the evening before going home. The lines were endless, and the work ethic was apparent.

With the approach of Election Day, an intensity and energy filled the huge room. Nevertheless, the volunteers demonstrated much fear about the election outcome. The comments we heard as they entered the room told us that fear of losing their goal was very depressing. Fear had turned into despair;

they had lost hope. We tried to cheer them up, and what happened next was nothing short of miraculous.

I heard my coworker saying to the dispirited volunteers, “Try praying.” One woman replied, “I’ve never prayed; I don’t know how,” while others nearby shook their heads in affirmation.

To this, my colleague suggested, “When you return home tonight, pray silently what is in your heart, and you will receive an answer.”

I added, “We all are praying with you.”

The following day, the two women who came together the night before returned, gushing with excitement. “It worked! We prayed, and it felt so good to have the heavy feeling of gloom lifted. I never knew I could feel this way.”

I sat there with a smile the width of my face and inwardly said, “Thank you, Baba, for infusing hope in the hearts of these women.” Their fear had been transformed into hope.

—**Marilyn Widrow**
Manhattan Sai Center
New York, New York

Love of One's Country

Concentrate on the Well-Being of Society as a Whole

All must protect the honor of the nation. They should be united. One who is not proud of his motherland and its reputation is worse than a corpse. The message of the Vedas is, "Let us all live and strive together in harmony." If only this spirit prevails . . . , the nation will shine in all its glory. . . . If people act together in concert, there is nothing they cannot achieve Determination and unity are essential. . . .

Give no room for differences of caste (i.e. social class), religion, or language. All should recognize the unity of the human family. Remember: "caste of humanity, religion of love, language of the heart." If you base your actions on these three concepts, the country can make any amount of progress. Cherish these ideals in your hearts and discharge your duties.

[One's country] may be faced with many grave problems and people are worried about what may happen, upon seeing reports in the press. There is no danger . . . , because the events happening are only the birth-pangs of changes to come. The changes will be for the good. There must be, however, a transformation in the minds of the people.

There is no use making changes only in external forms. Qualities must change.

There must be a change in people's way of thinking. Only then will the change accrue to the lasting good of the country. Envy and egoism are animal qualities. The qualities every human being should have are peace, compassion, forbearance, love, and sacrifice. These are the qualities that should be developed, not vices like hatred, greed, envy, pride, and others. Cultivate the feeling of love. Get rid of old prejudices and differences. Foster divine feelings. Only then can the nation make all-around progress. . . .

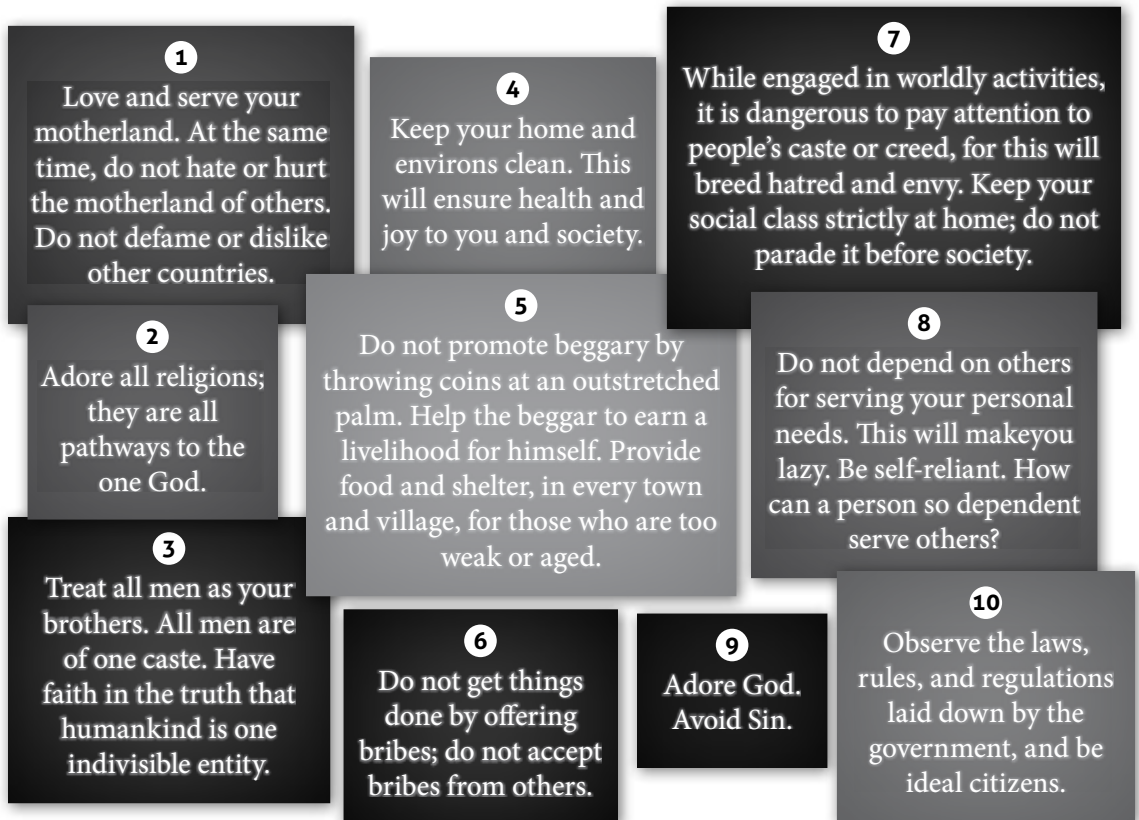
There should be unity of hearts so that anything that is desirable can be accomplished. People should cooperate with each other. From today resolve to give up selfishness and achieve unity among yourselves to serve the nation. . . . Regard yourselves as the children of one mother.

Develop genuine fraternal feelings and eschew separatist tendencies. Concentrate on the well-being of society as a whole. Forget all your differences and come together to uphold the reputation of the nation. Every effort should be made to raise the reputation of the country. (*Sathya Sai Speaks* [SSS] 25:26, Aug. 29, 1992, "Work Together for the Nation's Progress")

Ten Directives for Living

Man is certainly the crown of creation, but, nevertheless, he is born weak and dependent. The culture and traditions of the society, family, country, and religion—that is to say, history—has its impact on a person's life and thought. It molds his individuality and endows him with loyalty and affinity, with a nationality. Thus, he grows not as an isolated being, but with the consciousness of the divinity in all, which culminates in the experience of unity. . . .

Cultivate love and cleanse your hearts with that love. Spend that love in service and that will make it grow. I am giving you ten directives to follow:



Follow these directives with enthusiasm and with love, and be examples for others, wherever you are. (SSS 18:23, Nov. 21, 1985, "Love Is the Only Offering I Accept")

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

A Miracle in Vancouver

An Account of Faith and Healing

My name is Charles Toh. I was born in Malaysia and immigrated to Canada in late 1994. I am presently a naturalized U.S. citizen, although I still retain my Canadian citizenship. I first saw a photo of Sri Sathya Sai Baba while serving in the Singapore Armed Forces in 1975. I have made two trips to India and have had two interviews with Baba, in 1989 and 1992, respectively.

In July 1997, while I was working as a home health aide in Vancouver, British Columbia, a Sai devotee from the Vancouver Sai Center's Chinese group contacted me about a young Asian man who had been severely injured in an auto accident. The young man was in the intensive care unit at the Vancouver General Hospital. I went to the hospital to see this young man and pray for him; I brought with me a copy of the Sai Baba Hiranyagarba (Golden Heart) Lingam photo taken immediately after Sai Baba produced this lingam during May 1991. (See discourse and the referenced photo on pp. 24-28.) This photo is revered by many as a talisman of blessings, healing, and miracles.

When I arrived at the hospital, it was very difficult to locate the patient, because the devotee had not given me his name. When I gave the front desk his general description, the nurse informed me that several patients fit that description, but perhaps I should look for the Inthapanya family in the ICU waiting room. Fortunately, when I arrived, a woman

there who was known both to myself and the Inthapanya family, introduced us to each other. I discovered the patient was named Bo; his mother, Somnith or Samantha; and his father, Lam Inthapanya. Bo had been driving his father's truck when the vehicle was broadsided by another large truck.

The fire department had extricated Bo from the wreck, but the doctor, a leading neurosurgeon, had advised Samantha that Bo's brain was like "jell-o" from being so badly shaken in the wreck, and that there was no hope for recovery. Bo was pronounced "brain dead," though he was still hooked up to life support. The doctor further had expressed to the family that it was too costly for the Canadian system to keep a brain-dead person on life support, and that he had decided to remove the life support system the next day and "let Bo go." The family was very upset.

I then asked Samantha if she would allow me to say a prayer for Bo at his ICU bedside. She arranged permission from the nurse to allow me to see him. Bo was unconscious. A number of life-support tubes and hoses were visible and attached to his various systems. With Samantha's consent, I sprinkled a tiny bit of *vibhuti* (holy ash blessed by Sai Baba in the interview room) on Bo's forehead. I placed Baba's Hiranyagarba Lingam photo on the crown of Bo's head and a gold Shakyamuni Buddha pendant—materialized for me by Baba in the interview room on September 15,

1992—on Bo’s open right palm. I then chanted the *Maha-Mrityun-Jaya* mantra—commonly known as the “Shiva’s cucumber-liberated-from-the-vine mantra”—for 10 minutes:

*Om Trayambakam Yajamahe
Sughandim Pushti Vardanam
Urvar-Ukamiva Bandhanan
Mrityor Mukshiya-Mamritat.*

(“O three-eyed Lord Shiva, protect me and bless me with health and immortality; free me from the clutches of death, even as a cucumber is cut from a creeper.”)

According to the ancient story, the youthful sage Markandeya chanted this mantra fervently at the moment of his karmically-predicted death at age 16—upon which Lord Shiva himself intervened and granted Markandeya not only escape from death but also from the aging process. The mantra is often invoked for health and healing.

I then left the hospital to return home, while preparing myself mentally for Bo’s funeral. The next day, I went to the hospital waiting room, expecting the worst. Instead, I saw smiling faces! Ella, Bo’s girlfriend at the time, approached me to verify that it had been me who had come to pray for Bo the day before. After affirming so, Ella then told me that “a miracle has happened to Bo.” She explained that the previous day (before she knew about me coming to the hospital), she had been most distraught and crying at her place of work. Her boss, a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhist meditation, shared that while he had been meditating, Hanuman (also known as the Monkey King God) had appeared to him and told him, “Tell Ella not to worry. A stranger with a

miracle photo will visit Bo at the hospital, and the miracle photo will save Bo’s life!” Ella also said that the neurosurgeon had exclaimed that only a miracle of God could transform Bo’s “jell-o brain” back to a functional form—and that’s exactly what happened!

I prayed for Bo for a continuous period of 16 days. One Saturday afternoon, I went to visit Bo again. Samantha told me that she had fallen asleep in the waiting room and had had a dream of an Arabic-looking man with a gray beard, wearing a gray head scarf and a gray robe. This man was shoeless and was holding the hand of a little boy, who seemed to resemble Bo. The Arabic-looking man reassured Samantha that he was looking after Bo. I immediately pulled out a small picture of Shirdi Sai Baba and showed it to Samantha. Yes, indeed, Samantha confirmed that Shirdi Sai was the man who had appeared in her dream.

A few days after this incident, I was seated on the left side of Bo’s bed while praying. Samantha was on his right side. Bo still was not speaking because of his tracheotomy tube. Suddenly, Bo opened his eyes wide, grabbed my right hand, and gestured with his head and chin toward the foot of the bed. He signed to me with his right hand. I asked Bo to sign again, and Samantha verified that yes, Bo had signed *B-A-B-A* and indicated that he had seen Baba at the foot of his bed. Bo had never heard of Baba before his accident.

Bo presently lives with his wife and three children in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

—Charles Toh
Las Vegas, Nevada

Hiranyagarba: Golden Essence of the Spiritual Heart

For the world of external phenomena, the presiding deity is called Viswa. The deity presiding over internal phenomena is known as Hiranyagarba. What is the difference between the external and the internal? It must be recognized that the mind represents a highly sacred principle. When the mind that is filled with agitations contemplates on God, it achieves inner peace. Hence, seers have declared that man proceeds from peacelessness to peace, from peace to illumination, and from illumination to recognition of the supreme effulgence that is God the Absolute.

Thus, the mind-principle has been described as Hiranyagarba. *(At this stage, Bhagavan materialized a golden egg-shaped lingam, which he showed to the gathering.)* Hiranyagarba is in the heart of every person. You can see from where you are that the whole world is contained within this lingam. All the countries—India, Germany, and so on—can be seen in it.

Hiranyagarbaya Namah (salutations to Hiranyagarba) is a form of prayer addressed to this divine principle. *Hiranyagarba* means one who is pregnant with gold. A characteristic of gold is that it remains unchanged. Gold remaining buried in the earth for millennia remains unchanged and undergoes no decay. Likewise, no matter how long it may remain

on earth, the *hridaya* (spiritual heart) is not subject to change. It has infinite potential. The divinity in man is beyond description.

The Entire Universe Is Within Us

Here is this lingam (the Hiranyagarba lingam). Is it to be found within the physical body? In Vedanta, Hiranyagarba is described as the size of one's thumb. The Vedantic reference to the "Hiranyagarba (golden womb) in the Hridaya (spiritual heart)" is commonly mistaken as a reference to the physical heart. Not at all. In the spiritual sense, this linga is golden-hued, absolutely immaculate, untainted by any pollution, gloriously resplendent, and containing within it the entire cosmos.

For example, you might have been to Badrinath, Kedarnath, or other sacred places. Where are these places? The moment you recall your visits, all these places are in your mind. If you close your eyes and think of your visit to Badrinath, the entire scene—the temple, the Himalayas, the Alakananda River, and everything else—appears before your mind's eye. All that you have seen and experienced in life will appear before you in your mind, the moment you recall it.

This means that the entire universe is within you. All that you see is but a reflection of the inner being. All that you speak is

a reflection of inner thoughts. All that you do is a reflection of inner action. **Hence, to act according to your inner impulse is *dharma* (right action). To speak what you feel inside is *sathya* (truth). To contemplate on what you experience in your heart is *shanti* (peace). To understand properly the promptings of the heart is *ahimsa* (nonviolence). Consideration for all, emanating from the heart, is *prema* (love). *Sathya, dharma, shanti, prema, and ahimsa* are reflections of feelings emanating from the spiritual heart.** Humanness means the complete harmony of thought, word, and deed. If there is divergence between thought, word, and deed, what is the outcome? Fruitless action...

Hiranyagarba Resides in the Heart

Everything exists in the human heart/mind and not in the external world. Based on this, the one who is in the God-aware state is hailed as Hiranyagarba (*"Hiranyagarbaya Namaha"*). In that state lies unbounded bliss. Take a simple example. We don't derive much joy from finding a piece of copper, iron, or silver. But we are extremely happy if we find a piece of gold. Gold thus has the capacity to give some joy to the heart. What is this gold?

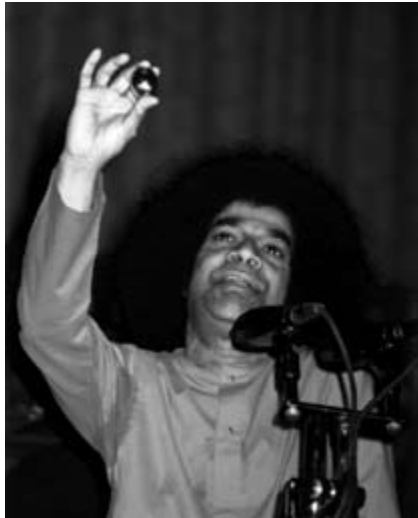
Gold is a mineral of earth. Plain dirt is available freely everywhere, and as such, is treated as of little value. But gold, which is found under the earth's surface, is accorded special value. If gold were available everywhere, it

would have no value. In the human body are flesh, bones, blood, etc., which are found in everyone; no value is attached to them. But the heart is regarded as as precious as gold.

Hence, when we refer to Hiranyagarba, we refer to the one who confers value on the human condition, who endows it with brilliance, who inspires man with idealism and ensures the humanness of the human being. This divine principle resides in the heart and is equated with the spiritual

heart. (*Sathya Sai Speaks* [SSS] 24:14, May 28, 1991, "The Indweller in the Heart")

The Sikshavalli section of the Taittiriya Upanishad has revealed three forms or deities in which the transcendental *Brahma-tatwa* (God-principle) manifests. These three forms are *Virat* (the cosmic), *Hiranyagarba* (the spiritual womb or heart), and *Avyakrita* (the formless). These are related to the gross, subtle, and causal levels, and to the three states of consciousness: waking, dreaming, and deep sleep...



Baba has materialized a golden egg-shaped lingam, called the Hiranyagarba Lingam, on a few occasions. This is a photo of a materialization in 1991.

Hiranyagarba Is the Source of All Beings

Hiranyagarba is the source of all types of knowledge—ethical, spiritual, physical, scientific, and social. It may be described as *jnana bhaskara* (the sun of knowledge). When the sun rises, it assumes a golden hue. By its golden rays, it turns the whole of nature golden. The entire creation emerged from Hiranyagarba, in the beginning. Hiranyagarba has the form of an oval-shaped golden egg. From Hiranyagarba, the first feature of man to emerge was the mouth; sound emanated from the mouth. Then came the nose, from which arose air. Then came the eyes, from which emanated fire or form. The ears came thereafter. The directions (space) arose from the ears.

Thus Hiranyagarba is the primary source of man. Hiranyagarba is the prime source of all living beings. Hiranyagarba endowed all these beings with the power of discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral, between what must be sought or renounced, and between what ought to be and what ought not to be done.

What is the supreme knowledge that a man needs for making his life sacred and meaningful, and what is the path he should pursue to lead a purposeful life? Hiranyagarba offers to man the knowledge he needs for this purpose. This is the primary activity of Hiranyagarba.

Hiranyagarba has two other names: Sutramaka and Prana. *Sutramaka* means one who functions like a string through all *Atmas* (souls), even as a string runs through a necklace of pearls. This means

that Hiranyagarba is present in all beings, like a string that holds together the gems in a necklace. This string is called the *Brahma-sutra* (the string of Brahman). The principle of Hiranyagarba indicates how the Divine unites all human beings equally, like the string of a necklace. Hiranyagarba thus demonstrates a divisionless universe.

Hiranyagarba is also called Prana. Hiranyagarba assumes a subtle form in the dream state of a human being. This entity is awake in the dreaming and sleeping states. In the waking state, the *Virat-swarupa* (cosmic form) creates the visible cosmos. In the dream state, Hiranyagarba creates the figures in one's dreams. All objects in this state have no physical basis. All that is perceived in dreams are the creations of Hiranyagarba. Hiranyagarba in its subtle form creates everything in the dream state.

Virat, Hiranyagarba, and Avyakrita are not entities existing in some separate place. When you examine carefully, you will find that every human being is an incarnation of Virat, of Hiranyagarba, and of Avyakrita. This profound truth is not realized by men because of their narrow outlook.

The Virat form (cosmic entity) is the human body multiplied by infinity: $\text{Body} \times \text{Infinity} = \text{Virat}$. $\text{Mind} \times \text{Infinity} = \text{Hiranyagarba}$. $\text{Life} \times \text{Infinity} = \text{Avyakrita}$. These three forms are likewise related to the gross, the subtle, and the causal bodies of man. All the three bodies are in the human being.

Hiranyagarba is not in some distant place. He is installed in the mind. Virat-

purusha (the cosmic entity) is in the human form. The five basic elements—which are also related to the faculties of sound, sight, smell, taste, and touch—are in the human body as well as in the cosmos. The body is made of matter or the earth element. The inhaling and exhaling process is based on air. When man is engaged in motion and action, heat is generated. This is the fire element. When one performs exercise or rubs his palms, heat is generated. That heat is in man. The body is composed mostly of water. In this way, all the five elements are in the human body, and hence it is regarded as a manifestation of Virat-swarupa (the cosmos embodied).

All powers are found in man. The powers not found in man cannot be found elsewhere in the universe. Because of his external vision, man remains unable to recognize that all that he sees externally is within himself.

“Waking” State vs. Dream State

On account of attachment, fear, and hatred, man forgets his true nature. This fact can be witnessed in the dream state. You have a dream in which you are traveling by train. You pass a number of stations in the dream. You see many passengers, and you spend your time talking and joking. Where did the train come from in the dream state?

It is a creation of your mind. Likewise, the stations you pass and the passengers you move with are all creations of the mind. All that is experienced in the dream is a product of the mind. Nor is that all. You create even yourself in the dream. This is the activity of Hiranyagarba.



*Hiranyagarba is immortal,
divine, eternal, and all-
encompassing. It is present not
only in human beings but also in
birds, beasts, and all other living
beings.*

In the “waking” state, one perceives things as outside oneself. One’s perceptions are governed by the conditions of time, place, and circumstance. But in the dream state, these three conditions are totally absent.

You may inquire into the difference between the waking and dream states. For instance, you learn that there will be a meeting at 4:00 p.m. here. You start from the city at 3:30 p.m. by car. You arrive here at 4:00 p.m. You came to attend the meeting and listen to Swami’s discourse. You have the time of 3:30 p.m., the action of leaving by car, and the consummation of arriving here at 4:00 p.m. In this sequence, time, aim, action, and achievement are all present in the waking state. But in a dream, you may travel to Delhi. When did you start on the journey?

Time or purpose are not present. By what conveyance did you go? There may be nothing in the dream about it. Neither will the purpose for going to Delhi be evident in the dream either. The absence of time, purpose, and circumstance is characteristic

of the dream experience, whereas the waking state testifies to the presence of these three elements. The Virat-swarupa is related to time, purpose, and action. The absence of these three factors indicates the nature of Hiranyagarba (the dream state). Men experience both these states (the waking and the dream states).

The Experienter is One in All Three States

Who is the experienter of all this? The experienter is no different in the waking state, the dream state, or the deep sleep state. The states of consciousness vary, but the experienter is one and the same in all the three states. Because of the differences in the states, the experiencers appear to be different.

All the variations in experience are related to differences in time, place, and circumstance. The body is made up of time, actions, and obligations. Therefore, if the body is to be sanctified, time has to be utilized in performing right actions. The human world is bound by actions. No one can be free from action even for a moment. ... As the ancient sages knew the inner secret of these three divine manifestations governing the three states of consciousness, they renounced all worldly attachments and strove to realize permanent *ananda* (spiritual bliss). People today, being ignorant of these truths, are treating this knowledge with derision. (SSS 24:17, May 31, 1991, "Experiencing the Bliss Divine")

Love Originates from Hiranyagarba

Man cannot exist without love. This principle of love is Hiranyagarba. Hiran-

yagarba is located on the right side of the human body, while the physical heart is on the left. The physical heart on the left has to be left one day or another, whereas Hiranyagarba, located on the right, is always right. Hiranyagarba is immortal, divine, eternal, and all-encompassing. It is present not only in human beings but also in birds, beasts, and all other living beings. The Vedas declare: "God is present in all living beings (*Eswara Sarvabuthanam*)," "God pervades the entire cosmos (*Isavasyam Idam Jagat*)."

Love is the reflection of Hiranyagarba and originates from it. The three principles of reaction, resound, and reflection have also originated from Hiranyagarba. Unable to recognize his true identity, man wastes his life in pursuit of temporary, fleeting, transient, and ephemeral pleasures. As I told you previously, gold loses its value, brilliance, and identity when it is mixed with different metals such as silver, brass, and copper.

So also is the heart, which loses its value, brilliance, and identity in association with the impurities of worldly desires. This is the present plight of mankind. Man behaves like a demon, devil, and beast because he has forgotten his divine nature. Divine love originates from Hiranyagarba. This selfless divine love lives by giving and forgiving, whereas selfish love lives by getting and forgetting. Such divine love is essential for man. (SSS 32-1:3, 1999, "Manifesting Divinity in Lingodbhava")

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Conference

A Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Conference will be held on October 10-11, 2009, at the Anaheim Convention Center in Anaheim, California. The event, organized by the Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Committee, will have the theme *Sri Sathya Sai Ideal Healthcare and Sri Sathya Sai Global Health Mission*. Dentists and physicians may register online at www.saiconference.org starting on July 5, 2009. For additional information, please contact inquiry@saiconference.org.



Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust

An official notice appeared in *Sanathana Sarathi*, May 2009 edition, announcing that the following four trusts operating at Prasanthi Nilayam are now under an umbrella entity, Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, and that “the activities hitherto carried on by the following trusts will be now under the respective divisions of the Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam 515134, Andhra Pradesh, India.”

Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust

is now **Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, Publications Division**

Sri Sathya Sai Media Foundation

is now **Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, Media Division**

Sri Sathya Sai Bhakta Sahayak

is now **Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, Bhakta Sahayak Division**

Easwaramma Women's Welfare Stores

is now **Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust, Mahila Division**

All correspondence and other transactions will continue to be carried out by the same offices as previously, except now as “divisions” of the Sri Sathya Sai Sadhana Trust. Postal addresses remain the same except for the change in the name. Phone and fax numbers, e-mail addresses, and website locations of the above trusts will remain the same as before.

SRI SATHYA SAI INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL COMMITTEE

**Sri Sathya Sai International Center
for Medical Services**

*A Center That Streamlines Shipping of Medical Supplies to Sri Sathya Sai
Medical Institutions in India*

Dear Brothers and Sisters, *Om Sri Sai Ram.*

We are happy to inform you that with the blessings and grace of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Sri Sathya Sai International Center for Medical Services (SSSICMS) has been established and will streamline the process of sending medical supplies from the USA to Sri Sathya Sai medical institutions and hospitals in Puttaparthi and Bangalore, India.

Sri Sathya Sai medical services in India are provided at three levels of care. Primary care is given through medical camps and dispensaries in the rural areas of India, and a mobile clinic that serves the villages surrounding Puttaparthi daily. Secondary care is given through the Sri Sathya Sai General Hospitals at Puttaparthi (since 1956) and Bangalore (since 1976), providing services in general medicine, general surgery, plastic surgery, ophthalmology, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, anesthesia, ENT, and dental services. Tertiary care takes place at two state-of-the-art super-specialty hospitals, the Sri Sathya Sai Institutes of Higher Medical Sciences (SSSIHMS) at Puttaparthi (since 1991) and Bangalore (since 2001). The Puttaparthi super-specialty hospital provides cardiology, cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, urology, plastic surgery, orthopedics, gastroenterology, ophthalmology, radiology, and pathology services. The super-

specialty hospital in Whitefield, Bangalore provides neurology, neurosurgery, cardiology, cardiovascular and thoracic surgery, radiology, and pathology services.

All services are given entirely free of cost to patients, and with the aim of delivering medical care in concert with the five cardinal human values—truth, righteousness, peace, love, and nonviolence—in every act. An overview of the services provided by the institutions of the Sri Sathya Sai Medical Trust can be viewed at <http://sssmt.org.in>.

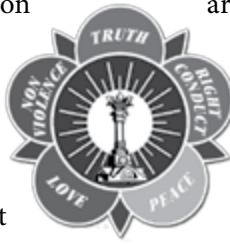
Regular rotations of surgical teams and medical personnel wishing to volunteer their services at the Sri Sathya Medical Institutions have been organized by the International Medical Committee, including volunteers from the USA. The volunteers provide medical care for patients and also participate in medical education and teaching programs at the hospitals. As a natural extension of volunteering their time, many doctors and volunteer teams have attempted to bring donations of medical supplies to India, but with limited success. Such supplies have encountered serious roadblocks through Indian customs and the Indian import duties of 34% on medical supplies.

The SSSICMS can now operate on a par with other charitable relief organizations who ship donated goods to India. Much-needed supplies, such as heart valves and stents for

cardiac surgeries, can now be shipped from the USA to India under an existing Bilateral Indo-U.S. Agreement. Under this agreement, the receiving entity in India and the sending entity in the USA must be registered and approved in India in order to streamline the customs process and to avoid import duties on charitable donations.

The Sri Sathya Sai Medical Trust was approved as a receiving entity in 2008. The Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation received approval as a sending entity in 2009, and the SSSICMS sent its first shipment of donated cardiac surgical supplies, valued at \$45,000, in March 2009. The Sri Sathya Sai Medical Trust first approves the list of items to be shipped, according to the facilities' needs. The requested supplies are then collected and shipped only according to the list, to avoid waste and to comply with the terms of the bilateral agreement.

The SSSICMS has set up a main hub and three regional satellite hubs across the USA for the receiving, storage, inventorying, packaging, and shipping by sea or airfreight of medical supply donations.



The main hub is located in Los Angeles and serves also as a West Coast collection point for Regions 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 (Pacific North, Northern California and Nevada, Pacific South, Southwest, and South Central, stretching from Washington to Texas). The other three hubs are in Rochester/Boston, Massachusetts (serving Region 1—Northeast, and New York City); Washington DC (serving Regions 2 and 3—Mid-Atlantic and Southeast); and Detroit, Michigan (serving Regions 4 and 5—Mid-Central and North Central).

The regional hubs and contact persons are listed below. The contact individuals are available to answer questions from devotees, donors, physicians, and allied healthcare professionals interested in participating in this noble service project. Questions about the project as a whole may also be addressed to Dr. Ganesh Yadlapalli (ngy51@hotmail.com) or Rohan Balasuriya (RohanLBa@aol.com).

Lovingly, in the service of Sai,

—**Dr. Narendranath Reddy**, Chairman,
Sri Sathya Sai International Medical Committee
Director, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation

SATELLITE CENTERS AND CONTACTS BY REGION

Northeast Satellite Center, Boston/Rochester MA

(Region 1 and NYC)

Dr. Krishna Rao, srao@rochester.rr.com

Mrs. Shantha Sarangapani, s.shantha@verizon.net

Midwest Satellite Center, Detroit MI

(Regions 4-5)

Dr. Hari Conjeevaram, hconjeev@hotmail.com

Southeast Satellite Center, Washington DC

(Regions 2-3, except NYC)

Dr. Nandakumar Vellanki, nbvellanki@gmail.com

Mrs. Sheela Nayak, sveryhappy@msn.com

West Coast Center, Los Angeles

(Regions 6-10)

Dr. Chandra Das, drchandradas@gmail.com

Mr. Rohan Balasuriya, RohanLBa@aol.com

Inventorying Medical Supplies

Logistical Support for CrossLink International Relief Organization

Sri Sathya Sai centers in the Mid-Atlantic region of the USA have participated regularly for a number of years in a service project with CrossLink International. About fifteen to twenty members of three Sai Centers in the Washington DC metropolitan area join forces on the second Saturday of each month at the CrossLink warehouse in Falls Church, Virginia. The team of devotees is kept busy unpacking, sorting, shelving, and repackaging donated



medical supplies prior to these supplies being shipped to impoverished areas.

Every six months, the group conducts an inventory of supplies on hand in the warehouse. In a typical month, Crosslink ships approximately \$250,000 worth of materials in over 30 shipments. Typical deliveries range from several packages of surgical supplies and medicines, to container shipments of hospital equipment and wheelchairs.



SAI SERVICE: LOVE IN ACTION

CrossLink International supplies medical materials to relieve suffering in the world's most troubled areas. CrossLink provides medicines, medical supplies and equipment, and eyeglasses, directly to free clinics, mission hospitals, and medical mission teams that treat the sick and injured regardless of race, creed, or religion. CrossLink deliveries support an international humanitarian network of doctors, nurses, and missionaries working in the U.S. and in over 120 developing world countries.

Since 1996, CrossLink has delivered more than \$33 million worth of medical materials. CrossLink receives donations of medical supplies and equipment from excess resources mostly donated by pharmaceutical companies, hospitals, medical supply companies, local physicians, and the public. All these donations need to be unpacked, sorted, and shelved. Then, as individual doctors request items prior to their trips to impoverished areas, the supplies must be repackaged for those trips.

In 2005 alone, CrossLink provided critical medicines and supplies for 359 mission

teams, clinics, and hospitals, to aid the lives of approximately 600,000 men, women, and children. CrossLink responded to the needs of Gulf Coast residents suffering from the effects of Hurricane Katrina in 2006.

Although we have not met the recipients of this aid, we are grateful to Swami for this opportunity to help, in some small way, to relieve suffering around the world. This seva epitomizes the sentiment expressed by our dear Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the following quote:

Seva brings out all that is great in man. It broadens the heart and widens the vision. It fills one with joy. It promotes unity. It proclaims the truth of the spirit. It drives out all of a man's evil qualities. It must be regarded as a great spiritual discipline. (SSS 23:31, Nov. 20, 1990)

Thank you, Swami, for allowing us to serve, and to become, in some small way, your instruments.

—Devotees of USA Region 2 (Mid-Atlantic)



Phoenix Medical Camp for the Homeless

Medical and Dental Services Offered—and Haircutting, Too!

Recognizing the need to provide medical care for the homeless, as well as the divine opportunity to serve, three Sai centers of greater Phoenix, Arizona, did extensive planning to conduct a medical camp. Spearheaded by Dr.

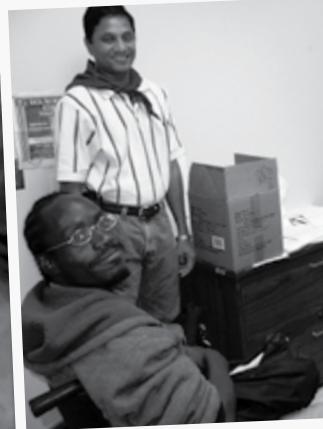
Krishnan Bala of the Sai Center of Scottsdale, together with the Phoenix and Mesa centers, the camp took place on Saturday, November 15, 2008, near downtown Phoenix.

This was the second Sai medical camp held at the Central Arizona Shelter Servic-



es (CASS) facility, which provides support for the many homeless people in the area. CASS was opened in 1984 in response to the city of Phoenix's need to provide emergency shelter for the increasing numbers of homeless persons in Arizona. Due to

the temperate climate in the winter months, the number of homeless swells significantly, beginning in the fall. CASS serves an average of 5,000 men, women, and children annually. The facility provides a safe and secure environment to 415 homeless men and women. Other



SAI SERVICE: LOVE IN ACTION

facilities in the downtown area accommodate the overflow.

The homeless were provided medical, dental, and haircutting services from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., followed by a hearty lunch for all. The number of devotees included ten doctors, four dentists, ten barbers, and over forty other volunteers. The medical camp commenced with prayers for guidance and blessings. As the homeless arrived, their blood pressure and pulse rates were taken by doctors, pursuant to their individual medical evaluations. Approximately 200 patients were seen by the doctors, and an additional 25 received dental care. (CASS provides dental care on a weekly basis as part of its shelter services.) Any acute or serious medical conditions were referred to the emergency rooms at nearby hospitals. For medical conditions needing follow-up, our guests were referred to a free clinic in the area. The barbers were kept extremely busy, providing 200 free haircuts. All patients were given a hygiene kit containing 12 items; the kits were assembled by devotees of each center and brought to the medical camp. Over 450 kits were given out.

A delicious Mexican cuisine lunch was served, with spinach enchiladas as the main course and sides of spanish rice, cooked beans, salad, chips, salsa, juice, bottled water, and a dessert of pumpkin pie. All the homeless at the facility, as well as any coming in from the surrounding streets, were offered lunch. A total of 620 lunches were served to hungry people during the midday event. The medical staff continued to see patients during lunch, in order to provide medical care without interruptions, thus accommodating everyone who desired or needed medical care.

The medical camp was extremely well organized and it functioned perfectly. The devotees heartily welcomed and served their many homeless brothers and sisters. True happiness was derived from serving and sharing, evidenced by the faces of the devotees. "Thank you" and "God bless you" were heard over and over from the homeless, but it was hard to disguise that the devotees were the ones who benefited most.

This medical camp is now scheduled to become an annual service event, and holding it more than once a year may be a viable option.

—Devotees of USA Region 9 (Southwest)



Human Values Parenting Seminars Held in the Middle East



American Sai devotees Rita and Robert Bruce of Austin, Texas, were hosted in several Middle Eastern countries—United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain—to present seminars on human values education as applied to issues of parenting.

With the infinite grace and blessings of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Global Region 94 (Middle East and Gulf) had the opportunity to host a seminar on Values Parenting by Rita and Robert Bruce, of the United States, who

have been devotees of Swami Sri Sathya Sai Baba for a very long time.

Joy, mutual harmony, unison, and love—sow the seeds of these harmonious qualities, even while your children are young. That is the richest inheritance you can give them, the most useful insurance against attack of despair, despondency, and discontent. This is the message for us from our beloved Lord Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

In today's fast-paced and competitive world, where people often place work commitments before everything else, good parenting is increasingly at risk. Teaching a child good moral values and discipline is mentally, emotionally, and physically demanding. In the Middle East and the Western world, the dynamics of the family structure has under-

gone a tremendous change. This is especially true of families who move away from the family home in search of better opportunities abroad. The problem is prevalent in every home and is increasingly a global problem.

Because parents are at the heart of these issues, Sai Group Dubai took the initiative to launch an awareness campaign to emphasize the roles of parents and to understand how Values Parenting (parenting with human values) can help mold children's character.

This series of seminars started in Dubai on September 5, 2007, and was followed by a seminar in Abu Dhabi on September 6. Then, on September 7, a day-long seminar and workshop on Sri Sathya Sai Parenting, for EHV teachers and parents of EHV children, was held in Dubai, which included participants from Abu Dhabi, Ruwais, and Sharjah.

The inaugural program in Dubai on September 5, took place at Zayed University Dubai Campus, under the patronage and

in the presence of His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, United Arab Emirates, and president of Zayed University.

While addressing the gathering, His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan said, “Sai Baba captured the essence of parenting when he stated that home and family are the basic social institution everywhere in the world. When the home improves, the whole world will be better.”

Echoing the cardinal values propounded by Sri Sathya Sai Baba, His Excellency stated that the vision of the United Arab Emirates is peace, truth, and nonviolence—for the present and the future. He also said that the U.A.E. seeks a world characterized by the values of integrity, civility, and compassion, and that these form the bedrock of their society.

Under the leadership of the President, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahayan, the U.A.E. continues its strong commitment to understanding and dialogue across national and cultural boundaries.

His Excellency also stated that Values Parenting held a special appeal for him. He emphasized the challenges facing today’s youth. According to him, there are two predominant challenges: (1) the tremendous influence of modern media, and (2) peer pressure. He concluded by saying that good parenting instills values in young people and stresses respect and proper communication between parents and children.

Brother G.B. Choithram Jethwani, Sathya Sai Organization Regional Central Coordinator for the Middle East and Gulf countries, addressed the group, saying, “Good parenting is essential while raising our children, and consequently, for building right character.” He said that parents have the primary responsibility to mold the character of the children. When the home improves, the whole world will be better.

Brother G.B. Choithram then repeated Swami’s famous words:

*If there is righteousness in the heart,
There will be beauty in the character.*

*If there is beauty in the character,
There will be harmony in the home.*

*When there is harmony in the home,
There will be order in the nation.*

*When there is order in the nation,
There will be peace in the world.*

Brother G.B. also observed that parenting is the most wonderful yet difficult task. Parents are their children’s first teachers. The responsibility of raising children with sound character rests with the parents, the teachers, the school administrators, and indeed, the whole community. In the home, the parents are responsible, and in schools and colleges, the teachers. He concluded his speech by mentioning that each of us must realize that children are precious treasures, and that we must teach our children not to receive something for nothing. Let them earn by hard work the things they seek.

Rights and responsibilities are like the two wings of a bird, the two wheels of a chariot. May every child soar to great heights

in life, understanding that both these wings are essential for their flight.

Dr. Sulaiman Al Jassim, Vice President of Zayed University, also spoke, saying, “The seminar seeks to draw out the basic human values of right conduct, peace, truth, and love, which are fundamental to the human personality.” He also said that the seminar would highlight the influence of education in human values and parenting.

Sister Rita and Brother Robert Bruce, experts and guest speakers, elaborated on the importance of communication between parents and children. Some of the points they shared were that instructions should be clear and delivered with love, so that they might have positive results. Also, words are crucial to children’s self-esteem, and we must not hurt or reject them.

Expounding on Values Parenting, Rita Bruce explained that parents can be divided into two categories, static and dynamic. She characterized static parents as being unable to think for themselves and greatly influenced by what they see and read in TV advertisements and the media. Victims of commercialism, they constantly mimic each other, with little or no individual thinking. In contrast, dynamic parents know that their goal in life is not merely earning wealth but raising ideal children. These parents will rear their children by practicing strong human values, such as kindness, generosity, responsibility, and humility, so that the children can grow up to make positive contributions to society.

Participants of the seminar included Indian Consul General, Mr. Venu Rajamony, as well as ministers, businessmen, officials, VIPs, university professors, principals, supervisors, and members of the teaching fraternity.

On September 7, Sai Group Dubai organized a full-day seminar exclusively for the parents of EHV children, teachers, and a few active workers. The sessions began at 8:45 a.m. and concluded at 5:30 p.m.

The response was phenomenal. About 150 parents and teachers attended this workshop, from the entire United Arab Emirates. Participants came from Abu Dhabi, Ruwais, and Sharjah.

The seminar helped the participants discover, through the Education in Human Values program, the importance of molding children’s character. The day was highly motivational, inspirational, and educational. It was a unique opportunity given to the parents and devotees of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, to equip them with values-based parenting techniques.

These techniques can help them give their children the necessary foundation, environment, and support for creating their most valuable lifelong asset, blemish-less character.

In addition to the above-described seminars, Sister Rita and Brother Robert went on to present seminars in the Gulf countries of Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain from September 8-15, 2007.

—From *Blossoms* (Sai newsletter in Dubai),
Report from the EHV Wing, November 2007.

Reprinted with permission.

The Divine Alchemy

Talk by Jeremy Hoffer at World Youth Conference 2007

As a young boy growing up in America, I never imagined that I would travel the world, let alone come to the other side of the planet, to a remote Indian village like Puttaparthi. For many, America

is a dream land, a land of opportunity for thousands who go there every year in search of a better life. But for me, the road to a better way of life began here, in this tiny corner of Andhra Pradesh, at this abode of highest peace, and home of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

While the miles I've traveled may be great, the transformation I've undergone is greater. Shortly after my first trip, people I knew began to say, "Jeremy, we don't know what it is about you, but you've changed." Even my father said to me, "Jeremy, I don't totally understand who Sai Baba is, but based on the positive change I've seen in you, He must be all right." Thus began my new life.



Jeremy Hoffer, shown here speaking at the World Youth Conference 2007, works as a teacher in Denver, Colorado, helping to create educational opportunities for low-income children.

Guarded and Guided by Him

Bhagavan caught hold of me at a crucial and formative time in my life. I was 18 years old, without direction, and in bad company. But Bhagavan had other plans for me. After learning

about his incarnation, I began studying Sai literature, participating in the local Sai center, and making trips to see him at just the same time that the budding youth wing in the Sathya Sai Baba organization was beginning to blossom.

I joined a group of 18 youth from the United States who attended Bhagavan's Summer Course in Brindavan in 1995, and was fortunate to attend both the first and second World Youth Conferences. Thereafter, I did my final year of college in Hyderabad, where I lived and worked with the Hyderabad youth group. Now, at age 36, I have spent exactly half my life under Bhagavan's care, and am eternally grateful to Bhagavan for

carrying me safely across those important years of my youth.

Three Important Lessons...

With humility, I offer a few of the lessons I have learned along this journey. First, take refuge in the words of Sai. Second, take Bhagavan to be your only friend. And third, engage whole-heartedly in good work. I'd like to elaborate on each of these lessons.

1. Take Refuge in the Words of Sai Bhagavan says that *the mind is the source of all suffering*. And just as a thorn can be used to remove a thorn, so too can the suffering of our confused and wayward minds be relieved by thinking about the words and ideas of Bhagavan. His words must be meditated upon. Food cannot be digested with only one chew, and mental peace cannot be gained from a quick or occasional reading of Sai's teachings. In my experience, it often takes the mind many years to grasp the meaning of his teachings.

For example, Bhagavan describes the spiritual path as a house: the foundation is self-confidence; the walls, self-satisfaction; the roof, self-sacrifice; and the house, self-realization. For years I listened to this analogy, and it remained largely unclear all the while. Only after some years of working on this puzzle did it begin to occur to me that Swami is describing a sequence of events, and that each stage must be passed through to get to the next.

Nothing can happen without self-confidence. With self-confidence we can begin to engage in the world and to extract

from it our own desires: self-satisfaction. But sooner or later, we must learn that satisfying our own desires doesn't give enduring peace and happiness. It is at this point that we must begin to use our own potential to relieve the suffering of others. And only after this "roof" of self-sacrifice is constructed can the mansion of self-realization be secured.

Perhaps the truth of this simple teaching came quickly to others. For me, it took time to digest. My point is that we must all put effort into understanding Bhagavan's words in a deeper way, and not skim too quickly across the surface. Mental peace can be attained if we take refuge in his words.

2. Take Bhagavan as Your Only True Friend For young people, friendship is very important, and often misunderstood and misused. Swami says, "Tell me your company, and I'll tell you what you are." The influence of the company we keep is very powerful, especially in the years of our youth. So, being in good company is essential for a good life. But the real meaning of friendship deserves to be explored carefully.

Bhagavan explains to us that "God is the only true friend." We should then ask ourselves, "Who is a friend?" A friend can provide company and companionship—that's true. But a true friend is the one who knows the deepest reservoirs of our hearts, whose care for us is perfect and inexhaustible and who is closer to us than any other. And who but God can be that friend?

Once Swami patted me on the chest and said, "This is not a two-seat sofa; this is not musical chairs.... Your seat is on that plane,

but my seat is in your heart.” True *sneham*, or divine friendship, should not be cheapened by putting all things into our hearts. We should reserve our love for God, for who can truly satisfy the pain and deepest yearning of our hearts, but him?

3. Engage Whole-Heartedly in Good Work

Wrong use of the body leads to all kinds of troubles. But to escape this suffering, we should put our body to good uses. Swami has prescribed that *seva* (selfless service) is the proper use of the body, and also a powerful tool for spiritual transformation. *Bend the body, mend the mind, end the senses*, Bhagavan has said.

Here’s an experience to illustrate this point. In the USA, the youth regularly take up a variety of service projects. An extraordinary opportunity came in 2005 when Hurricane Katrina devastated the coastlines of Louisiana and Mississippi. Sai youth responded quickly, locating a town that was not receiving much assistance, and sent a large truckload full of needed supplies to Tylertown, Mississippi.

Not satisfied with this initial effort, we organized a second trip to repair the roofs and homes of poor victims who could not afford to

have their roofs replaced after the terrible storm. Such large-scale projects are inspiring to be a part of, but another example I’d like to share illustrates well the power of doing service on even a relatively small scale.

The Magic of Selfless Work

Because winters can be very cold and snowy in many parts of America, homeless people run the risk of freezing without proper clothing and footwear. A few winters ago, some members of our group noticed that some homeless men in our city had only plastic bags over their feet as footwear. So we made a decision that the following winter we would buy 75 pairs of boots and distribute them among the homeless people.

When we went to the store to buy these 75 pairs of boots, we were pleased that the owner of the store himself took care of us.



“True *sneham*, or divine friendship, should not be cheapened by putting all things into our hearts. We should reserve our love for God, for who can truly satisfy the pain and deepest yearning of our hearts, but him?”

It took quite some time to buy so many boots and at some point in our work together, the owner of the store said to us, “Boys, 75 pairs is a lot of boots. Would you mind if I ask what you intend to do with all these boots?” We explained that we planned to give them away in winter to people without good shoes.

The store owner was quiet for a little while and then said, “Boys, in all the years that I have been in the shoe business, I have never seen anyone come into my store to do what you are doing. I will sell you these boots, but I will charge you only the price that I have to pay for them myself. I am only sorry that I did not know about this earlier, or else I could have worked with my suppliers to get the boots even cheaper. Please contact me next year so we can work together to do this good work.”

Finally after we paid for the boots and were leaving his store, the owner said, “Boys, every year I invite my employees and their families to come and shop in my store before Christmas, and I give them a very big discount. I also want you two boys to come in with your families, so I can give you the same opportunity too.”

When Love Is Put into Action

On the day we planned to give the boots away, our youth group had a meeting to talk about our work. Very often, the poor and homeless are treated badly, even by people offering them services. We all agreed that we would work differently. We reminded ourselves that God is the Indweller of every living being, and therefore, we would treat every single person as if he were Swami himself, and give only love to one and all. As the long line of people began filing into the downtown church where we were giving away the boots, the poor and homeless were at first restless and aggressive with each other

and with us. But our group continued to treat them all in a loving manner.

Very quickly, the atmosphere began to change. Soon, everyone became peaceful, orderly, and happy. Each person was invited to sit in a chair and be served food and drink while waiting for a turn to find a pair of boots. When their turn came, our workers peeled off the old shoes and socks from their worn and tired feet, carefully fit them with new socks and boots, and sent them on their way happy and recharged.

At the end of the day, after almost all of the boots were gone, there was one man who had received his pair of boots and was about to leave, when he noticed another man who could not find a pair of boots to fit him. The man without boots was very discouraged, as his shoes were in very bad condition and not fit to last through the tough winter months.

Observing this, the first man, with boots in hand went over and gave this man his boots, saying, “Here, it looks like you need these boots more than me. My shoes are in better condition than yours, so please take my new boots.” With this, the man walked away smiling.

We need not wait for hurricanes to befall us for opportunities to serve. In fact any act of love directed to relieve the suffering of another person is worthy service. In this work, love is the essential ingredient. Service is nothing more than love in action. It has the power not only to uplift the downtrodden, but also to transform us into more selfless loving human beings.

—**Jeremy Hoffer**
Denver, Colorado

I Knew I Would Feel Right at Home

It was mid-October 2007 when I first learned that I would have to travel to Kansas City, USA, on a six-month assignment. My first concern was whether I would be able to continue with my Sai activities there. I am a part of the youth wing of Mumbai and enjoy the activities at Dharmakshetra (Swami's ashram in Mumbai). I had visited the United States before on a few job assignments, but this would be my longest trip so far. Not sure if I would be able to stay isolated from Sai group activities for such a long time, all my hopes rested on Bhagavan's inimitable ways.

Sure enough, a few days before I was to leave from Mumbai, I happened to stumble upon a Yahoo group e-mail about a September 2007 mini-retreat in Kansas City, along with a link to the Sai center website, and everything! Thanking Swami for his help, I sent an e-mail to the Kansas City Sai Center about how I would love to join them in all their devotional and service activities. The response from the center was very touching, and I knew I would feel right at home!

During my stay in Kansas City, I was blessed with opportunities to participate in many Region 4 events as a YA member, such as the Region 4 YA Retreat in St. Louis,

Missouri, in January 2008. I still remember how inspiring the speakers were; the service project at the YMCA was very fulfilling. The DVD presentation showcasing the positive effects of the Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values on society was very motivating. I had many useful takeaways from that retreat, not the least of which was how one must take up service initiatives, having faith that Bhagavan will always help, whenever it is needed.

One of the speakers pointed out his way of feeling closeness to Swami, which is to take up challenging service activities and then allow Swami to control the situation. I thought this a very interesting perspective, one that I would like personally to practice. I still listen to the audio recordings of the retreat whenever I feel the need for some inspiration!

Another event that I fondly remember was the WYC Workshop in Manhattan, Kansas, in March 2008. This was like a virtual trip to Puttaparthi, with the World Youth Conference of July 2007 as its theme, attended by a small group of devotees mainly from Kansas City and Manhattan. Some of the speakers mentioned a few things that were very typical of the Parthi experience.

I may not have attended the WYC, but the speakers' accounts of their stay and experiences made up for it.

During my short stay, another beautiful endeavor taken up by the Region 4 YAs was the making of an audio CD, offering devotional songs to Swami. The whole concept of a CD specially made for Swami was a new one to me, and I thank Bhagavan for giving me the opportunity to be a part of it. The YAs' commitment to the task at hand, and also toward spiritual growth, was admirable.

It was a memorable six months in Kansas City, and I hope that I can make the trip more meaningful by trying to learn from the experience, and by developing firm faith in Swami and greater commitment toward his teachings—just like my Sai brothers and sisters from the USA. A special word of thanks to everyone at the KC Sai Center for making me feel at home halfway around the world! I will always be grateful to everyone there for all their help.

—Akshay Trasi

Mumbai, India (former YA of USA Region 4)

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A Lesson from Socrates on Use of Time

Once upon a time, Socrates was asked by a pupil, “Master! God has allotted a hundred years for man, but man seldom lives so long. Of these years, 25 are spent in childhood, boyhood, and youth, playing silly games; 25 more in family and social entanglements; and another 25 in allotting and apportioning properties among his children. If he survives 75, he is ridden by disease or grief at the loss of sons or daughters. He has no free time to think of God. It would be good if God could grant 25 years more for man to dwell wholly in God.”

Socrates responded with another equally sad statement. “Son! God has given us this vast house called Earth, but three-quarters of it is sea; the other quarter is mostly mountains, deserts, lakes, and forests. I have no place to live!” he wept.

The pupil consoled him, “Why? When billions can live on Earth, surely you can secure a place!”

Socrates responded, “When so many billion thoughts are framed in your mind, my son, you can certainly find room easily for thoughts on God!”

Only idlers complain of lack of time for meditating on God.

Yearn, you will find a way; pray, you will receive grace.

—Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Speaks (SSS) 15:20, Aug. 31, 1981, "Purity: The Real Value"

Right Action: Conduct and Kindness



According to Swami, “**Right Action** is the foundation for the welfare of humanity; it is the truth that endures for all time.” **Conduct**, a subvalue of right action, means personal behavior, way of acting, or deportment. Conduct is how a person shows his/her characteristics to others. This means so much, because if you behave wrongly, then you will attract the wrong crowd and vice versa. And if you act against your true nature, then you will never be happy with yourself.

I would like to share an experience about conduct. This incident happens on a daily basis. Every day after school, I have to do my homework and other extra-curricular activities, for which I need to have lots of good time management and make the right decisions. When it comes to playing, I sometimes get tempted. Let’s say I’m doing my work and everything is going well, when the doorbell rings. The momentum stops. I run to the door, because it’s usually my friends asking me to play. When I open the door, they always ask me the same question, and I am in a dilemma. It’s a matter of right action.

Honestly, I do go both ways. But whenever I make the right choice, I am really happy and peaceful. When I choose to go out and play instead of doing my work, I might feel happy momentarily, but when I come back, I feel glum. With Swami’s grace and under the guidance of my parents and my SSE teachers, I make the right choice most of the time and I am trying to improve every day.



Kindness is another subvalue of right action. What does kindness actually mean to me? Kindness is the golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. If you treat someone rudely, then another person can be expected to act like that to you; if you act nicely, others will be nice to you too.

One day, when I was walking to my bus after school, a kid came up to me and said “Hi.” I wondered why he was talking to me, because he’s not in my group of friends. He doesn’t have many friends. Anyway, I smiled and said “Hi” back. I am the only person he talks to, because other kids say mean things and think he’s a little weird.

He started to talk about Halloween, and all I could think was, “What if one of my friends sees me talking to him and makes fun of me?” Still, that did not stop me from talking to him. But just then, my fears came true. One of my friends came up and whispered, “Why are you talking to him?”

I told him there was no harm in being a little kind to anyone, no matter if they’re your friend or not. Saying that, I walked away. I was afraid that he wouldn’t want to be my friend any more, but the next day he came up to me and apologized.

I think the moral of this experience is: when you act kindly or do the right action, Swami always lets you know when you have done the right thing, and you also get happiness from it. In conclusion, I will try to practice these values regularly, on a day to day basis. With Swami’s grace, I am sure I will overcome the challenges thrown at me.

—**Harshith Sridharan**

SSE Student, Southfield, Michigan

Illustrations by Phyllis Wohlberg

Human Values Word Search



truth	peace	nonviolence	right conduct	love
kindness	courage	integrity	character	duty
Sai Baba	respect	courtesy	service	trust
responsibility	friendship	discipline	conscience	faith

—Adapted from *SSE Matters Newsletter*, Nov. 2008
Southfield, Michigan

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RECENT ARRIVALS: BOOKS

Science and Mankind, by Dr. Somenath Mitra, poses societal questions, such as “What is our origin?” “Where are we today?” and “How should we grow as a modern civilization?” Finally, it discusses the human values, based on Sai Baba’s philosophy, as key elements of human progress. BI-230 \$5.00

Sri Sathya Sai Baba: A Yugavatar, by Dr. K. Hanumanthappa, distinguished educator and scholar, touches upon the unique features of the Sai system of education, the author’s personal experiences in the divine presence, and a special vision that Swami blessed him with, of the Bhagavad Gita (Gitopadesha). The author also discusses Swami’s message of love and unity among religions. BI-235 \$5.00

The Power of Thoughts, a third book by psychologist John Goldthwait, Ph.D., explores Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s teachings on the power of the mind as the cause of all that we perceive, that one’s experiences are the direct result of one’s own thoughts and feelings; no outside force is responsible. Even our enemies are but reflections of our mental projections. Brief and to the point, the text is well-supported with quotes from Swami’s discourses and practical exercises for applying the mind’s power constructively in the areas of resolving doubts, issues of physical health, mental poisons, problems of everyday life, “unloving” reflections, and the power of “no thought.” BI-240 \$3.00

Twameva Matha..., by Smt. Padmamma, longtime resident of Prasanthi Nilayam and the daughter of Prof. N. Kasturi (Swami’s translator for many years), chronicles in a simple and intimate way the divine challenges, lessons, *leelas*, protection, and assistance Swami has blessed her family with for over five decades. BI-241 \$4.00

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